

2019: The Spies in Numbers 13 as a Research Process

Teh Yong Yuan

Research Director of RADIUS Initiatives

Visiting faculty member of Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary

A doctoral student at Monash University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

Social science research can be said to involve spiritual discernment and the performance of the prophetic gift. However, is there a biblical basis for research since faith in God supersedes human wisdom? In the Bible, Numbers 13 is an account of Moses sending out twelve spies to scout Canaan before the Israelites determined whether to occupy the land. This article sets out a four-phase research process depicted in that account and introduces five relevant parties involved in the process. This discussion is applied to the DMin context with several research implications highlighted.

Introduction

Social science research¹ helps in discerning what God has done, is currently doing, and how to cooperate with him.² Prayer and Bible reading as spiritual disciplines that help the Christian to ascertain opportunities for God to work within and transform them³ can be construed to fulfil the aforesaid threefold functions but both activities are assumed activities for Christian living.⁴ In this connection, research is a systematic means of inquiry into an issue, problem, or situation.⁵ The value of empirical research is the discovery of information that may potentially challenge existing preconception that leads to behavioural change.⁶ Contemporary research require interdisciplinary examination to better understand the complexity of the subject matter.⁷ Interdisciplinary research for both academic and practical purposes can apply multiple specialities, such as anthropology, communications, religion, economics, education, history, management, sociology, and theology.⁸ Research skills are a key requirement for DMin programs because the degree prepares the student through a thesis process to be a resident practical theologian.⁹

Various scholars have provided different models of the research process. Edgar Elliston proposed that a missiological research design is an iterative process consisting of five basic components, namely (1) central research issue, (2) review of precedent research, (3)

¹ In this article, the term research primarily refers to social science research.

² Edgar J. Elliston, ed., *Introduction to Missiological Research Design* (Pasadena, Calif: William Carey Library, 2011), xxi.

³ Richard J Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (Hachette: HarperCollins Publisher, 2003).

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:17 is a reminder to pray without ceasing. 1 Timothy 4:13 prompts for consistent Bible reading.

⁵ Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, eds., *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018), xvii.

⁶ Richard E. Davies, *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects: An Approach to Structured Observation of Ministry* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1984), 5.

⁷ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, xxii.

⁸ Ibid, xxv.

⁹ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), xix.

research methods, (4) findings, and (5) conclusions and recommendations.¹⁰ The model by Marvin Gilbert has four phases for investigation: (1) theological and biblical literature review, (2) social science literature review, (3) empirical/field research, and (4) integrative reflection.¹¹ A more comprehensive process of research suggested by Richard Starcher, Leanne Dzubinski, and Jamie Sanchez contained seven elements of rigor, encompassing (1) constructing embedded understanding, (2) utilising scholarly literature, (3) gathering data, (4) analysing data inductively, (5) displaying trustworthy findings, (6) writing rich and thick descriptions, and (7) re-engaging theoretical literature.¹² Other academicians suggested processes that include a practical component. For instance, John Swinton and Harriet Mowat provided a four-stage framework for conducting practical theology research, which starts with (1) identifying current praxis, (2) conducting cultural/contextual analysis, (3) theological reflection, and (4) formulating revised forms of practice.¹³ Another example is the action research process, which is an approach of understanding and improvement through real-life engagement with observations and feedback loops for research and reflection.¹⁴ These research process models originate from the field of social sciences. Each model has more in common than differences when compared with one other. Pursuantly, the purpose of this paper is to present a research process described in chapter 13 of the biblical book of Numbers. The different parties involved in the research process stated in the passage are also set out. This helps provide some biblical foundation for research which impact education practices. Some research implications are incorporated where relevant. Together, this makes the article useful for DMin directors, students, and the learning ministry practitioner.

The book of Numbers gets its name from the two accounts of counting the people of Israel at Mount Sinai and the plains of Moab respectively.¹⁵ These two censuses for the purposes of numbering the first and second generation of post-exodus Israelites¹⁶ can be considered as a form of quantitative research. This book that includes a narrative of the Israelites preparing to enter the promised land presents a record of God's faithfulness and forbearance against the backdrop of Israel's unfaithfulness, rebellion, apostasy, and frustration.¹⁷ In particular, chapter thirteen records the sending of twelve spies into Canaan, instructions given to them, details of them executing their commission and return, as well as the report they brought back to camp.¹⁸ Some biblical scholars even consider this chapter¹⁹ a key chapter of the book because it records the turning point for the nation of Israel, when they failed to believe God and refused to enter, possess, and conquer the promised land.²⁰ From a symbolic perspective, the research presented in chapter thirteen is of qualitative nature

¹⁰ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, xxvi.

¹¹ Martin Gilbert, "The Four-Phase Model of Missiological Research," in *Missiological Research*, 21-22.

¹² Richard L. Starcher, Leanne M. Dzubinski, and Jamie N. Sanchez, "Rigorous Missiological Research Using Qualitative Inquiry," *Missiology: An International Review* 46, no. 1 (2018): 51.

¹³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 89-82.

¹⁴ Paul Bramer and Mark Chapman, "Action Research for Doctor of Ministry Project: A Practical Definition," *The Journal of Christian Ministry* 6, no. 1 (2017): 30-32.

¹⁵ J. Hampton III Keathley, "3. The Law: The First Five Books," *Bible.Org*, last modified August 18, 2004, accessed December 1, 2018, <https://Bible.org/seriespage/3-law-first-five-books>.

¹⁶ David Malick, "An Introduction to the Book of Numbers," *Bible.Org*, last modified June 29, 2004, accessed December 1, 2018, <https://Bible.org/article/introduction-book-numbers>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Matthew Henry, "Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible: Numbers 13," *Bible Study Tools*, last modified 1706, accessed December 1, 2018, <http://www.Biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/numbers/13.html>.

¹⁹ Together with chapter fourteen.

²⁰ Keathley, "The Law."

through ethnography method, located directly between two quantitative studies in the form of census stated in chapters one and twenty-six respectively.

The Research Process

The narrative of Numbers chapter 13 chronologically describes a four-phase research process, starting with (1) planning (vv. 1-20), (2) collecting data (vv. 21-25), (3) reporting findings (vv. 26-29) and ending with (4) providing recommendations (vv. 30-33). Each phase is explained.

Phase One: Planning

The first phase is planning. This is discussed in verses 1-20. At the start, the Lord informed Moses about the purpose for exploring Canaan and gave some basic instructions to undertake this exploration (vv. 1-2). Research projects should start with an issue or problem to be explained. These are commonly known as central research issue. The central research issue may be a problem to be examined or a thesis to be tested.²¹ In the passage, the issue was to explore Canaan and to subsequently conquer it. Identifying and focusing on the central research issue is often the most difficult part of a research project and requires multiple iterations.²² Focusing on the central research issue helps tackle issues of continuity, sequence, integration of the whole study and research report.²³ Connected to the critical research issue is the research problem and purpose, which is considered the most important section of the DMin prospectus.²⁴ Sharan Merriam suggests four common locations to identify research problems: everyday practices, literature, questioning theories, and current issues.²⁵ Any issue or problem identified should be theocentric.

Moses then sends out leaders from each of the twelve tribes to scout the land (vv. 3-15). Part of the planning phase involves gathering suitable researchers. Tribe leaders were considered appropriate and qualified for the cause. Technical knowledge of the researcher is important.²⁶ In fact, Lincoln and Guba consider that the researcher is the instrument of choice in qualitative research.²⁷ The credibility of a researchers is dependent on training, experience, record of accomplishment, status and objectivity.²⁸ Next, Moses gave brief instructions for the spies' journey to explore Canaan (v. 17). The instructions can be considered vague because of the ambiguous locations mentioned, such as through Negev and into the hill country. Vague plans allow flexibility for researchers. However, the lack of instructions may lead to errors, especially for inexperienced researchers. Moses gave the scouts more than ten areas to observe in Canaan, such as land, inhabitants, residences, and produce (vv. 18-20). Part of the planning phase also includes determining data collection details.

²¹ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 15.

²² Ibid, 17.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 15.

²⁵ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 56.

²⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 56.

²⁷ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1985).

²⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 224.

Phase Two: Collecting Data

The next phase is collecting data. Verses 21-25 of the passage correspond to this area. The scouts' journey into Canaan was mentioned (vv. 21-22a). Data collection sometimes take place in the field, away from supervision and assistance. As compared to the brief earlier instructions from Moses (v. 17), the actual exploration was described in further detail with several landmarks mentioned, suggesting differences between plan and practice. Data collection needs to be systematic, according to protocols but may differ from initial plan. Researchers also need to work independently.

In the passage, the spies identified the various tribes staying in Canaan and took some fruits as instructed by Moses (vv. 22b-24). The scouts observed the people and gathered actual samples. Multiple data collection methods might be applied in one research project. Social science research of any type has three methodological-design choices for data collection, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-design study.²⁹ Quantitative methods include surveys and experimentation, while qualitative research, are such as observations and interviews.³⁰ Qualitative studies are long valued by anthropologists and historians, and have grown in popularity by other social scientists over the past twenty years.³¹ However, quantitative designs characterise research as hard science and is useful for their rigorous application of scientific models and objectivity towards generalising findings.³² Quantitative and qualitative approaches are not bipolar opposites but need each other for developing a more comprehensive understanding of issues.³³ This aspect is also connected to sources of information. Primary sources of information are artefacts, texts, and other materials (e.g. journals, interviews, surveys) that are established during the period under study.³⁴ On the other hand, secondary sources are created after events and contain an interpretive element, which is usually consulted by other interpreters, such as biographies and reports.³⁵

The exploration in Canaan took forty days (v. 25). Research takes place within limitations, such as time and human capital constraints. Limitations also arise due to research methods. For example, sampling restrictions, uncontrolled variables, faulty instrumentation, and other compromises to external validity.³⁶ Limitations should not be confused with delimitations.³⁷ Delimitations refer to the boundaries established around the research that determine the scope of what will be studied and excluded.³⁸ Both limitations and delimitations should not be considered from solely negative perspective because they actually constitute opportunities for future research. After gathering data, the subsequent phase is to report research findings.

²⁹ Martin Gilbert, "Qualitative and Quantitative Research," in *Missiological Research*, 127.

³⁰ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014).

³¹ Gilbert, "Qualitative and Quantitative Research," 128.

³² *Ibid.*, 129.

³³ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 42.

³⁴ Charles E. Shelf, "Primary and Secondary Sources," in *Missiological Research*, 132.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 26.

Phase Three: Reporting Findings

Reporting findings is the third phase. Empirical research generates data or findings that are subsequently systematically analysed to yield objective conclusions linked to the critical research issue and question.³⁹ Reflections arise from verses 26-29. The scouts presented their observations of the land, people, and its produce to the Israelite community (v. 26). It is important to consider the audience and users' needs of the report. This would affect writing style, design, and disclosures.⁴⁰ For a DMin student, research findings are presented in their project thesis which typically has five chapters: (1) introduction, (2) theological and theoretical underpinnings, (3) methodology, (4) findings and results, and (5) conclusion and implications (why is this study significant?).⁴¹ Tim Sensing suggests that the first principle in presenting findings is to write for the people who are expected to read the report with text or graphics presented in a way that meet their needs.⁴² In such a manner, the user of the report is involved in the research process. The application of qualitative or quantitative methods determine the type of data produced, whether words or numbers respectively.⁴³ Visuals (i.e. charts, graphs, and frameworks) often assist the reader to gain a quicker and more comprehensive understanding than the sole use of texts or numbers.⁴⁴

The scouts informed Moses of their observations in the presence of the whole Israelite assembly (vv. 27-29). They provided details that responded to most (but not all) of Moses' earlier queries (vv. 18-20). In particular, the spies reported that the people who lived in Canaan were powerful (v. 28). This could be construed to insufficiently respond to Moses' question of whether the people who live there were strong or weak, few or many (v. 18). Researchers must report both negative and positive results that relate to the central research issue.⁴⁵ Researchers also need to prioritise the big picture above novelty and trivia, which is whether the research findings are able to sufficiently address the research question. Findings provide the information for conclusions and recommendations to be made.⁴⁶

Phase Four: Providing Recommendations

The fourth and final phase is to provide recommendations. This is connected to verses 30-33. Based on the information provided by the scouts, Moses recommended to the Israelites that they should go and take possession of Canaan (v. 30). He was also confident that they would succeed in the conquest. However, the scouts disagreed with Moses and suggested that the Israelites would not be able to conquer Canaan by justifying their recommendation with their observation that the people in Canaan were stronger than them because the Anak tribe outsized them (vv. 31-33). Swinton and Mowat claim that the analysis to arrive at recommendations is at the heart of the research process.⁴⁷ Conclusions and recommendations may only be drawn from the findings of the study that relate to the central research issue.⁴⁸ This also means that conclusions should not be made from purely precedent research, but these prior studies provide an important theoretical perspective towards

³⁹ Martin Gilbert, "The Nature of Data," in *Missiological Research*, 122.

⁴⁰ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 28-29.

⁴¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 28-29.

⁴² *Ibid*, 89.

⁴³ Gilbert, "The Nature of Data", 125

⁴⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 93.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 88.

⁴⁶ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 88.

⁴⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 267.

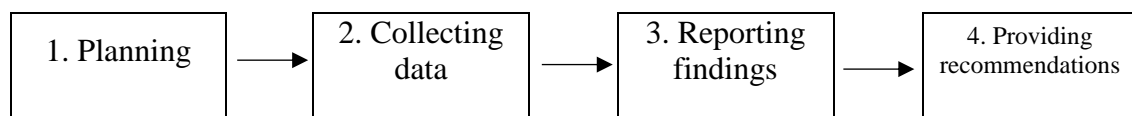
⁴⁸ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 100.

interpreting findings.⁴⁹ Qualitative and quantitative data analysis also differ. John Easter and Alan Johnson prescribed five steps for qualitative data analysis: (1) preparing transcripts, (2) identifying themes, (3) comparing data, (4) examining connections, and (5) building theoretical model.⁵⁰ Analysing quantitative data can be done through a variety of statistical software and tests that describe variables, measure relationships and differences.⁵¹ It is important that the analysis is objective without bias.

One way to mitigate the risk of biasness is triangulation. Triangulation acts to cross-check findings.⁵² The key to triangulation is to see the same thing from multiple perspectives and thus able to confirm or challenge the findings.⁵³ Norman Denzin identified four types of triangulation that augment the ability to see complex issues and events from varying perspectives, namely data, investigator, theory and methodological triangulation.⁵⁴ Working closely with supervisors are helpful. A diverse group of researchers also help provide different perspectives but this may lead to conflicts and disagreements. In the passage, the opposite views between the ten spies and Moses, Joshua, and Caleb may have been caused by the ten spies mistakenly generalising that all people in Canaan are like the Anak tribe residing in Hebron. Users depend on recommendations and analysis to make important decisions. In the passage, their analysis had drastic implications which resulted in the unwillingness of the Israelites to take possession of Canaan (the main issue from the start). This shortfall might have been overcome by implementing various types of triangulation.

Based on the above, the four-phase research process is diagrammed as follows:

Diagram 1: Research process (according to Numbers 13)



The four-phase research process of planning, collecting data, reporting findings, and providing recommendations that was presented based on the Bible passage contains similarities with several of the research process models provided in the introduction section of this article, especially the three models prescribed by (1) Elliston, (2) Gilbert as well as (3) Starcher, Dzubinski, and Sanchez. The research process can be iterative and repetitive, such as improving planning based on data collected or recommendations identified. This is common for qualitative research, whereby the researcher goes through circular and reflective process between research question, data collection, and analysis.⁵⁵ The various phases of the research process may also take place concurrently. For example, findings can be reported

⁴⁹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 100.

⁵⁰ John L. Easter and Alan R. Johnson, "Appendix 14: Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis," in *Missiological Research*, 333–336.

⁵¹ Martin Gilbert, "Statistically Speaking," in *Missiological Research*, 220.

⁵² Judith Bell and Stephen Waters, *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers*, 6th ed. (Berkshire, England: McGraw-Hill Education, 2014), 120.

⁵³ Sophie Laws et al., *Research for Development: A Practical Guide* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2013), 143.

⁵⁴ Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), 295.

⁵⁵ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 167.

with ongoing data collection whilst preliminary analysis is being formed. This may be observable in an action research, which is an iterative project cycle with action, research, and reflection guided by a leader with the participation of others to effect positive change and develop transferable and theoretical knowledge⁵⁶.

Separately, one notable omission of the research process prescribed in this paper, when compared to the other models is the literature review phase. Literature review is foundational to research reports, theses, and dissertations.⁵⁷ Part of the literature process involves identifying key concepts connected to the intended study and then use literature search tools to identify material.⁵⁸ It is common for amateur seminary researchers to neglect the rich prior studies in social science and dwelling solely on theology, Christian reference material, or worse, relying only on the Bible as reference. A wise researcher will carefully evaluate the bases upon which to design the study and might consider relevant divergent disciplinary approaches to address the research issue.⁵⁹ It is highly likely that someone has researched on a connected area to the study in consideration and the existing research can be refined by studying the arguments presented.⁶⁰ A well-written literature review that contains pertinent previous investigations and accepted theoretical and philosophical underpinnings on a topic provides the reader a working understanding about the given area of research.⁶¹ Considering other academicians' research helps validate significance, establish boundaries, and set theoretical perspectives to the study.⁶² The next section discusses the various parties involved in the research process presented in the Bible passage.

Parties Involved in Research Process

The parties involved in the research process had been mentioned in passing earlier. To be specific, the five prominent parties spoken of in the passage are the Lord as motivator, Moses as supervisor, tribe leaders as researchers, Canaan residents as research participants, and Israelite community as users. These parties greatly influence the resources and limitations in the research process. These five parties are elaborated further as follows:

The Lord as Motivator. Colossians 1:16 states that everything finds its purpose in God.⁶³ In Christian research, God should be the primary motivator for any study. In the passage, God wanted the Israelites to explore the land of Canaan, so that it can be given to them (vv. 1-2). From a theological perspective, the purpose of the scouting adventure can be construed to the Israelites gaining a better understanding of God's promises for them in a tangible and physical manner. Research needs to be God-centred. On this basis, the Word of God can serve as an impetus and benchmark for research with society observed and compared to biblical standards pursuant to 2 Timothy 3:16-17.⁶⁴ Tim Sensing proposes that DMin projects are incarnational in nature because it should take concrete areas seriously,

⁵⁶ Bramer and Chapman, "Action Research for Doctor of Ministry Project: A Practical Definition.", 29.

⁵⁷ Martin Gilbert, "Social Science Resources for Enriching the Literature Review," in *Missiological Research*, 36.

⁵⁸ Davies, *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects*, 49.

⁵⁹ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 31.

⁶⁰ Davies, *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects*, 49.

⁶¹ Gilbert, "Social Science Resources for Enriching the Literature Review", 36.

⁶² Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 33-38.

⁶³ The Message version.

⁶⁴ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (New International Version)

such as where God encounters his people.⁶⁵ For missiological research, the focus should be on the mission of God (*mission Dei*) for humanity and its study as divinely appointed.⁶⁶ Research can also be divided into two broad but related arenas of academic and applied.⁶⁷ Regardless of categorisation, the theocentric aspect is what differentiates Christian research from conventional studies.

*Moses as Supervisor.*⁶⁸ The second figure presented is Moses as the supervisor. Moses sent out the twelve tribe leaders to explore Canaan with specific procedural instructions and observations needed (vv. 16-20). The scouts followed most of the commands given (vv. 21-25). The term supervisor is commonly used in academic settings. In contrast, advisor would be a better title in a non-academic context. Moses performed a supervisory role by conveying recommendations, in the form of directions and instructions for research as well as which personnel to be sent out. A supervisor's responsibility is to guide the researcher with expert views. The selection of supervisors for an academic programme is based on faculty policy which could include university appointment, student nomination, or a combination of both. The supervisor is expected to guide the student in all aspects of the research process and may also involve pastoral care of the student.⁶⁹ Anne Lee and Rowena Murray prescribed a supervision framework to help postgraduate students developing into researchers which includes five approaches: (1) functional, (2) enculturation, (3) critical thinking, (4) emancipation, and (5) developing quality relationship.⁷⁰ It is also common to have a supervisory team with more than one supervisor. The supervisor is on the same team as researchers but may play the role of devil's advocate by raising potential concerns that the panel of thesis examiners may raise. The advice given are suggestions to improve the process and quality of the research. Supervisors balance the relationship with the student between heavy-handed dominance and hands-off neglect.⁷¹ Student-supervisor relationship has been found to correlate with students' progress and satisfaction with their research project.⁷² Desmond Manderson suggested that research students should assess their own needs as well as capacities and limitations of potential supervisors before deciding on arrangements.⁷³ Based on the findings and analysis provided by the spies (vv. 26-29), Moses recommended that the Israelites should take possession of the land and they would succeed in doing so (v. 30). However, the tribe leaders had reservations (vv. 31-33). In the end, the Israelites did not follow the advice given by Moses (chapter 14). Recommendations on handling supervisor-student disagreements are discussed in the next sub-section on researchers.

Tribe Leaders as Researchers. Good research is highly dependent on the researcher.⁷⁴ In the passage, those sent out to observe the land were leaders in Israel, consisting of a

⁶⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 13.

⁶⁶ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 3-5.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁸ In the process of preparing this article, it was observed that there is a lack of resources relating to research supervision in Christian academic context (including for DMin).

⁶⁹ Jacqueline H. Watts, "Challenges of Supervising Part-Time PhD Students: Towards Student-Centred Practice," *Teaching in Higher Education* 13, no. 3 (2008): 370.

⁷⁰ Anne Lee and Rowena Murray, "Supervising Writing: Helping Postgraduate Students Develop as Researchers," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 52, no. 5 (2015): 560.

⁷¹ Sara Delamont, Paul Atkinson, and Odette Parry, *Supervising the PhD: A Guide to Success* (Buckingham; Bristol, PA: Open University Press, 1997), 9.

⁷² Glenice Ives and Glenn Rowley, "Supervisor Selection or Allocation and Continuity of Supervision: PhD Students' Progress and Outcomes," *Studies in Higher Education* 30, no. 5 (2005): 535-555.

⁷³ Desmond Manderson, "Asking Better Questions: Approaching the Process of Thesis Supervision," *Journal of Legal Education* 46, no. 3 (1996): 411.

⁷⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 56.

diverse and inclusive group of one leader from each tribe (vv. 2-15). The tribe leaders were entrusted with the important task of gathering information and observations of Canaan. In this context, they can be construed to be researchers. The tribe leaders were from different backgrounds and had to work together. Research involves collaboration with others from various expertise and disciplines. The observation process undertaken by the scouts (vv. 21-25) were different when compared to earlier instructions given by Moses (vv. 16-20). Thereafter, the spies entered Canaan and completed the information gathering mission in forty days. Researchers need to be able to work independently with minimal supervision and scarce resources, especially time limitations.

The spies present their observations from the adventure according to the questions provided by Moses to them earlier (vv. 18-19). The ten spies (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) provided an analysis of their findings that contained reservations that the Israelites will fail to capture Canaan. They publicly disagreed with the analysis given by Moses. In contrast, Joshua and Caleb had opposing views from the other ten observers (Numbers 14:6-9) which were aligned with Moses. They were confident that the Israelites would be able to take possession of the land because of God's favour for his people. This public disagreement had confused the Israelite assembly and resulted in negative implications (chapter 14). Disagreements are bound to take place during research because of the diverse views and different conclusions deduced. Researchers are allowed to adapt different opinions from supervisors, especially when there is better evidence. The negative outcomes that could happen in an academic setting when disagreements between supervisors and students occur are mishandled slow progress and even potential dropouts.⁷⁵ For important decisions, some supervisors do not mind their students getting involved in them, however they are usually concerned about the outcomes from the choices made.⁷⁶ On the other hand, various policies may guide expectations and responsibilities between the two parties.⁷⁷ In this connection, a healthy interpersonal relationship and mediation are suggestions to help resolve supervisor-student conflict.⁷⁸

Canaan Residents as Research Participants. Choosing research participants correctly is important because it forms the premise for the appropriate data to be collected for the identified research objective.⁷⁹ The scouts went through the area where the descendants of the Anak lived (v. 22). Part of the observation on Canaan was to know more about its residents. The people living in Canaan constituted research participants. In practice, the choice of participants will also depend upon whether access is granted.⁸⁰ If the selection process is systematic and objective, the results from a few participants (or sample) can be generalised for the entire group (the population).⁸¹ The people living in Canaan were described as powerful with the Anak residing in the land and other tribes occupying specific areas of Canaan (vv. 28-29). There were many different people groups staying in Canaan. Anak is one

⁷⁵ Ronny Gunnarsson, Grethe Jonasson, and Annika Billhult, "The Experience of Disagreement between Students and Supervisors in PhD Education: A Qualitative Study," *BMC Medical Education* 13, no. 134 (2013): 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁷⁹ Mark N. K. Saunders, "Choosing Research Participants," in *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*, ed. Gillian Symon and Catherine Cassell (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2012), 38.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 49.

⁸¹ Martin Gilbert, "Sampling from a Population," in *Missiological Research*, 202.

tribe that resided in Canaan. The Anak were giants of huge built. There were also other tribes living in the land.

The scouts had described all people they saw as great size and larger than the Israelites (vv. 32b-33). Interestingly, the scouts scouting tribe leaders had concluded that all people in Canaan were of great size. Presumably, this conclusion was arrived at by over-estimating Anak people in Hebron and discounting the existence of other tribal groups in Canaan. Generalisation is the process of applying the findings from the sample to represent the population.⁸² In this connection, the scouts can be construed to apply qualitative research techniques with ethnography for collecting data to understand the land Canaan and its inhabitants. Ethnographic methods include participant observation, qualitative interviews, and the study of demographics.⁸³ Qualitative methods are useful for describing new phenomena deeply but are not generalisable for the broader population, unlike quantitative research.⁸⁴ This might have resulted in misinformed analysis given by the ten spies.

Another issue connected to research participants is the subject of ethics. Researchers need to protect their research participants, develop trust with them, guard against misconduct that might reflect the integrity of research and their organisation.⁸⁵ Ethical measures taken to protect research participants include allowing them voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.⁸⁶ It is also expected that researchers ensure participants are protected from harm, both in the process of conducting the research and when research findings are made known to the public as well as not fabricating data by falsifying statements for vested interest.⁸⁷

Israelite Community as Users. The last but very important group are users or audience of the report. The target audience and user should be clearly identified as early as possible in the process of designing the research.⁸⁸ At the beginning of the passage, it was stated that the land of Canaan is to be given to the Israelites (v. 1). They received the report from the spies, upon them returning to the Desert of Paran (v. 26). The report provided by the spies was used by the Israelite community to decide whether to take possession of Canaan. In this context, the assembly can be considered the user of the information that included recommendations from Moses, Joshua, Caleb and the ten spies. After receiving the scouting report, the Israelites responded in rebellion against Moses (Numbers 14:1-4). The Israelites reacted based on report given. In practice, the report should be written for the people who are expected to read the report⁸⁹ and also to consider what would help the reader to better understand what the researcher is trying to convey.⁹⁰

In some situations, the users of the report may also receive multiple and different opinions from various parties. The readers determine their next course of action based on the

⁸² Ibid, 203.

⁸³ Mary Clark Moschella, "Pastoral Ethnography and Doctor of Ministry Education," *The Journal of Christian Ministry* 4, no. 1 (2012): 2.

⁸⁴ Gilbert, "Qualitative and Quantitative Research.", 129-130

⁸⁵ Mark Israel and Iain Hay, *Research Ethics for Social Scientists: Between Ethical Conduct and Regulatory Compliance* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006).

⁸⁶ Johan Mostert, "Ethical Research with Human Subjects," in *Missiological Research*, 68.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 68-69.

⁸⁸ Elliston, *Introduction to Missiological Research Design*, 28.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 89.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 90.

report given. Action taken may be according to the recommendations rendered or otherwise. Nevertheless, Mary Clark Moschella suggests that when researchers offer their findings back to the community in a respectful and appreciative manner, the group members learn more about how their faith looks like from the outside and might become more conscious of their faith practices.⁹¹ This is also connected to the significance of the research, whereby theological implications from the study applied in the future.⁹² In academic and also DMin thesis, it is the incremental contribution to existing knowledge that the reader or examiner usually seeks. To this effect, David Brinberg and Joseph McGrath suggest three domains which a researcher might make knowledge contribution, namely theory, methodological, and context.⁹³ John Mowen had also prescribed a continuum of contributions of eight positions⁹⁴ from identical replication to developing a new theory that predicts a new phenomenon.⁹⁵

Based on the above, the five parties identified (i.e. the Lord, supervisor, researchers, research participants, and users) may be distinct group or overlapping with one another. For example, a church elder may be the supervisor of the research due to his expertise and also play the role as the researcher for gathering information. In addition, he might also be the research participant because he completes the questionnaire and is also the user of the report generated for decision making. In some cases, the users of the report and the research participants may be the same party. In an academic or DMin context, the individual roles are more discrete. The researcher would be the student. The supervisor would be the faculty professor. The primary audience of the report would be the thesis examiners. The research participants are the subject of study, such as church congregation or community.

The following diagram illustrates the relationship of the five parties involved in the research process:

⁹¹ Moschella, "Pastoral Ethnography and Doctor of Ministry Education.", 9.

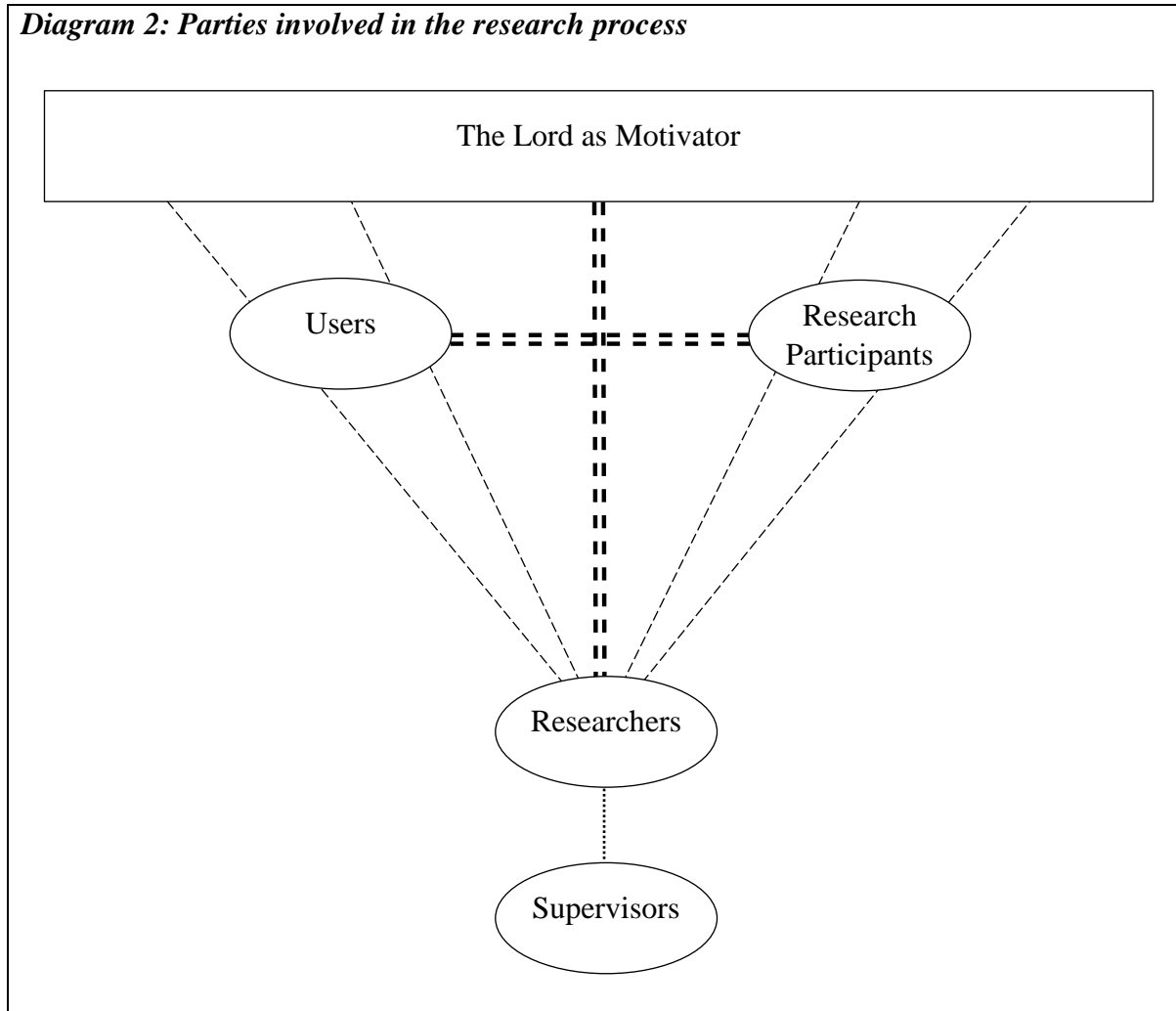
⁹² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 228-230.

⁹³ David Brinberg and Joseph Edward McGrath, *Validity and the Research Process* (Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1988).

⁹⁴ The eight positions are (1) straight replication, (2) replication and extension, (3) extension of a new theory/method in a new area, (4) integrative review (e.g. meta-analysis), (5) develop a new theory to explain an old phenomenon – compete one theory against another (e.g. classic theory testing), (6) identification of a new phenomenon, (7) develop a grand synthesis – integration, and (8) develop a new theory that predicts a new phenomenon.

⁹⁵ Daniel M. Ladik and David W. Stewart, "The Contribution Continuum," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36, no. 2 (2008): 163.

Diagram 2: Parties involved in the research process



Based on the diagram, this article suggests that the role of researchers is to learn about the research participants and reflect that knowledge to its users. The objective is to form a horizontal connection between these two groups. This understanding and reflection done by researchers takes place with the Lord as motivator in the background. Researchers are said to perform divine task of discernment.⁹⁶ This constitutes the vertical component in the diagram given. Both horizontal and vertical alignment (forming the cross symbol) are necessary for Christian research. In fact, Tim Sensing stresses that research projects (including DMin) are incantational in nature of God because it takes seriously the concrete place where God encounters his people to engender transformation.⁹⁷

Conclusion

In summary, this article based on Numbers 13 in the Bible presents a research process and highlights the parties involved in it. The narrative provided in Numbers 13 relates to Moses sending out the twelve spies to scout Canaan. The research process presented encompasses four phases, namely planning, collecting data, reporting findings, and providing recommendations. The five parties identified here are the Lord as motivator, Moses as supervisor, tribe leaders as researchers, Canaan residents as researcher participants, and

⁹⁶ DeLonn L. Rance, "Missiological Research as Worship: A Pneumatological Journey of Discovery," in *Missiological Research*, 288.

⁹⁷ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 13.

Israelite community as users of the research report. These two main points of discussion are also illustrated in the two diagrams given. In passing, various implication for practical and academic research were highlighted, such as qualitative and quantitative methods, triangulation, literature review, handling conflict, and research ethics.

The main contribution of this paper is the contemporary hermeneutics of Number 13 described in a research context. This is significant because the main thesis of this article suggests that there is biblical evidence to support the conduct of empirical research and scientific enquiry. This impacts educational practice to convince DMin directors, students, and ministry practitioners of the need for research. This understanding also helps correct the misconception that faith in God discounts the need for research in the form of human inquiry. In fact, the selected passage refers to research in the urban context.⁹⁸ In the present day context, the realities of urbanisation and overwhelmed cities confront the Church and her mission.⁹⁹ The Church needs to be well-informed through good quality research. This is so that churches are able to understand and hence able to reach neighbourhoods, cities, and nations to effectively proclaim and demonstrate the gospel.¹⁰⁰

Seminaries are institutions charged with educating religious leaders,¹⁰¹ whether pastors, missionaries, church leaders, or scholars. Social science research is an important aspect of seminary education because it trains the student to access the nature of human mind, society and culture, wider dimensions of church life and the implications of politics and social theory to understand God's creation.¹⁰² By undertaking systematic research, the DMin student assimilates fresh knowledge into existing structures and develops new structures of meaning.¹⁰³ This practical experience is conducted within a safe environment in a controlled and disciplined setting.¹⁰⁴ Even though DMin projects are often designed with a specific context in mind (usually the local church), the wider catholic church also benefits from them.¹⁰⁵ This is because academic research that are relevant and contemporary seeks to expand the body of knowledge by either generating new theory or evaluating existing ones.¹⁰⁶ This stresses the need for seminary to cultivate a research culture, even at entry level programmes as well as faculty level.

Lastly, Richard Davies stresses that the job of the researcher is to find relevant truth and convey it to others in an understandable way.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, research serves a prophetic function. The spiritual gift of prophecy involves both foretelling and forthtelling, demonstrated by prophets speaking to situations primarily by means of warnings and encouragements concerning the future.¹⁰⁸ In a similar fashion, research involves declaring a

⁹⁸ See verse 19 of the English Standard Version.

⁹⁹ Michael D. Crane, *Sowing Seeds of Change: Cultivating Transformation in the City*, Urban Ministry in the 21st Century (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), 18.

¹⁰⁰ John Fuder, *Neighborhood Mapping: How to Make Your Church Invaluable to the Community* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Jennifer H. Peace, "The Role of Theological Seminaries in Increasing Interfaith Cooperation in the United States: The CIRCLE Program of Andover Newton Theological School and Hebrew College," *Journal of College and Character* 12, no. 1 (2011): 2.

¹⁰² Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, xii.

¹⁰³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, xxix.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, xxviii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, xvii.

¹⁰⁶ Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, "Introduction," in *Missiological Research*, xviii.

¹⁰⁷ Davies, *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ J.P. Baker, "Prophecy, Prophets," in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall et al., 3rd ed. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 965-6.

message of truth in reporting current situation – forthtelling, as well as giving recommendations and warnings to guide future actions – foretelling. Therefore, research needs to be undertaken carefully because it is a performance of a sacred task to the Lord and His people, even though it seems to be just an academic exercise in seminary on the surface.

Bibliography

- Baker, J.P. “Prophecy, Prophets.” In *New Bible Dictionary*, edited by I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and D. J. Wiseman, 964–975. 3rd ed. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996.
- Bell, Judith, and Stephen Waters. *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers*. 6th ed. Berkshire, England: McGraw-Hill Education, 2014.
- Bramer, Paul, and Mark Chapman. “Action Research for Doctor of Ministry Project: A Practical Definition.” *The Journal of Christian Ministry* 6, no. 1 (2017): 27–41.
- Brinberg, David, and Joseph Edward McGrath. *Validity and the Research Process*. Newbury Park, Calif.: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1988.
- Crane, Michael D. *Sowing Seeds of Change: Cultivating Transformation in the City*. Urban Ministry in the 21st Century. Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014.
- Davies, Richard E. *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects: An Approach to Structured Observation of Ministry*. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1984.
- Delamont, Sara, Paul Atkinson, and Odette Parry. *Supervising the PhD: A Guide to Success*. Buckingham; Bristol, PA: Open University Press, 1997.
- Denzin, Norman K. *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.
- Easter, John L., and Alan R. Johnson. “Appendix 14: Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis.” In *Missiologial Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 333–336. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- Elliston, Edgar J., ed. *Introduction to Missiologial Research Design*. Pasadena, Calif: William Carey Library, 2011.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. Hachette: HarperCollins Publisher, 2003.
- Fuder, John. *Neighborhood Mapping: How to Make Your Church Invaluable to the Community*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014.
- Gilbert, Martin. “Qualitative and Quantitative Research.” In *Missiologial Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert,

- Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 127–132. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- . “Sampling from a Population.” In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 202–206. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- . “Social Science Resources for Enriching the Literature Review.” In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 36–40. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- . “Statistically Speaking.” In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 219–223. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- . “The Four-Phase Model of Missiological Research.” In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 19–24. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- . “The Nature of Data.” In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 122–126. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- Gilbert, Martin, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis. “Introduction.” In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, xvii–xviii. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- , eds. *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- Gunnarsson, Ronny, Grethe Jonasson, and Annika Billhult. “The Experience of Disagreement between Students and Supervisors in PhD Education: A Qualitative Study.” *BMC Medical Education* 13, no. 134 (2013): 1–8.
- Israel, Mark, and Iain Hay. *Research Ethics for Social Scientists: Between Ethical Conduct and Regulatory Compliance*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006.
- Ives, Glenice, and Glenn Rowley. “Supervisor Selection or Allocation and Continuity of Supervision: PhD Students’ Progress and Outcomes.” *Studies in Higher Education* 30, no. 5 (2005): 535–555.
- Keathley, J. Hampton III. “3. The Law: The First Five Books.” *Bible.Org*. Last modified August 18, 2004. Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://Bible.org/seriespage/3-law-first-five-books>.
- Ladik, Daniel M., and David W. Stewart. “The Contribution Continuum.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36, no. 2 (2008): 157–165.

- Laws, Sophie, Caroline Harper, Nicola Jones, and Rachel Marcus. *Research for Development: A Practical Guide*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2013.
- Lee, Anne, and Rowena Murray. "Supervising Writing: Helping Postgraduate Students Develop as Researchers." *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 52, no. 5 (2015): 558–570.
- Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1985.
- Malick, David. "An Introduction to the Book of Numbers." *Bible.Org*. Last modified June 29, 2004. Accessed December 1, 2018. <https://Bible.org/article/introduction-book-numbers>.
- Manderson, Desmond. "Asking Better Questions: Approaching the Process of Thesis Supervision." *Journal of Legal Education* 46, no. 3 (1996): 407–419.
- Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.
- Moschella, Mary Clark. "Pastoral Ethnography and Doctor of Ministry Education." *The Journal of Christian Ministry* 4, no. 1 (2012): 2–12.
- Mostert, Johan. "Ethical Research with Human Subjects." In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 66–70. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- Peace, Jennifer H. "The Role of Theological Seminaries in Increasing Interfaith Cooperation in the United States: The CIRCLE Program of Andover Newton Theological School and Hebrew College." *Journal of College and Character* 12, no. 1 (2011): 1–7.
- Rance, DeLonn L. "Missiological Research as Worship: A Pneumatological Journey of Discovery." In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 287–294. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.
- Saunders, Mark N. K. "Choosing Research Participants." In *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*, edited by Gillian Symon and Catherine Cassell, 35–52. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2012.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011.
- Shelf, Charles E. "Primary and Secondary Sources." In *Missiological Research: Interdisciplinary Foundations, Methods, and Integration*, edited by Martin Gilbert, Alan R. Johnson, and Paul W. Lewis, 127–132. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2018.

Starcher, Richard L., Leanne M. Dzubinski, and Jamie N. Sanchez. "Rigorous Missiological Research Using Qualitative Inquiry." *Missiology: An International Review* 46, no. 1 (2018): 50–66.

Swinton, John, and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: SCM Press, 2016.