

10-1-2024

Book Review: Social Research Methods: For Students and Scholars of Theology and Religious Studies by Joshua Iyadurai

Regina Manley

Developmental Associates International, manleyrm1@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/gcrj>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Manley, R. (2024). Book Review: Social Research Methods: For Students and Scholars of Theology and Religious Studies by Joshua Iyadurai. *Great Commission Research Journal*, 16(2), 83-85. Retrieved from <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/gcrj/vol16/iss2/10>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Commission Research Journal by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

Book Review

Social Research Methods: For Students and Scholars of Theology and Religious Studies

By Joshua Iyadurai

Marina Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion, 2023

302 pages

US\$28.21

Reviewed by Regina Manley, EdD in Curriculum from Boise State University. She has 39 years of mission experience and Bible storying training (Biblestoryfire.com) and teaches Research Methods with Developmental Associates International.

Today, interdisciplinary research provides a unique opportunity for religious scholars and theologians to engage broader audiences. By incorporating insights from the social sciences, they can innovatively apply theology's unique lens to modern life. However, to maximize their credibility, Joshua Iyadurai contends that these researchers must adopt the "scientific rigor" of the social sciences in their research practices and presentations (xx). To this end, *Social Research Methods* (SRM) is written as a comprehensive guide for students and professors who embark on these interdisciplinary endeavors.

Iyadurai writes with refreshing straightforwardness. This will inspire confidence in the new scholars as they grow in competence during each phase of research. He demystifies what is required in the social science research realm. He highlights the differences between the religious and social science schools of thought and explains where to apply the distinctiveness of each school in the research journey. Then, he provides the information necessary for the researcher to navigate decision-making.

This begins with choosing a topic and research design, continues through investigation, fieldwork, and analysis, and culminates with writing the final report.

The first eight chapters guide the student step-by-step through the research process. I am impressed by the author's clear explanations and concise descriptions. Frequent examples taken from theology and religious studies keep the material familiar to his target audience. The final chapter gives practical advice about the student-advisor relationship. Chapter One explores selecting a topic and has exercises to help narrow one's topic. It covers formulating research questions ranging from qualitative and quantitative to a mixed study perspective. The author speaks to the issues of feasibility, ethics, and researcher bias.

Chapter Two starts with the purpose of the literature review. Iyadurai explains that social research considers information from fieldwork as a primary source of data (21). He instructs how to read for research using the SQR4 method (survey, question, read, recall, review, and relate; 27-35). He also provides a helpful process for taking notes. It is an organizational tool that will serve for future projects. He then covers how to analyze and synthesize the data while deciding whether it is relevant to one's research.

Chapter Three focuses on the interdisciplinary research perspective by reviewing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research strategies. Iyadurai also defines four prominent social research paradigms—postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic.

The next three chapters step through the methodology for each research approach in lucid detail. Chapter Four is about qualitative research, and the next two chapters are about quantitative and mixed methods research. The descriptions enable the students to decide which approach is best for their research. With this understanding, the students can tailor a detailed plan to guide them through the particulars of their chosen research project. I appreciate the author's inclusion of key, related resources at the end of every chapter.

Chapter Seven is about crafting a compelling research proposal. Chapter Eight brings together the details for writing the final thesis or dissertation. Iyadurai tells where chapters in the final report will vary in focus for each discipline or methodology. Then, he finishes with the particulars necessary to write a journal article.

In the final chapter, Iyadurai's experience is most evident. He lists realistic expectations and roles for both students and advisors and then highlights the areas where students are likely to need extra help as they move through each step. He also provides examiners with scaled rubrics

for assessing the quality of a thesis or dissertation that combine social studies and religious studies. This is an unexpected asset for student researchers. They can use this information to evaluate and improve their research and final presentation.

SRM is comprehensive yet imminently practical and a delightful read! It is replete with solid advice and organizational tips. This text should be a go-to resource for those working in interdisciplinary research, particularly for those in the departments of religion, theology, missiology, or cross-cultural studies. It contains valuable guidelines for the new researcher and insights for advisors. I recommend it to the hobbyist as well as the expert with an interest in research methods.