

Systematic Review of Scripture Engagement Research

Sponsored by the *Scripture Engagement Research Initiative* of Dallas International University

This study will provide a comprehensive examination of all known Scripture engagement research and relevant research in related fields to provide fuller understanding of the current thinking. The mixed methodologies employed will give a more nuanced view of the current state of this emerging sub-discipline of missiology.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed methods approach, combining several known approaches to systematic review. It will include an aggregative approach (Hedges in Cooper, et al 2009, 26-27; Siani & Shlonsky 2011, 25-27) that will maximize the sample size to provide an estimate of frequency counts across sampled studies. This systematic review will also include a Bayesian meta-analysis (Raudenbush in Cooper, et al 2009, 305-312; Siani & Shlonsky 2011, 56-58) of quantitative analysis combined with findings from qualitative studies. The study will also employ an integrative approach (Hedges in Cooper, et al 2009, 30-33; Siani & Shlonsky 2011, 27-28) where findings from studies will be analyzed according to various parameters including the cultural context of the study, summaries of findings from majority world researchers compared/contrasted with those of Western researchers and comparing the findings of various studies per the research methodologies employed in each study examined.

Included Studies

This systematic review seeks to include all relevant studies originating from a variety of disciplines, organizations, languages, and sources (Rothstein and Hopewell in Cooper, et al 2009, 103-127). The goal is to include every relevant, quality study that falls within the review criteria for inclusion. Particular attention will be paid to unpublished “grey literature” (Rothstein and Hopewell in Cooper, et al 2009, 105-106). The following sources of material will be included:

Scripture engagement research conducted as part of theses and dissertations

Published Scripture engagement research conducted by field entities, BT organizations, and individual researchers

Internal publications, e.g. “Notes on” series; “Word and Deed,” and others, particularly from other organizations

Published missiological research relevant to various aspects of Scripture engagement (e.g. orality, discovery Bible studies, etc.)

Relevant research from the history of Bible translation

Relevant studies from reception history of the Bible

Relevant studies from the anthropology of missions and the anthropology of Bible translation

Relevant studies presented at various conferences – ASM, BT Conference, EMDC, EMS ISFM, SBL, WWSE, and others

Unpublished studies from various Bible agencies and missions including, ABS, BFBS, Ethnos360, FCBH, IMB, LBT, PBT, Pioneers, SIL, UBS, and others

Research Questions

Of the research questions below, some are focused on aggregative outcomes and other on integrative outcomes. As research is conducted, additional productive research terms will be searched as a part of the review process. These research questions will be made transparent to readers. Additional research questions may be proposed by stakeholders.

In which contexts (culture, religion, sociolinguistic situation, partnering organizations) were studies conducted?

How is Scripture engagement defined in the study?

How is “successful” Scripture engagement defined and measured?

According to the study, what contextual factors contributed to successful Scripture engagement? (A variety of contextual factors will be coded during the review with the potential inclusion of further codes to be explored as they arise from various studies.)

What ministry interventions contributed positively toward successful Scripture engagement? (Similarly, a variety of ministry will be coded during the review with the potential inclusion of further codes to be explored as they arise from various studies.)

What factors inhibited successful engagement with Scripture? (Of course, a variety of factors will be coded during the review with the potential inclusion of further codes to be explored as they arise from various studies.)

How did engagement with Scripture lead to transformation?

How is transformation defined?

How did engagement with Scripture lead to worldview change?

How is worldview and worldview change described?

Were certain strategies or factors found to be significantly more important than others?

Criteria for Inclusion

Transparent criteria for inclusion (and exclusion) of studies will guide the systematic review (Valentine in Cooper, et al 2009, 129-145). The specific criteria have not been set, but potential criteria are likely to include, peer review, primary research, research methodology, sample size, and others criteria.

Analysis of Systematic Review

The entire review will employ an aggregative approach that determines the level of consistency of ideas across the field of Scripture engagement, from a variety of perspectives. Secondly, results will be evaluated to determine if particular researchers (e.g. Western vs non-Western researchers, or researchers from a particular epistemological framework) or particular research methodologies consistently yielded different data from others. We will also conduct a meta-analysis of available quantitative Scripture engagement studies including a Bayesian meta-analysis of quantitative analysis combined with findings from qualitative studies.

Researchers

Jan Surer, PhD

Brandeis University, Waltham, MA. MA and PhD in Comparative History, May 2004 and May 2012
Dissertation: "Religion, Authority, and the Individual: The Russian Orthodox Church and Stundist Sectarianism in Kiev Province, 1870–1917." University of Oxford, Oxford, UK MPhil in Russian and East European Studies, November 1999 Thesis: "Colonel V. A. Pashkov and the Late Nineteenth-Century Protestant Movement in Russia." St. John's College, Annapolis, MD. BA in Philosophy and the History of Mathematics and Science, May 1997. Jan's background as an historian makes her particularly well-suited for evaluation of data on the history of missions / history of Bible translation.

Susan Nivens, MA

Master's degree in Intercultural Studies, Wheaton College. Susan serves as a Scripture engagement consultant for SIL International and has thirty years' experience in a Bible translation projects in Christian contexts in Indonesia. Her MA in missiology provides her with skills to explore the literature from that field.

Rachel Coombs

Rachel is in the final stages of a master's degree in language and culture studies at Dallas International University. She is currently enrolled in the thesis writing course and is compiling an annotated bibliography on existing Scripture engagement studies with SIL. Rachel and her husband have served with SIL for twelve years in non-Christian contexts (Muslim and Hindu) in Indonesia. Rachel would like to participate in the systematic review as the basis for her MA thesis for DIU.

Jessica Page

Jessica is also in the final stages of a master's degree in language and culture studies at Dallas International University. She is currently enrolled in research courses. She has served as a surveyor for SIL International in South Asia in a Hindu context. Jessica would also like to participate in the systematic review as the basis for her MA thesis for DIU.

Bibliography

Cooper, Harris, Larry V. Hedges, and Jeffery C. Valentine. 2009. *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Jesson, Jill. 2011. *Doing your literature review: traditional and systematic techniques*. London: Sage Publications.

Saini, Michael and Aron Shlonsky. 2012. *Systematic Synthesis of Qualitative Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.