**GD 730 Project Proposal**

**Viv Grigg, Rev 5.3; VG Oct 28, 2024**



## Independent Research and Creativity

PhD theses or projects are independent research. So a professor cannot give you exact details as to how to go about it. You have been given resources in the class to enable you to work that out. If you think as a graduate, that each detail will be defined in a legal format by the professor, think again. That would be in violation of the generic concept of independent research.

This document summarizes what we have been discussing and what you have been developing step by step. However, don't just fill in the blanks on this page as you did for your project plan; instead, write this as a complete formal academic paper.

This will become the basis for the first three chapters of your thesis, so use it to significantly complete those and parts of the later chapters.

In the proposal, you are looking forward. In the thesis, you will look back at work done, so it will be modified, but you will have broken the back of that part of your thesis.

Keep in mind the answers to: What is independent research: How independent will you be? Who will assist you, supervise you? Fund you? For whom are you writing? Who will execute the recommendation from your research? 

## Mechanics

**Style and Template:** Use a good word template with three levels of H1, H2, H3 headings and Ideally two columns of different sizes. Consider that every page needs to look good, so a graphic per page and two column pages might be ideal. This is not 1980. We are into a graphical age.

**Front Page and Proposal title**. Formulate a title that creatively encapsulates the research project. Look carefully at the layout of front pages of theses. The title is central. H1 Format. Underneath is your name.

At the center bottom is:

**“Submitted in requirements for**

**GD730 Qualitative Research Methods,**

**William Carey International University.**

**Month of submission.”**

Supervisor(s) can be listed here or on a separate page inside. Add a graphic. Why not? it enhances the readers interest (but make sure it is interesting and not squished. Format all graphics well).

**Index:** Use the word commands that format your index based on the H2, H3, H4 heading selections****

## Chapter 1: Introduction to Topic or Issue

Start with a **story or hook** that draws people into the awe of your question. What community problem or issue are you interested in? How did you decide to investigate it? What do you *already know* about it? Your background as a basis for writing on this issue.

**Define the question**. Redefine it as a problem. Identify sub-problems. Why is it essential to resolve this issue? Every word must be weighed. No extras. Two variable and a linkage, plus the context.

**Variables**. What are some of the key elements, factors, or variables that affect the phenomenon to be investigated? How do they relate to one another to explain what’s going on? Your question or problem should only connect the dependent and the independent variable. Anything else is subsidiary.

Diagram these, with a correct label on the diagram (and on all diagrams, pictures) Fig x: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and a description underneath linking it to the logic in the text.

**Expanded Research question.** What *more* do you want to know or understand about the topic or issue? Formulate a single research question clearly and concisely in one sentence. [Remember: it must be do-able—not too broad or too narrow. Could you actually answer the question given constraints of time, access to settings/informants, and language ability?] Refine your question to two variables and the relationship between them. Explain it to some friends a few times until you get it to a point where they stop laughing at you because they finally understand. Try writing it as a hypothesis, then convert it back to a question. Exclude all irrelevant details and sidetracks. No methodology. You may include the target group, but consider if your question is about a bigger issue for which they are an exploratory sample. Describe why you selected these variables. Are they indicators of wider variables/issues? If so, how good an indicator?

**Community relevance:** Explain *why* this research is timely and relevant. How does it address a concern voiced by your church, community groups or organizations? Who will even read this thesis? Who will make decisions based on it? Describe the organization(s) you will be working with.

**Action-reflection Theological Framework:** What theological questions arose when you encountered this issue? How does this fit with a *Transformational Conversation* approach? Or another contextual theological approach, such as the Pastoral cycle. How will you analyze the urban conversation in relationship to the Biblical conversation on this issue? Will you simply give a sense of Biblical perspectives on this issue? Or develop a full Transformational Conversation between the Biblical/theological data and the urban issue? The end result of a Transformational Conversation is new action. What are the projected actions as the result of this study? (Review the document: Developing a Transformational Conversation Process by Katie Gard in Unit 1).

**Assumptions or Presuppositions:** the above theological perspectives may simply be part of your assumptions or biases. There may be a number of other assumptions. Identify them and how they affect your research.

**Population and Locations:** What *population* (group of people) do you hope to gather information from in order to answer your research question? At what *locations* or *study locations* do you intend to make contact with group members? How do you hope to gain access to this population and research setting?

**Description of Your Document:** This shows your logic

* In chapter 1, I will…
* In chapter 2, we examine

**Acknowledgements:** Who has assisted you, supervised you, reviewed your work etc.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Using APA 7 in Zotero in Word formulate your references as you go. They will feed into you Command at the end of the document to create a list of references. The review will contain both a discussion of literature related to your topic, its context, and literature related to your choice of methodology. In each section identify

**Textual resources.** These will immediately begin to feed into your reference listat the end of the paper, list the relevant literature (e.g. websites, scholarly articles, book chapters, texts) that you have reviewed to date that will help frame your field study. (Provide full citations, including author(s), title, publisher, publication date, and/or URL, along with the number of relevant pages.). This will be an APA style –best done in Zotero or Endnote. It most likely should be an annotated bibliography, though that is not necessary in a Masters thesis.

## Chapter 3: Theological Framework

See Katie Gards article ontransformational Conversations

## Chapter 4: Methods

(This chapter will convert from your proposal (where you are looking ahead) to your thesis (where you are reviewing what you have done).What methods will you use to gather information, and in what order? (Consider materials collection and reading, a community internship, local event participation, observations, informant interviewing, etc.).

Give a rationale for the use of this method, referencing the literature (This could come in your literature review also). Why will you not used alternative methods? Why is this most likely to give data tht people see as valid compared with other methods.

 If interviews are to be used, explain whether they will be “structured,” “semi-structured,” or “unstructured.” Then attach your pre-set list of questions or an interview schedule with suggested themes as an appendix. (this does not have to be completely developed for this course, simply develop it as far as is reasonable given your esxisting understandings

Describe the types of data to be collected (e.g. fieldnotes from observations, audio recordings or transcripts of interviews, video tapes). Estimate the time needed to set up, do and then analyze each one and put this into your Gantt Chart below. Then go back and simplify this down.

##  Chapter 5: Data Analysis & Theoretical Development Plan

Quantify the time for analysis of each set of data. What time and cost will transcription take from the local language? Include in your Gannt chart

**Validity:** Describe how validity is determined with this kind of research.Do an initial statement as to how you will analyse and the viability of this process and representativeness of your sample. Will it give you a valid data set? How can you describe that to others? Etc.

**Research guide and assistants.** Do you hope to gather information from people whose language you don’t speak? If so, what persons have agreed to assist you, either as a project guide or as bilingual research assistant(s)? Estimate the time they will need with you and the people and the time they will need translating documents or tape recordings. How will you train them in ethics.

**Ethical considerations.** Attach your completed Training in Ethics. Describe the kind of relationship you intend to have with participants? How will you protect the rights of informants? Will they risk any stress or harm by participating in the research? If so, what safeguards will minimize that risk? How will you obtain consent from the agency that controls access to vulnerable populations (like street children, orphans, and sex workers)? How will you then safeguard the confidentiality and voluntary participation of informants.

Your data needs to be stored for seven years. Where will you do this. Add as an appendix your certification that you have done the WCIU Ethics in rResearch training, plus, a place to attach the sign off on your research from the IRB once that is submitted (This is only your first run through, so we will not submit that in this course).

Describe the organization you will be working with. How does this relationship affect your independence? Potentially bias results (and how you will mitigate this)? How will they own this research? Use this research? Decide on the recommendations of this research? Add a place in your appendix for a copy of the contract with them.

**Permissions:** Have you obtained the appropriate governmental or local University permissions.



## Chapter 6: Business and Funding Proposal

**Your objective is to develop theory, not to develop a business.** But along the way it can be of great asset to an existing organization in expanding its footprint**.**

**What will be the outcomes of your research that will produce ROI for any partners or a spin off business?**

**Research products (outputs).** What tangible products will result from your research? (Possibilities include a thesis, professional report, scholarly manuscript, magazine article, documentary video, book of sketches, or handbook of some kind.). You will need to make a presentation back to the leadership of your partner organization. Will that be by PowerPoint, Prezzi, YouTube or a written report or more than one? What magazines would you aim to publish for? What time frame is needed to write, edit and then proofread? What outside help can you get for the last two tasks? If it is an WCIU thesis you will need to follow through the process of binding with the library. If it is a project this is not necessary. What will be the timeframes and costing of all of these?

**Academic Product - Identify the WCIU Process and Timelines for Thesis Submissions and Review.** (these will be developed further in other courses in detail. Add these into your timetable. Double them as “nothing can go wrong, go wrong, go wrong…”. Faculty can be travelling; be on sabbatical, you get your thesis back 5 times for revisions; you fall sick with leprosy; your wife has her ninth child; your work promotes you to your level of incompetence; your house gets flooded…

**Community Action Outcomes:** Action research is inadequate if it simply ends up with a document. Given possible results of your study what are possible projections for utilizing this process for mobilizing to action? In what ways might the study benefit either the research participants or the community organization working on their behalf? How will this be communicated back to them? What kind of press release from your study might both include them and help them publicize elements you research? What will be the costing of this? What action steps are likely to come from this study? How will you mesh the data and analysis into generating a community or church lead action plan?

**Timetable:** List the specific tasks for carrying out the project, with estimated ‘begin’ and completion dates. It is simplest to insert this as a GANNT chart so you can juggle the various interconnections in a graphical format that communicates simply and update over time. Presume you will have an assistant or several and for many, a translator(s). That is not a violation of independent research, or ownership of your research, though you may need to define exactly how they are assisting you.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RESEARCH TASK** | **BEGIN** | **COMPLETE** | **HRS** | **RESPONSIBLE** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Budget:** List potential items needed to complete the project, along with cost estimates for each item (Hint: If you do this in Excel and link it, you don't have to redo it each time you update it, nor do the arithmetic). How will, you, the community, your supporters, the local church fund this into a viable action process? If you are able to raise funding from US foundations or business groups, then this needs to be expanded into a 1-2-page letter of inquiry.

Copy this Project Budget into Excel, rework it then insert the excel into your proposal

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | **COST** |
| Professional services: e.g. language coach, transcriber $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Research: e.g. cybercafé charges, text purchase, duplicating $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Research assistants (translator-interpreter) $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Payments to informants $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Supplies $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Equipment: e.g. digital recorder, camera, laptop, sketchbook $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Transportation $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Housing $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Consultation Costs $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Thesis Presentation to Community Organization/Church $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  |
| Thesis Publication (formal) How many copies to whom? $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  |
| Photography / Maps $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Mobilization $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Other $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| **TOTAL $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |

## Bibliography

Use Zotero to format. (Double-check three times for all the punctuation, correct names, etc. Professors are not paid for correcting Bibliographies. They just send them back).

## Appendices:

Add these with H2 headings that show up in your index.

1. **Attach your research tools:** Whatever approach you have designed, whether questionnaires, case studies, focus groups, or participant-observation, attach your tools to the proposal and your planned processes for analysis of these. (this is your first run-through, so the quality of these will not be evaluated, simply that you have begun thinking them through). If working in multiple languages you will need translations (Do not do them now, but add in a space for these.
	1. **Surveys**
	2. **Consent forms**
	3. **Questionnaires**
	4. **Focus Group Design**
2. **Ethics Training Certificate**
3. **IRB Permissions**
4. **Contracts**

## Beyond Chapters: Formatting Quality:

Once this is together, go back and review it with:

* A grammar check. Among other things this will help you reduce your sentence length.
* Spelling check.
* If the bibliography is not done properly within the APA7 framework, it will be sent straight back to you, as I will not edit bibliography details, you have Endnote or Zotero to do so. N.b. The APA quotations in the text generally need page numbers, unless you are quoting a whole book or a whole concept.
* Page numbers are always the first thing you turn on when opening a Word. Bottom right.
* Have you used Level 1,2,3 heading styles consistently? Are your headings interesting or simply boring descriptions?
* Is each paragraph a separate idea, with the idea clearly stated in the first sentence and the last sentence links it to the next? Paragraphs generally should not more than six lines long.
* Does your introduction interest people to engage the project?
* A picture, graphics or style sheet all help turn a boring proposal into an interest-generating document.

## Revise! Revise! Revise!

* Now you have completed the document, go back through and aim to reduce it down 10-20% in size, by shortening sentences, eliminating extra phrases. ( in this class do it only once. But for your final proposal likely 5-7 times)

The diagram in Appendix A might help envisage the hierarchy of excellence needed.

## Appendix A: Theological Framework

# Developing a *Transformational Conversations* Research Process

## Student Thesis / Research Guide

The *Transformational Conversations* process of research is present across various disciplines:

* It’s termed *Participatory-Action Research (PAR)* in Education or Development theory,
* *Case Study Methodology* in business research (for those focused on social entrepreneurship),
* In Theology, it is often called *Grounded Research*,
* Or yet again some aspects of the Catholic *Pastoral Cycle* also give some simpleresearch processes are included in the concept of *Transformational Conversations.*

Read the original papers on Transformational Conversations

These can be reduced to a step-wise framework for research that can be mapped out as follows:



**1. Intentional Presence.** First is your locus among the people. Your obedience to the incarnate one. Be wholly in the community you wish to work with, fully participative in learning their ways, concerns, and delights. Attune yourself to the community’s assets, and needs, as they perceive them.

**2.** **Community Partners.** At this point you begin to identify who you are working with in the community, be it church, community organization, or NGO. For your research will lead to collective action, so at the outset you need to be embedded with a cluster of relationships to those likely to take significant action. *Aim to work with a grassroots neighborhood or ‘people’s organization’ that is made up of people in the community, who have organized themselves to work on behalf of the community. (In some cases, an outside organization may have come in and gathered leaders in the community around a common cause.)*



**3. Define an Issue.** Meet *with* your chosen *community partners* to learn what issues they’re interested on working on. What discontinuity *(or glitch in the system)* marks the conversations of the people among whom you dwell? The poignant experience begins to define your research topic. Be sure that the topic/idea is coming not so much from you, but from the voiced concerns of the organization with whom you’ve chosen to partner for this project. *(This is to ensure that you’re serving a need that the community wanted to work on anyway, and that they will have the drive to continue on with it even after you have left, because they’ll feel it’s “our” project, not just yours. The point is to produce real community benefit, not just a paper.)*

**4. Preliminary Research.** How has this issue been addressed -- by our community and others?

**a. Get the Local Back-Story.** Ask your community partners what has already been done by locals in response to this issue. What was positive/negative about their approach? It may have been intuitive. It may have been sudden, a wave of violence. It may have been the imposition of some foreign concept of what needs to happen, like rescuing girls from the slave trade through legal cases funded form a cluster of New York lawyers wishing to good. It may be an NGO seeking to fulfil its foreign donors’ expectations. A response, perhaps largely un-thought-through. This may be in the history of the people or evolving yet today. 

**b. Get a Wider Perspective.** Given that the issue remains unsolved, the local response method evokes questions, uncertainties about the nature of the issue. See if you can pinpoint what shortcoming you want to research in your literature review, or where you might look to find other communities that have addressed this same dilemma more successfully?

**5. Begin your Literature Review.**

* How that issue is dealt with elsewhere?
* What’s the conversation **across the city** about the issue (a local literature search is important here) ...and across the **global** literature?
* As you get at some underlying root causes of your issue, your literature research begins to focus on the social or the economic or the educational, etc.

**6. Engage the Theological Conversation.** Begin with the preaching that occurs in the local communities and the talk among leaders -- how are these aligned (or unaligned) with a Kingdom response? What new ideas, rooted in Scripture, would you introduce to the community? Or how can you take something that’s already being preached, and apply it to this situation? 

**7. Define your Research Question.** What approach to addressing the issue are your community partners interested in investigating further and trying out? How would it need to be **adjusted to fit your cultural context** and specific needs? What **gaps in the literature** require you to investigate or solve your specific, contextualized issue in a new, creative way?

**8. Further Research.** You then have two necessary lines of research that deepen your knowledge:

(1) Anthropological / social / economic / development / political research (City Conversation)

(2) Biblical and theological research (Theological Conversation)

You have to cut these processes two ways:

(a) From among the people,

(b) And from among the global or citywide conversation on the same issues. 

Thus you end up with a four-fold matrix. *(See diagram at right.)*

**9. Applying Theory to Contextualized Action.** Underlying these four dynamics is the discussion as to action. How does the theology predict new actions? How does the literature predict it? How do the social science perspectives predict it?

**10. Involve Community Partners.** The tricky thing is that action research depends on the actors. And you yourself are likely not the actor. You may be the catalyst, the interpreter, the theologian, etc. Be sure your *community partners* define the parameters & significance of your questions, of possible further action, of the range of Biblical interpretation that fit the situation.

Your research then becomes a servant to the development, or expansion of action into new structural forms. When effective, and accepting of well thought out issues by/with ‘insiders,’ this is wonderfully motivating. When narrowly defined by ‘outsiders,’ (often by foreign donor mandates), this can be totally frustrating. It is wise early on to consider these limits. Your research is but a tool for decision-makers. They face many other pressures, so considering early on how it flows with structural outcomes will save you from a lot of angst.

Keeping frequent and close correspondence with your community partners will also guide you in defining processes in your research and in upfront setting up communications pathways for your research such that the optimal decisions are made by the community or organization.

**11. Your Final Research Report.** *What will you need to produce, publish?* All you prepare to present, you have to do at a dual level. *(Your results should be accessible/understandable/relevant to two different audiences:)* (1) At the level of story-telling in the community and (2) at the level of the academe to earn a masters research project or thesis with a written documentation of your process at an appropriate academic level that contributes to the expansion of knowledge.

**12. Equip Your Community for Action.** Plan on presenting your results to your community partners. This public presentation is what you will leave with the community to help spur them toward the next steps in the co-designed action plan. It is separate from the more theoretical/technical academic piece you prepare as your ‘thesis’ / ‘research report.’ 

Spurring this “new action” completes the cycle of the *Transformational Conversations* research process.



Appendix B: Quality of Writing Pyramid. By Shane Smith • Posted in [Image Works](http://phdthesisproposal.wordpress.com/category/image-works/) http://phdthesisproposal.wordpress.com/category/image-works