Cecil Thompson

Omega Graduate School

SR 958-42

Prof. Cathy Hughes, PhD

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1. **Introduction**. The main goal of the graduate program at OGS is to help students develop the skills necessary to tailor their professional backgrounds and callings to Christian missions of social change. Within that framework, SR 958-42, is geared toward training student in how to harvest source-material and arrange them into categories that are brought together under the cap of a narrative which fits within the student’s chosen dissertation topic. As such, the course, SR 958-42 appears to be perfectly situated between the SR 852 Dissertation Foundation and SR 958-52 Design and Methodology II.

In an effort to get SR 958-42 up and running, the professor used the residency

 component to lay out the schema for the entire course, while providing the students

with an overall understanding of what the course is about and where it is supposed to factor in the larger scheme of the ultimate objective of the research program at OGS.

In the residency program on Zoom, the professor opened up the pathway through his explanation of the four assignments forward, toward the development of what I think of as the first of the last three chapters in the OGS book on advanced scholarly research writing. At this point, I feel as though I am emerging from SR 998-52 with the comfort in which I feel that it need not be restricted to the specific role it plays in the final dissertation goal of the OGS academic curricula which is focused on laying down the foundation for the end game in the research methodology sequence. It is a course that could fit comfortably alongside discipline in respect to research writing.

1. **Personal Growth**: From the inception, it was made clear that the chief goal of the course was for student to develop an ability to determine the viability of their research topics right from the start and to learn the prevailing methods as well as to develop their own unique method of building a large enough reservoir of the sources out there relating to the topic he or she has in mind. In this venture, the word, “How” becomes less meaningful as a question than it is as an action word. For, from the start, it “how” must be treated as the “how” of determining whether the topic you have chosen is one worth pursuing. And second, it is the “how” of formulating a way to verify whether there is a plenitude of sources available for your research, under your chosen topic. The system you use and/or develop should be one that will help you further the goal of writing an acceptable dissertation. it should also be a system whose process can be repeated in the future.

 Fortunately, I came into this course already primed from SR 852 with the essential tools in the form of a purpose, a problem, a research topic, a thesis, and a main hypothesis. With those tools, the training I already had in how to search for “topic-viability” had been developed through the usual channel of scribbling down a list of “keywords” and putting them into search engines such as “Google Scholar”, then checking to see if a large enough number of related sources exists in that area of research. While that endeavor had been sharpened by that process with the use of keywords, in SR 852, I have found in SR 958-42, that part of the process was, for me, a necessary jumping-off place for assessing the “viability” of my research topic. Because, to me the keyword-process, along with the function it serves in establishing the viability of my topic-choice by showing that I had plenty to choose from, had opened a door into a place whereby I would be able to select a first tranche of sources most closely related to my topic—sources from which I would beable to develop a mechanism for harvesting other sources.

From thence, I treated the first small bulk of sources as a small pool from which I would be able to mine the reference that are tacked on to the end of each journal article or book. And then, I would harvest each source for more sources from every reference in each list of references. In this way I would continue to grow topic relevant sources from each bundle of references in a sort of exponential way. In this system of source-harvesting from reference list to references lists, I would also get to harvest “instruments” that were being applied to hypotheses in ways similar to mine.

In this course, I also found that it was tremendously helpful to write down a list of sub-topics into short two or three-word phrases and assign some kind of identification to keep each cluster of related references that belong to the same group or sub-group together in my development of a storyboard. With this approach, all I needed to do was to number or alphabetize the sources groups according to the matching sub-topic category to which they belong.

Historically, I would have used index cards for that kind of cluster-separation of sources I had done. With this system of source-harvesting from references and cluster arrangements, there was no longer a need for index cards as in the past.

1. **Reflective Entry**: As a NYC high school teacher of mathematics, I have come to realize that the power of the Nth degree of a variable through a logarithmic function may be used to giving meaning to processes which are ordinarily very unmathematical. From the educator’s viewpoint, one of the ways we work to open up students’ understanding of the enigmatic nature of a thing or concept, not too commonly known, is to, not just compare it to something similar that is more well known in that particular student-community (affective instruction), but to contrast it to another well-known thing or concept that is very unlike it. For that reason, it makes sense that the teacher would sometimes ask the student to “contrast and compare” things. The teachers frequently rely upon figures of speech such as simile, ironies, oxymorons, and the likes, in order to open up the students’ understanding of new knowledge and skills. By such means, we are able to contextualize my source-mining system of harvesting sources through end-page reference lists as described above. When we look at in the context of mathematics education, we are better able to appreciate the value of this “source mining system” in the way that we can compare and contrast it to the concept of “exponential growth”.

We begin with a single journal article that is perfectly aligned with the “topic-choice” the investigator wishes to research. If that single article has 10 references, and one of those references is selected, that single reference is potentially a journal article or book with a whole slew of other references attached to it. In the meantime, each of the other nine remaining references at the end of the first article can then be mined in similar fashion as that done to the first reference. If every reference of every article is mined in a similar way, the growth of the number of articles related to the topic should begin to seem more like a kind “logarithmic expansion”.

The mathematical implication of this is that the process could reasonably be stated as a function in the form of log10 = X. If expressed in terms of exponential growth, it would look like y = 10 x . But, in reality, we know that despite the resemblance between the mathematical example and my proposed “source-mining system” (SMS), the logarithmic prediction of an “exponential growth” system always promises an infinite harvest of values. Yet, inversely, what we do know is that the supply of sources related to a research-topic is always finite since many of the references will be repeat-references from article to article. Therefore, while my SMS method of harvesting references closely resembles a “logarithmic expansion”, it is not. But what we can call it is a “quasi logarithmic expansion”.

1. **Future Expectations**: To me, the promise of the OGS doctoral program is that the student should succeed if he completes all the requirements over time. For me there are drawbacks.  For programs such as the PhD program at OGS, one needs good health and time. Although I have neither, I am determined to succeed. I can remember that in 2017, during the on campus residency part of the program I got sick in one of Dr. Ward's classes and had to leave the room so as not to be completely disruptive. In recent years, I have passed out a few times but that has gotten less frequent, or I may even have gotten over that part of my illness altogether. I have not passed out since 2019. Despite the fact that I now have complications from a recent proctectomy, and the ongoing issues with the multiple myeloma, I have had and still have very good medical care and I have come a long way. In addition to these facts, I am also doing overtime—in terms of age. I do not have the stamina I would like to have. I have tons of doctor appointments and I get Chemo once per month. But regardless, I believe that God wants me to complete this program and I will continue to put one foot in front of the other as long as He continues to pinch hit for me. Right now, I am permitted to go at a slower pace than the other students because I have on file an ADA exception with Dr. McClane.
2. **Conclusion**: I found SR 958-42 to be an invaluable course for students who need to learn how to validate their research topics and how to collect and organize sources into related groups for setting up the subdivisions of Chapter II of the dissertation. To this end, I have created a system I call the “source mining-system” (SMS) for harvesting a large number of suitable sources for the research topic. In adapting the system to mathematics, I utilized the concept of exponential growth in comparison and contrast to my SMS exponential growth method. At present, my progress is slow because of the health issues but I believe that my ADA status as OGS is great in that it has been allowing me to work at a slower pace than normal. Even so, I am satisfied that I am still comfortably situated in the hunt.
3. In this course I have found it most difficult to organize the large number of sources I gathered into a storyboard.
4. Years ago, my daughter was in her first physics class at the famous Bronx High School of Science. I wondered if I needed to get my friend, the physics teacher at my school, to tutor her. So, I asked her if she was finding the physics hard and if she needed help. Her response was, “Nothing is hard! some things just ain’t easy!” It took me a few weeks to fully understand what she meant. Now! That exactly is my answer to this question.
5. The whole thing clicked for me when I developed the SMS method of source harvesting.
6. I had originally planned to collect my data directly twelfth graders in a South Bronx NYC DOE high school. But because of ethical issues concerning the collection of data from children, I am thinking that my “Letter of Informed Consent” that is normally submitted to the NYC DOE for permission will have to be directed toward the 12th grade student record (population) from the guidance department in the target school, rather than through direct contact with my target-population.