Research Design and Methodology III

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Professor

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**Course Learning Journal**

**Introduction**

The purpose of SR 958-52 is to equip doctoral students at OGS to develop and defend a research design and determine the appropriate methodology for creating a research study. This includes the following essential elements and course outcomes:

1. Evaluating the criteria for ethical research with human subjects.
2. Determining the appropriate sampling and recruitment techniques.
3. Delineating the process of data collection and analysis using appropriate software.
4. Developing an outline for conducting a dissertation Literature Review.

SR 958-52 is one of two courses for Core 5 that builds the conceptual framework and the research methodology for the submission of the Dissertation Prospectus. For this specific course, Dr. McClane gave his approval for this researcher to write a concept paper toward completing the qualitative dissertation instead of using a fictional study to accomplish the above learning objectives. Writing up a concept paper provided a “real-time” experience to think through the process of designing and developing a qualitative dissertation proposal. The alignment of these course objectives toward the goal of completing the dissertation provided a strong incentive for me to learn the essential elements built into SR 958-52.

**Personal Growth**

The personal growth that I experienced in doing the work of this course came from drilling down into the details of the ethical criteria of the research design, the conceptual framework of the Literature Review, and the challenges of aligning the research question with the appropriate qualitative research method. The specificity of consulting with the executive leaders at Ashley Furniture brought a lot of clarity about the needed safeguards and ethical standards that would provide the psychological safety to share openly in an information-rich interview. I could also see the importance of creating an interview guide that would help manage and build upon the relational power that I would bring to the interactive interview process. Writing up the fictional study would have been more difficult to visualize the ethical and procedural challenges that the actual case study would provide.

The sampling and recruiting process also became clearer and more actionable. My intention is to conduct “purposeful sampling” to get thick, rich descriptions that would provide substantive results. Since my research question is on how transformational learning has impacted the growth and development of leaders at Ashley Furniture, I want to interview those participants who were fully engaged in the experiential learning that took place in the Life Legacy Cohorts. The developmental readings for this course were very helpful in understanding the linkage between purposeful sampling and getting the results of the qualitative research being investigated. Purposeful sampling will be essential when my research is focused on how deep change and transformation occurs through the process of experiential learning.

Another important area of growth for this researcher was developing the Venn Diagram as a preliminary outline for the Literature Review. Working up a Venn Diagram was an effective way for me to think through the major subject areas involved with my research and then building a conceptual framework for the dissertation. The overlapping circles provide a visual way to both include and delimit the vast amount of literature that could be used in reviewing and analyzing the information related to my research. This researcher wanted to focus on the most relevant subject matter and peer-reviewed articles that would inform the research question. I chose three streams of literature that would be critical to the fulfilling the purpose of my study: Interpersonal Neurobiology, Transformative Learning, and the field of Leader Development. My focus will be on the development of the character and capacity of the leader in contrast to the development of leadership skills and competencies.

Another way that I have used the Venn Diagram is to see the relationship between one subject area and another and how one circle might be correlated with another. For example, in the overlap between transformative learning and interpersonal neurobiology, Adult Development might be a beneficial source of knowledge and research for the dissertation. Another overlap between transformative learning and leader development might involve Narrative Psychology. The untold stories of executive leaders who have grown through the facilitation of the Life Legacy Cohorts will need to be analyzed and interpreted from the information-rich interviews. I plan to consult with my dissertation committee to validate the accuracy and completeness of the Venn Diagram that I developed. Writing this concept paper on a real-time qualitative case study was very helpful in the process of developing an outline for the Literature Review.

**Reflective Entry**

One of the reasons that I came back to the Omega Graduate School was to master the literature in my professional field of Executive Leader Development. I have read widely on many subjects that are a concern to my clients, but I have not systematically developed the knowledge and expertise required for a Literature Review. Neither have I performed doctoral level research that would support the models and methods that I use to catalyze the growth and development of executive leaders. My commitment to complete the Ph.D. will provide me with the structure and support to master the field of transformative leader development and produce a dissertation case study based on the growth of high-capacity executive leaders in a large, complex organization. Documenting the qualitative results of how transformative learning can develop the character and capacity of executive leaders will be a very valuable asset to my consulting business.

One of my concerns that surfaced through this study is how much the executive coaching and leader development field rely upon transmissive education. The media has become the message for many popular influencers, writers, and speakers. Podcasts are plentiful and “proprietary” models of leadership training are ubiquitous. One of the ways that I have differentiated my coaching and consulting work from the popular trade offerings has been through experiential and transformative ways of learning. Many leaders have shared with me how valuable their growth and development has been as compared to the normal slate of leadership workshops that they have been exposed to. I want to address this important gap in the leader development field through a comprehensive literature review and completing a qualitative dissertation research design based on a high-profile corporate case study.

**Conclusion**

Both SR 958-52 and COM 968-QDA have prepared me well for the next phase of my professional development. I have always been a high-level practitioner, but at this stage of my career, I need to meet the challenge of becoming a *scholar-practitioner*. This is the main reason that I came to OGS—to be equipped through social research to be a world-changer. I continue to be blessed with remarkable opportunities to develop, equip, and resource transformational leaders in both ministry and marketplace organizations. My desire is to catalyze a movement of psychologically integrated and spiritually mature Christian leaders who can reproduce themselves in the lives of other leaders. Organic missional movements require the multiplication of transformational spiritual leaders, and that is the legacy that I want to leave when my work on earth is done.

Jack:

This Course Learning Journal clearly indicates that your returning to OGS has been very beneficial! I am so glad that both the Stats course and the RDM course have further equipped you and successfully situated you to enter into the dissertation phase!

I am so glad that the “Concept paper” was instrumental in providing clarity for your going forward. Looking back on it, I am so thankful that you were able to suggest it. That now allows me to be open to the idea of where it might work best for future qualitative researchers.

Additionally, it sounds like the Venn diagram exercise was helpful in conceptualizing your conceptual framework for your lit review, and it was helpful in your seeing potential secondary areas of overlap that might be important for you to be aware of as you are coding your interviews.

Self-efficacy in graduate studies relates to how the student sees themselves being successful each step of the way. It is clear from this Course Learning Journal that you have seen yourself grow in particular areas related to your own status as a Christian scholar-practitioner!

Thank you for taking the time to articulate your journey in this Course Learning Journal!

May God bless you as you progress in the dissertation journey now!

Dr. Curtis D. McClane, Professor of Leadership Studies