

PHD RESEARCH

**Exploring a Hybrid Framework of Design Thinking and Pluralistic Counselling:
How Does It Affect Individual Responses to Wicked Problems?**

Information Letter

Executive Summary

Mr Zern Liew, a Murdoch University PhD researcher, seeks to work alongside a problem-solving team addressing a Wicked Problem in an organisation. This can be changing/improving systems and processes, interpersonal interactions, communications, disruption response, or proactive innovation.

WHAT. The researcher will facilitate your problem-solving team to use a novel Hybrid Framework. This Framework combines the evidence-based practices of Design Thinking and Pluralistic Counselling. The researcher has decades of consulting experience plus Design, Business, and Counselling qualifications.

WHO. The researcher is seeking 7-10 participants on an organisational problem-solving team. They should have varied job roles in a Perth-based business or organisation (that is not a charity, university, or management/innovation consultancy). Participation is voluntary and unpaid.

HOW. The researcher will work alongside your team, from exploring the problem to determining the most appropriate solution. The work will be highly collaborative, inclusive, respectful, and tailored to your organisation and team. The researcher will interview and observe participants and contribute to the problem-solving work. This research is not an evaluation of the organisation or individuals.

WHY. The research seeks to understand how individuals using the Hybrid Framework in a real-life context affects their capacity to respond to uncertainty and complex problems. Your organisation may gain a more innovative and practical response to your Wicked Problem. Participants may gain greater awareness of their problem-solving capacity and experience new techniques and methods.

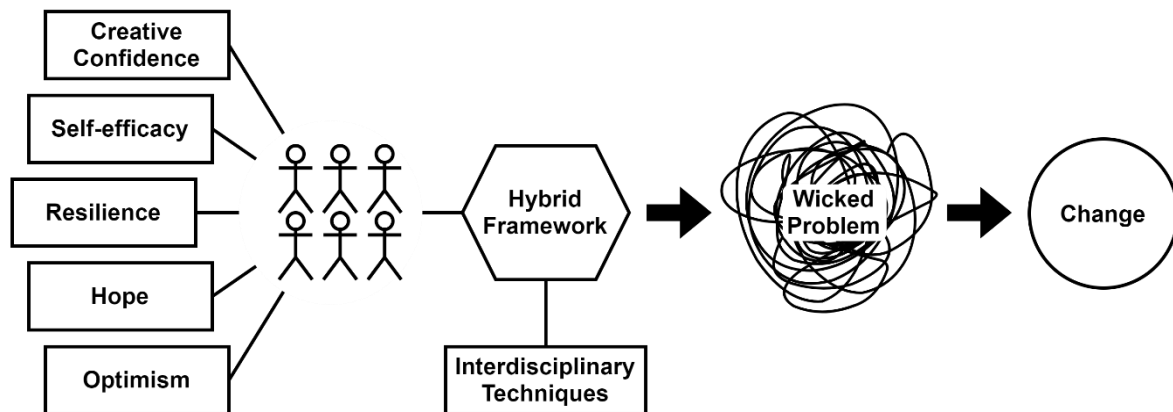
WHEN. A project starting anytime between February and August 2024, that will run for an estimated 12 weeks, working 2-3 days a week. These are estimated figures. The research will work with you to set up a mutually appropriate arrangement. The intention is to see the entire problem-solving process through to a solution.

More information and details regarding this research are available on request should you be interested in participating.

About this Research

Aim

This research is exploratory in nature. The intention is to discover how using the Hybrid Framework may affect individual self-beliefs of creative confidence, self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and optimism.



These characteristics affect how individuals respond to uncertainty and complex problems. They are malleable and will vary across individuals. They are not used to judge whether an individual is good/bad, right/wrong, or better/worse. The researcher wants to understand each participant's subjective experience of using the Hybrid Framework and how they perceive their capacity to respond to complex problems.

Participation Key Activities

- Participants and the researcher will work collaboratively on the organisation's Wicked Problem.
- The problem-solving work will follow the Hybrid Framework process (facilitated by the researcher) and use various techniques.
- Participants and the researcher will collaboratively decide on the most appropriate goals, tasks, activities, and techniques.
- Participants will attend four interviews with the researcher. After each interview, participants will confirm the resulting transcripts. In total, these interviews may take up to 4.5 hours.
- When working alongside participants, the researcher will gather data by asking questions and making observations. Temporary recordings will be made to augment notetaking and produce interview transcripts.

Potential Benefits

Due to the nature of Wicked Problems, these benefits cannot be guaranteed.

Possible benefits to the organisation include:

- Apply an evidence-based problem-solving framework, with facilitation, to your Wicked Problem.
- Increase the likelihood of gaining innovative perspectives and a practical outcome.

Possible benefits to individual participants:

- Access semi-structured guidance to reflect on and gain greater awareness of individual capacity when facing uncertainty and complex problems.
- Learn a new problem-solving framework and experience various interdisciplinary techniques.

Possible benefits to knowledge creation:

- Help contribute new knowledge that addresses gaps in Design Thinking, Pluralistic Counselling, and Organisational Development research.
- Help improve our collective ability to respond to the Wicked Problems we face today and in the future.

Potential Risks

Wicked Problems are a mix of uncertainty, contradictions, divergent requirements, and diverse stakeholders. Individuals may experience some situational/momentary anxiety in the following circumstances:

- Sharing ideas in brainstorming, offering gut reactions and opinions, experiencing disagreements and criticisms, and practising assertive communication.
- Reflecting on past experiences of failures and rejections.

The researcher is a trained counsellor with experience in helping individuals manage strong emotions. Participants who experience unusual levels of distress may approach the researcher for debriefing. Where relevant, the researcher will support the distressed participant to access ongoing support, such as from the organisation's EAP provider or Lifeline. (The researcher will not provide counselling.)

Participant Privacy and Confidentiality

- Individual contact details will only be used for this research project.
- Information that identifies individuals will only be stored until the project is complete. All data is de-identified for analysis, publication, and archiving.

- All collected data will be treated as confidential. Identities of individuals will be replaced with labels (such as Participant01, Client02, Expert03, and Client04) prior to analysis, publication, and archiving.
- Research data will be stored on the University's OneDrive, Qualtrics, and email systems and only accessed via password-protected computers.
- Archived (de-identified) data may be used for future research, but never for commercial purposes.
- The organisation and managers will NOT have access to any of the collected data.
- Recordings will be made to augment the researcher's notetaking and to generate interview transcripts. When the researcher has made sufficient notes and participants have confirmed their transcripts, recordings will be deleted. Recordings will not be published or archived.
- Interview recordings will be transcribed using the Otter.ai service. This is a service trusted by large institutions and has robust security and privacy policies in place (<https://otter.ai/privacy-security>). Recordings and transcripts will be removed from Otter.ai as soon as transcriptions are complete.

Business Confidentiality

- This research is only interested in how individuals experience the use of the Hybrid Framework. This research does not set out to collect confidential business information or detailed information about the substance of the organisation's Wicked Problem.
- All collected data is confidential. Identities and business confidential information will be replaced with labels (such as Supplier01, Client02, Strategy03, and System04) prior to analysis, publication, and archiving.
- Research data will be stored on the University's OneDrive, Qualtrics, and email systems and only accessed via password-protected computers.
- Archived (de-identified) data may be used for future research, but never for commercial purposes.
- The organisation, the University, and the researcher will not make claims on each other's respective intellectual properties.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this research is voluntary. There are no fees or remunerations payable to any party.

The organisation agrees not to mandate participation in this research project. Each member of the problem-solving team may make their own decision to participate. Participation in this research will not affect a team member's employment conditions or performance review.

A team member who chooses not to participate in this research will still be welcome to engage with the researcher while he is working alongside the team. This team member will not need to engage in data collection activities and their input will not be included in the collected data.

Right to Withdraw and Implications

Individual participants (and the organisation) have the right to withdraw from this research for any reason and at any time.

Individual withdrawal means:

- The participant will no longer need to complete data collection tasks.
- The participant may continue to remain on the problem-solving team.
- The data from that participant will be deleted unless it has been de-identified for analysis. At this point, extracting components from specific individuals will no longer be possible.

Organisational withdrawal means:

- The researcher ceases engagement with the entire organisation.
- All participants will be deemed to have withdrawn consent.
- The entire data pool will be deleted unless data has been de-identified and analysis has begun.

Researcher and Supervisor Profiles

The researcher – Mr Zern Liew – has 28 years of consulting experience, helping organisations and individuals solve complex problems involving software systems, business processes, technical communications, interpersonal efficacy, and intrapersonal capability. His interdisciplinary approach combines methods from Design, Counselling, and Business Management. He has tertiary qualifications in these disciplines.

This research is supervised by Dr Graeme Ditchburn a registered Organisational Psychologist with 20+ years' consulting experience working with multi-national organisations. His research interests focus on the individual at work, including personality and dynamic performance, organisational commitment, and organisational culture and values.

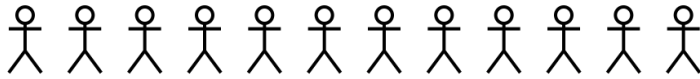
This research is co-supervised by Ms Erica Mason. Erica is an experienced lecturer in Design with a professional background in art and design. She holds a BA in Design & Visual Communication from Curtin University, and Honours in Design & Visual Communication from Edith Cowan University, and is currently conducting PhD research at ECU. Erica leads service design and design thinking at Murdoch University.

Research Findings

At the end of the PhD project, the researcher will share a summary of the final findings with participants. Findings will be general and will not contain material specific to an individual or the organisation.

Call for Participants

Research needs participants from the real world. Your participation in this research will further original Australian research in Design Thinking, Pluralistic Counselling, and Organisational Development.



Please help spread the word by forwarding this letter to those in your network whose organisation and problem-solving team may be interested in participating.

Criteria: The Participating Organisation

- A start-up, established business, government agency, or department in a larger organisation.
- A suitable Wicked Problem including but not limited to changing/improving systems and processes, interpersonal interactions, communications, disruption response, or proactive innovation.
- Problems of a high-risk nature that rely heavily on specialist industrial, engineering, medical, financial, or legal expertise may not be suitable for this project. The researcher is happy to discuss your project with you.
- The problem should be sufficiently substantial to engage at least 7-10 problem solvers, working 2-3 days a week for around 12 weeks. The researcher will negotiate an appropriate timeframe/engagement period with your organisation.
- An office-based problem-solving team in or near Perth, Western Australia.
- A problem-solving team with 7-10 members who are willing to participate. The team may also include members who do not wish to participate.
- Members of the problem-solving team who are willing to participate should have diverse roles in the organisation, such as strategist, project manager, client liaison, subject matter expert, frontline server, programmer, etc.
- Members with varied expertise, interests, backgrounds, motivations, ages, genders, professions, and education backgrounds are especially welcome but not mandatory.
- Teams with members already known to the researcher are not eligible to participate.
- An organisation in any industry is welcome, except (a) not-for-profit, (b) education, (c) consulting in management, strategy, innovation, or problem-solving, especially those using Design Thinking or similar methodologies, (d) organisations with an established use of Design Thinking or similar methodology, or simultaneously engaging with another consulting/problem-solving provider, using Design Thinking or similar approaches.

The organisation is prepared to:

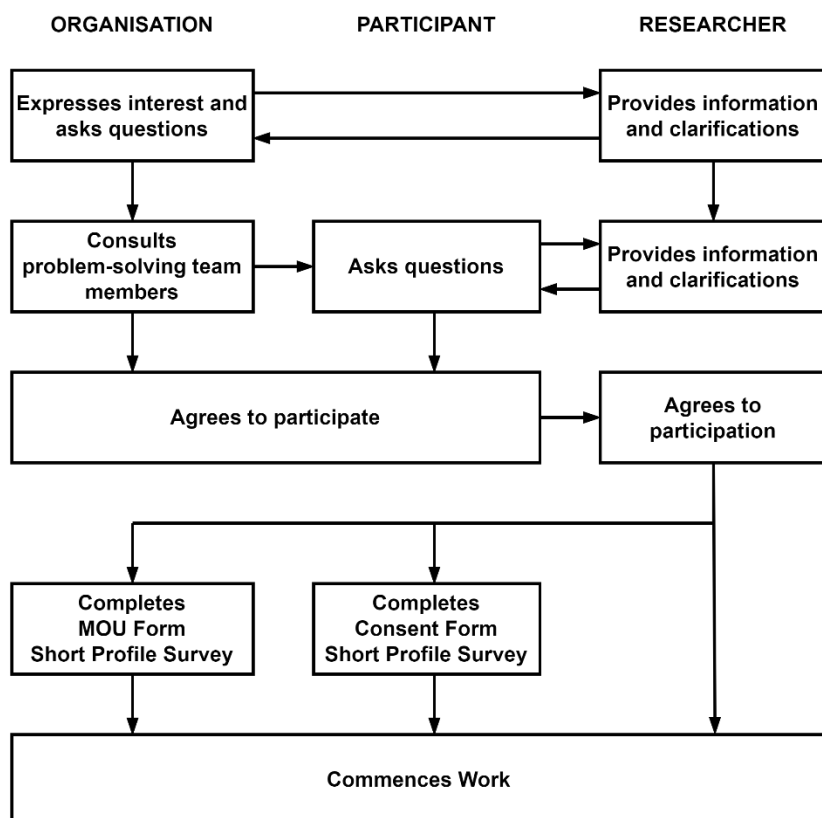
- Provide senior leadership support for this project.

- Accommodate the researcher working alongside its problem-solving team from the start to the end of the problem-solving work. This is expected to take about 12 weeks. The researcher will facilitate using the Hybrid Framework, conduct two interviews, and make observations in this working-alongside period. There will be two additional interviews that will take place 4 and 8 weeks after the end of this period.
- Allow sufficient time for team members participating in this research to engage with research data collection. This is expected to take up to 4.5 hours, averaged across the entire engagement.

Criteria: Individual Participants

- Adults over 18 years of age.
- Have sufficient proficiency in workplace/business English. You do not have to be a native English speaker.
- Are business partners, owners, employees, or contractors of the participating organisation.
- Are members of the problem-solving team working on the organisation's Wicked Problem.
- Individuals who are family, friends, prior colleagues, or prior clients of the researcher and their immediate teams are not eligible to participate.
- Prepared to work alongside the researcher to work on the organisation's Wicked Problem for an estimated period of 12-weeks. Thereafter, attend 2 interviews 4 and 8 weeks after the end of the working-alongside period.
- Willing to attend a total of 4 one-on-one interviews with the researcher, and confirm the accuracy of transcripts created after each interview. Interviews will run for up to one hour and will be recorded (to generate transcripts). Exploratory questions will be asked about your experience of using the Hybrid Framework and self-beliefs around creative confidence, self-efficacy, resilience, hope, and optimism.

Expressing Interest in Participating



EXPRESS INTEREST. Start by emailing the researcher expressing your interest. The researcher will then organise a phone or in-person discussion with you. These preliminary discussions are not part of the research and carry no obligations.

SELECTION. In consultation with his supervisors, the researcher will select the most appropriate organisation. All organisations who have expressed interest will be informed of the selection outcome.

POST-SELECTION. The researcher will engage in more detailed discussions with the selected organisation and participants. Participants will have two weeks to ensure all questions are answered to their satisfaction before signing their consent.

CONSENT. Participants will then complete the relevant online consent form. This step is the formal granting of informed consent. The organisation will also sign an MOU.

COMMENCE. The researcher will work with the organisation to arrange access, schedules, start date, working days, and other logistical issues. As the researcher will be working alongside the problem-solving team, he will also complete any onboarding procedures of the organisation.

Contact information

Email the researcher of this project at: zern.liew@murdoch.edu.au or phone +61 413 33 77 44.

The researcher will be your primary contact for all questions and problem/conflict resolution relating to this research project. If you have any questions about any aspect of this research, please contact the researcher first.

This project has human research ethics approval 2023/147. If your problem cannot be resolved directly with the researcher, please contact the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee: Call (08) 9360 6677 or email human.ethics@murdoch.edu.au