

# The Thesis Statement and Research Questions as Headlights for Research

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# Stages and Functions of Research

- Identify a problem or gap in knowledge ;
- Locate oneself in the field;
- Devise a methodology and conceptual framework for investigating the problem;
- Articulate the process and carry out the research;
- Give an account of the outcomes or knowledge gained;
- articulate the significance and broader applications of this emerging knowledge.

# The Thesis Statement

- Starts as a hunch
- Emerges from the main research question
- Helps you to articulate the sub questions
- Establishes a critical stance or position

## Main Question

How does Australian cinema perpetuate myths and archetypes that influence the formation of contemporary Australian identities?

# The Thesis Statement (emerges from the main question)

Contemporary Australian cinema challenges the myths and archetypes that have traditionally underpinned the formation of Australian identity and in doing so, articulates a more fragmented and heterogeneous society and sense of identity.

# Aims and Objectives

Avoid using the word “explore”

- *This project will examine a selection of early and contemporary Australian films in order to demonstrate/argue...*
- *This project will investigate how early and contemporary Australian cinema has influenced the formation of .....*

*(This project will include the making of a half hour feature film set in Suburban Sydney in order to...)*

# The Sub Questions (emerge from the main question and thesis statement!)

- What cultural myths and archetypes have influenced the formation of Australian identity since European settlement?
- How has Australian cinema functioned historically to perpetuate dominant myths and archetypes of Australian identity ?
- Which traditional myths and archetypes are challenged in contemporary Australian cinema?
- What new myths and archetypes are emerging in contemporary Australia cinema and what influence does this have on a sense of identity in contemporary Australian society?

## Method

(how the research will be conducted, what you will do)

- Scholarly Research
- Analysis of a selection of key Australian films  
(in a practice-led project – the making of a short feature film and analysis of the film in relation to the research questions in order to demonstrate argument)

# Methodology/Approach

General principals, schools of thought and paradigms in which the research is located and that can provide a conceptual framework for discussion and analysis

historical, sociological, semiotic, other?

## The Sub Questions Should Guide the Research Method and Approach

- What cultural myths and archetypes have influenced the formation of Australian identity since European settlement? (scholarly research)
- How has Australian cinema functioned historically to perpetuate dominant myths and archetypes of Australian identity? (selection and analysis of key early films using historical, sociological approaches)
- Which traditional myths and archetypes are challenged in contemporary Australian cinema? (selection and analysis of key contemporary films using historical, sociological approaches)
- What new myths and archetypes are emerging in contemporary Australia cinema and what influence does this have on a sense of identity in contemporary Australian society? (discussion/argument based on reading and analysis of films - if practice-led, analysis film –research outcome)

- **The Thesis Statement and research questions will guide reading, analysis/ discussion and argument.**
- **Permits the researcher to to adopt a critical position**

# Using The Thesis Statement as a Headlight For Evaluating Works and Texts /Literature Review

## Questions to guide research/reading:

- How does the text or work support my thesis statement?
- How does it help to locate my research in the field ?
- Help to indicate how my thesis addresses a gap in knowledge or provide a rationale for my research?
- How can my thesis extend or critique the position/practice presented?
- How does this work/reading provide a conceptual framework for my analysis?
- Why is it irrelevant or to the side of my thesis?

Lucas Ihlein, *Framing Everyday Experience : Blogging as Art*, Deakin University, 2010

Abstract:

For two months, in April-May 2006, I remained entirely within the boundaries of my home suburb of Petersham in Sydney, writing an exhaustively detailed blog about my own experiences. This art project, entitled *Bilateral Petersham*, was initially intended to transform my relationship with the local environment in which I live. Reflecting on *Bilateral Petersham* as a case study in practice-based art research, this paper explores the following questions:

## Abstract continued....

- First, *Bilateral Petersham* works to transform social relations within the community of readers and writers who engage with the blog on the internet and in the local suburb.
- Second, the project demonstrates a new set of tools for the emerging international field of socially-engaged art practice.
- Finally, I suggest that blogging as a form of art might also offer a novel approach to social science research – a method of attention focusing based on embedded, immersive experience.

# Case Study: Practice-led Research

## Lucas Ihlein, 2010

### **Main Question**

**How can art practice and everyday life be brought into a rich relationship with one another?**

# Sub-Questions

- Historically, what forms of art have attempted to bring art and life closer together? (scholarly research into history and practice of and as everyday life )
- What new forms of art are required to demonstrate that practices of everyday life operate as art? (development of blog as art and other artefacts)
- If art and life can be integrated, what new knowledge might emerge in this process? (analysis of process and completed work)

# Method, Methodology/Approach

- **Method** : The practice, materials and methods used - includes genre, form - eg blog
- **Methodology/ Approach:**

***Context of practice*** – analysis of antecedent and contemporary practices

***Context of Theory:*** Theoretical paradigms, modes of analysis that can provide a conceptual framework for discussion and analysis (Happenings relational aesthetics , semiotic, sociological models of analysis)

## **Exercise For Candidates**

- **Develop or outline a main research question for a proposed or current research project**
- **Develop three subsidiary questions that will direct how you will conduct the research**
- **What is the provisional thesis statement for this project?**