THOROUGHLY MODERN THESES

EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON OF THESES WITH MULTIPLE FORMS OF MEDIA

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledge within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledge. In addition, I certify all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Within this thesis, I have complied with all participants' wishes regarding identity or anonymity.

Signature

Bronte J Somerset

Date:

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I dedicate this work to creativity and courage.

all ultimo lavoro!

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TEXT FORMATTING

Normal text

"Quotations from literature"

Titles of theses, poems, sections, papers, etc.

Pseudonyms: *Marion* or *Stewart University*

Transcribed content, Century Gothic

Text transcription of sound tracks

SOUND TRACKS

This thesis includes a CDRom in the front cover containing sound tracks of verses and research participants' voices.

For Macintosh, a program does not need to be opened to listen to them.
- Open the Tracks folder on the CDRom.
- View the tracks in Columns.
- Single click on a Track.
- Click on the play button.
- Adjust the volume next to the play button and in the Finder menu bar on the right hand side, to an appropriate listening level.
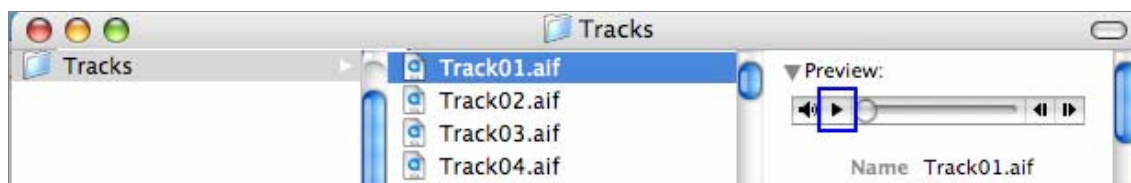
For PC:
- Insert the CDRom and open the My Computer icon on the desktop.
- Locate the CDRom drive and double click on it.
- Double click to open the Tracks folder
- Right click on a Track, roll to play and the PC's media program will open.
- Adjust the volume to an appropriate listening level.
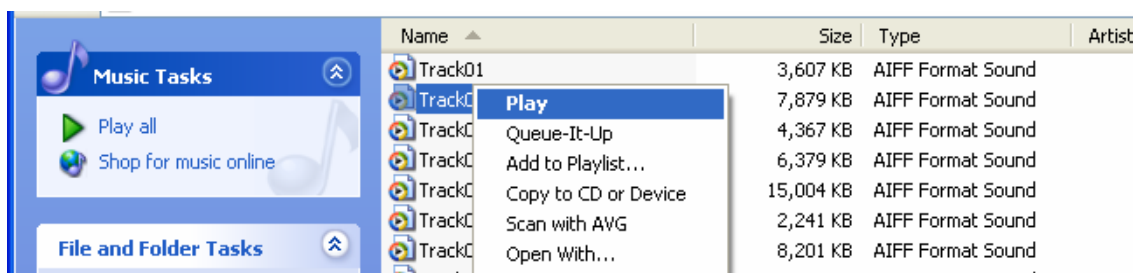
ABSTRACT

THOROUGHLY MODERN THESES

Exploring the phenomenon[1] of theses with multiple forms of media

Modern technologies have changed the way doctoral candidates create theses and present knowledge. The traditional thesis has evolved to include a range of dynamic components. Inroads made by technologies and multiple forms of media provide for "a dazzling array of research and scholarly possibilities for emerging Ph.D.s" (Lang, 2002, p.681). This activity forms a new research paradigm of research literacies and identities in knowledge production and a unique research epistemology.

In order to create knowledge about such 'thoroughly modern theses', this qualitative study explores the experiences of fourteen candidates from Australian universities. Literature scarcely publishes the voice of those who take unconventional approaches to creating their theses, so this explorative study uses phenomenology to seek enlightenment and understanding by asking in what ways candidates' experiences reveal the phenomenon of media theses. 'Media theses' is the term used in this thesis to describe those which include narratives, poetry, multimedia, artworks, etc.

Candidates' individual accounts are represented in case studies using narrative, verse, prose, participants' voices, and reflection and insight. The exploration found that in most cases, candidates' boundary pushing endeavours led to successful outcomes. Some considered their enterprising, courageous and inspirational journeys were 'life-affirming'. Other candidates encountered challenges which reflected their choice of thesis construction. Primarily, these related to unclear guidelines for using media in theses, finding appropriate supervisors and examiners, justifying the inclusion of media elements to research boards, being misunderstood and accessing technological training and expertise. These circumstances sometimes led to candidates' feelings of insecurity and isolation, and hindered the development of their theses.

To learn what was occurring in this social research activity from a wider perspective, the study also asks how the experiences of academic staff enhance understanding of the phenomenon of media theses. This phase of the research is an interpretive exploration of ten academic staff members' experiences, opinions and attitudes. They discussed the qualities of media theses and the new languages they brought to research. They shed light on issues relating to supervision and examination and technological skills development. They offered advice to candidates and discussed their ideas for the future of research. There was often consistency of attitude and consensus that the way of the future involved media theses. However, inconsistencies of thought and an underestimation of what was

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[1] Holian (2001), Brown (2002) and Fineman (2004) describe the emerging practice of submission of theses containing non-text components as a 'phenomenon'.

possible and of what was occurring could prove to be detrimental for media thesis candidates and the creation of dissertations.

This investigation found that media theses offer more potential for authentic presentation of thesis content. They create the need for amended thesis submission policies and guidelines. They alter candidature and supervisory practices and need specific examination criteria. They also transcend conventional modes of knowledge categories. Based on its evidence, the study suggests advice for candidates and makes recommendations for supervisors, examiners and universities.

This dissertation leads to understanding about candidates' experiences with their media theses and how academic staff and universities contribute to their support. This exploration should benefit doctoral candidates and supervisors who are involved in creating a media thesis. It should contribute to innovative research practices by providing research communities insight into the phenomenon of theses with multiple forms of media and their impact on knowledge creation.

Lang, S. (2002). Electronic dissertations: Preparing students for our past or their futures? *College English.* Urbana, 64(6), 680-695. Retrieved 8th June 2003, from the Proquest website: http://proquest.umi.com.

Holian, R. (2001). Emerging forms of data collection and presentation in postgraduate research [online]. In *Emerging forms of representing qualitative data.* C. Boucher & R. Holian (Eds.). (pp. 201-207). Melbourne: RMIT University Press. Qualitative research methods series. Retrieved on 6th July 2007 from: http://search.informit.com.au.

Brown, D. (2002). Going digital and staying qualitative: Some alternative strategies for digitizing the qualitative research process. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], *3*(2), 1-14. Retrieved on 14th July 2007: http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-02/2-02brown-e.htm

Fineman, Y. (2004). Electronic theses and dissertations in music. *Notes*. 60.4, 893(15).

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THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is divided into six chapters.

1. The <u>Introduction</u> includes the background and context of the research, describes media theses and explains the use of verse in this thesis.

2. The <u>Literature review</u> forms a background of knowledge about the creation of dissertations which incorporate media in multiple forms. It discusses changes to doctoral knowledge production, the experiences of candidates who justify creating media theses, new research literacies, approaches to IT training, the impact which media theses have on supervision and examination practices and issues relating to digital publishing.

3. The <u>Methodology</u> explains why a phenomenological approach is taken towards understanding candidates' experiences, why interpretivism is used to explore academic staff members' experiences and this chapter describes the research process.

4. <u>Phase 1</u> presents individual case studies of candidates' experiences including reflection and insight. A discussion on the research findings incorporates concepts of metaphor, experience, partnerships, transition and the future.

5. <u>Phase 2</u> presents data gained from exploring the experiences of academic staff members with media theses. Interpretation of the findings shows where opinions offer support or have the potential to hinder the media thesis phenomenon.

6. The <u>Conclusion</u> draws together the evidence from the research and associates it with current literature. It suggests advice for candidates and makes recommendations for supervisors, examiners and universities.

7. The <u>Appendices</u> include an interview with an academic staff member, a discussion on Modes of Knowledge and administrative documentation.

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1   CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Technology is exerting a powerful influence on graduate education and scholarship, altering how we construct, define and publish knowledge" (Moxley, 2001, p. 37).

As pioneer users of information technology (IT), the World Wide Web and then the Internet, universities embraced evolving digital technologies. Within a changing academic culture, doctoral candidates took advantage of the opportunity to use IT and various other technologies to include multiple forms of media and digital components such as art, computer software, imagery, novels, artefacts and multimedia within their theses.

Eisner (1997) affirms that candidates include media in their theses because "conventional forms of research often constrain the data in ways which misrepresent the phenomena the researcher wishes to understand" (p.na [2]). Boucher (2001) supports this idea in her comment that this practice could stem from candidates' desire to make use of new technologies and a sense of dissatisfaction with the problems associated with conventional ways of presenting findings. Regarding her investigation into supervisors' opinions of non-traditional theses, Conrad (2003) similarly proposes that "the very form of the thesis, with its nineteenth-century origins, is being challenged for its capacity to accommodate twentieth-century or twenty-first century thinking" (p.1). Thus, theses have evolved from being presented only in text to including media components.

As a campus IT Trainer I supervised a studio [3] where I helped postgraduate researchers learn the skills and processes of digital publishing for teaching and research projects and to explore alternative presentation media.

Figure 1: Helping a staff member in the studio

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[2] p.na is used for web published articles without page numbers.
[3] The studio was closed in 2005.

The studio was like an incubator where original ideas were hatched using computer technologies and where representational aspirations became reality. I witnessed innovation and originality in the scope and breadth of candidates' concepts and taught them the multimedia skills they required to publish their research. The informal training environment helped candidates to overcome the technological barriers which could have prevented them from presenting their research as thesis components.

Thus, through understanding the possibilities of IT and the development of IT skills, I became aware of how it was influencing the construction, definition and publication of new knowledge. My work led me to think about exploring this niche area of activity. I was curious to know how doctoral candidates fared as they created theses with media components and that an investigation of the emergence of media theses would contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of this research practice. I wondered about Eisner's (2001) comment that: "There is still a good deal of prejudice out there, especially for forms of qualitative research that do not look like conventional ethnography" (p.143) and, if this prejudice existed, how it affected candidates' thesis composition. I was further encouraged to test Lippincott's (2005) comment that pressure to conform to traditional thesis production practices stifled candidates' desire to use different technologies in theses because they feared non-acceptance by the academy. I thought that by gathering materials about doctoral candidates' experiences and by exploring the experiences of academic staff members, a research study would be able to reveal essential phenomena relating to media theses in research practice.

A search of the literature revealed little about the experiences of candidates who create media theses. This indicated that an exploration might prove to be enlightening. For example, from workplace interaction with doctoral candidates and from papers by Burrows (2004a) and Auld (2002b), I perceived that doctoral candidates' experiences with media theses could range from being inspiring and pioneering to being problematic and contested. Holian (2001) learned from researchers that they would like more freedom of expression in their theses in a variety of aspects. They suggested that metaphor, analogies, stories and illustrations, visual art, poetry, audio, video tapes, film, song and dance in the form of exhibitions, installations and live performances, online media components be permissible. These candidates said that they would like to be able to include their own subjective comments and would like more freedom in the form and content of products and applications. They suggested they could include

others' works in their theses, such as artworks and poetry. Regarding this need for freedom and autonomy, Malfroy and Yates (2003) agree candidates "need roots and wings, they have to know where their roots are but they also need wings" (p.124). It would be illuminating to know whether Australian doctoral candidates were experiencing the freedom to which Holian (2001) and Malfroy et al (2003) referred.

It became obvious that several authors supported the need for an inquiry relating to doctoral candidates' experiences. Pearson (1999) recommended the need for research into Australian doctoral programs which are diverse in structure and context. In comments regarding doctoral student attrition, Golde considered students' voices are least heard despite the fact they are central to gaining an understanding of the doctoral research environment (in McAlpine & Norton, 2006). McLaughlin and Tierney (1993) contended that students are neglected as spokespeople because their opinions are either considered to be unimportant or are not being heard by people who are in a position to bring about change. Conrad's (2003) study into supervisors' opinions of non-traditional theses highlighted the need for reform, identifying the nature of post-graduate research, the impact of IT and the fact that candidates' experiences warrant further research. Brew (2001b) stated that no previously written account regarding "disciplines, scholarship, science and/or knowledge" (p.272) addresses research experiences from the researchers' perspectives.

Other authors supported the need for inquiry into what they call 'non-traditional' research practices. Conrad (2003) conceded that "issues of diversity in the content or methods of research….have only begun to be addressed" (p.1). Pearson (1999) suggested a lack of adequate research exists in all areas of post-graduate and doctoral education including one identified by Haworth (in Pearson, 1999) as being non-traditional research programs. Bleiklie and Powell (2005) forecast the influence which diversity in theses may have on higher education practices in their statement:

"Many of the changes....that stem from a new understanding of knowledge, how it is produced, organized and transmitted, are likely to gradually and profoundly transform higher education systems, the way in which institutions are run and the way in which coming generations will behave as students, university employees, and users of research" (p.8).

During preliminary explorations of literature, I noticed that, depending upon their experience and personal preference, academic staff and authors used different terms to identify what I call 'media theses'. They refer to theses which include components other than academic text as 'non-traditional' (Conrad, 2003), 'artistic', 'creative', 'alternative', 'marginal', 'unconventional' or 'contemporary'. Apart from being created in traditional and creative arts doctoral programs, candidates also create theses with media components in doctorates by project, practical doctorates or combined studio and scholarly degrees. Moxley forecast the evolution of doctoral theses in his statement:

> "Creative researchers will challenge our conception of academic writing. Increasingly, linear text with one-inch margins will give way to hypertextual writing, streaming multimedia, interactive chat spaces, three-dimensional modelling and features we can't even imagine right now" (Moxley, 2001b, p.63).

This genre of theses originates from both traditional and creative arts disciplines. A candidate may also produce a media thesis from across a traditional and a creative arts discipline such as from management and creative media.

Based on my initial perceptions, the practice of using multiple forms of media in theses in traditional disciplines was less common than in creative arts disciplines. It seemed that candidates from traditional disciplines were more likely to be pioneers of using unconventional media in theses; relied on their lifelong learning skills; did not have ready access to technological training or technical support; were less familiar with media creation technologies such as videoing, IT, directing performance, etc.. Alternatively, candidates from creative arts disciplines were more likely to have access to artefact/exegesis thesis precedents; were more likely to have professional technological skills; to have access to technological training and to find practices involving media components in theses better established. These scenarios suggest different cultures of practice and this research may provide insight into them.

The nature of media theses varies across the higher education spectrum in Australia according to university policies [4] and practices. The objective for including media components varies. Sometimes researchers incorporate the gathering of data in media formats as part of their

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[4] Examples of policies are in the <u>Literature review.</u>

methodology. They may present data gathered from research participants in drawings (Kearney & Hyle, 2004), poetry, prose or narratives. Media theses are often created with artefacts or multimedia and an exegesis [5]. Depending on the circumstances, candidates may present their works for examination at sites of performance such as an art gallery or as a stage performance at a theatre. They may be packaged unconventionally and published in formats which differ from the single text bound volume, such as on the World Wide Web in various file formats, on a CDRom, as an installation, as a photographic or art exhibition and in print as folios, books or as papers published prior to submission.

They may take specific forms or combinations of forms such as:

<div align="center">

actual or virtual [6] objects
autobiographies
biographies
books
bricolage [7]
computer software
creative artworks
dance
decorative arts
digital animations
digital models
documentaries
drama
drawings
electronic databases
essay films
ethnodrama
ethnotheatre [8]
exhibitions
fashion designs
ficto-critical writing
fine arts
folios
graphic art
illustrated novels
images
installations
instrumental music
monographs
multimedia

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[5] An exegesis is described as a text accompanying a work to explain, theorise, describe it. The term stems from the study of biblical texts.

[6] Virtual, in computer terminology, means a digital representation of an actual object or experience.

[7] *Bricolage* is a French word used in visual arts and literature. It means: a work which has been put together from available resources. A *bricoleur* is a person who constructs a *bricolage*.

[8] 'Ethnodrama' and 'ethnotheatre' are terms used by Saldaña (2003).

<div align="center">

music
narratives
novels
operas
oral history
performance
photo essays [9]
photography
plans
plastics
poetic text
poetry
pre-published papers
printmaking
screen plays
sculpture
simulations
sounds
stage plays
subject guides
textbooks
verse
video clips
visual artworks

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Media theses demonstrate a new involvement in the creation and evaluation of research products where research authors are thinking in very different dimensions and working with research presentation media their research predecessors would consider untenable.

From these basic understandings as to what media theses are and in recognition of the potential for their impact, it seemed that researching this topic offered opportunities for creating greater understanding about them and about how they were accommodated in research practice. This research may also show, that as researchers use various technologies to create thesis components, they bring about changes in research practices which creates the need for new approaches to thesis management, supervision and examination.

To form an inquiry based solely on candidates' experiences or only on the opinions of academic staff would have the potential to constrain the outcomes. In order to encapsulate a balanced perspective of this emerging phenomenon, the research was formed from two perspectives based on two research questions.

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[9] Quinn, Albrecht, Mahan, Bell-Ellison, Akintobi, Reynolds & Jeffers used photo essays as a methodology (2006).

- **In what ways do doctoral candidates' experiences reveal the phenomenon of media theses?**

<u>Phase 1</u> is based on the comments of Bleiklie and Powell (2005) that a new understanding of knowledge may be gleaned from learning how candidates experience producing, managing and publishing their research. This phase of the research was influenced by phenomenology and the nature of lived-experience (van Manen, 1990) as it explored the experiences of Australian doctoral candidates, and PhD graduates, with media theses. Fourteen case studies (Yin, 2003) present the experiences of the research participants from creative arts and traditional disciplines at different stages of candidature. The representation of their experiences includes descriptions of their journeys, scripts of interviews and sound tracks of their voices [10]. It also includes verse which I have written to try to capture experiential phenomena in keeping with phenomenological data re-presentation (van Manen, 1990). Reflection upon and insight into each case study is included. Informal conversations with candidates enabled them to discuss how they coped with creating and presenting knowledge.

- **How do the experiences of academic staff enhance understanding of the phenomenon of media theses?**

For <u>Phase 2</u>, academic staff members from Australian universities who supervised candidates who were producing them or who had examined them, were interviewed informally regarding their experiences. Some of these participants had included media in their own thesis so they were able to participate in the research from a candidate's perspective and as an academic staff member. This interpretivist inquiry was designed to discover their opinions of, attitudes towards, and experiences within this research practice in order to enhance understanding of the media theses phenomenon.

This twofold approach of gathering data (<u>Phases 1 & 2</u>) provided the opportunity to compare candidates' experiences with the opinions of academic staff. It highlighted situations where, for example, tensions lay or issues existed as well as where concurrence occurred between research boards, faculty, supervisors and candidates.

This study's participants were doctoral candidates, PhD recipients and academic staff from Australian universities. They comprised only a sample of the Australian higher education

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[10] In <u>Chapter 4</u>

research community, however, depth of insight compensates for what the study may lack in breadth. The purpose of the study is to create enlightenment and understanding. Some generalisation from this study is possible but incidental and not intentional and the research outcomes are authentic within its scope. The study does not compare the experiences of media thesis candidates with those who created 'traditional' text-only theses. Although my experience as a campus IT Trainer was pivotal to the formation of this study, as it has progressed, this influence has lessened and my role as a researcher has dominated. Neither does the fact that I am not an academic seem to me to be as potentially limiting to this topic as I had first thought.

To use Eisner's (2001) choice of words, this study is not designed "to invent neither the equivalent of spaceship Discovery nor…to capture reality in a bag" (p.138). However, it tries to develop some workable insights. It will inform people who are interested in current research practices, such as doctoral candidates, academic staff, higher education policy makers, campus knowledge workers and research training support staff. By knowing how some candidates respond to and manage change in thesis creation and presentation, higher education professionals may know what is needed to manage the present and be better equipped to plan. This research study is a beginning, not an ending to the research story. It intends to present knowledge about an emerging phenomenon. It generates situations which would benefit from further discussion and thus invites other researchers to design closer inspections of the many aspects of the topic's intricate and complex phenomena.

1.1 VERSE

Verse 1: <u>Verse</u>

Poetic verse
Attracts eyes
Engages minds
Embraces hearts
Moves souls

Connects worlds

(Somerset, 2008)

Candidates incorporate media in theses to prove hypotheses, present answers to research questions, express qualities such as emotion, provocation and persuasion and to connect with

the reader in styles which are different from traditional academic text. These more accessible and less stylised languages enable writers to capture experience through injections of emotion, sensation and metaphor. Many authors support using verse for experienced-based research [11] and others publish verse in research journals [12]. As writers use this approach to present research outcomes, Brearley (2002) acknowledges they are:

> "… challenging the voice of the omniscient academic observer and are exploring creative forms of representation which reflect richness and complexity of data and invite new and multiple levels of engagement that are both cognitive and emotional" (p.5).

Her support for exploring new representational media reflects her belief that people experience the world in different ways and the intensity and complexity of some experiences are best represented in forms other than academic text.

Video formats capture facial and tonal expressions and body language in experience-based research. Other representations such as sound, art and performance express reality in a textless form to enhance what Lawler calls "the rich and fascinating territory of human experience and the ways people find meaning in their lives" (in Higgs, 1998, pp.47). Such methods enable researchers to communicate with greater integrity and authenticity. Heidegger suggests artificiality stems from the tendency to be reactive or passive receptors of life's experiences (in O'Donoghue & Punch (eds.), 2003). Verse supports authentic presentation of data and satisfies an author's presentational autonomy. Van Manen (1990) supports verse as "a literary form that transforms lived experience" as it "allows the expression of the most intense feelings in the most intense form" (p.70). Verse in this thesis strives to combine van Manen's descriptive and interpretive elements of events and sensations depending on the experiences they represent to communicate experience without "losing a sense of vivid truthfulness" (p.71).

Van Manen (1990) suggests ways in which phenomenological methodology (as used in <u>Phase 1</u> of this study) and verse are compatible. Firstly, in phenomenological methodology the links between the research materials and their presentation should not be broken (van Manen,

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[11] Barnacle, 2001, 2004; Brearley, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Ellis, 1997, 2000; Evelyn, 2004; Glesne, 1997; Hecq, 2005; Langer & Furman, 2004; Furman, 2006; Lincoln, 1997; Richardson, L., 2000, 2002; Richardson, M., 1998; Szto, Furman & Langer, 2005; Tierney & Lincoln, Y.S.(Eds.),1997.
[12] Clarke, Febbraro, Hatzipantelis & Nelson, 2005; Faulkner, 2005; Kendall & Murray, 2005; Ketelle, 2004; Raingruber, 2005; Weems, 2003, 2005.

1990). The verses in this thesis remain true to this tenet. Secondly, the verses represent the research outcomes and have been written with van Manen's admonition in mind that:

"When you listen to a presentation of a phenomenological nature, you will listen in vain for the punch-line…. To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing" (p.13).

Thirdly, he supports the idea that phenomenology and verse are complementary as "over the ages, human beings have invented artistic….and poetic languages that have sought to (re)unite them with the ground of their lived experience" (p.9). Lastly, in acknowledgement of his opinion that doing hermeneutic phenomenology is very difficult and that events in life are often indescribable, verse in this study provides a suitable way of presenting and representing candidates' experiences.

Verses from the <u>Case studies</u> are written in what Merleau-Ponty calls "language that sings the world" (in van Manen, 1990, p.13) of experience. They are mostly what Richardson (2002), calls 'short' poems as they tend to "focus and concretise emotions, feelings and moods" (p.880). Some are metaphors for my own experiences, such as <u>Night dawning</u> and <u>Understanding phenomenology</u>. Sometimes candidates' controversial experiences inspired verse which metaphorically segued into other social contexts such as <u>'Yes' but 'no' from the Committee</u> and <u>Railroads</u>. The use of metaphor allows a research participant, the research project and the university to remain unidentified but retains the essence of the experience. Some verses use a universal metaphor to describe experience such as <u>Pioneering folly,</u> and have what van Manen (1990) calls the author's personal signature in the choice of metaphor. Woolf (in Van Manen, 1990) describes how poets use metaphor to:

"… give us not the thing itself, but the reverberation and reflection which can be close enough to the original to illustrate it, remote enough to heighten, enlarge, and make splendid" (p.49).

Glesne (1997) uses the exact words of her subjects and rearranges them poetically to capture the essence of their experience. This activity suited the effect I was looking for in presenting experiential phenomena as in <u>Towards socially just pedagogies</u> and <u>My examination</u>. Verse is also economical – enabling long transcripts to be condensed into concise re-presentations such as in <u>Post examination,</u> <u>Mark making</u>, and <u>Practical Doctorate</u> which is about the evolution of a doctorate with a compulsory multimedia component.

Some verses take on the identity of the research participant. For example, <u>Practical Doctorate</u> evokes a Banjo Paterson ballad-like tone which reflects a strong Australian accent, personality, identity and sense of 'country'. <u>Perspective on practice</u> has a feminine caring tone. This concept reflects Richardson's (2002) comment that "poetic representation offers social researchers an opportunity to write about.…people in ways that honor their speech styles, words, rhythms, and syntax" (p.880).

<u>Conundrum</u> emulates van Manen's (1990) "vivid truthfulness" (p.71) of the emotion I felt after meeting a candidate whose research proposal was rejected. Brearley (2002) suggests that "Making meaning of research data in the form of poetic text blurs the boundaries between research findings and analysis. A poem has the potential to be both" (p.7). This is evident in <u>Synchrony</u> and <u>IT help</u>.

Glesne (1997) states she did not plan to experiment with poetic transcription when she interviewed her subjects, but upon hearing the transcriptions it became obvious to her what was needed. I also found that thoughts for verses emerged as I listened to recorded conversations with participants and drew myself into their realities. I understand Richardson's (1998) notion that poetry "is particularly suited for those special, strange, even mysterious moments when bits and pieces suddenly coalesce" (p.451). Richardson (2002) comments that creative writing has "a mind of its own, strange as that may sound" (p.883). I also found my conception and creation of the verses went beyond what was regular, logical or even describable. For me, it was like 'humming' with words, not notes. The verses started with sensation and flowed onto paper as if writing themselves. This scanned page of my notepad shows what a cognitively untidy process this can be.

Figure 2: One of my poems in rough form

A research participant showed support for verses in this thesis by her comment:

> But you're doing verse. To me again, this is another expression of a person investigating an area of interest and then displaying their own capacity in that area in a different way to what they're investigating. And isn't this what a PhD is about? Isn't this what doctoral work is about? Conceptual analysis and then rigorously displaying it in a variety – something new – adding to our knowledge of the area (personal communication, *Vanessa*, 2005).

Linschoten describes an enigmatic quality of verse whereby "human science starts there where poetry has reached its end point" (in van Manen, 1990, p.19). I feel the impact of a poem moments after reading or hearing the last line. In aesthetic and yet practical ways, verse in this study has the potential to connect the reader to the sensation of candidates' experiences. The following verse shows how experiential phenomena can be expressed in verse.

Verse 2: <u>Night dawning</u>

Saturday afternoon is cold
Hours pass
I read and think hunched over my computer
A black shawl covers my shoulders
A single light illuminates my notes
Papers, books and articles beckon
The oil heater ticks to room temperatures
Coffee, snacks and pacing breaks
occasionally help thoughts coalesce

Four becomes eight
The world is cloaked in darker shades of grey
Outside I shiver with anxiety and cold
Shrug my shoulders to relieve the tension
Breathe deeply to calm my mind
The icy full moon lights the dimness

In the crispness
I see a way forward.

(Somerset, 2008)

An idea for a verse or theme may come unexpectedly. Paz wrote: "Poetry is in love with the instant and seeks to relive it in the poem" (in Richardson, 1998, p.451). I was sitting on a headland overlooking a bay, typing on my laptop and reading Barnacle's (2004) comments on the concepts of immediacy and reflection. I became aware of immediacy in research reporting, pre-reflectively and in that moment, I sensed and a metaphorical connection with

what was happening and captured it in <u>Dolphins</u>.

<u>**Track 01: Dolphins**</u>

Poem 3: <u>Dolphins</u>

There's a pod of dolphins in the bay
The children's high-pitched voices scream:

"dolphins – there are dolphins in the bay!"

urging them to come and play.

I listen to the seagulls caw
as shags catch gentle rays.
The rolling mounds of Gulaga
are shrouded in the haze.

I'm reading at a lookout
above the glistening bay,
and as I grind my thoughts in type
I urge them come and stay.

(Somerset, 2008)

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2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Doctoral knowledge creation in higher education encompasses a multitude of topics. This review includes the ones that are most likely to reflect aspects of the practice of creating doctoral theses which incorporate different forms of media. It includes the findings of authors whose knowledge and experience form a commentary about the way emerging research practices are expanding knowledge creation boundaries and discusses some of its "promises and perils" (Eisner, 1997). Literature relating specifically to the experiences of candidates who create media theses is quite limited thus the unexplored nature of this emerging practice supports this study's original contribution. The chapter is divided into five main sections.
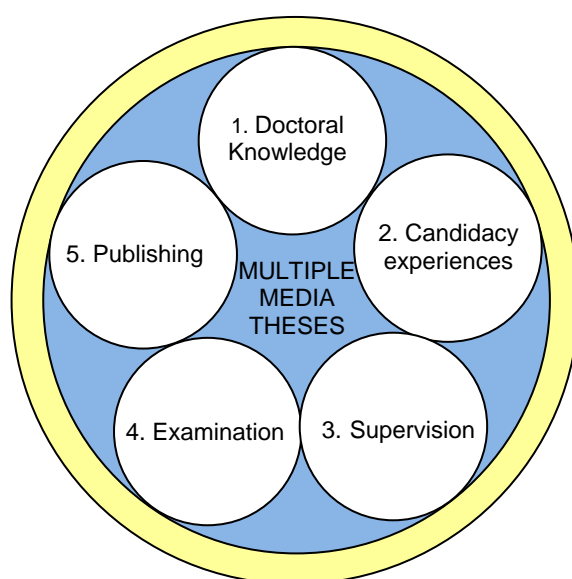
Figure 3: Structure of Literature review

2.1 DOCTORAL KNOWLEDGE

This section presents a sample of universities' thesis submission policies for media theses, the formation of new research paradigms and rationale for their nascence. Ideas about the emergence and impact of innovation and novelty in theses are discussed. The review enters the debate as to whether a knowledge crisis exists and it suggests that, because of their unconventional nature they alter the identity of the doctorate and so may contribute to this 'crisis'. Change in research practice raises awareness of the impact of complexity caused by inter-disciplinary candidacies and the formation of new doctoral identities. The question is raised whether universities have exclusivity in knowledge production and authors suggest how higher education needs to prepare and adapt for new research practices.

2.1.1   Doctoral knowledge: implications of thesis submission policies

In Australia, the format of media theses is directed according to universities' policies and researchers' chosen media. Current policies demonstrate how the traditional or text-based thesis is being reidentified, reformed and reclassified. Opportunities for submitting media theses vary across universities and faculties. Some universities do not accept them; at others they are increasing exponentially; some have established policies and some have none; some media theses policies are mainstreamed into traditional thesis policies; some policies are specific and others less so.

Macquarie University's (2007) thesis submission policy offers a flexible range of options for media theses.

"… the size of the creative component should be specified in relation to the critical component, and will vary according to the candidate's academic area and medium. Examples of creative components are: in music - a written score; a compositional folio containing a number of pieces which might be in different forms; software; video; audio recordings; in writing - a novel, a collection of shorter creative pieces, a volume of poems. … Candidates may also choose to integrate creative and critical components, as e.g. in ficto-critical writing or essay films; but explicit critical analysis in written form will also be required [13].

The following is from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology's (RMIT, 2007) thesis submission policy.

"A thesis is normally….in bound paper form. It is a written document that may supplement language with images, charts and diagrams which are essential to the argument and which can be printed on paper. Appendices may be constituted in a range of media and forms. The candidate may present a thesis in an alternative form but not normally as a substitute" [14].

A candidate who wishes to present a thesis for examination in a 'non-standard' format is required to make a special request. This written request needs to include: details of the proposed alternative format; why it should be considered to be a research thesis; why the

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[13] Extract from: http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/thesis_examination
[14] Extract from: http://mams.rmit.edu.au/6rp3m7h6fawnz.pdf

standard text based format does not meet the candidate's needs; and how the material might be examined (RMIT, 2007).

The thesis submission policy of the University of Technology, Sydney (2007) states:

"It is recognised that a candidate's research may not always be most appropriately embodied in the form of a written thesis. Magnetic tapes, documentary film, or engineering drawings, for example, may be acceptable alternatives. Any departure from the requirements laid down should be discussed with the candidate's supervisors and approved by the Academic Board" [15].

Discrepancies between web-published policies and what is actually permissible could mean that web published policies have not been updated to accommodate accepted practice. Some universities may be proactively determining new thesis submission policies and yet others may be creating them only in response to emerging practices.

Universities' thesis submission policies give candidates the legitimacy to create media theses. This freedom to design, implement and publish their media research projects brings a new research paradigm into higher education. This creates opportunities and problems or, to use Eisner's (1997) expression – "promises and perils". Holian (2001) also acknowledges the conundrum of exploring new forms of data representation presents interlinked problems and potential. As media theses attract attention from academic communities, researchers engage in discourse about these promises and perils. They recognise that candidates emerge themselves in creative explorations which academic research boards did not previously accept. Brew (2001a) suggests this exploration should:

"… enable us to give substance to aspects of research waiting in the wings: ideas, methods and techniques waiting to fly; ideas which, more often than not, have their wings clipped to protect or promote the interests of the powerful" (p.8).

Candidates are now free to combine form and content when presenting their research data (Eisner, 2001). This activity is especially advantageous in qualitative studies relating to human experience where researchers may present or represent data more authentically in formats other than text.

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[15] Extract from: http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/thesesprocedure.html

There are concerns with this new research paradigm. Media theses dramatically change the foundation and appearance of the traditional thesis. As it becomes accepted practice to include thesis elements such as those mentioned in the Introduction, one might question if they have the hallmark qualities of doctoral research. Eisner admits these new modes of research raise the question as to what counts as research and that new modes of knowledge creation have "problematized the traditional view of what research entails and have escalated our consciousness of its unexamined assumptions" (Eisner, 1997, p.na).

Eisner (1997) suggests that these new forms of data representation complicate the social science research process in various ways. For example, examination criteria for some media may be unsuitable for another. Criteria for examining aesthetic models differ from those for evaluating scientific ones. Eisner (1998) uses the example proposed by Dewey (in Eisner 1998, p.101) regarding 'measurement' in evaluation. He suggests that measurement of properties is a physical activity yet measurement of impressions are not bound by rules or criteria.

Additional complications include how the components in media thesis should be related. Nelson describes how the text-based artefact/exegesis thesis is formed for "the creative material to be in constant rebirthing through the text that sits beside it" (in Arnold, 2005, p.3). Further, Scrivener elaborates that "the artefacts are not exemplars of the project outcomes, they are the project outcomes" (in Arnold, 2005, p.9). Milich and Schilo consider that basing "the exegesis and the 'artefact' on a research question enables the relationship between the two elements to result in academic writing that is complementary to the creative component" (in Arnold, 2005, p.3). Some faculties consider the artistic and text components must be linked theoretically within a media thesis. Eisner (1997) suggests making the interpretations without sacrificing the quality and character of either is challenging. He asks if we can "have our evidentiary base and still maintain the sometimes imaginative and poetic quality of well-crafted qualitative research?" (p.na).

A situation also now exists where multiple languages (and thus multi-literacies) are emerging in media theses. These could be the languages of verse or film, of analogue or digital art and music, of a performance or installation. All participants in the research candidacy need to be familiar with these 'languages'. Bamford (2005) describes their impact as an expansion of

academic discourse and a new knowledge paradigm has been born into a "range of contemporary languages [which] need to be accepted in the presentation of dissertations" (pp.1-2).

The new research paradigm offers opportunities for candidates to be innovative and to express their creativity. This freedom also brings added responsibilities and risks. From a candidates' perspective another concern is the risk they take by including media components in theses. In Conrad's (2003) study into supervisors' opinions of non-traditional theses, two opinions are given regarding this risk. Phillips and Pugh consider candidates should write a traditional thesis and create innovative work post-doctorally, yet Salmon and Brew suggest there is a "growing disquiet about efforts to constrain research ingenuity, intellectual creativity, and personal development" (in Conrad, 2003, p.1).

2.1.2   Doctoral knowledge: novelty & innovation

Where tradition and novelty meet in universities there may be power struggles and differences of opinion because novelty and innovation may be threatening (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001) and because research which focuses on novelty may detract from purpose and meaning Eisner (2001, p.139). Eisner (2001) raises concern about researchers who investigate and conduct educational research unconventionally. He cautions they should not become so involved with novelty that they forget about what it is they intend to communicate. He advises the form of a research project needs to be connected to the way it presents knowledge. Perhaps in their over-enthusiastic approaches to presenting research, he suggests that researchers may downplay their "obligation to create something that a reader or viewer will find meaningful" (p.139). Eisner also identifies the situation where whatever components researchers choose to include or omit they ironically create bias – either for or against tradition or novelty.

Novelty and innovation may be problematic in traditional academic circles. Nowotny et al. (2001) consider the impact of novelty contests traditional practice, challenges traditional authorities and creates an impetus for institutional reformation. In research practice, novelty alters power relationships because change is not being driven from traditional directives. This reversal of power is noted by Bleiklie et al. (2005) who states that "pressures for reform or change are not only generated from higher education policy makers, but stem from a number

of forces inside and outside the formal higher education sector" (p.1). This statement could implicate the media thesis.

Novelty and innovation strengthen the 'epistemological core' of knowledge (Nowotny et al., 2001). Universities accept that a wider range of knowledge practices and traditions fills this knowledge core with "new values, norms and practices" (Nowotny et al., 2001, p.259) which revitalises and reconfigures it (Nowotny et al., 2001). The impact of novelty and innovation on the ways we communicate, learn and conduct our business, according to Friedman, "have come together into a whirlwind today....while creating a new division between the Fast World and the Slow World" [16] (in Nowotny et al., 2001, p.67). Nowotny and her colleagues agree "innovation has acquired an urgent, even quasi-moral, stridency" and they predict that "without innovation, there may be no future" (p.67). One of the related constraints may be reflected by Carnoy's supposition that universities in many countries do not implement systems for promoting innovation nor provide training innovative practices (in Muller et al., 2001). This study may identify how innovative research practices are encouraged in Australia.

2.1.3   Doctoral knowledge: knowledge & change

"The irony of the current situation…is that while the innovation agenda might have been considered to ostensibly herald a boom time for research degrees, the reality is the opposite. Instead, a crisis exists in regard to what the doctorate is meant to be" (Barnacle, 2005, p.181).

If media theses contribute to this 'boom time for research degrees', they may also contribute to what Barnacle (2005) calls a 'doctoral identity crisis'. Universities are coping with pressures from within the campus generated partially by the influences of novelty and innovation (Nowotny et al., 2001) and this would surely include the impact of media thesis. Nowotny et al. (2001) also question the identity of a doctorate because knowledge creation processes continue to become multifaceted, explorative, unpredictable and transgress 'normal' practices. They acknowledge this is due in part to scientific practices having been

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[16] Fast World and Slow World possibly refers to progressive attitudes and practice versus complacency and acceptance of the *status quo*.

modified by what Gibbons et al. (2000) describe as Mode 2 knowledge production – the introduction of the Professional Doctorate [17].

Universities are also coping with pressures from outside the campus as they compete in the divisions of the 'fast and slow' worlds (Nowotny et al., 2001). Contemporary revolutionary human endeavours in science, politics, culture and industry "around which the world is organized now appear to be either in flux, eroded or socially contested" (Nowotny et al., 2001, p.21). The domains of state, market, culture, mass media and public and private arenas are experiencing a blurring of their boundaries resulting in a construction of even more disparate domains and opportunities which remain largely unexplored (Nowotny et al., 2001). Whilst this blurring of the boundaries may be problematic for universities, if new knowledge **stagnated** behind closed doors of science, politics, culture and industry or was **confined** within the domains of state, market, culture, mass media and public and private arenas – knowledge may also be in crisis. Though unsettling, phenomena of flux, erosion and social contest may not always be disadvantageous to human endeavour and social progress.

It is also of concern whether traditional research practices are sustainable within the contemporary knowledge creation climate (Barnett, 2000). Barnett addresses aspects of the current nature of knowledge, knowledge production, ownership and use within "a world of supercomplexity" (p.415). He questions the sustainability of traditional research within the current supercomplex age (which he states should not be confused with post-modernism) and suggests that "in an age of supercomplexity, a new epistemology for the university awaits, one that is open, bold, engaging, accessible, and conscious of its own insecurity" (p.420).

Another concern for universities is Barnett's (2000) claim that "we are witnessing 'the end of knowledge' in higher education" (p.409). His justification for this is that university knowledge has no specific claim or standing; that ideologically university knowledge lacks legitimacy and that it is 'implied' its future will only be secured by 'entrepreneurial' activities which enable its knowledge production regimes to become geared towards marketability. He considers knowledge has changed in response to the knowledge economy because of the push for academic capitalism in a world in which the university does not hold, and does not consider it holds, a monopoly on knowledge production; knowledge is subject to different

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[17] Mode 1 represents the traditional disciplinary PhD knowledge and Mode 2 represents application-based knowledge of the Professional doctorate which is more closely aligned with industries or commerce.

forms of accountability, including to its stakeholders; academic knowledge needs to be geared towards being profitable; knowledge needs to be transportable and society demands that it enlighten.

2.1.4   <u>Doctoral knowledge: supercomplexity & interdisciplinarity</u>

The media thesis is in its nascent stage and is experiencing insecurities compounded by interdisciplinarity and is contributing to supercomplexity. It has reached a point where Arnold (2005) observes that 'artefact/exegesis' activity is taking practice-based research into the realms of learning and knowledge and bringing traditional PhD into the realms of creativity. This contributes to the phenomenon of supercomplexity which Barnett (2000) suggests presents "as a rival form of knowing and claiming legitimacy and is the outcome of a multiplicity of frameworks" (p.415). As candidates search through a complexity of research choices, Barnett (2000) considers that once a framework is defined – knowing which framework to inhabit becomes difficult. He further suggests this situation creates feelings of insecurity with which researchers may be familiar as "no longer are the boundaries, or the forms of right knowing clear" (p.415).

As doctoral candidates often create media theses from across disciplines, Stehr's (2003) comments from a post-graduate student workshop are particularly relevant. He suggested the matrix of today's order of knowledge was being dissolved by the creation and production of knowledge which blurred social, political and economic boundaries. He observed the overlap between disciplines brought new fields of research. He spoke of the futility of pondering pros and cons where within the 9,000 known fields of knowledge the malleable boundaries are becoming increasingly difficult to draw. Henkel also agrees that academic staff no longer work in confined spaces but that:

> "… academic autonomy has become something which must be realized by managing
> multi-modality, multiple relationships in a context where boundaries have either collapsed
> or become blurred" (in Bleiklie et al., 2005, p.7).

One might consider if media theses have established a rogue presence in higher educational research, or contribute to supercomplexity. They represent an alternative way of conducting and publishing research and provide new ways of looking at the world through societal and cultural objects, artefacts and productions and create a genre of new knowledge conducted within less traditional research paradigms. It will be interesting to witness if this type of

contemporary research practice helps universities reclaim the status which Barnett (2000) contends they have lost.

Stehr (2003) commented that the research paradigms of the past now seem 'outdated and quaint' and are being changed by other forces such as self-induced interdisciplinarity. His perspective regarding the problems of interdisciplinarity draws attention to the need for academia to respond to this socially driven change in research practice. This reinforces that the nature of interdisciplinary research warrants further investigation in Australia.

2.1.5   Doctoral knowledge: knowledge modes & research training

Universities adapt as knowledge needs change. One of their reactions was to create new doctorates such as the professional and practice based doctorates, doctorates by pre published papers or by project. Media theses are not limited to one form of doctorate. Modes of knowledge have been identified and each thesis produces a specific and classifiable type of knowledge. Usher maintains disciplinary Mode 1 knowledge of Gibbons et al. (2000) is "pure or curiosity driven" (Usher, 2002, p.146) and characterises university knowledge. By confining university knowledge to Mode 1, Usher seems sensitive about losing hold of 'tradition'. He considers that "universities have now lost their traditional status as primary producers of 'worthwhile' knowledge" (p.148). He also seems insecure about universities having to share their long-held knowledge producing rights with non-government organisations and other knowledge producing organisations. Although not agreeing with Usher's (2002) view, Nowotny et al. (2001) refute Barnett's (2000) allegation about witnessing the end of knowledge as they contend that "universities are unique in the sense that they both produce knowledge and train future knowledge producers. Moreover, they contain the strategic sites, or home-bases, of both 'research' and 'science' " (Nowotny et al., 2001, p.69).

Mode 2 application-based knowledge is gaining in popularity in areas outside academia (Aken, 2001). Muller and Subotzky (2001) agree that recent focus on "the Mode 2 thesis is something of a fairy tale as it over-homogenizes the evolution of a phenomenon that probably happened much earlier" (p.169). With the recognition of modes of knowledge and changes in research practice, Nowotny et al. (2001) contend the space occupied by science is now no longer guaranteed because the "potential guardians, the state, market and culture, are no longer recognizable there in their old identities, functions and roles" (p.29). The authors

attribute this problem to the birth of a Mode 2 research society which they attest has diminished the role of science. They focus on the role played by Mode 2 knowledge in today's research culture and climate. Nowotny et al. (2001) consider the diversity and innovative opportunities it offers creates a fuzziness or a blurring of categories which impact on both 'modernity' and 'science' and they claim that science has been pushed into "ever more contextualized and contextualising arenas" (p.29).

"In our present time of change, research training seems to have become a hybrid mix of attempts of bundling and unbundling….We have to train students for the world of research – but for which 'research'?" (Enders, 2005, p.130).

Enders asks what type of research training accommodates the various forms new knowledge is taking and the way in which it is being used. He based his argument on the way the PhD in Germany has become linked to the labour market which favours a "traditional academic-disciplinary mode of apprenticeship training" (Enders, 2005, p.119) and suggests that this traditional approach is unsuitable for "research training by a hybrid model that crosses disciplinary and organizational borders" (p.119). Enders believes that the "face of research training" of the future will employ "a diversity of organisational and structural forms as well as different validation criteria and procedures" (p.119).

In response to the need for acceptance of this new genre of knowledge production, Enders (2005) uses the concept of (un)bundling research training. In order to do this, he favours the breaking up of "certain traditional academic disciplinary modes of knowledge production in universities" (p.127). For example, because Gibbons et al's (2000) Mode 2 knowledge requires teamwork in problem solving contexts, Enders agrees with Gibbons (1998) that "this environment will demand different things from them for which, so far at least, very little formal training is available" (Enders, 2005, p.43). Enders looks to the community of practice model established by Lave and Wenger (1991) for researchers who need to work in teams.

2.1.6   Doctoral knowledge: doctoral identities of the future

The studies of Malfroy and Yates (2003) and of Evans, Pearson, Macauley and Tregenza (2003) use different approaches to investigate aspects of research practice in higher education. My qualitative study focuses on a specific type of thesis, the qualitative study of Malfroy et al. (2003) investigates application-based (or practical) doctorates and the quantitative research

of Evans et al. (2003) investigates occurrence of specific theses. These examples demonstrate qualities of contemporary doctoral identities.

1. Mode 2 application-based Doctorates

The research study of Malfroy and Yates (2003) was designed to examine two application-based doctoral studies. The first study was in nursing and midwifery where candidates worked between the hospital and the university to create partnerships. The second study involved local councils and community groups in order to develop a management and monitoring system for a major Australian river system. Malfroy et al. (2003) consider this collaborative type of interactivity is important for knowledge production.

Malfroy et al. (2003) explored the "tensions, relationships, new practices and new outcomes" (p.120) in the hope that innovative practices could emerge. They focused on issues of context, supervision, pedagogy and knowledge production as they related to the way knowledge develops within new doctoral identities. Whereas they consider the professional doctoral program enabled beneficial research, the authors found there were problems for the participant researchers. They inevitably entered the debate as to what constitutes appropriate doctorate research and looked to presentation of the data for answers, including that alternative formats need to meet examination criteria. Because of their immersion in community environments, participant researchers from both doctorates expressed their dilemmas relating to reconfiguring their tacit, experiential and workplace practice knowledge into "a scholarly articulation of their applied knowledge at a deeper and broader level" (p.127). They also struggled with actually doing the practical research work and producing their outcomes as scholarly texts.

Malfroy et al. (2003) concluded that a benefit of undertaking practice-related doctorates is that the candidates had different perspectives on the impact of their work within the workplace community from those of their PhD peers. They stated that knowledge did not reside alone in texts and individuals but in other changes to policy, practices, models, thinking and education which resulted from their research being integrated in the workplace. Their study into practice-based doctorates showed that the researchers shared similar ideas about the development of new knowledge and commitment to the professions and communities of which they were a part.

2. Creative arts in Australia

The social and historical contexts of the PhD is explored by Evans, Pearson, Macauley and Tregenza et al. (2003) who maintain this aspect is less well represented than its theoretical and practical nature. They suggest the submission of creative arts theses "pose[s] challenges in terms of doctoral pedagogy and scholarship" (p.1). The authors agree that, subsequent to the introduction of professional doctorates, doctoral rules have been liberalised for the more specific and characteristic ways in which ways in which research is now conducted and presented. This liberalisation could accommodate the new generation of media theses.

The study of Evans et al. (2003) is significant because it discusses creation, appreciation and representation of formats within the creative arts fields such as painting, music, dance, drama, sculpture, film, video and computer-graphics. They make the distinction between, for example, art which is produced for theses and theses which are produced about art. They consider the former are not as difficult to 'deal with' because the latter are more likely to involve cross-disciplinary study. This raises conundrums for examination where media components emanate from both arts and traditional disciplines.

Four hundred and twenty five theses containing media components from creative arts disciplines were awarded in Australia between 1948 and 2003 (Evans et al., 2003). Evans et al found that fifty-four comprised a major artwork plus an exegesis. The authors maintain Australian theses from creative arts disciplines represent only about 0.8% of all PhDs. They state these theses are mostly text-based and, surprisingly, only 0.1% comprise a major artistic work with an accompanying exegesis leading from the major work. The authors acknowledged the fifty-four PhDs which contained components other than text was an underestimation as judgments were made from bibliographical records and not from the original sources. Professional doctorates were excluded from their calculations. It would be useful to have known how the incidence of media theses from traditional disciplines influenced the statistics reported in their study and for university libraries to identify a lexicon for searching for hard copy and digitally published theses **containing** media components, and excluding those which are written about media.

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Authors who have been represented above have developed ideas and expressed opinions

regarding doctoral practices. A closer look at the research activities and experiences of the doctoral candidates who bring about change in research practices is introduced in the next section.

2.2 THE DOCTORAL EXPERIENCE

Studies on candidates' experiences with media theses were limited within the literature. In this review, literature regarding the doctoral experience includes: justification by candidates of their need to create a media thesis; a study about how a candidate coped with university concerns about her media thesis; general doctoral candidacy research experiences and a paper regarding the benefits of creative doctoral research.

2.2.1   Experience: justification of media in theses

Two doctoral recipients justified why they included media in their doctoral theses. Burrows (2004b) and Auld (2002b) made presentational choices for different reasons.

1. A thesis in a box

"A box, a teddy bear, a tangle of wire and a collection of fragmentary stories lack the serious stamp of science" (Burrows, 2004b, p.6).

Burrows (2004a) was awarded a PhD for his Management Education thesis: A map for getting lost: a study of the use of art, images and artifacts in the development of reflexive practices in management students.

Burrows (2004b) admits he is the type of person for whom boundary pushing and for whom persistently asking 'why?' is part of his nature, especially where he sees a different way of doing things would be a better way, but which bureaucratic requirements could inhibit. Is he an academic legend or, to use his own words – "stupidly heroic?" (p.7). He produced a non-traditional thesis and presented it for examination in a box. Burrows accepts if there were no rules there would be nothing which could be done to test them and there would be no boundaries to could test or transgress.

Whilst boundaries constrain, they also offer the opportunity to experience the phenomena of pushing against or crossing beyond. To Burrows, testing and rule breaking were intrinsic to his management practice and it seemed to him his thesis should exhibit these same attributes,

hence the box, teddy bear etc., which were submitted to comply with the need to test and support his preference to provoke and question rather than to answer. Burrows agrees his collection of artefacts: "a teddy-bear, a twisted wire sculpture, a fragment of a brown paper bag (with a raffia handle), a leather 'detail' axed from a size-nine male business shoe and a shard from a tea-cup" (Burrows, 2004b, p.1) could have been presented from a design faculty. However, he submitted his PhD thesis from a School of Management.

(Used with Burrows' permission)

Figure 4: Image from <u>A bear blanketed by words</u> (Burrows, 2004c)

Burrows (2004b) engaged with authors who wrote about the arts and acts of choice and he connected these ideas with how managers perceive and behave. "The problem addressed by my thesis related to the twin conditions of dulled awareness and distracted attention in managers" and the need to "break through what I perceived to be a rubberised shell of disconnection" (p.3). He determined his thesis would not be *about* his work, but it would *embody* his work and he decided to make that which he was most passionate about – art, art theory and his teaching practice – the focus of his PhD.

Burrows thought

"… the idea that a PhD thesis is an amalgam of words sandwiched between two thick pieces of cardboard is a deeply socialised and taken-for-granted notion but such an idea may not be well suited to practice-based researchers" (Burrows, 2004b, p.6).

He advises students who intend to explore practice-based research to think about creating a non-traditional thesis and blending methodologies and methods to determine a form and shape of the work synonymous with the research topic. He considers his thesis' exegesis acted as a 'thick blanket of words' for the artefacts yet he admits that for examination, the words were of most significance and the artefacts were supplementary.

2. Talking books on a touch screen computer

(Used with Auld's permission)

Figure 5: Kunibídji people using a touch screen computer (Auld, 2002a)

For his thesis <u>Computer Assisted Ndjébbana,</u> Auld (2002a) presented a series of digital talking books created in the Ndjébbana language for the Kunibidji people on touch screen computers, accompanied by a scholarly text – all presented on a DVD. The exegesis met the requirements of academic discourse and the digital video supported the empowerment of the Kunibídji people of Maningrida on the coast of Arnhem Land, Australia. From a theoretical perspective, Auld (2002b) locates the thesis in the centre of critical literacy, a critical theory of technology and critical research methodologies.

A benefit for creating the Ndjébbana narrative digitally was that it permitted the Kunibidji people to become actively involved in critiquing and engaging with the digital material – an activity which an English text-only narrative would have denied or inhibited. From an ideological perspective, Auld felt that the inclusion of spoken opinions were morally and

ethically responsible for creating a truer representation of the Indigenous people as they may not have been able to 'see' themselves in the research had they been only represented textually. He was very pleased that both the oral and written voices of the Indigenous people proved to be a way of authenticating their contribution to scholarly knowledge.

Auld justified creating the thesis' software as it was appropriate for the topic's genre of spoken and visual literacy, it used technology by necessity rather than by preference and it enabled a representation of lived-experience vividly and in the clearest possible format thus eliminating textual ambiguity. He supports the transition of technology from social worlds into knowledge creation and recognises multimedia plays a central role in how arguments are developed and knowledge is conceptualized especially in qualitative research environments.

The use of technology in Auld's thesis created a shift of focus from the traditional bound thesis. This shift highlights that research projects which need to include media should be designed to include it from the outset. Auld considers he used technology for a performance of text and meaning making for Indigenous Australians. He views the evolution of integrating multimodal meaning and elements within text as adding to the integrity of the thesis.

<p align="center">***</p>

These two doctoral candidates included multiple forms of media in their theses for different purposes. Burrows included non-text media because it had a metaphorical connection with his business management topic. Auld included media because it was an essential component of his thesis. The language could have been represented in flat sound files, however the use of interactive tutorials on touch screen computers engaged the intended audience more effectively as Figure 5 delightfully shows. Burrows collected metaphorical artefacts which he did not manufacture. Auld personally recorded and edited his digital media using specialised software and unskilfully, yet effectively, customised it to suit his purposes. Due to the difference between the intent and purpose for their inclusion, these two sets of components would require different examination criteria.

2.2.2 Experience: doctoral candidacies

Whilst the following three studies regarding the doctoral experience do not relate closely to media theses, they are representative of other experience-based ones. The first study was

designed to establish a 'doctoral world' profile (Cumming & Ryland, 2004), the second study represents the difficulties of presenting a thesis (Hunt, 2001) and the third refers to the multi-layered experience of creative doctoral research (Brearley, 2003a).

Working independently and collaboratively as part of an Australian Research Council Linkage Project, PhD candidates Cumming et al. (2004) investigated the study, research, training, work and career development experiences of doctoral candidates to determine how they interrelated to the sphere in which they operated. The quantitative aspect of their research was to obtain information about the contemporary doctoral experience and the qualitative one was to ascertain variations in doctoral education. The researchers' online activities were statistically oriented, their semi-structured interviews with Australian National University candidates were analysed interpretively and Cumming (2004) wrote about his own doctoral experiences. The outcomes were presented as a statistical analysis of the nature of doctoral students regarding population, age, gender, disciplinary gender mix, age across disciplines, demographics, attendance patterns and spread of candidates across disciplines. The researchers formed a profile for the 'typical' PhD student yet they conceded that:

> "… the increased diversity and complexity of the doctoral candidate population suggests that the traditional boundaries between study, research, work and career development are becoming increasingly blurred" (p.11).

Cumming (2004) admitted that "generating a wider range of stories to reflect the diversity of the [research] population" would be valuable (p.12). My research should complement their project's intention which is "to generate new knowledge in doctoral education and to inform the development of Australian postgraduate associations' policies and practices" (p.1).

Hunt (2001) describes difficulties of her doctoral candidacy in <u>Climbing out of the void: moving from chaos to concepts in the presentation of a thesis</u>. Her problem lay in not knowing how to convert her ideas into academic form. The paper describes how she abandoned thesis writing for a year because of her supervisor's negative feedback. To use her words, she "rolled over…and played dead on the academic stage" (p.360). Due to the support of friends and colleagues, she climbed back from being almost defeated. The experience helped her to explore her own personal meanings and values and to recognise that "a choice does not have to be made between either 'my' world-view or 'yours', but that both have their own internal validities, constructions, comparisons and contradictions" (p.360).

In her paper Exploring the Multi-Layered Experience of Undertaking Creative Doctoral Research, Brearley (2003a) explores the creative research experience using an approach to foster emotional, rather than cognitive, engagement with candidates' research journeys. Her methodology was designed to include multiple voices such as narrative, song, poetry and academic literature. Her epistemological justification emanated from authors who challenged the nature of the "omniscient academic observer" (p.3) and advocated the use of more creative forms in ethnography, phenomenology and in educational fields. They further maintained that both cognitive and emotional engagement with these media formats was possible. One of Brearley's practical justifications relates to the idea that "some human experiences are so complex and intensely emotional, that multiple voices may be needed to evoke the texture of the experience" (p.4).

Brearley (2003a) cites Brew's study into the nature of research, Lee and Green who have studied the phenomenon of research and others who relate to theories of learning and knowledge creation. She also cites Hattauer and Broder who found doctoral research to be a potentially transformative experience, and, metaphorically, an "educational odyssey and personal pilgrimage" (p.5). Most of the paper is a reflexive narrative about Brearley's own candidacy. It is disclosing, passionate, informative and inspiring. It "reflect[ed] the substance and emotional intensity of the research experience and foster[ed] an emotional engagement with the data" (p.2).

2.2.3   Experience: acquiring new literacies

In order to meet the needs of future generations of researchers, Bamford (2005) stresses the need for students "to be equipped with the digital languages to be able to make informed decisions about the selection of a language or languages in which to conduct their research and present their findings" (p.7).

Moxley (2001a) explained what 'new media scholarship' means as academic researchers respond to the impact of digitisation and struggle with all the other candidacy requirements. He maintains that many graduate students in the United States of America (USA) fail to complete theses and dissertations because of their unfamiliarity with publishing multimedia.
  "Our concepts of research, the authority of knowledge, and the shape of content are being
    radically challenged. To produce students endowed with Knowledge Age literacy,

universities must provide the resources and training that faculty and graduate students need to write and annotate documents online, to incorporate visuals with a degree of sensitivity of their rhetorical value, and to publish and metatag documents on the Web (for efficient retrieval)" (Moxley, 2001b, p.63).

These needs will become of greater significance if Australian universities request compulsory digital thesis submission as pioneered at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the USA.

2.2.4   Experience: the Net. Gen. & research skills

Lippincott (2005) compares technologically handicapped researchers who fear not being able to use technology with the ones who want to use it and want to use it innovatively. In some cases, she feels the Internet generation (Net. Gen.) does not know how to transfer their social use of technology into academia. This also creates a problem for those who do not know how to translate their analogue world into the digital age of computer literacy for, say, database research or for thesis formatting and for using specific information technologies required by their academic disciplines.

In order to form a training response, Lippincott (2005) stresses that the characteristics of the Net. Gen. candidates differ from, for example, the 'baby boomer' generation. She considers that the Net. Gen. prefer to multi-task, prefer experiential learning, are visually oriented, are more interested in working in groups than individually, are fast and mobile, want quick responses and can work anywhere and at any time and want global collaboration and worldwide access to their research products. Yet she adds that they need better "grounding in using technology in academic work and need the tools and skills to facilitate that use" (p.2). These technologies may include knowing how to search disciplinary related electronic databases for specific topics, how to use qualitative or quantitative evaluation software or how to produce interactive websites with multiple forms of media.

Lippincott (2005) heralds the problems which are going to continue in research practices as Net. Gen. students enter universities where "theses have developed within a higher education system that tends to be linear and focused, is text-based, and emphasizes independent, and even isolated, solo learning" (p.1). She suggests universities could make changes to support their learning and knowledge production styles by "providing new types of environments,

training in information policy issues, multimedia....and new tools to facilitate their work"
(p.1).

She considers efforts by universities fall well short of current information technology training requirements for candidates and explores some of the types of processes for which they should receive training. Lippincott stresses the importance of meeting candidates' needs as they, in turn, are likely to be future supervisors of candidates who will want to work in multimedia and multiple media formats. She asks the question: "Who is responsible for teaching students about these issues?" (p.4). Both Harris (2005) and Lippincott (2005) place such services within university libraries. Whether it is the responsibility of campus libraries to provide undergraduate and/or postgraduate students with IT related research training is, from my experience in a university Library, open to discussion [18]. Lippincott includes her ideas about 'the perfect support service' and refers to those available at the University of Tennessee [19], USA.

The characteristics of the Net. Gen. give insight into their technological readiness for candidature. Decisions regarding broad-based or specific training needs of Australian doctoral candidates' needs to be formed from outcomes derived from research into the technological training needs for contemporary research practices. Forming a training response which takes into consideration characteristics of the Net. Gen., the X and Y generations and the 'baby boomers', designating responsibility within the university to meet technological training needs for their specific academic disciplines and providing on going and just-in-time support for doctoral candidates would be an ideal response to Lippincott's paper. This study may confirm that a response such as this is appropriate.

2.3 SUPERVISING MEDIA THESES CANDIDATES

This section comprises supervisors' opinions of media theses; media theses in the creative arts disciplines; cross-disciplinary supervisory practices; composition advice and supervisory relationships.

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[18] The American Library Association's standards in Fluency for Information Technology (2007) are useful.
http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm
[19] http://www.utk.edu/librariesandtech/

2.3.1   Supervision: opinions

When candidates invent ways of presenting doctoral knowledge, they require more customised supervision. Several authors agree that supervisory practices for media thesis candidates should be more widely discussed. Conrad (2003) considers the experience of supervising non-traditional thesis candidates has received little attention and she noted that "the issues of diversity in the content or methods of research....have only begun to be addressed" (p.2). Malfroy et al. (2003) comment there is little evidence to show that universities are formally recognising the need for new supervisory practices. Ashburn (2003) also maintains:

> "… there is no doubt that including a practical studio component with a thesis/dissertation has contributed to concerns regarding the definition of projects, their quality, their supervision and assessment" (p.1).

In response to this situation, Conrad (2003) investigated postgraduate supervision, at a university in England and at one in Australia, in the context of "interdisciplinarity, the rise of new disciplines, increasing fragmentation of disciplines, and the rise of new research paradigms" (p.1). Her interpretivist study emanated from her observation of different disciplinary cultures and the struggles regarding worth and value within them. She decided to investigate postgraduate supervision from her perspective as a university lecturer, from her observation of recent literature and from the establishment of new university disciplines. She wanted to discover how people who function in an academic environment consider the changing nature of research affected their practices. Specific purposes of the study were to:

> "… (a) identify discrete understandings of what a non-traditional thesis is and (b) suggest the diversity of supervisors' perceptions of the supervision issues or problems they face" (p.1).

She thought that the responses would highlight problems regarding the current variety of research frameworks which Brew (in Conrad, 2003) indicated went beyond the traditional ways of creating new knowledge.

Questions she asked the supervisors concerned what they thought 'non-traditional' or 'marginal' meant in relation to theses, whether they identified problems, benefits or coping strategies and how they thought the non-traditional thesis could be managed in research

environments. Most supervisors thought the term 'non-traditional' in research referred to "features of a particular non-traditional thesis they were supervising – suggest[ing] that theses could be considered marginal because they challenged either specifically academic norms or more general non-academic norms" (p.5). Supervisors thought this type of thesis challenged the standard thesis especially when candidates included a "performance, creative art form such as a film with written analysis or original computer art in a thesis submitted in a faculty of technology" (p.6) with the written thesis.

Her study indicated both resistance to and support for non-traditional theses. Supervisors identified that university policies were too unrefined to deal with 'alternative' work and that the works did not fit into institutional initiatives. The thought also prevailed that the United Kingdom and Australia would benefit more from people thinking or acting similarly in research activities rather than 'suffer' from diversity of content and method. Conrad also identified that an accentuated feeling of isolation was experienced by candidates who produced non-traditional work. Her supervisor participants considered that:

> "… there is a great pressure on people to continue with things even when it's obvious to all concerned that it's simply not suitable and everybody is made miserable by the process….high risk projects are these days very strongly frowned upon" (p.10).

Encouragingly, and despite her preconception that "a non-traditional thesis would be defined as 'against the grain' "(p.13) of traditional research, Conrad concluded most supervisors found such work valuable and equal to the quality of traditional research. Her summary concludes that "non-traditional research is seen not as subverting the ideals of traditional research but fulfilling them in ways that are responsive to larger social needs as well as expressive of the need for greater academic creativity" (p.13).

2.3.2   Supervision: creative arts media theses

Considering her role as a Supervisor in creative arts disciplines, Arnold (2005) states that she:

> "… was very aware of the dead hand of conventions upon the structure of the thesis and at the same time unable to get a very clear and precise picture of the elements of those conventions as they apply to the elements of the creative artefact and the exegesis" (p.2).

Experience has shown Ashburn (2003) that supervising candidates who create theses with, say dance or film, is different from supervising traditional doctoral candidates. She states that

difficulties relate to traditional theses supervisory guidelines being inadequate for supervising arts theses and that there is a lack of uniform practice and guidelines in universities for fine arts doctorates.

She likens supervising in the fine arts disciplines as "more like sitting together in the front seat of a roller coaster" (p.4). One of the hazards relates to the way experienced artists want to write about their work in many voices. As they create their art, they naturally display a wider spectrum of human emotions. Ashburn recognises – as art is the artist's most familiar language – writing the exegesis may provide more problems than for the traditional candidate. She attests it is more difficult for arts candidates to attain the same level of expertise with their writing skills as they do with their art works. Ashburn has also noticed candidates for whom this problem exists, try to compensate either by creating 'deep' and 'academic' styles of writing in order to justify the level of the award or by deviating to another tangent in order to comply with what they consider to be genuine research. From a different perspective, very passionate people who author 'text only' theses may find it unnatural to constrain their personality as they endeavour to write using more formal language.

Many supervisors express their opinions about the composition of creative arts media theses. Ashburn (2003) understands that "any aspect of research should be there because the student's topic justifies it and not [just] to make the thesis 'academically respectable' " (p.3). Complementary to this regarding creative writing in doctoral degrees, Bourke and Neilsen (2004) elaborate on the tension between a creative stand-alone project and one which requires supporting documentation (p.2). They consider this tension "leads students to question whether they should be required to write an exegesis in order to 'validate' their Creative Writing research" (p.2). They question "the usefulness of particular kinds of exegetical practice for both the student and for the (imagined/potential) reader" (p.2). Macleod and Holdridge (2004) state some research cultures in the United Kingdom and the European Union consider the exegesis is essential. Others argue that theses with exegeses are equivalent to doing a double doctorate.

Bell (2006) acknowledges there are epistemological difficulties in creative arts practice and perhaps these difficulties could emulate those of all media theses. He recommends a "process of systematic research investigation" (p.85) be established to account for the individualism of academic research in these disciplines "to be delineated and given due intellectual

recognition" (p.85). He notes that "we have been slow to adumbrate [20] a distinctive research paradigm or establish a set of methodological precepts to render" (p.87) a documented process for this type of research. This echoes a similar need for all media theses.

2.3.3   Supervision: across-disciplines

Ashburn (2003) suggests it is beneficial for students where supervisors from other disciplines are required in cross-disciplinary study. Where fine arts doctorates are interdisciplinary, she has experienced that they require joint supervision and that participation with supervisors from other disciplines can be stimulating and challenging for fine arts supervisors. In order to address the shortfall occurring when a candidate specialises within two disciplines, Ashburn expressed that "sympathetic co-supervisors from these fields can be a blessing to the supervisor when sallying into cross-discipline studies" (p.3).

However, some authors do not support this idea. Elkins (2004) considers it is inappropriate for experts in different academic disciplines to critique the text component of an artistic thesis. Conrad (2003) agrees difficulties arise when a supervisor is required to criticise a work which is situated in one discipline, but which relates to fields of knowledge outside his or her own discipline. She suggests this type of situation can cause anxiety and apprehension, no doubt for the supervisor and the candidate. Concern was also expressed in Conrad's study about supervising at the edge of one's expertise. Burrows (2004b) recommends for cross-disciplinary research, that supervisors need to have matching cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills. In this respect he also suggests a team of supervisors be created to meet the extraordinary circumstances and that the candidate may need to orchestrate the supervisors' activities. He supports collegiality of this type is increasing as "people are finding their way to each other" (p.8).

It can be beneficial when a variety of academic staff give input to a candidate's work. It may also create complications which are likely to be avoided if the candidates' supervisors are either colleagues and if they both understand the candidate and his or her approach to the work. Conrad's (2003) suggestions for candidacy management include to: arrange an informal committee; recognise the principal supervisor may not be an expert in all aspects of the research; maintain quality; and look for indicators of the candidate's depth of knowledge

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[20] In this sense 'adumbrate' means to give even the faintest of an outline to.

and confidence.

2.3.4   Supervision: composition advice

When candidates choose to include media components in their theses, Holian (2001) suggests supervisors may be unsure about advising candidates and that the wrong advice may lead:

"… students to take 'risky' paths that may not lead to the qualification they wish to obtain….or of advising them to be too conservative, thereby 'blocking' innovative and creative ideas which may have led to significant and original contribution to knowledge of fact and/or theory" (p.205).

Whereas there are joint decisions to be made during candidacy regarding what to include and what to exclude in a dissertation, Holian proposes that the nature of supervisory skills needs further examination in order to meet the needs of candidates who produce novel forms of data collection and representation.

Ashburn (2003) suggests although one may have greater weight than the other, neither the studio component nor the written text be neglected. She recommends that "the studio work should not be a mere appendage but serve some integral purpose, such as a demonstration of the ideas developed in the thesis" (p.4). A student commented to her about the advantages of developing the written and the artistic components at the same time. Ashburn also suggests that supervisors help candidates to develop strategies to organise and plan because time-limited artistic and creative people often find pressure dulls the creative processes.

As more candidates produce media theses and publish journal articles about their experiences, best practice principles may emerge. Those for whom combining text and other components in a scholarly work is a novel experience, may benefit from Bamford's (2005) advice. She considers that the more 'open and reflexive' the work; the more it lends itself to critical evaluation. So she recommends that candidates need to apply extra rigour to meet validity whilst ensuring that the "digital process encourages holistic data embedded with personal meaning and value" (p.3) and that the "digital and virtual form exists as a balance between intellectual, moral and aesthetic values" (p.3). Her admonition that dissertations "in the arts design field should engender passion, actively promote conversations, be a catalyst, and be evident of artistic vision" (p.7) presents an exciting challenge for candidates to intertwine their scholarly activities with an abundant range of suitable media and/or presentation

choices.

2.3.5   Supervision: relationships

The correct relationship between a candidate and supervisors of media theses is important and several authors offer advice for engendering beneficial supervisory support for media thesis candidates.

The literature shows that the way that people were supervised as candidates often influences how they supervise their own candidates. Burrows' (2004b) view for the future is that with an increase in non-traditional theses, the candidates of yesterday will become the supervisors and examiners of tomorrow and help meet the need for innovative research practices. McAlpine and Norton (2006) confirm that:

> "What individuals learn during their doctoral education may lead them to understand their role as supervisors in ways which perpetuate the traditional culture of their discipline" (p.9).

Delamount, Atkinson & Parry (2000) reported that a lecturer decided to keep:

> "… a very close eye on graduate students because I felt remarkably scarred by my own experience....when I was a graduate student I didn't have any supervision at all....I do feel strongly about care and attention" (p.137).

Brearley calls for a greater number of supervisors who understand both the traditional and the alternative research environments "so that they can act as role models, mentors and advocates for greater flexibility within the academic system" (in Boucher, 2001, p.190). She also recommends that supervisors need to know the system well, be perceptive when guiding students, maintain correct academic standards and rigour within new research paradigms, develop creative literacy skills and to develop relationships with examiners who are familiar with and receptive to alternative representations of data in theses. Universities, which provide support for their academic staff in achieving these goals, are addressing the status quo.

Other authors discuss the qualities of beneficial supervisory/candidate relationships and that artistic people have special needs for freedom and autonomy. Beneficial supervisory relationships in the fine arts, as Bibby states, are often "characterised by mutual requirements of trustworthiness, in which neither side has total dominance" (in Ashburn, 2003, p.2).

Conrad (2003) recommends the candidate and supervisor relationship be imbued with the same sort of friendly respect which siblings may have for each other. It has been Ashburn's (2003) experience that artists may often be more mature practitioners who are driven by passion and are accustomed to forming their own creative paths. This group of candidates need time to build confidence in their supervisors to permit them entry into their private and creative spaces where "mutual understanding and partnership are ideal approaches" (p.3). Brearley (2004) recommends that:

"… there is a need to develop research supervisors who understand the language and rationale of alternative forms of inquiry....who can work with both traditional and alternative research paradigms and who can act as role models, mentors and advocates for greater flexibility within the academic system" (p.10).

Bamford (2005) portends that there are few qualified and experienced practice-based research supervisors in arts faculties with the result that candidates may unfortunately be supervised and examined by academic staff who are less experienced in research when artistic work and exegesis form the complete thesis. Lang (2002) points out that tensions are created between students who immerse themselves in neo-media and the faculty who are not fully experienced in analysing or creating such works. However, Malfroy and Yates (2003) encouragingly note that, "although there appears to be a reliance on fairly traditional supervisory modes, in practice a broader picture of supervisory roles is emerging" (p.125).

If supervisors and candidates discuss their mutually beneficial media thesis journeys in academic journals and at conferences, principles of best practice regarding the candidate/supervisor relationships with media theses should emerge.

2.4 EXAMINING MEDIA THESES

Academic authors express how media theses alter examination needs. They discuss the problems of assessment; artistry and scholarship; the ideal of educational connoisseurship; problems relating to expertise and examiners' media preferences.

2.4.1   Examining: problem of assessment/establishment of criteria

As more students produce media theses from both creative arts and traditional disciplines and, in order to keep pace with how technological changes impact on research presentation modes, examination practices need be addressed. Usher (2002) for example, considers that

doctorates by project pose problems of accreditation and assessment. Bamford (2005) queries how assessment, authenticity and authorship will be managed and whether practical work will be judged more in terms of skill and competence or in its critical analysis and the weight of digital media versus text. She notes that digital media with aesthetic qualities benefit from an accompanying dialogue which is more aesthetic and persuasive than text-only dialogue, that the value of a digital thesis comprises both merit and worth, and she suggests criteria from which both these qualities may be judged. This opens up the question of how examiners expect theory and practice to be linked in media theses and the weight they should assign to each element.

Bamford (2005) commends the 'brave' institutions which have attempted to establish ways of determining "equivalence, authenticity and validity" for electronic theses (p.2). If only some 'brave' institutions adapt by identifying new criteria for awarding doctorates to candidates who create media theses, what becomes of candidates' works whose universities have not acted so bravely?

For example, in light of the establishment of a PhD in creative writing at her university, Arnold (2005) discusses the format of examination criteria for PhDs which include artefacts and an exegesis. She believes new genres of research are of value to the academy yet also problematic because their duality can be seen as "complementary but different" (p.3). In her paper The Embodied Thesis, Phillips (2003) asks: "can performances, like written theses, 'analyse and explain', is dance 'legible' and how can such knowledge be stored?" (p.1). These ideas suggest examination of media theses could include a combination of traditional examination criteria and specific criteria for other media.

2.4.2   Examining: criteria

Expertise with examining text-based theses may not equip an examiner to appraise media in theses as they have different sets of value, merit and worth (Bamford, 2005). Bamford makes a case for "form as an alternative to validity" (p.1) and claims that the problems of thesis creation in the arts relate to the act of balancing the practical and creative aspects with the theoretical component. She notes counterproductive restrictions exist when universities delineate boundaries between "*poiesis* (conception) and *techné* (knowledge and skills)" (p.1).

This situation gets to the heart of media thesis construction as it influences the evaluation of

these two entities. It leads to her argument that the research community needs to expand the boundaries of value and merit for both 'traditional' and media dissertations. This can be achieved if examiners and supervisors take advantage of opportunities to engage in "deeper levels of aesthetic appreciation" (Bamford, 2005, p.2). Whereas this quality is engendered in academic staff from artistic fields, it may be less likely to be so for examination purposes in staff from the natural sciences. However, with the increasing popularity of cross-disciplinary study and new trends in thesis composition, special consideration needs to be taken for academic staff, for example, from an environmental science background who are required to examine a music composition in a thesis.

Sankaran, Swepson and Hill's (2005) study relates to the question of whether thesis examiners needed training. Their data was collected in the form of practitioners' stories. Their reflections and conclusions included insightful indicators regarding examiners' experiences. They concluded that candidates were not prepared for the examination process because neither they nor their examiners were aware of the criteria and process for choosing examiners. They believed research communities need to know the criteria which examiners use and that problems would be avoided if the examiner could converse with other examiners, supervisors or candidates prior to examination. They recommended formation of communities of practice to enable discussion between examiners and groups to examine media components collaboratively.

Holbrook, Dally, Graham and Lawry (2004) conducted interview-based research into examiners' experiences with artistic works and exegeses. Examiners thought their roles evolved and that they needed:

> "… to demonstrate flexibility in order to cope with the variations in institutional requirements, to demonstrate empathy with candidates, to have openness and wisdom in their judgement and should strive to be 'fair and reasonable' assessors" (p.14).

However, they did not accept the concept of collaborative judgement for artistic works of Sankaran et al. (2005). They stated they would prefer to function independently and to make objective judgments. As a solution to the problem, Boucher (2001) suggests traditional examination criteria will soon have to be reconsidered. She points out that fine arts works require different examination criteria as they are not only examined for their creative qualities, but how they help engagement with the research topic and how it assists

understanding of relevant issues. She emphasises that "we may have examination panels who must consider work both as art and scholarship" (p.210). As a guide, Arnold (2005) suggests qualities for both the artefact and the exegesis. She has created examination criteria for both purposes.

The concept of educational connoisseurship [21] and practice plays a role in qualitative analysis. Eisner (1991) stresses the importance of educational connoisseurship and criticism as the ability to perceive what is educationally significant in each situation and criticism is the ability to describe, interpret and evaluate what has happened. Schwandt emphasises the concept encompasses:

"… how enquirers develop an enhanced a capacity to perceive the qualities that comprise the educational experience….and develop the skills to render those perceptions in….forms that portray, interpret and appraise education phenomena" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.129).

This ability requires the eye and the mind of a connoisseur of educational practice (Eisner, 1998). Its interplay is useful for understanding students' conceptual practices; for evaluating their experiences relating to both linking textual thesis components with descriptive, demonstrative or cultural objects and artefacts and for the way supervisors and examiners evaluate them.

Eisner (1997) agrees new forms of presentation require new criteria of assessment and people who are experienced in such evaluation should be employed. Lang (2002) agrees an examination problem exists and asks:

"… how, on a local level, should dissertation committees who have a high level of expertise in content areas but perhaps little or no expertise in working with new forms of publication, evaluate students' work?" (p.681).

One of Conrad's (2003) supervisor participants recognized "it is crucial to get examiners with a respect for original creative work, and an understanding of the many forms of communication which can be used to report on research" (p.12).

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[21] Apperception and educational connoisseurship are terms relating to how works with dual artistic and scholarly qualities are valued. Eisner uses the example of wine tasting: the perceptive wine connoisseur is prepared to take a more intuitive approach to assessing the qualities of fine wine. The novice wine buff takes a less intuitive approach.

2.4.3   Examining: examiners' media preferences

Is it necessary to consider the preferred reading, viewing or listening mode of the intended audience when creating a media thesis? An examiner may not wish for example, to read onscreen, or alternate between paper and screen or alternate between different computer programs to view multimedia. Would this preference influence the examination process? In this respect, Bamford (2005) considers research presentation and publication have "changed the separation between the agencies of producer/creator and audience" (p.1). She lauds a benefit to the reader or traveller 'through' digital theses as an opportunity to encounter the "engaging 'conversations' through the rich sensory description" (p.2) afforded by media components. In depth research into examiners' preferred modes of reading or viewing thesis works would help guide candidates' modes of presentation and perhaps influence media theses submission policies.

2.5 PUBLISHING MEDIA THESES

2.5.1   Publishing: the situation

When candidates submit theses with forms of media, it inevitably leads to their need for online publication. This is a developing endeavour for Australian students. The sharing of new knowledge via the Internet is advantageous yet it raises technological problems for digital publishing houses. However, to deflect criticism about the question of sustaining access to digitally published theses, Moxley (2001) responds:

> "In my opinion, a document that can be read over the course of several years by many people is preferable to a document available for a million years and read only by a few people" (p.63).

Lippincott (2005) suggests universities would benefit from the processes and practices employed by the American based Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) [22] which supports preparation for and publication of digital theses [23]. Australian Digital Theses (ADT), the main digital thesis repository in Australia, does not currently present a wide range of media [24]. The Australian Research Repositories Online to the World

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[22] http://www.ndltd.org/
[23] The Adobe website gives instructions on how to convert theses for digital publication.
[24] http://adt.caul.edu.au/

(ARROW) [25] Discovery services initiative will have the capacity to 'harvest' metadata from those institutional libraries who use ARROW software. ARROW brings into play renewed copyright issues and the potential for it to act in competition with conventional web publishers (Lafferty, 2007). This initiative not only involves technological research training for doctoral candidates but also requires campus wide awareness and training for staff who are involved with creating and publishing educational and academic materials.

2.5.2   Publishing: the perils

Regarding research publishing procedures, Malins and Gray (1991) admit digital theses have both benefits and limitations and require specific considerations in terms of navigation, technology, support, format and development. They suggest it is problematic for digital theses emanating from practice-based research which are more likely to include media in a variety of visual and increasingly interactive formats. Inhibitors to the production of digital theses includes the time taken to conceive, develop and prepare media, that access to familiar and new technologies is difficult for candidates and that technology training is too time intensive (Malins & Grey, 1991).

Similarly, Harris (2005) considers the technological issues relating to publishing theses with multimedia and artistic components such as "sound, visual, installation, exhibition or web-based material" (p.1). To demonstrate challenges and problems of publishing theses digitally Harris used the example of a thesis which combined a live website with a 60,000-word exegesis. The multi-layered, multi-component website required the viewer to navigate through text, static and moving images and soundscapes. The work needed to be accessed by an examiner on a live website as the entire work was too large to fit on a portable storage device. Lippincott (2005) also discusses issues relating to publishing media theses online including digital simulations, multimedia, 3D visualisations and other forms of digital media. She notes they are largely absent from electronic theses and dissertations databases.

Harris (2005) acknowledges the difficulties involved in reproducing theses for examination and publication on the World Wide Web and in archiving and retaining accessibility to these media. She notes the impact of this type of thesis has on research stakeholders. She stresses the need for research training in information technology, the possibilities of standardising

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[25] http://www.arrow.edu.au

software and identifying preferred presentation formats. She notes McGill University (USA) [26] suggests universities establish conversion services for media theses. These issues are now gaining attention at worldwide Electronic Theses and Dissertations [27] conferences.

2.5.3   Publishing: the promises

Some universities in the US only accept electronic submission of theses (Moxley, 2000) and this practice is likely to become more common in Australia. Lang (2002) considers inroads made by information technology and multimedia provide for "a dazzling array of research and scholarly possibilities" (p.681). Malins et al. (1999) predicted these possibilities related to the use of manipulative, evaluative and web-based presentation technologies which are transportable, easy to store and to publish new material and are cheaper to publish. They recognised that online publishing gives candidates the opportunity to become part of global research communities. They suggested other benefits of digital theses included the use of sensory and interactive media, the interactivity provided by hypertext links, the potential for web-based databases and the use of QTVR to rotate and view objects from different angles.

The following examples demonstrate a range of digital publishing styles and options. Malins et al. (1999) present examples of theses with a web-based interface. Web published theses permit the viewer to make navigational choices which are different from the 'front to back' intention of a hard bound thesis.

Figure 6: Opening screen of a web-based UK media thesis (Burt, *circa* 1999)

[26] http://www.mcgill.edu
[27] http://www.ndltd.org/community.en.html

The opening screen of Burt's PhD thesis: <u>The Use of Multimedia for Art and Design Practitioners</u> (Malins et al., 1999) is more sensational than the tables of contents of this thesis. The icons and terminology hold meaning for readers who are familiar with traditional thesis contents and help them to make correct navigation choices.

Figure 7 shows how Ma's (2003) thesis' title page displays the files of its composition. It was submitted electronically and published on the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Electronic Thesis and Dissertations website [28].

Files	Filename	Size	Approximate Download Time (Hours:Minutes:Seconds)				
			28.8 Modem	56K Modem	ISDN (64 Kb)	ISDN (128 Kb)	Higher-speed Access
	chapt4mov.tar	211.95 Mb	16:21:14	08:24:38	07:21:33	03:40:46	00:18:50
	chapt5mov.tar	184.92 Mb	14:16:07	07:20:17	06:25:15	03:12:37	00:16:26
	chapt6mov.tar	35.92 Mb	02:46:18	01:25:31	01:14:50	00:37:25	00:03:11
	readme.txt	0.88 Kb	< 00:00:01	< 00:00:01	< 00:00:01	< 00:00:01	< 00:00:01
	RM_Dissertation.pdf	19.68 Mb	01:31:05	00:46:51	00:40:59	00:20:29	00:01:44

Figure 7: File structure of a digitally published multiple media thesis (Ma, 2003)

The memory size of the files and the capacity of the Internet connection determines the length of time it takes to download them. The compressed file <u>chapt6mov.tar</u> contained the following movie clips. The movies add a dimension to understanding which one-dimensional graphs or diagrams could not convey.

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[28] http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/
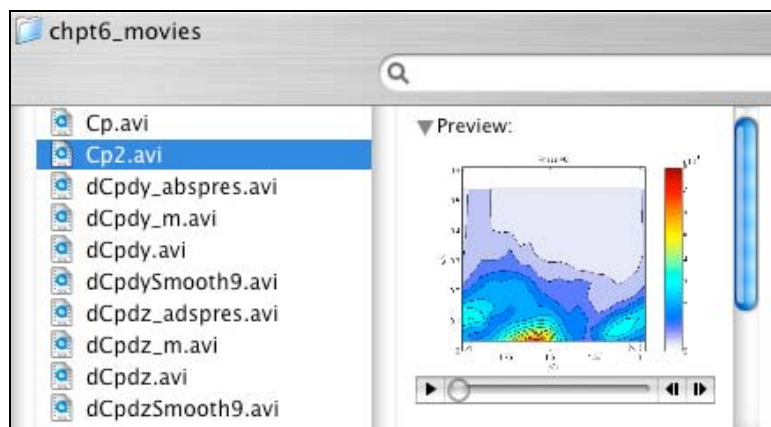
Figure 8: Chapt6mov.tar file's contents decompressed (Ma, 2003)

Figure 9 shows the conventional digital publishing format with collapsible and expandable sections.
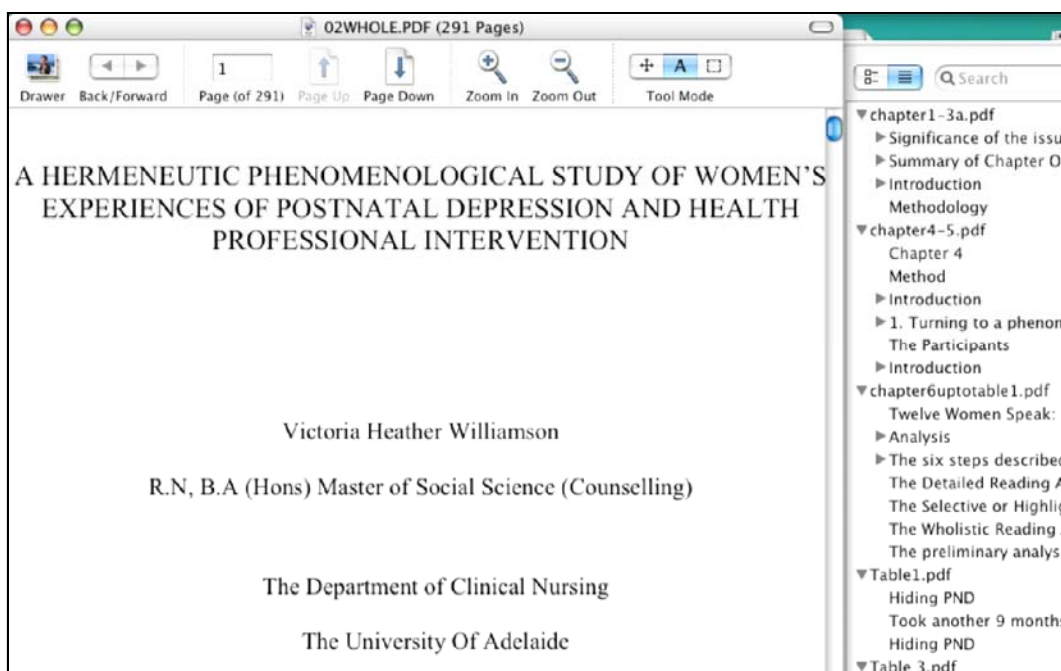
Figure 9: Title page of a digitally published single media thesis (Williamson, 2005)

The thesis represented in Figure 10 contains one main .pdf file and QuickTime movie files. They are especially suitable for this thesis regarding deaf and hearing cultures, as sign language is able to be displayed authentically as opposed to still frame images of different actions [29].

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[29] This thesis won an Innovative ETD Award from the Electronic Theses and Dissertations. http://www.ndltd.org/awards/awards2007.en.html
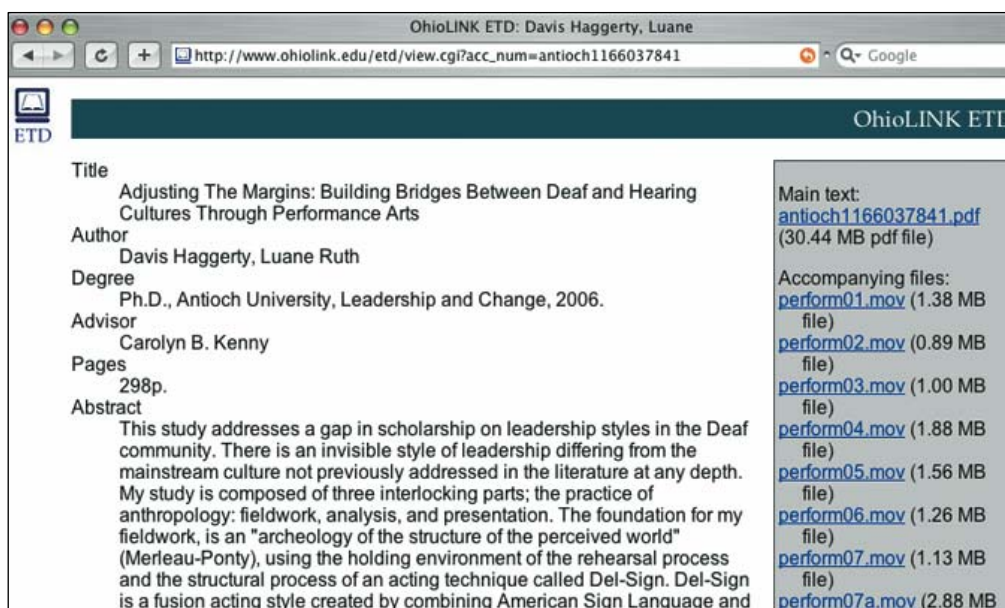
Figure 10: Title page of a digitally published multiple media thesis (Haggerty & Ruth, 2006) [30]

2.5.4 Publishing: the future

"We have difficulty imagining what dissertations or academic digital libraries will look like ten years from now" (Moxley, 2000, p.1).

Future generations may consider the above examples as unadventurous and conventional. Lippincott (2005) defines a generation of students whose learning preferences differ from those of most people who studied and researched in the 20th century. Because this generation has been born and raised in a technological age, it is assumed they are more familiar with using technological tools to enable them to study, communicate, use computers for entertainment. This would enhance their ability to produce and electronically publish theses and media.

Research publishing initiatives need to keep pace with thesis composition modes. In order to accommodate the future generation of research publishers, Lang (2002) urges that it would be ethically irresponsible to defer discussion of the electronic composition and distribution of dissertations. Unless these discussions occur, candidates will continue to take the risk that in efforts to meet departmental expectations regarding print-based works, and they will be preparing for an environment which no longer exists. Thus she determined that "we have a responsibility to equip students for their futures, rather than for our past" (p.694).

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[30] http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd/view.cgi?acc_num=antioch1166037841

SUMMARY

"Academics stand on a precipice separating our past, when genres of communication evolved slowly, and our future, when new genres emerge overnight. Our concepts of research, the authority of knowledge, and the shape of content are being radically challenged" (Moxley, 2000, p.1).

Eisner (1997) subscribes that these challenges are linked to unfamiliarity with unconventional approaches to research, examination and consequent publishing difficulties. His hope is that research practice will produce hybrid forms of research and use different approaches within the same study. Regarding the role change plays and will increasingly continue to play in research practices of the future, Brew (2001a) explains there are choices to be made for the future of research in both the topics chosen and methodology. She warns that "to be constrained by narrow agendas because we are unaware of alternatives or afraid of retribution is unforgivable" (p.183). This literature review has shown that there are aspects of knowledge creation which invite opportunities for making choices which will inevitably determine the "future of research" (Brew, 2001a).

In terms of responding to the *status quo*, the university is engaged in a cyclical state of change. By observing the current situation, it has choices to make as to whether it creates new policy or derives policy from present activity. Choices inevitably arise from the nature of research practice. These relate to new ways of providing technical support, new ways of providing supervision, determining criteria for interrelationship of thesis components, and identifying new ways of examining and publishing contemporary research models.

The literature also shows that, in order to determine policy change, several 'environmental' indicators need to be considered. In a research world where traditional philosophies meet more radical ones, it shows that there needs to be accommodation and compromise. The boundary pushers function in an environment of supercomplexity and interdisciplinarity and bring innovative and novel representational models to the research scene which complicate sustainability, create states of flux and have the potential to alter traditional doctoral practices. As different types of knowledge are formed, the literature shows that they blur the boundaries

of traditional categories of doctoral modes of knowledge. (Barnett, 2000; Gibbons et al, 2000; Eisner, 2001; Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons, 2001; Stehr, 2003; Barnacle, 2005).

The literature indicated that doctoral candidates who used multiple forms of media in their theses made various methodological and production choices. (Auld, 2002b; Malfroy & Yates, 2003, Burrows 2004b). These related to determining the purpose of media and to making choices regarding presentational and representational technologies. Candidates questioned whether they should tread safer traditional paths, or embrace more radical approaches; whether they should cross over disciplines; include lifelong learning skills and knowledge in their research method; determine how or whether to use multi-literacies; or whether to 'speak' from their own worldview or from another 'generic' worldview. Another issue which arose from the literature was the availability of reliable technological support. (Holian, 2001; Conrad, 2003; Arnold, 2005; Bamford, 2005, Lippincott, 2005).

A range of choices which supervisors made during the media thesis journey was illuminated in the literature. They fell into three categories: managing themselves, the candidate and the work.

Studies showed that supervisors who were unfamiliar with supervising media thesis candidate had to make choices. These choices included: reconciling with their own opinions of multiple media theses; deciding what contribution they could make to the work; determining if the researcher's area of expertise was outside their own purview; knowing where to find supervisor mentors; deciding who to invite into the research/supervisor relationship; and whether they thought that a candidate's work may be too diverse. (Ashburn, 2003; Conrad, 2003; Burrows, 2004b; Arnold, 2005).

The studies indicated that supervisors' management of candidates involved making choices relating to their approaches to the work. They included: knowing whether to, or how to, advise candidates to proceed with the multiple media work; knowing when to offer help and when to allow freedom; knowing what was quality 'artistic' work in a non-creative arts thesis; knowing how to advise a candidate whose artistic expression was more advanced than his or her academic expression. (Ashburn, 2003; Brearley, 2004; Bamford, 2005).

Choices required which related to managing the work included: choosing how much weight to assign to each element; knowing how to work with an exegesis; knowing what to do if the supervisor was unfamiliar with the research language; working with media which was considered too diverse and/or posed a risk for examination. The study also showed that choices needed to be made if a candidate wished to express him or herself passionately and/or emotionally in the thesis. (Holian, 2001; Ashburn, 2003; Bourke & Neilsen, 2004; Arnold, 2005; Bamford, 2005).

The literature shows that the process of examining media theses needs to be more firmly established in universities' examination policies. The wide variety of types of doctorates and the types of media contained within theses which emanate from a range of artistic and traditional disciplines indicates what a complicated process this inevitably presents. It was stressed that a fair and reasonable examination process needs to take into account theses which contain artistic, descriptive or interpretive media. Choices need to be made regarding how to handle media thesis examination; how to deal with mixed genre theses and how to form examination criteria based on the way media contributes to knowledge. From the review, it emerged that examiners need awareness training for multiple forms of media in theses and in educational connoisseurship. It also showed that examiners need to be able to make the correct choices regarding which forms of media attract what examination criteria and how much weight should be ascribed to each object. (Eisner, 1997, 1991, 1998; Boucher, 2001; Lang, 2002; Phillips, 2003; Bamford, 2005; Arnold, 2005).

The literature review engages briefly with digital thesis publishing. It shows current trends in the formation and contribution to digital depositories for both text only, media theses and other objects for educational use. Criticisms have been levelled at the problems of digital publishing. Those who have chosen to disregard this criticism and who have taken advantage of digital thesis publishing have had the door of choice opened even wider and have witnessed the possibility of an ever-increasing capacity the World Wide Web has developed in publishing digital objects. The problems of the future will be to keep all digital publishing options in view and this will inevitably lead to complicating the concept of choice. (Malins & Gray, 1991; Mosley, 2000, 2001; Lang, 2002; Harris, 2005; Lippincott, 2005).

The topics covered in this review form a framework of knowledge around the research paradigm of multiple media theses. The review shows that specific aspects of the traditional

research environment influence media theses. The tangential and relational subjects show that many higher education authors would consider the topic of this study is important. They have expressed their opinions, offered cautions, made suggestions and recommendations, discussed impacts and given advice for the future. The picture this literature review paints is incomplete. From my research study it may be possible to gain a better understanding of what is occurring in the conceptual, creative and production phases of research practice with media theses. Only by looking critically at the present, can we begin to form strategies for managing the future.

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3   CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter shows how characteristics of qualitative research were embedded in this study, the methodological approach for the study's two phases, the data gathering method, research and interview questions and it also justifies the use of case studies for <u>Phase 1</u> of the research.

3.1   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This qualitative research study was pursued within the domain of human experience by engagement with a social phenomenon. It was designed to generate a knowledge of experiences with and knowledge of media theses. As this study explores fresh fields, a qualitative approach was appropriate because it allowed quality, thought and understanding to represent lived experience within society. In this case, an exploration to discover the phenomenon of media theses from a qualitative perspective "has much to do with making vivid what had been obscure" (Eisner, 2001, p.136).

To describe the qualitative influences on my research activity, I created a verse called <u>Reality theatre</u>. This metaphorical approach echoes Janesick's chapter entitled: <u>The choreography of qualitative research design</u> (in Denzin & Lincoln (eds.), 2000). The verse creates a metaphorical connection with directing an unrehearsed stage play. The left hand column describes concepts of qualitative research and how they influenced this investigation.

Qualitative characteristics	Theatre context
To give the research breadth, the study incorporates case studies and the opinions of academic staff members. The choice to do this corresponds with Eisenhardt's advice that multiple case studies give more opportunity for "replication and extension among individual cases" (in Smith, 2000, p.77).	Verse 4: <u>Reality theatre</u> **Assembling the cast** Working in the wings randomly seeking actors and other social players without audition widens the casting net's range.
People who were unknown to me participated in this study to retain authenticity. Prospective participants responded to campus wide invitations. Miles & Huberman supports the concept that where research participants randomly self-select it enables a more holistic picture of its content (in Punch, 2005) thereby benefiting research outcomes.	**Direction** The director owns the stage; it is hers to manipulate with versatile sensitivity.

As a sole qualitative researcher, I was able to direct the

project flexibly and to disregard my previously made decisions if circumstances altered (Miles et al. in Punch, 2005, Merriam in Creswell, 1994). Merriam considers the qualitative researcher remains the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (in Creswell, 1994). This gave me the freedom to alter lines of inquiry if required during interaction with participants.

Conversations with research candidates were informal and loosely structured as Titchen and Hobson state that structured questionnaires and interviews would be counterproductive to helping "participants to tell stories in everyday language rather than reflection-on-action or theorizing" (in Somekh & Lewin (eds.), 2005, p.126). Informal conversations also allowed participants to focus on their experiences in a non-threatening and open-ended way.

My participants knew about the research topic but were free to discuss their experiences without restriction. By using an unstructured approach, I could follow the participant's lead (Bloland, 1992). This gave research candidates the freedom to raise issues, situations, opinions or activities of most importance. Miles et al. agree qualitative researchers suspend preconceptions while gathering research materials (in Punch, 2005). However, loosely formed pre-determined questions were available to act as prompts and to help participants to access what was significant (Somekh et al., (eds) 2005).

Sharkey (2001) suggests that "the perquisite for genuine conversation is that the dialogue partners surrender to the ebb and flow of the conversation as its subject matter unfolds" (p.23). Conversations flowed naturally and were driven by the qualitative values of sense, intuition, imagination and emotion. This enabled a deeper probing to "try to understand nuances, subtleties and meanings" (Somekh et al., (eds) 2005, p.126). As a researcher seeking to understand phenomena, it was useful to know that a "goal of qualitative research is to enhance understanding of phenomena" (Byrne, 2001, p.1). Thus, I did not solely depend upon spoken and transcribed words but engaged with the participants' experiences cognitively,

Carefully considered
responsive moves
customise each scene.

Prewritten scripts

Prewritten sequential scripts
impose a programmed role;
content of the play is false
counteracting lived reality.

Freedom

Do restricted strategies
beckon truth or display
obedience to convention?

Strategy

Does freedom to speak
allow players
to write their lines
like reality theatre?
Or child to parent?
Woman to man?
Unscripted,
unprompted,
unbridled.

Observation

Watching every movement
hearing thoughts and sighs
with pure interconnection
phenomena arise.

Performance

Informal interaction
amidst the entourage
engenders novel meaning
by reflection on their lives.

Stage Management

Freedom of one's speech,
unconscious letting flow,

soulfully and emotionally (Brearley 2003a).

Informal engagement with research participants enable me to reflect in order to understand their experiences (Punch, 2005). Merriam also believes qualitative researchers need to reflect to enable interpretation (in Creswell, 1994). Titchen et al. consider reflection upon experience is a "reiterative process of looking at parts in relation to whole and whole in relation to parts" (in Somekh et al., (eds) 2005, p.126).

By interpretive insight Miles et al. state the researcher can "contrast, compare, analyze, and bestow patterns" (in Punch, 2005, p.142) in order to present the outcomes. By engaging with the research materials it is possible to determine specific themes and tones of expression (Punch, 2005) for representation in analyses. It is from these themes and expressions that concepts and theories develop (Creswell, 1994).

During transcription of research materials, I also sought understanding through participants' use of metaphor. Merriam agrees qualitative researchers are interested in understanding gained through descriptive words or pictures (in Creswell, 1994). Using metaphoric verse as an interpretive element of candidates' experiences is an enjoyable activity. Sharkey (2001) supports that being "playful and dialogical" (p.17) enhances immersion into the inquiry.

behaviours are apparent,
situations are on show.

Critique

Recording all the moments
the transcript now unfolds,
needing their endorsement,
is the story justly told?

Discernment and connoisseurship

What exists about our
conduct?
Why are we so compelled?
Are we puppets or born
authors?
What lies behind our act?
What directs our situation
upon the living stage?

Final Act

The play is complete;
the actors are paid and
leave.
The bit parts together
create an interlinked new
whole.
The director now encounters
a transformation …

Understanding of
performance becomes
a performance of new
knowing.

(Somerset, 2008)

Conducting qualitative research using these concepts generates outcomes about the nature of experience. This study presents, and represents, these outcomes to form an understanding of the phenomenon of media theses in research.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

The research comprises two phases – one to explore candidates' experiences and the other to hear the opinions of, attitudes towards, and experiences with media theses of academic staff members. Each phase has its own purpose and individual mode of enquiry designed to contribute towards an understanding of the phenomenon of media theses. This customised approach is supported by Eisner's (1997) comment that:

> "Virtually any careful, reflective, systematic study of phenomena undertaken to advance human understanding can count as a form of research. It all depends on how that work is pursued" (p.na).

This section of the thesis discusses the methodologies for the research <u>Phases</u> and their influence upon conducting and reporting outcomes.

3.2.1   Phase 1: Phenomenology [31]
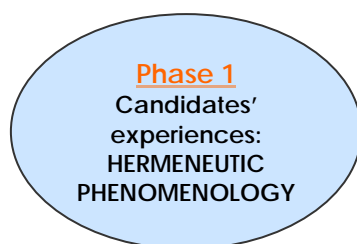
- **In what ways do doctoral candidates' experiences reveal the phenomenon of media theses?**

<u>Phase 1</u> research activity inquired into doctoral candidates' experiences in order to seek enlightenment and to gain understanding about the phenomenon of media theses. In order to achieve this goal it was necessary to find a way of encouraging candidates to talk about their experiences. This was achieved through informal conversations which enabled me to listen enthusiastically about their successes, to engage with their encounters and to empathise with their difficulties and challenges. How they experienced what they experienced became paramount.

For analysis purposes, this activity presented an opportunity for me to reflect and to gain insight into experiential phenomena. The essence of the gathered research materials needed

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[31] 'Phenomenology' is derived from the Greek word 'phenomenology' meaning 'to show itself' (Ray, 1994, p.119).

to be presented sensitively and with sufficient detail to demonstrate participants' experiential phenomena. In some cases, the experiences are presented using participants exact words. In others, the experiences are **re**presented in another form in order to engage the reader with an interpretation of events. Description and interpretation worked together to produce the intended research outcome. For a description I look to phenomenology – for interpretation I look to hermeneutic phenomenology. Van Manen (1990), a contemporary phenomenologist, uses the terms interchangeably however both lead to enlightenment. The following paragraphs introduce the philosophy of phenomenology and why its influence is appropriate for conducting Phase 1 of the research.

Phenomenology – an enigma?

Because many authors have written about the theoretical assumptions of phenomenology from their own various perspectives and understandings, it is quite difficult to summarise succinctly. Its elusiveness is a part of its problem because it is not specific, yet also a part of its benefit, because it is adaptable and accommodating. For example, Gadamer suggests "that the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics is that there is no method!" (van Manen, 1990, pp.29-30). However, some grace is afforded the novice phenomenologist for this conundrum by Ströker's (1998) comment that "becoming clear on understanding phenomenology is not a marginal accomplishment – getting clear about such matters is the very heart of the phenomenological method itself" (p.253). I also found "phenomenology did not supply a set of rule-like procedures" (Sharkey, 2001, p.16) for conducting research. This metaphorical verse conveys the sensation of my experience of learning about it.

Verse 5: <u>Understanding phenomenology</u>

Drifting in the middle of an ocean
Thoughts circling as seabirds searching prey
Meandering northwest, east, or south
Conceptions ebb and flow as ocean waves
Wrestling with the jostling of my craft
Pulling all the drifting ropes aboard
Alone but focussed on a misty light
Searching for a certain place
where waves of thought tumble together
and break with ruffled edges on the sand.

(Somerset, 2008)

A snapshot of phenomenology

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is generally considered the father of phenomenology. Husserl's phenomenology was "devoted to the examination of consciousness and its objects" (in Magee, 1998, p.211). It was a "systematic analysis of experience….and prized as the proper foundation of all philosophy" (Smith, 2003, p.209) and based on the premise that to find out what exists can only be manifest through a discovery of individuals' experiences (Magee, 1998). Husserl's reflections (in Ströker, 1998) on truth led to his assumption that phenomenology was also analysis of consciousness, ego and "a phenomenological approach to life-world and history" (p.249). Husserl deduced that consciousness and intention could only accept knowledge as being derived from the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity and "through the analysis of these relations that we expect to gain insight into the true sense of knowledge" (Ströker, 1998, p.250). Ströker further explains that this way of understanding the construction of knowledge must apply not only to the world of objective knowledge and science, but also to the empirical world of human experience.

Heidegger was a student of Husserl who thought phenomenology required some form of interpretation. Hence, the hermeneutic (or interpretive) form of phenomenology proves to be appropriate for exploring social activities. It plays a significant role in <u>Phase 1</u> as it supports reflection and insight for representation. <u>Phase 1</u> explores and presents lived-experience descriptively. Schwandt (1997) states that "phenomenologists insist on a careful description of ordinary conscious experience of everyday life (the life-world), a description of 'things' " (p.114). Merleau-Ponty contends that descriptions of phenomena from the appearance of

things **are** the outcomes of phenomenological research (in Ehrich, 1996). The Case studies of Phase 1 focus on description in order to exhibit experiential phenomena.

Interacting with research participants

Core principles appear in literature about phenomenology which instruct in how to gather research materials (van Manen, 1990). One of these is the principle of maintaining a non-assumptive perspective (Ströker, 1998) using the concept of **bracketing** as also described by Janesick (Denzin et al. (eds.), 2000; van Manen, 1990 and Merleau-Ponty in Ehrich, 1996). Schutz (1970) describes bracketing as "a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry consisting in a deliberate effort to set all ontological judgments about the 'nature' and 'essence' of things" aside (pp.316-7). Whilst this might be desirable in order to generate outcomes which are not influenced by a researcher, it is not entirely possible in this study as I am 'immersed' in the topic of the research myself and my experiences may be similar to my research participants. On the other hand, I am unlikely to be persuaded or influenced by local opinion as I am not involved in campus policy-making or research management. Sharkey's (2001) opinion complements my thoughts that "the goal of the research process is not to jettison these prior understandings, but rather to test them" (p.17). However, separating my own experiences from the subject matter is desirable for bracketing purposes and I understand that interacting with the research participants to influence the content of their contributions could distort the data and invalidate the research.

Another principle of phenomenology focuses upon the **relationship between objectivity and subjectivity** (Crotty, 1998; Gubrium et al., 2000) for interpretation. Van Manen (1990) states that in experience based research it is difficult to separate objectivity and subjectivity. Thus, the object and the subject are interrelated. As I explore candidates' experiences, phenomena become apparent at different places within the objectivity/subjectivity spectrum. Crotty (1998) cautions against researchers who choose to study the experience of individuals over studying "phenomena as the immediate objects of experience" (p.48). His advice is congruent with the purpose of this study. He also states that meaning is born out of the interplay and interaction between subject and object (p.45) and this may be so. However, I think 'phenomena' and 'meaning' are asynchronous terms and to draw meaning from phenomena alone is subjective and precarious. 'Understanding' creates a link between phenomena and meaning, so Phase 1 focuses on gaining understanding rather than on constructivist meaning making. Gaining understanding can occur by searching for essences,

themes or essential relationships which involves exploring phenomena using free imagination, intuition and reflection (Ehrich, 2003, in O'Donoghue & K. Punch). This way of thinking embraces both the 'noema' or "subjective **reflection** of the objective statement" and the 'noesis' or "objective statement of **behaviour** or the experience" [emphasis added] (Ehrich, 2003, in O'Donoghue et al., p.47).

Once experiences are brought into conversation, as a phenomenologist it is important to invite the research participant to explain **what the experience was like** (van Manen, 1990). The responses to this invitation help to gain insight into candidates' experiences as they lived them (van Manen, 1990). It prompts the participants to disclose their lived experiences which van Manen (1990) identifies as an "explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness" (p.9) via recollection of events or retrospective reflection upon them. Gadamer suggests another beneficial conversation technique is to continue questioning more deeply and to be able to weigh and test what is being said (in Sharkey, 2001).

Listening to candidates' experiences requires empathy and engagement. Van Manen (1990) considers the word **'thoughtfulness'** most aptly describes phenomenology as it complements the "search for what it means to be human" (p.12). Sometimes the emotion of a related experience engenders poetic expression. Van Manen describes phenomenology as a poeticizing activity and couching sensations or passions about candidates' experiences poetically helps to turn the mind "back to the silence from which the words emanate[d]" (p.13). Sharkey (2001) agrees phenomenology "always seeks to open up a middle space of rich engagement between the research object and the researcher" (p.17).

Phenomenologists need to become immersed and involved in order to look for how things really are (O'Donoghue et al. (eds.), 2003; Schwandt, 1997; Gubrium et al., 2000). Sharkey (2001) discusses Gadamer's concepts of **'being playful'** or being a 'player in the game' and " 'getting lost in the subject matter'.…leads to genuine understanding and interpretation" (p.17). As the participants drew me into their world we were momentarily in the same world – on the same stage – at the same time. As I later immersed myself in their world, I considered the idea of writing verse and of choosing and applying metaphorical connections to the experience.

In summary, a phenomenological approach to this experience-based research drew upon the principles of leaving ones' own preconceptions and experiences out of conversations with participants, observing and valuing places between objectivity and subjectivity, using thoughtfulness during interviews and analysis, and becoming a 'player' in the subject matter. Phenomenology requires reflective insight upon situations, events and behaviour. Its power lies in its ability to identify truth about a situation from experiential phenomena. Its purpose is to establish understanding about life and experience. It is an exciting way to see how we live in the world.

Presenting outcomes

Presenting the research outcomes incorporates several activities. The candidates' stories are a main component of the research outcome. They are described as they were related; verse interpretation presents some of their experiences or explores them in other contexts; sound files of participants' voices invite us into their personal space and, after reflection and insight, experiential phenomena are identified. Whilst examining transcripts to reveal phenomena, Thorne (2000) suggests looking for underlying structures or essences of the experience. Ehrich (in O'Donoghue et al, 2003) suggests searching for concrete themes and Lawler invites the researcher to form interpretations of the experience (in Higgs, 1998, p.50). Sharkey (2001) suggests sound interpretive research outcomes depend on "scholarship, tact, judgement and taste" (p.16).

Metaphor has a multiple roles in phenomenology. It can serve as an interpretive tool for the researcher and "can be thought of as rhetorical devices serving a particular purpose of the speaker" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.85). Metaphor provides a way of finding meaning for the subject under discussion and insight into the personality of the speaker or writer. Kochis and Gillespie (2006) indicate that conceptual metaphors help to identify revealing patterns in language. For example, speakers whose metaphors relate to 'journey or being on track' may consider they are situated within a moving process. Speakers whose metaphors relate to 'boundaries or confinement' may consider themselves trapped within their environment. Others whose metaphors relate to activity may consider themselves as participants in, or directing, such activities. Coffey et al. (1996) consider that the metaphor is "revealing in terms of cultural and conventional usage" and helps to "identify cultural domains....of a given culture or subculture; they express specific values, collective identities, shared knowledge,

and common vocabularies" (p.86). They are valued in <u>Phase 1</u> as a way of identifying phenomena.

To present research materials, Ehrich recommends describing the entities and the essential and revealing phenomena (in O'Donoghue et al., 2003). Crotty suggests phenomenologists commit to describing what lies 'beneath and beyond' the experience (in Sharkey, 2001). Van Manen (2003) suggests a phenomenologist should be "reflective, insightful, sensitive to language and constantly open to experience" (p.xi) and to conduct a thematic analysis (van Manen, 1990). He admonishes presentation of research outcomes should include description (phenomenology) and interpretive (hermeneutic) elements. The aim of <u>Phase 1</u> "is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence" (van Manen, 1990, p.36). Phenomenology requires that experiential materials comprehensively describe the quality and significance of the experience (van Manen, 1990).

Sharkey (2001) acknowledges many phenomenologists have discarded Husserl's 'bracketing' method and instead, use descriptive artistic or cultural media. In presenting participants' experiences and, after reflection and insight, my goal was to communicate the essence of participants' expressions (Sharkey, 2001).

Topics of conversation

<u>Phase 1</u> was designed to explore the experiences of researchers who create media theses, to present their experiences and to determine if certain phenomena occurred or recurred. The following prompts were available if a participant hesitated to direct the conversation. They focus on creating a descriptive picture.

- What is your experience with media theses?
- What caused you to think about including media in your thesis?
- How will your thesis demonstrate concepts in media formats?
- What were the opinions and attitudes of your supervisor or the faculty regarding your media components?
- Did your supervisor's creative skills or technical ability affect your thesis composition?
- How did access to technology or information technology training or assistance affect your thesis creation?

- What are your attitudes to universities providing such support?

- What moment was most memorable to you in the creation process?

- What were the key factors of your media thesis became a reality or what were the inhibitors?

- In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

- How do you see media components of your thesis being published?

3.2.2   Phase 2: Interpretivism
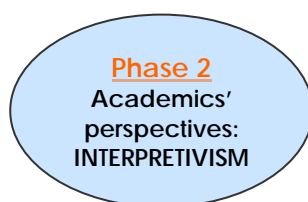
Phase 2
Academics'
perspectives:
INTERPRETIVISM

- **How do the experiences of academic staff enhance understanding of the phenomenon of media theses?**

Interpretivism is the approach taken for Phase 2 of the research. Interpretivism assumes that there is a basis from which to direct an enquiry to meet the need for understanding people, their situations, activities and responses. It is a suitable methodological tool within a field of enquiry or a state of cultural, social or professional interaction. The activities of interpretivist methodology are more appropriate for investigating the human experience than those which researchers use to investigate the natural sciences (Schwandt, 2003). Usher (1996) describes interpretivism in social research as being "concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination" (p.18). Gadamer explains it as being "a *pointing to* something….and *pointing out* the meaning of something" (in van Manen, 1990, p.26). The purpose of interpretivism is to understand meaning and belief about an activity or situation being researched (Connole, 1993) and to provide ways for researchers of human life-narratives and experiences to discover and create knowledge.

The interpretivist methodology for Phase 2 is different from the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology used for Phase 1. The purpose of Phase 2 is to elicit **descriptions** and **interpretations** of events. It does not focus on **how** they were experienced in the way phenomenology explores candidates' experiences in Phase 1.

Phase 2 was designed to investigate the beliefs and experiences of academic staff members. The informal conversations were designed to flow according to the participants' interests, experiences and subject knowledge. In this process it was desirable to avoid preconceptions and weighted thinking and to maintain interest yet impartiality in order to determine common themes, to report on their opinions, their differences or similarities, and to discuss their impact on media theses in research practice.

My interpretation of Phase 2 participants' opinions, experiences and attitudes are the outcomes of this phase of the research and it is this interpretation which defines a social action. This cycle represents a double hermeneutic process (Usher, 1996). The quality of interpretivist-based conversation analysis depends upon the interpreter's ability to communicate and think clearly and logically and also upon his or her social, linguistic and cognitive skills (Connole, 1993).

The Phase 2 research activity involved interviewing higher education leaders and other academic staff members such as lecturers, supervisors and heads of departments. The following questions were available:

- What is your experience with media theses?
- What sort of knowledge do media theses create?
- How does the media thesis change your supervisory practice?
- How should supervisors prepare for doctoral candidates who wish to submit theses in media modes?
- What sort of supplementary technological support should researchers receive?
- What advice do you give to doctoral candidates who want to create media theses?
- Are there differences between examining a 'traditional' thesis and a media thesis?

Conversations were loosely structured to allow participants to raise matters or situations which were of most significance to them. Informal discussions about their experiences from within different disciplines were formed into categories and themes for comparison. Content was restricted to experiences with media theses and matters relating to general doctoral candidacy were excluded. It was anticipated that the experiences of academic staff members would inform, provoke and improve understanding of research problems, practices and

processes. They complement the content of Phase 1 and give a wider perspective to the phenomenon of media theses.

Figure 11 shows how the research is structured.
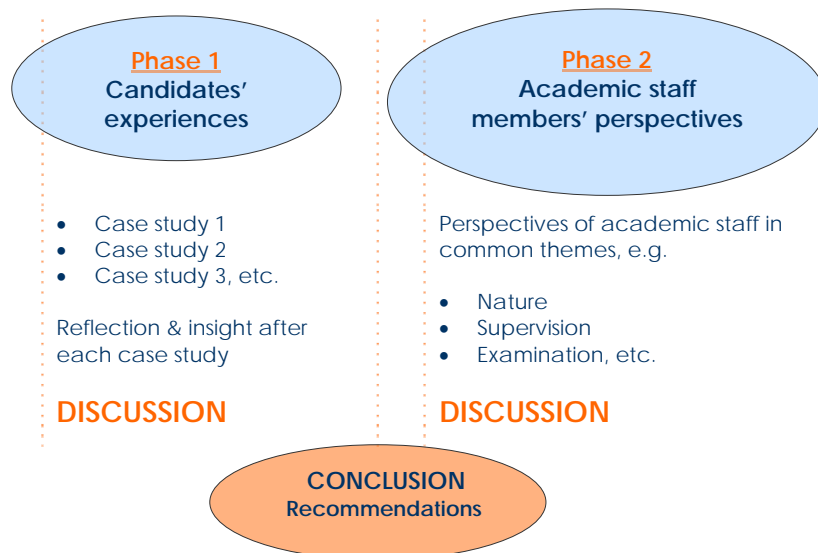
Figure 11: Research structure

Discussion of findings are located after presentation of each phase. Phase 1's (Chapter 4) findings are presented in the categories of metaphor, themes and issues. Phase 2's (Chapter 5) findings identify areas which have the potential to engender confluence and constraint for researchers. These two methodological approaches have been carefully designed in order to gain optimal results from implementing the research. The Conclusion summarises outcomes of most significance and makes Recommendations regarding the future management of the multiple media thesis phenomenon.

3.3 A CASE FOR CASE STUDIES

Case study method is appropriate for presenting a collection of individual experiences with the purpose of demonstrating "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Punch, 2005, p.144).

The case studies of Phase 1 are structured around Yin's (2003) model which suggests that each case study and its report be presented individually – not collectively. Yin considers case study is suitable and beneficial for experience based research which investigates a phenomenon where the context and the phenomena are not obvious. The boundaries in Phase

1 of this study pertain to the experience of creating media theses. Participants share the commonality of being research candidates or doctoral graduates participating in a research project. Their differences lie within their own complex experiences. Davey (1991) and Byrne (2001) indicate that case studies are a valuable way of learning about experience as they offer the opportunity for further exploration by transference into other contexts.

Multiple case studies have several other benefits. Single or few case studies may have depth but would not provide as much potential for nominating tendencies or forming "a complex multitude of typifications which we organize into 'meaning contexts' or stock of knowledge" (Benton et al., 2001, p.84). Punch (2005) considers case studies permit focus within and across cases. He recognises they make a "valuable contribution.... especially in situations where our knowledge is shallow, fragmentary, incomplete or non-existent" (p.147) and help us to gain an "understanding of the important aspects of a new or persistently problematic research area" (pp.147-8).

Another benefit of case studies is that they preserve "the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case" (Punch, 2005, p.145). Complementing this, Goode and Hatt consider the case study is a way of conducting research to preserve the character of the individual (in Punch, 2005). Thus, case study method preserves the uniqueness of participants' experiences. Theodorson and Theodorson recommend case studies enable a more intensive analysis of details which may be overlooked using other research methods (in Punch, 2005). This advantage is supported by the non-assumptive approach of phenomenology. Punch (2005) also considers case studies are beneficial in research practice when used in conjunction with other approaches which complements this study as it uses other information and data gathering methods in Phase 2.

These attributes support the use of case studies for Phase 1 of this study and justify my approach to gathering and presenting research material. Research materials for the case studies are gathered from fourteen doctoral candidates and are presented individually to enable reflection on and insight into each participant's experiential phenomena. Eisner's (2001) advice that qualitative researchers have more capacity to be specific about matters, rather than to make comparisons is particularly relevant in presenting case studies for Phase 1. Comparing or cross-referencing one case study with another would detract from a participant's ownership of certain phenomena. Looking for interconnecting themes from the

interviews and amalgamating them creates a focus on issues, or generalities or similarities of experience. This would tend to give dominance to events and activities rather than to highlight candidates' experiential phenomena.

3.4   METHOD

3.4.1   Gathering research materials

Locating research participants involved the following activities.

I contacted the Secretary, Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDoGS) to introduce myself and the research topic. The Secretary gave me permission to send an email to all Australian universities' DDoGS. I introduced myself and the research topic to them and asked for their assistance with identifying supervisors who had experience with candidates who were creating or who had created media theses. I directed the DDoGS to a website [32] which presents information about the research topic, a preliminary thesis Abstract, letters of introduction, agreements to participate, information about the meeting and participation process, ethics approval information and my Supervisor's and my own contact details. If their university accepted media theses, the DDoGS contacted academic staff to suggest they contact me. If they did, I forwarded them the same information [33] I had given to the DDoGS.

Fifteen academic staff members expressed interest in participating in Phase 2 of the research. They contacted candidates who had created, or who were in the process of creating, media theses and introduced them to my topic. The candidates contacted me if they were interested in participating and the response was encouraging. Twenty candidates from a mixture of disciplines, from seven Australian universities from Queensland, the Northern Territory, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, said they would like to participate in Phase 1.

The most likely respondents amongst the candidates were those who had had significant experiences with media theses, who had a story to tell or who were very interested in participating in the study. I thought it was inappropriate to engage with supervisors who were currently supervising candidates who were creating media theses as it could have been

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[32] See Appendix 3. http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/bsomerse/
[33] Correspondence is Appendix 3.

awkward or create a breach of confidentiality. Similarly, I did not intentionally seek candidates, supervisor and/or examiners who were involved in the same candidacy. I also phoned the DDoGSs' office of each university which had not responded to my original email. Some staff members to whom I spoke told me their university did not accept that type of thesis for submission. One university supportively advertised my research in their post-graduate newsletter.

3.4.2   A pilot study

I conducted a pilot study with *Grant* (2003) from a creative arts discipline. His thesis comprised forty artworks with an auto-ethnographic exegesis. It made a unique contribution to the psychology of art as he explored the impact of the sub-conscious on the way he painted. His journal was bound volumes of hand-scribed calligraphy on vellum. *Grant* showed me all his art and his thesis. He lent me a copy of his thesis but was protective of his work as he did not want his ideas plagiarised.

I approached the interview from a non-assumptive perspective, with prompt questions available. We had an informal conversation and *Grant's* story unfolded at a measured pace. He was very enthusiastic about sharing his experience as no one else had heard it. He did not like his wife interrupting although I thought her contributions were important. Hearing his story was inspiring. My preconception to explore lived experience from an assumption free perspective was correct. This interview proved to me that letting participants make their own contributions in informal conversations was beneficial to this experience-based enquiry. In retrospect, I identified two problems. The first was when he asked me about myself. When I responded I felt it detracted from his story. The second was when I once looked at my prompts I felt uncomfortable as it broke the natural flow of conversation and it felt disrespectful. *Grant* enjoyed the interview and thought the process ran smoothly [34].

3.4.3   The meetings

I organised a schedule of visits to seven universities to meet the doctoral candidates and the academic staff members. The process for Phases 1 & 2 entailed a single contact with each participant. This proved to be adequate to allow them to relate their experiences and to reflect on them through dialogue. Some candidates communicated with me after the research

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[34] *Grant's* story is Case study 5.

conversation to provide more information. After introductions, we focussed on the research experience. Participants were well prepared for the conversation topic and discussed their experiences holistically. The phenomenon of being strangers with a common focus was manifest and the interaction became as friend-to-friend. All the meetings took about one hour. The informal conversations presented in many different guises, always driven by the participant. Often my first question for Phase 1 participants was: 'where would you like to begin?' If the conversation lost focus I would ask: 'now where were we?' to return to relevant themes. Conversations with Phase 2 participants were a little more structured yet informal as academic staff discussed their opinions of and insights into media theses. Some academic staff members had created media theses themselves and these experiences are included in Phase 1, Chapter 4.

All conversations flowed naturally with little prompting. What was most important to participants took precedence. Questions I had formulated were usually answered during our exchanges. On no occasion did I stop and look at my list of questions as I had done during the pilot meeting and had found it to be disruptive. There were no awkward silences. The serendipity of the meetings led to places and circumstances hitherto unexplored, and opened up knowledge about unpredicted situations and occurrences.

I actually had conversations with about twenty doctoral candidates and from those, fourteen are included in this study. Some were excluded because they were at early conceptual stages of development, because they needed someone to talk to about unrelated research matters or because they referred to, but did not actually use multiple media forms, even though they thought they were suitable candidates for my research. All the participants were enthusiastic about being involved in the research project and I was equally enthusiastic about meeting them and listening to their experiences.

3.4.4   Ethics, identification & process

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Technology Sydney: UTS HREC2004-017.

Some candidates were pleased to be identified yet others were not. Most academic staff members were willing to be identified [35]. However, for conformity, I have used pseudonyms

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[35] Identities of research participants who wished to be identified are Appendix 5.

for all research participants and universities within the body of the thesis. I have also obscured the identity of some candidates' research topics.

The complete content of each tape of each interview was transcribed. The transcriptions were forwarded to participants who clarified certain points when required, but most transcriptions required no changes. <u>Phase 1</u> participants were surprised and delighted to read the poetry which I had written regarding their experiences.

3.4.5   <u>Appendices</u>

APPENDIX 1: A complete interview
APPENDIX 2: Discussion on Modes of Knowledge
APPENDIX 3: Website Sample letters:
  * Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies
  * Research offices
  * Invitation to academic staff
  * Invitation to candidates
  * Agreement to participate
  * Information letter for participants
APPENDIX 4: Ethics approval letter
APPENDIX 5: Identity of specific research participants

4   CHAPTER 4: PHASE 1

- **In what ways do doctoral candidates' experiences reveal the phenomenon of media theses?**
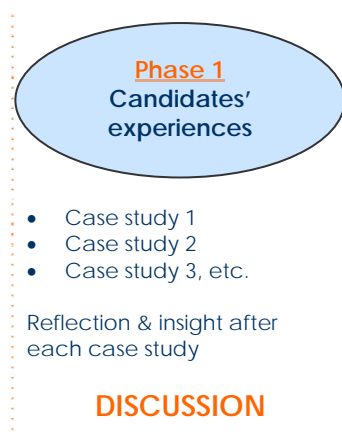
Figure 12: Structure of Phase 1

This chapter gathers insights into doctoral candidates' experiences with media thesis [36].
Some Phase 1 participants related their experiences from the dual perspectives of having been
a candidate and as an academic staff member. Their opinions as an academic staff member
are included in Phase 2.

Case study 1	*Lexi* reveals behaviour through Egyptian decorative figures.
Case study 2	*Naomi* uses art and design for self-understanding.
Case study 3	*Anthony* creates a computer program on artificial life.
Case study 4	*Elanor's* cross-disciplinary thesis is a suitcase.
Case study 5	Artist *Grant* paints from the sub-conscious.
Case study 6	*Jana*, an educator, submits a thesis in folio format.
Case study 7	*Marcia* 'does it her way' in Business faculty.
Case studies 8	*Carson* submits a thesis as pre-published papers.
Case studies 9, 10 & 11	*Matthew*, *Vanessa* and *Rick* withdraw media components before submission.
Case studies 12, 13 & 14	*Isabel, Mei* and *Bronwyn* submit theses from a doctorate designed to include a compulsory video component.

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[36] Pseudonyms of people, organisations and universities are *italicised*.

Each case study is unique. Candidates' experiences are presented as they were related during conversations. Within narratives, the intention was not to present transcriptions verbatim but "to invite the reader to enter the world that these texts would open up" (Sharkey, 2001, p.34). Because some cases are emotive, the experience is represented using metaphorical verse. Some of their experiences were similar to those of most doctoral candidates and some difficult life experiences occurred during their candidacies. In order to preserve a holistic perspective these have sometimes been referred to in case studies.

My reflection upon and insight into (Sharkey, 2001) candidates' experiences is presented at the completion of each case study in the manner of the Yin (2003) model of case studies. This activity seeks phenomena from either the richness of the doctoral experience or from their 'boundary pushing' qualities, their innovative qualities and the unique qualities of the research, researcher or context. Experiential phenomena and, what could be generally referred to as the **essence** (van Manen, 1990) and **structure** (Thorne, 2000; Quinn, 1990; Ehrich in O'Donoghue et al., 2003) of candidates' experiences, are sought.

Sound tracks

Phenomena of experience are best sensed as close to the original content as possible. Sound tracks of participants' voices demonstrate sensations which are inaccessible in a text transcription. Listening to the sound files enables a close connection with the participant. All of the candidates I spoke to were very passionate about their experiences so it seemed appropriate to present this sensation. Some participants spoke very quickly and one spoke quickly with an accent which made these voices unsuitable for creating sound files. Transcribed text of sound files is included within the relevant case study.

Verse

As discussed in the Introduction, verse and poetry has been included with the Case Studies in order to enhance understanding and sensation of candidates' experiences.

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CASE STUDY 1: LEXI REVEALS BEHAVIOUR THROUGH EGYPTIAN DECORATIVE FIGURES

(Used with *Lexi's* permission)
This figure animates in *lexi.ppt* file.

Figure 13: An animation of wall figures from *Lexi's* thesis

Lexi's PhD thesis uses computer animations to prove that single figures from decorative Egyptian friezes and tombs were, in some cases, 'frames' of a movement sequence. Her thesis includes the digital animations on a CDRom in the thesis' appendices. The thesis was classified as 'non-traditional' because it used IT to prove a hypothesis.

Lexi asked me to help her with the animations. Witnessing her combine her academic, artistic and creative processes, and her struggles, drew me into her doctoral experience. Working with her placed me in a position to share her journey, its successes and its problems. Listening to her and engaging with her gave me insight into the phenomenon of creating a media thesis and inspired me to design this research study.

Hypothesis and technology

From the perspectives of a working dancer and a working artist, *Lexi* started to see the drawings from scenes in wall paintings and tombs in ancient Egypt looked like frames in stop time animation. She thought the Egyptian figures could be animated digitally yet she knew neither how to edit the images in Adobe Photoshop nor use animation software, so she could

not test her hypothesis. She knew it was crucial to find help with this activity and with formatting her thesis

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My input

When Microsoft Windows and Internet technologies evolved, I enthusiastically explored them and taught myself how to use them, developed courses in them and trained others. Curiosity had led me to experiment with .gif [37] animations which flashed from one design to another with different coloured backgrounds or text for web page use. When *Lexi* came to see me, I was not aware of the significance of my tinkering or of her request. I showed her how to scan a sequence of the isolated black and white figures. With her guidance, we layered the line drawn images of individual figures in a .gif animation program in a way which is similar to building up a design or a concept by layering overhead transparencies. We needed to move the opaque layers into a place where the left foot of the figures was in exactly the same position on each layer so I rendered each layer semi-transparent to see below it and returned each layer to its opaque setting once the left foot was positioned in the same place on each layer,

We ran the animation. It flashed through too quickly so we regulated its speed and looped it for the required number of iterations. The figures in each sequence became one figure. They danced or mourned or fought – performing culturally significant activities. Neither of us had known what the software would really display – it was a very exciting moment for both of us. This discovery was essential to *Lexi's* hypothesis as it showed that Old Kingdom artisans had represented many frames of a single activity in their artwork.

Whilst working on the sequence in Figure 13, we noticed the ancient artisan had represented the action out of sequence on the frieze, *viz.* the hands faced up and down alternately. By rearranging the sequence of the figures, the hands of the subject faced down whilst she was

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[37] .gif files are simple images with flat areas of colour that are used for web animations such as logos and banners.

bending, and faced up whilst she was standing and throwing dust over her head in an act of mourning. Altering and interfering with the work of an ancient artist felt strangely discourteous.

Technological problems

Lexi's lack of IT skills hindered her preparation of other thesis components. She had underestimated what was technologically required to create a thesis. She had problems using the correct Egyptian font, creating statistics and graphs, editing images and inserting hieroglyphs. Formatting the thesis using tables of contents, lists of illustrations, cataloguing image information and using footnotes were also a major concern for her. I was the only person on campus who was officially available to help her with the animations, scan and edit photos correctly, insert them in the text document and create a Website. *Lexi* felt strongly that more campus help was required for people who were doing her kind of work and was very disappointed about the restricted IT training and support at the University for doctoral candidates. The time I was officially allocated to help each post-graduate student was one hour.

Her supervisor helped her by giving examples of theses so she knew what was required for its layout, but she did not know how to do it. She did not want to bother him with getting formatting help, as she needed his expertise in translation and his extraordinarily broad knowledge of excavation and the material that is available. She knew *Professor Al-Sonbatti's* expertise was world class in the areas for which he is acclaimed and that was essential for helping *Lexi* end up with a finished product at a satisfactory standard. She thought *Professor Al-Sonbatti* was very generous in passing on opportunities and information.

Reactions

I asked *Lexi* how *Professor Al-Sonbatti* reacted to her proof that the figures were actually frames of a sequence of movements. She responded that:

> At first I thought he had not quite got the point of it. His reaction was fairly *ho hum* but actually I think he was taken aback at the time as he has changed his opinion and he seems to be quite interested in that aspect of my work now and he has been very supportive. When I gave a paper at a conference in Boston, he emphasised that I should show the animations. So, he realised that it was something I should put out.

Lexi recalled the experience of presenting her animations for her doctoral presentation. She had worried the subject and the activity may be perceived to be trite, naïve and not academic.

Colleagues knew about her work but *Lexi* felt they had not recognised its worth. When she presented the figures at a conference in Boston, participants offered exceptionally high praise.

Fulfilment

As she was nearing thesis completion and preparing a conference presentation I helped her apply timed Egyptian dance music to the sequences of animated figures. When it was complete, she stood up and we played the animation and music. She performed an Egyptian dance. It was delightful to witness the technology, her knowledge of Egyptian art, choreography and dancing merge. This was a golden moment – it was enlightening and victorious when the theory and practice intertwined.

<div align="center">

Verse 6: <u>Synchrony</u>

Technology baffles the candidate

She needed music for her presentation
I knew my skill would help her work
We sat together at the powerful Mac
I slid the disk inside the drive
Applied the perfect track to all her slides
in presentation software

Time the music to the slides?

So difficult it seemed to her
I showed her how the click of keys
timed rhythm to the movement
Delightedly she turned to me and smiled
Confusion turned to joy

We played the work completed in the tiny office space

She stood transformed within another world
Her spirit and body danced
absorbed in long lost art
Transcending time and place
Her countenance memorably rapturous
in the coming together

(Somerset, 2008)

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REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Information technology problems may be common for many doctoral candidates. For *Lexi*, it was poignantly distressing. Her emotional outpourings about IT highlight a situation which

may be overlooked in universities. She was immersed in creating disciplinary knowledge in an environment where her lack of IT skills could have prevented her from proving her hypotheses and creating knowledge. Dependence on expert help while creating a media thesis can be essential during candidacy.

Witnessing *Lexi* combine her academic, artistic and creative processes and struggle with technology exposed to me the range and nature of her experiences as she created her media thesis. Sometimes her attitude displayed defeat, frustration and helplessness. She was often in a state of conflict as her despondency could really bring her down and unsettle her focus yet she was compiling a body of work which took her through the annals of the Old Kingdom in Egypt into a milieu which she had always loved – dance.

It seems that problems which were unrelated to *Lexi's* work clouded her sense of academic achievement, perhaps even detracted from her progress and made it unnecessarily difficult. She also internalised her struggle with technology – it was a part of her and her doctorate but overcoming the problems were the key to her success. In such situations, mundane problems such as lack of IT problem-solving skills may be very annoying for individuals who are intently focussed on developing other projects or knowledge creation which depend upon its more specific use. As Gubrium et al. (2000) recognise, such struggles spring not from the subject material, but from within "categories that are social in origin" (p.489). This verse expresses *Lexi's* struggles during her candidacy.

Verse 7: <u>Out of the shadow</u>

Her face and flustered request reveal distress
Protests replace her rippling laugh and sunny greeting
I listen with quiet empathy as she leaks her dispirited heart
about the problems of her world – effusively to me.

Mundane concerns impede her way
Absorption with her thesis magnifies them
She wills them away – yet they persist
to blur the vision of her work like a giant shadow.

Technology is defeating her
It is the key to her hypothesis
Yet could be her demise
without specific help.

Why is living research so complicated?

Quietly I watch her struggle in the milieu of a mediocre world
as she creates a new one.

(Somerset, 2008)

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CASE STUDY 2: NAOMI *USES ART & DESIGN FOR SELF-UNDERSTANDING*

Naomi's PhD research is grounded in her professional activities in organisational development. She uses the processes of creative action and critical reflection with clients in her business to help them gain greater self-understanding in order to bring about individual and organisational development. For her doctoral research, rather than produce a thesis solely on a fine arts topic, she wants to use her arts background to branch out into areas of transformative learning. To do this, *Naomi* needs to investigate how her practice of creating space for artistic self-reflection helps people with their self-development. Her hypothesis incorporates a functional application of art as opposed to an analysis of art to form a hypothesis. She uses art and design methods in her research project to enhance a self-development learning process and not for their artistic qualities or value.

Her story

Her metaphor rich story is presented in her own words.

The project

My purpose is to explore individual personal development, your inner world, the way you think, the way you engage peoples' levels of self-awareness. My work is about creating self-interactive spaces using artistic methods even for people who are not artists. It is a philosophical, theoretical, spiritual embodiment thing and I guide people through an experience. The objects they make become visual metaphors for data. They are not seeking to make art or to intellectualise self-awareness but to embody their inquiry and their experience. That they end up with something visual or tactile is inconsequential in terms of the artistic value of the work. It is not about the object – it is about the journey and the experience of becoming through making. It has to do with ontology and is based on engagement with materials. It ties in with my commercial work that structures experiences for people, so that through engaging with materials I have designed, their inner wisdom may be manifest.

Acceptance

I was originally with the Business Faculty because my field is in organisational development. The process of getting a project accepted in this faculty is very rigorous. There is a panel of academics, supervisors, the research co-ordinator of the school and various other people. If they don't 'get it' you don't pass so it is a very tough process.

Since my proposal was accepted I shifted my research focus to my own creative practice. This involves what I do to create these methods and experiences that allows me to gain insight. None of the underlying themes, philosophies or theories had changed. I transferred to the Faculty of Art and Design on the understanding that a second proposal wouldn't be needed because it was really the same work. I am still trying to get this proposal accepted by the *Research Committee* a year later. The proposal is a fully-fledged highly referenced scholarly piece of work supported by

both supervisors. The original proposal was accepted three years ago. Now they change their reasons for not accepting it each time they review it. It has been very unsatisfactory and frustrating.

Her perceptions

I think the problem is that what I am doing is not traditional and the problem seems to be in classification. From the rigid thinking I have encountered the issue seems to be in the way it is classified. They're thinking: 'This can't be classified as art or sculpture so why would she be in the School of Arts?' It seems to be the sticking point that when you are trying to open up new ground (and isn't that the point of doctoral research?) you are criticised because what you are doing cannot be classified as traditional. I feel that my work doesn't fit anywhere comfortably in a traditional academic taxonomy. It's partly philosophy, partly spirituality, partly psychology, partly Buddhism, and art design. To me there is no conflict as to whether it belongs in a business or an art faculty but somehow the rest of the world is thinking that there are boundaries and everything has to fit within.

Maybe the inconsiderateness within one university doesn't help and when there is so much rhetoric about cross-disciplinarity and multi-disciplinarity – its bollocks – they are just words. Everything seems to have been driven by the cash register. But at that level of the university, inconsistencies are a major issue. More and more candidates want to move around and if we are wanting to work across boundaries as practitioners, that is going to happen. But there is no process or procedure for transferring intellect and knowledge across the boundaries.

Survival

I've tried to use my experience for self reflective activities and to that end I have learned a lot more about myself in coming head to head with the bureaucracy. And whether it is isolated or not is no consolation to me. I know that other people are suffering as well. The real scary thing is how can candidates gain approval for interesting work that is unclassified? Why doesn't the academy open up that space to support the candidate for whom classification is difficult?

Carrying on with the work has been therapeutic. I've kept on whether it gets doctorate status or not. I believe in it and it is a part of me to develop it. I'm not giving up. I'm going on – I feel determined that I'm not going to be robbed of the pleasure of doing the work. I've made every change that has been requested and that's it. None of this is helping me – it is stupid to put a candidate through this at all. I've thought about another university, but couldn't bear having to submit another proposal and possibly having to go through all this again. I've done enough already – I don't want to go back and write another proposal.

Having a cohort of other candidates has been important. We have had good conversations. My support network has been important and without them, I probably would have given up. And after getting through that it seems so silly to be held up here because somebody seems to be moving the goal posts.

Immediately after hearing *Naomi's* story, I sat down on a city street bench opposite where we met and wrote <u>Conundrum</u>.

Verse 8: <u>Conundrum</u>

In the name of unknown gods
best intentioned plans sometimes go awry.
Dreams of what could have been
scatter to the four winds
blown erratically,
obedient to the quirky impulses
of ambiguous convention.

(Somerset, 2008)

Postscript

Naomi submitted her research proposal five times to the *Research Committee* and it was rejected each time. She was disenchanted and about to withdraw but decided to appeal to a highly ranked *Professor* at her university who approached the *Head of School*.

> She was fantastic and handled the whole situation very professionally. She took the unprecedented step of taking the decision out of the *committee's* hands and approved the proposal on the spot at our meeting. I finally got approval to conduct the research from the *committee*.

Professor offered to supervise *Naomi* and she accepted. She received a twelve-month extension to her candidature to compensate for the disruption to her research. In this case, an almost defeated candidate retained her self-belief and successfully circumvented bureaucratic boundaries.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Naomi faced problems relating to the nature of her cross-disciplinary work. She experienced rejection by the research board, frustration at needing to explain concepts which were influenced by the intangible qualities of self development through creating art objects, stress from the length of time taken to get her proposal accepted and grief that her work might fail. Her experience indicated that conceptual novelty and originality of design complicated getting her doctoral research proposal accepted. The committee had power over what she considered was to be a straightforward process. Despite having a supportive supervisor, she was unable to gain approval from the university. This situation had the potential for her to lose self-belief and create insecurity for her as a doctoral candidate.

Her proposal was accepted by one faculty and, yet, because of its cross-disciplinary nature, was not accepted by the other. *Naomi* experienced that both faculties had some difficulty with the concept of the topic and its lexicon. *Naomi* felt thwarted in her attempt to open up

new ground. In some way she felt she had been either misled about the purpose of doctoral research or misinterpreted the amount of freedom she was afforded. Coupled with this was the feeling of being isolated as she got the impression her work did not fit in a traditional academic taxonomy because of its composition. The rejection of her proposal could have proved detrimental to knowledge creation. From her account she felt the academe could not engage with the intangible spirit of her work which was a philosophical, theoretical, spiritual embodiment thing designed for people to immerse themselves in transformative learning activities.

Naomi gave the impression she was creating knowledge through her practice yet felt she was being misunderstood because her work did not fit within normal academic boundaries. Yet, she mentioned that a benefit was she learned a lot more about herself in coming head to head with the bureaucracy. Her self-belief remained strong and was instrumental in her decision not to capitulate despite somebody moving the goal posts. The irony of her situation is that with the disruption and lack of agreement, it became a case of 'healing herself'.

<p style="text-align:center;">৪৩</p>

CASE STUDY 3: ANTHONY *CREATES A COMPUTER PROGRAM ON ARTIFICIAL LIFE*

Anthony created a computer program on artificial life. The topic was an investigation into plant communities by way of simulation. He was interested in the creative side of writing a computer program and doing something challenging and original. He had several attempts at writing it.

Project

My thesis didn't fit into any neat boxes. The program was designed to simulate grasslands which I could populate with plants and each plant would grow and compete against the others and they'd grow roots and leaves and compete for water and produce seeds. And I could investigate whether you could have lots of species coexisting or just one.

The idea that I was hoping for was to have an interesting outcome with emergent unpredictability programmed into where lots of species were co-existing. The rules were to be the same for all the plants and some species had ways of having choices, like having more leaves or less roots or growing shorter or taller so would do better. So, instead of having one best species you'd get an unstable, dynamic sort of situation. The program went quite well. I didn't model the plants on any particular species and even the rules of the world were not modelled too closely on anything. There was the potential to do that but it didn't end up happening.

Anthony's experience

My PhD wasn't a very satisfactory experience. I started in Chemistry and I wanted to explore artificial life. It sounded exciting but I ended up in Ecology. Then I had a fairly unsatisfactory experience with a supervisor for about two or three years and we didn't get on all that well. I suspect there was too much difference between us.

[Track 04: Supervisor's nature](#)

Anthony: I realise he was very busy with a lot of students and he kind of inherited me rather than sort of chose me as a student. And he didn't have a huge amount of interest in what I was doing – and it became quite awkward – sometimes when I'd been particularly successful and got a lot done, there was even less to talk about than if I'd done bugger all. It was kind of awkward. (Laughter)

I ended up working with someone who had always been my official supervisor. I was more loosely supervised and then things got a lot more productive, and I got a lot more done. But then I started working part time and each time I took on a new job it just completely collapsed and fizzled. I just managed to get it handed in at the end.

Anthony:	I needed to talk to people who were relevant in the field, and get some people who were interested. On one hand the sort of freedom and isolation really helped me develop something that was much better than it might have been otherwise. On the other hand, without any sort of supervision from someone who was interested, or even casual, like twice a year contact, it really suffered.

Anthony abandoned his work for a year and a half and only completed the thesis because he had run out of time. He returned to the testing and wrote up the results so quickly that he was not confident about examination. He thought he had written the thesis' introduction in a way that did not prepare the reader for the interesting aspects of and experiments with the artificial life component of his work. However, he felt that he needed to write the thesis in a way which was constrained by the requirements of the Ecology faculty.

Isolation and engagement

Anthony:	I think it was a very successful model compared to what was around at the time, possibly even today, though I am not so sure of that because part of the effect of the isolation was I was able to do things that perhaps would never have been approved by anyone. I made so many revisions of this program and I think if I had a very clear question from the start, I would never have developed it to the same extent that it was. And the result was that it was actually a much better program. And I wasn't completely on my own, every now and again my supervisor would make a suggestion of something that he thought might be an investigation and I would then have to rewrite the program so that it'd be able to do it.

Technology

In his choice of computer platform *Anthony* was influenced by the fact that most Biologists use Windows. Despite having made this decision, *Anthony* thought Windows' credibility problem could restrict his program's marketability.

Examination

There was difficulty knowing who to send the thesis to for examination.

Anthony:	It was sent to an examiner who really wasn't suitable and I knew that from the start. She was a statistician and there was no statistics in my project at all. (Laughter) And there was just no logical reason to send it to this person other

> than she was suggested and she gave a damming indictment and I can't
> see how she could have given anything else. I mean because there was just
> nothing in it that would appeal to her. It wasn't an appropriate choice in
> more ways than one and not in the field at all and not likely to appreciate the
> creative side.
>
> Statisticians are the most hypothesis-focussed people around. Their whole
> work has to be hypothesis result. But that's not all scientific work, you know
> but, she just why isn't there a hypothesis – well it wasn't a hypothesis
> investigation, it was a 'let's do something that no one's done before and see
> if you can get an interesting result out of it. I don't know what the result will
> be but you know maybe something new will come out of doing something
> different'. And that doesn't lend itself to 'the hypothesis was' unless you go
> and bogusly write one in retrospect. You know, but the statistician just
> canned it for not having a pre-set pre-conceived hypothesis from the start.

Two examiners gave both very good and somewhat negative comments, but the statistician
woman – she just trashed it. *Anthony's* thesis was awarded with minor corrections. He felt
that although it was technically successful, he did not promote the work and thought that over
time it would become less suitable for publication. He concluded:

> I am becoming a lot more pessimistic that anything will ever come of this. A lot of it is
> my personality; I'm just not good at getting things out there.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Anthony's experience sounds like being on a roller coaster. His reflections demonstrated his
vision for and his belief in his work. Yet they illuminated the insecurity he felt about himself
as a candidate and a scientist. Despite being excited about the prospects of creating a
program on artificial life he recognised his thesis wasn't standard in either topic or mode of
presentation so he thought it could not be categorised. This may have created a measure of
insecurity about the research which was no doubt compounded by his uncertainty about being
in the right faculty. He enjoyed the times of freedom when he became productive yet
expressed despondency when the work collapsed a couple of times and he felt trapped by
convention and stifled. *Anthony* was dissatisfied with the intermittent nature of his candidacy
and the times he could work on his project brought about by disruptive changes of
employment. He thought writing the introductory theory was dry and formal and that it did
not complement the excitement of the exploratory and creative practical component.

His two supervisors were in unfamiliar territory. He experienced 'awkwardness' with them
and he thought the difficulties stemmed from there being too many differences between them.
Having a supervisor who he thought did not seem to fully understand his concepts or

experiments was isolating. This was more of an embarrassment to him rather than an obstruction to the work. He did not understand why his thesis was sent to a statistician for examination.

The use of a computer operating system (Windows) which he knew to be good, but which was not a popular technological choice, may have created a feeling of insecurity and of going against the tide of traditional thought. However, it proved to be adequate for what he wanted to achieve.

The following verse describes the process of creating the work, *Anthony's* self-deprecating nature, his disrupted experiences with the work and with his supervisors and his ambivalence about publishing the work or transitioning the program into further use.

Track 08: Binary ecology

Poem 9: Binary ecology

I've made a grand discovery in case you'd like to know
like flight or electricity, steam power or radio

I've found a way to simulate forms of botany
observe behavioural changes in their ecology

It's worked up in a program which I designed to show
environmental impact on how plants exist and grow

The plants and rules for growing were all of my conception
Coexist or perish? was the fundamental question

Some plants had much larger leaves or grew a great deal quicker
while some were slow to sink their roots or seedpods were much thicker

These simulated life forms exist in binary code
Varieties of input render changing episodes

It could be used by others in scientific modes
to calculate the impact of global ebbs and flows

Experts did not comprehend it scientifically
my crafting of the model from seed to maturity

I felt like I was tramping through forests deep and tight

Chapter 4: Phase 1

without a star for bearing nor moon to light the night

I'm a modest academic but others tell me 'no'
a latent Isaac Newton, Einstein or van Gogh

It was awarded PhD but hardly gratifying
the writing up was fast and sparse – not very satisfying

I'm caught in a conundrum – this work could stretch and grow
but where it goes from here and now I'm at a loss to know

It lives on my computer and in a library
what e're the final use of it, I truly fail to see

It's been my long time shadow passed in through me and out
My earnest love of science was what helped it come about

This embryonic program is destined to expire
unless by new endeavour is programmed to survive

(Somerset, 2008)

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CASE STUDY 4: ELANOR'S CROSS-DISCIPLINARY THESIS IS A SUITCASE

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Figure 14: *Elanor's* cross-disciplinary thesis

Elanor's background is in design yet she produced her thesis from Business Management. Her thesis connects to the management concept of 'unpacking' so she submitted it in a suitcase with many other suitcases with text and objects packed inside. She had studied architecture and taught industrial design, yet she enrolled in a Management faculty for her doctoral candidacy. Her friend successfully submitted a thesis in a box with various metaphorical artefacts (Burrows, 2004a). This motivated *Elanor*, for whom conceptualising ideas through design is part of her normal practice, to use an alternative presentation format as well. *Elanor* describes the process of her candidacy, the difficulties she faced and how she felt about dealing with them.

The project

My thesis is not going to be displayed in the Library as a book, but as a large suitcase. My other friends who are doing PhDs and are submitting artefacts are enrolled in a PhD by Project program so they will submit an artefact and an exegesis [38]. But I am enrolled in a PhD by thesis. In these situations you are asked to submit a book – my thesis **IS A** and **IS IN A** suitcase.

The thesis material, manufacturing and contents cost her over $8,000. She had eleven sets of suitcases made including four PhD sets for examination. She made all the creative materials and designed the custom-made suitcases. She searched Australia to find a manufacturer and

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[38] Traditionally 'exegesis' means a text explanation of a text – *viz.* biblical texts. Candidates tend to use it to mean a text explanation of a text (eg. a novel, script, etc.) **and** an explanation of non-text artefacts.

eventually found one whose <u>Globite</u> suitcase factory and workshop was ironically only five minutes from her home.

Being in the witness box

Elanor had already written a long manuscript which she considered could have stood alone, but because of the topic she felt it needed to be represented in another format. She told her supervisor, *Janice*, that there was only one way she wanted to do it and if she couldn't do it her way she wasn't going to finish it. *Janice* suggested that a book format would have been less problematic but eventually supported *Elanor's* request. She explained: I'm not against books, I love books, but the topic was on collaborative practices and participation. It didn't make sense for me to preach something through a tool that was the opposite of what I was preaching.

When *Elanor* requested if she could use an alternative format, the *Research Committee* asked her to produce a prototype because they couldn't visualise the thesis. She thought this was unusual but said she would make the prototype if it would help to get the work approved. She thought it might reinforce her argument about the connection between the topic and the mode of presentation. She created a very early prototype and presented it to the Management and Business faculties and the *Research Committee*. She described that the thesis would be a suitcase containing textual and non-textual elements such as objects, books, CDRoms, DVDs, learning modules and metaphorical artefacts. The *Committee* decided they could recommend her going ahead, but they did not feel comfortable about giving her final permission. They thought they needed some regulations for this type of thesis so, although they supported it and endorsed it, they did not want to give the final 'yes'. To be given an ambiguous 'yes but be careful' response to her research project proposal was disconcerting.

> So then I had to present to the *Higher Degree Committee* – pretty scary. There were people from each faculty and my assumption was that people from creative and design disciplines would be supportive and that people from say, Engineering, would not be happy with this. My assumption was completely wrong because in fact, the two representatives from the artistic faculty didn't ask any questions. The most brilliant questions were all from Engineering. So I thought 'never have assumptions like that because you could be wrong'. Besides amazing questions, some were quite predictable.

Elanor repeated their conversation:

Them: Is there going to be a thesis with this?
         (They already knew there was going to be a 90,000 word 'normal' PhD thesis.)
Elanor: Well, actually I am going to have to cut down the thesis – I already have twice as much.

Them	How is it going to be in the Library?
Elanor:	In a suitcase.
Them:	Why don't you put it on a CD – take pictures?
Elanor:	Well that would negate the act of unfolding things. If I transcribed it into a digital medium I am not going to have the same result.
Them:	Why are you trying to do it by thesis? If you did it just by project it would be so much easier for you.
Elanor:	This **IS** the thesis. It is just articulated differently. You can write about the love that you feel for your mother, but in fact, it does not describe at all the act of loving your mother. My hand around my mother and hugging her is very different from writing about it.

So, in the end I think they understood what I meant. Then I received this fantastic letter. It said something on the lines of; 'we give you permission to submit your thesis in an alternative form. However, we don't want to be held to this in case something goes wrong in the examination'. So I thought – whatever! I just had to laugh at the usual bureaucracy. It was very interesting to see how it all unfolded.

Supervision

Janice was sight-impaired so *Elanor* needed to help her visualise something which depended upon all of the senses. She discovered that describing something to a sight impaired person helped her re-evaluate what she herself saw so she had to focus on what was essential. *Janice* supported *Elanor* but started to have reservations about the content when it came closer to submission.

My supervisor started over-focussing on some aspects of the work.   She did not express any interest in any artefact or other non-textual element – the text was the only thing that counted. I was really disappointed because I was trying to do something different here. To me reading the text in isolation from the rest is like reading a book, one page yes, one page no. It didn't make sense to me but she didn't seem to see that. She was acting as if the text was the only thing that the examiners were going to be looking at.

I was disappointed and confused - you have your self-doubts. I thought what am I doing here? Maybe this thing doesn't count. And then you think 'no', the thing is worth believing in and it is not my problem. I told myself: 'You've been working for such a long time and working hard. Given her reaction she is obviously scared she is going to be judged because of it'.

At the end I gave up asking, what can they do? I just worked to complete. There are things inside the suitcases that my supervisors didn't even know were there. If they didn't ask then it wasn't a problem for them – I didn't care anymore. What can I do at the end of the day if it is only the text that counts for them? It would be really disappointing if my examiners took the same approach.

Level of engagement by the faculty

I think I was the only person on the planet who had their entire thesis read five or six times and some of the chapters have been read twelve times. There were 90,000 or 100,000 words. On the other extreme, the supervisor of a friend never read her PhD cover to cover. They posed all these questions about terminology and vocabulary. In

different disciplines some words don't mean the same. I had to put footnotes to explain the words that could be represented differently depending upon the context. The closer I got to submission, the more they concentrated on the text.

It was bizarre and frustrating. Actually, it was ironic because I just got this letter yesterday and *Janice* wants me to send her a picture of my thesis because she wants to give a talk about non-traditional theses. She has been great and supportive and I wouldn't have been able to do it without her, but at the end of the day she is human. A human being who is suddenly put in a position where a student wants to do something outside what is considered by academe as appropriate – a nice idea, but when it becomes practice then it becomes scary. I can understand that it would be easier to abandon such a ship – lots of people have done so.

Examination

When you do something that is a-disciplinary you would like examiners that are like that – a-disciplinary: people that are comfortable with not having boundaries between what is suitable or appropriate and what is not. The question in the end should be: 'is this a PhD or not – regardless of boundaries?'

One of *Elanor's* suitcases went to the USA for examination and another to Canada, where *Professor Stewart*, an Australian, examined it. He knew about the form of the thesis before he received it. When it arrived and he opened it, he was very excited because, as a suitcase, it represented the notion it had had to travel from Australia to Canada. He said it was like a travelling box of tricks. He was a little overwhelmed at first because there were many compartments and he had to find an entry point (*Stewart*, 2006, personal communication).

During our conversation *Prof. Stewart* said the thesis contained a lot of work which he thought was perhaps evidence of the unrealistic pressure the Australian system puts on doctoral candidates in terms of word length. In his view there was far too much there. He said it was a wonderful thesis but that *Elanor* was expected to do too much. He believed *Elanor's* thesis in a suitcase was important because it replicated a process which would appeal. He considered the form of the suitcase was not as important as how it connected with the unfolding of a process, unfolding of the data [39].

This verse is a metaphorical comment upon what happened.

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[39] Further comment by *Professor Stewart* about media theses is in Phase 2, Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Phase 1

Track 09: 'Yes' but 'no' from the committee

Verse 10: 'Yes' but 'no' from the committee

'We've considered your proposal

The committee decided
you can drive your modified car in our rally
Other people have won in modified cars

Yours is more modified than usual
so if you drive it and crash it
we did not say you could drive it

The club does not like people crashing
in unusually modified cars
It makes us look silly

If you lose
we don't lose
But if you win
we win too

If you win
we'll drink champagne together
and my club will get the kudos and cash
for your success

That's it then – OK?'

(Somerset, 2008)

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Elanor's thesis passed examination with no amendments and the feedback was well beyond my wildest dreams. One of the examiners wrote 'This work fulfils the most stringent standards of sound scholarship let alone the mere requirements of a PhD thesis'. *Elanor's* approach was validated and her thesis in a suitcase set a new benchmark for media theses. She has since presented her suitcase thesis to many peers and students to show them what Australian postgraduate students can achieve if they are scholastically adventurous and are given the opportunity to express themselves innovatively. *Elanor* now supervises candidates from different disciples and strives to give them an awareness that her experience might help them shape their work as they intend to. (Email communication, 12th October 2005).

Elanor gained initial inspiration from Burrows' (2004a) academically daring thesis. She combined her creative and technical skills, and disciplinary knowledge, to conceive of a body of knowledge and to form its essence into a unique thesis proposal. The lengths to which she was required to go to justify her work went beyond what one could consider was customary. However, *Elanor* was prepared to face this and to deal with the reaction of a 'traditional' research board and for this, one must admire her courage, vivacity and gracious chutzpah. She acknowledged that she began to doubt about the presentation mode – but never mentioned that she doubted the knowledge content. This is a phenomenon which text-only thesis writers do not experience. The hardbound thesis is safe, reliable and 'traditional' candidates never need to submit a prototype. It is reasonable to think that, during her various presentations to the research board, *Elanor* became the tutor and the board became the learners. They had difficulties with lexicon and conceptual understanding, and other questions relating to *Elanor's* choice of media.

One of her examiners noted her thesis work was in excess of the requirements of the degree. Perhaps *Elanor* went to extra effort because of the hesitancy of the research board to give her outright permission to proceed. In circumstances where creativity and artistic interpretation is criticised, it could dampen the creative spirit. In *Elanor's* experience, the criticism seemed to reaffirm to her that her approach was valid.

<div align="center">ᮗᏇ</div>

CASE STUDY 5: GRANT PAINTS FROM A SUB-CONSCIOUS STATE
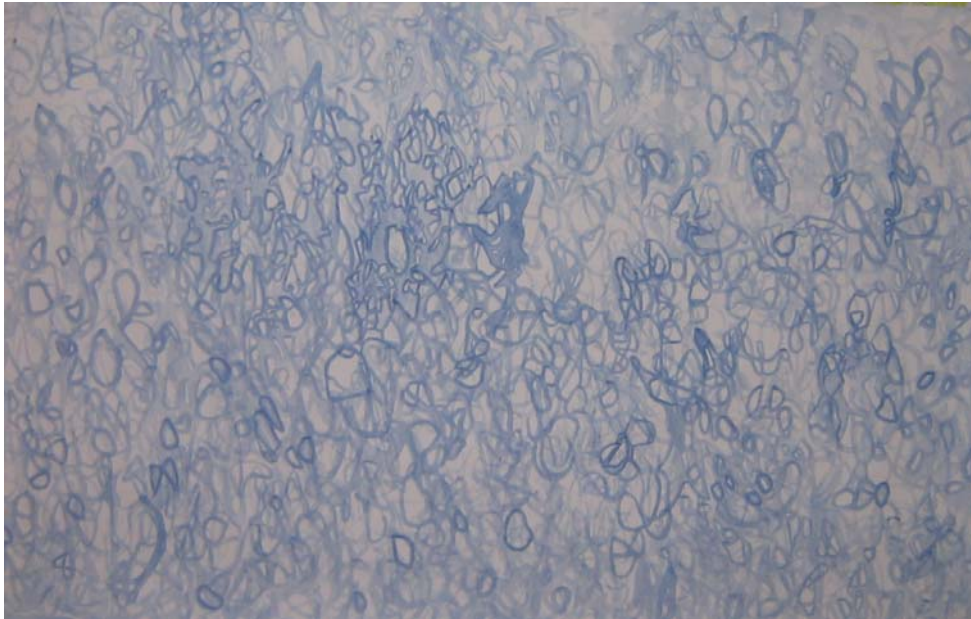
(Used with author's permission)

Figure 15: One of forty artworks from *Grant's* thesis

Grant's hypothesis sprang from looking at ways of painting from the sub-conscious. He discarded previously learned ideas of formal writing and painting and tested his theories in his studio. His auto-ethnographical study is an explanation of his art practice and shows how his experiences formed the way he thinks. His thesis demonstrates the role the sub-conscious plays in the creation of art.

The journey begins

Grant was an architect before he commenced Arts School in 1988. Due to family ill health, he spent a year drawing and painting and enjoyed the activity. He saw an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald for a three-year course into which he was accepted. He attended art lectures, became involved in painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, printing, calligraphy and essay writing. He worked hard at his studies, topped his first year in 1991 and because he had performed so well he was accepted into a postgraduate degree course.

He started a Postgraduate Diploma but did not get on well with his teachers. He thought some were stupid and they all had one-track minds. He did not want to study their principles of deconstructionism because he wanted to pursue his own original ideas about art. This annoyed his supervisor who he thought wanted to fail him. However, his external

examiner was enthusiastic and so he passed his Postgraduate Diploma. He enrolled in a Master of Arts at another university in 1992. His two supervisors were well-meaning but *Grant* thought they did not understand him or his art.

Crises, constraint and confluence

In 1993 *Grant* became very ill with cancer which interrupted his course. He underwent five years of treatment and was not given much chance of recovery. His honours masters' exam was the same week he was to be admitted to hospital. One supervisor had seen his work previously but was not enthusiastic about it. The other supervisor took great interest in his work which encouraged him to get back to painting and writing. He passed with honours at the end of 1998 and survived the cancer. The supervisor who liked his work moved to another university and was put in charge of Visual Arts, where *Grant* enrolled in a PhD in 2001. He was awarded a full time doctoral scholarship, finished painting his work and writing his thesis in June 2003 and was awarded PhD in 2004 when he was aged 73. *Grant's* thesis comprises forty artworks with an exegesis.

Hypothesis

The concept for a thesis came to *Grant* when he discarded previously learned ideas about formal writing and painting and looked for a way to create art from the sub-conscious. He enjoyed the experiment but expected it would take him a long time. *Grant* thought the best moment of his research was when he created the first two or three paintings. It was then he recognised what he was trying to do was becoming a reality. His work centres on what he calls 'the mark' – any mark you can make which happens in a subconscious way. 'Mark making' helps him break into visual thoughts which he is unable to achieve in other ways. A different entity taking over, preoccupation with the unconscious and state of quiet trance describe the state *Grant* needed to experience in order to paint. This verse uses *Grant's* words to explain the formation of his hypothesis.

Verse 11: Mark making

How do you make a thesis?
How do you make a mark?
Unconsciousness directs it
Don't try to ask me why

Anyone can paint
with brush or pen
with pencil or crayon
with no pre-thought and an open mind
visual thoughts appear on paper
but will stop if you start thinking again

No battles or warring inclinations of the mind should be with me
let my mark making happen without evasion
or false exaggerated emotional outbursts
which are not part of my essential being
Simply give myself time to let the marking show itself
Nothing more is needed.

(Somerset, 2008, from *Grant*)

Grant's auto-ethnographical study is an explanation of his art practice. His exegesis includes a background to his way of thinking, how he gradually started mark making, how he relates to other artists and how others are unable to relate to the unconscious, his relationship with his illness, his upbringing and his parents. He also discusses his philosophical evolutionary path from religion, dogma, good and evil to an analysis of fantasy versus reality and his artistic transition from architecture to expressionist art. The following excerpts from his thesis explain his approaches to creating the type of art he was exploring.

- I have found my own efforts in paint, ink or pencil to be....as if a different entity takes over control when I try to make meaningful statements.

- I find myself occupied with marks in response to music and the facsimiles of the unconscious.

Discussion on the thesis

Grant lent me his thesis and this conversation ensued when I returned it.

Self: I think your thesis is an auto-ethographic study.
Grant: They thought it was. I was trying to explain how I made these marks.
Self: Yours is a lovely story. It would be of great worth to people who doubted themselves or people who doubted their ideas were worthwhile.

Grant: You don't know whether your ideas are any good. I had encouragement from my supervisor – a great lady from my university.

Self: What type of support or encouragement?

Grant: She was a very good artist herself. She liked my artwork and then she encouraged me to write the thesis. She came to visit me here at home and she lives in Hunters Hill. I had to go up there now and again. I thought she was very considerate.

Self: What did she think of your ideas?

Grant: I don't really know but she obviously thought it was good enough. It's just a simple story, all I've said is just an explanation of why – about mark making. This is all hypothesis but essential to know if we are to understand the part of the brain which may govern the mark. One of the examiners thought I must have instinctively known when to stop and start – but I don't know whether that is true or not. This business of the unconscious – I don't know what it is.

Examination

Grant had an oral examination on his exhibited portfolio of forty artworks. He had expected an intelligent discussion of the displayed work, but:

> …one examiner grilled me for three hours. It was obvious he had not read my thesis properly or the references. I did the correct thing by not losing my temper and by being patient. If you 'lose your rag', it is not a good thing to do or betray your impatience.

He was relieved when two examiners sent back favourable reports straight away. The examiner who grilled him took months to return the report. When he finally did, he had submitted it improperly and had written six pages of criticism. He finally said *Grant's* work was acceptable and that he should be awarded a PhD.

Other thoughts

My conversation with *Grant* drifted into other topics. For example, we noticed similarities between my phenomenological approach to gathering research materials and his approach to painting. Both involved removing preconceptions. *Grant* regretted not having commenced his work earlier and wasn't sure about what to do with it in the future. He was both protective of his work and a little self-deprecating regarding its worth. It has not been published because he is not sure he wants other artists to copy his ideas or to plagiarise his work. Yet *Grant* is also an expert in traditional forms of painting and drawing and is commissioned to sketch musicians during performances. He still paints on a smaller scale yet tires easily.

Grant wanted to know if I had thought the thesis was boring.

Self: No, no – it was about you and it was incredible that you completed it after what you had been through – that was the power of it apart from the artworks and apart from your talents, incredible that you did it after you were so sick and that you finished it – that's another lesson …

Grant:	Another lady friend said that it was remarkable that I had finished.
Self:	Yes, she was right.
Grant:	I hadn't thought of it that way.
Self:	It's a testament to what a person can do to overcome difficulty and have the challenge and the will and the drive not to give up, and at your specific age is even more worthy.
Grant:	I'm not doing much now.
Self:	You are not doing much now in terms of …
Grant:	I've just finished sketches for a piano competition but I should get on with the painting again …

He indicated it was not a sentimental gesture to say he could not have completed the work without the support of his wife. Their photograph is on the front cover of his thesis. Since being awarded, *Grant* and his wife have noticed an increase in the use of 'mark-making' by artists and writers.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Grant's story is one of physical and academic survival. It is inspirational, not only because he was older and suffered and overcame illness, but because of his belief in himself and in his hypothesis, and because he had the stamina to accomplish what he set out to do. Reading about his early university experiences without knowing his age, one might think he was a free-thinking youth with radical ideas. That he repeatedly expressed that he thought he was 'lucky' with his art is an indication of his modesty.

Grant's artworks and his hypothesis connect with phenomena on a metaphysical level. He experienced a golden moment in his research when the thought regarding the ability to create art from the sub-conscious and the activity connected. He formed a hypothesis from this connection. The examiners obviously could not put themselves into *Grant's* state of 'subliminal consciousness' during which he created his art. Thus, his ability to explain the activity and to persuade the examiners that for him it was a genuine experience would have required articulate justification. The examiners thought that the works had the hallmarks of good quality artwork [40].

Grant's experience supports the argument that candidates who create multiple media works are under more pressure than traditional candidates are because they may have to cope with subjective critique by supervisors and examiners of their media plus academic criticism of the written exegesis. Connecting with a supervisor who did not understand his approach to research was difficult for him. He had a very good relationship with one supervisor who was

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[40] *Grant* showed me all his paintings. Their soft, muted colours with mysterious patterns were mesmerising.

very sensitive to his needs. This must have been reassuring yet the third examiner's criticism of the work was discouraging. *Grant* noticed younger artists had more difficulty transposing their artistic expressions from a paint medium to a textual one to fulfil the conditions of the degree.

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CASE STUDY 6: JANA SUBMITS HER THESIS IN FOLIO FORMAT

Jana was awarded an EdD in 2003. Her thesis components were presented in folio format and each component differed in content and purpose.

The folio

Jana produced a thesis by folio of four separate yet interrelated components which were all examined.

1. A thematic analysis statement justifies the work and explains *Jana's* philosophical approach to socially just pedagogies.

2. A research journal – a snapshot of her subjectivities – describes the major theme of her work and explores discourses related to her study. It also reflects on the gender specific and racist nature of the curriculum she experienced at primary school.

3. Learning materials, a workbook for educators to provide a philosophical and physical space to engage in discourses related to socially just pedagogies and a journal which contains participants' reflections on the research.

4. Two academic papers for publication.

The project

Her research focuses on socially just pedagogies and supports awareness of the discourses that might support or get in the way of this approach towards communicating and educating.

Track 11: *Jana's* dissertation

Jana: So, basically what I set out to do in my research was to explore the discourses that might be aligned with socially just pedagogies and the discourses that get in the way. And I say that might be aligned because I explore in my book the notion of proceeding with caution, and that mine is not a study where definitive statements are made. But I think there's value in reading stories about particular people in particular places.

Jana conducted two focus groups at six sites for people to come together to share understandings of socially just pedagogies. During the focus group sessions, she asked people to demonstrate what they considered were socially just pedagogies. She wrote up a narrative with each of four teachers (co-investigators) which included negotiated quotes from their discussions. This activity involved teachers and students creating knowledge together.

In the thesis, the narrative sits on top of the page in a different font and the analysis or commentary is on the bottom half of the page.

Theoretical stance

Jana expressed her epistemological stance regarding the social construction of truth.

Track 12: Social construction of truth (sound only)

Jana believed her personal and educational philosophy went against the grain of traditional thought. Using her expressions, this verse describes her shift away from traditional type thinking towards feminist, poststructural theorising. This change created the impetus for her to form a thesis which was based on the need to be aware of how we are constituted and constitute ourselves through language and discourses.

Track 13: Towards socially just pedagogies

Verse 12: Towards socially just pedagogies

Entrenched in academia
and learning communities
Enthusiastically participating
in what needed to be done

Mentors discourse
about philosophies

Wonder why
mine are not aligned
traditionally
and no match to the cohort
who talk about their work

Assumptions abound
about the way
we are
and communicate

Write a dissertation
in consciousness
and recode to fit
traditions of the academy?

Seems so antisocial
Concrete dissertations
Dead white man's genre
To me

Poststructural theorising
changes the way we think
interrelate and teach
For educators to engage
and apply accessibly

Action to change the world

(Somerset, 2008, from *Jana*)

Impetus for change

The purpose of *Jana*'s research was to inspire action for change to social and post-structural practice in schools as she outlines in the following voice tracks.

Track 14: Schooling as a social practice

Jana: I have a very strong notion that schooling is a social practice. Schools have been made by people. Schools can be **remade** to better serve the needs of a wide group of people. I say to my students constantly, especially if they are giving positive feedback about a pedagogy that I've used … and I remind them, it might not serve the interests of everyone. And if we would just realise that notion of partiality, of incompleteness, of some groups being privileged and others being marginalised then I think that we can work in ways that help.

Track 15: Personal influence of exploring socially just pedagogies (sound only)

Jana thinks her work has been:

> …an opportunity to celebrate the socially just pedagogies of some extraordinary teachers and I feel very privileged to have come to know them and to stay in contact with them and work with them since.

Supervision

Rick [41], *Jana*'s supervisor, referred to the positive nature of their supervisor/candidate relationship. She's one of those people who didn't need a supervisor. She's just a great person. He discussed how her work influenced him.

> She really gets deeply into her own personal motivations which led me to look at socially critical pedagogies. *Jana* should be very proud of her work. Big name post-structural feminist theorists examined it, quite frightening examiners, world experts in their areas. Every one of them came back and said 'this is a brilliant piece of work'.

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[41] My conversation with *Rick* provided content for Case study 11 and for Phase 2.

Rick and a few of his colleagues have written a book to which *Jana* contributed a chapter from her doctoral work. She based the story around a sewing basket she had at primary school which *Rick* noticed was ironic for her as a gender-sensitive person.

Illness

Jana's health presented major challenges during her candidacy. She started her EdD in 1998 and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001. She kept studying through remedial procedures. During this time, her son also developed life-threatening cancer and *Jana* kept studying through his illness as well. Her comment from <u>Folio Item 2: a research journey: Reflective journal</u> (2003) describes an insight into how coping with doctoral work and cancer affected her personally.

> It would be both sad and surprising to devote five years of my life to a project such as this if it did not result in significant shifts in my thinking about the world and my place in it. Probably the most significant shift in my thinking relates to my appreciation of the strength associated with uncertainty (p.15).

> I have a strong sense that participation in this research has been part of my journey to survive and even thrive amidst so much unknown (p.16).

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Jana's illness could have been detrimental to completing her thesis. She experienced the sensations of one whose life, and whose son's life, was being threatened, coupled with the tenacity to continue her research. I believe her experience exemplifies the strength of the human spirit in times of great difficulty.

Jana included personal events of her life during her candidacy in her thesis' journal. This decision is one which traditional researchers may not wish to do, but it becomes essential in auto-ethnographic studies. How much insight does a candidate permit an examiner to have into a researcher's personal world, if any at all? Examiners may like this insight or consider it is not essential or scholarly.

Jana found direction by converting from thinking like her colleagues to a way of thinking which embraced socially just pedagogies. She then actively searched for a way to convert other educators to a more socially just educational pedagogy. This required her to influence her workplace colleagues to think about communicating in classrooms in a similar way. She found this was a very satisfying activity. The folio proved to be a very valuable tool for bringing about change in classroom practice and the workbook became a useful educational tool.

This case shows how a candidate and supervisor can benefit from their relationship. *Rick* guided *Jana* and she shared her knowledge with him. Despite her ill health, *Jana's* candidacy was a very positive experience. She radiated self-confidence, excellence, passion for new knowledge and for new ways of thinking.

The concept of undertaking research work which combined a theoretical base with radical and critically innovative philosophies, personal reflections and creative and practical instructional elements were possible by presenting the thesis in folio format.

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CASE STUDY 7: MARCIA 'DOES IT HER WAY' IN BUSINESS FACULTY

Marcia was awarded a PhD in 2003 for an auto-ethnographic study based on her one-person business experiences. Her thesis is about change, leadership and personal and professional transformation. Her clients expect innovation, and in her loyalty to them and for professional credibility, she wanted to demonstrate this quality in her thesis rather than to create a traditional thesis which was less likely to gain the attention of her predicted audience. She sought confluence between her creative and innovative business practice, her research methodology and her thesis writing. *Marcia* used metaphorical art and poetry in her thesis and formatted it unconventionally using a variety of colours and fonts.

The project

Marcia wanted to write her autobiography reflectively. This need took her on an introspective journey whilst forming the thesis' structure and its elements. Her text and image-based thesis was designed to be visually and conceptually creative. The exploration of how I intended writing it was as complex as the journey. Her topic developed through taking parts of an Indigenous work of art to form the structure of each chapter which she started with a drawing of a human hand. She explains the metaphor:

> So, you have the hand, and the hand drawing the picture. Let it go, let it out, let it all unravel, let it be free and it can be the path on which to travel. It is that kind of thing – a metaphor of a road, or a canoe on the river. The path of a river changes over time. I discovered the notion of the Indigenous song lines and that is the metaphor and the organising structure of the thesis.

Marcia conceded it was quite unusual for a Business faculty thesis to draw heavily upon the visual senses yet she used text and visual media unconventionally for emphasis. She presented poetry in formats which gave both cognitive and visual clues. For example, she reinforced the text by making sure the breaks on the pages were meaningful. *Marcia* considers that left and right justified text deadens language and she used blank spaces to 'create space for thinking'.

Finding a supervisor

After a series of disappointments and angst whilst trying to find a supervisor, *Marcia* realised the phenomenon she was studying was holistic and she wanted to research it holistically. Because of her methodological approach and individual style of presentation, she had

difficulty finding a supervisor. One potential supervisor told her she could not write in the first person, he had never and would never supervise a candidate who did.

[Track 16: Motivation and tears](#)

Marcia:	I wasn't doing it to get a PhD. I did it because I was profoundly curious in the phenomenon. And all of the bringing it down to the size of the head of a pin and going deeper wasn't good enough. I don't know if all of the undermining and the tears … I don't know how I stayed, I do really don't know how I stayed strong enough to say I can't do it that way. I eventually said I can't do it that way.

[Track 17: Supervisor/student harmony](#)

Marcia:	I had every likelihood of my research dying before it had even been born with the second supervisor.

It took *Marcia* nine months to find the 'right' supervisor.

[Track 18: The right supervisor](#)

Marcia:	I just loved him. I just thought that he was a very special person and I picked myself up and was brave enough to say, 'Would you be willing to come on my journey with me? What I really need is someone who will attempt to understand where I am coming from and push and challenge and you know cajole me and all of the rest but understand my journey'. And he was all for it and that's the way I supervise, as well. I've been a supervisor of masters' students for eleven years so I do have a supervisory experience. I know the kind of work that can come when you share someone else's journey and encourage them and challenge them and that's what I wanted for myself and I guess – I found it.

[Track 19: Supervisor's influence](#)

Marcia:	He came out of social work – I come out of business. He stretched me and my thinking and it just fell out so natural. We didn't actually have many conversations that I can remember about the form itself other than at the very end where he started pushing me further.

Defending approach

My research is as much about being a first person researcher as it is about being a first person business and my research journey of struggling to find my voice. The methodology shifted as I became more aware of my own stuff. I am an action researcher but my research is not actually like this.

> It is interactive, evolving, emerging. So it is not 'here's the interview, here's the phenomenon, here's the analysis and we have the end of it'. Action research – that provides a basis for us.

Marcia felt she did not want to be pushed into doing research work which did not connect with her approach. She did not want her creative spirit to be deadened and feared having to spend years working on a project which was more influenced by tradition than by innovation. She attended international academic conferences – was criticised many times and even shouted at whilst giving a keynote session. Once when presenting her ideas about alternative research methodology and modes of doing research, a person jumped out of his chair and said: if you don't like the game, get off the field.

Track 20: Need for autonomy

Marcia:	I couldn't do it any other … this was the work that was pouring out. As I was synthesising and indwelling it was going around inside me and then synthesising and moving into the other world. This was what was coming. It was the expression of something that was really pretty profound as I was concerned. I got into that space, where like authors often do that they talk about 'the thing writing itself'. I had long patches where I completely immersed myself in this and I had the whole of this document together and it kind of worked its way and it actually started to grow its own form, its own synthesis and its own flow as far as I was concerned.
	We're way beyond the black and white space and a half. And to bring the ideas and thoughts down to that rather than encouraging alternate expressions of people like myself who've had a life in business and didn't necessarily think we had a creative bone in our bodies. This found me because I allowed it expression but I had to battle the system along the way.

Examination

Marcia had her own ideas about how she wanted the examiners to examine her work. She believed it stood to reason that theses written in a certain genre would benefit from being read in a compatible environment. She advised her examiners not to read the thesis in their office, but to take it outside, sit in a comfortable chair where they could 'be themselves' and read it there.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

As an independent businessperson, *Marcia* was reluctant to conform to a constrained system which she believed was asynchronous to her purposes. Her survival depended upon her business activities and she felt justified in wanting to present her thesis in a genre which

would be accessible to her clients. Her innovative qualities and her need to create a connection to her commercial activities drove her thesis' presentation style. It seemed the characteristics of her thesis were determined more by herself than by university policy and *Marcia* was prepared to take that risk.

Marcia's candidacy experience was embedded with relationships, connecting, bonding and respecting.

- It took her a long time to find a supervisor with whom she thought she could have a satisfactory and harmonious relationship. It was not a problem for her research project that someone from a different discipline supervised her.

- She had a very strong connection with the work which she considered to be a living entity and with her own experience as she created it. The thesis was designed in a way for her clients to relate to.

- The artistic work of the thesis formed a conceptual connection with the topic so a relationship between layout and colour of the text and the poetry was needed.

- *Marcia* tried to form a relationship with the examiner by advising him or her what frame of mind to be in and where to read the thesis.

- *Marcia* was also enthusiastic about forming a relationship with me and my topic. To demonstrate her support for my and her topic, she rode three hours on her motorbike to meet me.

Her experiences drew me into her world, her journey and her way of thinking. The intensity of her self-belief was evident throughout our meeting. I thought she was inspiring, inventive and courageous and larger than life. She expressed her candidacy experiences with passion and clarity. Her thesis resulted from her strength of character and determination to undertake the type of research she believed in and which she believed she was capable of completing. Our conversation and the sound tracks demonstrate *Marcia's* strength lay in her self-belief, humanism and courage.

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CASE STUDY 8: CARSON INVESTIGATES THE BREAST CANCER RATES OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Undertaking doctoral study by pre-publishing research components is considered to be neither a 'traditional' nor a new approach. *Carson's* experience has been included because theses created this way provide opportunities for innovation and flexibility in research practice. Five published papers form the major component of the PhD thesis *Carson* submitted in 2004. The 40,000 word thesis consists of an introduction, the papers, a conclusion and bibliographies. Three of his technical reports were published in peer-reviewed health journals.

Carson was investigating the rate at which certain cancers, including breast cancer, affected Indigenous people. He had known for years that Indigenous women in the Northern Territory are very unlikely to get breast cancer as he had worked with Indigenous people for twenty-five years in health services and ran a cancer register for seven or eight years. He understood Indigenous health issues but he needed to apply rigorous methods to convince the National Breast Cancer Program of what he knew. *Carson* began his research with a qualitative analysis and then moved to rigorous testing and quantitative and qualitative analysis. The evidence had to be sound and credible and get as close to the truth as it could. A big part of the research was constructing and refining the evidence and putting the story together.

> And in that process you think you know what the answer is and every so often you get a surprise as your personal impressions and the long experience and the anecdotes are all heading in the right direction, but every so often they are not right and you get a surprise.

The unexpected outcome was that breast cancer had increased dramatically in Indigenous women in the past ten years.

Advantages and disadvantages of pre-published papers

Carson found the main advantage of doing a doctorate by pre-published papers was that it gave a very early definition to the final work in which the chapters were structured according to the various parts of the project he was working on. He avoided the problem of compiling and structuring an entire thesis. The longer-term major advantage was that everything in the thesis except the introduction and conclusion was published in national or international scientific journals. This process eliminated the burden for someone who has just completed a thesis from having to try to create publishable papers when:

…often the contents of PhD research never gets published in the peer review press. An indirect advantage was that the thesis was a lot shorter than it might have been otherwise and that was a great advantage.

One disadvantage was that *Carson* thought he may have been able to complete one section at a time and send it off for publication over the course of three years. However, except for the literature review and the data collection, all of the sections were delayed for various reasons until the last twelve months.

> So whereas I'd hoped I might be able to finish one section after another, for some reason I could never finish the analysis and write up of any particular part until close to the end **anyhow**. I could never nail anything on the head and say that's done. That was particularly frustrating.

Carson explained another reason why it was difficult to complete each section.

Track 21: Another disadvantage

Carson:	If you are writing a chapter you've got to satisfy yourself and your two supervisors and that's done. If during the process start you start to send them off to journals for publication well you've then got reviewers' and editors' comments coming back and you've got to modify things to suit **their** requirements.
	So, that imposes an additional workload. Even if you think you've finished something, and you move onto the next one, well, of course then you know, a couple of months later you get the reviewers' comments back and you've got to deal with those and you can't let them go forever. So whatever you are doing, you have to put that aside and deal with something you'd hoped you had done with a while ago. And you are writing for a different audience so the best way [is] to present something for your supervisors and examiners. There was occasionally some conflict and certainly some annoyance during that process.

This problem related to the levels of detail of methodology and background to the research. The results and the interpretation differed depending upon what was required for examination or for journal editors and reviewers. This meant *Carson* sometimes had to adapt papers to suit their purposes.

> My major concern was that at the end of the thesis, revision would be made more difficult because of the format of the papers. But examiners probably preferred a shorter, more succinct work. The format of peer-reviewed papers is the bread and butter of scientific examination anyhow so they are very familiar with that format. It is easier to read, easier to digest and in the end, it wasn't a problem.

Track 22: Advice

Carson:	If early on in the piece the student could come up with relatively discreet pieces of work that could be done relatively discreetly and that could be

> written up and reported relatively discreetly, then it is a good way to go. And
> if you can then organise the work so that you can actually finish them as you
> go (which I unfortunately was unable to do) and you take that approach
> from the very beginning or early on in the first six months, then I think it is very
> good, very good, highly recommended.

Examination

Carson was expecting comments from the examiners saying there was a lot of detail missing or information needed. One examiner required no modification and *Carson* took only two days to make the modifications the other ones wanted. He thought the examiners probably appreciated the shorter, more succinct format of presentation. It made it easier for them as there was less verbiage and extraneous detail. He had unnecessarily thought brevity may have been a problem.

> Maybe the risk was a consideration but perhaps it made the examination process
> easier rather than harder.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Carson was conducting research amongst the Indigenous people with whom he was familiar. He felt a sense of obligation to the research participants in order to have funding allocated to their health needs if required. The research outcome was very significant to a societal group and proved the worth of well-designed and rigorously conducted research.

Customising the research methodology to suit each phase and each paper was dissatisfying for him because the process was not streamlined. Another problem was that each paper needed to be critiqued by two supervisors, reviewers and journal editors and so *Carson* had to accommodate all their requirements. This complicated the completion process and he experienced a delay in writing the analysis which he said was frustrating. It was difficult for him to know who he should write for and he began to doubt his decision to conduct his research this way. Each paper had numerous iterations and keeping track of the different stages of each paper was challenging. He realised that creating a thesis by pre-published papers was a very segmented process. His confidence about limiting the word count was well founded. The thesis also contained graphic statistics which he thought added to its weight. *Carson* was relieved only one examiner required minor corrections. As he had already published papers for his candidacy, he was relieved of the worry of publishing after being Awarded.

CASE STUDIES 9, 10 & 11

<u>Candidates whose media components were rejected</u>

<u>Case study 9</u> represents the experience of a doctoral candidate whose thesis was not submitted because he did not create the media component. <u>Case studies 10 & 11</u> relate the experiences of candidates whose supervisors recommended the media components of their theses be withdrawn because it would be too risky to submit them.

CASE STUDY 9: MATTHEW CREATES AN ILLUSTRATED NOVEL

Matthew has a Communications and Arts background. He wrote an illustrated novel on trauma for his PhD thesis. He was not an artist so commissioned a friend to make artistic interpretations for the novel. The drawings illustrated feelings, phenomena and the kind of body language he wanted to portray which was indescribable in text. His thesis proposal was accepted at the colloquium stage so he continued to work with the artist. Later his supervisor said the images could not be examined, because they were not his work and so had to be put in an appendix. This would have ruined the novel so he did not submit the thesis. It was very disappointing for him and his artist friend.

Justification

Matthew justified the mode of the novel.

> The purpose of a graphic novel is to communicate with the reader on a multifocal level. There are parts of the novel where there is no text, just a visual explanation. Because I'm dealing in trauma and memory, I'm also dealing in altered states of consciousness at times. So whenever the character is in an altered state I want to be able to demonstrate that in an other worldly manner. It gives the reader a sense that something has changed here, something that couldn't be communicated with words. Words can't say 'consciousness is shifted here'. The reader can see and pick things up in illustrations that you can't put in words. They're seeing stronger shifts in consciousness and shifts in states of perception. So that's how I wanted to use images in my book.

> I started working with the artist and we mocked up about three hundred illustrations. We'd put together about forty or fifty pages of images and text. In the colloquium, they were concerned about how it was to be examined, as I didn't own the rights to the images. My argument was that people go to secondary texts and use them in their theses and all sorts of secondary sources to communicate their vision. I'm going to another source – its like I'm quoting someone else in my novel.

Matthew justified it was not an aesthetic choice to incorporate the images in his novel. He wasn't doing it to make it look good or to make it more appealing to a specific demographic. He wanted the images to enable cognition and allow the engager to become both a voyeur and a reader. Some people suggested they could imagine what the character is like from the text. *Matthew* wanted the text and the images to be dependent upon each other.

Supervisors' initial reactions

When *Matthew* showed his proposal to the supervisors, they agreed a graphic novel was a really interesting new area. They thought the interconnection between the pictures and the text made the work very rare. They asked *Matthew* to get the artist to sign a statutory

declaration agreeing he was being commissioned to create images under instruction. Yet *Matthew* recognised it was also important to allow the artist space and to be inspired and influenced by what he was doing.

> He's a good friend of mine and he said 'sure – if we've got to jump through a bureaucratic hoop'. So, we agreed. If we had to do that to get the PhD through at the end of the day we'd do it, so we did it.

Ultimatum

Matthew and his friend continued to work on the novel and two years later, he met with his supervisor. *Matthew* related the conversation to me.

Supervisor:	You do realise that the images aren't going to be examined.
Matthew:	No, I don't realise that. No one has actually told me that they weren't examinable.
Supervisor:	No, they are not examinable. (I was ready to burst into tears).
Supervisor:	I've tried to tell you this before.
Matthew:	I'm dealing in trauma and memory and you say that I don't remember you telling me something as significant as that when I've been working on it for two years (incredulously).
Supervisor:	You are going to have to put the images into an appendix or the exegesis but they can't go into the actual novel component. It has to be text only – it has to be your work.
Matthew:	It is not going to work as a novel without the images and if I take the images away the novel isn't going to work any more and I've failed.

It was painful for Matthew to tell his artist friend after two years of work, that the images were not acceptable so the thesis could not be submitted.

Matthew's reflections

> There's a taboo about feeling in academia. I have trouble engaging in an art space with other academics about my work – they can't get emotional. Art space is difficult to win in an academic environment and my supervisor told me that it had been a struggle for him. He said, 'you can't do that because it is not arguable – it is not scientific'. One supervisor said, 'I don't go for this new age stuff'. I didn't think I was doing 'new age stuff' at all but it is very expressive and deals with esoteric themes. I'm dealing with trauma and also transcendence and personal spaces.

> Despite all these problems, what frightens me is that certain academics believe that creative theses with exegesis should not be done and that they are not academically credible. I find that frightening. I like the idea that academia has restrictions but any idea should be able to be expressed within that limit. I think there is a lot to be learned within the exegesis but I don't think that the exegesis should be concerned with objectifying the work and it shouldn't have to even explain the work. I think the exegesis should engage in the concept of the work. An exegesis should be exploring and understanding the constructive process in a creative project.

A new PhD

Matthew and his friend are hoping to publish the original novel after he completes a new PhD. *Matthew's* second PhD is a novel without images. He thinks writing a novel and an exegesis would be more difficult than writing a traditional thesis. He finds the creative element is more difficult and exhausting than the theoretical component.

> For me focussing on the creative component is like a full-time job. There are moments of 'that was good' but most of the time you are searching for words, fighting for meaning in what you are doing. It's so personal and emotional you get wrung out by it. Sometimes I've actually had to stop. I find writing the exegesis is quite cathartic. This theoretical part comes out quite easily as I have been focussing so long on the creative component.

Interaction

> One supervisor said hurtful things about the work and wrote all over it. I made a lot of progress despite the fact that the supervisor was hacking apart what I was constructing. My other supervisor just wanted to deal with the finished product – this doesn't help a candidate. I really feel as if he just ended up as a proof-reader. I don't want my supervisor only to say 'cut this out and write it like this' – I also need someone who will discuss what I am doing and engage with the ideas and see what they are getting out of it and see what it all means.

> I feel like I've had more direction and feedback from my friends and colleagues.   This kind of discourse helps you to go back to the static and you can talk about your project. If I stop communicating with people I start wondering and I get to the point where I just can't do any more – I get dried up. I need to talk to stir up all the gathering dust.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Matthew's situation reflect the worst type of problem a candidate could face when creating a media thesis. His supervisor's initial reaction to his project was positive in light of its potential benefit to the creation of knowledge. It seems in this case the supervisor either changed her mind or bowed under pressure. By creating an illustrated novel, *Matthew* felt he was exercising his right as an author to make it clear to the engaged reader how situations unfolded and how the characters appeared. *Matthew* wanted to give readers the optimal opportunity of understanding what the characters were doing or feeling and the situations unfolding, in a way that for him and his work, text alone would not permit.

This poem sets *Matthew's* story in another social context to capture the phenomenon of endeavour and understanding being replaced by rejection and mistrust.

Poem 13: Railroads

I thought to build a railroad
along a certain track
Yes all the way to Kingstown
for going there and back

I asked the Supervisor
to guide the way it went
and he agreed to help make sure
I kept it straight not bent

I could lay down gravel
my mate had some hard wood
so I built the foundation
and he helped where he could

We worked along together
laboured nights and days
The super was approving
so I laid down the rails

The track was straight and worthy
as it traversed the land
It functioned just as promised
I'd done what tracks demand

When it was halfway finished
the Council asked to see
the effort of my labours
I hoped they'd all agree

They told me to be careful
as I did not own the wood
But I could not remove it
the track would be no good!

I couldn't turn the sleepers
and lay them in a row
I'd laid the firm foundation
knew where the track would go

Can you leave a track undone
because you have the fear
that someone will object
when the final stretch is near?

Chapter 4: Phase 1

So I kept on with digging
and working through the night
The work was nearly finished
the end was just in sight

The Super came to visit
and said 'a darn nice track...

but

...take out all the sleepers
and put them round the back'

I looked at him and quivered
my heart it skipped a beat
and tears rolled down my dirt-streaked face
and fell right at his feet

He said the wood was foreign
and the Council would agree
they only wanted gravel
and tracks put there by me

I still believe this railroad
was the best I'd ever built
so left it just the way it was
The Super felt no guilt

But I believe in railroads
and paths throughout the land
I'll find a way to build one
how the Council now demands.

(Somerset, 2008)

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CASE STUDY 10: VANESSA DESIGNS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DIGITAL MODEL

Vanessa produced a media PhD thesis on educational leadership and management but submitted it without the non-text component. She had created a movie for her thesis to demonstrate mentoring concepts in a multi-dimensional model. She described the appearance of the model as being almost like a jellyfish or a big manta ray with a tail which flips back and forth, and at times some parts of it were more influential than others. Her supervisor advised her it would be inappropriate to submit the video. She asked *Vanessa* to create a linear model, which she submitted for examination. This was one of her most challenging academic moments. In defence of the model she reasoned:

> To use an alternative expression of the model would not have been suitable because in fact the model was not linear. It is very hard to express that in black and white on paper. It is better to do that on a video and it is much better to do impressions, as there were at least twenty-one different components of the model and four major ones that interacted and intersected with one another. Video was a perfect way of showing that.

She showed the model to a technician at her university who commented that it gave him an understanding of mentoring. He did not have a background in her area and possibly would have found the model uninteresting. However, she said:

> He loved the video. It wasn't what he expected and he thought he'd be bored to death. That was the first compliment I had on the work, so I thought 'oh excellent', because if **you** get the model – if you understand where I am going with this that is great, that means for me: 'I'm on the right track'.

However, opinion was mostly weighted against her. Her supervisor thought there was nothing wrong with her ideas but her cautious attitude prevailed because this sort of component was new to thesis presentation.

> Some people thought I was trying to cover for the fact that I hadn't explained sufficiently in print what I meant. The criteria seemed to be explained very well in print, and I did very well in the examination so, OK, her advice was good.

Vanessa took the initiative of sending the videos to the examiners **after** she was awarded because they had not withheld their names from their examination reports.

Vanessa:	One of them made the comment: 'this is the way of the future' and he wrote on it 'I enjoyed this – this is the way of the future', but then he wrote 'it would be interesting to see how many people who would accept this as part of a PhD'.

Vanessa:	The second one who saw it said to me – the point you are raising. His quote 'I would need the explanation with it'. Having the explanation first he'd read the thesis first and examined it and then received the video. He thought it was great. He thought that if he'd reviewed the video first and not the thesis the doubt would have been 'is there any other work?' They see video representation as simplistic – they really do. Like something you put together overnight.

They have no, oh that sounds dreadful. They have no concept of what goes into developing alternative methods. They have no idea of the drawings. Only now do we look at da Vinci's and Michaelangelo's drawings and say 'look what went into the art that they did, look what went into the discoveries they make'. Copernicus is another one – ah, restrained by religion. |

The following represents their response using *Vanessa's* words.

Verse 14: <u>Post examination</u>

Three examiners awarded PhD
now viewed the video
Two of three said 'excellent
and different'

One said 'irrelevant'

Thought: 'I'm not fussed
You don't appreciate a different way
Connection isn't there for you
Not skilled enough
to value works aesthetically
A film shows depths of knowledge
where writing misses out

You don't want to go there
it does not fit with you
Your linear sight and thinking
is only black and white
like a 1960s TV box
supports no other shades or hues

Description was explicit
for this new mentor model
in either video or linear form
explaining very well
conceptual understanding
linking multimedia
and text together
in a thesis

People who know
creative processes
would understand these
things we have never seen before

You just don't want to go there
it does not fit with you'

(Somerset, 2008, from *Vanessa*)

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

<u>Pioneering folly</u> expresses the phenomenon of *Vanessa's* research journey and her character. The verse adds insight into the impact of decisions made about a candidate's media work. Metaphorically, it suggests how pioneering innovation and inspiration become blueprints for the future yet may initially meet with disappointment. It captures the phenomenon of being ahead of one's time. It tries to capture the sensation of coming to terms with having an unfulfilled vision which others are able to fulfil later because of change.

Track 27: Pioneering folly

Verse 15: <u>Pioneering folly</u>

Pioneers who form new pathways may fail in their attempt
They cut away the branches
and clear the scrub
and tramp the trail
but may see no light at end of day

The denseness becomes impassable
To continue would threaten their existence

Innovative remedial ideas are challenged and meet with stern rebuke
No policy exists against which this reckless behaviour can be measured
'You'll fail' they cry!

'Use your forefather's tools and theirs before
They've stood the test of time
A little rusty but still keen enough to do the job we could do with ease'

Dreams of a well-built purposeful project remain trapped within – unborn
Instead of accolades, you sense the loss – it was yours ahead of its time
As pioneer in heart and spirit you pursue its worth regardless of their vain decree

  Policymakers with greater power than you
  (a mere apprentice)
  meet behind closed doors and self-convince
  'New tools are required to do the job!'

  The ones you recommended before their consciousness aroused
  The ones they now employ

  Others reach the pathway's end victoriously
  using new tools as highly praised
  and proudly display their medals.

  Because you are a pioneer in heart and spirit
  you hold your peace and
  urge them on supportively.

(Somerset, 2008)

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CASE STUDY 11: RICK CREATES A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

As a doctoral candidate *Rick* created a photographic essay to accompany his thesis but towards completion he decided not to submit it. He was inspired by <u>Daredevil Research</u> (Jipson & Paley, 1997) as it has presentation formats which are clever aesthetically and also clever epistemologically and representationally. The book contains a variety of works by black American mothers-to-be at a home for pregnant teenagers. The project comprises captioned photographs taken by each other of their everyday lives as they approached motherhood. *Rick* connected with this form of presentation.

The project

My own work was in the area of white ethnicity at a time when it was a burgeoning area. It was very difficult for me to work on myself as a white ethnic and to portray that in a traditional doctoral thesis. So, I became involved in the use of visual forms of representations and presentation of data.

I studied the work of curators at museums and art galleries, because I wanted to think about the power relationships involved in putting together a sequence of photographic images and what that does to the viewer. I was trying to work out what goes through the minds of curators when they structure an exhibition in a certain way. I wanted people to construct their **own** paths. I started playing with random slide show productions with the images that I believed portrayed whiteness. I envisaged my thesis would have at least a CDRom with the images for readers to view in a random fashion.

Method

Rick used what he called 'learning conversations' for gathering data. He had repeated conversations with a group of people who identified as white. They were not interviews as such because he would share his own experiences of being white.

That would trigger them, and they'd trigger me, and it became learning conversations, which is far less threatening, and it's far less cold than the way you do an interview. I found that if you genuinely take them as learning conversations, you have repeated contact. It's like a couple of mates having a conversation

Supervision and examination

Rick thought he had a very good supervisor who left him alone to do what he wanted however he wanted to do it. *Rick* confessed his supervisor was happily unaware of what he was doing. He appreciated what his supervisor went through, because he knew that he was a direct person. His supervisor did not want to discourage him but he wasn't able to ensure *Rick's* work would be accepted by the examiners.

Track 28: Supervisor relationship

Rick:	Where I didn't have the **dis**couragement of a supervisor; I didn't have the **en**couragement either. Because my supervisor just didn't… Frank just, you know, said, look, I don't know that stuff.

Rick reached a point where he had to decide what to include and to exclude from his thesis.

Track 29: Reconsideration

Rick:	But it's interesting and I think this is a phenomenon that is really difficult. It cuts to the heart of these forms of theses or folios – is that there's a conservatism that impacts on your work the closer you get to submission date because I ended up excising the equivalent of at least another full thesis out of my doctoral thesis. All that visual stuff I cut out – didn't use.
Self:	Oh, no.
Rick:	Because, cowardice, pure cowardice! (Laughter)
Self:	It's a risk, isn't it?
Rick:	Exactly. You know, in the earlier stages, this was all wonderful and it was, it was ah enthusing, it was empowering in lots of ways, to be able to think about you know presenting stuff in new ways, or in ways that were different at least to what I'd experienced. But as time came closer and closer to submission, my supervisor at one stage said, you know, I just don't know who we're going to get to understand this for examination purposes.

He was also concerned about the impact the photographs would have on examination.

Track 30: Examination at the effervescent edge

Rick:	When you've got that crunch point of the examination, and it needs to be there, it is just the most limiting factor in my opinion of all of this sort of work. It is that examination. Because you know, the closer you get, you think, ah sheesh – I don't want to take too many risks here and have all this work come back, because someone knowledgeable in the content area, or who would have some sort of connection to the content area, may not have any connection whatsoever with the methodology or the presentation stuff. And to try and find what I would I like to call sometimes, 'the effervescent edge', where things are just bubbling and you can't see clearly what's in there. You know this effervescent edges stuff. You'll rarely find it, I think. I've not tried to do it. I didn't with mine in the end. So mine ended up being a standard thesis – a standard written thesis.

As I said before, I just like the idea of this 'effervescent edge'. It's where we are at a point and there's a bit of foam in there, and you know there's something underneath it, but you don't know what will emerge. You get to submit, you get to get close to submitting it, again, that old thing, that examination, as important as it is, there needs to be some way of moderating it.

Post-doctoral use

In order to avoid taking a risk, *Rick* removed about three hundred pages from his thesis including images. He published some of his work with a colleague after his doctoral study.

Rick is supervising *Leon*, who is presenting his thesis in folio format. His work is designed to determine a culturally appropriate post-colonial pedagogy with Torres Strait Islander people. He decided to remove some media components prior to submission. *Rick* explained *Leon's* predicament.

> One of *Leon's* folio components is the result of his living and talking, listening and yarning. Yarning is what Torres Strait Islander folks call sitting around talking – having a yarn – *Leon's* using yarning as a methodological tool. But he was doing it in a cultural sense as a yarning session. *Leon* and I thought about what the Torres Strait Islander people believed to be a way for educating Torres Strait Islander kids.

> *Leon* ensured that his thesis components were useful for the Torres Strait Islanders, so his writing was not for an academic audience. It was a quandary to know what to do. Your doctoral thesis is only one report on a part of a project and you'll continue publishing after it. *Leon* has taken the view that his thesis is a report on a work in progress. So, he said:

> 'OK, you're right – all the material I wanted to submit I'll carve that adrift from the doctorate and give it back to the Torres Strait Islander people after the doctorate'.

Leon gave his opinion about the withdrawal of media components before submission.

> The whole experience is interesting when one considers the many forms a thesis might legitimately take, however when confronted with the process of judgement of those forms, inevitably we revert to the 'accepted' form to ensure that we achieve the result. The integrity of the thesis from a cultural perspective is very quickly aligned with the dominant. A really sad statement unfortunately.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

As *Rick* was influenced by Jipson et al. (1997) he thought that if a book can contain illustrations and a thesis is a book, why couldn't a candidate illustrate a thesis? For him, the link between display and control posed an interesting concept. He thought the concept of choice and the curator's 'power over' the order in which observers viewed images had the potential to create an extra dimension to his thesis. His sense of loss as he succumbed to tradition must have been profound. He believed in conducting research at the 'effervescent edge' yet the dilemma for him was to know whether he should conform or take the risk of failing. His sense of doubt drove his decision to remove the photographic essay – he did not know whether an examiner would accept or reject it. However, he was optimistic his photographic essay would contribute to society in post-doctoral activity.

The freedom to explore which his supervisor afforded him may have been welcome yet closer contact may have been desirable for a candidate who is near to submitting a media thesis and could have possibly circumvented *Rick's* disappointment.

During his learning conversations with 'white' people *Rick* performed the multiple roles of researcher, observer and participant. He experienced the satisfaction of confirming the approach was suitable to the topic.

Despite *Rick's* ongoing and active support for conducting research at the 'effervescent edge', he drew upon his own experience of withdrawing components from his own thesis prior to submission to advise *Leon* how to handle his thesis' media components. In this instance, the fear of taking a risk determined their course of action.

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CASE STUDIES 12, 13 & 14:

The verse *Practical Doctorate* captures how *Rolf Jamieson,* a university lecturer, designed and proposed a doctoral degree in the mid 1990s. In acknowledging the potential for media theses, *Rolf* was instrumental in launching a *Practical doctorate* at his University.

The degree was designed for the thesis to include a substantial video component to evaluate, critique and analyse teaching practice. Candidates who enrolled in this degree produced a two-component ethnographic thesis containing interlinked practical and theoretical components. At the time, *Rolf* considered it was a monumental shift because most theoretical frameworks (of PhDs and other doctorates) are looking out there away from the person involved. So, the difference between the *practical doctorate* and the regular Educational Doctorate was to improve professional practice. Researchers had to provide evidence which said: 'I am better now than I was', and present graphic evidence and link it to a theoretical understanding. The formation of this degree was a proactive response to the availability of new technologies and the use of multiple media for gathering, analysing and presenting research data.

This poem records the inception and implementation of this doctoral degree. Its character stems from *Jamieson's* personality, sense of country and from his broad Australian accent.

Track 31: Ballad of the *Practical Doctorate*

Poem 16: Ballad of the *Practical Doctorate*

Higher ed was changing in the city by the sea
They'd formed a brand new uni from TAFEs and CAEs
but teaching staff had few degrees and none a PhD.

A country bloke *Rolf Jamieson*, a native pioneer,
Settled there to teach a while and stayed for many years
In Dewey-like pragmatic style considered campus needs.

He helped create a Master's course designed primarily
with coursework and some school research combined creatively
so teaching staff and students could now do a PhD.

He chatted with the campus folk on higher ed. degrees
but wondered if the theory of a standard Ph D
would help the local teaching staff progress effectively.

It was a long and dusty drive from classrooms of the day
where *Jamieson* had long believed the field of research lay.

He met with the executive to influence their minds
and as he blew the winds of change a new degree designed
with practical and theory work in equal weights combined.

He thought the Board would not connect with 'practical component'
but 'fieldwork' was a concept he was sure they comprehended
so borrowed it to demonstrate the structure he intended.

It was neither Ed. D, PhD nor combination
but designed to aid instruction in any situation.

      Teacher education in the city by the sea
      was fittingly established in the academy.

      And students from the faculty knocked on *Jammo's* door
      entreating him to guide their work in ways unknown before.

            He supervised a nursing coach though years of his degree
            whose work included media so all could plainly see
            text, pictures clear and movies clipped and skillfully combined
            Articulating theory of the work that he'd designed.

            The Board attached a simple note to copies on CD:
            This thesis should be treated now as if a PhD.

            This meant the Board upon it had bestowed quite fittingly
            equivalence in stature of the newly formed degree
            to its long established counterpart, 'grandfather' PhD.

            Jammo would not steal the show by sending it to those who'd know
            that he had interest vested in this newly formed degree.

            So one was posted inter-state while others went abroad
            the teacher nurse triumphantly gained first this new award.

                (Somerset, 2008)

The next three case studies are the experiences of candidates who enrolled in this new *Practical Doctorate*. Case studies 12 & 13 are the experiences of candidates who were able to review, analyse and evaluate their professional practice through videos of their own classroom teaching activities. Case study 14 shifts from being a candidate's personal evaluation to one where she evaluates the practice of others as they taught an educational course which she had designed.

CASE STUDY 12: ISABEL IMPROVES CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Isabel was a creative arts teacher, and she was required to undertake further study to improve her position so she enrolled in the new degree. This case study demonstrates her experience of producing the compulsory video component of her thesis.

Isabel embarked on a *Practical Doctorate* because teaching was her passion and because she liked the idea of its practical component. Her thesis was entitled *Beyond the Classroom Walls*. She was familiar with videoing technology so she did not see it was a handicap to her completing the degree. She decided to focus on an aspect of primary school teaching to improve her professionalism as a teacher. She was able to exchange her position in the university with a primary school teacher and returned to school to teach for six months.

The foci of her research topic were the use of technology in the classroom, multiple intelligences and discovering the impact of her experience of being a mother as well as a teacher. *Isabel* used videos in teaching in order to reflect upon her own practice. Although *Isabel* could use a video camera, she could not teach and video her teaching at the same time. Besides, video can only be taken once, so it has to be done properly. It cannot be retaken for clarification of data as with a conversation. Therefore, she relied on the multimedia skills of the campus' *IT* staff who videoed specific sequences, rather than recording hours of inconsequential activity for editing.

Track 32: Impact of video of self-practice

Isabel:	So they came out in Week 5 and they videoed the multiple intelligence aspects. That worked extremely well, and I had them come out in further sessions as well. The advantage of it was I didn't have to be worried about that. And when I watched the video, it was a wonderful learning experience for me because you are not aware always of what comes out of your mouth. So there were instances where I would dismiss children and I wasn't aware that I was doing that – what a terrible thing to have said, so it was great learning.
	Looking at the videos helped me then restructure some of the things that I said and did and it also made me far more aware of classroom noise. So when the children were actually presenting their work there was no noise. Which I was totally unaware of the fact of how interested they were. So we don't always value what we do.

Isabel's video was professionally edited with music and voice overlays. The use of videos in critique of practice is undoubtedly beneficial. *Isabel* said the personal benefit of practice analysis via the video and the written thesis was rewarding and self and life affirming. The teaching concept was represented educationally, metaphorically and symbolically in multi-dimensional media. The data would not have been as well represented in text. For example, the children were asked how they knew *Mrs Barclay* was a caring teacher. One child answered because you could see it in her eyes. It is unnecessary to describe *Mrs Barclay*'s caring countenance – it is obvious in the video, as is the tone of her caring motherly voice. Despite her doubts about being able to bring the work to meaningful completion, she said everything she was doing was relevant, she has used the video ever since and used the thesis in various other forms, including in academic journals.

The following verse reflects an activity of reviewing the practice of teaching young children. It emulates the way *Isabel* spoke.

Track 33: Perspective on practice

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Verse 17: Perspective on practice

Life's a full-length mirror
that circles all around
The way that others see us
may often quite astound

If we video recorded
what the mirror had displayed
Would we be contented
or considerably dismayed?

Become an armchair critic
of the way we had performed?
It may improve our practice
and lead to some reform.

(Somerset, 2008)

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REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Although *Isabel* was familiar with using technology, she needed IT help for her thesis' media component, and so depended upon another person. This gave her the freedom and the space to give more attention to the classroom aspects of her research. *Isabel* verified that using video was appropriate for the research as it enabled her to analyse her practice. However, she

was neither experienced with analysing video nor writing a critique which was based on video evidence. She experienced the phenomenon of seeing herself from a new perspective and became aware of behaviours she had not previously identified or valued. She experienced self-doubt in her capacity to complete her doctorate yet felt self-affirmation because of the way she had designed the research. *Isabel* experienced both synchronicity between the chosen research tool and its usefulness for evaluation and resourcefulness in using the media component for post-doctoral purposes.

Candidates would not know in which country their thesis was going to be examined. Therefore they would not know whether to create a video in NTSC format or Australian PAL format for examination purposes. One US examiner critiqued *Isabel's* work from the text-written thesis only. She was unable to view the VHS video as it was produced in PAL format and unplayable in the US. However, it was a relief for *Isabel* that the thesis was complete even without the video component. DVDs are now created to be playable internationally.

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CASE STUDY 13: MEI, ON BECOMING A CLASSROOM TEACHER IN AUSTRALIA

Mei is a Japanese teacher in Australia and she enrolled in the *Practical Doctorate* program. She was in the early stages of her research when I met her. When she came to Australia eight years ago, it was not possible for her to teach economics and nutrition as she had in Japan yet there were more opportunities for her to teach Japanese. She also thought teaching Japanese would improve her English. She studied for a graduate teaching diploma. It was then she realised there were differences between teaching in Australia and teaching in Japan. *Mei's* research project relates to her becoming a teacher in Australia and discovering the misconceptions she had about a Japanese teacher being able to teach subjects other than English. *Mei* explained how she conceived her hypotheses.

> To look at myself and find out what sort of behaviour I have then compare it between native Japanese teachers and Australian teachers. There must be a difference – I do not know until I compare them. I think about Australian teacher subjects. They are happy for me to sit in class and look.

> I did not know about these differences. Now I am learning every day. So definitely overseas people coming to Australia need to have support and need to learn about cultural differences. People who come from overseas can see what I have been doing and can learn from my mistakes and can make their way and feel more comfortable doing it the right way. There is an issue here. Australia is a multicultural country but not many overseas teachers – not many people realise there is a problem.

Mei shows how she came to understand that being Japanese presented a problem for her as she started to teach Australian students subjects other than Japanese.

> Australian high school students of Japanese appreciate and respect me. But high school home economics students say:
>
>> Miss how long have you been in Australia?
>> Miss you are from an Asian country.
>> Miss how can you teach us when you don't know our culture?

> Those were the first questions. It was a very different reaction and I thought 'Oh my gosh', from their eyes I should not be a teacher because I don't know about their culture. I did not really know what sort of students there are or how I should be teaching. I cannot learn all those things from a book. I have to go into the field and experience it and read about intercultural teaching. I need to start thinking more about becoming an intercultural teacher – a Japanese teacher in Australia. I'd also like to improve myself as a teacher. People haven't done this research yet. Doing this doctorate is like doing two areas, it's not easy though, it's a lot of work doing it.

Mei's supervisor recommended she do a *Practical Doctorate* as it combined a compulsory video component reflecting her daily classroom practice with a theoretical component to incorporate discourse analysis. Initially *Mei* was worried because she did not have a strong

research background and she wasn't sure about her methodological approach. As her supervisor had lived and taught in Japanese universities, his experience was very helpful as he could see the sorts of differences *Mei* wanted to identify so she said she was able to trust him.

Mei encountered a problem videoing the teenagers.

> My students are shy being teenagers and they do not want me to video them, or, that I can but I cannot use it for my thesis. Little kids are different. They are so excited and they really want to be in it.
>
> I will have to change my focus or change the way to capture shy teenagers to see how I teach them. They are getting to know me so I can build up relationships with the students and develop trust. As a Japanese teacher, I only see my students twice a week. If you see the same students every day there is a different relationship. I need a solution. Students coming from Japan to Australia will be in my class as well, so some activity might be OK. They might like Japanese cooking. I need to be creative and cunning and if I think of something they like they will forget about the videotaping.

Mei said she had watched other candidates' videos from her university to gain ideas about how she was going to use and evaluate hers. She realised she would need to evaluate hers differently because she was a native Japanese teacher and therefore had a different focus.

> Another student teacher is doing similar sort of research. She is focussing more on cultural adjustment and differences and also teacher's dialogue. She was focussing more on what we say in class, so she recorded the speech more like the pictures and then she brought it down to what Japanese teachers say in class compared to what native English teachers say in class in similar situations. So I am trying to set up my system to find out what I am looking for to do with culture and interculturalism – we don't have set rules as such. Anyone can read the text but people cannot really picture what is going on sometimes.

Mei planned for a friend to videotape in the class. She had thought of setting up the camera and just letting it run but decided it would be better to capture the moments which suited her research. *Mei* thought her supervisor was quite good with technology and that younger students may be more familiar with the technologies than the older students. She needs to learn to edit the video and will probably have to pay a friend to help her create the DVD. *Mei* did not think she would be able to get IT training on campus but said it would be wonderful if she could. She recalled that the University held a post-graduate week at which students asked the university to run a course about learning information technology. At the time of meeting *Mei* the university had not responded.

Mei discussed how she felt about how an examiner would regard the format in which she was submitting her thesis.

Verse 18: <u>My examination</u>

[Wary laughter]

This is a new way of doing research
hopefully my examiner is happy
to change for new things happening
and be positive about it

There is no reason why
we have to stick to text at all
we are moving forward
not going backwards

I need to consider what sort of message
I am going to send across
not many people have done it before
which is a good thing
and also a bad thing

Researching this way
cannot be done in Japan for sure.

(Somerset, 2008, from *Mei*)

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Mei's experience is one of crossing cultural barriers and research boundaries. She entered a new culture to evaluate her performance within that culture to improve her practice so she and others could understand the differences. Conducting research with the intention of preparing people from a familiar culture to enter a new culture is similar to experiencing the phenomenon of going outside one's comfort zone in an act of dare devil (Jipson et al., 1997) research.

Her problem-solving activity using 'teenage' psychology immersed her in ingenuity as she devised an activity to engage participants so they would be comfortable being videoed. Qualities of foresight and thoroughness are experienced in the act of using others' media projects to review correct technique and procedures. For *Mei*, fear of examiners' lack of experience with media theses was present from conception to submission. Depending upon, and not receiving IT help, engenders lack of faith in the institution and *Mei* may have felt her need was either inconsequential or beyond what was reasonable to expect. She had anticipated video editing help would be available somewhere on campus and was

disappointed it was not. *Mei's* supervisor was familiar with both cultures and with technology and this was reassuring.

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CASE STUDY 14: BRONWYN CRITIQUES EFFECTIVENESS OF A PROGRAM

Bronwyn's research project was for the same degree undertaken by *Isabel* and *Mei*. It deals with evaluating the implementation of a course (which *Bronwyn* had developed) for helping people with difficulties and adversity. The thesis comprises an exegesis and a video on a DVD. Each chapter of her DVD looks at various aspects of policy curriculum pedagogy and methodology in schools.

Hypothesis

For three years, *Bronwyn* had been teaching professional development to pre-service teachers, to primary and secondary school teachers and in health services. Her ethnographic study relates to testing whether the methodological approaches she had taken, in the development of her educational program on social and emotional health, had been effective. She also wanted to know if it had been effectively used by other teachers, not just in terms of what was taught, but also in its process, curriculum, policies, procedures and partnerships.

Methodology

Her project intended to capture:

> … the essence of what teachers were saying in the classroom, to find the effectiveness of experiential learning in terms of their ability to apply it in classroom situations. So, was learning being transferred from the professional development site back into the real life context bringing both the health and education paradigms together?

Her respondents returned very interesting and useful information. *Bronwyn* considered it would have been very difficult to collect data if she had not been working in the same field. The media component of her thesis was able to demonstrate:

> …where I was coming from and it had a lot of potential in terms of support for changing theory and including practice. I may have done it with just the theoretical but I think the practical certainly has cemented it.

Bronwyn's research participants agreed to being videoed and they were happy with the results. She found people were so focussed on the activities they were not concerned with being videoed. She videoed Indigenous people from many communities – some of them were elders and others were not as literate as mainstream people, they had just gone with the flow and not been taken aback by it at all. *Bronwyn* took video footage of a workshop and the next day one of the Aboriginal men in the video died so she had to edit the movie. She had been involved with Indigenous people for a long time so understood the obligation, but

noted that once the video is given to a library, the researcher loses control of keeping it up to date.

Data in the media

Track 34: Media demonstrates the data

Self:	When did you discover that experiential learning could be transformative?
Bronwyn:	Actually when I was delivering my professional development I saw it in the faces of participants. There was that intrinsic satisfaction and knowledge that there was a link, that there was power in what I was doing. So I saw it right at the beginning and I knew that that was effective. But being able to document that via video format I guess really captured it although it is also in the oral feedback from the participants, so it has been documented in the written format as well, but I guess using both formats just verifies it.

Learning to use technology

I asked *Bronwyn* how she learned to use a video camera.

Track 35: Using digital equipment

Bronwyn:	It was extremely hard actually in the beginning. I had to learn how to drive a video camera; in some places I had people take footage for me. In others I actually ran sessions and took the footage myself. So you were doing two things at once, which is not always easy.

At the university, I managed to get somebody in the IT section here to actually video some lectures that I ran which was good. And then I had hoped that this man would be able to help me translate that or transpose that into a DVD later on down the track and when I got to that stage he was very keen. However, there were changes at the university and it wasn't quite so easy and he was taken out of the picture.

And I met somebody else a few months ago who said to me 'well I wouldn't be able to get it done until June', and I was stumped because I needed to transpose. And I don't have those skills in IT to download the information using the programs that are used into the digital or whatever format I needed to put it on to a DVD, because I just don't have those skills. So I was desperate because I had finished the writing and I wanted to get it up and done and finished so I could submit. |

For thesis submission *Bronwyn* cut seven hours of footage down to two hours of DVD into eight chapters. She met a colleague who worked in IT and:

> …he sat with me and knew where I was coming from because he had been involved in my professional development work. So he understood what the program was about and he was passionate about the program and offered to help and in the end it cost me $1,000.

Bronwyn thought the content was more important than the quality of the sound and the movie. Sometimes the content she captured herself was better than when she had help. She wasn't very impressed with the university support and the fact that IT training for research students was not a top priority. Perhaps the university thought other activities would:

> …bring in more money from an economic rationalist point of view and the resources will go to where the bucks are and they don't worry about the nondescript things that really don't bring us kudos.

Post-doctoral use

Bronwyn's video remains an active learning tool. She takes it wherever she goes and shows it:

> …in workshops with mainly Indigenous people and show them what I've done and they love to see themselves and others on film because the connections and relationships with family are very strong. So that's a very powerful thing in itself to be able to say well 'that person's up there doing that role modelling'. So people pick that up and are keen to support.

Examination

For examination, *Bronwyn* placed two DVDs containing the edited videos in the back of her thesis. She did not worry about the examiner's computer not being modern enough to play a DVD. He or she would want to know what was on the DVD because it had been referred to throughout the written documentation.

Her reflection

> It was just a phenomenal experience to be able to write and to learn and to cement many theories in the process and to take myself to a different level of play and to know that I know myself and I know what I talk about and can articulate that. So it was just a wonderful process. To be able to pick up the information through the research and put it into a narrative I guess, because I think there is a lot of power in a narrative.

> I think it has been a phenomenal journey. It has been intriguing. It has given me an opportunity to put a passion not only in a theory but also in an illustration. I think the two actually combine extremely well. I guess it is about having a passion in relation to something and if you are passionate about a particular subject, then you put your heart and soul into it. The practical bias certainly supports a passion in being able to illustrate what it is you have done and found through example and illustration and others saying it, or doing it – it exemplifies the real significance of that process.

REFLECTION AND INSIGHT

Bronwyn wanted to bring humanism into her research. She wanted to enrich what she was saying – to make the writing personal, true and valid and to combine the human element with the academic one.

Bronwyn was motivated to test the effectiveness of her training. The quest for self-analysis drove her into an experiential analysis of the impact of her professional activities on its transference into others' professional activities. Having to 'pull bits and pieces' together for a DVD was difficult for her as she was entirely dependent on IT and IT help. Although she had the cognitive skills for organising information on paper, she was unable to transfer this ability into a digital medium – a situation which caused frustration. She considered the theoretical versus the practical options and experienced strong self-conviction in verifying a combination of approaches was appropriate.

Bronwyn found herself in the situation of needing to evaluate whether the quality of her video production would enhance or detract from its content. Text is easier to format than a movie. A video may require both subjective evaluation, depending upon production quality, and objective analysis depending upon its purpose. Text only thesis creators do not experience this situation. She also experienced the awkwardness and unfamiliarity of operating the digital video camera. This sensation was compounded by an urgency to learn and learn correctly and quickly as her research depended upon this ability – she was not developing the skill for a hobby.

Looking around haphazardly for someone to help with an unfamiliar process is not conducive to a streamlined research process. It creates stress and insecurity for a candidate. This is undesirable in the thesis creation process where each thesis component is dependent upon another. This led to feelings of disappointment and of being let down as the help *Bronwyn* was offered became unavailable. Further enquiries became fruitless and *Bronwyn* sensed desperation and urgency to complete. Coincidence led her to someone who could complete the video editing, but at a price. *Bronwyn* became disenchanted with the university's approach to helping research students with IT.

Bronwyn took into account the ethical ramifications of including Indigenous participants in her DVD. This practice requires sensitivity and awareness which is beyond the practice of producing text only theses.

Bronwyn trusted that whoever examined her thesis would find a way of viewing the DVD. Resourcefulness led her to use the DVD as an educational tool amongst the Aboriginal

people. This added a new dimension to her research because the multimedia component became a practical learning tool after being awarded. People also became excited about seeing themselves or their family members in the work. *Bronwyn* and her research participants experienced the sensation of gratification and pleasure which accompanied the experience.

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4.1 PHASE 1: DISCUSSION

- **In what ways do doctoral candidates' experiences reveal the phenomenon of media theses?**

The <u>Case studies</u> give insight into the experiences of candidates who create and present theses in multiple media modes. They show that these research activities created opportunities and provided challenges which went beyond traditional research norms and boundaries. This embryonic record of candidates' successes and challenges has been compiled using the philosophy of phenomenology. It revealed candidates' experiences in a non-assumptive way and gave the participants an opportunity to speak informally about what they thought was most important. Candidates' experiences have been presented, or represented, faithfully in a way that was intended to capture sensation and immediacy. Whereas this approach may have required the inclusion of more detail than is perhaps considered essential, it retains integrity. The outcomes of the research data are categorised into: metaphor, perceptions of the media thesis experience, research partners, transition and, the future.

4.1.1   <u>Metaphors</u>

Coffey et al. (1996) suggest that metaphors help to identify cultures and subcultures as "they express specific values, collective identities, shared knowledge, and common vocabularies" (p.86). This has proven correct within this research paradigm's subculture as the following examples show.

Thesis topics

Some candidates from this study used metaphorical connections within their thesis topics. *Vanessa* described the video of her mentoring model to create a visually engaging encounter with the fluid and flexible concept of mentoring. During implementation of her workshops, *Naomi* created activities for people to make artefacts which became visual metaphors for data in order to help them to learn more about themselves. *Isabel's* thesis title <u>Beyond the Classroom Walls</u> is a metaphor for creating learning activities which extend beyond traditional pedagogies. *Jana's* use of the word 'snapshot' in the title of a folio simulates speed, decisiveness and brevity. *Elanor's* presentation of her thesis in Globite suitcases was a metaphor for a management concept of 'unpacking'. The framework for *Marcia's* thesis was an Indigenous work of art from which she created metaphors and song lines for each chapter.

Experiential phenomena

During conversations research participants used metaphors to describe dimensions of space and place, activity and emotion. The visual and cognitive pictures of these metaphors play an important descriptive and interpretive role.

Journey

- It's about the journey and the experience of becoming through making (cs2)
- It has been part of my journey to survive and even thrive amidst so much unknown (cs6)
- Would someone come on my journey with me? (cs7)
- The exploration of how she was going to write it was as indicative and as complex as the journey (cs7)
- I'm on the right track (cs9)
- I think it has been a phenomenal journey (cs14)

Boundary

- There are boundaries and everything has to fit within (case study2)
- Why doesn't the academy open up that space to support...? (cs2)
- ...wanting to work across boundaries as practitioners (cs2)
- It seems so silly to be held up because somebody seems to be moving the goal posts (cs2)
- There is no process or procedure for transferring the intellect and knowledge across the boundaries (cs2)
- Making a statement, making a fence and pushing the boundaries (cs7)
- Breaking down the door and narrowing our learning (cs7)

Activity

- It seems to be the sticking point where one is trying to open up new ground (cs2)
- The work just completely collapsed and fizzled (cs3)
- I did a rapid-fire write up (cs3)
- I had every likelihood of my research dying before it had even been born (cs7)
- Sure – if we've got to jump through a bureaucratic hoop (cs9)
- She was really hacking apart what I was doing in the construction (cs9)

Physical being and emotion

- There's a taboo about feeling in academia (cs2)
- I'm not going to be robbed of the pleasure (cs2)
- I felt like I was in the dock (cs4)
- … didn't think we had a creative bone in our bodies (cs7)
- This kind of discourse kind of like rubs you up in a way like you go back to the static – I get dried up – I need to stir up all the gathering dust (cs9)

Physical objects and concepts

- Everything seems to have been driven by the cash register (cs2)
- My thesis didn't fit into any neat boxes (cs3)
- The statistician just canned it – she just trashed it (cs3)
- Trying to shoehorn work into another discipline (cs3)
- … from a human point of view that it is easier to abandon ship (cs4)
- … using text and using visual media to bring the words off the page (cs7)

- We're often in the presence of the profound yet we're often more concerned about whether the baby is clean (cs7)

This sample of metaphorical expressions suggests experiential phenomena and create a sense of awareness of how candidates experienced their media thesis journeys. The 'journey' metaphors indicate satisfaction with exploration yet the need for reassurance in unfamiliar territory. The most commonly used metaphors related to 'boundary' and conveyed a sense of being trapped and of wanting freedom. Those relating to 'activities' describe states of inconsistency and instability. The 'physical being and emotion' metaphors imply feelings of insecurity driven by outside influences. The 'objects and concepts' metaphors suggest images of engagement with tangible and theoretical entities.

4.1.2   Perceptions of the media thesis experience

Although many aspects of doctoral candidacy experiences were evident within the research materials, the following themes and issues were the most often expressed. They may have implications beyond the scope of this research.

Candidate participants showed that they employed their lifelong learning pursuits, professional work or personalities within disciplinary knowledge to create their media theses. For example:

- *Lexi's* love of dancing influenced her Egyptology studies
- *Naomi's* activities with developing self-understanding for her clients influenced her research into the philosophical application of creative art
- *Anthony's* IT abilities supported his ecological research activities
- *Elanor's* passion for design influenced her management research
- *Grant's* artistic talents supported his arts candidacy
- *Rick's* photographic interests were used for his thesis on white ethnicity
- *Jana's* sense of justice and equality influenced her folio thesis on socially just pedagogies
- Intuition and creativity enabled me to form verse from candidates' experiences.

This study has shown evidence that these inherent qualities and previously acquired talents and abilities influence the development of media theses. Extension of these qualities into candidates' research enhances innovation and dynamism in their theses. Universities can

benefit from the experiences of researchers who push research boundaries as they create novel elements for theses generated from their lifelong interests and pursuits. The far boundaries exist in terms of how researchers want to create and present knowledge and the close boundaries exist within universities' thesis submission policies and practices. When fresh approaches to research become evident in the field, studio or laboratory it would be advantageous that university policies and resources support them. Society endeavours to keep pace with the changes technologies have brought but are universities acting in tandem with these changes for researchers? Are universities keeping a step ahead of researchers? Are they providing what Friedman terms 'Fast World' (Nowotny et al., 2001) models which challenge the researchers, rather than being challenged by them?

Did 'innovation' become popular when universities realised they no longer owned the sole rights to creating and promoting new knowledge (Barnacle, 2005; Nowotny et al., 2001; Barnett, 2000)? Perhaps universities' pledge to support innovation in research practice was a tactic designed to compete with non-government organisations. Perhaps universities were not quite prepared for the ways in which candidates met their quest for innovation and that composition of theses went beyond what was expected. From this study, it seems the promotion of innovative research practice may have contributed to diversity, cross-disciplinary work and supercomplexity (Barnett, 2000; Stehr, 2003).

Case studies in this research study show that novelty and doctoral research are compatible yet initially may create problems for candidates. Media thesis candidates require approval to conduct their research plus, some from this study also had to stress the necessity for their thesis components. Some were required to go to exceptional lengths to have their media research proposals approved. *Elanor* was asked to make a prototype of her suitcases and was questioned about her research many times before it was given even conditional approval. *Naomi* became emotionally exhausted while repeatedly trying to get approval for her research proposal from her universities' research board. *Marcia* also successfully fought to conduct and present her media research unconventionally. *Matthew* desperately tried to convince his university that a graphic novel could communicate on a multi-focal level. In light of their experiences, I also felt the need to validate the use of verse to present and re-present

candidates' experiences [42] and Burrows' (2004b) and Auld's (2002) papers justify presentation formats of their media theses [43].

Resistance to ideas about how technology and artistic expression support the way researchers think, create and present their ideas may hinder research outcomes. Another recurring theme from candidates' experiences related to the difficulty of gaining understanding for what they know as indefinable and indescribable concepts. For example, *Naomi* creates an intangible space: it is partly spirituality, partly psychology, partly Buddhism and art design. She believed the work was considered unacceptable because academic staff had difficulty classifying it. *Elanor* had to create a prototype because the Research Committee could not visualise her concept. *Matthew* was disenchanted with a taboo about feeling in academia. He had trouble engaging with academic staff about his work in art space as they could not get emotional and his supervisor indicated he was unable to get involved with this new age stuff. *Matthew's* research project was criticised for not being scientific but was very expressive and dealt with esoteric themes. *Grant* experienced challenges from some academic staff about his unique and arcane methodology for producing his artworks from the subconscious. About his photographs on white ethnicity, *Rick's* supervisor stated: you know I don't know that stuff. *Anthony* also experienced that his supervisors could not fully engage with his artificial life computer program because it was exploratory rather than driven by a hypothesis. This was confirmed as the thesis was sent to an examiner whose disciplinary experience bore no relevance to its technically creative field.

Thus, the evidence shows that some candidates had difficulty with what they perceived as academic staff being unprepared to recognize the value of their vision or to engage with the novel, emotional, spiritual and affective qualities of their research.

The evidence from this study also shows that other people contributed to the media component of some candidates' theses and others paid to get help with them. This raises concerns about appropriateness and fairness. It is unreasonable to expect an artist to create technological tools: for *Elanor* to have made the suitcases, for *Lexi* to have developed the animation technology or for *Marcia* to have painted the Indigenous artwork. Yet, to what extent are researchers permitted production assistance in developing their media? Some

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[42] See the Introduction.
[43] See the Literature review.

theses in this study benefitted by input from experts however, where the quality and professionalism of the created media is examinable, it raises the question of the level of assistance given.

Isabel, Mei and *Bronwyn* needed help with videoing and editing as it was necessary for them to include a movie with their theses. The use of videos to critique teaching practice is beneficial and commonplace. The quality of assistance given for producing a movie for a thesis has an impact on the finished product. Does help with the production techniques from recording to burning to a DVD constitute having another's work in the thesis? Does the camera angle, the light, the focus, zooming and panning, laying down voiceovers or music fading in and out constitute an imported artistic contribution to the work? Does the expert improve the video from being amateurish to being a professional documentary or to having artistic qualities? Would an amateurish instructional movie pass examination? Are these considerations applicable to media content from all disciplines? Do universities monitor and manage this situation? Finally, do all media thesis candidates have equal access to professional help opportunities?

Matthew's experience emphasises the question of contribution to a thesis by outsiders. His thesis' components were created to convey meaning and were not intended to be artistic. Yet, he was not permitted to embed them within the thesis as he did not create them. The text in his illustrated novel could not stand alone. Whether a reader could 'imagine' what the character or situation was like from text was not the point for *Matthew*. As an author he wanted to make it clear how the situation was unfolding and how the characters appeared to be. He argued that he could reference text quotations from secondary sources so he considered it would be acceptable to use referenced drawings. Perhaps the interdependence between the text and the illustrations in *Matthew's* novel proved to be detrimental rather advantageous. His thesis was inadmissible only because the medium was **commissioned**. Candidates need to be very cautious about including imported contributions within a media thesis.

A live stage performance for a thesis permits inclusion of other peoples' talents and skills. If a candidate was able to present the knowledge and content textually, there would not be the need for a performance. Other people support the candidate's performance under his or her direction and, during presentation, become a part of it. They contribute to the work whether

they perform well or not. I digitally animated a series of Old Kingdom line drawings for *Lexi*.
By doing this, the knowledge created was not mine. *Lexi* was the director; the drawings were
most probably commissioned and then created by an Egyptian mason; a technology company
created the computer program and my workplace owned the computer. What percentage of
the work did *Lexi* 'own'? The university credited *Lexi* with the connection of ideas, but the
knowledge she created probably, and appropriately, 'belongs' to Egyptology.

Issues arising from situations like these relate to what the standards are and whether they are
consistent across universities and disciplines. Is there an assumption that art, music
composition or creative technologies are high level or **exceptional** skills and talents and may
not be imported into theses? Do assumptions exist that skills such as image or video editing,
actors' performances, and help with IT or other technologies are **common** abilities and
therefore are appropriate contributions to theses? Not everyone has the equal capacity to
develop these skills. The problem lies with the assumption. Perhaps the exceptional skills
are commonplace to someone who has an intimate knowledge of them (as with *Matthew*, or
with music or art) but who lacks the ability to create them.

I understand if I use photographs, artwork or music in a thesis I have created; I do not need to
reference them. Whether I use a few or many of my photographs, artworks or music in a
thesis; the components may or may not necessarily be considered artistically or theoretically
acceptable. I may be able to incorporate referenced works another person has created, but
evidence from this study shows that acceptability of any media components in a thesis
depends upon their origin, their intent and the significance of the purpose for inclusion.

It seems that there are 'grey' areas regarding the act of incorporating an imported work or
contribution to media theses. Perhaps universities have different policies on contributions by
others to theses. University policymakers need to be aware of the issues regarding
contributions by others to media theses in order to meet the needs of legitimacy, equality and
integrity. Thus, issues exist which relate to external contributions to media theses.
Uncertainty about these situations from commencement of a candidacy creates insecurity.

Candidates in this study focussed on their need for academic and representational freedom. It
was stifling for those who felt obliged to conform to traditional practices in what they
considered should be a dynamic, powerful and exciting experience. This (mixed)

metaphorical quotation from a participant captures the phenomenon of being in a situation where something wonderful and innovative is occurring and observers only notice the inconsequential [44].

> The hurt and the pain – it was huge. We're often in the presence of the profound yet we're more concerned about whether the baby is clean. And here's someone whose parting the water and we want to make sure that he's clean. That's the sort of thing that I came across over and over. Yes, we may be doing profound research or doing something really special, but come on, don't you know that it needs to be one and a half spaces. To find the strength to say well, look, I need to challenge that. The most horrific part of the whole thing was the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy never actually left.

This echoes Brew's (2001a) statement that the different contested dimensions of research should "enable us to give substance to aspects of research waiting in the wings" and those who search for "new ideas, methods and techniques should not have their wings clipped to protect or promote the interests of the powerful" (p.8). One of Conrad's (2003) participants considered that candidates have to deal with the confinement of a university system which is not prepared for alternative work. She also noted an accentuated feeling of isolation for candidates who produce media work. *Naomi* certainly felt isolated because of the non-acceptance of her proposal. *Matthew* and *Anthony* stated they needed at least occasional intellectual engagement with like-minded people. Yet *Anthony* thought that although he would have liked more engagement, a degree of isolation enabled him to accomplish things which would never have been approved by anyone if they had engaged with his project and this led to a much better outcome. These examples suggest that media thesis candidates need freedom and yet also cope with personal and academic isolation.

Media theses need to be focused and edifying yet they risk having only novelty value or being subjected to the author's 'spin' or personal interpretation of the media component. For some, the thought of animations derived from ancient line drawings, a thesis presented entirely in a box or suitcase or artwork created from the sub-conscious, may be perceived as untenable. Herein lies the challenge for researchers to prove the validity and worth of their creative ways of looking at the world.

Another phenomenon of media theses is that candidates withdraw media components prior to examination because of fear of failure. *Matthew*, *Vanessa* and *Rick* describe this occurrence.

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[44] I can identify with this syndrome. The only comment I received on a set of IT course notes I had created was that I had used the wrong font in the footer.

Elanor's thesis in a suitcase also presented a risk factor to the research board. As *Rick* came closer to submitting his photographic essay, his supervisor said he was not sure who would understand the work for examination. *Rick* thought most examiners were traditionalists. He did not want to take too many risks because he thought that someone who understood the content may have been unfamiliar with the methodology.

Vanessa thought students were taking a risk if they did not reach consensus with their supervisors regarding their thesis composition at the beginning of their candidacy. Conrad (2003) reported one supervisor considered that controversial work was strongly discouraged and yet when attempts were made to remove the risk factor in one candidacy, the research tended to become routine. Lippincott (2005) indicated that current students are being pressured to conform to traditional thesis production practices and that this stifles their enthusiasm for using creative technologies because they fear non-acceptance by the academy. In support of candidates, Brew (2001a) states that "to be constrained by narrow agendas because we are….afraid of retribution is unforgivable" (p.183).

Traditional candidates may withdraw text content from theses because it is redundant or irrelevant. Candidates withdraw media components from their theses for examination, not for those reasons but because they are **media**, not text. Candidates **fear** of non-acceptance of media forms could be enhanced by a lack of criteria for their use.

4.1.3   Research partners

Three essential research partners: supervisors, technology and examiners, require special considerations for candidates who create media theses.

Supervisors

Some candidates experienced propitious relationships with their supervisors and favourable interactions with research boards which played a very influential role during their candidacies – personally, creatively and academically.

Lexi was in awe of her supervisor's knowledge and reputation. *Prof. Al-Sonbatti* was initially surprised by the animations in her thesis, but later encouraged her to present them at conferences. *Elanor's* supervisor, *Janice*, was at first cautious about the suitcase thesis and evidently focussed more intently on the text than on the other components. However, when

the work began to materialise *Janice* became more interested to the extent that she promoted it. *Naomi's* supervisor was very supportive of her research proposal and she became entirely dependent upon her to get it accepted. *Grant* had an encouraging relationship with his PhD supervisor who supported his philosophical and practical approach to creating art when others did not understand him. She also supported him personally during his ill health. *Marcia* went to great lengths to identify a supervisor with whom she felt she could work harmoniously. *Mei's* supervisor had lived and worked in Japan and this enhanced her trust in him.

However, the evidence from this study also shows that conducting media research can create tensions and difficult communications between candidates and supervisors. Initially *Matthew's* supervisor was very interested in his novel yet as the work progressed, seemed to lose interest and acted more as a proofreader. *Rick* thought his supervisor was very good although he left him to his own devices because he said that he did not understand the concept of photographic essays. *Vanessa's*, *Rick's* and *Matthew's* supervisors had their reasons for recommending cautiousness so the media components were withdrawn. *Anthony* had an intermittent relationship with his supervisors which he thought stemmed from a lack of understanding of his work, that there were too many differences between them and that they had too many other candidates to work with. These types of candidate/supervisor relationships may be accentuated because of the nature of the thesis' composition.

Elanor (personal communication, 2004) recommends that if a supervisor is conversant with the topic but not necessarily conversant with the media in the thesis, a candidate needs to clearly explain the process from conception to theory. She introduced the idea that postgraduate students may need to spend extra time in helping supervisors learn how to supervise them. Evidence shows that candidates who have created media theses will know how to supervise future candidates who wish to present theses in media formats. *Elanor* suggested that:

> Others will simply do their best and try to accumulate knowledge on the way. In these cases, students doing theses in alternative formats will need to handle the supervisory process with extra care – they will have to reassure supervisors and bureaucrats, ensure they engage in dynamic supervision loops, translate their vision so that supervisors can understand, and negotiate roles so that shared understandings can be built.

This study has shown that because their theses include multiple forms of media, media thesis candidates have specific supervision requirements.

Technologies

The need for skills and abilities in various technologies are essential for candidates who create media theses. This creates difficulties for candidates for whom working with technologies places them in unfamiliar territory. For example, *Lexi* required essential assistance with digital animations for her thesis, hieroglyphic software and thesis formatting techniques. *Matthew* needed help with illustrations. Some candidates from this study needed to use video in their theses and yet were unsure of how to evaluate behavioural activities from a video and present the findings. *Mei* took the initiative of referring to her friend's videos for an example of how and what to record and to learn how to analyse it and present the analysis. Candidates need access to training in analysis of behaviour on videos. Supervisors and candidates should agree on analysis criteria so that they may be addressed in the thesis' written component.

Technological skills and abilities support the development of media theses. During conception of a research study a candidate may decide to incorporate a novice interest, skill or talent in, say design, art, music, photography or drawing (at an untrained or at a professional level) into research design to conduct research, prove a hypothesis or present an outcome. Basic technological skills may not be sufficient for media theses. Some candidates draw upon technical skills learned in undergraduate study, such as in creative arts disciplines. Some draw upon abilities and talents learned from engagement with a hobby or interest. People learn specialist skills such as computer programming, web development, creative technologies or art and design over years of practice and experience. Some candidates from this study used their lifelong learning skills or cross-disciplinary knowledge in their theses.

Alternatively, where candidates become aware that they need to acquire technological skills to complete their research during candidacy they may require just-in-time access to technological training and support. They may not be aware of the technological skills they require prior to commencing research because they decide to present or re-present data, or outcomes in media once they are immersed in their topic. In this case, it can be a problem or a revelation depending upon the candidate's skill level and the flexibility of the faculty to accept a change in the research design. Telling a candidate not to proceed until he or she had acquired a specific media talent or skill would only be practical if the candidate had the ability to develop the talent or skill. For example, *Matthew* was unable to develop the level of drawing talent required to illustrate his novel, *Lexi* was unable to animate images, *Isabel*, *Mei* and *Bronwyn* were unable to edit videos and *Marcia* could not paint in the Indigenous style.

Availability of just-in-time broad-based technological training would depend upon the university's ability to provide it and to anticipate its demand. It is unlikely universities could support an environment for this type of broad skills development. This study has shown that support in broad-based technological training usually occurs *via* happenstance or on the goodwill of campus staff. That broad based just-in-time technological training is not feasible on campus for media thesis candidates is problematic for this research paradigm.

Examiners & examination

This study showed that candidates are employing media forms in their theses which are novel in research practice yet ubiquitous in today's society. Despite this, angst exists for candidates who are unsure about whether their theses will be sent to suitable examiners. *Rick's*, *Leon's* and *Vanessa's* fear of what examiners might think led them to remove the media component from their theses. The examination process needs to accommodate the thesis which demonstrates that research authors are thinking in very different dimensions and working with extra-ordinary research presentation media which their research ancestors would have considered untenable. Complementary to this situation, Elkins (2004) recommends that experts from traditional disciplines should not examine the text component of an artistic thesis. Similarly, *Anthony* would agree that a media thesis should be sent to an examiner whose interests and disciplinary specialities are compatible with the genre of the thesis and its media component.

The submission of media theses has also created a situation where the merit of 'artistic' components may be examined subjectively. Neither *Isabel's* nor *Mei's* videos of their own professional practice were intended to be analysed for their aesthetic or artistic qualities. *Lexi's* and *Jana's* media components were not required to be analysed for their artistic worth. Since being awarded, *Lexi* applied for a research grant to support her dance company's activities. The animations (example see Figure 13) were criticised for being "mediocre" and "underwhelming". They had been judged for their artistic worth and not for their scholarly implications. The animations were demonstrations of a scholarly concept and were not created to have aesthetic value or to be entertaining (*Lexi*, pers.comm., 26th January, 2008). It would be difficult to know if an examination benchmark existed for computer programs, such as *Anthony's,* which was designed to simulate artificial life. That his thesis was sent to an examiner whose skills were not in a field relating to artificial life, presents a problem. *Grant*,

a well-renown artist, reported two examiners liked his work yet the other made no personal or interpretive connection with them.

Where multiple forms of media are included in theses for various reasons, the examination process also becomes more complicated when considering the 'weighting' accorded to each media item based on its intent and purpose for inclusion and what percentage of the whole work it represents.

Candidates' experiences show that special considerations need to be taken when choosing examiners for media theses and for examining their media components. Examiners could be given guidelines so that supervisor, candidate and examiner will have similar expectations about how media will be critiqued.

4.1.4   Transition

A supervisor who I interviewed suggested I contact a candidate who had been awarded a PhD by submitting a media thesis. She was unable to discuss her experience with me as she was busy working in her family's restaurant. At that stage she had been unable to use the knowledge and experience she had gained by doing a PhD or to use the thesis' media components. However, candidates from this study have used their ready-made multiple media thesis components or drawn from them for post-doctoral work and activities. For example:

- *Lexi* formed an Egyptian dance company which performs at cultural events
- *Naomi* continues to use her transformative learning work in her business
- *Elanor* has presented her suitcase to her peers locally and overseas
- *Grant* continues to draw and paint
- *Vanessa* uses her mentoring video for educational purposes
- *Jana* continues to use components from her folio thesis on socially just pedagogies in educational work
- *Leon* gave unsubmitted thesis content back to his research participants for their educational benefit
- *Bronwyn* demonstrates her DVD in workshops and to the Aboriginal people.

Post-doctoral activity and publishing follows 'traditional' thesis submission. However, the evidence from the Case Studies shows that media in theses enhance the potential for post-doctoral activities. The extent of use of thesis media and artefacts in post-doctoral activities shows a practical benefit of media theses.

4.1.5   Future

Track 36: Action for the future

Marcia:	For me, the whole notion of tradition and what's traditional and what's non-traditional and how do you change it? It's not going to happen without someone like you making a statement making a fence and pushing the boundaries.

In order to avoid research practice being labelled 'outdated and quaint' (Stehr, 2003) higher education needs to ensure researchers are not only philosophically and intellectually prepared for research practices of the future, but technologically equipped as well. Recently technologies have advanced to the point where whatever is 'thinkable' is almost 'doable' for researchers. Rich and dynamic research scenarios, such as these case studies demonstrate, have the potential to flourish if universities are able to accommodate candidates' needs. In the light of their experiences, such initiatives could include: reviewing broad based technological training provision and production facilities, re-evaluating supervision and examination practices concerning media theses, actively promoting or showcasing theses which are presented innovatively using multiple forms of media and establishing communities of practice for candidates who create media theses.

Does the ideal of excellence in research practice stem from higher educational institutions proactively leading the way or from reactively trying to keep pace with current research practice? [45]

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[45] Outcomes from Phase 1 will be consolidated with those from Phase 2 in the Conclusion.

5 CHAPTER 5: PHASE 2

- **How do the experiences of academic staff enhance understanding of the phenomenon of media theses?**
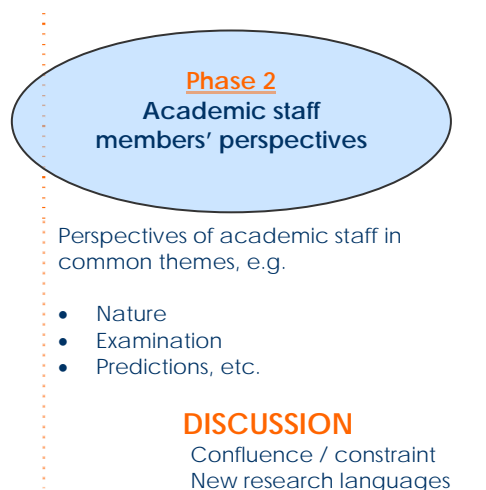
Figure 16: Structure of <u>Phase 2</u>

Within this phase of the research, the experiences of academic staff members are explored in order to illuminate their opinions, perceptions and attitudes toward media theses. The findings are discussed in common themes. Suggestions are made as to whether the outcomes of this exploration offer confluence within the media thesis process or whether they have the potential to be constraining.

All of the <u>Phase 2</u> research participants hold PhDs and some are Professors. Some of the participants are heads of departments; some created their own media thesis; some have supervised candidates from the case studies chapter; some have examined media theses; some were heads of departments and some were on university research boards. Some have had experiences with combinations of these pursuits. Connections between participants in this study were coincidental [46].

The content of <u>Phase 2</u> data falls into several themes.
- o **Nature of media theses** focuses on how learning and knowledge can emanate from visual materials and suggests the inevitability of the practice of presenting theses with

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[46] *Professor Al-Sonbatti* supervised *Lexi* (Case study 1), *Professor Stewart* examined *Elanor's* thesis (Case study 4), *Rick* supervised *Jana* (Case study 6) and *Rolf* supervised *Bronwyn* (Case study 14).

multiple forms of media. Examples of media theses known to academic staff illustrate a variety of composition.

o **New languages** in research relates to the way new technologies influence how candidates communicate in their theses.

o **Intent and examination** discusses perceptions of the relevance and intent of media theses components and their impact upon examination.

o **Attitudes and reactions** indicate different levels of acceptance of media theses.

o **Supervision** suggests suitable ways of supervising media thesis candidates.

o **Advice and predictions** relates to the future of media theses. This includes considerations which academic staff perceive to be important for candidates who wish to incorporate media components in their theses and insight into how they perceive this research paradigm is unfolding.

In order to understand how well media theses are accepted within academe, a discussion follows the data which focuses on where their opinions, experiences and attitudes offer confluence and constraint in the media thesis process.

5.1 NATURE OF MEDIA THESES

Academic staff expressed their understanding of media theses by referring to the nature of their composition and methodology.

There are no special media thesis categories at *James'* university. A PhD may contain up to 100,000 words and include multimedia on CDRom, film or audio. All media forms of presentation are acceptable and there is no single template. A candidate would have to seek approval to include a media component for a PhD at *Jack's* university. *Eric* considered his university's media thesis policies were appropriate for current thesis projects but not comprehensive enough to address the full range of the different approaches which are developing. He said that: The model has in fact been turned on its ear and there are very different approaches. I think we need to take a good look at it (your research may help us).

Professor Al-Sonbatti presented his opinions on the nature of knowledge and its construction

within the Egyptology discipline [47]. He imparted a special understanding of the 'appearance' of the history of a civilisation in a textless form and of the cross-disciplinary nature of Egyptology. His explanation gives insight into the reason why theses evolved to accommodate elements which are unsuitable for presentation in traditional text form.

Prof. Al-Sonbatti confirmed that because Egyptology is a visual culture it lends itself to the creation of theses which include components other than text. He explained that our knowledge of the culture is understood from the representational images which Egyptian artisans created. He stated that restriction to text would be practically eliminating the culture. He explained how Egyptian text is visual and that our spoken and written language becomes the medium into which it is translated. *Prof. Al-Sonbatti* states that early Egyptology theses and their sources would be practically all text and that only within the last maybe two generations at most, people realised sources are not restricted to text as Egyptology tombs are decorated. He used the example of a newly discovered tomb where all the walls are decorated.

> To ignore all that and to look only for a text that could be simply one paragraph is practically throwing away your main sources and looking for the trivial one. You see the culture develop and advance. You can see that in the technology you just have a pot or a potsherd and you can see how the technology of firing was developing. At present, certainly anyone who restricts the research to textual material is really depriving the candidate from a major source, a rich source of information and we cannot accept it now.

> All scholars have to work with is representational media in the form of cultural objects and art. As explorers of these civilisations, we apply our language/s and naming conventions to them.

As reporters of these civilisations, *Prof. Al-Sonbatti* clarified that we use our own cultural tools and objects such as technologies, performances, software and artistic works to represent those civilisations in various media formats. He emphasised that Egyptology lecturers use visual material as it is such a visual culture. He asks: How can I **speak** about art? He stressed the importance of the visual to describe, say, a recently discovered blue beaded mummy. He suggests it is not by choice that the visual dominates in Egyptology and Egyptologists are forced to let it because their sources are visual.

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[47] The complete transcript of my interview with *Professor Al-Sonbatti* is included as Appendix 1 as it extends knowledge about non-text media within the Egyptology discipline.

This example shows an accommodating change of attitude towards innovative research practices. When one of *Eric's* candidates was undertaking a PhD by previously published papers in collaboration with other researchers, the faculty had reservations about how the thesis' components might develop. The students gave evidence of theses by publication, of continuity of thinking and of the way the project was being integrated into a whole. As the faculty looked more closely, they began to see the possibilities, of linking these works to the fundamental work of a thesis by publication and could see great merit in this approach.

These next few examples illustrate an awareness of how academic staff members perceive that research practices are changing.

In the last ten years *James* thought there had been an exponential increase in the number and form of the thesis. He considered a high percentage of submissions at his university were presented in media formats. He knew of a thesis submitted in 2004 which was presented as a database on CDRom with an exhibition as a small component and another which was submitted with an exhibition on DVD.

Jack had been a member of a *higher degree committee* for about seven years but admitted he knew little about media theses. However, he recalled a candidate who recently presented a 7-minute movie clip of his research site. He thought it was ambitious yet knew this type of activity was becoming more popular as were PhDs by creative works where you have a scholarly piece and another additional piece of work – a music score, a novel, a play.

Victor's university recently formed three thesis categories for its submission guidelines; 'text', 'thesis by papers' and 'creative theses'. He explained the word 'creative' identified theses with 'artistic' components. He said that the intent was to recognise the different types of components in the thesis where the intent was not scholarly. He gave the example that: writing a novel – a children's book that is not itself being treated as a piece of scholarship as a children's book might be just about you know, the Famous Five or whatever. That's the creative thing.

It was *Victor's* understanding that the creative work only had to illustrate and then it had to be written about in a scholarly way.

> The scholarly bit is the dissertation for the position they want to take and then the creative component is going to explore part of those different things and then identify them. So that exploration will be treated as the scholarly thing.

He admitted that the process seemed unclear. He added that there was no special formal process for submitting a media thesis but if a candidate wanted to do a mixture of components, it needed to be explained in the initial plan. Different components needed outlining to a supervising panel and the usual progress reports are required even though the content balance could change.

In acknowledgment of the potential for multimedia in theses, *Rolf* was instrumental in launching a *practical doctorate* at his university [48].

The following examples refer to academic staff members' knowledge of successfully submitted media PhD theses.

David related an experience from a performing arts discipline when a candidate had no formal music training yet was awarded for presenting his media component as a jazz performance. The faculty agreed that performances or thesis' artefacts needed to be accompanied by, at the very least, an abstract. Yet, *David* thought a trend away from text-based theses was unlikely.

James recalled a candidate whose experience highlighted ingenuity in thesis production. *Rowan's* PhD thesis on Nietzsche's philosophy and fire as a medium was presented traditionally and later became a performance. *Rowan* read literature about burning and fire and, to read Nietzsche from his original archived texts, spent a year learning German. He was influenced by Nietzsche's idea that the archive should be burnt as only then would the negation or void caused in genuine creative activity – a transcendence – be experienced. He decided to visit each site where Nietzsche had written books. *Rowan* took copies of Nietzsche's books to each site and burnt the book he had written at that particular site. He performed this act in eight different countries. The exercise was designed to capture Nietzsche's belief that the poetics of silence and the idea of philosophy, and art being at its core, was futile. Thus, *Rowan's* performance became a metaphor for capturing Nietzsche's engagement with futility. A Nietzsche scholar examined *Rowan's* thesis and contended it made a major contribution to scholars who studied Nietzsche's works.

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[48] This was introduced in <u>Chapter 4</u>, p.132.

David's candidate held a Master in Science Communication yet wanted to change his career to children's literature and decided to write a book for children for his PhD. Part of the submission was to write a small thesis which was supplemented by the book which carried more weight than the thesis. The candidate's department considered it another way of producing knowledge. The examiners liked the novel, passed the thesis and recommended the book be published.

At *Mike's* university, a candidate produced a CDRom which included the history of maths and presented it as a 3D Web site. The thesis was published in a series of printouts from a CDRom to create a story.

James knew of a thesis on cyber culture and cyber feminism.

> The candidate spent six years in cyberspace creating a cyborg web site. The fictional feminist character engaged with all the other feminists around the world and read all the feminist literature. The amount of work involved and the level of reading and research was huge.

5.2   NEW LANGUAGES OF RESEARCH

"Within the arts and design field, students need to be equipped with the digital languages to be able to make informed decisions about the selection of a language or languages in which to conduct their research and present their findings" (Bamford, 2005, p.7).

A defining quality of media theses is that they bring to research new languages or multiple literacies which are embedded within various technologies including information technology. As issues exist regarding technological skills and training, this section presents the opinions of academic staff regarding this important aspect of thesis development.

Prof. Al-Sonbatti explained that knowledge and learning embraced multiple perspectives and that the availability of media drove the exploration of technology for representational purposes. His department did not have the expertise to deliver technology training and, because technologies used were similar across departments, *Prof. Al-Sonbatti* did not think it should be the responsibility of individual departments to provide technical training but it should be provided from a central training area. He thought isolating departments from each other:

… would not be very healthy as it would not enable students to see what others were doing and to exchange ideas and learn from others using the same technology. I certainly think that training should be central to the university and not within departments.

As a supervisor, *Prof. Al-Sonbatti* considered it was his responsibility to guide with the topical knowledge but not with the technological knowledge. He placed the responsibility for skills acquisition with the candidate and thought they should enter the discipline with the technical tools and skills already acquired and that the university should provide support. He gave the example of how a candidate's computing skills made a valuable contribution to an aspect of Egyptology.

> In Egypt, people were ranked according to their status in society at the time in categories called Titles. There are about four thousand Titles and these are rearranged according to the needs of the country at the time. One candidate developed a computer program for ranking Titles by specific years or periods of time. Thus, he transferred laborious manual searching to instant searching on databases. With this database we do not need to search from scratch. **We can leap, not walk.**

Jack advises students who have no video camera skills that he is unable to help them and to just go and find out – you can ask the people around. He thought that:

> … poor IT training provision was compensated for by young kids having an incredible ability to pick things up quickly. We want students to be up there in terms of their skill level – and they should sort out how to get there themselves. It is obvious they have to go to training courses. Whilst working in groups with other students they see standards and work towards them.

Jack thought more sophisticated software was becoming an accepted part of research and there were many students who could not participate in projects which required the high level of skills demanded by such software programs. His answer to these students would be: if you can't do the work you are out! He agreed with me that there were 'haves and have nots' but it was the 'haves' who could quickly check the veracity of presented data and ascertain whether it was a load of nonsense and say it is not working – it is just not on.

> The 'haves' are making it more difficult for people to get away with things that you could have got away with in the past. The trouble with the equity argument is that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses and it is very difficult to treat everyone the same. Candidates have a limited amount of time in which to do their research so you really have to target the individual and identify where their needs are. We have to be a bit more proactive on this side and pick up on the weaknesses here and there.

Rolf remarked that when candidates in the *practical doctorate* knew they had to include a practical component, they:

… slipped into the technological side because they had to record practice. Some students create websites to demonstrate their teaching activities. Technologically we had to go through developmental phases to get to where we are now. In a degree such as the *practical doctorate* where you record practice to show interaction, students must become technologically literate.

Nick considered the necessity for IT training related to the reality of the conditions of the university workplace and the sort of people who were in it. His student, *Stephen,* had an IT background. He had worked extensively with web-based media. *Nick* did not remember *Stephen* needing or requesting any help, or the faculty offering any particular technical support in what he was doing. His website was very advanced, well designed and presented. By contrast, *Nick* recalled another student who was at another level in terms of technical ability. He was able to work with her and help with some of the video recordings, editing and many other associated issues. Other staff members were involved in the process as well. *Nick* did not consider this was fair as neither he nor any of his colleagues were paid to give this help. He considered there is:

… lots of stuff in the university that people who work here do that they're not paid to do but that they need to do. In a sense it's just part of the job because of the environment you work in.

Nick agreed that IT training in universities should be funded.

… of course, of course, I believe that very, very strongly. Actually, there are broad signs and historical markers that give encouragement. But the overall answer to that question is (a) there's not enough and (b) it's not taken seriously. We still rely mainly on people's good will and personal skills and interests to actually carry these things.

Regarding technology training responsibilities *Prof. Stewart* commented:

I don't see informal skills development as a university's responsibility. One needs to do this towards preparation for creating ones' thesis. There are all different types of organisations and activities that can help people develop these skills. It's part of lifelong learning and you do what you need to do but you have to identify that.

George said his university used to have a dedicated video analysis unit for about three years but it was abandoned as video analysis is too time consuming. *Rick* was concerned candidates were not advised about the alternative technologies which could be more suitable for producing media components than the familiar ones. He suggested candidates need someone to advise on alternative use of technologies, technique or equipment.

If you're looking at non-traditional ways of presenting doctoral stuff for most people, that would involve some use of computer-based technologies. There is a technical limitation. You can go to anyone and say I want to do X, how do I do that? That you can usually get around. But you need to have the support staff or the technical

people who know the technical stuff that maybe is just over the horizon, the possibilities... .

5.3 EXAMINATION OF MEDIA COMPONENTS

5.3.1   Intent

One of the major considerations when creating a media thesis is the purpose of the components and how all the components should be prepared for examination. Academic staff brought their own ideas, concepts and understanding to this important aspect of research practice. Most academic staff agreed that the purpose for including media components should determine how they are examined – as instructional or artistic components or as integral to the thesis' argument. Others had different opinions.

Jack distinguished between theses which contained components which he considered were 'add ons' and those which were central to the thesis' argument. I had mentioned the animations which *Lexi* created from Egyptian figures so he used them to demonstrate this concept. He stated that if the drawings were reconstructed as an illustration then it could be considered not the central to the argument of the thesis. Alternatively, if they were, for example, reconstructed then deconstructed and converted into a three-dimensional model and analysed, then he would see them as a central part of the thesis. *Jack* said he would expect a detailed description and an analysis of how the transformation had taken place, what assumptions had been made to transform it, or what other possible ways it could have been arranged and presented. In this situation, he would see the additional component as a critical part of the evidence and, were he examining it, he would change his approach to examination. This shows that a distinct difference exists in the purpose for including media components in theses. This difference creates the need for appropriate examination criteria.

Jack cautioned there were some grey areas regarding recording visual and auditory material for theses, and he considered it was essential, for example, that a musical score include a written record of what the score was about. He used a hypothetical situation to demonstrate the intent and value of a media component in a thesis.

> A candidate videos something about the behaviour of an organism to study something about its motions – let's say to work out the biomechanics of a particular movement. If their interpretation went beyond just describing it, then I would see that as valuable evidence. I think examiners would treat it as such – I don't have any dispute with that. Videoing has become such an obvious thing to do so therefore –

use it.

Jack explained how one candidate organised a performance to observe how people reacted to it. A visual record of the performance would be required for judging outcomes against activity as a textual description would not adequately demonstrate what actually occurred.

Prof. Stewart suggested the intent of artistic components in media theses determined approach to examination.

> Examination of artistic components is very subjective though it depends upon its purpose. For example, if it was simply to illustrate some sort of evidence of a process, then it is what it is and that's it. However, if it represents a particular set of data or a set of experiences and is going to be included, then I would want the artist, author or creator to pay particular attention to aesthetic form.

> However, there are no standards. There are no absolutes and we all know that the high art critic will reject anything that is of a different culture or anything that is created by non-professional artists or people who don't have a certain authority. The main thing is whether people agree that the art is powerful or whatever. I think we are going to run into trouble if we want to nominate any one person to have the authority over the quality of work.

Rolf related the experience of *Louise,* a French teacher and *practical doctorate* candidate, who was doing research on role modelling. The activity was for French teacher students to solve a murder only speaking French. The research site was a train carriage with twin video cameras and *Louise* was the train conductress. One camera was on her, because *Rolf* insisted she had to **demonstrate** her experiential change, and the other camera was on the students. If the research had been for a PhD, the emphasis would have been on the student's activities. However, for a *practical doctorate* the emphasis or focus had to be on the facilitator who had to show in the practical component that she was shifting ground as a practitioner. The significance of the exercise was that media was the mechanism whereby the candidate could analyse her performance in order to improve her professional practice and that was the focus for examination purposes.

George admitted he was not fully informed of all of the strategies and techniques which are used but suggested examiners might need to critique photos in a thesis and evaluate the connection between the exegesis and the image. In support of the need for candidates to identify the intent of media components, he suggested ideally an agenda for critique should be determined by their methodology – defining their theory of interpretation. As there is the potential for multiple interpretations, examiners would need to review the generative aspects

of the research for direction. He thought this was not always entirely suitable but was all that could be done under the circumstances.

Mike thought of most importance is that media thesis presentation demonstrates a connected story. He thought that the elements need to be interconnected and explicitly defined so that multimedia and text are integrated.

Nick raised the notion that problems arise in examination of less 'traditional' theses because we are locked into outcomes which have a tradition attached to them. The primary one at doctoral level is a thesis written in a particular style and organised in traditional chapters.

5.3.2   Examination & examiners

The *research committee* at *Rolf's* university agreed to an art exhibition as a completed thesis and the researcher did not need to create an exegesis. The university flew the examiners from interstate to examine the exhibition on site who were impressed and recommended awarding a PhD. They commented that an exegesis was unnecessary because the exhibition itself was a non-traditional thesis. The art showed a new technique and on that alone was awarded a Doctorate. *Rolf* confessed he wrestled with the situation because he was a traditionalist at heart.

As explained in the Introduction [49], media theses' components take many different forms. *George* raised ideas about analysing and examining these many forms or multi-literacies. He tended to support traditional methods.

> There are differences between reading and connecting with the page and the screen. Yet perhaps our generation, or generations that are coming up may not even be able to articulate the differences or the problems. They might think ours is a strange new world when we start teaching them discourse analysis and the rest of it. But that's part of the journey.

His suggested solution to issues relating to examination of evolving multi-literacies in theses was for examiners to be chosen who were familiar with that field. Being mindful of examination, he cautioned candidates against producing movies which reflected a 'Hollywood' style. His faculty has established guidelines for examiners relating to theses by

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[49] Introduction, p.2.

exhibitions where an analysis is built into the text and includes an explication of the creative components. He thought that:

> … examiners are not out to fail people if they can avoid it. I think most examiners try to take a fair and balanced approach. If there are issues which conflict with their own personal ideology, they'll usually indicate that that's the case. I think they're willing to adjust and learn, and in most cases if there's a major problem in terms of the structure or the information or the presentation of the examination, one hopes that the supervisors are talking to the students about this and warning or advising them.

In *David's* experience when identifying a suitable examiner for a media thesis, the supervisor, the head of department and the candidate made recommendations.

> It was very difficult finding a suitable examiner. In this case, the problem was that the chosen examiner had the specialised knowledge, yet had a previous association with the student. This could have prejudiced or biased his role as examiner. Eventually the *dean* made allowances because of the problems the student had experienced. It had a good outcome.

Rick reflected on his supervisory responsibility to identify examiners for his candidates. He suggested he would send a doctoral thesis to anyone with a specific sort of interest in it. He would choose the examiners according to either their expertise in content knowledge, familiarity with the specific methodology or for their presentation or representational skills, depending upon the nature of the thesis.

Victor took a different approach to evaluating an artistic component in a thesis. He was concerned that, by approving a media thesis the university ran the risk that the component was not going to be satisfactory. He thought that if one person liked a piece of music, the chances were others would as well. He used the examples of a novel and a song. If a publisher did not like a novel it would be rejected and if people did not like a song, they would not listen to it. However, he conceded that if a work of art were explained to him, he would be more likely to approve of it. The skill of the artist in articulating this explanation would influence his opinion.

> There are a lot of people who want to paint and put on a show and people like it or don't. The university expects people to be really articulate about what they are doing, and know the history and all this inside out and be able to explain to people in great detail, where this thing fits in, how it differs from such and such and all that sort of stuff.

5.4 ATTITUDES & REACTIONS

As this research paradigm evolves, it is interesting to know how universities have reacted and to learn what academic staff perceive to be the key issues.

Eric considered management of current research environments was required in terms of the guidelines, training of supervisors, advice students are given and that articles about media theses which give support and guidance, would assist that requirement. He explained his university:

> ... has moved to a process of having two supervisors for each student. The value is to match the skills of the supervisors with the design of the student's work. In that way, I hope the student would have someone who could alert them to issues, give guidance and direct them to where else they might find support.

Jack was examining a paper for publication which had a visual component. He looked at the video first out of curiosity and said: Oh wow look at that – that is really good! Then he read the paper. He decided he would support a visual component being published with a paper if it added to its content. He recognised the worth of media being published on CDRoms. He suggested that rather than a student trying to describe animal behaviour in words, it would be more appropriate for the behaviour to be represented in movie format.

> I would see that as very useful, and that it sounds like a very good idea. So in terms of packaging you'll have to put that in a text as some sort of description as to what is going on and then point to this other visual material that people can look at if they want to which actually shows what you are describing. That is one of the advantages of the modern era that sort of stuff is much easier to capture and deal with.

Alternatively, *George* commented if he watched a video of classroom practice without having read the thesis, the risk existed that he might not be able to identify the specific approach the candidate wanted to illustrate. Unless the phenomena were clearly identifiable within the video, he considers the approach may not contribute very much to growth and capacity.

Eric recommended extra materials should be relevant to the topic being investigated. He thought text which interacted with photographs enabled some very strong points to be made. In relation to *Elanor's* suitcase thesis, he considered he would find it difficult to accept if the intended message was unsubstantiated.

Regarding artistic representation in theses, *James* thought some are worthwhile and some are an appalling waste of time. He believes a perception exists that artistic theses are soft versions of a PhD yet he considers them to be just as complex and analytical.

Rick commented that he was heartened to know that there were supervisors who wanted to encourage their candidates to consider the best way to present their work and represent their data. Regarding the way doctoral candidates present their research, he commented: I would like to think a number of the students, both recently graduated and currently completing doctoral work, are really pushing some edges of both epistemologies, methodologies and presentation format.

Mike thought this type of thesis attracts university wide interest and raises the generic definition of what a thesis is. In acknowledgement of the changes in thesis content and composition, he considers the traditional thesis no longer exists. Thesis content and composition with continue to change, so what is defined as traditional at one time will have a different meaning at another.

5.5 SUPERVISION

Media theses create changes in supervisory practice and conversations show that supervisors embrace the opportunity of a new learning experience. Several academic staff discussed ways they handle media theses and the candidates who produce them.

Prof. Stewart commented that a good relationship between a candidate and a supervisor was crucial.

> A supervisor has to be able to work with someone who is comfortable in their own skin, trusting and really bright, creative and energetic. They need to be intellectually engaged and compatible with a number of things such as the subject matter and the direction of the research. One of the most important questions to ask is: 'Who will I work with and why?' If there is no one who has a sound grasp and is familiar with this form of thesis then the candidate needs to take on the really hard job of educating the supervisor. The supervisor and candidate relationship needs to be founded on trust and faith.

Eric was concerned that candidates who develop media theses take longer to complete them and that possibly this type of research required supervisors who had greater skills than those supervising traditional approaches.

I asked *Vanessa* whether she thought media theses candidates from creative or performing arts disciplines were better provided for than those from traditional disciplines and her answer showed she was not inclined to differentiate between either approach.

Superficially, I think it is incredibly hard for both groups – and there are two different reasons for this. For example, history is quite creative and asks you to investigate but then they become very harsh about the facts and why shouldn't they? And they become very harsh about who is doing the writing and from what perspective. So you have to keep a quite open perspective while you are creating the conceptual underlay.

In creative and performing arts I've heard it said that the work is either brilliant or dreadful. There seems to me no middle run. There seems to be people who put everything into producing a thesis differently and it is spectacular and there are some that are borderline. Universities here in Australia won't tolerate a lack of rigour whether it is in the performing and creative arts or anything else. The heads of school advise us as supervisors that despite its composition, a thesis has got to have the correct rigor [emphatically].

Prof. Stewart's view is:

That all theses or dissertations produced at universities must exhibit some hallmark qualities of sound research and must be on a topic that has some importance regarding its usefulness. It may be esoteric too, but it must be on a topic that is of value. I think that the new understanding derived after analysis and interpretation has to rest on some very sound principles.

Considering the special interactivity required between theoretical and media thesis components of the *practical doctorate, Rolf* would not supervise students who:

… could not change their pattern from getting everything they needed for research out of a textbook and writing it up. With the PhD program, to my understanding, there is no requirement that says it has to be experientially based. It can be but the student has to make the decision. But the *practical doctorate* has to be submitted with a practical component. This rule goes to the examiners.

This shows that no matter what approach is taken to creating a thesis, supervisory practices need to accommodate each specific situation without losing sight of the essential requirements of doctoral research.

5.5.1   Co-learning between candidate & supervisor

Nick supervised *Stephen* whose aim was to get his colleagues more in tune with potentials and opportunities for online learning, so he started a program of staff development using Web-based media. He wanted to examine the way his colleagues could gain information from and contribute to online learning to determine how successful it was. One of the challenges for *Nick* was to understand the award's requirements as the structure of the *practical doctorate* at his university entailed supervising in a different way from supervising a traditional PhD. His primary responsibility was to ensure *Stephen* was going to be successful.

So I needed to get a handle on what the expectations were and what would be successful under this program. A PhD is reasonably easy to get a handle on because of its traditions and its expectations so this was a little bit different. There wasn't a lot of information or advice available in terms of guidance on this. We had external examiners who potentially were also going to be a little bit cloudy about the expectations of the examination process. So I was trying to keep those things in my own head and alert *Stephen* to these requirements. We adjusted what he was doing to ensure that we got the right outcome.

George is supervising *Margaret* who is working with a small number of volunteers. He did not know much about the topic of volunteering until he started supervising her. He found it necessary to learn, as he had to guide *Margaret's* reading in refereed papers and in-house journals. *George* believed it was an important area which crossed various disciplines such as communication and cultural studies.

> *Margaret's* work contains some interesting photo essays. Experiencing the phenomenon of having two activities running along side each other without a great deal of connection was problematic. The first activity was the deconstruction of the photos into temporal and spatial contexts and reading the cultural semiotics of the images. The second activity was that the images act as a mnemonic to the participants in this study in that they take them back to that particular period, to the experience of the phenomenon at that particular time. *Margaret* needed to find a way to connect the topic with the photo essay.

Margaret faced obstacles and difficulties with *George* as a supervisor because they were both learning the process and finding a way of incorporating the photography. *George* conceded it was necessary for him to learn how to understand photographic composition and that *Margaret* was educating him, in some respects, more than he was educating her. He stated one of the reasons he supervises candidates was to learn or otherwise why would I bother to do it?

George wanted *Margaret* to come up with solutions or trial activities rather than to ask what should be done and for him to give her examples. His way of supervising is to get candidates to explore what they want to do, not to be told. He realises students may say they could have done with more direction, but he would still prefer not to over direct. He does not recommend any specific presentation genre or format but encourages students to present in ways which suit the needs of their particular research project. He tells them he cannot be expected to understand everything that the research involves. It is a general process he follows with all students and specifically for *Margaret* given the approach to her thesis.

5.6 ADVICE

Brearley's (2004) advice to students regarding the complexity of both creating new forms of representation and for supervising doctoral candidates include:

> Knowing the rules AND Challenging assumptions
> Being creative AND Maintaining rigour
> Honouring content AND Exploring form (p.7).

If *James* were a candidate he would ask how the media in his work would inform gathering of information and the analysis.

> For me, I would want to represent it in ways that are more accessible to the public. I'm not necessarily interested in demonstrating conformity to academic jargon or the cloistered nature of knowledge production. I am interested in finding ways that are much more accessible to people across the spectrum.
>
> My arguments for the particular form of the arts that I employ, whether it be visual arts, poetry, or dance or movement or performance, is that you have to have a valid reason for doing it and make those arguments. Having said that, though the work of a thesis has to be good art, it has to be mindful of the aesthetics. If you want to create an aesthetic narrative and include photos you can't say look I've got a camera I think I will go and shoot some photos. Well that's not good enough. I would urge the thesis writer to learn how to take photographs professionally, do creative writing and other studies to help with creative works.

Allen would advise candidates to gain a level of experience before embarking on a media project to gain the necessary skills and expertise. He thought there was no point doing amateurish work to support a doctoral thesis as each thesis component is there to demonstrate capacity. He would like to think the university where he works ran such courses.

Eric advises that candidates take the following approach to designing media theses. He suggests that they should explain on what premise the project was based; form a literature guide to demonstrate thought about the issue; design an acceptable methodology; emphasise the *raison d'être* of the media items and present an extended understanding about the way the research materials were organised. *Eric* would need to know how the researcher intended to gather data from the preliminary stage of organising the research site to ensure videotaping did not interfere with the participants' responses and to know how the data would be analysed. He thought the interference on students when collecting material this way was probably a lot greater than completing a text-based survey and believed the use of video and photography as research tools raised ethical and permission issues which were even more extensive than usual.

After seeing a photograph of *Elanor's* thesis in a suitcase, *Jack* advised that:

> … a student has the final right to submit a thesis in whatever form it fits and the only gap to that is finding examiners who are prepared to examine it. If it is OK that is the only constraint. A student can ignore the guidelines and present their thesis however they want. But you are running a risk. Various people would advise you. You could reduce a thesis to a microfilm and an examiner would say 'I am not going to bother with that – give me a hard copy'. We can advise but they can ignore. The suitcase student must have weighed up the decision and backed herself – so ticks all round.

Rolf's stipulation regarding candidates who conduct case study research is that he is prepared to supervise students on just about anything provided they themselves were central to the topic and that they could link the theory with practice. He stressed that a video component had to be exactly the same quality as the written one and meet all the doctoral requirements. The videos could not contain bad camera work. He advises candidates that examiners do not want to see all the raw data – just a short movie showing the relevant content and which is continually linked to the theoretical aspect of the thesis.

Vanessa's advice is for candidates to be very careful of the universities' guidelines. Even though her university permits alternative forms of thesis presentation, she is adamant that she and her candidates should understand exactly what the guidelines mean and that they should document each step of the supervisory and candidacy process. Otherwise, she thought a student was putting a candidacy at risk.

5.7 IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

Academic staff offered their opinions as to how they perceived research practices were changing and predicted what they thought the future held for research practice.

James noted how the value of a PhD is changing.

> A huge contestation is occurring between values and how knowledge is measured. In the past, the hard sciences were the prime discipline. They were only the prime discipline because everyone wanted to get into them and no one wants to get into them now. The evidence of this change is that ultimately the form of the thesis will change to suit that evidence.

Rick expressed doubt the paper-based thesis could survive change.

> If we're serious about knowledge, and that the purpose of doing doctoral-level research is to add something to the understanding of interactions of people and power relationships and things in the world, then we have to accept, at this point in time, that this form of thing [rattling thesis papers] is not quite able to hold everything that we need to be able to convey and communicate. It is the era of the visual and the postmodern era is the age of the visual and the image is paramount.

He acknowledged there could be difficulty for traditional doctorate supervisors to change their supervisory practice to media theses.

> It will be the new people. It will be those people who've actually thought, like myself in a way, five or six years ago, I would have liked to have done that but I didn't. So I encourage my students a little more than I was encouraged. They'll finish and they'll encourage the folks that they work with. It will grow. Yes, it will come at the new doctorate end. I think that whole introspective stuff is what's leading the really serious or exciting students to look at this stuff.

George thinks universities cannot predict all the forthcoming changes.

> As technology drives the process, in the future I would see it becoming a lot more widespread and widely accepted within universities. As web-mediated learning gathers in intensity, I think we'll see that reflected in the kinds of research work being done.

5.8 PHASE 2: DISCUSSION

- **How do the experiences of academic staff enhance understanding of the phenomenon of media theses?**

Staff from higher education research communities have shared their knowledge and vision and given insight into the practice of using multiple forms of media in theses. This section interprets how their opinions of, attitudes towards and experiences with media theses have the potential for confluence or constraint in this research paradigm.

5.8.1 Confluence

Confluence is demonstrated by those universities which alter management practices to accommodate media theses.

> Rather than delineate distinct forms, participants from one university represented in this study, explained that it accepts all media forms in theses. There are no specific guidelines or rules and there is no distinction between a text only and a media thesis, so the two forms of thesis have been amalgamated. This demonstrates a university wide acceptance of this form of research.

Awareness that some disciplinary new knowledge components may best be represented in non-text forms supports confluence.

> A defining quality of media theses is that they bring to research new languages or multi-literacies which are embedded within various technologies. It has been explained how in Egyptology, disciplinary knowledge is gleaned from the non-text forms of art and objects, and text becomes the medium into which it is translated. This shows that the nature of disciplinary media drives its suitability for presenting research outcomes in multiple forms of media. In situations like this, the text is incidental rather than pivotal – the cultural objects and artefacts are the focal point of interest. Thus, there are very valid reasons to use media in theses. It is not by preference for a certain medium that candidates choose to use it in their theses; it is because it is the most appropriate way to present knowledge.
>
> The use of multiple forms of media in knowledge creation may be central to how

arguments are now developed and how knowledge is conceptualised especially in qualitative research where it may provide a more suitable way of presenting data. Eisner's (1997) argument that traditional forms of research constrain the data "in ways which misrepresent the phenomena the researcher wishes to understand" strengthens this concept.

Universities proffer confluence as they demonstrate awareness of the opportunities and potential which media theses offer.

One university proactively recognised the potential for use of media in theses. It established a degree which had a theoretical component linked to a practical one. Each component was weighted at 50%. This doctorate changed the focus of research in that it became a way for teaching professionals to evaluate their own practice. It showed that a university was willing to take a new approach to doctoral work in order to improve the professionalism of the teaching community and took advantage of digital technology to design the degree's compulsory component. This type of proactivity supports media theses.

This study shows that universities are supportive of cross-disciplinary research which incorporates different forms of media. Candidates from this study either produced cross-disciplinary theses from two 'traditional' disciplines or created a media component from a creative arts discipline and the text component from another. This complements Bamford's (2005) opinion that "contemporary creative practice is by its nature cross-disciplinary" (p.1).

An academic staff member's recognition that student interest is leading the university demonstrates understanding for a new approach is required for thesis management. He admitted that it was difficult for the university to keep up with researchers' innovative practices and admitted:

> Being prepared to accept that is difficult because someone is always thinking up something new that goes beyond where we have reached in our thinking. So we're always going to be tapping on the edges of knowledge and new ways of doing things and I don't think we will ever completely be able to say that 100% we've caught up – we're here! By academia adopting this attitude, the future looks more positive for all researchers who use a range of technologies innovatively.

Changes in attitude are encouraging and positive.

> A traditionalist academic staff member showed support for visual materials which he considered were powerful and impressive. His university adjusted provision of supervisors to suit current research practices. This shows a customised approach for supporting media thesis candidates. This academic staff member's attitude supports those of the supervisor participants in Conrad's (2003) study who considered "non-traditional research is seen not as subverting the ideals of traditional research but fulfilling them in ways that are responsive to larger social needs as well as expressive of the need for greater academic creativity" (p.17).

> An acknowledgement that the text-based thesis may no longer be as suitable for conveying and communicating interactions and power relationships as the media thesis, shows a responsive attitude. One academic staff member hoped that candidates were really pushing at the edges of epistemologies, methodologies and presentation format. This desire indicates acceptance of candidates who choose to do this.

Responsive to change and finding solutions to problems beyond policies demonstrates support for media thesis in research practice.

> Publishing papers for a thesis is not a new practice, yet it was at one university. A candidate proposed that he publish his thesis by writing papers. This necessitated that his department discuss the issues and it found that the evidence pointed towards doing something different from traditional research. The department concluded that new issues were emerging which enabled the thesis to be more proactive in its approach. Rather than create a bureaucratic boundary, it looked at the situation as a way to improve research options for candidates. This type of responsiveness contributes to confluence between the academy and candidates and enhances knowledge creation.

Universities demonstrate confluence for media thesis by recognising the need for change in supervisory practices.

Due to its increased number of doctoral candidates, one university recently changed its categorisation of supervisors. They now include, the principal supervisor, who must be within the same department as the candidate; an associate supervisor who may be located in another division, faculty or department or who may be external; an adjunct supervisor who need not necessarily be a member of staff and a co-supervisor who is generally appointed to gain experience in supervisory practices. This demonstrates the introduction of the type of support which could be especially useful for media thesis candidates, as it would enable them to draw upon a diverse range of expertise.

When the research is cross-disciplinary in nature, Burrows (2004b) suggests that supervisors need to have matching cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills. In this respect he also suggests a team of supervisors be created to meet the extraordinary circumstances and that the candidate may need to orchestrate the supervisors' activities. Ashburn (2003) lauds that "sympathetic co-supervisors….can be a blessing to the supervisor when sallying into cross-discipline studies" (p.3). In cross-disciplinary media theses, it is important to find examiners who are both content and representational specialists.

Because of being unsure of the supervisory requirements of a media thesis, a supervisor collaborated with his candidate to ensure they both knew what they were aiming for and adjusted the process as they saw fit. This shows proactivity in supervision where there are no guiding principles for media theses. It creates a situation where the supervisor and candidate become co-learners in the development of the thesis. Co-learning is mutually beneficial for gaining experience and it could circumvent misconceptions during the research process. For example, one supervisor who participated in this study approved a problem solving mechanism for a candidate who had difficulty trying to video and collect data simultaneously. Having an understanding relationship with a supervisor meant the difference between success and failure.

Consensual opinions and co-learning support multiple media candidates.

By receiving direction and support in a videoing activity, candidates' data gathering mechanisms achieved the required outcome. Thus, candidates benefited from direction and the resultant media were acceptable scholastically as they related to the theoretical component of their thesis. This shows that for theses using multiple forms of media,

supervisor and candidate need to reach a high degree of consensus before gathering data in order to produce a worthwhile product. Support for candidates who experience difficulties using media in their theses removes stress and produces better quality outcomes. Brearley (2004) supports the concept of 'mentoring supervisors'. She believes that they need the opportunity to learn to understand the languages and purpose of different forms of theses so they are able to become role models, mentors and advocates in a variety of research environments.

Candidates' experiences with media theses benefit future supervisory practice.

Several research participants in this study agreed with McAlpine and Norton (2006) and Delamount, Atkinson & Parry (2000) that the way people were supervised as candidates influences how they supervise other candidates. The experiences of academic staff who felt a sense of loss from not submitting their own media components for examination generally leads to their support for candidates in media thesis submission.

Confluence is demonstrated when the research partners form opinions about how to prepare for the examination process and when flexibility is necessary.

It was generally acknowledged that neither supervisors nor academia knew all the answers to the critique of media theses. Advice from a staff member regarding examining them provides a practical solution. He suggests that if the research question and the methodology from which the media components were generated are known, it is possible to observe the media or artefact and to critically assess it with that knowledge of its intent and purpose. This removes the potential for subjective misrepresentation of the quality of the component and an opportunity for a candidate to emphasise its intention. This approach would help with the problem of assessing the variety of multiliteracy in media theses. It would benefit candidates, as they would have to strategise about 'why' and 'how' to include media components rather than just think about 'what' to include. In the absence of specific media examination guidelines, an examiner would take their lead from a candidate's justification of media components in the thesis. This process would give candidates confidence that they had articulated and justified an approach. Where there are no guiding rules, self-direction becomes necessary.

A supervisor found a suitable examiner who was also an associate of the candidate. Because of the specialised nature of the work, the university approved the associate to examine a media work. This shows that universities can be accommodating if supervisors deal with exceptional circumstances through the right channels. A candidate was awarded a PhD for an art exhibition **without** a written exegesis. Although this may be perceived as a controversial approach, it demonstrates an act of permissible flexibility.

5.8.2 Constraint

Some discussions with academic staff members suggested attitudes and ideas which had the potential to be constraining within the media thesis research paradigm.

Issues relating to underestimation of media theses, unhelpful assumptions and attitudes which 'played down' thesis' media components cause concern.

Academic staff members confirmed Eisner's (1997) opinion that new modes of knowledge have "problematized the traditional view of what research entails and have escalated our consciousness of its unexamined assumptions" (p.na).

A head of department understood that an unconventional thesis included approaches to methodology, literature review, styles of approach or writing – anything different to the scientific model. This approach seems conservative when compared to the merits of the media theses research participants in this study produced. It showed a constrained understanding of the qualities of media theses. Another academic staff member thought that if he could re-present his own thesis he would alter the way the text appeared on the page. Such an approach would appear to be unimaginative in comparison to the dynamic knowledge products of this study. It shows a misconception about the opportunities that media theses offer for presenting dissertations.

The unusual opinion was expressed that creative arts people **were** intelligent even though 'people' thought their theses would be easier to read than those from traditional disciplines. This attitude has the potential to be socially and academically isolating and it could discourage candidates who wished to form their media theses research projects from creative arts disciplines. Grandiose statements expressed about candidates having read all the literature, met all the people, etc. are also unhelpful. Sweeping statements such

as no one wants to get into the hard sciences now and everyone wants to get into
the creative ones lack credibility. Candidates need to be prepared to source alternative
opinions if they sense that the advice they are being given about research practice is
biased.

A research board member explained there were elements in media theses which were all
scholarly and others which were part scholarly. This sheds light on a perception that
media components could be considered to be either essential or complementary elements.
Another academic staff member considered media components were add ons which
could either be central to the argument or not and was not sure about how they were to be
examined.

One staff member referred to media thesis components as this thing or stuff. These
expressions showed that to him they had much less status than the text component or
exegesis. Another described a media thesis as: you have a scholarly piece and another
additional piece of work – showing that he thought the media components were not
scholarly. This use of this sort of terminology could be detrimental to the reputation of
media theses.

Constraining influences exist for candidates regarding their expectations and haphazard
design of methodology.

One candidate was not awarded because he claimed he did not need to analyse the data in
his media thesis. Some phenomenologists [50] may support this claim, but it seems
unfortunate he was not given, or chose to reject, supervisor's guidance or that he did not
understand the consequence of this omission.

Another discrepancy relates to methodology. Forming methodology either 'as they went'
or retrospectively does not seem to be an issue for some, yet is controversial for others.
Lack of interconnectedness between the thesis and the component parts highlights the
need for negotiation from the beginning of a research project and for consensus on
methodology to be reached before the work proceeds. To have reached completion before

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[50] Van Manen (1990) would agree that, in phenomenology, data analysis was not necessary.

lack of interconnectedness became apparent could be symptomatic of a misconception of university policy or a misunderstanding between supervisor and candidate.

Issues for the university relate to the needs of research boards and members of research communities.

One supervisor recognised that when research committees were asked to give their approval for web-based publications they did not have a thorough understanding as to how to deal with them. If such committees are not proactively engaged with moving with the technologies of the day, it bodes poorly for candidates who create media theses. Perhaps committees need to become more aware of the knowledge producing capacity of evolving technologies. This also shows candidates need to consider this when presenting research proposals and to not make assumptions about prior knowledge of the benefits of their presentation modes in media. Displaying media theses at university exhibitions and at national conferences may improve this awareness. Researchers need to learn how to 'sell' their projects and their products.

A scientist and research board member who participated in this study, framed his opinions about media theses solely on the candidacy of a friend who was creating a thesis with artworks. He knew that she would present them at an exhibition attended by examiners and that she would link the works to her exegesis by indicating their 'size' (which could mean either their 'weighting' or 'worth'). He was not sure how she was going to back up her works with theory. Other participants in Phase 2 of this study stress that whether the link is theoretical, explanatory, methodological, metaphorical, etc. it is required to be articulated often. This participant's inexperience reflects Eisner's (1997) opinion that management complications result from a lack of familiarity with non-conventional approaches to theses. Lang (2002) questions how dissertation committees, who are experts in traditional work, can evaluate this type of work when they have little or no expertise in working with new forms of publication.

Examination of theses' media components indicated lack of definition and consensus which could prove to be potentially detrimental.

Ashburn (2003) claims that "there is no doubt that including a practical studio component with a thesis/dissertation has contributed to concerns regarding the definition of projects, their quality, their supervision and assessment" (p.1) and that one of the problems of fine arts doctorates relates to a lack of "fixed, universally recognised customs or guidelines across universities" (p.1).

Another supervisor had difficulty knowing the expectations of his role with a media thesis candidate. This indicates supervisors need to be supported in adapting their responsibilities to accommodate media thesis candidates. He also feared examiners were not going to be clear about their roles either, which could disadvantage a candidate. He thought that any thesis which did not conform to 'tradition' could run the risk of the examiner not accepting the values which candidates had instilled in their work because they would carry their own values. His solution for candidates to choose the right examiners may not always be practical. If his comments are a reflection of wider opinion, it indicates a serious issue for management of media theses candidatures.

One academic staff member stated that candidates were setting themselves up for failure by creating media theses. His thought that examiners might not like the work indicates that, were he an examiner, he would judge subjectively. That he expressed the stuff might fall over at the end, shows lack of faith in the student/supervisor/examiner relationship. His knowledge of non-text theses components, or understanding of the art of apperception, did not gel with the opinions of other academic staff from this study. He thought, for example, an examiner might not like a musical score. The flaw with this argument is, of course, that a candidate cannot gauge an examiner's personal taste in music or art. The implications of this for examination of artworks, photographs, poetry or any other component in which there is an artistic element would be unreasonable. That he also thought if he liked a certain piece of music others probably would as well is an assumption. Perhaps examination guidelines were not available to him. His comments were potentially constraining.

If a thesis' component was designed to have artistic or aesthetic qualities, would it receive fair judgement if only two or three examiners evaluated it independently? It seems more realistic for several people to determine whether it met the required creative arts criteria. In such a case, is it permissible for example, for a 'traditional' examiner to seek opinions

from others for whom the medium is either a passion or profession? It seems that all media components which emanate from traditional disciplines should be examined using different criteria from those used to examine media components from creative arts disciplines which are more likely designed to be of artistic worth. Supervisors and candidates would then have clarity on how to proceed. During her own PhD experience, Arnold (2005) was "unable to get a very clear and precise picture of the elements of those conventions as they apply to the elements of the creative artefact and the exegesis" (p.2). Her criteria for examining theses in her paper: <u>PhD in Creative Writing</u> from Swinburne University could be adapted for use by other disciplines.

A university staff member expressed the opinion that thesis media such as a novel or a performance should be good enough for people to pay to read, see or hear – or be created to be popularly accepted. Unless it was their intention from the start, this belief would frustrate candidates when creating their media components. The emphasis should not focus on whether the media was 'liked', unless a candidate stated that it was created to have aesthetic value. That this academic staff member admitted he was not completely sure about this issue is limiting for media theses.

The issue was also raised regarding examination of artistic components. This study has shown that examination of a thesis and its components should focus on their interrelationship with the topic, increase understanding or demonstrate an answer to a research question. A candidate would not have created this type of work to be judged for an aesthetic quality so it is unlikely to be judged accordingly. It was also thought that if an artistic work related to an illustrative process (or educational phenomena) it should be judged on that intention. However, if an artistic work demonstrated data or intended to portray an emotive connection with a social activity, it should be judge more on its aesthetic form. This confirms others' opinions that artistic components should be judged differently from those relating to disciplinary or educational phenomena.

Unless examiners understand the intent of the media and have clear examination guidelines, it could be disadvantageous for candidates. It should be the responsibility of the candidate to indicate the intent of media components and the responsibility of the examiner to heed the candidates' directive. Some academic staff believe examiners need

more support in evaluating media theses.

The practice of supervisors being 'educated' by candidates may conflict with their expectations.

One supervisor had challenges educating himself on a candidate's topic. The problems were that the media component ran parallel to the work not within it and that it was difficult to find connections between the 'culture' and the 'experiential phenomena'. As the topic and presentation medium was new for him, he was tempted to give more direction than usual. It created a situation where the candidate needed to educate the supervisor about the topic and the medium. The supervisor was unconcerned about this as he said that he supervised to learn. This phenomenon of 'educating the supervisor' may have come as a surprise for the candidate. Candidates need to remember that supervisors may have a peripheral knowledge or be unfamiliar with their topic or methodology. They may be less familiar with the activity of presenting knowledge concepts, artefacts or metaphorical objects in different forms of media. Participants from this study agreed that supervisors guided the way and did not create the knowledge. Media thesis candidates may not be aware of their supervisor's role and their own responsibilities in this respect. However, it is very helpful when supervisors can direct candidates to other experts for discussion.

Opportunities for creating a potentially media rich theses should not be lost.

One candidate's PhD led him on a deviating path to completion. To read about his subject he learned to speak German, discovered certain mistranslations of a German philosopher's writings, travelled to different counties to perform acts to simulate the philosophy of his research subject, organised exhibitions and spoke at conferences in German. His work involved activities and engagements with various media. This showed the university was supportive of an unusually extensive endeavour which was not predicted at its commencement. However, the thesis was submitted in text, therefore an opportunity for recording the performances and the exhibitions was lost. Rather than advising candidates not to submit media in theses, a constructive model would be for supervisors to recommend that they design a research project to take advantage of a familiar and appropriate technology.

These contrasting scenarios add to our knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of media theses. They show that some academic staff and institutions are supportive of them and change their practices to accommodate them. Other universities could improve their breadth of understanding by studying what is occurring in media thesis candidacies at their own and at other universities. These discussions identify many phenomena regarding the identity of media theses, perceptions of supervisory and examination practice and conceptions and misconceptions about how they exist in the world of research.

5.8.3   New languages of research

The following discussion drawn from conversations with academic staff for this study relates specifically to technologies which candidates use for their media theses. It contributes to a much broader field of research practice and research training beyond the scope of this study.

Learning the technological 'languages' of research before candidature pre-empts difficulties.

A carefully planned approach to media research should not be based on 'managing to get someone to help', 'winging it' or 'coincidence' as some of this study's participants did. Learning a technology skill during candidature could be daunting and create extra stress. However, depending on a 'cottage' craft for a media thesis may be less suitable than using a 'professional' one. For example, from my experience, the quality of movies created by students who have had basic training in movie creation, compared with those who have used the 'trial and error' method, is very different [51]. *Jack* saw the benefits of IT skills in research in that it reduced lengthy text descriptions of activities to short video clips. However, as a solution to acquiring video making skills he recommended students to just go and find out – you can ask the people around. Several participants expressed this ineffective solution to the creation of media components.

Technological help is not readily available on campus.

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[51] After providing Masters' students with just-in-time training for editing and converting video clips of clinical practice into iDVDs for assessment, I sometimes comment to them that now they have the skills, they could include a movie or a documentary their PhD theses. Some look at me askance but at least they know the possibilities.

Nick gave one candidate intense assistance with her technical work. People need to be able to produce their works in technologies of their choice, whether as an installation, a novel, a computer program or a live performance. Should there be a limit to the level of help required to ensure the student's work reaches examination? If all students cannot get this level of help, then it could disadvantage others. It raises questions about equity, equal opportunity and access to campus resources. That some candidates from this study had no access to on-campus help for creating their theses' media components and some did is problematic for media theses.

A misconception regarding the availability of research training on campus is problematic.

The requirement for candidates to enter disciplines with the appropriate technology skills received focus in interviews. If this is true, then the basic technological tools they need before undertaking a research degree need to be identified. *Allen* considered amateurish skills were inappropriate accompaniments to theses which should be created to demonstrate capacity. *Allen's* assumption that multimedia training was available for candidates on his campus was incorrect. Evidence shows that some academic staff thought their IT departments supported training when, in fact, candidates, from the universities they represented, found they had to get help elsewhere. This usually meant from their friends or from other candidates or they had to pay to get IT work done. This study has also found that it was not always practical for supervisors to be IT advisers.

Proactivity is helpful for addressing the need for technological training.

Prof. Al-Sonbatti recommended researchers from all departments should learn technologies together and have workshops where ideas and processes could be learned and explored in groups. *Nick* agreed the universities should provide training but he thought it was inadequate and not taken seriously. He commented: We still rely mainly on people's good will and personal skills and interests to actually carry these things. Undergraduate students get a lot of IT training at his university where all departments have an IT training budget and some training is online. He noted there was IT training for postgraduate students which included courses in standard and specialised software which were useful for research. This indicates that his university funds IT training.

Support for excellence in the quality of technological components.

This study showed that some staff members had misconceptions about the availability on campus for training and the ease of learning appropriate technological skills for creating digital media components. It seemed to be the perception that it is easy to acquire good IT skills for media components. However, casually acquired skills will not create professionally edited digital components. Face-to-face or online IT training may be adequate to support research candidates' presentation needs. However, one participant noted that a big difference exists between providing basic IT help and exposing candidates to a wider range of technologies for them to consider opportunities for creating new devices, mechanisms or media products to prove hypotheses and create knowledge. Researchers need specialised skills which generic training may not address.

Clarifying connections with the media content for the examiner is beneficial.

George considered he would not be able to discern from a video what it was that the candidate wanted to highlight. A solution to this problem would be for a candidate to learn how to include text with a DVD, identify DVD chapters and include instructions on relevant text pages what was needed to be observed in specific DVD chapters. This would mean an examiner could read the thesis in book form and watch the video concurrently.

A conundrum exists for the technologically unskilled.

It was revealed in this study that anomalies exist as to how candidates who create media components acquire the required technological skills. Universities enhance the creation and publication of candidates' knowledge by providing technological and IT training. Yet, this study has shown that creation of media theses is threatened when candidates are unable to access basic or specialised technological training on campus.

Jack's advice to those who could not learn the technologies required for candidacy was: if you can't do the work you are out **and** if you want to be in the game you have to get into it and stay in it seemed irregular. He commented that technically competent candidates could identify poor use of technologies by other candidates who were making it more difficult for people to get away with things that you could have got away with in

the past. This shows reliance upon peers. Candidates need to be able to source professional people who can give advice about the quality of their work. Collaborative learning between candidate and supervisor would assist in a critique of technical elements. From my perspective, it is also an assumption that *Jack* thinks young people are quick at picking up technologies required for doctoral study. According to Lippincott (2005) the Net. Gen. also need training for using technology in academic work. All researchers should be able to access IT training in research skills despite their generational belonging.

Necessity to learn digital publishing languages and processes.

Eric raised concern regarding publishing media components. The impact of this on media thesis creation is twofold. Firstly, students embarking on media research need to produce good quality research products suitable for publishing for which they need appropriate IT training. Additionally, candidates need to create works which suit the presentation style of journals or magazines. This study has highlighted the detrimental ramifications of the second option when candidates may resort to 'text-only' options in order to 'get published'. This practice would restrict a reader's full engagement with the topic. *Jack* thought the quality of work being submitted by candidates exceeds current publishing modes. This situation could provide a disincentive for candidates to create theses with full media capacity as they focussed on creating works to suit the presentation capacity of journals or magazines. It raises challenges for journal publishers to monitor and upgrade their web publishing capacities in response to thesis creation modes and practices. Lang (2002) confirms that, as candidates strive to meet departmental text only publishing requirements, they are prevented from learning the publishing technologies in preparation for the digital publishing procedures of the future [52]. A cohesive approach towards training for candidates in digital publishing would be advantageous for media theses.

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[52] This situation demonstrates a publishing problem. I submitted a paper after a conference as a .pdf document with a movie embedded in it but the conference website published the paper as a text file without the movie. My workplace published the .pdf file with the movie. http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/about/conferences/qpr/paper.pdf

The section has given insight into the perceptions of academic staff regarding IT and technological skills training for candidates who create media theses. They sometimes assumed that training and help was available on campus when it was not. Academic staff who are capable may be willing to give help yet others warn that, if candidates are not adequately trained they need to acquire the training before they proceed with their candidacies. The quality of help candidates receive or commission determines the quality of the finished media component. Candidates may need specialised training for producing quality research products. These situations indicate that candidates should identify their own professional training and help sources. Proactive exploration by faculties in establishing group learning or technological communities of practice is recommended. The intent and purpose of the media should be clearly evident to examiners so that they know how to examine them. There is also a lack of concern that by not providing candidates with digital publishing training for presentation in print and web-based journals, it could limit publication of media theses components.

The benefits of technology outweigh the disadvantages. By becoming immersed in their potential for creating and presenting knowledge, candidates place themselves at the forefront of the innovative practices that universities applaud.

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6   CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1   RESEARCH PURPOSE

"One goal of qualitative research is to enhance understanding of phenomena" (Byrne, 2001, p.703). This qualitative research study has been pursued within the domain of human experience by engagement with a social phenomenon. In this case, an exploration to discover the phenomenon of media theses "has much to do with making vivid what had been obscure" (Eisner, 2001, p.136).

The phenomenon of candidates entering and changing academic worlds which are based on generations of tradition is enterprising and courageous. Brearley (2001) confirms this in her statement that: "Exploring alternative forms of data representation in an academic context is a political act which challenges long established and revered traditions" (p.190). It creates a new research environment which heralds prosperity and provides challenges.

Phase 1 of this study explored the experiences of fourteen candidates who created media theses in order to identify phenomena and to create enlightenment about this research practice. It reflected Cumming's (2004) admonition that generating a range of stories would enhance the development of postgraduate policies and practices. The candidates' unfolding narratives allowed insight into their unique experiences as they created knowledge using multiple forms of media and unconventional modes of presentation. Reflection on and insight into their journeys revealed experiential phenomena. To enhance depth of understanding, some of the candidates' experiences were illustrated in metaphorical and reflective verse. Sound files of candidates' voices presented the personal spirit of their experiences in a way that written text could not. The research process showed that candidates' use of metaphor also gave insight into their experiential phenomena. Perceptions of the media thesis experience were explored and the role of candidates' research partners, supervisors and examiners were discussed.

This study has also explored the opinions of academic staff whose knowledge and experience enhance understanding of the type of environment which candidates may encounter. Discussion with academic staff indicated whether their opinions and experiences contributed

to confluence in media thesis practice or had the potential to be constraining. Some of the implications of new languages in research practice concluded the Phase 2 discussion.

These two explorations create a dynamic scenario from which much is able to be gleaned and from which much can yet be learned.

6.2 UNIVERSITIES

This study demonstrated that some universities are prepared for the submission of media theses. Some exhibited proactive and reactive responses to their evolution. For example, when disciplinary knowledge and evolving technologies met, a proactive response by one university was to create a degree which included a compulsory media component. A reactive response was made by a university which changed its supervisory categories to accommodate new research practices involving media theses.

Academic staff who participated in this research acknowledged that universities were finding it difficult to keep ahead of candidates' innovative practices. The evidence generally indicated that research communities need to pursue an understanding of how to accommodate the 'exceptional' rather than the 'customary'. Specifically this would involve: establishing guidelines for 'how' to include media in theses; advice, training and assistance for candidates; support for supervisors and examiners who may be unfamiliar with multiple media thesis and the establishment of customised examination criteria.

6.3 CANDIDATES

6.3.1   Positive aspects of the media thesis experience

Candidates spoke honestly about their personal research journeys – bravely about their disappointments and modestly of their successes. Evidence found within the case studies showed there is no doubt that researchers have successfully challenged the *status quo*. They have brought research practice into a world of new opportunities for the presentation of knowledge in unique and novel forms. These innovative practices have been made possible from their belief that creative forms of expression were pertinent to their research and from the support that they received from colleagues and supervisors. They knew that, as they

created their media theses, they were breaking through research boundaries in order to explore and create new ones.

Some candidates negotiated with research board members who, although accustomed to more traditional research practices, generally demonstrated flexibility of thought and willingness to put their faith in researchers' sense of adventure, creative spirit and determination. Such candidates have felt the phenomenon of being pioneers in modes of representation and of being ahead of their time. Those who encountered and mastered the challenges of creating media theses indicated it had been a life-affirming experience.

6.3.2   Candidates' individual qualities & expressive preferences

In addition to bringing prior experience and interests, media thesis candidates brought previously developed technological skills into their research practice. Others determined to explore new representational modes during their candidacies. Whenever their inspiration occurred, candidates from various disciplines who created theses with multiple forms of media permitted their creativity to flow into their research.

Some candidates within this study incorporated their own personal philosophies into their methodology and combined this with unconventional presentation methods. Other candidates in this study wanted to deal with entities such as the metaphysical and the spiritual. In some instances it seemed to be bothersome when candidates expressed themselves passionately, emotionally or to discuss spirituality in their theses. Supportively, Bamford (2005) considers that dissertations "in the arts design field should engender passion, actively promote conversations, be a catalyst, and be evident of artistic vision" (p.7). These expressive needs may be problematic so candidates need to pre-empt and innovatively address such potential difficulties in their media theses proposals. For example, some candidates who wanted to conduct research which was designed to engage with qualities which were indescribable textually, found that some members of research boards needed to be led into an understanding of their significance. In such cases, research board members may have difficulty giving helpful criticism. If a candidate was unsure about whether their research intentions were clear, presenting a research proposal to peers for critique may be helpful.

The study showed that some candidates whose theses emanated from their professional work wished to structure their research and create their theses using language and presentation modes which their clients could engage with. Candidates also created theses by 'mixing' disciplines and using presentation media not necessarily associated with those disciplines. These approaches may be accepted. However, acceptance depended upon supervisory support and the degree to which the university's research board was prepared to be flexible. Case study evidence showed that research work which was difficult to 'classify' resulted in problems with gaining permission to proceed.

6.3.3   Capabilities & strengths required for media theses

Several desirable qualities for candidates wishing to create a media thesis have been discussed throughout this study. One was the ability to demonstrate both creative and theoretical abilities and strengths. Evidence showed that some highly functioning 'creative candidates' found it difficult to transpose their artistic expressions from a technically creative medium to a textual theoretical one and felt constrained by the requirements of traditional thesis writing. Ashburn (2003) also noted that some, highly functioning 'theoretical candidates' found it harder to be creative in the construction of non-text or media components. Complementary to this 'crossing-over' of research skills is Arnold's (2005) observation that 'artefact/exegesis' activity is taking practice-based research "into the domain of scholarship and bringing traditional PhD models into the domain of creativity" (p.2).

Discussions with research participants showed that media thesis candidates often required additional forms of research training. For example, some researchers were unaccustomed to organising and analysing video evidence. Movies require a different set of formatting skills than those required to format a text only thesis. For these candidates, exposure to and extra assistance with this activity would have been desirable.

Candidates who are considering creating a media theses need to know the 'how' and 'why' of including media components rather than just knowing 'what' to include. Media in theses require subjective evaluation of artistic qualities and/or objective analysis depending upon the purpose for their inclusion. Candidates from traditional disciplines who wish to present objects and artefacts which may seem to be more suited to creative arts disciplines, may need special assistance in meeting university requirements. These could include the need to link

the artefact/s to the theoretical work to demonstrate a distinctly relevant engagement with the hypothesis. Supervisor and candidate need to be mindful that the work in progress demonstrates it is achieving this objective.

6.3.4   Challenges & criticism

Some researchers in this study who created a media thesis encountered problems. For example, some removed media components from their theses because they considered it was a risk to include them. If withholding meant the difference between successful examination and rejection, one could understand their hesitation. They withdrew media components from their theses prior to examination, not because they were redundant or irrelevant, but because they were media, not text. The closer they got to submission they feared non-acceptance of media forms, began to think more conservatively and wrestled with indecisiveness about submitting their media components. This behaviour corroborated participants' opinions in Conrad's (2003) study who discussed the risk of including unconventional work in theses.

This study indicated that novelty in theses may require special justification. Candidates spoke about interactions with research boards which involved rigorous attempts to justify presentation modes. This justification process was in keeping with Burrows' (2004b) and Auld's (2002b) experiences, and with Brearley's (2003a) and Ashburn's (2003) advice. This research study highlighted that when justification of a media research proposal failed to gain approval, candidates found themselves in the position of looking for a 'saviour', appealing to higher authorities, embarking on a new doctorate with a completely new proposal or changing faculty or university. A candidate's self-belief is tested in this type of situation. However, for the candidate whose efforts had a good outcome, self-belief was preserved and the ensuing success was found to be justly rewarding.

This study highlighted that media thesis candidates benefited from a fine balance between freedom, isolation and engagement. Uncertainty about acceptance, process and supervisory expectations because of the thesis' unconventional nature created insecurity and engendered feelings of isolation. Depending upon the personality of the candidate, this isolation was shown to be either difficult or acceptable. Some participants enjoyed the freedom which isolation brought to their research yet they also wanted supervisors to be available to engage

more with their ideas and focus less on proof-reading and editing in the initial stages of thesis production.

Candidates who submit theses with media components may receive criticism of the media plus criticism of the written theoretical component. This study revealed that this criticism may be given in the form of unsuitable subjective, rather than scholastic comments about artefacts, novels, performances, music, etc.. In order to avoid this possibility, this study substantiated that candidates need to emphasise connections between the artefact and the theoretical component of the thesis. This should help allay criticisms of components for which a subjective or unscholarly criticism could be made.

This study upholds Eisner's (2001) admonition that candidates should not become so absorbed with the novelty element of their work that they forget about what it is they intend to communicate. It also showed that candidates may be so absorbed with producing their thesis innovatively that they find it difficult to accept criticism for what they perceive as being inconsequential, for example, the way the text is laid out or for a discretionary aspect of an instructive non-text component. Exploration of this research phenomenon showed that concerns relate to the need for media theses to be focused and edifying, that alternative modes of re-presentation may only have novelty value or that an author may convincingly 'spin' a personal interpretation of the media component.

6.4 SUPERVISION

Ashburn (2003) maintains that: "there is no doubt that including a practical studio component with a thesis/dissertation has contributed to concerns regarding the definition of projects, their quality, their supervision and assessment" (p.1).

This study has revealed that supervision of media thesis candidates has specific requirements. Academic participants confirmed that, where there is a lack of uniform practice and guidelines, supervisors need clarification about their expectations and responsibilities which was also promoted by Arnold (2005). Adjustments to supervisory practices are needed for media theses and Brearley suggests that supervisors need the opportunity to learn to understand the languages and purpose of different forms of media so they are able to become role models, mentors and advocates in a variety of research environments (in Boucher, 2001).

Conrad (2003) suggests supervisory committees for media thesis work; Ashburn (2003) promotes joint supervision across disciplines; Burrows (2004b) recommends a team of supervisors for cross-disciplinary research and Holian (2001) suggests further examination of supervisory practices for media thesis candidates is required. These activities would benefit media theses from a range of perspectives.

This study has also shown that the way media theses candidates were supervised influences the way they supervise their own media thesis candidates. This endorsed McAlpine and Norton's (2006) recognition of this phenomenon and Burrows' (2004b) belief that the media thesis supervision tradition will replicate itself.

In the media thesis experience, candidates justified the time they spent in finding the 'right' supervisor. Candidates benefited from having supervisors whose views were similar to theirs. Participants from this study confirmed Ashburn's (2003) understanding that they relied on supervision based on trustworthiness, mutual understanding and confidence building. The research showed that successful media thesis candidatures flowed from synchronicity of thought between candidate and supervisor. This study highlighted the need for candidates to thoroughly discuss their research topics, methodology and choice of presentation media with their supervisors before commencing their research. They also need to be aware that, where radical or highly unconventional approaches are taken to research, supervisors may find themselves wanting to support the candidate's research project, but at the same time, knowing the risks.

6.5 EXAMINATION

Bamford (2005) highly recommends that examiners take advantage of opportunities to engage with contemporary theses and to engage in deeper levels of aesthetic appreciation. Case studies in this research made it apparent that customised specific examination criteria are required for theses with media and Arnold (2005) corroborates that special examination criteria are required for the artefact/exegesis thesis. The study has also highlighted that contrasting opinions exist regarding the 'weight' and 'worth' of media thesis components. Bamford (2005) verified that criteria need to be established to delineate judgements on such qualities as skill, competence, critical analysis, weighting or aesthetic value. Academic

participants were united in their opinion that linking the theoretical and the practical thesis components within the dissertation is essential for examination purposes.

This study provided evidence that supervisors and candidates need to submit media theses to an examiner who preferably has both disciplinary knowledge of the topic and/or a professional knowledge of, or at least a keen interest in, the genre of the medium. This evidence supported Conrad's (2003) opinion that only examiners who understand the many forms of communication in theses should be employed.

Initial strategies designed to improve examination of media theses would be for academic committees to gain expertise in new research forms Lang (2002), for examiners to receive training (Sankaran, Swepson and Hill, 2005) and for the establishment of examiners' communities of practice (Sankaran et al., 2005). These initiatives would help to form a basis for "equivalence, authenticity and validity" promoted by Bamford (2005, p.2) for the media thesis examination process.

6.6 NEW LANGUAGES OF RESEARCH

Some candidates bring lay skills and abilities into the media thesis process and plan to incorporate thesis components which draw upon their previously learned skills. These activities benefit the development of media theses especially if candidates can produce professional quality media. Evidence generated in this study from the literature, by candidates and academic staff members emphasised that if candidates want to use multiple media presentation modes they need to develop expertise in specific technological 'languages' which Moxley (2001a) calls 'new media scholarship'. It further highlighted that these technological languages need to be academically supported by creative technical expertise, a perceptive understanding of how media 'communicates' and how they are appropriately incorporated within research practice.

Some academic staff members in this study thought that generic skills were sufficient for creating multiple forms of media in theses. However, the creation of media components for theses is difficult when candidates are unable to access either generic or specialised technological training on campus. Academic staff from this study recommended that creative

technologies, including specific media and web technology skills, that wherever possible, they should be learned prior to commencing candidature.

Participants from this study would have liked access to professional advice as to what technologies were available for specific purposes and whether alternative technologies would have supported their research objectives more effectively. This study has shown that if preliminary decisions about what technologies and technological skills and training are required to develop those new literacies, are not factored into the thesis process, a candidate may become thwarted in his or her endeavours and managing technologies may become an unnecessarily stressful part of the research journey. This evidence reflects Bamford's (2005) recommendation for candidates to have knowledge of 'enough' languages to put them in a position of being able to choose how to conduct and present their research in an environment where academic discourse is formed by a "range of contemporary languages" (pp.1-2).

Evidence from this study confirmed the work of Lippincott (2005), that technologically handicapped researchers need more support from universities in information technology training. It also highlighted that, where they see the need and are available, other people contribute expertise to media theses to support candidates' technological underdeveloped skills. Universities may consider this problematic for thesis integrity and equality. It also shows that dependence upon others' goodwill for help with creating media using unfamiliar technologies is undesirable and unreliable. It was stated that candidates could not expect to receive information technology training from within their disciplines. The study highlighted that unless candidates independently explore how to acquire appropriate technological skills, they may forego the opportunity to create media for their theses as:

  "Without technical skills all the sensibility, ideas and imagination in the world will remain
  hopeless aspiration" (Eisner, 2001, p.144).

6.7 NEW THESIS IDENTITY

Barnett (2000) questions the sustainability of traditional research practices. This study has showcased a new research epistemology and, that despite preliminary issues, universities and the candidates who produce knowledge in various media formats have welcomed this new arrival. This new thesis identity reflects Bell's (2006) advice that a formalised structure and an accompanying lexicon for the distinctive practice of creating theses with media are

required. These theses bring to research practice their own identity yet they influence, and are influenced by, specific aspects of traditional research practice. Yet, this study highlighted that their unique identity is formed through an intra-relationship of thesis components and the formation of multi-literacies.

Academic staff in this study emphasised the essential need for clarification of the intent and purpose for inclusion of media and the methodology of a media thesis. This requirement endorsed the opinions of Evans et al (2003), who made the distinction between, for example, art which is produced for theses and theses which are produced about art, and Ashburn (2003) who recommended that neither component be neglected and both be integral to the thesis. This study has shown that the articulation of scholarly connections between media, text and/or the exegesis is a defining phenomenon of media theses.

Academic staff members' opinions of media theses influence their identity in research practice. Conrad's (2003) study indicated both resistance and support for media theses. Most academic staff members who participated in this study have positive attitudes towards media them which demonstrates their acceptance. However, this study clearly revealed that some academic staff thought media theses contained peripheral non-essential objects and artefacts which they considered were unscholarly. Individual academic staff members having varying opinions or misconceptions about creating media with theses could be problematic for this research practice.

Have media theses established a rogue presence in higher educational research? Do they contribute to the phenomenon of supercomplexity? Whether these questions are considered valid or not, this study has shown evidence that they represent an alternative way of conducting and publishing research and provide ways of looking at the world through societal and cultural objects, artefacts and productions and create a new genre of knowledge within a less traditional research paradigm.

6.8 WHICH MODE OF KNOWLEDGE?

A comparative analysis shows that the knowledge the media theses from this study produced falls outside the parameters of traditional Mode 1 disciplinary knowledge and Mode 2

application-based knowledge of Gibbons et al. (2000) [53]. It indicates that they are more likely to have created any of the four knowledge modes of Scott et al. (2004) depending upon the researcher's intent and the prime characteristics of the research project. The implication of this finding is important as it suggests the modes of knowledge which media theses produce go beyond the traditional PhD/professional doctoral paradigm. This study has referred to only two sets of modes of knowledge [54]. Other modes exist and others will no doubt arise in order to accommodate changes in research practices such as those which media theses bring. It is likely that the matrix of theses and knowledge modes will inevitably become more complicated. It may be that the boundaries become so blurred and flexible that categorisation will become redundant.

6.9   THOROUGHLY MODERN THESES

Media theses undeniably contribute to the evolution of the shape and content of knowledge. They enhance opportunities for ingenuity, innovation, intellectual creativity and personal development.

The knowledge media theses produce is multifaceted, explorative and unpredictable (Nowotny et al., 2001). Thus, for the academy, media theses have problematised concepts of knowledge and disturbed the concept of what the doctorate is meant to be (Barnacle, 2005). They radically challenge previously held assumptions about research practices and raise awareness of the inevitable complexity of research practices.

Media theses open many doors for candidates and their supervisors. However, with this opportunity lies a measure of insecurity for candidates, as "no longer are the boundaries, or the forms of right knowing clear" (Barnett, 2000, p.415). It becomes difficult for researchers to draw a line between 'the forms of right knowing' when boundaries are becoming acceptably malleable and "have either collapsed or become blurred" (Bleiklie et al., 2005, p.7). Are universities recognising that today's order of knowledge production is dissolving the traditional knowledge matrix and is blurring social, political and economic boundaries (Stehr, 2003)? As Barnett (2000) positively speculates, the impact of this is that: "In an age of supercomplexity, a new epistemology for the university awaits, one that is open, bold, engaging, accessible, and conscious of its own insecurity" (p.420). This study has

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[53] See Appendix 2
[54] Literature Review: Doctoral Knowledge.

demonstrated, that because of their innovative qualities and contemporary ways of communicating, media theses could dispel some of the insecurities which universities face regarding their legitimacy in society as knowledge producers in a competitive research world.

This study has revealed many issues concerning the media thesis phenomenon. It has uncovered the experiences of candidates, supervisors and examiners who have worked with them and provided insight into ways in which the production of a range of media theses can be facilitated and developed. These are presented as a set of recommendations.

6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA THESES

6.10.1 Advice for Candidates

- Talk with other people who have created media theses.
- Find supervisors who are open to new ideas of presenting research.
- Consider if you have the necessary skills for creating media components or know how to get help.
- Source from within the university someone who has a professional interest in the media you use in the thesis.
- Explain the intent and purpose of the media components and why they are essential to the research.
- Articulate the connection between the media and other thesis' components and show how they are going to present data.
- Collaborate with supervisors to identify examiners who are amenable to examining different forms of media.
- Be aware that creating a media thesis may take longer to complete than anticipated.

6.10.2 Recommendations for Supervisors

- Where possible, fully explore the direction and process of the research and its products and agree to the outcomes with the candidate.
- Ensure that the media and theoretical components are linked and are appropriate and integral to the intent of the research.
- Inform yourselves on the media components.
- Source examiners who have interest in media theses.

6.10.3 Recommendation for Examiners

- Refer to media thesis' examination criteria from the originating university.
- Identify and define the intent of the inclusion of media components and examine them in the light of this.

6.10.4   Recommendations for Universities

- Explore and promote new directions in research practice.
- Showcase new research technologies to academic staff members for understanding and ideas about the media thesis phenomenon.
- Identify changes in candidates' research practices with media theses and accommodate them within university policy.
- Support supervisors' and candidates' involvement with multiple media literacies.
- Identify the extent to which others may contribute technological help with media.
- Create examination criteria for media formats which have aesthetic value.
- Provide online, face-to-face and just-in-time IT training for generic and specialised skills.
- Recognise that candidates need 'space' for creative academic freedom.
- Endeavour to engage with novel and affective qualities of candidates' research topics.

Despite the benefits which this study into media theses has illuminated, phenomena appear which pose challenges to higher education. By gaining insight into their experiences, candidates' requirements have become apparent. They need freedom and support for creating multiple forms of presentation and re-presentation in their theses. They require support for their quest to be authentic, the freedom to cross boundaries and help with media thesis management. They should not feel it is a risk to include media elements in their theses. They need assurance that creative alternatives are valid forms of expression in dissertations. They should not be required to go to exceptional lengths to justify research proposals which include both conventional and unconventional forms of media in their theses.

Higher education research organisations need to create an environment where candidates can commence candidature with the sure knowledge and confidence that supervisors, research boards and examiners have a professional and dependable knowledge of media thesis processes, practices and policies.

Education, knowledge-sharing and enlightenment depends upon the research work of future candidates. In an ever increasingly complex and challenging world, we need to reconsider how survival depends upon adaptation – and that the way societies of the future will learn about the way they function, become ecologically sustainable, healthy, peaceable, educated and productive, will depend upon being able to communicate in ways with which they are most familiar. Today's innovative researchers are already the pioneers of those societies. Higher education research needs to sponsor further research into research practices, research

into the emergence of new research literacies, 'neo-media' and 'new media scholarship' (Moxley, 2003), form new research epistemologies and enthusiastically prepare to receive tomorrows' creative candidates.

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EPILOGUE

This has been a long story – thank you for reading it. It is a story about people – people who poured emotional, physical and mental effort into their candidacies as they went beyond the traditional, the comfortable, the usual, and into realms of new endeavour. It is also a story which is enriched by people who have the responsibility of guiding those candidates who create knowledge. In light of all its humanity, it does not satisfy me to end this missive with a set of recommendations. Neither would grand conclusive statements do justice to the threads of enlightenment found within these pages. Instead, I clarify why I chose the metaphorical title: "Thoroughly Modern Theses", for this dissertation. It is self-explanatory.

Thoroughly Modern Millie [55] is a 1967 film which opened on Broadway as a stage production in 2002. Millie was a good-hearted girl who wanted to leave her country town of Salinas in Kansas City and go to New York City to find a wealthy man to marry. She took all her sound country girl qualities with her with nothing taken away. However, with fresh naivety and her eye on new opportunities, she shed her country girl appearance, donned a flapper dress, bangles, beads and high heeled-shoes, bobbed her hairstyle and learned to dance the Charleston. In this endeavour, she learned more about herself and her world and came up against unforeseen circumstances and problems. She made many new friends and had many new exciting experiences in New York City that she would have been denied had she stayed in her hometown. This made her feel that she had come of age – she had grown up and had transformed into a thoroughly modern Millie.

> MILLIE:　　Goodbye, good-goody girl!
> 　　　　　　I'm changing, and how!
> ALL:　　　　So beat the drums 'cause here comes
> 　　　　　　Thoroughly modern Millie now!
>
> 　　　　　　Scanlan (2002)

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[55] See Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thoroughly_Modern_Millie

7   APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview with Professor Naguib Kanawati
APPENDIX 2: Discussion on Modes of Knowledge
APPENDIX 3: Website and sample letters:
- Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies
- Research offices
- Invitation to academic staff
- Invitation to candidates
- Agreement to participate
- Information letter for participants

APPENDIX 4: Ethics approval
APPENDIX 5: Identification of participants

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7.1   APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR NAGUIB KANAWATI

Professor Kanawati's knowledge on the nature of knowledge and its construction is unique as it relates to Egyptology, and not Education, as do most of the other higher education leaders' contributions. This knowledge imparts a special understanding of the construction of knowledge, learning, research and presentation style to enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of media theses. This interview was my first meeting with Professor, yet I felt connected as I had witnessed the experience one of his doctoral graduates throughout her research journey in the field of Dance and the Middle Kingdom. Helping her with technology for her multiple mode thesis inspired me to pursue the topic of media theses. Professor knew that I had helped Lesley whose thesis, at the time of interview, was being examined. He hoped the examiners would appreciate it. They certainly did, and Lesley graduated Doctor of Egyptology in September 2005.

Professor:
Egyptology by nature lends itself to theses which include components other than text because Egyptology is a very visual culture. By nature, even its language is visual and therefore one has to be very open minded about an approach other than simply text.

In the past, theses have been practically concentrating on history. While Egyptology and just Egyptology, my area, is not only the study of history, it is the study of the culture in all its aspects. Because of that we should be really open minded about a student who would like to study, for example, dancing. Dancing is a part of the culture, fishing is a part of the culture, fowling, catching birds, agriculture is a theme that appears practically in every tomb and how a civilisation based on agriculture – is that more or less important than 'king so and so reigned for so many years'. History is not simply about the reigns of certain kings. So by nature the supervisor in Egyptology has to be more than simply a historian in the sense of 'king so and so reigned for so many years and did so and so'. History is not written only from a king's point of view but from people, as to how they live. For that matter Egyptology is not simply a text – you just cannot really focus on merely a text.

If you want an example, I have a student here and working here doing a thesis on animal behaviour on war scenes of Egypt that show the Egyptian artist was so observant. Because they depicted the animals behaving in such a way that only someone with knowledge of the nature of each animal could depict that. So we cannot really restrict ourselves to text in Egyptology. Restrict yourself to text and you are practically eliminating the culture.

This discussion shows that the nature of the discipline itself, not information technology and students' desire to use it, drives its suitability for multiple mode theses. In fact, as Professor explains it, Egyptian text is visual, English (or other language) text becomes the medium into which it is translated, which makes it incidental rather than pivotal. The cultural phenomenon of the day as represented visually is what becomes the focal point of interest and research, therefore lends itself to visual re-presentation in research works. It seems that numerous current technologies could support and enhance researchers possibilities for representing these visual symbols of a past civilisation in their theses.

Self:

Is the way we are looking at history now a recent event? Do you think it has changed from years ago?

Professor:
Very much so. It is a very young science (as a subject), and at the beginning Egyptology attracted those who came to it from classics – Greco Roman and they were mainly linguists – people who studied Greek and Latin got interested in Egyptology language and gradually started to decipher the language and study the history from the textual material. Accordingly, the thesis would be practically a text; all you looked at, your sources, are textual material so the thesis would practically be all text. In the last maybe two generations at most, Egyptology became more independent than simply as an off shoot of classics and people realised that our sources are not restricted to text including also tombs and Egyptology tombs are so well decorated.

> This phenomenon of the opening up of a science from a single 'mode' to one which embraced multiple perspectives and mediums drove the need for exploration of technology and its multiple modes of re-presentation.

Professor:
We are recording a tomb at present, which has thirty-two rooms in one tomb. All the walls are decorated and these scenes represent the life of a very important man. To ignore all that and to look only for a text which could be simply one paragraph is practically throwing away your main sources and looking for the trivial one. So now our sources are much more advanced, both visual and literally and in some cases, not literary at all. For example if you study pre history and who can say that prehistory is less informative?

This is the formative period which led to the establishment of the whole Egyptology civilisation. Yet pre history had no language. What text do you have – you have nothing. So you have to rely on not only scenes but also objects. You see the culture develops and advances. You can see that in the technology you just have a pot or a potsherd and you can see the technology of firing was developing and much more advanced. So, at present, certainly anyone who restricts the research to textual material is really depriving the student from a major source, a rich source of information and we cannot accept it now.

Therefore, the essence of pre-history and early civilisations is text-free. All we had was representational media in the form of cultural objects and art. As explorers of these civilisations we apply our language/s and naming conventions to them. As reporters of these civilisations, we are using our own cultural tools and objects such as technologies, performances, software and artistic works to represent those civilisations, accompanied, not by hieroglyphics, but by ubiquitous Times New Roman, font size 12 in either digital or analogue form.

Self:
I had no idea that Egyptology was so advanced in this area. Just to draw an analogy, I read about that mummy in the newspaper and I had some sort of picture in my head but it was nothing like that (pointing to poster on wall).
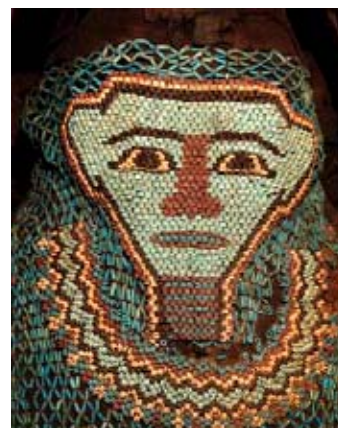
Professor:

Take this mummy, for example, we have no text accompanying this mummy. So I cannot study this mummy from a textual point of view, yet I can study a lot of things. I can study the technology of making beads, the different colours, the material, I can study textiles, so I can study the linen, the nutrition by studying the teeth, medical treatment, broken bone has been corrected or healed, so the subject is not merely in text and strictly speaking Egyptology should not be in the department of history at all. We are accepting the MA students well. Egyptology at postgraduate level is not a history course.

Anyone with any degree can contribute to Egyptology and not only learn, but contribute to knowledge. So, we need doctors with full medical training to come and study – I will never be able to study an x-ray and say this man has a disease. We need dentists, and nutrition and textile and chemistry and beads and making colours and earth pigments, in addition to the language, the art, the technique of sculpture, the painting so it is really – we need the whole university to participate in order to have successful research in Egyptology we need all these people.

> Professor's comments reminded me of the nature of cross and interdisciplinary study typical of some of the candidates I had interviewed and whose journeys across disciplinary boundaries to undertake research were often very difficult encounters. Here we have a Professor not just supporting such endeavours, but considering them **essential** in his field of study. Some candidates have struggled because they wanted to explore and combine topics within different disciplines.

Self:
Thinking about and looking deeper into the phenomenon of learning without text, there may be lessons about learning to be gained from Egyptologists who engage in this activity. It seems that presenting the text first when trying to teach any subject where there is an engagement with physical objects, assumes it is a learning tool that is appropriate for engagement with the object to be learned about and the preferred learning style of the learner. It would be similar in a way to teaching someone to swim by reading the manual. What impact would using learning materials which matched the medium of learning (using text as an auxiliary medium) have on improving learning? And what impact would it have on non-textual thesis components?

Professor:
I agree. I cannot recall any lecture in Egyptology, except how to speak the language, without visual material, it is such a visual culture. How can I **speak** about art? As they say, a picture is better than one thousand words. It is! How can I describe that (indicates to picture of beaded mummy) you look at that and get an image that no words would convey in any way, so we put very strong emphasis on the visual and we are forced to do it not because we want to – our sources are visual.

Self:
How well do you think this university's thesis submission guidelines suit the Egyptology area of study?

Professor:
We have never submitted a thesis that was rejected. I find this university fairly flexible in that respect in accepting non-text components in theses. The thesis of Lesley had a CD with it – nobody questioned anything and rightly so. She has spoken about dancing, unless they want

to argue that dancing is not part of the culture, which they cannot. What better way of representing dancing than by reconstructing it?

Self:
On a personal note I regret that I was not able to give Lesley more time. I would like to have been able to help her more professionally and to have been able to do it for other students as well. The time I spend helping each student has been strictly limited to one hour. In some cases this was very inadequate. Creating miracles in the form of new knowledge using technology sometimes takes longer than one hour. I gave Lesley more than one hour's tuition.

Professor:
She was very impressed with what you were able to do. She was very happy and she produced a good work.

Self:
Do you think that the university has the responsibility of giving students the technology training to work within specific departments or do you think that it is the responsibility of a department?

Professor:
I don't think that is the responsibility of a department to provide this training because the technology is similar in many areas of expertise. If every area provided in-house technology training it would differ from training by a central training area. Isolating Egyptology from other departments is not very healthy and would not enable them to see what each other are doing and exchange ideas and learn from each other using the same technology. I certainly think it should be central to the university and not within departments. Besides, we don't have the expertise to teach technology training within the departments.

> This comments reflects the idea that, not only should researchers from all departments learn the technologies together, but that they should be given opportunities to have workshops where ideas and processes can be learned and explored together in a constructivist learning environment.

Self:
I've been helping people in the Studio but it is only just scraping the surface. Different universities say they have had IT departments but now the students have to get help from within faculties which usually means they get help from their neighbours or from other students or pay to get IT work done.

Professor:
The universities are not providing the service?

Self:
Not to the extent that is obviously required as learning information technology has become an essential part of research training.

Professor:
It is not supervisors' responsibilities. Students need someone to launch them – to mentor them academically. Supervisors can help students develop their own methodologies for the

research but somebody needs to guide them in learning the technology. You can apply what you learn through your own research. The nature of some software is too complicated – too high level for most students to cope with.

Self:
How then do we manage the present? Do you think lack of technological know how inhibits knowledge creation?

Professor:
My responsibility stops at providing them with technological know how. My responsibility is in guiding them in their research project, in the practical application of the research process and to show them how to organise their thesis and evidence and story or whatever. They have to acquire the technology skills either by doing a course but they have to come to me with that knowledge already, it is their responsibility to acquire it and I think it the University should help them, but it is not my responsibility to do that. I think that the university should supply it, not to me, I cannot. You need the topical knowledge and the technological knowledge. The former I can help them with but not the latter.

Self:
It is obvious that expertise in the main discipline is of most significance.

Professor:
Technology helps us with research, and computers can perform statistical analysis much quicker than a human. But, the skills need to be acquired before students commence their research.

Professor discussed how technology helped a student rank Titles. In Egypt, people ranked according to their status in society at the time. There are about four thousand titles and these are rearranged according to the needs of the country at the time. A student devised computer technology to organise the titles by specific years or periods of times. He transferred manual searching to instant searching on databases for categories of information. This example describes how technology can enhance understanding and we can create knowledge about disciplines quicker.

Professor:
With this database, eliminated searching from scratch. **We can leap, not walk.** To do Egyptology research, you need a good library. But obviously if they were online you could research from anywhere. Would offer a huge potential. Students are different now. They want a computer; they don't want to open a book. They are used to IT.

<div align="center">શ્રૄ</div>

7.2   APPENDIX 2: MODES OF KNOWLEDGE

> The model has in fact been turned on its ear and there are very different approaches and I think we need to take a good look at it (your research may help us) (*Eric*, 2005).

As Scott et al. (2004) explore different modes of knowledge within professional doctorate programs; they provide a useful framework for determining where one could position media theses. Participants' theses within this study have only one commonality – media components. To determine where they are situated within the four modes of knowledge of Scott et al. one should take into account elements and qualities such as where the research site was situated, the theoretical perspective and the purpose of the research. Modes of knowledge of Scott et al. apply to professional doctorates, yet perhaps it is possible to situate all media theses within one or more of their four categories.

One could also ask: What are the ramifications of locating media theses in research paradigms in terms of knowledge production? As researchers push boundaries with media theses, will the pushing weaken or strengthen university research practice? What tensions will this create? Do media theses emerge as hybrid forms of specific knowledge modes? If so, does hybridity compromise knowledge forms or knowledge outcomes, or both or neither? Within these frameworks, are media researchers free to negotiate between communities of research practice and within the hybrid forms they may take? Do these frameworks consider activity within discipline and workplace and adapt to both in order to be able to communicate within and to both? Do these modes of knowledge support or discourage peripheral participation and enhance induction into the community? What would be the impact on research if peripheral activity occurred in one community and not in others? How could selective induction into academic research or the industrial or commercial communities be determined?

An exploration of an alternative to knowledge Mode 1 & 2 of Gibbons et al. (2000) may provide a basis for responding to the unexplored implications of administering and managing candidature and for researchers, while planning and conducting media research and the production of 'thoroughly modern' theses.

Modes of knowledge 1 & 2 of Gibbons et al. (2000)

Gibbons et al. (2000) categorised doctoral knowledge as a reaction to diversity, instability and change. The authors identified characteristics of doctoral research and categorised doctoral theses into knowledge Modes 1 & 2 [56]. Mode 1 can be described as disciplinary knowledge and Mode 2 as application-based knowledge. This classification could be used to differentiate the PhD (Mode 1) from the Professional Doctorate (Mode 2). Descriptions of these two knowledge modes from Gibbons et al. (2000) are now summarised.

Mode 1 knowledge emanates from traditional research in scientific fields of knowledge. It is characterised by a traditional hierarchical PhD form and is designed to produce scientifically robust knowledge which may involve problem solving in contexts governed by interests of a specific community. Mode 1 produces knowledge according to cognitive and social norms and it claims that scientific knowledge is truth. Its outcomes are publishable and subject to peer review. Mode 1's problems relate to its inflexibility and by being "dominated by an

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[56] Gibbons et al. (2000) Modes 1 & 2 were introduced in the <u>Literature Review.</u>

academic agenda with little interest in application" (Aken, 2001, p.2). Mode 1 knowledge supports "a quest for truth" (p.4). Its critics consider that it requires adaptation to social and political change.

Mode 2 knowledge is trans-disciplinary and application-based, is situated within social and economic contexts and is pragmatically based. It is dynamic, solves problems and supports group creativity. Aken (2001) qualifies that Mode 2 research is undertaken "in intensive interaction with application and driven by a broad range of interests" (p.2). Unlike the hierarchical structure of Mode 1, Mode 2 is less hierarchical and the knowledge produced may be transient. Research may be conducted with the intention of problem solving through group activity in a wide range of societal movements and agenda. Mode 2 knowledge is generated by groups in teams where knowledge created may be passed on to others for action, implementation or for further development. Mode 2 claims that its knowledge is useful in practical application. Its outcomes are subject to accountability in social spheres. Its socially distributed knowledge is useful in industry or government and may be useful in context other than the one for which it was created. Problems are perceived as Mode 2 knowledge is not necessarily disciplinary knowledge, may be time limited and could be poorly managed. Mode 2 knowledge can claim more socially accountability, is more composite and multi-dimensional. In contrast to Mode 1 knowledge which supports a quest for truth, Mode 2 knowledge supports "a quest for human performance" (Aken, 2001, p.4).

Modes of knowledge 1 – 4 of Scott et al. (2004)

Scott et al. (2004) propose modes of knowledge 1 to 4 for the Professional Doctorate. They classify Mode 1 as <u>Disciplinary</u> knowledge, Mode 2 as <u>Technical rationality</u> knowledge, Mode 3 as <u>Dispositional and transdisciplinary</u> knowledge and Mode 4 as <u>Critical</u> knowledge.

I have condensed the qualities of each of these modes of knowledge in the tables below from Scott et al. (2004). They summarise the purpose, the type of research activity involved, the key knowledge claims, research outcomes, problems perceived as tensions between the different modes and practitioners' opinions of the purposefulness of each category.

Qualities of DIsciplinary knowledge Mode 1

Situation	o Well established in the academy
	o Academic, not industrial
Purpose	o Theory established from practice
	o To understand reality from students' perspectives
Activity	o Self-reflection on disciplinary or sub-disciplinary competence via methodological activities
	o Academic rigour
Knowledge claims	o Classification, evaluation and methodological belief in epistemological foundation
Outcomes	o Student initiated into discipline
Problems	o Varied structure
	o Favours research over practice
	o Indifferent to other forms of practice
	o Strong or weak boundaries between this and other forms of knowledge
Practitioners' opinions	o Logically distinct

    o   Disciplinary knowledge separate from workplace knowledge

Table 1: Summary of Disciplinary knowledge Mode 1 (Scott et al., 2004)

"For the student, the knowledge that is being demanded is esoteric and irrelevant. For the examiner, or disciplinary gatekeeper, it is central to the practice" (Scott et al., 2004, p.43).

Qualities of Technical Rationality knowledge Mode 2

Situation	o Between workplace and academy
	o In practice
Purpose	o Technical rationality
	o To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the economic and social system
Activity	o Incorporate scientific knowledge into practice
	o Focus on objectivity of activities to problem-solve.
Knowledge claims	o Knowledge produced by outsiders (or insiders acting as outsiders) is superior to knowledge produced by practitioners
Outcomes	o Societal credibility
	o Optimisation of workplace performance
Problems	o Considers experience-based practice inferior
Practitioners' opinions	o Research-based knowledge should inform professional practice
	o Increases performance

Table 2: Summary of Technical rationality knowledge Mode 2 (Scott et al., 2004)

Practitioner knowledge is "judged not by objective criteria but by whether it contributes to the achievement of short-term goals and problems encountered in situ …." (Scott et al., 2004, p.45).

Qualities of Dispositional & Transdisciplinary knowledge Mode 3

Situation	o Between discipline and workplace
	o Research site source and arena for theoretical development
	o Transdisciplinary
	o Oriented pragmatically
Purpose	o Application of multiple positions to improve practice
	o Development of individual through reflection
	o Objectification of actions through investigation, contemplation and comment
Activity	o Researchers customise research activities according to site
	o Texts and stories produced outside workplace as resources
	o Knowledge constructed in different ways
Knowledge claims	o Multiple inclinations or approaches
	o Non-predictable, non-deterministic, situation-specific and contextual
	o Knowledge creation is cyclical
Outcomes	o Uncertain as dispositions are ends in themselves
	o Theorist produces knowledge, practitioner implements it
	o Re-conceptualisation of theory

Problems	o	Re-evaluation of knowledge perspectives
	o	Methodological imperialism rejected
	o	Lack of useful technical instruction
	o	Success dependent upon fit between values held by theorist and practitioner.
Practitioners' opinions	o	Useful for solving practical workplace problems and future decision-making
	o	Practice situations question routine practices
	o	For career progression or new strategy for practice
	o	Limited to individual and own practice

Table 3: Summary of Dispositional & Transdisciplinary knowledge Mode 3 (Scott et al., 2004)

Provides the practitioner "with the space to reflect on their practice and to think of new strategies or new understandings of what they're doing" (Scott et al., 2004, p.50).

Qualities of Critical knowledge Mode 4

Situation	o	Self and institution
	o	Within discursive and institutional structures
Purpose	o	Political and change oriented of self and institution
	o	Structural and institutional reform
Activity	o	Critical reflection with a view to change
	o	Problematisation of practice
	o	Undermine conventional knowledge discourses related to practitioners
Knowledge claims	o	Application of different criteria to establish truth
Outcomes	o	Destabilisation leads to equality
	o	Disruption of current and conventional power arrangements
	o	Redescription opposes current political discourses
Problems	o	Destabilises
	o	Challenges *status quo*
	o	Creates need for further action which may be disruptive without institutional consensus.
Practitioners' opinions	o	"a kind of critical reflection on things that people would prefer not have critical reflection applied to" (Scott et al., 2004, p.51).

Table 4: Summary of Critical knowledge Mode 4 (Scott et al., 2004)

It attempts to undermine conventional knowledge discourses within which most practitioners work and in the process undermine the legitimacy of institutional life (Scott et al., 2004, p.50).

Classifying theses within modes of knowledge

I agree with Scott et al. (2004) that Mode 1 & 2 of Gibbons et al. (2000) do not tell the complete story about current research but I am not sure whether their model is sufficient either. It seems to me that the lines of demarcation of one form of research (knowledge production) and another become hazier and more complicated as one tries to incorporate

where doctoral theses, of the type this study investigates from different disciplines, fit within modes of knowledge categories of Gibbons et al. (2000) and Scott et al. (2004). They could be 'forced' to fit into Mode 1 or 2 of Gibbons et al. but their unique characteristics suggest that there is not one mode of either into which they **all** fit.

Classifying my thesis

My research study into the experiences of candidates who create media theses fits primarily within <u>Technical rationality</u> knowledge Mode 2 of Scott et al. (2004). It is located between the academy (higher education research) and the workplace/industry (research practice). It is designed to enhance understanding of a social system or practice (research experiences) and the outcomes create socially creditable knowledge for optimisation of a performance (doctoral research). An insider (as a higher education worker and a research candidate) is producing knowledge acting as an outsider but bringing into the research peripheral field experience. Because of adherence to socially acceptable methodology (approved by a campus research body), the outcomes will be societal credibility and have the potential to improve workplace/industry (research practice) and increase performance (of knowledge generation, research bodies and research degree candidatures). The collected or generated phenomena have the potential to act as a body of knowledge to highlight areas of practice which could benefit from problem-solving.

The study could serve as a <u>Critical</u> Mode 4 change agent. However, this would depend upon effective promotion of the research outcomes and how significant they are considered to be by higher education research bodies. There are contradictions to positioning my research study within <u>Technical rationality</u> knowledge Mode 2 of Scott et al. (2004). These include that the study considers experience-based practice as superior, not inferior, and that it focuses not solely on objectivity, but uses subjectivity within phenomenology and interpretivism as research methodology.

Classifying theses from my study within knowledge modes of Scott et al. (2004)

Theses from <u>Case studies</u> and from the <u>Literature review</u> are examined to identify within which knowledge mode of Scott et al. (2004) they are most likely to fall.

<u>Disciplinary</u> knowledge – Mode 1

- *Lexi* digitally animated figures from ancient Egyptian art to prove that original artisans represented frames of movements.
- *Anthony* created a computer program on artificial life in which he was able to implement, test and record changes in the ecological environment.

These studies are Mode 1 knowledge of Scott et al. (2004) because they are situated within disciplinary boundaries and required logical and rigorous theoretical application to test hypotheses. *Lexi* and *Anthony* used information technology. The outcome permitted the candidates to be initiated into the discipline and created disciplinary knowledge which was not designed to be useful in the workplace (teaching).

<u>Technical rationality</u> knowledge – Mode 2

- *Carson* investigated the breast cancer rates of Australian Indigenous people.
- *Bronwyn* used video to analyse professional teaching practice.

- *Mei* investigated the practice of a Japanese teacher becoming a classroom teacher in Australia.
- *Isabel* wanted to test her own teaching performance in the classroom.

Mode 2 <u>Technical rationality</u> knowledge is created by outsiders, or insiders acting as outsiders as it was in these cases. These candidates created Mode 2 knowledge because they were situated in and between workplace and practice. Their research projects were designed to enhance the effectiveness of a social practice, incorporated empirical knowledge into practice, focused on problem solving, were socially credible, designed to optimise workplace performance and inform professional practice.

<u>Dispositional & Transdisciplinary</u> knowledge – Mode 3

- *Elanor* produced her thesis from across design and business disciplines to improve an aspect of management practice.
- Located between business and design faculties, *Naomi* used art, design and professional development background to help people improve their self-understanding.
- *Grant* explored the sub-conscious by creating art during meditative periods, or created art from the sub-conscious. His work was situated between the arts and behavioural science disciplines.

Burrows (2004a) used art, images and artifacts in the development of reflexive practices in management students. The transdisciplinary nature of his work echoes the experiences of candidates who combine their life interests with disciplinary studies. His thesis fits well with Mode 3 knowledge of Scott et al. (2004) because, as Schon expressed, it presents "a continuous interrogation and imaginative reconstruction of the practitioner's actions as they are unfolding" (Scott et al.*,* 2004, p.49).

These examples demonstrate how personal practice may allow the candidate to construct theoretical understanding from unique viewpoints. The candidates used their own workspaces, or studios, as arenas for theoretical development. They were oriented pragmatically and used the application to explore practice through individual investigation and reflection. The researchers were able to customise the activities depending upon results, were inspired by other than workplace type mentors or experiences and constructed the knowledge in ways which they determined using multiple inclinations or approaches. Hypotheses were loosely formed and the knowledge created was cyclical yet uncertain and not likely to be validated in other settings. The outcome represented a reconceptualisation of theory and caused a re-evaluation of knowledge perspectives in this area. The dispositional and transdisciplinary practitioner is able to use the outcomes for future decision-making, yet the knowledge created resists replication or reproduction by others and confirms the creator's innovative qualities.

<u>Critical</u> knowledge – Mode 4

- *Jana* created a folio thesis which included workbooks, narratives and other written materials. She held workshops in order to educate teachers' awareness of socially just pedagogies and to change their communication practices in classrooms.
- The underlying purpose of Auld's (2002) research was to empower Indigenous people through language.

- *Marcia*'s thesis from a Business faculty focussed on personal and professional transformation.

These candidates' research projects were located within their own philosophies, the institutions in which they worked and within the practicing lives of their research subjects. Their research was reform-based, to bring about social change and was enlightening. Their impact could have proved to be destabilising and could have disrupted current practices. They challenged the *status quo* in that they proved to be 'revolutionary' and successfully caused "a kind of critical reflection on things that people would prefer not have critical reflection applied to" (Scott et al., 2004, p.51). For example, from *Jana*, challenging ones' own assumptions about how to communicate with young people in a classroom situation, from Auld (2002), improving opportunities to empower Indigenous people and, from *Marcia*, the emancipation that comes from change, leadership and personal and professional transformation.

From these few Australian media research projects, it seems that knowledge models Mode 1 & 2 of Gibbon et al. (2000) are now neither adequate nor comprehensive enough to accommodate the type of knowledge that the media theses research paradigm is producing. It proves that they are better situated in one of knowledge Modes 1 to 4 of Scott et al. (2004) depending upon the researcher's intent and the prime characteristics of the research project.

This study has referred to only two sets of modes of knowledge. Other modes of knowledge exist and others will no doubt arise in order to accommodate changes in research practices such as those that media theses have brought. The matrix of thesis and knowledge modes will inevitably become more complicated. It may be that the boundaries become so blurred and flexible that categorisation will become irrelevant. Media theses undeniably contribute to the evolution of the shape of content of knowledge. Identifying where they are situated within specific modes of knowledge adds to our understanding of this phenomenon.

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7.3   APPENDIX 3: WEBSITE AND SAMPLE LETTERS

Front page of this research study's website

Figure 17: http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/bsomerse/

Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies

Dear …………..,

For my EdD research I wish to explore the experiences of candidates from traditional disciplines who create theses with non-traditional components such as multimedia. I would very much appreciate your help in order to present a picture of this aspect of thesis creation in Australian universities.

Would you please be able to let me know if your University permits doctoral students to include non-text components as part of their theses?

I will be visiting some universities next year to research these candidates' experiences. So I would also be very grateful if you could point me in the direction of academic staff who have had experience with candidates whose research experiences fit this category.

When I hear from you I will send a request to conduct research at your University, and of course Agreements for research participants when appropriate. Both institution and participant will not be identified unless the university agrees otherwise.

Thank you very much for your help.

With best wishes,

Bronte Somerset

Ms Bronte J. Somerset, M.Ed.
EdD (Candidate)
Faculty of Education, University of Technology Sydney, NSW
Student No. 00095808
Ethics Approval No.: UTS HREC2004-017
H: 02 xxxx xxxx W: 02 xxxx xxxx

Research offices

Dear …….,

Professor …….. forwarded you an email from me recently and, as an EdD research student from University of Technology, Sydney, I am seeking your help. An Abstract of my research project is attached.

I would very much like to be able to have candidates and academic staff from …….. University to participate in my research. Would it be possible please for you to put me in touch with researchers, supervisors or examiners, or faculty heads who have been involved with media theses?

I will be travelling to participating universities in 2005. Depending upon response, I would like to conduct informal interviews with doctoral candidates and academic staff. Once I have identified likely participants, I will formally request permission to conduct research on your campus. Institutions and participants will not be identified in the final thesis.

Kind regards,
Bronte Somerset, etc.

Invitation to academic staff

Dear (Dr., Professor, etc.)

Significant changes have emerged in the way researchers conceive, create and present their thesis. These changes are possibly being driven by the innovative and creative qualities of 21st century researchers. Some universities now accept pre published papers, art, writing, sculpture, music or other portfolios of work submitted with accompanying text. Such theses are often called 'non-traditional' and include multiple modes of representation.

I am undertaking a research project as part of my Doctor of Education studies at UTS. UTS HREC2004-017. The provisional thesis title is: "What phenomena do researchers experience creating multiple mode theses?" I am conducting an investigation into the definition, creation, publication, supervision and examination of theses with non-traditional components, from non-artistic disciplines, in order to find out how researchers are experiencing these changes in the doctoral research process.

My research will be conducted in two phases:
- The first will be to investigate how candidates experience the changing face of research from conception and creation to publication of theses with media components.
- The second will be to seek opinions and definitions on the media thesis from higher education research leaders from various Australian universities.

I would like to invite you to participate in Phase 2 of this research. If you are interested, could you please contact me at: bronte.j.somerset@student.uts.edu.au to arrange a time to meet? You are under no obligation to participate in this research. If you participate, you will have the option of not being identified.

Yours sincerely,
Bronte Somerset, etc.

Invitation to candidates

Dear Candidate,

Significant changes have emerged in the way researchers conceive, create and present their thesis. These changes are possibly being driven by the innovative and creative qualities of 21st century researchers. Some universities now accept pre published papers, art, writing, sculpture, music or other portfolios of work submitted with accompanying text. I call them 'media theses'.

I am undertaking a research project as part of my Doctor of Education studies at UTS. UTS HREC2004-017. The provisional title for this topic is: What phenomena do researchers experience creating multiple mode theses? I am conducting an investigation into the definition, creation, publication, supervision and examination of theses with non-traditional components, from non-artistic disciplines, in order to find out how researchers are experiencing these changes in the doctoral research process.

My research will be conducted in two phases:
- The first phase will be to investigate how candidates experience the changing face of research from conception and creation to publication of theses with media components.
- The second phase will be to seek opinions and definitions on the media thesis from higher education research leaders from various Australian universities.

I would like to invite you to participate in <u>Phase 1</u> of this research. If you are interested, could you please contact me at: bronte.j.somerset@student.uts.edu.au to arrange a time to meet? You are under no obligation to participate in this research. If you do you will have the option of not being identified.

Yours sincerely,
Bronte Somerset, etc.

Agreement to participate

I .... agree to participate in the research project provisionally titled: "What phenomena do researchers experience creating theses presented in multiple modes?" UTS HREC2004-017

This research is an investigation into the definition, creation, publication, supervision and examination of theses with presented in multiple modes, being conducted by Ms Bronte Somerset, 47/147 Talavera Road, Marsfield, of the University of Technology, Sydney for her Doctor of Education degree.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how universities, students, supervisors and examiners experience research involving theses presented in multiple modes.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve providing information to the researcher regarding my understanding of what a non-traditional thesis is and how students, supervisors and examiners experience it. I understand I may be invited to participate in an interview or contact the researcher by email.

I am aware that I can contact Bronte Somerset or her supervisor(s) Dr Janette Griffin from UTS, Kuring-gai Campus if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish and without giving a reason.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way unless, after I have read the outcomes of her investigation, I request that my name be published.

Email: Janette.Griffin@uts.edu.au Phone No: 02 9514 5474

I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish and without giving a reason. I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me or my university in any way unless after I have read the outcomes of her investigation, I request that my name be published.

Signed
....____/____/____

Witnessed
....____/____/____

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, Ms Louise Abrams (ph: 02 9514 9615, Louise.Abrams@student.uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Information for participants

"What phenomena do researchers experience creating multiple mode theses?"

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?
My name is Bronte Somerset and I am a student at UTS. My supervisor is Dr Janette Griffin, Faculty of Education, Kuring-gai campus, UTS.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?
This research is an investigation into the definition, creation, publication, supervision and examination of theses with presented in multiple modes. I hope the outcome will discover how students, supervisors and examiners experience non-traditional presentation of research. Universities may then be able to take a fresh look at policy, support, processes, etc.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?
I will ask you to meet me for, say a one-hour interview or to join a focus group to discuss your experiences with the non-traditional presentation of theses. This research project is framed around a constructivist research paradigm, therefore interviews will be loosely structured and, although I have some questions of interest, I would prefer to hear your opinions and experiences. If you have journal entries, records of conversations, etc. about your experiences, these would be very helpful as well. I would also like to give you the opportunity to provide me with further information but this could be done via email if this is more convenient.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?
There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you may or may not wish your name to be used or identifying information about your project. If you agree, I may wish to include examples of your non-traditional components, which will not identify you unless otherwise requested.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?
You have been asked to discuss your experiences with non-traditional presentation of theses you are progressing through, have submitted, have supervised or examined.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?
You don't have to say yes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO
Nothing will happen. I will thank you for your time so far and will not contact you about this research again.

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?
You can change your mind at any time and you do not have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and will not contact you about this research again.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?
If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact me on H: or email me at bronte.j.somerset@student.uts.edu.au

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer on 02 9514 9615, and quote this number UTS HREC2004-017.

You may prefer to contact my Supervisor Dr Janette Griffin. Email: Janette.Griffin@uts.ed u.au, W: 02 9514 5474

7.4   APPENDIX 4: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

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City Campus
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PO Box 123 Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
T +61 2 9514 9681
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UTS CRICOS PROVIDER CODE 00099F

08 April 2004

Dr Janette Griffin
Faculty of Education
Level 4, Building 2
Kuring-gai Campus

Dear Janette,

UTS HREC 2004-017 – GRIFFIN, Dr Janette, DeVries, Dr Peter (for SOMERSET, Ms Bronte - EdD student) – "What is the contemporary thesis experience? An investigation into the definition, creation, publication, supervision and examination of theses with non-traditional components"

Ms Comerset's response to my letter dated 16 March 2004 satisfactorily addresses the concerns and questions raised by the Committee, and I am pleased to inform you that ethics clearance is now granted.

Your clearance number is UTS HREC 2004-017A.

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. This report form must be completed at least annually, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year), or in the event of any changes to the research as referred to above, in which case the HREC Secretariat should be contacted beforehand. The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

If you have any queries about your ethics clearance, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the Research and Commercialisation Office, on 02 9514 9615.

Yours sincerely,
Production Note:

Signature removed prior to publication.

Associate Professor Jane Stein-Parbury
Chairperson, UTS Human Research Ethics Committee

7.5 APPENDIX 5: IDENTITY OF PARTICIPANTS

The following people who participated in this research were willing to be identified.

Pseudonym	Identity and current location
Professor Al-Sonbatti	Professor Naguib Kanawati, Macquarie University, New South Wales.
Professor Stewart	Professor Gary Knowles, University of Toronto, Canada.
Rick	Dr. Jon Austin, University of Southern Queensland, Qld.
Rolf Jamieson	Dr. Darol Cavanagh, Wilton, NSW.
Carson	Dr. John Condon, Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory.
Marcia	Dr. Tricia Hiley, Victoria.
Lexi	Dr. Lesley Kinney, Katoomba, NSW.
Elanor	Dr. Daria Loi, Intel, USA.
Leon	Dr. John McMaster, University of Southern Queensland, Qld.
Vanessa	Dr. Pamela Matters, Macquarie University, NSW.
Jana	Dr. Jennifer Nayler, University of the Sunshine Coast, Qld.

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