

## WRITING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

Given now what you know from the “What is a Thesis Statement” article, how do you write a clear, focused, and directive thesis statement for different kinds of written compositions? Let’s now consider thesis statements in writing clinical/research case studies.

### *Clinical/Research Case Studies*

The terms “clinical” or “research” case study are deliberately used in this article to refer to a type (or category) of academic research paper that exists in many different professional fields, but is most commonly found by college and university students in the fields of psychology/counseling, science, medicine, education, and business. As with other good quality research papers, some case studies possess heavy demands on research time, critical thinking skills, and good quality writing.<sup>1</sup> There is quite a difference between poor, fair, and excellently composed research case studies, and that difference is very obvious to the intelligent reader. Excellent research case studies require much work, time and skill.<sup>2</sup> Writing requirements for a case study vary depending on the school and instructor, the assignment purpose, and the case study’s thesis statement.

Since well-written clinical case studies are good quality research papers, the instructions for non-clinical research papers presented in the “Thesis Statements for Research Papers” article along with the “How to Research a Thesis Statement” article will be very helpful.

In a research case study, the writer’s intent is usually to inform concerning a topic, to evaluate specific data and draw conclusions from it to support a hypothesis (thesis), or to persuade the reader toward a certain viewpoint. In any case, a good quality case study is an involved analysis. The one thesis statement that guides the entire paper will not be successful without solid research evidence, sound conclusions, and justifiable argument for support.<sup>3</sup> All these features make the effective thesis statement crucially important and difficult to write well. Therefore, the most effective and accurate version of the thesis statement might not become apparent until the final edited version of the paper.

### *What distinguishes the Case Study and its Thesis Statement?*

Though there are vast similarities among all good quality research papers, the clinical case study does possess several distinctive features that impact its thesis statement. Consider these distinctive elements for good quality clinical/research case studies:

1. Research evidence can rely very heavily upon statistical data or calculations.
2. Research may take a lengthy time to conduct if a clinical or laboratory study is involved.
3. It is acceptable to specify a primary thesis statement for the entire paper, followed by several specific hypotheses statements (propositions) that will each be tested and evaluated.

4. The primary thesis statement and/or secondary hypotheses are more likely flexible and revisable by the time the paper is finished, due to the heavy dependence on what precise evidence the case study honestly presents.
5. The clinical/research case study possesses very limited value for argument and a short life span for its evidence, depending upon the nature and amount of statistical data used.
6. The case study can be poorly designed and produce inaccurate evidence or data.
7. The evidentiary data produced by a well-designed case study should not be twisted to force it to prove the thesis and hypotheses.
8. If the evidentiary data clearly does not support the writer's goal(s), either the thesis statement and/or secondary hypotheses must be effectively changed, or another related case study attempted.
9. Although the case study is not simply a personal reflection, in some studies (especially in psychology/counseling) the first person "I/we" writing perspective can be quite appropriate.

In summary, the clinical/research case study can be valuable within its limited vision and short statistical life span. Some value can live on as a successful case study becomes a basis for a new one. In the course of researching and writing the paper, the case study writer possesses less control over the thesis statement than he/she would have in writing a non-clinical academic research paper.

### *Example Thesis Statements for Case Studies*

Consider these fictional examples of primary thesis statements (ones which cover the entire paper):

#### *Example 1: Business*

**Businesses structured as large corporations do not succeed in rural United States communities due to economic, logistical, and social-prejudicial factors.**

Note this primary thesis statement (in third person "he/she/it" perspective) is deliberately vague, leading the paper to several possible specific hypotheses to be examined (e.g., what economic factors, what logistical factors, what social factors). The thesis statement will not proceed without precisely defined verifiable evidentiary data (e.g., what kind of corporations, what is meant by "rural," etc.). Since the entire United States rural environment cannot possibly be examined, the thesis statement and the study have limited value, and the intelligent reader already knows this. On the other hand, the thesis statement can be valid to test and study, and it may be accurate and true, but it may not be supported by what limited data the writer is able to obtain in available time.

### *Example 2: Biblical Counseling*

**Given the test patients examined, I conclude that the attitudinal and affective hypothesis set forth in Ecclesiastes 5:17 is accurate.**

Note that this thesis statement is acceptably written in the first person “I/we” perspective. This paper does not necessarily require secondary hypotheses. However, the writer must clearly show who the test patients are (not in name but in demographics) and why they should be used for this study. The writer will also have to show what the acceptable meaning of the hypothesis of Ecclesiastes 5:17 is and why it should be used in this psychological case study. Lastly, the writer will have to clearly demonstrate and argue how Ecclesiastes 5:17 is true for the test patients.

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<sup>1</sup> Too often an academic case study is written as nothing more than a personal reflection by the writer. That is legitimate if a personal reflection is what the case study instructions request.

<sup>2</sup> Hacker, Diana (2006). *The Bedford handbook* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martins, contains much advice relevant to writing academic research papers in general and for various formats. See especially: pp. 24-25, 31-38, 53, 56-60, 97, 178-179, 439, 492-496, 527-790.

<sup>3</sup> A well-researched and written case study is scholarly and could run from 10 to 40 pages or more. Many academic scholarly, professional and clinical journal articles, essays, and conference papers are in essence well-written research case studies. However, clinical/research case studies are most often found as professional journal articles.