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**Review of *Strategies for writing a thesis by publication in the social sciences and humanities*. By Lynn P. Nygaard and Kristin Solli (2021)**

Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 178 pp., ISBN: 978-0-367-20469-3. NZ\$44.99 (softcover) or \$38.99 (eBook).

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In contrast to the traditional “monograph” or “Big Book” theses, a thesis by or with<sup>1</sup> publication comprises one or more published (or publishable) manuscripts, such as journal articles, along with some accompanying, non-published text. Theses by publication have long been standard in science-based disciplines but remain relatively few within educational research in Aotearoa. However, international trends towards increased use of this emerging genre (e.g. Mason & Merga, 2018) suggest that we may begin to see more of our students interested in presenting their doctoral research through theses by publication.

*Strategies for Writing a Thesis by Publication in the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Nygaard & Solli, 2021) fills a gap in the current doctoral education literature by discussing how this thesis genre may work in social science and humanities contexts. The authors are from Scandinavia, where the thesis by publication “has eclipsed the monograph as the most common type of thesis in the social sciences, and disciplines in the humanities are rapidly following suit” (p. 13).

The book is part of Routledge’s excellent *Insider Guides to Success in Academia* series (edited by Pat Thomson and Helen Kara). As such, *Strategies for Writing a Thesis by Publication in the Social Sciences and Humanities* offers the insightful, practical, timely, and research-informed advice in a friendly, conversational style that this series is known for. The ‘pocket-sized’ paperback format supports an affordable price point for the postgraduate student audience.

Nygaard and Solli begin their book by discussing what a thesis by publication – or a “doctorate in pieces” (p. 1) – actually involves. In the authors’ words (pp. 5-6):

Putting [the publications] together into a whole means more than stapling them together with a cover letter saying, ‘Here are my articles. Hope you like them! Looking forward to being a doctor 😊’.

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<sup>1</sup> There is much variation in the terminology used for such theses internationally. This review uses “by publication” for consistency with the book being reviewed; however, it should be noted that many NZ universities use the PhD *with* publication model, which typically has a lower expectation for the publication component of the thesis (fewer publications and/or ‘publications’ may not have actually been published yet).

The authors acknowledge the variation among institutions' requirements and terminology for theses by publication, but identify three essential elements: (1) the inclusion in the thesis of several self-contained articles that have been, or could be, published elsewhere; (2) the provision of some additional text(s) within the thesis to complement the publications and show how they fit together to form a single project; and (3) the requirement (fundamental to doctorates in any format) that the resulting thesis demonstrate "doctorateness" through offering an original and worthwhile contribution to knowledge. The authors appropriately focus the book on elements (2) and (3), noting that strong resources are already available around writing individual articles for publication (e.g. Thomson & Kamler, 2013).

Chapter 2 positions the thesis by publication in the broader doctoral education context, reviewing the reasons for the emergence of this model. Important forces discussed are neoliberal/New Public Management pressures for institutions and supervisors to produce 'countable' research outputs; the advantages of publication for doctoral students' career trajectory, scholarly development, and research impact; and the trend toward more collaborative rather than individual research projects. Although accurate and informative, this chapter lacks the sort of critical depth found in other recent writing on the affordances, agendas, and discourses associated with this thesis model (e.g. Frick, 2019; Huang, 2021; Skov, 2021). Perhaps this reflects the normalisation and acceptance of the thesis by publication in the authors' local context.

Chapter 3 discusses the logistics of preparing multiple individual articles as well as the accompanying "narrative" (p. 43) text(s), emphasising writing early and often during candidature. Some of the advice in this chapter would be equally valid for monograph thesis students, but what is unique here is the focus on the distinct purposes and audiences of the texts comprising a thesis by publication. Nygaard and Solli argue that while the articles involve "going public" (p. 45) as a member of a scholarly community, the thesis narrative(s) aim to show examiners how the articles come together as a coherent single study through which the candidate has demonstrated the requisite forms of "doctorateness". This latter theme forms the focus of Chapter 4, an extremely useful chapter that breaks doctorateness into five core elements – publishability, disciplinary belonging, originality, independence, and cohesiveness – and suggests practical strategies to achieve each of these requirements within the narrative component(s) of a thesis by publication.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to structural matters, considering the (institution-specific) rules, conventions, guidelines, and components of the thesis and then the (thesis-specific) structure of the narrative text(s) that complement the publications. The authors discuss how a thesis by publication can address specific doctoral standards in terms of background/contextual information, review(s) of literature, discussion of methodology and methods, and articulation of the significance, limitations, coherence, and future possibilities of the research conducted.

The final chapter focuses on "ownership" (p. 155). The authors seek to empower doctoral students to demonstrate agency and confidence around their writing, receiving feedback, their ongoing professional learning, and the decision that the thesis is ready for examination. For me, this chapter did not go far enough in tackling the complex identity work – and identity threats – that accompany learning to write for publication (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2021). Arguably, one of the most challenging features of a thesis by publication is that the candidate must find their scholarly voice and sufficient confidence to submit work for assessment by expert others *far earlier* in their candidature than monograph thesis students do. I would have liked to see more attention to this aspect.

In terms of audience, this book has been written primarily for doctoral candidates. It offers them a range of highly practical advice situated within acknowledgement of broader discourses and expectations of doctoral

education. As such, the authors successfully avoid reducing the book to a 'recipe' or 'quick guide' that would miss the complexity and uniqueness of each doctoral project.

Those supervising or examining theses by publication will also appreciate this book, especially given the relative unfamiliarity of this thesis genre for educational researchers in Aotearoa. A particular highlight of the book is the end-of-chapter exercises, which could be valuable supervision tools at a range of stages of a student's candidature. The exercises support students to apply concepts from the text to their own thesis, such as by creating a visual map of how their research questions and publications might interact.

Overall, this book offers a clear vision of what an excellent thesis by publication should achieve, and practical advice for how to accomplish this. In my view, this book should be compulsory reading for anyone considering, undertaking, supervising, or examining a thesis by publication in education.

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