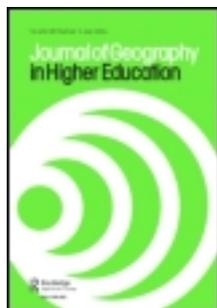


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Critical Reflections on Doctoral Research and Supervision in Human Geography: The ‘PhD by Publication’

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ABSTRACT *Doctoral education is central to both the production of knowledge and the reproduction of disciplines—producing the next generation of researchers. This paper considers the doctoral and supervisory experiences associated with the ‘the PhD by publication’—in which a dissertation comprises a number of stand-alone ‘publishable’ papers, along with introductory and concluding overviews. Using the entry points of human geography and our experiences doing and supervising these PhDs, we provide a number of guidelines for human geographers, and illuminate the identity work involved in this specific process of producing scholars.*

KEY WORDS: PhD students, academic identity, research supervision, publishing

Introduction

Doctoral education is central to both the production of knowledge—a significant proportion of new knowledge is produced within PhD theses—and the reproduction of disciplines—producing the next generation of researchers. It is surprising then that there is a relative lack of attention paid within human geography to the processes and characteristics of doctoral education, and even less theorization of research supervision.¹ There has been some work on the use of writing groups for graduate students (Ferguson, 2009), the RGS-IBG and AAG have provided guidance on research and publication for new researchers (including doctoral researchers) (Solem *et al.*, 2009; Blunt & Souch, 2010), and there has been limited critical reflection on practices such as master classes in developing academic identities (Bærenholdt *et al.*, 2010). Nonetheless, there remains a critical gap in understanding the formation of academic identities through doctoral education in the contemporary era. This paper begins to fill this gap through an exploration of the ‘PhD by publication’.

Definitions vary across institutions and disciplines, but essentially the PhD by publication consists of an unspecified number of stand-alone published or ‘publishable’ papers (Robins & Kanowski, 2008). Our exploration here serves two purposes. The first

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purpose is to contribute to the broad body of work on the support of writing in doctoral supervision. As an ‘interstitial’ discipline—with topics and research practices ranging across the humanities, social sciences and environmental sciences—human geography can make a unique contribution to the literature on supervision and writing, which has previously identified a dearth of interdisciplinary considerations (Lee & Kamler, 2008). The second purpose is to intervene in recent critical debates on publishing within the discipline, which argue that there are increasingly individualistic approaches to scholarship and micro-management of academic life related to the development of researchers within the neoliberal university (Dowling, 2008). As we outline here, the PhD by publication offers insight into the production of researchers in the contemporary academy which some have argued is characterized by a performance culture (Dowling, 2008; Starrs, 2008). We begin with an outline of the PhD by publication and provide prompts for supervisors and students considering such a thesis mode. We then turn to the process of writing, its link to academic identities and the role of the supervisor and peers in supporting these. In conclusion, we reflect on the academic identities produced through the PhD by publication as a means of guiding further research. A brief note on ‘method’ is in order here. This paper is the product of a long-term dialogue of our individual ruminations on the process of undertaking a PhD by publication, alongside a number of shorter term conversations (both verbal and written) in which we juxtaposed our reflections. Effectively, then, we present a collective autoethnographic story and critical reflections, broadly mirroring Manathunga *et al.*'s (2010) approach to supervisory development.

The PhD by Publication: An Overview for Students and Supervisors

The PhD by publication is certainly not new. In the UK, PhDs based on published works have historically been awarded retrospectively in recognition of a contribution to scholarship of someone working in the academy but without a PhD (Davies & Rolfe, 2009), or as the basis of honorary or professional doctorates. In various European nations, presenting a PhD as a series of interconnected but stand-alone papers occurs across a number of disciplines, including geography, while in some fields, such as economics, thesis by papers is the international norm (Davies & Rolfe, 2009). We are concerned in this paper with the more recent and widespread adoption of this model across Australian universities, where PhD theses are encouraged to be in the form of a collection of published or publishable papers. Indeed, a 2010 scoping of Australian doctoral degrees revealed that the majority of universities explicitly identified the PhD by publication as an option. For some, this option was confined to specific disciplines or professional doctorates, for others it was considered a non-conventional but allowable route towards the PhD, and for others yet, it was the preferred thesis format. Institutional rules around theses by publication vary significantly. Monash University, for example tightly prescribes the number of publications, whether they are published, accepted or submitted, and sets conventions of co-authorship. Others, such as Macquarie University and the University of Wollongong, provide more general guidelines on length and form, with the specifics expected to vary by discipline. Common across universities is that the PhD thesis is still subject to examination—the publication of papers in and of themselves is not sufficient for the awarding of the PhD degree. It is important to note that although there are many differences between the PhD by publication and the traditional mode of doctoral dissertation, these should not be considered as diametrically opposed, but as a continuum.

For example, a student writing a dissertation can publish alongside, but the PhD by publication changes the nature of the supervisory dyad.

Our engagement with PhD by publication is through Macquarie University, where this mode of PhD thesis is valorized and increasingly is the norm. In the sciences at Macquarie, for example more than half of PhD theses are in the form of published/publishable papers. In human geography at Macquarie, around a third of submitted PhDs take this form, and span cultural geography, urban planning and resource management. Macquarie University's guidelines are quite flexible, as suggested in the descriptions of the authors' theses given in Table 1. Journal articles (in print or in press), book chapters, submitted manuscripts or manuscripts in preparation are appropriate for a PhD by publication. These papers can be co-authored, though in this case must be accompanied by a statement of the student's contribution. At Macquarie, the quality of the PhD is maintained through a rigorous examination process involving three external examiners. Theses can be submitted with the actual publications bound into one document or, more commonly, publications re-formatted into one document with linking sections. In this way, examiners are able to, and do, make comments on the published as well as unpublished components of the thesis as part of their overall assessment of the thesis' contribution to knowledge. Acceptance of the PhD by publication is far from universal; many supervisors remain sceptical and some examiners continue to query the validity of it. Our experiences as students and supervisors suggest that a lack of knowledge about this PhD mode has contributed to this reluctance. Thus, in this section we provide some guidance for both doctoral researchers and their supervisors. Our guidance is based on conceptual framings of the doctorate and its supervision (Pearson, 2005; Wisker, 2005; Boud & Lee, 2009; Halse & Malfroy, 2010) as well as Dowling's recent involvement in the professional development of research supervisors.²

Topic 'Fit' and Thesis Mode

PhD by publication more readily lends itself to some types of research projects. For us, a PhD by publication is particularly suited to doctoral research that addresses a number of related but potentially stand-alone empirical or conceptual issues. Such a project can be more clearly separated into distinct papers. 'For example, each of the authors' doctoral projects consisted of discrete schemes each of which spoke to a broader theme. Emma's PhD addressed the broad issue of more-than-human domesticities, using a number of different methods and sub-projects.' These resulted in papers on a media analysis of pests, dogs and home making, pests and the nation as home, and domestic temporalities. Similarly, Andrew's PhD addressed and advanced the theme of critical geographies of sexuality and home by utilizing mixed methods—media analysis, archives and autobiographies, and semi-structured interviews—to produce discrete papers that focused on gay men and the home, gay men in lifestyle media, same-sex couples at home, same-sex-attracted youth in family homes, and meanings of home for lesbians and gay men. Karina's PhD explored the geographies of family; also employed mixed methods; and similarly produced a range of papers with diverse themes such as moral panic, parenting places, disorder in the home and family photography. Mixed methods and 'mini-projects' within the larger PhD are not unusual within the doctoral experience, but the three of us found they worked particularly well in PhD by publication.

Table 1. Our experiences with PhD by publication.

	Research field	Papers (published/ accepted/in submission)	Motivation to undertake PhD by publication	Likes/benefits
Robyn (supervisor)	Urban and cultural geography		Student interest	Encourages writing-focused conversations
Andrew (student)	Social and cultural geography	Published: 3 papers Accepted: 1 paper In submission: 1 paper	Keen to develop the requisite skills for an academic career, such as expertise in academic writing and experience in publishing processes	Able to explore mixed methods through discrete projects which addressed a central question. Learn- ing to write for different academic audiences through an interdisciplin- ary project
Emma (student)	Urban and cultural geography	Published: 3 papers Accepted: 1 paper (co- authored) In submission: 1 paper	Keen to develop skills required for an academic career, and motivated to develop a publication record to ensure competitiveness in a tight academic job market	Rhythm of work structured around discrete publications. Pragmatically, PhD by publication supported timely completion in a tertiary context that emphasized on-time completion
Karina (student)	Social and cultural geography	Published: 3 papers and 1 book chapter Revise and resubmit: 1 paper	Keen to rapidly develop key skills and competencies required for an academic career, establish a publication record and join the scholarly conversation	Emphasis on writing 'for' publi- cation and wider dissemination of work. A thesis comprising mini writing projects, all with diverse themes and formats. Developing a writer's identity and self-discipline—work that is still in progress!

However, although published journal articles or book chapter papers need to stand alone and address distinct concepts and topics, they also need to be able to be woven together into a thesis. The difficulties doctoral students have in finding their 'voice' and articulating the 'thesis' (in its meaning of an overarching argument) are well known. These can be more pronounced in the PhD by publication in a number of ways. There can be a tendency to want to write the thesis in each paper. Karina found this to be a particular challenge early in her candidature when she was simultaneously developing the ideas that would underpin the thesis and finalizing papers that would become the chapters. At this early stage, it was difficult to separate the two and she battled the impulse to write the entire thesis within her first paper; she was also concerned about how her ideas would change and develop over the period of the candidature and whether this would render early papers obsolete. Similarly, Emma found identifying the conceptual framing of her first paper challenging, spending many early drafts rehearsing the broader theories that ultimately framed the thesis as a whole rather than focusing on the specific contributions of this paper. Writing the 'binding' sections of the thesis at the end can be equally challenging. As with traditional theses, the thesis by publication is required to be a coherent contribution of knowledge. The coherence, and overall thesis argument, can become lost in the process of writing separate papers.

Finally, PhD by publication can be easily aligned with interdisciplinary research and/or doctoral researchers wishing to make a contribution across a number of fields. For Andrew, the process encouraged creativity and interdisciplinarity, and enabled him to deliberately position his research as not only a geographical project, but also an interdisciplinary one. This decision was reflected in the choice of journals located in geography, cultural studies and housing studies, and journals with an interdisciplinary remit across geography, gender studies and cultural studies. These journals speak to different audiences within a range of scholarly communities and encourage varied forms of academic writing, which enabled him to experiment with different writing styles and techniques commensurate with humanities (e.g. cultural studies) and social science (e.g. geography) disciplines. This also provided the opportunity to learn how to position his work in different ways in these disciplines. Indeed, more generally it may be that PhD by publication is especially suited to those numerous human geography projects that speak across disciplines.

Doctoral Temporalities

The planning, implementing and writing of a research project in a set time frame is one of the hallmarks of doctoral education. Supervisor, students and departments have many 'rules of thumb' about what should happen when. In many 3-year programmes, for example, it is envisaged that the first year is spent setting up the topic and conceptual framework, the second on data collection and the final year on writing. The rhythm of the PhD by publication is somewhat different from this 'conventional' rhythm (though we acknowledge that many different timings are evident across all PhDs). In the PhD by publication, writing and data collection can, and sometimes need to, occur simultaneously. Emma, for example was able to start archive-based research and subsequent writing while her Human Research Ethics Application was processed by the university. On receiving ethics approval she was able to continue working on this article in the period between advertising for participants and commencing interviews, and between interviews and the

transcription process. Then when the first article was in review, another paper was started. This process may sound broadly similar to the ongoing writing that takes place throughout a traditional candidature, but there is a key difference: the writing is different in so far as it is scheduled around a publication plan and hence is organized into discrete bundles of time that are punctuated by the completion of a new article or chapter. For Emma, this process had very pragmatic benefits as it meant that she progressively finalized large sections of the thesis throughout the progression of the candidature, rather than having a constantly moving thesis that was always ‘up for grabs’ until the date of submission. It also meant that by the time she came to write the thesis she had a confidence in it as the majority of it had undergone blind peer review in addition to supervisor comments.

However, there are a few unique challenges to this process, which significantly shape the scheduling of writing as well the thesis timeline. Journal lag times, for both refereeing and final publications, have been identified as possible stumbling blocks to the PhD by publication (Robins & Kanowski, 2008). While acknowledging this impediment, there are also broader changes to the temporal rhythms of the PhD at play. In particular, Emma found that she needed to adapt her research timetable to the uncertainty of the review process, including the length of time that articles were under review, and the nature of changes that could be required. Different journals had different periods of review, some sending feedback extremely promptly while others took significantly longer. In Emma’s case, most articles were under review for approximately 3 months before receiving comments, although one took significantly longer at over 6 months. These times are not out of the ordinary, but within the 3-year candidature of a PhD they impel both planning and a willingness to alter research and writing schedules—flexibility was essential. These factors meant that progressive publication was not just a benefit but rather a necessity. Writing and sending articles for review early in the candidature and continuously throughout were an essential insurance against these uncertainties, providing a time buffer that could accommodate some of this uncertainty. Karina similarly reflects on being encouraged to adopt very productive writing habits (Draft a paper, edit, send off, write an article, edit, send off and repeat.) and of developing a pragmatic attitude towards the writing process itself (no time to sit around and brood about what is happening with your paper, you have another one to write!).

In essence, our experience of the PhD by publication underlines not a simple difference from the traditional thesis, but a subtly different emphasis, especially in relation to topic definition and temporal rhythms. Thus, rather than assessing the worth of this form of PhD, we believe it more useful to prompt scholars to consider whether the project, the supervisor and the student are appropriate to it. We hence summarize this discussion in Table 2, which is a series of prompts for supervisors and students to consider before and during candidature.

Academic Identity, Academic Writing and Research Supervision

In this last section of the paper, we connect more directly with the scholarship on research supervision, the doctoral experience and academic writing. In particular, we are interested in theorizations of the doctorate as ‘more than the thesis’: the PhD also produces academic identities. As Peterson (2007, p. 477) states in her summary of the field, doctoral work ‘is not simply a matter of coming to know; it is also a matter of coming to be’. In undertaking doctoral work, students are immersed in, and learn to perform, the norms of scholars and

Table 2. Prompts for considering and supervising a PhD by publication.

For students	For supervisors	About the project
How competent is the student at juggling multiple projects and time frames?	What is the expected time frame of the PhD? What does the supervisor expect of a PhD? Is there departmental support for thesis by publication?	Can the research project be broken down into smaller components?
Is the student a capable writer? Is the student able to 'let go' of a piece of writing that may not be perfect?	Is the supervisor willing to help the student develop juggling skills? Does the supervisor have knowledge of, or access to, resources to support time management (e.g. Kearns & Gardiner, 2008)?	
How well is the student likely to cope with criticisms from referees/peers?	Is the supervisor able to mentor writing for publication? This might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication/refereeing experience • Knowledge of the 'anxieties' of the early career researcher 	Is early publication of results possible or desirable? Is the topic likely to have trouble being published? For example, is it so cutting edge that it may meet with resistance in peer-review processes?
How keen is the student on becoming a publishing academic?	What are student/supervisor/discipline expectations of co-authorship and how are they to be negotiated?	

scholarship. Writing is central to the performance and demonstration of an academic identity, and to the doctorate. It is through writing that scholarly identities are formed, with the text putting the work and the self in the public domain (Kamler, 2008; Lee & Kamler, 2008). Writing is central to scholarship and a demonstration of research competence. Written work conveys the scholarship and scholarly identity of the researcher: public academic audiences respond to statements, findings and arguments in a scholar's published work. So in this section of the paper we conceptualize how the PhD by publication configures the connections between doctoral writing, supervisor relationships, student anxieties and scholarly identity work.

Writing, Supervision and Scholarly Community

Supervising and supporting scholarly writing have been the focus of a number of interventions in geography, including writing groups, mentoring and facilitating supportive communities of practice (Cameron *et al.*, 2009; Ferguson, 2009; Bærenholdt *et al.*, 2010). The PhD by publication amplifies the links between writing and the formation of doctoral scholars, though in different ways. Much more so than a conventional dissertation, the publication-based doctorate emphasizes ongoing writing, and writing for peers. It also changes the character of the supervisor-student relationship in at least two important ways.

First, supervision becomes much more explicitly a conversation through the medium of writing. Written work is the focus. Certainly supervisory meetings cover the usual issues such as the scope of the project, its methodology and how data collection and analysis are progressing. But in the middle years they also intensely focus on written work, not only encouraging the completion of papers, but commenting on draft papers and re-drafted versions. In our experiences, when referees' reports were received, the focus was on interpreting what the referees had said, on how to respond to the referees and on highlighting the role of the editor's comments. Supervision became a process of mentoring for publication that included much more than the content and structure of a piece of work. Supervisor as mentor comes to the fore (see Lee *et al.*, 2007).

Second, for all of us it felt as if the broader scholarly community was participating in the creation of the thesis. Prior to submission, each thesis had already received considerable feedback from a range of academic experts as well as supervisors. We really had a sense that the PhD by publication is a very broad collaborative effort; much more so, we would argue, than the traditional PhD. Karina notes that some of what she has written towards the PhD will 'make it' into journals and/or the thesis, while other works would not go any further than the 'Misc folder' on her computer. Nonetheless, to date she has received direct and indirect feedback on her work from literally dozens of people: supervisors, adjunct supervisors, editors, sub-editors, reviewers, as well as from colleagues and peers. Scholarship on supervision often points out the merits of supervisory panels, and open discussions about supervision as a means to improve student experiences and encourage completion (Samara, 2006; Walsh, 2010). For us—candidate and supervisor alike—this expansion of the supervisory team was much wider than conventionally envisaged. Moreover, it helped allay some anxieties going into the examination processes: since the thesis, or parts thereof, had already been judged by peers we were more confident in the general outcomes (though of course examiners did have additional comments to make).

These experiences allow further reflection on Kiley's (2009) discussion of the role of the supervisory relationship in supporting doctoral students' comprehension of threshold

concepts. Threshold concepts are 'concepts that are so critical to an understanding of the discipline that advanced learning is not possible without having crossed the threshold of understanding for that concept', and include 'thesis', 'theory' and 'framework' (Kiley, 2009, p. 297). In the case of the PhD, threshold concepts revolve around learning to be a researcher. Threshold concepts are troublesome but transformative—they are difficult to grasp, induce anxiety, but are critical for doctoral learning and the development of scholarly confidence—for transforming doctoral 'candidates' into 'scholars'. Through her work with experienced supervisors, Kiley (2009, p. 301) found that a common strategy used to help students grasp threshold concepts—and cross thresholds—was to 'encourage candidates to feel part of an academic community' through activities such as journal clubs or reading groups. Furthermore, she argued that scholarly transformation is advanced if 'candidates are engaged in "learning the rules" of the culture into which they are moving but not in any didactic manner but rather by participating with peers and others within the environment' (Kiley, 2009, p. 302).

We suggest that the characteristics of the PhD by publications—the particular rhythm and scheduling of writing activities—are very useful for identifying threshold moments in the development of the researcher. For the authors, as identified in the discussion so far, key moments in the production of the PhD by publication included writing the first paper, interpreting and responding to referee comments and publication itself. These are frequently characterized by feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, and are moments when the researcher is forced to confront disciplinary threshold concepts including identifying the thesis, articulating the theory and communicating a coherent framework. Crossing these thresholds and forming scholarly identities are also wrapped up with doctoral candidates' introductions into a wider academic community. Our collective experience suggests that the PhD by publication patently enables such engagement with scholarly communities, academic cultures and their rules. The process of writing for publication pushes the candidate to engage with academic peers beyond their own supervisor, and together the supervisor and student address peer review comments, mediating and supporting the candidate across the threshold into the academic community. We found that the PhD by publication facilitates 'crossing the threshold' and becoming a 'member' of the academic community.

Scholarly Identity Work

Crossing the thresholds of both concepts and communities helps to transform the candidate into a scholar. We now further conceptualize how the PhD by publication facilitates the formation of a scholarly identity through its emphasis on writing for publication. This work builds on insights by Kamler (2008, p. 285), who encourages us to think about doctoral writing as both text work and identity work because of the way in which it focuses on:

the connections between textual practices in a field and the formation of the doctoral scholar . . . Students find doctoral writing difficult because texts and identities are formed together, in and through writing. They feel vulnerable when their work is made public because the text is an extension of the scholar and scholarship; it literally puts the self and the work 'out there'.

In many ways, doing the PhD by publication directly addresses the vulnerabilities of both writing and the contemporary academic labour market. For us, it has certainly been in

response to a number of uncertainties: uncertainty around the academic market place and future job prospects; uncertainty about having the time, opportunity, and of course, the financial resources ‘later on’ to acquire necessary skills and last, but certainly not the least, uncertainty around ‘academic identity’, and how each of us as an individual scholar ‘fits’ into academia in general. Indeed, doing the PhD by publications has not only been a way of joining conversations; it has been a way to manage (but not completely overcome) anxieties around these uncertainties, by jumping straight in. It enables us to develop a publication record while completing the PhD. This was more than ‘just’ a list of publications; however, this record was crucial for making our research work known in the academic community, and thus for beginning to develop reputations as scholarly figures in particular disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) areas.

Such was Andrew’s experience of doing a PhD by publications. Doing research with a view to writing for journal publications crucially shaped his understanding of his own doctoral work—not as a low-circulation dissertation but as high-circulation published scholarship with potential to contribute to debates within international communities of scholars in geography, sexuality studies and cultural studies. He was quite consciously aware that he was constructing an emergent scholarly identity through the process of writing articles for peer review and publication. This process can be both exciting and daunting for doctoral researchers. It is motivating to work and to write with the intent that one’s research can be read and circulated so early in one’s career. But it also induces a level of anxiety, not just about the peer-review process, which can be trying and sometimes destructive (Kamler, 2008), but also about how one’s published scholarship will be read, interpreted, applied, extended and/or critiqued once it is in print. The reception—not just the production and publication—of one’s scholarship is a critical contributor to shaping one’s scholarly identity, particularly for new researchers. In Andrew’s case, he was concerned about how his work would be received by the scholarly community, particularly within the field of geographies of sexualities. Would his work and thus his ‘academic self’ be welcomed in that community of scholars? How would he know?

These are vital fears for new scholars, but there are two other significant aspects of the formation of textual-scholarly identities that should be considered and which we would like to explicate. These pointers are informed by post-structural ideas about the constitution of identities, and extend Kamler’s (2008) discussion about the links between text work and identity work in doctoral writing. One factor to keep in mind is that identities are always formed relationally—in relation to other people, dialogically, in community. In terms of the present discussion, this relationality means that our own textual-scholarly identities are sculpted through our engagements with other scholars and their published work; or to put it in terms of text work, our scholarly identities are constituted intertextually, through reading and responding to other scholars’ published ideas within an academic community. For new scholars, it is important to remember that intertextual engagement is powerful, networked and flows in multiple directions: we constitute our scholarly identities by entering the academic community, but in doing so we also begin to reconfigure other researchers’ scholarly identities as well. This reconfiguration should empower new scholars, suggesting their capacity to contribute to academia; simultaneously, we urge all scholars to enter this intertextual ground with an attitude of care, using our text work to advance scholarship, and not to damage scholars.

The second factor to consider is that all identity work is an ongoing process, not a one-off event, and this includes the text work involved in constituting scholarly identities; this

means that the emergent scholarly identities of doctoral writing and publication are certainly not fully formed, solid and 'final'. Rather, scholarly identities—like all identities—are partial, fluid, flexible, and change over time as our scholarship develops and we take on new ideas, research interests and collaborative partnerships with other scholars. Moreover, it is arguable that as researchers we should never intend to have 'final' unchanging scholarly identities, but to try to always be open to new concepts, ideas, fields of enquiry and avenues of investigation. What is crucial for doctoral writers and new researchers to keep in mind is that we only set out on that scholarly adventure when we begin writing and thus become part of a broader community of scholars. The PhD by publication certainly facilitates that journey.

Concluding Thoughts

In this paper, we have considered the PhD by publication in terms of the doctoral experience, academic identities and research supervision. In this short conclusion, we bring together the paper's insights with respect to these three elements.

With respect to doctoral education, it has not been our intention in this paper to advocate for the PhD by publication, nor to provide an analysis of its costs and benefits. Rather, we wanted to elaborate on some of its rhythms and specificities. In this respect, the doctorate by publication is both similar to, and different from, the traditional thesis in subtle ways, for both supervisor and student. The PhD process in this mode has a more cyclical rhythm—one attuned to each paper, and, in our experiences, a magnified focus on writing throughout the doctorate. Moreover, given that many human geography research projects are cross-disciplinary, we would suggest that the fit between PhD by publication and cross-disciplinary engagement may make it more suited to geographical research than to other areas.

In terms of research supervision/advising, our experiences underscore the ways in which supervision of these doctorates necessarily takes on these new rhythms and an associated focus on writing. Interestingly, supervision is undertaken by more than the supervisor, with feedback and perspectives from the broader scholarly community, for example through the refereeing process, being incorporated into the research project and the thesis. The human geography perspective offered in this paper facilitates social science insights into a knowledge field that has so far been dominated by experiences from the biophysical sciences (e.g. Robins & Kanowski, 2008). From this disciplinary perspective, the relevance of topic selection and mentoring writing are magnified, while issues such as co-authorship are less pressing.

Finally, in terms of academic identities, the critical reflections on our own experiences we present in this paper illuminate the production of academic identities attuned to scholarly practices of writing for publication, and the threshold concepts encountered through this process that, in the PhD by publication, can be negotiated in and through groups of learners that include peers, supervisors as well as the broader academic community. Whether, however, the PhD by publication produces academics as neoliberal subjects with a commitment to 'publish or perish' (Brien, 2008; Dowling, 2008; Starrs, 2008) remains an open question that needs development in future research. From our perspective, as both students and academics, the PhD by publication produced both an enriching doctoral experience and an enhanced publication record. Further research across institutions and disciplines is required to understand the changing place of the PhD in the academy, academic careers and scholarly identities.

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Notes

- ¹ In North America, the terms ‘advising’ and ‘advisor’ are more commonly used to describe the process of guiding a research student/doctoral candidate through to completion. We use the European and Australian terms ‘supervision’ here.
- ² Currently, Dowling is coordinating Macquarie University’s Supervision Enhancement Program which is designed to enhance supervision practices across the university (see http://www.mq.edu.au/lrc/about_it/hdr/program_2011.htm).

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