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Practical strategies for addressing social sciences and humanities compilation thesis challenges

Dissertations in the social sciences and humanities (HS) have increasingly adopted the compilation thesis model, originally prevalent in the natural sciences (NS). This transition has introduced unique challenges that demand attention from both doctoral students and supervisors. This article aims to shed light on these challenges and proposes three key approaches — holistic view, coherence, and anchoring — to help address them effectively.

The rising popularity of compilation theses in HS signifies a shift from traditional monographs (Paltridge, 2002; Krumsvik, 2022). While the NS model has proven successful, it is essential to recognize that HS fields possess distinct traditions, expectations, and demands (Nerland, 2012; Becher & Trowler, 2001). This article seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by exploring the genre-specific conditions for writing compilation theses in HS and delving into doctoral supervision within this context.

We propose three approaches. First, maintaining a holistic perspective throughout the thesis-writing process is vital, ensuring a connection between the individual articles and the overarching narrative of the kappa (Krumsvik, 2022). Second, prioritizing coherence involves emphasizing logical consistency, integrating the articles and the kappa, aligning research questions, and maintaining methodological continuity (Lauvås & Handal, 2005). Finally, it is crucial to consider the thesis's different theoretical and methodological anchors as a whole (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

In conclusion, the compilation thesis model in HS presents challenges distinct from those encountered in NS. Doctoral students and supervisors can navigate these challenges by considering the approaches above. The article suggests approaches to be considered at certain

stages of working with the dissertation, and topics for supervision to discuss during these. This will, we believe, facilitate the successful completion of compilation theses.

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