The Composing Process and the Academic Composing Process

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In several publications (Krashen 1994, 2004), I have reviewed the research showing that writing itself does not contribute to language or literacy development. The arguments are:

(1) Those who write more do not write better.
(2) Increasing student writing does not increase writing quality or improve any other aspect of literacy.
(3) We do not write enough to account for the complexity of the written language.

The third point is only an argument against the strong hypothesis that writing is the only way we learn to write, but arguments (1) and (2) destroy even a weak form of the Writing Hypothesis, the position that writing makes a contribution to literacy development.

But writing helps us in other ways. Smith (1994) tells us we write for two reasons. One is obvious: We write to communicate with others (letters, emails, reports) and ourselves (notes, lists, reminders). The second is less obvious but profound: We write to solve problems and to make ourselves smarter.

The Language Arts profession, in the last few decades, has made tremendous progress in describing how writers do this, how they use writing to solve problems and make themselves smarter. The strategies they use are called *the composing process.*

Components Of The Composing Process

The fundamental generalization underlying the composing process is simple: Writing makes you smarter. When we write, our minds automatically help us solve problems, and in doing so, stimulates intellectual growth. The claim has

been made, in fact, that writing is the primary means by which we get new ideas: Inspiration, suggests Boice (1994), is the result of writing, not the cause, a view shared by several professional writers, as we will see later.

Revision

Perhaps the most fundamental strategy good writers use, the one that differentiates them very clearly from poor writers, is that good writers understand the importance of revision, and accept that revision is part of the composing process (Krashen 1984). They understand that as they write, they come up with new ideas, that it is in revision that writers discover problems and solve them: "The heart of revision is the process by which writers recognize and resolve the dissonance they sense in their writing" (Sommers 1980, p. 385).

Average and poor writers do not know this, and often regard revision as a sign of weakness, laboring under the false impression that they are supposed to get everything right in the first draft.

Interviews with writers reveal that they value revision. Here are two examples, one about Neil Simon and one from Kurt Vonnegut.

"In WHO'S WHO, Simon lists his recreational activities as golf and rewriting, and clearly yet another part of the secret of Simon's success is his willingness to write the same scene over and over again until he feels that he has at last got it right. This is the mark of the professional - mediocre writers write, good writers rewrite." (Meehan 1978).

"Novelists have, on the average, about the same IQs as the cosmetic consultants at Bloomingdale's department store. Our power is patience. We have discovered that writing allows even a stupid person to seem halfway intelligent, if only that person will write the same thought over and over again, improving it just a little bit each time. It is a lot like inflating a blimp with a bicycle pump. Anybody can do it. All it takes is time." (Vonnegut 1981).

Planning/Flexible Planning

Murray (1984) points out that "experienced writers refuse to leave on a trip without a map. The map may be in the head or on paper, but the writer needs a sense of direction." (p. 223).

A number of studies confirm that good writers have a plan before they actually start writing, a road map of where they want to go (Krashen 1984). These plans, however, are not always formal outlines, and they are not written in stone – they

are flexible plans. As writers write, as they come up with new ideas, they change their plans.

Without a plan of some kind, writers run the danger of losing their way, of wandering off into areas they did not intend to explore. This may lead to unexpected discoveries, but it can also be counterproductive when a definite problem needs to be solved. Rose's subject Liz, a writer who was classified as a "high blocker," and "did not map out her discourse" (Rose 1984, p. 48). According to Rose, Liz "made decisions about the direction and shape of her discourse incrementally as she proceeded. This approach led to discoveries as well as dead ends..." (p. 48).

While some poor writers have no plan, others over-plan. Their plans are often rigid, and they are unwilling to change them. Such writers are unprepared for new ideas that emerge while they write, and even regard them as annoyances. This is a tragedy.

"For all the planning, writers are surprised at what they write." (Murray 1990, p. 91).

Rereading

"I rise at first light and I start by rereading and editing everything I have written to the point I left off." (Hemingway, in Winokur 1990, p. 247).

Good writers frequently reread what they have already written, a strategy that helps them not only keep their place, but allows them to re-evaluate what they have done and come up with improvements. Rescanning and rereading appears to help the writer maintain a sense of the whole composition, or "conceptual blueprint." (Beach 1976).

In addition to Hemingway, other writers who reported starting each workday by reading include Jonathan Kellerman, who uses this practice to "segue into new material" (Perry 1999, p. 178), and Octavia Butler, who typically rewrites the last page she wrote at her last session, as a "lead-in" to the current session (p. 177.)

Delay Editing

An important way in which good writers differ from poor writers is that good writers do not stop to consider small aspects of form while they are working on their ideas (Krashen 1984). They delay editing until after an acceptable draft has been written. There are good reasons to do this. One obvious reason is that the current draft may not be the final one. Another is that stopping for editing disturbs

the flow of writing and coming up with ideas. Perl (1979) studied college level remedial writers. One of her subjects, "Tony," had a concern with form "that actually inhibited the development of ideas. In none of his writing sessions did he ever write more than two sentences before he began to edit." (Perl 1979, p. 324).

Also, when writers think about form while creating meaning, they can easily lose their place, or "lose the gist" of what they are trying to say (Jones 1985). Rose (1984) and Lee and Krashen (2002) provide empirical evidence that premature editing and writing blocks are related.

Peter Elbow advises writers to "Treat grammar as a matter of very late editorial correcting: never think about it while you are writing. Pretend you have an editor who will fix everything for you, then don't hire yourself for this job until the very end" (Elbow 1973, p. 137).

Incubation

"Composition is not enhanced by grim determination" (Frank Smith 1994, p. 131).

Creativity research has revealed that problem-solving often requires "an interval free from conscious thought" to allow the free working of the subconscious mind (Wallas 1926, p. 95). Wallas reports that he first heard of the idea of incubation from the physicist Helmholz. In a speech delivered in 1891, Helmholz described how new thoughts came to him: After previous investigation, "in all directions, ... happy ideas come unexpectedly without effort, like an inspiration ... they have never come to me when my mind was fatigued, or when I was at my working table. ... They came particularly readily during the slow ascent of wooded hills on a sunny day" (p. 91).

Tolle (1999) is clearly referring to incubation when he notes that "All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness ... Even the great scientists have reported that their creative breakthroughs came at a time of mental quietude" (p. 20).

One of Einstein's biographers reports that Einstein's eldest son said "Whenever he felt that he had come to the end of the road or into a difficult situation in his work, he would take refuge in music, and that would resolve all his difficulties." (Clark 1971, p. 106). Clark notes that for Einstein, "with relaxation, there would often come the solution" (p. 106).

Of course, these moments of insight are preceded by hard work, by what Wallas (1926) refers to as "preparation." The mathematician Poincaré (1924) agrees,

stating that there must be a “preliminary period of conscious work which also precedes all fruitful unconscious labor” (Poincare 1924).

Periods of incubation can be very short, lasting just a few minutes, of medium length, or quite long. Piaget told Gruber (1995) that after he worked for a few hours, “he would go for a walk, not think about very much, and when he went back to his desk his ideas would be clearer ...” (p. 526). The physicist Feynman mentions longer breaks: “You have to do six months of very hard work first and get all the components bumping around in your head, and then you have to be idle for a couple of weeks, and then - ping - it suddenly falls into place...” (Csikszentmihalyi & Sawyer 1995).

Allowing time for incubation is clearly a part of the successful composing process: writing requires time off-task as well as on-task. Forcing writers to sit without a break and write nonstop, as we do in school, and as we require on examinations, denies the possibility of incubation. These practices teach students that incubation is not a part of writing.

Daily Regular Writing

Successful authors are in near-universal agreement that writing requires regularity, and that ideas and inspiration are the result of writing, not the cause.

Author Rosellen Brown tells us that writing “is a job, not a hobby ... you have to sit down and work, to schedule your time and stick to it ...” (Winokur 1999, p. 188). Walker Percy agrees: “You’ve got to sit down and follow a schedule. Unless you do that, punch the time clock - you won’t ever do anything.” (Murray 1990, p. 60). Irving Wallace was a regular worker, and investigated the writing habits of other writers. He concluded, “...the vast majority of published authors have kept, and do keep, some semblance of regular daily hours...” (Wallace and Pear 1971, pp. 518-9).

Of course, we see some variability in when writers work. Michael Chabon works at night, from 10 pm to 4 am, and Maya Angelou worked in the morning, from 6:30 am to 12:30 or 1:30 pm. (Nickell 2002).

Irving Wallace (Wallace and Pear 1971) informed us that some writers made sure they worked a certain amount of time each day (Balzac, Flaubert, Conrad, Maugham, Huxley, Hemingway). Other writers counted pages (Updike, West, Bradbury) and others counted words (Haley, Wambaugh) (Murray 1990, pp. 48-65). But all did daily regular writing. All came to the same conclusion that children’s book author Kate DiCamillo did: “When I turned 29, I had an

epiphany: I'd never get published if I didn't actually write." (Cruger 2004, p. 35). She began a two-page per day routine, which resulted in success.

Successful writers also agree that inspiration comes from writing, not vice-versa: Stephen King advises writers not to "wait for the Muse. Your job is to make sure the muse knows where you are going to be every day from nine 'til noon or seven 'til three" (King 2000, p. 157). Susan Sontag says the same thing: "Any productive writer learns that you can't wait for inspiration. That's the recipe for writer's block" (Brodie 1997, p. 38), as does Madeleine L'Engle: "Inspiration usually comes during work, rather than before it" (Brodie 1997, p. 35).

Successful writers also tell us that a modest amount of daily regular writing is much more efficient than "bingeing," that is, occasional long sessions of intensive effort. According to Woody Allen, "If you work only three to four hours per day, you become quite productive. It's the steadiness that counts" (Murray 1990, p. 46).

A series of studies by Robert Boice provides strong empirical confirmation for the value of daily regular writing (see especially Boice 1994). In one study (Boice 1982), junior faculty members who had a "regular, moderate habit of writing," were compared to those who were "binge" writers ("... more than ninety minutes of intensive, uninterrupted work)" over a six-year period. The differences in productivity were amazing: the regular writers produced more than five times as much, and all got tenure or promotion. Only two of the binge writers got tenure.

The regular writers were clearly more relaxed as well as more productive: The binge writers showed three times as many signs of "blocking": when binge writers actually wrote, "they more commonly did nothing or very little (for example, recasting a first sentence or paragraph for an hour; staring at a blank screen)." Also, binge writers "were three times more likely to be rushing at their work ... during scheduled writing periods" (p. 68), and were three times more likely to put off scheduled writing in favor of "seemingly urgent, no more important activities."

Despite the failure of their approach, binge writers still believed in it. One subject, for example, said: "You can't get enough good writing done in little pieces; you need big, undisturbed blocks of time."

In another study, Boice (1983) asked writers to write under different degrees of regimentation. He compared those who were asked to do no writing at all, writing whenever the writer felt like it, daily regular writing, and what can be called "forced writing." In forced writing, writers were required to write at least three

pages per day. If they did not meet this quota, they agreed to donate money to a "despised charity."

Boice reported that tightening the restrictions resulted in more writing, as well as the production of more new ideas, with forced writers producing the most writing and the most new ideas. The forced writers, however, did only as much as they had to in order to avoid punishment, averaging 3.1 pages per day. In my analysis of Boice's data (Krashen 2002), I concluded that those who did daily regular writing were the most efficient, producing the most new ideas per page, about double the number per page as the forced writers.

Daily regular writing is a profound strategy. It helps for several reasons. First, it promotes incubation between sessions, keeping your project on your mind. When this happens, it results in "more noticing of things that relate to the writing, noticing that adds ideas and connections because the writing stays fresh in the mind each day" (Boice 1994).

Second, daily regular writing helps solve one of the most serious problems writers have, but one rarely mentioned in the professional literature: warming up.

Many writers complain that it is often hard to get started writing (and once they start, it is hard to stop). Flaubert wrote: "I have the peculiarity of a camel - I find it difficult to stop once I get started and hard to start after I've been resting" (Murray 1990, p. 31). Gore Vidal has a similar problem: "I'm always reluctant to start work, and reluctant to stop" (Kellogg 1994, p. 192).

The problem appears to be that writers wait too long between writing sessions. When writers do this, they "lose their place" as well as their enthusiasm. If Charles Dickens missed a day of writing, "he needed a week of hard slog to get back into the flow" (Hughes, in Plimpton 1999, p. 247). Stephen King has a similar experience: "If I don't write every day, I begin to lose my hold on the story's plot and pace. Worst of all, the excitement of spinning something new begins to fade. The work begins to feel like work." (King 2000, p. 153). Regular daily writing, Boice notes, "helps... by eliminating most or all the need for a warm-up in each new session." (Boice 1994, p. 106).

Delay consideration of audience

I have no empirical evidence for this aspect of the composing process, only Peter Elbow's advice. Elbow advises writers to delay considerations of audience until the paper is nearly finished.

"Beware the common advice that has blocked so many people over the years: that you must always keep your audience in mind from the beginning of any piece of writing. This is wrong just like that other common advice: that you must always figure out your meaning before you start" (Elbow 1981, pp. 197-198).

Thinking about audience is analogous to thinking about editing: doing it too early will disrupt the flow of ideas. Also, since writing makes you smarter, the article may end up quite different from your initial conception.

The Academic Composing Process

The research literature provides only hints concerning the academic composing process, how nonfiction and research writers work. My hypothesis is that much if not all of the "regular" composing process applies to academic writing. What follows is a combination of what is available in the professional literature as well as what I have learned from my own experience, which I present as conjectures or preliminary hypotheses about the components of the academic composing process.

Don't be in a hurry, don't overwork

Regardless of deadlines, successful academics work in a relaxed but focused manner, working hard, but not in a hurry, and allowing for incubation. They understand that overconcern with deadlines is a sure way to miss the deadline. For eminent researchers, deadlines don't seem to matter one way or the other: Hargenes (1978) found no relationship between having deadlines and eminence among university faculty members in chemistry, mathematics, and political science. This is probably because they ignore them. (Eminence was defined as the number of works published and number of citations).

I wonder if my own experience is typical: deadlines immobilize me and lead to avoidance and blocking. Forgetting the deadline is the only cure: when I do this, and pretend I have all the time I need, I always meet the deadline easily.

There is agreement that successful professionals in general put in more time than those who are less successful, but the difference, when considered as hours per day, is modest. What is apparently the case is that the modest differences in hours per day totals up to a substantial cumulative difference over the years (Ericsson, Krampe, and Tsech-Romer 1993). In addition, and this is the major point of this section of this paper, successful academics work differently: they have more effective strategies.

Write before you read

Although there is no empirical research on this hypothesis, writing experts recommend that academics begin writing before doing their literature review (more about that later) and before they think about gathering data. They recommend beginning by putting their ideas in outline form, or in any kind of planning format that feels comfortable.

Peter Elbow explains the reason for this: it's much easier to write in the beginning when you know less about a topic. If you start to read all the relevant literature before you start to write, or worse yet (as we will see later) start to gather data before you write, you will end up with chaos and it is easy to get lost: "You already have so much material ... that you can't find a place to start, you can't find a beginning to grab hold of in that tangled ball of string ... writing first thoughts ... keeps you from falling into this research paralysis" (Elbow 1981, p. 64). Boice (1994) arrives at similar conclusions when he recommends that writers "begin before feeling fully ready or inspired."

If you start writing immediately, you will develop a clear picture of what your own ideas and thoughts are. Your ideas will, of course, change as you write, and, as we will see, as you read and as you gather data, but you will never be lost. As noted earlier, as we write, we arrive at deeper understandings. The changing outline and eventually changing text is a record of this cognitive growth.

If you begin your project by writing, you will set forces in motion in a way that is not possible by reading or gathering data. Incubation will begin, and it will seem that the world will conspire to give you new ideas. Successful academics usually carry a notebook to capture their new ideas, the results of incubation.

Read after you have a plan, read narrowly

Successful academics read after they have a plan. And they read "narrowly," only reading what they need to read for the paper they are working on now. They do not attempt to "keep up with the literature." Bazerman (1985), in a study of physicists, noted that they read current journals regularly, but only read and studied those papers that related to their current projects, filing the others for later reading, when they became relevant.

I have found that if I read an article only to "keep up," I forget the contents nearly immediately. If I read it because it relates to an issue I am currently involved with, I remember it very well. "Keeping up" just doesn't work.

Reminder: Flexible plans

As noted earlier, good writers are willing to change their plans as they work. Similarly, successful academics return to their plan frequently while reading the research of others.

My practice is to immediately return to my plan whenever any idea or piece of data is relevant to the project I am working on. This is hard to do, but it can make a huge difference, and giving in to the urge to read on can result in a complete loss of the idea and how it fits into your plan. Whenever I think, "I'll certainly remember this," I usually don't. Even when I mark the section, and go back to it later, the original insight as to how it relates to the current project may be lost.

Interviews with creative thinkers reveal that they get most of their original ideas from their own previous work: while they also get new ideas from reading, they generally read in order to confirm their own ideas (Glueck and Jauch 1975).

In summary: successful academics, I am hypothesizing, first make sure their own ideas are clear in their minds by writing, then they read to see if there is evidence supporting their ideas, returning to their writing whenever they find supporting, or contrary, ideas. They are happy to return to their plan, happy to make changes. When they have to adjust, or even revise their plan or prose because of contrary data, they are happy because it means they have learned something new.

Writing up the study

Quite often, a review of previously published research will be sufficient. Some of the most important breakthroughs in science have been either "secondary analyses" (re-analysis of previously published data using new statistical tools or addressing different hypotheses) or "meta-analyses," a statistically precise way of analyzing large numbers of studies. When necessary, however, successful academics will do primary research.

Doing primary research

Successful researchers, I hypothesize, try to use existing sets of data and avoid collecting fresh data whenever they can. They use published data and test scores in the public domain whenever possible to save themselves time, and to save their subjects time. When possible, they use "unobtrusive measures," data that subjects contribute without knowing it, and without being bothered (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest 1966).

Webb et al. provide many examples of unobtrusive research, such as the following: “A Chicago automobile dealer, Z. Frank, estimates the popularity of different radio stations by having mechanics record the position of the dial in all cars brought in for service ... These data are then used to select radio stations to carry the dealer’s advertising.” (p. 39). For current examples, see Levitt and Dubner 2005.

NOTE: I have also noticed that good researchers, when they must construct their own instruments and actually deal with subjects, tend to make the intervention or instrument as efficient as possible, and try to use at least some tools developed by other researchers, which not only saves effort but also facilitates comparisons across studies.

Writing up the research paper

Which journal? Forget it.

Peter Elbow’s advice, discussed earlier, on delaying consideration of audience until one’s ideas are worked out in some detail, applies to academic writing as well. Even though beginning scholars are advised to familiarize themselves with the journals and aim their publication at a specific target journal, I suspect that good scientists don’t do this at all. I suspect they do not consider where they will publish their work until the paper is nearly complete.

There is good reason for this: considerations of audience, as Elbow has told us, are similar to considerations of form, and can prevent the writer from coming up with new ideas.

The Central Table hypothesis

My hypothesis is that nearly every empirical study has one table that is, in a sense, the center of gravity of the study, with the core information. The first step in writing up an empirical study is the construction of that table. In fact, I suspect that successful empirical scientists consider what will go in the central table before gathering any data, with all columns and rows labeled, and with predictions as to how the study will come out, that is, with pretend data, including means and standard deviations. These predictions may, of course, be incorrect, and good scientists are prepared for this as well.

I also suspect that successful empirical scientists have a good idea of what statistical tests they will use before gathering the data.

After data is gathered and analyzed, and the central table is constructed, the rest is easy. Here is the order:

(1) the central table
(2) the other tables
(3) the results section
(4) the procedure section
(5) the conclusion
(6) the introduction
(7) the abstract

Once the central table is done, the "supporting tables" (descriptive data, additional analyses) are constructed. The prose in the results section simply frames the tables. The procedure section is straightforward, consisting only of a description of the subjects, methodology and measures used.

Conclusions generally begin with a short summary of the results, which is a real service to the reader. After that, most conclusions move on to the "apologies" section in which the researcher confesses the flaws of the studies, followed by the implications for theory, and how future studies can fill gaps and push the quest further.

Successful academic writers, I suspect, write the introduction last, and keep their introductions focused. They also do not write reviews of the literature.

It is highly inefficient to begin writing a research paper with the introduction, because it is hard to know, until you have written the results and conclusion, just what you are introducing. The introductions to the most effective professional papers merely provide the reader with the background necessary to read the paper; they assume that the reader already has a considerable background in the topic and they assume that the reader does not need to be convinced that the writer has read everything in the field.

How effective writers deal with criticism and rejection

Everybody gets rejected, not everybody talks about it. Refusal rates of most journals are very high: it is difficult to get published because journals receive so many papers and have room only for a small fraction of them (it would help, of course, if researchers wrote shorter papers). The average American Psychological Association journal rejected 73% of the articles submitted in 1997, and some journals reject as many as 96% (Research Exchange Newsletter 1999).

Are journals arbitrary?

There have, of course, been accusations of arbitrariness in the review process and there is evidence supporting these accusations. In one famous study (Peters and Ceci 1982), twelve previously accepted papers were changed only slightly and resubmitted under different names to journals that had accepted them: reviewers recognized only three of the papers as previously published, and eight of the remaining nine were rejected for publication, mostly because of methodology. (Incidentally, Peters and Ceci's article was initially rejected for publication, first by Science and then by the American Psychologist; Campanario 1993.)

Are journals conservative?

Each paper usually needs to be read by three referees. If any of the three has serious reservations about a paper, it will not be published. This seems to guarantee that any paper with controversial ideas or conclusions will not get published, resulting in a tendency for conservative, bland papers to be published, stimulating comments such as the following:

"One of the roles of journals almost appears to be to sift out and reject really original contributions" (H. Redner, cited in Campanario 1993).

Peer review "favours unadventurous nibblings at the margin of truth rather than quantum leaps" (S. Lock, cited in Campanario 1993).

But the situation is not nearly as hopeless as it seems. While some papers that eventually became highly cited or even Nobel Prize winners were initially rejected by journals, it appears to be the case that many good papers are not. Campanario (1993) analyzed authors' essays written about their papers that were considered "citation classics" because they had been cited an unusually large number of times. Campanario found only about 5% of the authors reported having had problems getting their paper published. Writers can find even more consolation in Rotten Reviews and Rejections (Henderson and Bernard 1998), a collection of bad reviews that famous, successful books received when they were first published.

Here, for example, is what Paul Theroux said about Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* when it was first published:

"This crappy novel, misusing vulgarity to the point where it becomes purely foolish, picturing women as a hapless organ animated by the simplest ridicule, and devaluating imagination in every line ...represents everything that is to be loathed in American fiction today" (Henderson and Bernard, p. 119).

And here is Jong's reaction, invited by the editors of Rotten Reviews and Rejections.

"Since *Fear of Flying* is now a bona fide classic, with ten million copies in print from Japanese to Serbo-Croat not to mention twenty other languages, this review does not have the personal sting it once had. Nevertheless, it broke my heart in 1974 and, in a way, is typical of treatment fresh and radical books receive" (Henderson and Bernard, p. 168).

I suspect that successful academic writers deal with feedback fairly promptly, and accept those criticisms they feel are right, and reject those that they feel are wrong, even if it doing the latter means not getting the paper published in a prestigious journal. They understand that the paper is theirs, not the journal's and not the reviewer's, and that the author is responsible for the content. They realize that they cannot excuse errors in their writing by blaming reviewers and that it is better to walk away from a journal or publishing house than to give in and simply make all changes reviewers request.

Summary

I present here a summary of the major hypotheses presented. Some should more properly be labeled "conjectures" because they are based on so little empirical data. Nevertheless, they provide a start at discovering the answer to an extremely important question: How do people use writing to solve problems and make themselves smarter?

GWs (Good Writers) understand that revision helps them come up with new ideas. They do not confuse revision with editing, and regard their first drafts as tentative.

GWs have a plan before writing, but the plans are flexible.

GWs frequently reread what they have written.

GWs delay editing (formal aspects) until their ideas have been worked out.

GWs intersperse periods of relaxation with periods of intensive activity, to encourage problem solving and loosen writer's blocks.

GWs treat writing as a job, keep regular hours and/or have set goals, and write regularly. They do not engage in binge writing.

GWs delay considerations of audience until their ideas have been worked out.

GAWs (Good Academic Writers) work in a relaxed but focused manner. They ignore deadlines.

GAWs write out their ideas before "reviewing the literature."

GAWs read narrowly, reading only what they need to read that applies to the problem they are working on now. They do not attempt to "keep up with the literature."

GAWs return to their plan frequently while reading the research of others.

GAWs recognize the importance of secondary and meta-analysis and understand that primary research is only one way of doing research.

GAWs take advantage of existing sets of data, and try to do unobtrusive studies. They take full advantage of tools developed by other scholars.

GAWs delay consideration of where their work will be published until their ideas have been worked out.

Strategies for writing up empirical studies:

1. There is one central table in every empirical study: GAWs consider the content of this table before gathering data.
2. The first step in writing up the paper is constructing the central table, followed by the peripheral tables and the prose parts of the results section. The next step is to write up the procedure section.
3. GAWs then write the conclusion.
4. GAWs then write the introduction, which is not a review of the literature but is focused on the particular study.

GAWs deal with reviews, criticisms and rejections without delay. They understand that there is some arbitrariness in reviews, and that many journals are conservative, but GAWs usually succeed in getting their work published in appropriate places where the desired readership will see their work.

GAWs accept criticisms and comments that are helpful to them, and do not accept those that are not.

Note: There is some evidence that successful academic writers are resistant to peer pressure and fashion. Simonton (1984) asks this question. When we consider eminent thinkers, was their thinking (a) ahead of the times or (b) with the times?

The answer is none of the above. They are usually behind the times, often concerned with issues that are no longer popular.

Good thinkers focus on questions and issues that they decide are important, regardless of trends and fads. According to Simonton, great thinkers tend to be "unrepresentative of their times ... It is, in fact, their less distinguished colleagues who most accurately reflect the spirit of their times. The truly impressive thinkers are ruggedly independent of what the zeitgeist dictates for their generation" (p. 156).

Moreover, eminent thinkers are "oddly backward-looking in their ideas" and "struggle to consolidate the ideas of the recent past into some grand overarching synthesis" (p. 156), a conclusion that agrees with the previous claim that most breakthroughs do not come from primary research but from secondary and meta-analyses, from making sense of previous research.

Of course, just because one sticks to one's own ideas and is an independent thinker does not guarantee success or eminence. Some people should give up their wrong-headed ideas!

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