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Commissioned Article

Strategies and attributes of highly productive scholars and contributors to the school psychology literature: Recommendations for increasing scholarly productivity ☆,☆☆,☆☆☆

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ABSTRACT

In all academic fields, there are scholars who contribute to the research literature at exceptionally high levels. The goal of the current study was to discover what school psychology researchers with remarkably high levels of journal publication do to be so productive. In Study 1, 94 highly productive school psychology scholars were identified from past research, and 51 (39 men, 12 women) submitted individual, short-answer responses to a 5-item questionnaire regarding their research strategies. A constant comparative approach was employed to sort and code individual sentiments ($N = 479$) into categories. Seven broad categories of counsel for increasing productivity

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emerged: (a) research and publication practices and strategies, (b) collaboration, mentoring and building relationships, (c) navigating the peer-review process, (d) strategies to bolster writing productivity and excellence, (e) personal character traits that foster productivity, (f) preparation before entering the professoriate, and (g) other noteworthy sentiments. Results are discussed in terms of nine recommendations for scholars and graduate students who wish to increase their productivity. In Study 2, five of the most productive scholars (1 woman, 4 men) participated in a semi-structured interview about their high levels of productivity. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed, and a case analysis approach employed to profile each scholar. Study limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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1. Introduction

The lives and practices of successful men and women, those whose accomplishments rise above the ordinary, intrigue many people and have been the subject of several bestselling books. In *Developing Talent in Young People*, Bloom (1985) studied 120 highly talented individuals who reached the pinnacle of success in their respective fields by age 35. Bloom concluded that with the appropriate environmental nurturing almost anybody could mirror the accomplishments of these extraordinarily successful people. More recently, Gladwell (2008) published *Outliers*, chronicling the lives of people who had attained particularly high levels of success in their professions, including baseball and entrepreneurship. Both Bloom and Gladwell related that people do not become consummate models of accomplishment in their fields simply because they were born that way. Rather, these authors contend that people become the crème de la crème in their professions as a result of the complex interplay between what they bring to the table and the environmental conditions along the way that nurture, reinforce, and make possible their rise to the top. Under the right circumstances, any man or woman can become extraordinary at his or her craft; in academic school psychology the craft that must be cultivated is scholarly productivity. Although scholarly productivity is only one measure of success in academe, it is the benchmark against which high-stakes decisions about salary, promotion, and tenure are measured at research universities. Accordingly, successfully publishing research in peer-reviewed journal articles is the lifeblood of the graduate student seeking employment at a research university, the tenure-track assistant professor desiring tenure, and the tenured professor seeking promotion to full professor.

1.1. Productivity studies

One challenge to face when attempting to study these environmental conditions, strategies, and resources is objectively identifying the most productive scholars. This challenge may be overcome by drawing on prior research using productivity indices which have been calculated in various ways including a simple numerical tally of how many publications a researcher has published and taking into account an author's position relative to his or her co-authors. The productivity indicator of program prestige has been applied in psychology (Webster, Hall, & Bolen, 1993), education (Hsieh et al., 2004) and school psychology (Davis, Zanger, Gerrard-Morris, Roberts, & Robinson, 2005; Kranzler, Grapin, & Daley, 2011; Roberts, Gerrard-Morris, Zanger, Davis, & Robinson, 2006).

Little (1997) published the first study about the most prolific authors publishing in six school psychology journals from 1987 to 1995. He employed three productivity metrics. First, he assigned equal credit to all authors. Second, he awarded credit to first authors only. Third, he assigned authorship order credit based on the author position formula. Later, Davis et al. (2005) used the simple count method to identify the top 20 most productive authors across four school psychology journals from 1991 to 2003. Davis and colleagues noted the flawed nature of the productivity score because it penalized collaboration by awarding lower scores to authors with more co-authors. As the fields of educational psychology broadly (Hsieh et al., 2004) and school psychology specifically (Roberts, Gerrard-Morris, et al., 2006) become more collaborative,

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