Bryce Panter

Writing Self Study Part 2

ENC 1101

2/20/13

**Background:**

Perhaps the most common ailment that affects many writers is writers block. However there are some writers such as myself who aren’t affected by this notorious issue. Essentially writers block is the disruption of one’s creative flow due to a lack of ideas or an uncertainty of how to proceed. Many researchers have studied writers block. Mike Rose completed a comprehensive study of writers block by comparing those who were effected by it “The Blockers” and those who were not “The Non-Blockers” (Rose). Rose stated, “blockers may well be stymied by possessing rigid or inappropriate rules, or inflexible or confused plans” (Rose).

The first and most basic way Non-Blockers avoid writers block, is they use what Rose calls heuristics or flexible rules (Rose). As a result when Non-Blockers write their creative flow is not interrupted by an obsession over rigid rules which Rose refers to as algorithms (Rose). The second and most important way writers prevent writers block is by having clear and cogent plans. Rose expresses this when he explains that Blockers are unable to prevent writers block because of “confused plans” (Rose). Consequently the best way to become a Non-Blocker is to make clear and comprehensive plans before beginning to write.

Other researchers such as Sondra Perl and Carol Berkenkotter have also conducted studies that relate to writing processes, and in those studies good planning by certain test subjects resulted in the avoidance of writers block, however when the test subjects did not plan sufficiently, writers block ensued. The best example of planning resulting in fluent writing is the planning process of Donald Murray who was featured in Berkenkotter’s study. Before Murray began to write he stated “process goals” which where specific procedures that he created in order to write (Berkenkotter). As a result of these procedures Murray was able to easily develop sub-plans to carry out his larger plan while writing. Consequently Murray had a clear idea of what to write and was not affected by writers block. “ A second kind of planning activity was the stating of rhetorical goals, i.e. planning how to reach an audience” (Berkenkotter). This is an extremely important planning step for creating a relevant piece of rhetoric and for preventing writers block. As a result of stating rhetorical goals, it becomes easier to generate content because of how many things the writer must account for. For example one must take into account the audience, the situation, the specific purpose and more. After all the rhetorical goals are accounted for during planning, the writer should gain a considerable amount of criteria to discuss to satisfy these goals.

In Sondra Perl’s study the importance of planning is also conveyed. In Perl’s study, students who did not spend enough time planning were consumed by writers block. In the prewriting section of her study, Perl found that “When not given specific prewriting instructions, the students in this study began writing within the first few minutes”(Perl). As a result of this insufficient planning time, “students read the topic and directions a few times and indicated that they had “no idea” what to write” (Perl). This having “no idea” what to write is the epitome of writers block. If these students took longer to plan and came up with a clear strategy for writing they would not have encountered writers block.

**Methods:**

I identify as a Non-Blocker because as a result of comprehensive planning before I begin writing, I do not encounter writers block. When I create a plan for writing like Murray I first state process goals. What this means, is I state procedural goals to lead me to the development of sub plans. For example in my writing self study transcript before I began to write I stated a general process goal by stating: “I guess ill talk about recursiveness, rhetorical strategies, planning and one other topic” This specific process goal is an example of how I state specific goals that I will develop and meet.

Another similarity between Murray and my planning process is the consideration of rhetorical goals. Before I begin to write anything I always consider who my audience is, what the context of my rhetoric is, what my specific purpose is, and what the exigency is behind my writing.

After I state my process goals and consider all of my rhetorical goals I will spend at least 20 minutes writing down a flow chart or comprehensive outline of my assignment that includes my topic, my specific purpose, my main points and my supporting points. This chart or outline will also include various quotes that I plan on using to add credibility to my writing. While I am writing I use this chart or outline as a reference to keep my creative flow running smoothly. Consequently as a direct result of comprehensive planning I am a Non-Blocker.

**Discussion:**

After reading the above sections one might ask so what? The point of these methods are that they can directly benefit anyone’s writing process who takes the time to incorporate them into his or her writing style. By using my methods of comprehensive planning it is possible for anyone to become a Non-Blocker and over come the infamous writers block. The reason that so many students suffer from writers block as seen in Perl’s study is a lack of planning. Most students will jump right into writing without asking themselves the following questions: What are my goals? How will I organize my assignment? What is the rhetorical situation? What are my main points? If students take at least 20 minutes to sit down and create a legitimate plan of action, then they can also become Non-Blockers and make writers block a thing of the past.

Works Cited

Perl, Sondra. "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers." *Research in the Teaching of English*. 13.4 (1979): 317-36. Print.

Berkenkotter, Carol. "Decisions and Revisions: The Planning Strategies of a Published Writer." *College Composition and Communication*. 34.2 (1983): 156-69. Print.

Rose, Mike. "Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist Analysis of Writers Block." *College Composition and Communication*. 31.4 (1980): 389-401. Print.