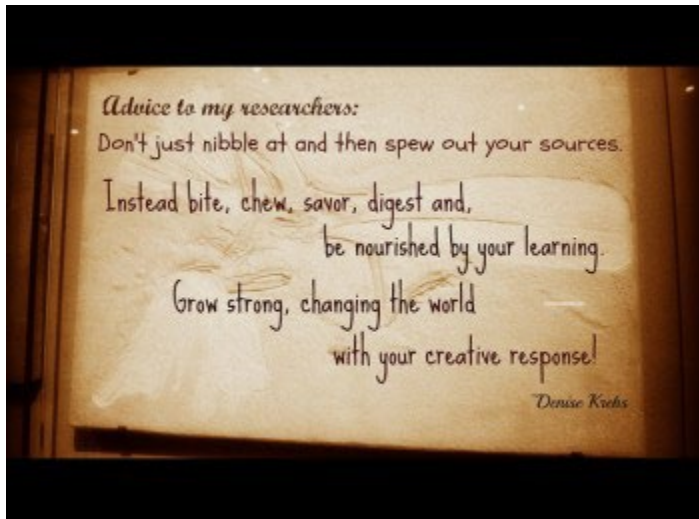


Dichos for Summer Research



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by Theresa Delgadillo

For many years, members of my family often referred to my summer schedule as my "time off" or my "long summer vacation" in contrast to their one or two weeks. As the working-class daughter of working-class parents, I understand well the fascination and misunderstanding with which many view the summer life of academics. I've also spent many a hot summer working in a factory, mill or sweatshop or in what seemed like a hermetically sealed over-air conditioned office. From that perspective, an academic summer schedule looks pretty good. Yet, if you're on the tenure-track or trying to get on the tenure-track, summer is definitely not playtime. It's precious research and writing time. Here are a few notes to remind you that even though it may seem like campus is deserted or, if you're teaching this summer, like the school year never ends, that there are many, many people, just like you, trying to get as much research and writing in over the summer as possible. Because we know that the readers of *Mujeres Talk* have a wealth of knowledge to offer us all, we wish you well in that work. In recognition of this seasonal shift in our collective work rhythms, *Mujeres Talk* will change from a weekly to a biweekly publication schedule in July and August. We will return to a weekly publication schedule in September.

"Cada maestrillo/a tiene su librillo."

We each do things in our own way, so stick to what works for you. If you don't know what your process is for getting to the writing and research, think back on how you've done it. Are you the kind of writer/researcher who needs to finish up all obligations to others (service, reviewing, reports, letters) before you can concentrate on your project? If so, create a reasonable schedule for clearing your desk of writing and work you owe others. Would making a map or list of what you'd like to accomplish this summer help you to achieve it? If so, consider penciling in some timelines or due dates for parts of the project. Do you know that support is essential to keeping you on track? Find writing/research partners. A colleague recently told me about her "writing accountability" group where everyone reports on their daily writing accomplishments. Another colleague is now away at the second two-day writer's retreat with peers that she has organized already this summer. Do you

need to have the physical stacks of books related to each piece of writing/research visible on your desk to keep you on track and moving through it? A visit to the library will get you started. Will working at the office or at home or some other third location make writing possible? I'll never forget the poet Annie Dillard's description of her choice of workplace and time: a deserted library in the wee hours, equipped with thermos and writing instruments.

“El comer y el rascar, todo es empezar.”

Even the shortest piece of writing, or note-taking or reading is a start, and we all have to start somewhere. Start. Begin. Are you going to start generating new text? Are you going to start revising and editing? Are you going to start by reviewing your field notes, or feedback you received at a conference or workshop? Are you going to start by reading and note-taking? Are you going to start by creating questions and goals for fieldwork? Do you need to begin interviewing or analyzing data? If starting is hard, set a shorter time period for beginning on first day and then add to it everyday until you get to your optimal working hours. Write down, every day, a short note on what you accomplished for that day. Once you really get going, it may be difficult to tear yourself away from your work.

“Más vale maña que fuerza.”

This saying cautions us to make intelligent use of our time and resources rather than muscling our way through. One way to think of this is to consider structuring your work so that you are writing and generating new text at times when you are most alert and creative, and revising and editing when you've temporarily run out of ideas or need a break from writing but still have time to do work. Flexibility and willingness to shift into another aspect of research/writing can work really well to complement the time you focus on writing and generating new work. This saying might also apply to establishing a regular writing practice for the summer, doing some work all the time rather than squeezing it all into a shorter period.

Reference: Bermejo, Belén. *Refranes Populares*. Madrid: Editorial Luis Vives, 2002. 33, 51,79.

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