Does using a Macintosh lead to sloppier writing?
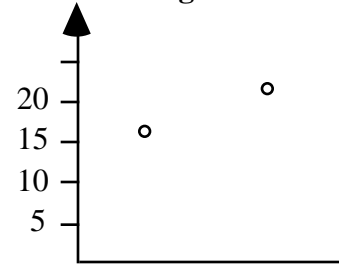
Quill or Computer?
Los Angeles Times, August 9, 1990

Item: Using an Apple Macintosh can lead to "sloppier writing and fluffier topics," according to research by a University of Delaware writing instructor. Analysis of a random sample found that 30% of the Mac writers used complex sentences compared to 50% of the IBM- clone writers.
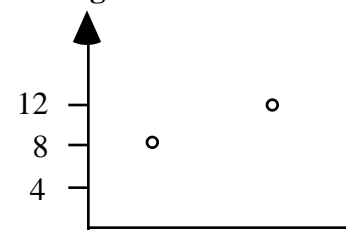
Sentence length averaged 16.3 words for the Mac essays and 22.6 from those written on PCs. And the Kincaid Scale, a measure of readability, showed Mac users writing at the 8th grade level versus 12th grade for the IBM clone group. "Never before in 12 years of teaching had I seen such a sloppy bunch of papers," wrote Delaware's Marcia Peoples Halio in "Student Writing: Can the Machine Maim the Message?" "Words were misspelled; commas were placed haphazardly; semicolons were virtually non- existent or placed by means of "breath" punctuation rules, and such fine points as quotation marks, apostrophes and question marks were treated with gay abandon." The Mac's format seems to "encourage a simple sentency structure and childish vocabulary. On the other hand, the papers that the Mac class turned in were often very creatively illustrated."
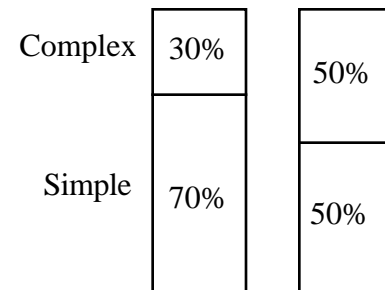
Your reaction...?

Sentence Length

Writing Level

Sentence structure

	Mac	IBM
Complex	30%	50%
Simple	70%	50%

Mac	IBM

§ 2.5 and §2.6 Causation : Example 3
Better Service from Canada Post ? *Do you agree?*

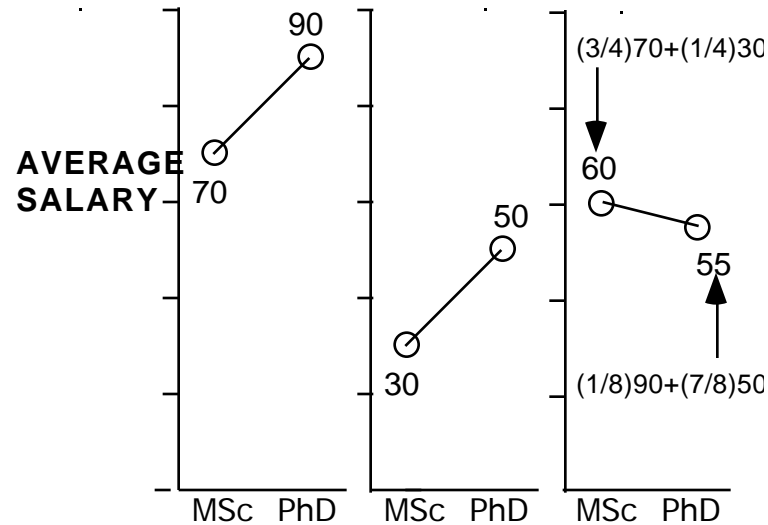In 1989, after a major 1988 restructuring, Canada Post delivered a pamphlet to every mailbox in Canada:

 "We promised you better service and we are living up to that committment. Independent auditors make ongoing measurements of our delivery performance"

		% of letters delivered on time	
		Oct–Dec'87*	**Jan–Mar'89***
Delivery	Our Promise		
Same city	2 DAYS 83%		**94%**
Same prov.	3 DAYS 79%		**95%**
B/w prov.	4 DAYS 85%		**96%**

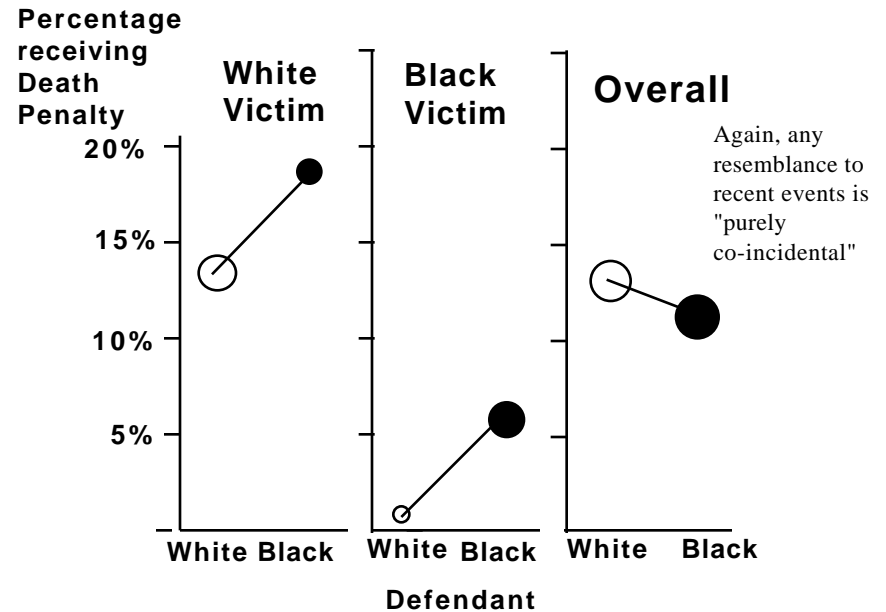* pre & ***post** restructuring programme.

§2.5 Simpson's Paradox e.g. 1
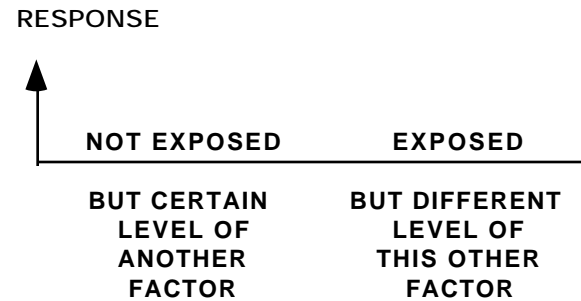[earlier Simpson, no relation to "OJ"]

INDUSTRY ACADEMIA OVERALL

§2.5 Simpson's Paradox eg 2 (source: M&M page 197)

Again, any resemblance to recent events is "purely co-incidental"

or...

or...