2003

The Art or Non-Art of Writing

Eric Ward
Georgia College & State University

Megan Melancon
Georgia College & State University

The Art or Non-Art of Writing

Eric Ward and Megan Melancon

Abstract

The science of graphology (the study and analysis of handwriting) has traditionally been applied to delineate personality traits. Some of the results have been invalidated, although we believe the field can be expanded into broader categories. Specifically, this study analyzes the handwriting of "artistic" and "non-artistic" subjects. Our working hypothesis (with results still being compiled) is that our "artistic" informants will display a less formal type of handwriting compared to our "non-artistic" informants.

Introduction

The study of handwriting started in 1622, when the first essay appeared on the subject. In 1872, this study of handwriting was given a name, and graphology was coined by a French scientist named Abbe Hypolite Michon. Along with his compatriot Jules Crepieux-Jamin, they both developed the School of Isolated Signs, which linked specific handwriting elements to specific human traits. This idea was further developed by Ludwig Klages – with the addition that handwriting is a unique self-expressive phenomenon. These paved the way for what is now modern day graphology.

Graphology is now defined as the study and analysis of handwriting. Although many of the findings from graphology have been debunked, some of the foundation ideas behind it are very valid; one of the main ones being that how we write is in some way influenced by what is going on in our lives. Institutions such as the FBI, government agencies, and even personnel services use graphology in a number of ways – to screen applicants and to ascertain employee morale.

We believe that these characteristics have only scratched the surface of what graphology could be used for. It could be argued that our handwriting is, in fact, a unique "3D snapshot" of our current state of mind and body (www.thegraphologysite.com).

Hypothesis

Our hypothesis is that "artistic", creative people have messier writing; non-creative people have neater handwriting. This idea differs from the original, most extreme version of graphology, which claimed that one's mood and/or personality can be discerned from their handwriting. We're claiming that certain abilities, such as having an artistic flare, is present in a sample of handwriting, and that with previously established graphological techniques, this ability can be recognized. We conducted a survey based on this hypothesis and will outline the methodology and conclusion in the following paragraphs.

Methodology

- Administered a survey (asked gender, age range 15-30/31-45/46-60/61+, student or faculty, major or profession if not student, consider yourself artistic or non-artistic/analytical, and asked the subject to write a sample sentence: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. We chose this sentence because it includes every letter in the alphabet).

[Visual 1]

Age Range	15-30		31-45
	46-60		61+

Circle One: Student   Faculty/Staff

What is/was your major: _____

If not student, what is your profession: _____

Do you consider yourself:

      Artistic/Creative   Non-Artistic/Analytical

Write this sentence:

    "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog."

_____

_____

- Surveys were random and anonymous.
- Only at Georgia College & State University
- Given to different courses and different departments
(not all artistic people)
- Two 'judges' (the authors of the paper)
- Looked at the surveys in random order (did not divide into artistic/non-artistic)
- After reviewing previously established criteria in graphology studies (size, layout, line direction, connection, temporal features, regularity, letterforms, angle, and shading), the judges established a three-way division based on a combination of aforementioned criteria (slant, size, rhythm) and judged them individually (Encyclopedia of Language).

For Slant – If the sample deviated from a vertical axis, it was judged to be slanted, whereas a vertical sample rated no slant.
For Size – Inconsistency in size within the sample sentence resulted in a judgment of 'artistic' while consistency within the sentence resulted in a judgment of 'non-artistic'.
For Rhythm – If the letters were connected, they were judged to be rhythmic or 'flowing'; conversely if the letters were not connected, they were judged to be choppy.
- Correlated our responses with each other
- The two judges agreed upon 93% (86 samples). The remaining 7% (6 samples) were discussed at length and reexamined.
- After discussion and reanalysis, an agreement was reached between judges, and the sample was placed into the appropriate category.
- Correlated our responses with our hypothesis.

Artistic = messy

The quick brown fox jumps over

The quick brown fox jumps over the

"The quick brown fox jumps over the

the quick brown fox jump

the lazy dog.

"The quick BROWN fox jumps o

Non-Artistic = Clean

'The quick brown Fox jumps over the lazy dog"

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Analysis
- We labeled 52 of the samples as an artistic style of handwriting (again, based on the previously established 3-way division of slant, size, and rhythm).
- We identified 40 of the handwriting samples as non-artistic/analytic (based on the same criteria) for a total of 92 samples.

Total Number of Informants

40

52
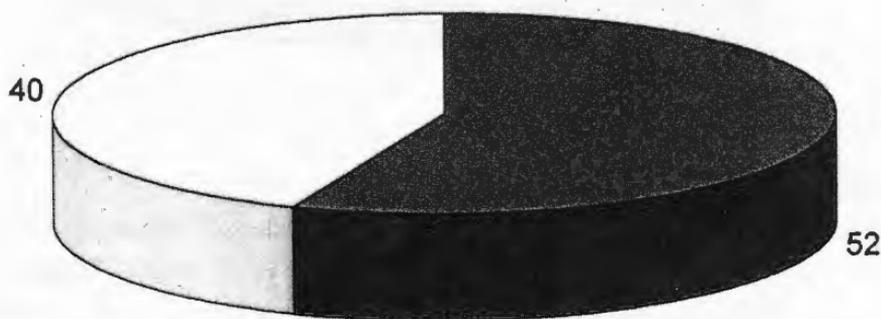
-Of the 52 'artistic' samples, 39 people identified themselves by this label; a 75% match.
- Of the 40 'non-artistic' samples, 25 of them proved to be a match; a 63% correlation.
- 64 surveys out of the 92 total surveys (70%) corroborated our hypothesis.

Corroborating Informants
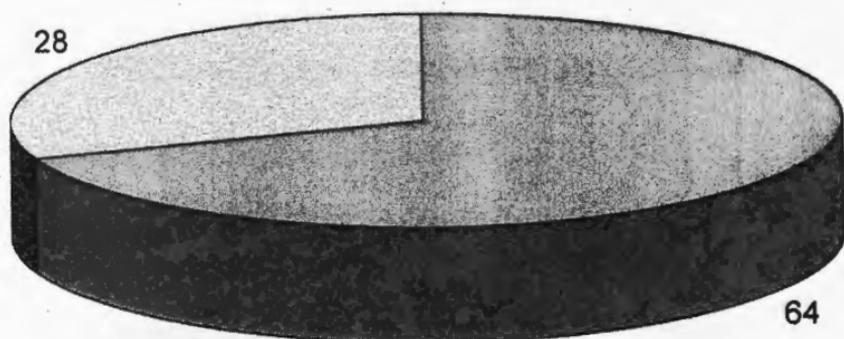
- (Misc: 6 people identified themselves as both)
- (Misc: many business majors labeled themselves as artistic, AND displayed artistic tendencies in their handwriting – Major change?)
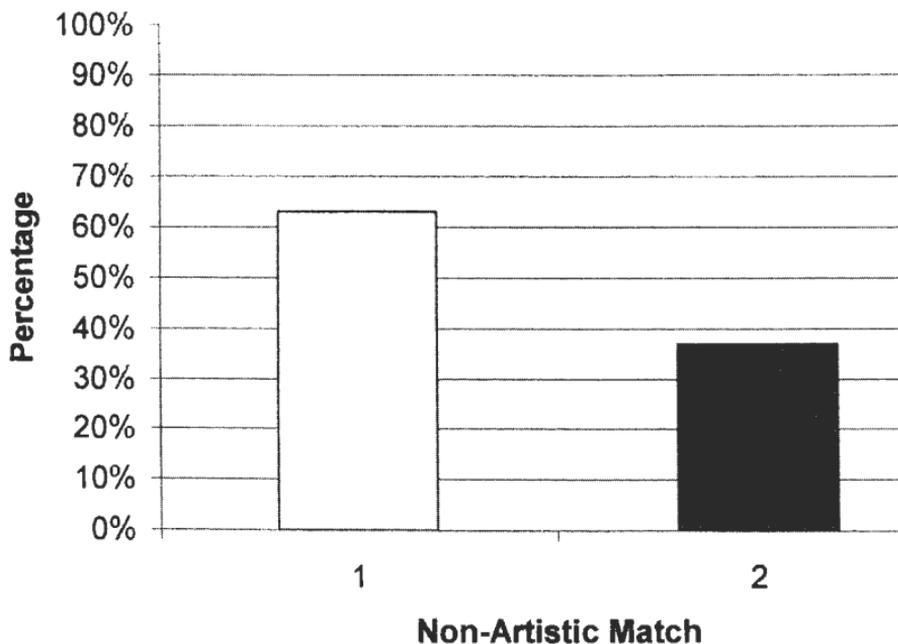
Conclusion

Based on our data, given the fact that 75% of our informants self-identified as 'artistic', our analysis of their handwriting samples proved to be an accurate measure of artistic and non-artistic abilities. The bottom line is that 39 out of 52 (75%) of our 'artistic' informants, through handwriting samples, proved themselves to be artistic.

Percentage of Artistic Matches
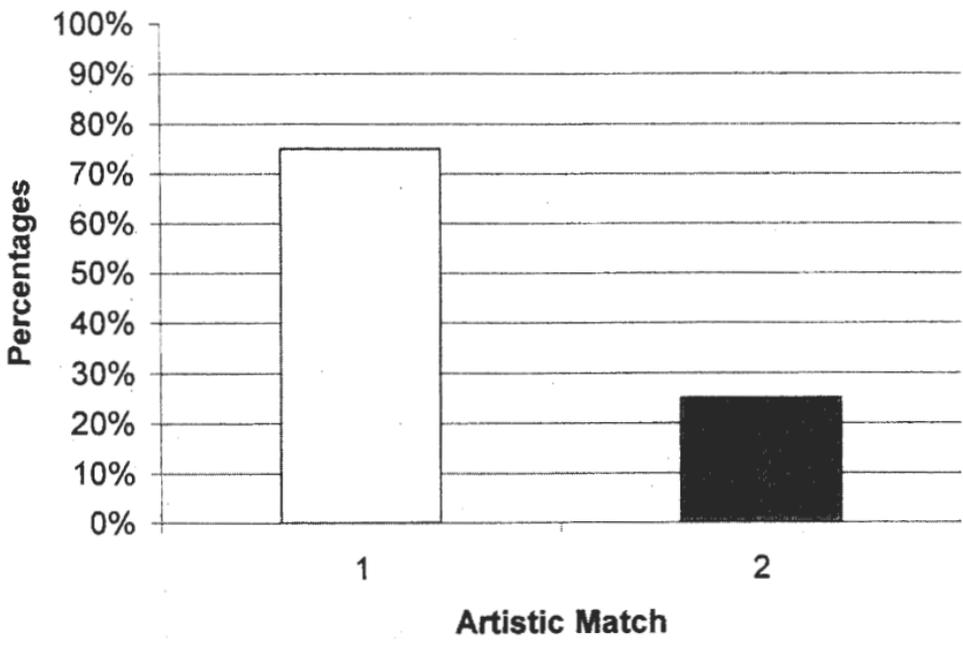
Likewise, 25 out of 40 (63%) of our 'non-artistic' participants proved themselves to be 'non-artistic'.

Percentage of Non-Artistic Matches

In conclusion, 64 out of the total 92 surveys included (70%) matched our hypothesis. It appears that 'messy' handwriting is a trait of people who identify themselves as artistic, while less messy (cleaner) handwriting is a trait of people who do not identify themselves as artistic.

Works Cited

Crystal, David. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language. Cambridge University Pres, 1987. p. 189.

Taylor, Caroline. Graphology Handwriting Analysis Service. 24 Nov. 1999. 4 Feb.2003 http://www.thegrapholgysite.com.