

Measuring Satisfaction Levels in Writing Short Fiction and Personal Narrative

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ABSTRACT

Little research has been conducted surrounding student levels of satisfaction with their own work in creative writing (CW) courses. This study aims to measure the level of student satisfaction on final drafts of short fiction and personal narrative in a creative writing course in four areas: time spent writing, level of effort in writing, number of drafts written, and presence of instructor feedback. An online survey was distributed to current and former students who have taken at least one CW course. Results showed students' levels of satisfaction on the final draft was higher when more time was spent writing, when more effort in writing was put forth, when more drafts were written, and when instructor feedback was present on drafts. These results establish these activities as beneficial to student satisfaction with their CW work in a course.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hanauer (2012) noted that meaningful literacy (ML) consists of the following elements: ML is autobiographical, describing personal experience; ML is emotional, eliciting emotional responses from the writer and reader; ML is personally insightful, providing deeper understanding of a personal experience; ML is significant to the writer, and ML is publically accessible in an authentic way to people in and out of the classroom. The creation of meaningful texts is a creative process that may or may not be assisted by intrinsic motivation or limited by extrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1985). However, intrinsic motivation shares a link between authentic pride and creative achievement (Damian & Robins, 2013). The concepts of pride in creative achievement relate to the importance of understanding students' perceptions of themselves, the level of their awareness about creativity and creative writing, and their expectations to better understand the nature of creativity and creative writing (Stillar, 2013).

Engaging in creative writing can provide writers with a sense of cognitive and affective learning (Prescott, 2011). Moreover, the nature of creative writing is connected to reading and raising critical consciousness (Stillar, 2013). It is necessary for students to have critical awareness in understanding how others perceive their own narratives. Yet their research to date does not explore students' experiences with writing creatively. The studies mentioned here leave unexplored concepts regarding the levels of satisfaction students feel about their CW experiences and their perceptions of those experiences.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

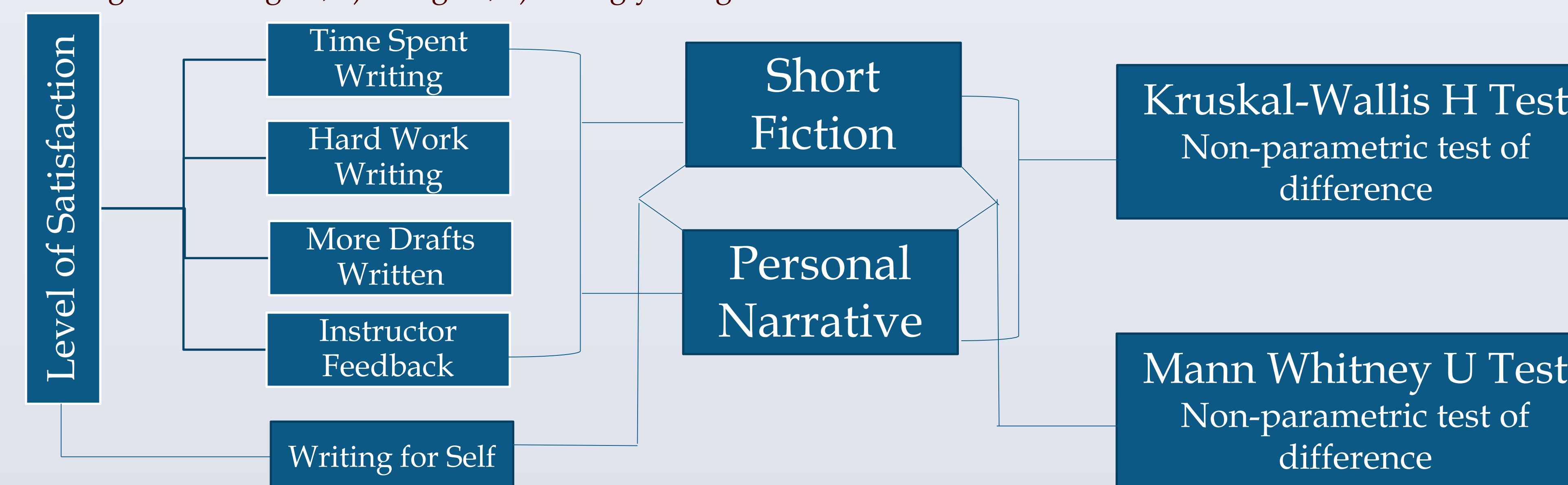
1. RQ1: Are there differences in students' levels of satisfaction relating to time spent writing, effort in writing, number of drafts written, and the presence of instructor feedback when writing short fiction and personal narratives?
2. RQ2: Is there a significant difference between levels of satisfaction for students writing short fiction and personal narratives for themselves instead of for a class?

H₀: No differences in levels of satisfaction will be found.

H₁: Significant differences will appear among reported levels of satisfaction.

DESIGN, METHODS, & MATERIALS

A validated online survey was distributed to individuals who met inclusion criteria: current or former creative writers with experience as a student in CW courses and/or genres at the college or university level who have written short fiction and personal narrative in that CW course and were over the age of 18. Participants (N = 32) responded from research sites, including a private mid-western university, a northeastern public university, and a professional group on Facebook. Participants took a 5-point Likert scale asking them to identify the extent to which they agreed to questions regarding the four criteria (time spent writing, effort in writing, number of drafts written, and the presence of instructor feedback) when writing short fiction and personal narrative. A sample question was as follows: To what extent do you agree with the following statement about writing short fiction in a creative writing course?: The more time I spend writing short fiction, the more I am satisfied with the final draft. 1) Strongly agree; 2) Agree; 3) Neither agree or disagree; 4) Disagree; 5) Strongly disagree.



RESULTS

Table 1
Mean and standard deviations of satisfaction levels in short fiction (SF) and personal narrative (PN)

	Mean	SD
SF Satisfaction	1.8828	.99306
PN Satisfaction	1.9063	1.03815

Table 2
Mean and standard deviation of satisfaction levels in writing SF and PN for oneself.

	Mean	SD
SF for Self	1.91	.818
PN for Self	2.09	1.088

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to evaluate differences of the levels of satisfaction among the four conditions (time spent writing, degree of work when writing, number of drafts written, and presence of instructor feedback on drafts) between the genres of short fiction and personal narrative. The test reported no significant difference in satisfaction levels for time spent writing in either genre $X^2(1, N=32) = .012, p = .913$; no significant difference in satisfaction levels for degree of work when writing in either genre $X^2(1, N=32) = .029, p = .865$; no significant difference in satisfaction levels for the number of drafts written in either genre $X^2(1, N=32) = .306, p = .580$; and no significant difference in satisfaction levels with presence of instructor feedback on drafts written in either genre $X^2(1, N=32) = .236, p = .627$. In all four cases, the null hypothesis was accepted.

A Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to evaluate the differences in the levels of satisfaction between writing short fiction and personal narrative for oneself, not for class. The test reported no significant differences between the levels of satisfaction when short fiction or personal narrative is written for oneself ($U = 477, p = .496$). The null hypothesis was accepted.

CONCLUSION

This study supports long-held beliefs about the work students do for CW classes. The more time students spend writing short fiction and personal narratives for class, the more satisfied they are with the final draft; the harder students work on writing short fiction and personal narrative the more satisfied they are with the final draft; the more drafts students of short fiction and personal narrative students write for class, the more satisfied they are with the final draft; and the presence of instructor feedback on drafts of short fiction and personal narrative allows students to feel more satisfied with the final draft. Moreover, the study establishes there is no difference in levels of satisfaction when students write short fiction and personal narratives for themselves instead of for a class.

Taken together, the findings of this study provide CW teachers with measured activities that create higher levels of satisfaction for students relating to their final drafts. Now, with confidence, CW teachers can rely on these activities, if encouraged and practiced, to increase student satisfaction with the final drafts of short fiction and personal narrative written for a CW class.

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