



Briefing Document: Key Insights from Handwriting University Silver Member's Class, September 2025 Trauma, Success, and Exceptions

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the key themes, analyses, and debates from the September 2025 Handwriting University Silver Class, led by Bart Baggett. The session provides a deep dive into both the practical application and the complex theoretical underpinnings of modern graphology.

Key takeaways include the utility of handwriting analysis as a powerful social tool and business "lead magnet," exemplified through real-time anecdotes. A central theme is the challenge of analyzing cursive from individuals who rarely write by hand, a phenomenon dubbed the "wobbly bicycle syndrome," which necessitates collecting both print and cursive samples for a complete picture. The class critically deconstructs common preconceptions about success traits, arguing that drivers like vanity or low self-esteem can be as potent as traditional indicators like high self-esteem or sharp intellect.

Detailed analyses of multiple handwriting samples reveal nuanced interpretations of traits such as self-castigation, stubbornness, fluidity of thinking, and social confidence. The discussion culminates in a sophisticated debate on graphotherapy, contrasting the targeted, trait-specific approach with the broader, "gestalt" method of changing margins and zones. This highlights a core philosophical tension: whether to use handwriting as a precise tool to initiate change or as a diagnostic measure to track transformation spurred by other therapeutic modalities.

The Social and Practical Applications of Handwriting Analysis

A recurring theme throughout the session is the immediate and compelling power of handwriting analysis in social and professional settings. Bart Baggett describes it as an "incredible social lubricant" capable of instantly creating connection and rapport.

- **Social Engagement:** An anecdote involving participant Melissa Mensah at a hotel bar illustrates this point. After Baggett mentioned his profession, Mensah became the "center of attention," with other patrons eagerly asking her for analysis. This skill was

shown to be an effective icebreaker, with Mensah obtaining a bartender's phone number within "16 seconds into the conversation."

- **A Proven "Dating Tick":** Baggett shared a story of meeting a man named Benjamin at a marketing conference who, 20 years prior, had used Baggett's "Grapho deck" to get "hundreds of phone numbers." The man tested the deck's accuracy by "intentionally say[ing] something wrong" and found that people would correct him, validating the traits.
- **Professional Lead Magnet:** For professionals in coaching or therapy, handwriting analysis is positioned as a "great lead magnet." It serves as a unique and engaging entry point to attract clients and begin deeper therapeutic conversations.

Challenges and Preconceptions in Modern Analysis

The discussion highlighted the evolving challenges in the field, particularly the decline of regular cursive writing, and the need for analysts to question their own biases regarding success and personality.

The "Wobbly Bicycle Syndrome"

The analysis of a handwriting sample from a highly successful 37-year-old engineer, presented by Jean Hicks, introduced a key modern challenge: interpreting the cursive of someone who rarely writes it.

- **The Problem:** The engineer's resume was "fantastic," with experience commissioning water plants and oil pipelines globally. However, his handwriting appeared slow, crafted, and lacked the dynamism Hicks expected, prompting her to ask, "What am I missing?"
- **The Diagnosis:** Baggett likened this to the "wobbly bicycle syndrome," where someone who hasn't ridden a bike in 30 years will not be fluid. He noted the writing "almost looks like someone that didn't master cursive," suggesting that for individuals under 40, a lack of regular practice significantly impacts fluidity and form.
- **The Solution:** The recommended approach is to obtain samples of both the individual's cursive and their regular printing to "stitch those two together" for a more accurate assessment.

Deconstructing Success Traits

The session actively challenged long-held assumptions within graphology that link specific traits directly to success.

- **Pointy vs. Rounded 'M's:** Jean Hicks expressed a preference for pointed 'M's and 'N's as an indicator of a sharp, analytical mind. Baggett systematically dismantled this bias:
 - His mentor, Dr. Walker, had "the most rounded M's and N's."
 - Famed musician Billy Joel has "the most unrhythmic Handwriting."
 - All valedictorians from his high school and college had rounded 'M's.
- **The Drivers of Success:** Baggett argued that success is not always born from positive, balanced traits. He stated, "some people, despite their unfortunate personality, can get rich." Negative or imbalanced traits can be powerful motivators:

- **Narcissism and Vanity:** These can "drive you to stay up late and take rejection."
- **Pain and Insecurity:** The combination of feeling "I'm not good enough" with "I want everyone to think I'm great" can create a "huge spurt of achievement."
- **The Michael Jordan Example:** Baggett asserted that changing Michael Jordan's sensitivity (the loop in his 'd') at age 16 would have removed the "fire that makes them an artist, a great artist, a great athlete," as his motivation was rooted in "revenge and approval."

Detailed Handwriting Sample Analyses

The class performed in-depth analyses of several samples, leading to specific insights and broader discussions.

Sample 1: The 37-Year-Old Engineer

- **Key Traits Identified:**
 - **Self-Castigation:** Ending loops in the lower zone that move backward into the past were identified by Josephine Diamond as a sign of self-punishment or dwelling on past events.
 - **Lack of Attention to Detail:** Missing 'i' dots were noted, but the group concluded this trait did not hinder his real-world success.
 - **Fluid Signature:** His signature was observed to be much more fluid than the rest of the writing, suggesting it is a more practiced motor skill.
- **Background Context:** Jean Hicks revealed the subject's parents were orphans from the Vietnam War. This led to a discussion about epigenetics and how trauma and beliefs can be passed down, potentially influencing the writer's psychology.

Sample 2: Bonnie Heilman (Mental Health Therapist)

This sample was unique for featuring three distinct styles of writing, from constrained to free-flowing and artistic.

- **Key Traits Identified:**
 - **Social Confidence & Open-mindedness:** Her tendency to fill the page and disregard margins was interpreted as extroversion and social confidence. Baggett noted a correlation he'd observed between not respecting margins and being "sexually open-minded."
 - **Fluidity of Thinking:** The presence of efficient connectors, such as a "Laverne and Shirley L" and a counter-clockwise 'G', indicated a brilliant, fast, and creative mind.
 - **Stubbornness:** Pyramid-shaped 't' stems were identified as stubbornness. The group distinguished this from persistence, defining stubbornness as a "defense mechanism" often developed in childhood to resist "idiot beliefs" from authority figures.
 - **Sensitivity:** A small loop in the 'd' stem indicated sensitivity. This sparked a debate on whether to eliminate such traits through graphotherapy, weighing the potential benefits against the risk of removing a key motivational driver.

Sample 3: Bartender and Friend

Samples collected by Melissa Mensah at a hotel bar were analyzed, demonstrating graphology in an entertainment context.

- **The Bartender ("Jack"):**
 - **Key Traits:** A "go-to-hell K" (resistance to micromanagement), small letters (focus, analytical), and very large lower loops (high physical and sexual energy).
- **The Bartender's Friend:**
 - **Key Traits:** Sharp 'M's and 'N's (intelligence), dominant T-bars (need for control), and rigidity. The combination was seen as a potential source of relationship conflict, where her anxiety and need for control could be perceived as "bossing [him] around."

Sample 4: 55-Year-Old Yoga Teacher

This sample, from a client of Josephine Diamond, prompted the most advanced discussion on graphotherapy.

- **Context:** A 55-year-old in recovery from alcoholism, described as socially vibrant but emotionally immature.
- **Key Traits Identified:**
 - **Mid-Zone Dominance:** Her writing was almost exclusively in the middle zone, indicating someone who "lives in the moment" and is not "consequence-driven," which correlates directly with addiction issues.
 - **Avoiding the Past:** A left margin that progressively widened down the page was interpreted as a deep-seated avoidance of past trauma or unresolved issues.
 - **Low Self-Esteem Debate:** The T-bars were low, but with no upper zone for comparison, the group concluded that while her core self-esteem might be low, it is masked by high "social confidence" and "social intelligence."

The Philosophy and Practice of Graphotherapy

The final sample led to a debate on the best practices for graphotherapy, revealing two distinct approaches.

Approach	Proponent	Core Philosophy	Method	Cautions
Precision Trait Therapy	Bart Baggett	Focuses on changing a few specific, well-researched primary traits for targeted results. Uses handwriting as a diagnostic tool to observe organic change from other therapies.	Change foundational traits like the loop in the 'd', stubborn 't' stems, or fear of success 'y's. Avoids changing broad, gestalt elements.	Changing gestalt elements (slant, margins, zones) is like "giving them 50 vitamins at the same time" and can be unpredictable or overwhelming for the client.

Gestalt and Identity Therapy	Josephine Diamond	Believes that gestalt elements like margins are foundational to a person's boundaries and psychological state. Prioritizes strengthening self-identity before addressing other traits.	Starts by working with margins ("the person's path") and the lowercase 'd' ("self-identity"). Uses these changes to "push buttons" and bring up issues for therapeutic discussion.	This is an advanced technique that should only be used in a long-term therapeutic relationship, not as a one-off analysis. Never change the slant.
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The consensus was that while both methods have merit, caution is paramount. Changing handwriting is a powerful intervention. The group affirmed that for practitioners not in a long-term therapeutic contract, sticking to the primary, well-documented trait changes is the safest and most effective path. The relationship between handwriting and personality is bi-directional: changing the writing can change the person, and as a person changes, their writing will change organically.