

# Romanticizing the Writing Center: A Case for Joy

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## Research Question and Overview

This research aims to answer the question:

**How do writing tutors, writing faculty, and scholars perceive and utilize concepts of joy, happiness, awe, and positivity in their tutoring, teaching practices, and writing processes?**

In a world where negativity is easier to access than positivity, global events and increased connection through the Internet have caused shifts in the way people think about joy and the role of joy in mediums like writing.

Using analysis of current theory, the #romanticizeyourlife trend, and interviews with writing professors and writing tutors, this research aims to highlight the importance of joy in writing and specific role of joy in the writing center.

## Methods

Theoretical Method:

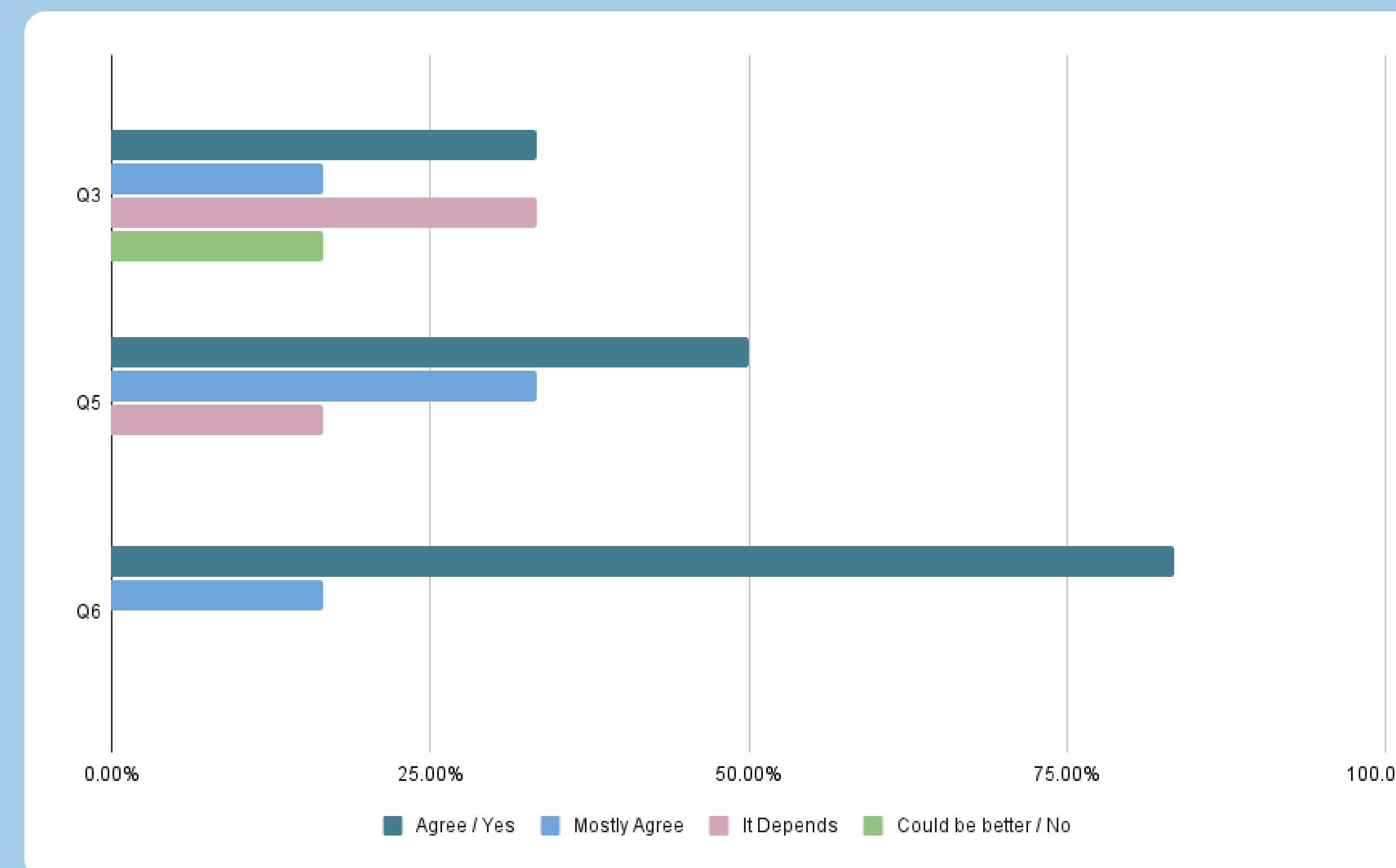
- A selection of published articles from writing theory journals was gathered based on the keywords *joy*, *happiness*, *awe*, and *romanticism*.
- An additional selection of published articles was gathered based on the keywords *positivity*, *mindfulness*, and *playfulness*.
- The gathered articles were then evaluated for original concepts and concepts that appeared in multiple articles.
- A third collection of articles was gathered focusing on Buddhist teachings, the Danish concept of *hygge*, and the Dutch concept of *gezellig*.
- All sources were evaluated and analyzed for gaps in theory and then compared to concepts shown and evolving in the #romanticizeyourlife social media trend.

Emperical Method (Data Collection and Interviews):

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with writing professors and writing tutors using the guiding questions:
  1. How would you define joy?
  2. How does joy appear in your professional life or career?
  3. Do you think joy is sufficiently represented in your work or teaching?
  4. How do you think joy could be better incorporated into your writing or teaching?
  5. Is joy important to the writing process?
  6. Do you think students, tutors, and writing professors benefit from joy in the writing process?
- Interviews were then analyzed for potential trends and quotes were selected.

## Results

- The theoretical analysis found a number of articles relating generally to positive emotions in the writing process and stress management, but very few focused on bringing joy to the process or to the individual.
- Joy was acknowledged primarily by utilizing other positive emotions—such as happiness, playfulness, gratitude, and mindfulness—and not as an individual concept.
- Social media trends, such as the #romanticizeyourlife trend, highlight the desire and need for joyful experiences more clearly than academic writings.
- Trends from semi-structured interviews (not all questions represented):



## Significance

Practices that romanticize writing and look for the joy in writing give the writer something to be proud of in their work as well as acting as a non-writing counterbalance to negativity in academic subjects or the happenings of their life outside of school.

The focus on joy has shifted and become more valuable after the shared experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ease in which negativity is accessible through social media and the Internet.

The biggest barrier to implementing joy in the writing center is that it is not a tangible thing. While it can be shaped by tangible things, as highlighted in the romaniticize your life trend, the emotion and action of joy itself is not tangible.

By romanticizing the writing center, it is possible to foster not only more open, creative, and enduring writers, but students and individuals who have the skills to weather the ups and downs of academia and life.

## What is Joy?

“When I think about joy, the first words that come to my mind are contentment, satisfaction, and I would say, a sense of at least temporary pleasure.” – Writing Professor #1

“... to me, when I hear that [joy], I imagine that there's a bit more creative freedom, a bit more play, a bit more fun in the writing process.” – Writing Professor #2

“...it's like this upswelling of positive emotion... something that's happening in whatever sense you wanted to find happening that causes this, this like upswing and positive emotion. And it's something that I think you can kind of feel physically a lot of times, as well as it being a mental, positive change.” – Writing Professor #3

“...something to do with meaning, like an activity that's meaningful, a sense of well being... It's like a very balanced whole kind of feeling.” – Writing Tutor #1

“I think that joy is when you feel content and excited to continue doing whatever it is you're doing. So I find joy when I do a good job at work and I want to continue to do a good job at work, and it makes me happy.” – Writing Tutor #2

“I think that joy is a feeling that can ebb and flow, that can come from things that make you feel good. Joy is very different for some people, writing is a good example. Some people might find a lot of joy in writing. Others, I've come to learn really despise it.” – Writing Tutor #3

### And why it matters...

“The writing process is an embodied one; by paying closer attention to our bodies, we can begin to see how it is that we write *with* our bodies.” – Sarah Johnson (2018)

“...the stakes that students face in today's academic and socio-political climates, I not only want students to boldly write, but to feel emboldened.” – Lindsey Allgood (2018)

“One of the most common misconceptions about positive thinking is that it avoids all the negatives and thus becomes unrealistic.” Samantha Rhea (2015)