

Interviewer: Today is April 26, 2013. This is *** interviewing—

Interviewee: ***.

Interviewer: For the student writing development study. How would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I think like over the past maybe year and a half, I've written a lot of more psychology papers, being a psychology major. It's more, I guess, technical in that kind of sense. I'm always writing to either talk about a study or to talk about a study that I have done. I don't do much creative writing or English papers or anything like that.

Interviewer: All right. How would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: I write a lot. I have, every semester it's pretty prominent. It's one of—this semester, all I have is papers, no exams at all. Then I guess I write for myself, too. What things are going on, and stuff like that. Last summer I went to [country] and then I started writing cuz I was in a different country by myself, without family or friends. That was a way to just express what I was thinking.

Interviewer: All right. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: I really didn't—I was used to the five-paragraph essay format that you do in high school. I didn't write much argumentative stuff. I remember [English course], that was all we did. We were just trying to prove something. When I started, I didn't even know what writing was, I guess. Just like the simple high school kind of model. I was definitely an amateur, I guess you would say.

Interviewer: Would you say you've changed? How has it changed?

Interviewee: Even just that class changed me a lot. It just, I started writing actual papers that were lengthy. Started making outlines before I wrote. I never used to do that, either. In high school, you could throw a paper together in like a day, and be fine with it. Not edit it over and over again. Now I'll like write—sometimes I won't even, I'll make an outline and then I'll just write, cuz I feel like I just need to get something down on the paper. Then I'll edit three times. Print it out and read it and edit it, because for me it's easier to see it and change things than on the computer screen. Yeah, it's definitely—

Interviewer: To what would you attribute that change or that growth to?

Interviewee: I think that first class, we had to do peer, like, your peers would have to read your papers and critique them. Then we had writing consultations with our professor. Then also in some of my psych classes, we've had writing consultations and just sitting down with them and having them tell you what you could work on and stuff, giving you ideas, helps a lot. Then my upper-level writing in psych, I took two of those to get just

more, even more experience. The professors were great, great help, and they let us know what was expected, but gave us the tools to be able to succeed.

Interviewer: All right. As you graduate, what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I think I should continue writing for myself and, I mean—it's important to, obviously if I'm not—I'm going to go grad school in probably a year, and I'll be writing again. But in this year that I'm taking off, I'm not going to be writing papers and stuff, so I guess it's important to keep just reading. Cuz reading helps, seeing how other people write, I feel it helps me know how to write, too. I can do that, since I won't be writing.

Interviewer: All right. Thinking across your writing experiences at U of M [University of Michigan], what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: I think really, like I said, taking your time and making sure you are able to argue your point. Maybe somebody's not going to agree with it, but get good sources and good things to say. Editing and all of that, too. Asking other people, like, input, I guess.

Interviewer: Is that right? Yup. Which upper level writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: I took [Psychology course], which was a developmental lab. We had to do studies and then write about them. Right now, I'm taking [upper level Psychology course]. We did the same thing. Today, the paper that I wrote, that I finished, we did a study and I had to do the methods, results, all of that for it. Yeah, those are the only two.

Interviewer: What were your writing experiences like in that class, in those courses?

Interviewee: They were both very technical. You were trying to just explain, you're going to start with an abstract and then you explain your hypothesis and your intro and do a lit review and all of that. It's using APA style, so it's already very structured, I guess. But then in the discussion is where you're able to—and in the intro—talk more about why you wanted to do this, or use background information to explain it. I also did my own study this semester, so I had to write another one of those for that. That was really cool, because I was, I designed the study, so I was, personally, I felt personally tied to it. It was more personal than the other ones have been, when I've been in classes and worked with other people and we created something. But that was just myself, so—

Interviewer: What effect do you think those experiences have had on you as a writer?

Interviewee: I think it's made me learn how to write psychology papers, for sure. I guess the downside is that I have, that's kind of my style of writing. If I were—I guess I haven't taken many English classes. But if I was writing a paper for an English class, I would definitely help to change my thoughts and how I write. It's a good thing, and I've gotten experience. I guess I probably, if, when I go to grad school, it's gonna be for psych or social work, so those are the papers I'll be writing, so it's a good skill to have.

Interviewer: So you feel like you'll continue using the things you learned there?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: With what you go forward. Have you taken any other writing courses?

Interviewee: I took [upper level English course] and we had to write a lot in that. All my psych classes, we've had a paper. History is my minor, but I finished that. Last semester I had two history classes, but that was—basically, it was finished like end of last year. I just, I've been writing history papers, too, a lot. Yeah.

Interviewer: How have those experiences altered or affected your writing style, you think?

Interviewee: I think it just made me be able to be more, write longer paper, I guess. The research papers for history classes, you have to really, I was reading, would get like ten books from the ugly 07:34 and to through. It also, I guess, made me learn how to—you can't read the whole book. There's no way. I had to pick and choose and flip through and find things, and that's a good skill, I think, to have, too. Being able to find information that you need.

Interviewer: Did you take these writing courses in your concentration? I guess, what's your—?

Interviewee: The history?

Interviewer: Yeah. What is your concentration?

Interviewee: Psychology.

Interviewer: Psychology.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So took some in your concentration and also some in your minor?

Interviewee: Yeah, right. Right.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think, I mean, is there any connection between the history paper writing work that you've done and your concentration writing? Do you think it's affected it, or there's been crossover?

Interviewee: I guess somewhat. I guess with history papers, you're more trying to, you have a thesis and you're trying to prove it. In psych papers, you're just explaining what you did and then giving your input. They're kind of separate, but at the same time, just

being able to write and forming good, like your thoughts into well-written sentences transfers over the two, I guess.

Interviewer: Okay. How often have you used skills or strategies learned in one of those writing classes in your other courses? Can you give an example?

Interviewee: I guess, like for history I would have to, like I said, go get tons of books and find what was best. Then for psych, you have to go find lit reviews and you're not going to read—if you're, like, for my study, I had 20 lit reviews. I didn't read them all, but I read all of the abstracts and skipped the results and read all the discussions. So just being able to pick, know what you can skip and not, I guess I learned that from my history minor. I definitely have used that in psychology.

Interviewer: All right. Thinking back over the last two years, what experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: I would say, when I took [Psychology course], that was one of the first times we went out and did field work and then had to write about it. Having those kinds of experiences. When I took a soc [Sociology] class, we also did field work and we had to write about it too. Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Do you think your writing process has changed as a result of that experience?

Interviewee: I guess I learned more through that, because before that I hadn't done that kind of work before.

Interviewer: Observational, and then trying to represent—?

Interviewee: Right, right. As if somebody's reading it that wasn't there, but you want them to feel like they were there. I had to learn how to do that.

Interviewer: All right. If I use the term reflective writing, what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: I would say, like writing for yourself, I guess. Just like sitting down and maybe whatever you're thinking. Whatever's going on, just reflecting on things.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you recently used reflecting writing, reflective writing in any of your own processes, or for your courses? Is that something that's called on? Or voluntary, outside?

Interviewee: I mean, on my own, I'll write a couple times a week, so, yeah. But not for classes, I don't feel like.

Interviewer: What have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your courses?

Interviewee: In the psych class that I'm in, we don't have to have peers look at our papers, but I have people that were in my group, like for our projects. We all will exchange papers and just like give each other pointers and stuff like that. That's really helpful, because they catch things that I didn't catch, or they make a suggestion that I wouldn't have thought of.

Interviewer: All right. Now that you're about the graduate, what advice would you give to college students about writing? What are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing their papers?

Interviewee: I think they should definitely take it really seriously, because it's a skill that you will need in college. Even if you're gonna major in something, like if you're gonna major in like math or something, you're gonna, there's gonna be papers somewhere. You will have to take some kind of class that—so just taking it seriously and when you take [English course] or [different English course], using your professor really well and going to office hours and getting suggestions and just like really pushing yourself. Because it'll, it's just, it's good to start early on something like that and want to do well, instead of just being like, I'm never going to need this.

Interviewer: I'm interested in that thing you said about using your professor well. What advice could you give a new student about how to do that? It seems like that's kind of an intimidating process.

Interviewee: Yeah. I think a lot of people, every time—like, I don't know if more people do this, but at the beginning of every semester, I go to office hours of every professor within like the first two weeks. That is always my goal, since freshman year. I think that's a good goal for everyone to have. It is intimidating, because they're your professor, and people think that they're critical or they're higher than you. But really, they're your professor. They're professors for a reason is what I try to think. They want to be professors and they want to help their students. They don't want you to do awful.

There's definitely professors that are more approachable than others. Some are, like one of my professors right now, he is just so smart that it's kind of hard to be on the, have a conversation with him, because he's just so intelligent. But even—that can be intimidating, but still, you learn from that. So I would say, if you go early on. If you wait until the middle of the semester, then you're just like, well, they don't even know me, so what's the point? But if you go early on—and another thing, the reason I did it was if I ever need letters of rec, it's good to know a lot of professors that know you well. Starting that early on, too, and having those kinds of goals, I guess, will push you to do it.

Interviewer: It sounds like you're talking about building relationships early on.

Interviewee: Yup, uh huh. Cuz then you can go back and get advice from them when you're trying to choose your career path.

Interviewer: Have you had any experiences with new media writing, like writing for blogs or websites or an electronic portfolio, or digital portfolio?

Interviewee: Last summer when I was in Europe I kept a blog over there so that my family and friends here could read what I was doing. I put pictures in it, too. I guess it was kind of ended up, instead of—it started off, this is what I did today and—but then it ended up, I was kind of reflecting on the trip and what it taught me. The last few were definitely just like what I learned and what I wish I would have known and what I knew now.

Interviewer: All right. What effect has that experience had on your writing?

Interviewee: That was really, like when I go back and read it now, I'm impressed with what I was able to write. I wish that I did that more often. Maybe now that I'm graduated and I have maybe more time, besides writing for school, I will. Because it's cool to go back and look at what you created.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's nice. Has it affected your own sense of your writing, then, you think?

Interviewee: I guess it—other people that read it told me that I was really able to convey what I was doing, so it made me, I guess it made me feel good about my writing.

Interviewer: Have you ever had any assignments like that for any of your classes, where you had to post to a class blog?

Interviewee: I had one class where we had to like, we would—there was reading every week, and you would have to just post something that you found interesting. That was, I think, freshman year, second semester. I took some anthro [Anthropology] class where we had to do that. But that was kind of laid back, I guess. People really—you could comment on other people's, but since it wasn't required, nobody really did it, so the conversation really stopped at what you wrote. You just got five points or whatever for doing it. If that would have been more involved, I think it would have been more impacting.

Interviewer: All right. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on Ctools [learning management system]? How's that process been going for you?

Interviewee: It's good. I mean, it's easy to do it. It's easy to pick one too.

Interviewer: Can you talk about a little why you chose the pieces you chose?

Interviewee: Uh huh. This semester, I chose a psych paper that I wrote, just because I felt like that was, beside I guess the one I wrote today, I tried really hard—but I tried really hard on that one that I uploaded, and I wanted to send something in that I didn't just put together because I was procrastinating and had to do it at the last minute. I actually

worked on it and edited it and—over and over. That was a good representation of my writing this semester. And it was a psych paper, and that's my major, so I felt like it would be good. Last semester, I uploaded a history one, a term paper that I had been working on for months. I guess I just try to pick the one that I had the most fun writing, cuz I tend to do better in the papers that I actually like to write.

Interviewer: Right, that makes sense. What's it like, looking back over your old writing, uploading some of it for the study?

Interviewee: When I was, when I uploaded this last one, I looked at the first one I uploaded, and I don't remember what it was, but I read it and I—it was just like—then I went back on my old laptop and I read stuff from high school. Just because I, it made me interested. My junior year of high school, reading in my history papers. I—[sighs]. I don't know how teacher do it without being super—cuz they have to know their expectations of their students without being super-judgmental, because obviously when I was a junior in high school, I wasn't going to be able to write like I could now. But like your teacher can probably write like that, so—it just made me think a lot, I guess. It's really cool to see the progression, because that's something that you don't notice as time goes by unless you look back.

Interviewer: Right. Did the process make you think differently about your writing?

Interviewee: Yeah. It definitely made me realize that I've been pushed to change my writing and do better, and I've definitely changed as a writer.

Interviewer: That's cool.

Interviewee: Therefore, college has been beneficial, and the writing.

Interviewer: Finally, what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: I think it, most of them should do some kind of peer editing thing. Having writing consultations with those students, just so that—cuz a lot of students need it, probably, but they are too shy to ask for it. Then I know like my freshman year that [English course] professor had someone from Sweetland come in and tell us we could come, and I didn't know about Sweetland, I don't think. Maybe I learned about it at orientation, but just knowing that and knowing that you have that resource is important, because a lot of students, not as many use as probably should. But just knowing that's an option, I guess. I feel like most professors aren't, like, they're not, I haven't had any that I've felt like were very critical, I guess. They just, they use constructive criticism, so just making sure that that's always the approach that's used, as well.

Interviewer: Yeah, all right. Any other comments you wanna make about writing or your experience as a writer here?

Interviewee: I guess I've learned a lot. I've developed a lot of skills that I can take, even like I said, into reading and stuff like that. And when I go to grad school, it's going to be very beneficial. I think the idea of this study is really interesting. Like I said, it's made me look back at my stuff from high school, so it's just cool. It's a unique, good idea that I guess needed to be done.

Interviewer: All right. Thank you very much—

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: - for your time.

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