

Interviewer: Okay. This is ***

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer; - and I'm ***. The date today is Wednesday, April 3, 2013. The first question I have for you today is, "How would you describe yourself as a writer?"

Interviewee: I consider myself a pretty good writer. I don't know. What are you looking for?

Interviewer: What do you see as maybe some of your strengths?

Interviewee: I'd say I'm good at organizing when I'm writing. I feel like I can be a very descriptive writer when I try, but sometimes I shy away from that. I think at this point in my major I'm focusing more on writing scholarly papers like research papers and stuff like that. I feel like I'm pretty good at being technical in writing in a scholarly manner.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What's your major?

Interviewee: Nursing.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. Okay.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm

Interviewer: How would you describe yourself as a writer when you first got here?

Interviewee: When I first got here? I'd say pretty similar. I took [English course], that is one of the first classes I took, and I think that helped me a little bit with my organizational skills. It helped me a little bit—we talked about different writing styles and stuff. I mean I feel I've improved just from writing more, but I don't know.

Interviewer: What would you say some of your struggles or weaknesses were at the beginning of the process?

Interviewee: I'd say—just depending on the assignment—I feel like some assignments I got I was prepared for and others—I can't really remember now anything specific. Just some of the goals that were presented, I didn't really meet just because I had never really written. I guess it just depended on the paper, and I can't really think of an example right now.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. What are your personal goals for yourself as a writer right now?

Interviewee: I'd say my personal goals are just to be—I guess to be more independent in writing research papers. As part of the nursing, I'm in an honors program, and so we're required to do research and then write a paper on it. It's something that's more difficult just because it has to be written in such a tone that is—such a specific tone that they're looking for and stuff. It's just a different style of writing. It's something that I need help with.

Interviewer: Okay. I see. What is the process like of writing one of those research papers?

Interviewee: I started haven't done a lot with it because we're still doing our research. It's really just—we have to do our research first and then we get to have our lit review and talk about the methods. It's all being very technical and making sure you get everything, and write about everything that you've done in the study so that it's portrayed accurately. Just being able to make sure that I get all those parts and include them in a way that works for the paper. I guess it would be—that's where I'm struggling, I would say right now.

Interviewer: How are you struggling, would you say?

Interviewee: Just, I don't know how to explain that. Just being able to—I'm not really sure how to explain that.

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you consider a great—what is your vision of what a good research paper would be? What are you aiming for?

Interviewee: One that is accurate and reliable. One that when someone else reads it they completely understand what the research process was. What we did. Why we did it, the importance of it. They can clearly understand the results, and it's just a very, very clear representation of what was done—

Interviewer: Cool.

Interviewee: - in the research.

Interviewer: Great. Let's see, so thinking across your writing experiences at U of M in general, what do you think it means to write well, in general?

Interviewee: Kind of like what I was just saying—writing well is being able to accurately portray what you're trying to say and being able to do so in a way that's elegant and official. Something that when someone else reads it they know what you're trying to say, and they understand it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. You took [English course]? What were your experiences with [English course]?

Interviewee: It wasn't my favorite class, but I think it was a necessary class. It was good to take it right when I got here, just because I've just had to do so much with—write so

many different papers and stuff throughout my education here. I felt some of the assignments didn't really apply to what I was gonna end up doing. Overall, we wrote, I think, a good four or five papers, and they're all pretty substantial papers. I think it was definitely very appropriate, and it was needed and necessary.

Interviewer: Cool. What do you feel you learned from that [inaudible 00:06:15] way, even if you don't use those skills?

Interviewee: First off, I was able to learn about different resources around campus, and so I think that was a good thing, I learned about Sweetland from that class. I learned how to address my professor and talk to them about what was going on with my paper and get feedback from them. I learned how to use that feedback to help make my paper better. I think those are two big things that I took away from the class. Then just overall, in general, being able to write and get feedback and learn what my strengths are, and what I needed to work on more to help me learn about that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. To what extent—you kind of talked about this a little bit, but to what extent are you still making use of what you learned in that first-year-writing course?

Interviewee: What I said before. I don't really know what else I can say about that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you maybe take away anything that still applies to your more technical, research-driven writing—[English course] or—?

Interviewee: I don't really think I did. I think [English course] was more focused on—I'm tryin' to think what our assignments were. I guess we would—we had to read an article and then do an analysis of that. I guess that's an example of something that I still need to do. Through research you have to do your literary analyses and do a review of the literature. I guess that's something that kind of helped. That was more of an informal approach, because we didn't really do a formal article. It could be any type of article, I think. It's helped me to read about that, and put that into hopefully how I portrayed the article, and what I thought about it into words for that paper. I can't really remember any of the other assignments though.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. I see. Did you take [Writing course]?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay, and your concentration is—

Interviewee: Nursing. Yes.

Interviewer: - nursing, okay. Let's see. We talked a little bit about your experiences with writing in nursing. How would you say that writing for nursing classes has—what effect has it had? How has that changed you as a writer?

Interviewee: I talk about the research part of it, but there's also we've had to write papers about what we do in clinical. That's a completely different aspect. We have to—for example, this semester I had to pick a family, and I had to write a paper about their process in the hospital and stuff. It's completely different. I mean, I guess—what have I taken away from it?

Interviewer: How's your process changed maybe, or your style?

Interviewee: My style changes based off of what type of paper it is. Since I'm really only focusing on those two types of papers—I'm not really sure how my style's changed I guess.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Interviewee: I'm not really sure.

Interviewer: Yeah. Let's see, how confident do you feel about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: I feel pretty confident. I think that, in general, I can write pretty well. Comparatively to my classmates, I think I do a pretty good job. I think we're getting to the point where we're writing longer papers and stuff. I think just one of the issues is sometimes not having enough room—running out of space. It's difficult to condense what I'm writing about. Another problem I guess with that is when it gets to 15—the papers we're writing this semester are 15-page-long papers which are longer than what I've written in the past. It gets to the point where I just get tired of doing it and don't want to revise and stuff like that. That's been a difficult part—is the forcing myself to take the time to revise papers and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Earlier you mentioned that you consider yourself as maybe better off than some of your peers. What makes you say that?

Interviewee: I don't know. In high school and stuff, we were always given a lot of writing assignments, and I just feel I've always been—I portray myself as being stronger in writing and being able to, in general, do a good job of writing. I just have noticed or have heard my classmates complain about how it's difficult for them to write sometimes. I just don't feel like I've had that problem.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. Let's see. What other experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: What would be an example?

Interviewer: Maybe life experiences, or any other academic experiences that have sort of taught you something about writing—reading experiences.

Interviewee: Yeah, that's what I tryin' to think of—I mean I've—when I'm not in school I tend to read more, and I do really enjoy reading. During school I don't really have the time to sit down and read a book for fun. Reading different books are fun like in the past. It's interesting to see different styles and to experience those. I really enjoy reading very descriptive passages and things that are—books that are very, very—what's the word? They do a very good job of—they do a good job of—I can't think of the word right now—of making me feel like I'm there. I do like reading non-fictional, but I think I like fictional books more so just feeling like I'm there, and the descriptions that they use allow me to understand, I guess, what they're tryin' to write about.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great.

Interviewee: That's something that I try to do in my—when I write, but, I guess, lately I haven't really been writing papers that would necessarily need that style of writing.

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

Interviewee: Reflective writing—it brings two different things to my mind. The first one would be—reflective writing would be writing about something else that someone—writing about something that someone else has written.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Writing a response to that, or critiquing it or something. The other thing it brings to my mind is reading what you have written and then reflecting on that, so that you can better understand where your weaknesses are in the writing and where your strengths are.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Let's see. Have you used reflective writing in your own writing processes, whether in courses or voluntarily?

Interviewee: I'd say that—I mean, do you have a definition of what reflective writing is?

Interviewer: I think going off of what you had said it was. Have you done that?

Interviewee: Okay. I tend not to write about—reflectively write about what I'm writing, but like I said, I try to re-read and rework what I'm writing, and change what I'm writing based off of what I'm critiquing myself. I try to get others to critique so that I can see or understand what they are seeing. I guess I wouldn't say I necessarily reflective write. I'm not sure if I have the right definition of it anyway.

Interviewer: Sure. Could you give an example of one of those times where you received feedback and then you've changed your writing accordingly? What's an example of a feedback that you would incorporate?

Interviewee: Tryin' to think back to [English course], because I think [English course] was really the course that I tried to get the most feedback for, and would come here and get help and got feedback from my professor. I can't remember—it would be about the total feedback I guess, that I remember getting and just tryin' to make the paper, not necessarily flow better, but tryin' to use a higher level of writing. Tryin' to—instead of maybe combining sentences and making it so that—I guess it would have to be the flow of the paper. Just that in general—the paper sounds more at a higher level than it originally did. I mean I don't think that necessarily my paper sounded—my paper was written at a lower level. I just think that, in general, whatever you're at, you can always make it a little better maybe.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. When you don't have an opportunity for peer feedback, and it's just you with your paper, how do you determine where the paper's at, or its quality—things like that?

Interviewee: It's hard to do. I basically try to re-read through it and make sure that everything makes sense. Then I try to stay away from it for a day or two and then come back and make sure that what I was reading before is actually there. I guess when it's just me doing it, it becomes harder, I guess. It comes down a little bit to laziness—when I think that it sounds good, then I'm done with it. When I can get other people to read it and they can point out things [inaudible 00:18:33] want me to rework paragraphs or whatever, then I'm more apt to make changes and stuff. I think it's hard to critique your own writing cuz you wouldn't have written it the way you did, if you didn't think it was right.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Right. Talk a little bit about your history or experiences with working with peer reviews throughout your time at [University of Michigan]. I know you mentioned you did that in [English course]. Could you talk a little bit about that experience, and maybe talk about what you do in your major in terms of peer critique?

Interviewee: When I came here, basically what they did is, they took 10 or 15 minutes and read my paper. They went through and just tore it apart, just talked about mistakes I had—grammar mistakes, or talked about style mistakes that he thought I could improve upon.

Interviewer: Who is this?

Interviewee: One of the peer reviewers here. I'm not sure who it was.

Interviewer: Oh, in Sweetland?

Interviewee: Yeah, in Sweetland.

Interviewer: Oh. Okay.

Interviewee: What I find most difficult about writing is that what one person thinks, what they want to see, and the style that they want to see, can be completely different from another person. So it's very subjective. That's probably the thing that frustrates me most about writing, is just how different each person can be. If you give a copy of my paper to five different people, I could have one person that really likes it. I could have one person that really hates it, and then all in between. I think coming here was cool because I got a different perspective, and then I would always end up going to my professor and getting her to critique it just because I know that she's the one grading it. She's the one who has the ultimate decision and the style that she wants.

In my major, I'd say that the papers we write are—they're not really—style matters and stuff, but it's not as much. Style's not as important as content. A lot of my professors just wanna see the content, see that you understand the content, and style comes second. That's not something I really had to deal with as much in my major. I guess I don't really have an answer for peer review just because I don't really go to my professors to ask them to review it for style. I go to them to ask them for help with content.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Right. Do you talk to your peers about content at all or—?

Interviewee: Like other students?

Interviewer: Yeah, like—

Interviewee: Sometimes, it depends on the paper. I sometimes don't even—when we talk about content in general, it's not reading each other's paper. It's more asking questions about the content. I wouldn't say that I have other—I don't have my peers really read my paper. I have peers outside of my major. I have one or two who read my paper just to make sure that it sounds—everything sounds okay, but they don't really understand the content. They're just reading it for pure grammar and making sure that everything makes sense—

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Interesting.

Interviewee: - structurally, yeah.

Interviewer: So by content you mean—

Interviewee: Content, I mean what—the requirement of the paper. Say the paper is on some topic like diabetes or something—making sure that I am explaining the topic correctly, and making sure that I have all my facts straight. That's when I would go to my professor, to my peers in my major, but I wouldn't have them read it to make sure that my paper structurally makes sense.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, as opposed to the style?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: In your classroom, there's not—is there a time or a place where you guys exchange papers?

Interviewee: No, no.

Interviewer: Okay, so that's all on you.

Interviewee: It's all on me, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see. If you were going to give someone advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?

Interviewee: It depends on the type of paper. Making sure that you understand what the objective is, of the paper so that you can focus on that. Because it's easy to get sidetracked or worry about something that's not actually the goal of the paper. In [English course] a lot of the papers were five-paragraph papers. You would want to make sure you have your introduction, and you have your conclusion, and your body paragraphs. That was a big focus in [English course] and making sure that you had all the proper—you have your hypothesis or your thesis or whatever at the end of your introductory paragraphs, so the writer knows what the paper's gonna be about, and that your conclusion relates back to your introduction. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: Could you talk about maybe—I know that is a very broad question, so maybe if you could talk about the kind of papers you're writing now for your nursing classes—those research papers. What advice would you give to somebody about to begin one of those research papers? How would they go about starting or thinking about it?

Interviewee: I think it's important to have a background of what you're gonna be writing about. Making sure that you do research, and then [pause] I think research like background is probably most important just so you have an understanding of what you're gonna write about, and then—I don't really know what else I would say.

Interviewer: When is the last time you wrote one?

Interviewee: I'm in the middle of writing—I'm writing the papers that I was talking about earlier—papers about the clinical setting. I'm writing a lot of those right now, and then I'd say a research paper. I did a literary analysis two semesters ago, and I'm about to start writing the start of a research paper in a couple weeks—or in the coming weeks. I mean for that basically what I'm doing is just really talking to the professor I'm doing the research with and just talking about the paper and stuff. Just really doing a lot of research, reading a lot of other articles about it, and making sure that I understand the background.

Just going off of what their papers—what other papers have done. I'm just picking out the things I like that they've done, and doing similar things in my favor.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What are some of the things you've liked, people have done?

Interviewee: I don't think I have specific examples I can think of off the top of my head.

Interviewer: What's the topic?

Interviewee: The topic that I'm doing—it's COPD, chronic—COPD, I'm tryin' to think—chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and physical activity. The specific study is focusing on how these—how people think about—what they're thinking about when they have acute exacerbations of the disease.

Interviewer: What they're thinking about?

Interviewee: Yeah. What they're thinking and what their reaction, and how they portray their disease when different parts of it happen. When they're having good times, and when they're having bad times. Getting a better understanding of why they do or don't—why they do or don't—why they are or are not physically active and—yeah.

Interviewer: I see. Yeah. Do you know what you're gonna say in the paper yet or—?

Interviewee: No, I'm not sure yet.

Interviewer: Yeah. What are some of the—do you have any hopes or concerns about writing that paper, or—?

Interviewee: It's a paper that I'm gonna be writing over the next year just because we're still getting data and stuff like that. For the class I'm in now, I'm just required to have a start to it. I'm not really too concerned about it right now. I might be more concerned about it next year, just depending on—the main concern is being able to get the research done and stuff and having my specific objective of my paper thought out and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. It's not on the radar right now.

Interviewee: Nah.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see. Have you had any experiences with new-media writing, like blogs or using sound or video, or PowerPoint presentations? What have those experiences looked like?

Interviewee: PowerPoint presentations, we do those for our classes, and generally they're done in a group setting. We normally use the Google presentation. We each split it up and do a portion of it. I mean it's just—I think it's a lot easier than writing cuz it's just more

bullets and getting the main facts across—getting the main facts on the presentation and then you can talk about them more when you present. I think that's easier.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: With blogs, I've had my own blog. I did it for a class two semesters ago where we were required to—one of the assignments was to have a—or complete a transformation. It was exercise. It was a health and wellness class so exercising, nutrition, and stuff like that. I kept a blog of my daily activities and what I was eating and stuff like that. That was kind of my own personal blog. I didn't really have anyone reading it or anything. It's basically like a journal just to keep track for that project.

Interviewer: Okay. What effect did those PowerPoint presentations and that blog have on your writing?

Interviewee: If anything, I'd say has a negative effect just because I'm not really writing—I'm not really writing complete sentences or anything. I'm just writing to get the information down.

Interviewer: Okay. Interesting.

Interviewee: I mean there's just a different type of—just a different type—I mean I wouldn't—I would say—I guess it's not negative. It just doesn't have an effect on my writing.

Interviewer: Okay. Mm-hmm. That's fair. You've been uploading pieces to the study archive on C-tools 00:30:41. How has that process been going for you?

Interviewee: Oh, it's been goin' fine. I did it last semester, and I'm pretty sure I already uploaded one this semester. I don't know. It's easy to follow.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you wanna open up—let's look at your pieces and talk about which ones you chose.

[...]

Interviewee: The assignment for this paper was to write about a relationship with one of the kids I worked with at the hospital in the pediatric setting.

Interviewer: When did you write this?

Interviewee: I wrote this last semester.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I'm tryin' to remember what—I can't really remember what the assignment was though.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Do you remember why you chose this one or—

Interviewee: No, I just picked one. I just—we only wrote, I think, maybe one or two papers last semester, so I just picked whichever one was—I think this might have actually been the only one. I just picked this one.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Cuz it was recent?

Interviewee: Cuz it was recent, yeah.

Interviewer: Let's see. Okay. What are your thoughts on it? Do you have any feelings about the paper?

Interviewee: Not really. I don't really—I don't really have any feelings towards it.

Interviewer: Was it a big—a high-stakes paper?. Was it a low-stakes paper? How big of a deal was it?

Interviewee: I don't think it was—it was kind of a big deal. It wasn't like a huge deal. I don't think I spent too much time on it. I think I did fine on it. I can't remember.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It was a while ago.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have any insights into its quality? How do you feel—thinking back on it, looking at it here—what would you say are its strengths or its areas or you still worried about it, or anything?

[Pause 00:34:47 - 00:34:57]

Interviewee: I think I did a good job of finding background research and incorporating that into my paper. I think the assignment was kind of informal for a lot of it. I just—it was a lot of first person, so it wasn't very—it wasn't in any AP format or anything like that.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I mean, the style I guess wouldn't be that great, just because of that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I'm not sure, I guess, what else.

Interviewer: Cool. All right. Do you have any other comments about this piece or about writing in general—your experience here?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Cool. All right. That concludes our interview.

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