

*Interviewer:* This is \*\*\* and I'm here with \*\*\*. It is April the 29th. I can't keep track of the days anymore. Thanks for coming, \_\_\_\_\_. I really appreciate it. Are you all done with your thesis or are you still sort of finishing up?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, it's submitted and I got my honors designation and it's all done.

*Interviewer:* Ahh, that's wonderful. I bet that's a big weight off of your shoulders.

*Interviewee:* Oh absolutely.

*Interviewer:* All right, well this conversation is going to primarily be about your experiences with writing here at the University of Michigan and since you've just submitted your thesis so that's probably pretty fresh. It's gonna be pretty informal and I'll start by asking you some general questions about just what you think about writing and yourself as somebody who writes. Then I'll ask you some questions about your experiences with the courses you've taken here. We'll end up by talking a little bit about the pieces you've uploaded on the study archive, on C Tools [learning management system] and that's it. [...]. To start out, I'll start with kind of a broad, general question, which is how would you describe yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* I'm definitely, at this point and in my undergrad career, like an academic writer. I never—I mean I was always kind of a good writer, but I really like focused all my skill building on writing. I'm a psych [Psychology] major, so writing research articles and [literature]reviews, that's pretty much all I do now.  
[Laughter]

*Interviewer:* I understand that. Primarily like academic then?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* How would you have described yourself as a writer when you came here? Did you come here as a freshman?

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm.

*Interviewer:* When you came here as a freshman, how would you have described yourself?

*Interviewee:* I was the very typical five paragraph essay person, like totally had kind of a—not a rough transition, but it was kind of a rude awakening seeing that all the things I'd learned in high school really didn't apply to college writing. I had to really adjust my writing.

*Interviewer:* What do you attribute that change to?

*Interviewee:* Well I just—I mean I started out in Great Books here and they did not want a five paragraph essay. They wanted a long, drawn—like long analysis of text. I'd just never really done that before. I did a little bit in high school, but even then it was still kind of based off of five paragraph type idea.

*Interviewer:* What's next for you after graduation?

*Interviewee:* I'm doing a fellowship next year [...] and then back to grad school for PhD.

*Interviewer:* As you graduate then, what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* Right now I'm working on getting my thesis—changing it up to publish it. One of my goals for the next two years is to publish that and be on some more papers. I've never been published before, so that's kind of my big goal.

*Interviewer:* That's fun.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* And a lot of work.

*Interviewee:* Oh yes.

*Interviewer:* What's your thesis about?

*Interviewee:* It's on father—early fathering predictors, so like when the child is three to later child adjustment outcomes when the child is ten [...].

*Interviewer:* Wow, that's really interesting.

[...]

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I was really glad to be able to use that data and really glad I found something.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, that's fascinating. As you think about all of these experiences, your thesis and your experiences in your courses primarily here at [University of Michigan], what do you think it means to write well? What does good writing look like?

*Interviewee:* I guess in general it's clear and easy to follow. I mean simple things like grammar and spelling, but also just cohesive organization and I guess being—making it tailored to who is going to read it. I wouldn't write an e-mail to

my grandma like I would write my thesis type of thing, I guess. Yeah, just keeping in mind the context of the writing, making it appropriate for it.

*Interviewer:* That makes a lot of sense to me. Which upper level writing courses have you taken since you've been here?

*Interviewee:* So my thesis counted for that, but I also took [Psychology course], which is like research methods and psychopathology or something.

*Interviewer:* Wow that sounds intense.

*Interviewee:* It was not too bad. I had a lot more research experience than most people in my class, so it was kind of—

*Interviewer:* That's nice then.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. What were your experiences like in that psych course and then writing your thesis?

*Interviewee:* I think my thesis was a lot more helpful. The psych course, like I said I had a lot more experience, but just the way—I don't know, we wrote little parts of a huge research paper in a group at a time. I've never been a huge fan of group writing just because it's kind of hard to work with people you've never met before in that way. My thesis, I had—I have a really close relationship with my mentor and her former graduate student, who's now a post-doc somewhere else. I worked really closely with them on my writing and got a lot of feedback. That really taught me a lot of just tips and how to write a thesis, essentially.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Did you meet with her on a regular basis? I've never—I don't know how that's set up, the thesis—

*Interviewee:* Oh, I mean it depends on your advisor, your mentor. I met with her for my thesis like every other week and for her lab every other week. I saw her pretty much every week.

*Interviewer:* Oh wow, that is a lot of time.

*Interviewee:* Yeah and then we e-mail. I would e-mail with the former grad student too. I'd just send out drafts and be like, "Look at this now."

*Interviewer:* Yeah, and now this, that's awesome. What other writing courses have you taken here? You mentioned Great Books.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I took [Great Books courses]. I guess those are really like writing—like I write for most of my classes, but those are like—

*Interviewer:* The designated, yeah. What were your experiences like in those Great Books courses?

*Interviewee:* It was not my thing. *[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* You took it twice, two of 'em?

*Interviewee:* Well, I had to—okay, so for the honors program, it changed now but when I started you had to take either Great Books or a similar class. I picked Great Books. Then you had to take a second type of class like that, if that makes sense.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, and you'd already done the one.

*Interviewee:* I might as well power through. I didn't—I don't know, I like writing for psychology, I don't really like writing for other things. The whole like analysis of texts and all that is not my thing. I kind of—I still did well, but I struggled with it in my—from my perception.

*Interviewer:* Why do you like the writing in psychology better?

*Interviewee:* It's just more—to me, it's more straightforward. I know some people think it's more boring that way, but I just like looking—reading all the articles and then summarizing and thinking of new ideas. I think it's also what I'm more comfortable with because I—yeah. I'm more interested in it.

*Interviewer:* That makes a lot of sense. You took the one psych writing class in your concentration, right, the upper level. Did you take any other writing courses in your concentration?

*Interviewee:* Well I did some independent studies, kind of to prep for my thesis, but it was very similar to my thesis.

*Interviewer:* Do you feel like the writing that you did in the psych class—you mentioned the group work and that kind of thing, do you feel like that affected your writing at all?

*Interviewee:* No. I think I—not to like be mean about it, but I think I just wasn't—

*Interviewer:* No, I wanna hear your honest thoughts.

*Interviewee:* I think I learned a lot more from my lab, just because—I mean I don't know, maybe it's just because it's hard to teach writing to that many people

at once or what, or it was the group project part, but it was like no one really took it that seriously.

*Interviewer:* That's hard.

*Interviewee:* I wasn't about to take it super seriously if my group wasn't.

*Interviewer:* Right, you don't wanna be the one person taking it super seriously.

*Interviewee:* We had a girl not show up on our last day of working on it. It was just bad. Maybe it was just a horrible experience for me. I've heard other bad things about that class and some other classes, so I don't know.

*Interviewer:* That sounds really frustrating.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, oh yeah. We were like, "We're gonna e-mail the professor," because we tried to contact her but you know—so anyway, I don't mind writing with other people, like in some of my other labs I'm helping with preparing manuscripts, not really writing anything, but just helping with it. I don't mind that, but working with strangers for a grade is like so—I would have rather done it on my own.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, that's not—that would not be a good time.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, no.

*Interviewer:* How often have you used the skills or strategies that you've learned? It sounds like primarily in your thesis and your lab in other courses, but if you feel like you've taken things from these other classes, like your Great Books class or even the psych class that you didn't enjoy, and sort of transferred that into other courses, I'd like to hear about that too.

*Interviewee:* I guess one example's from my lab, but I—and it's also because it was a class with that—the professor was a PI [Principal Investigator] for my lab. I had to write, I think it was a [literature] review for one of her classes and it was a 400 level/500 level grad—undergrad class. I found it not very difficult to write. I just kinda wrote up a paper and I sent it to her like I usually do and I was like, "Can you give me any feedback before I turn it in?" She's like, "This is an A paper." I know other people were really struggling who hadn't really written at that level before.

*Interviewer:* What do you think prepared you so well to do that?

*Interviewee:* I'd already done a [literature] review for her, so it might be because I knew what she was looking for. Also, I just knew not to do it last minute because you have a lot to read and you have to outline it and put your thoughts in order. I

had done a—well annotated bibliography and mini [literature] review freshman year too, so I guess I just had more experience with it.

*Interviewer:* Makes sense. As you think back over the last two years, and I know we've talked some about your experiences in class, but I'm wondering if you could talk about the experiences that you've had both in and out of the classroom that you feel have had an effect on your writing?

*Interviewee:* I guess in addition to like my—all my research stuff, I'm also an applied stats [statistics] minor, so that's really helped with my stats writing, just being—you have to be so careful with your words. That's helped a lot. Some of the other labs besides my thesis lab, I do a lot of informal, semi-formal reports for, like grant reports, things like that. I don't know, I've just learned a lot of different skills.

*Interviewer:* A lot of different—yeah, yeah, it sounds like it. Has your writing process changed? You were talking a second ago when you were talking about that [literature] review assignment, it made me think about—it sounds like you really learned something that first time you wrote a [literature] review about how long it takes and you mentioned outlining and reading before and putting your thoughts in order. I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about how your writing process has developed since you've been here at [University of Michigan]?

*Interviewee:* I've always been a non-procrastinator type. I've always been kind of like the outline and then you write it. Sometimes I've actually kind of strayed away from that and I can just read a bunch of articles, maybe write down a few notes, and write a paper, just because I can organize my thoughts a little faster about these concepts now. When I do have to integrate a lot of articles or something, I definitely now take the time to read them. I'll maybe write up a little summary about each one. For one really long paper I like had little summaries and then just started copying and pasting the order until I had a paper and then filled in the blanks basically. I guess I've gotten better at integrating a lot of sources just because it's—I didn't have to do that in high school really.

*Interviewer:* It sounds like you've developed a couple of really specific strategies.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* I do a lot of the same—not a lot of the same things, but when I do the same thing, where I kind of just—

*Interviewer:* It works, right?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* If ain't broke—

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* That's really interesting. If I use the term reflective writing, what does that mean to you?

*Interviewee:* I guess like writing about—like when you're reflecting on something so—like reflecting on your experience in a class or somewhere else.

*Interviewer:* Do you use that kind of writing at all, either in class or out of class?

*Interviewee:* I've had to do it for classes where you write about like, "Oh, I read this last night and it made me think about this." I've done it for quite a few discussion based classes. I don't really write for fun, so I don't really do it.

*Interviewer:* Sure, that's fair enough. Not everybody likes to write for fun.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* You talked a little bit earlier about that group writing project in your psych class. It sounds like that was not your favorite experience. I'm wondering if you've had any other experiences of working with other writers in your courses or in other contexts, so it could be in your lab, could be wherever else you write things?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I know like freshman year when I was in Great Books, at least the first semester I remember doing peer editing, like in a discussion. I think—I don't really remember it that well, but I think it was helpful maybe. I guess more recently I've submitted abstracts to a couple different conferences and whenever I'm doing that, there's a lot of collaboration with either people who are on the poster or just like my friends in my—one of my labs who I trust their opinion and will just e-mail things to each other and give suggestions. I do it for them, too. That's been really helpful just to have a different pair of eyes on it.

*Interviewer:* Nice. Yeah, that's really nice. Now that you're about to graduate, which is exciting, what advice would you give to college students about writing? What are some things that people should think about when they sit down to write a paper?

*Interviewee:* Well especially when you start off here, don't do the five paragraph—unless you're specifically told to, don't write a five paragraph essay. No one wants to see it, or at least that's my experience. Do not procrastinate. I see so many people procrastinate and I can't—it works for some people, but I don't

know. You'll produce something better if you take time and edit your work and actually try at least a little.

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

*Interviewee:* I had one class last year that I had to make a website for. I think that's it though.

*Interviewer:* What was that experience like?

*Interviewee:* I like computers, so it was like you could choose whatever type of media you wanted to use. It was either that or a PowerPoint, or something a little more traditional. I figured I'd do it. It was basically a paper, but in website form. It was not super website-y, but it was still kind of a fun way to be able to integrate pictures and make the colors all pretty and stuff. I had fun with that.

*Interviewer:* That sounds like fun. No electronic portfolios, in portfolio, anything like that?

*Interviewee:* No, I've never done that.

*Interviewer:* Okay, I'll skip those questions then. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on C-Tools [learning management system], has that process been going well? I know this semester there were some issues with the drop down being labeled incorrectly, they may have fixed it already.

*Interviewee:* Oh, I remember it looked weird, but I can't remember if I picked the right semester now. I know that there was like issues—

*Interviewer:* The right semester wasn't there was the problem. A lot of people had put—had to put Fall [...] I think.

*Interviewee:* Oh, I think I might've done that.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, so I know that was an issue. Have you had any other troubles with it?

*Interviewee:* I don't think so. Sometimes I couldn't connect to the drop box, but it was never like a—I figured it out.

*Interviewer:* Okay great, resourceful.

*Interviewee:* Yes.



*Interviewer:* Why did you choose the pieces that you chose to upload for the archive?

*Interviewee:* Usually it was like the paper I cared the most about from a semester, one that I liked the most.

*Interviewer:* What was it like to look back over your old writing and upload some of it for the study? I know at one point you had to go back and upload pieces from before.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, it was always like, "Oh, I remember that." I don't know, I never read through it that closely, but it's like, "Oh yeah." Like even the other day when I was uploading my thesis to it I was like, "Oh my God, I forgot I wrote these." Yeah.

*Interviewer:* It's funny isn't it, when you look back you're like, "Oh, I wrote that?"

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I've had that experience before too. Did this process of uploading things make you look at your writing differently than you would have otherwise?

*Interviewee:* I guess just looking back at what I've written, it made me realize that I've improved a lot, or at least I think I've improved a lot. I didn't really learn anything new; I just kinda realized how much I have learned already.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, that's great. What do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level? Like if you could tell your professors anything about teaching writing, whether it be in writing classes or other kinds of classes.

*Interviewee:* I guess, I don't know, I mean the classes—like something that was really helpful was going to office hours and things like that for my writing. Most professors already do that, but I guess just being aware that students—probably more students than come actually need that attention. This is totally specific to that one class, but teaching writing by making someone write a group paper doesn't really teach you writing because then you don't write the whole thing. I don't know. I don't know, like I haven't had any really like bad experiences besides that.

*Interviewer:* Have you had any good ones that you would say people should do more of that?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I guess—well this isn't really for professors but I did a couple honors conversions my first two years here. I would do a lot of independent

writing with professors, which kind of helped me a lot. I don't know, I really like working one-on-one with people and just focusing on my work. That was really helpful. I guess—this isn't really advice for professors at all, but advice to students is go to office hours and don't be afraid to like ask for help or also do independent studies and—I don't know, I feel like most of the stuff I've learned has been from one-on-one interactions with professors and grad students.

*Interviewer:* That's good advice, that's great advice. Do you have any other comments or questions or things you thought I might ask you but I didn't? Anything you just wanna say?

*Interviewee:* Not—I don't know, not really.

*Interviewer:* Just wanted to give you the opportunity.

*Interviewee:* Yeah I know, of course.

*Interviewer:* That's all the questions I have. I thank you so much for coming and chatting with me about your experiences.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, of course.

*Interviewer:* It's really interesting to hear about your work.

*Interviewee:* Oh thanks.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Well I'll look forward to reading more of your work in the future.

Thank you so much. It was so nice to meet you.

*Interviewee:* You too. Bye bye.

*Interviewer:* Goodbye.

[End of Audio]