

*Interviewer:* ...—and just do my little announcement. I am sure—\*\*\*, what is your last name?

*Interviewee:* \*\*\*.

*Interviewer:* \*\*\*. I'm here with \*\*\*. This is \*\*\*. It is April 24th, 2015. We are doing the Writing Development Study exit interview.

[...]

*Interviewer:* We start off the interview by asking people how they describe themselves as writers.

*Interviewee:* Like writing is very personal for me. It's like a love-hate relationship. I enjoy writing, but I also hate, like, writing because it's such an arduous process, sometimes. It is really a great way to express things. It's just frustrating at the end of—like, I'm a “Comm” [Communications] and “Psych” [Psychology] major—

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* —so the number of papers I have to write every semester is astronomical. Sometimes it just feels like I'm churning 'em out, and pushing out words rather than writing, but I do enjoy the conceptual process of writing. I'm proud of the way that I write, but, um, as of late, it's been feeling more like an arduous task, rather than something I really enjoy.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. It's been feeling less personal, in some ways?

*Interviewee:* Yeah, just more like I'm just completing it to get the grade, rather than exploring the concept. I also feel like it's kind of a sign of how I feel accomplished as a writer, just in the fact that I can churn out papers that are usually pretty decent without a lot of thought. It's just not as much fun.

*Interviewer:* Right. In your ideal world, what would you like the process to look like?

*Interviewee:* Fewer papers and more opportunities to turn them into the professor at times for review in like a draft. A lot of my classes will have four major papers throughout the semester, and ever, there's no, like, back-and-forth with the professor. I'd much rather have two, and I could turn in a rough draft and get feedback on it.

I've had papers that I've turned in where I've gotten a grade and zero feedback. That's just useless to me as a writer.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Like, “Was that any good? Why did I get a ‘B?’” Like, that doesn’t—Yeah, so that’s not ideal.

*Interviewer:* Sure. Yeah. For you, when you say “personal” there, you used the phrase “exploring.” It’s about exploring those ideas. It’s about pushing in more deeply and—

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Right, right. I’m proud of my writing, and so that’s why it’s personal. I feel like it’s a great way to express things that I’ve learned. I do enjoy it as a process of talking about like, “Oh, I clearly understand this concept because I can explore it on my own terms.” Like with my own ideas, which is great. But sometimes I just feel like there are other assignments where it feels as if my professor wants me to just say exactly what he or she has taught in class, and that’s also—again, I mean, it doesn’t feel like as much of a learning process. It’s just like, “Can you say what I’ve already said?”

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you got here to [the University of Michigan]?

*Interviewee:* Um, I think I was just as confident, but probably not as rightly so. [They both laugh] Um, I really—I took an AP Lit., my senior year, and I had an amazing, amazing, teacher, who I’m still in contact with. I love her. She really pushed me to be better at expressing things that I was good at saying out loud. We’d have conversations, and then I would not put them in my paper, and so she really helped me get through that process of being able to have ideas and put ‘em on the page and organization.

I felt very confident with that. Then I came into—I was in the RC my freshman year—

*Interviewer:* —okay—

*Interviewee:* —so I didn’t take the normal [English course]. I took, um, the class on the “science of creativity.” That was a very exploratory, like, I don’t know if you know about the RC [Residential College], but it’s very—a lot of the classes are really conceptual. It was taught by a doctor at the hospital system.

*Interviewer:* Right. Interesting.

*Interviewee:* He just wanted to teach a class. He taught about the “science of creativity.” It was really cool.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* What I liked about that class was, I came in and everybody was in a different place. I felt like I was the best writer. I went in and learned immediately that I was not.

*Interviewer:* [Laughs] Right.

*Interviewee:* We would sit on the ground in the middle of the classroom in groups of two or three, and we would just tear each other's work apart. That was devastating, because I was like, "No, I'm the best! You guys don't understand!" [Interviewer laughs] It was also great because it was a very small class. I think there were 15 or 16 of us.

*Interviewer:* Oh, that's great.

*Interviewee:* We just tore each other's stuff apart and then just built it back up. That was probably the most helpful writing class I've had. Like teaching me how to write, rather than using writing as a mechanism for other ideas.

When I came here, I was definitely overly confident, but yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* I learned quickly. [They both laugh]

*Interviewer:* That first year writing class contributed to some of that sense of being more realistic?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* How much is there—are there other ways that you've grown, other than sort of having that more realistic—?

*Interviewee:* Right. Um, so I said I said I was "Psych" and a "Comm" major. One of the requirements for both of those degrees is you have to take two semesters for each major of a class on research methods.

*Interviewer:* Oh, wow.

*Interviewee:* I am now a pro at writing any research thing, [Interviewer laughs] because you learn the same thing in each class. Like, "This is how the research methods work. This is how you write a 'methods' section. This is APA." Like I could recited APA standards back to you, just because I've done it so many times. Having classes that are very mechanically based, I'm like, not that I'm personally gonna go into research, but, um—

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* —if I were to be, I would be totally prepared for that kind of writing, just because you go into these classes and they're like, "We're gonna spend a week on the 'methods; section. We're gonna spend a week on the 'results.' This is the kind of writing. This is the kind of formatting. Very straight, spelled out." Those classes, um, I had one—I took a child development—"[title of course]" for "Psych," and my GSI [Graduate Student Instructor] for that class, her name was [instructor] something, and she, as I said, she had no qualms in telling me that I was totally wrong.

At the same time, she gave me exact feedback on how to fix it and was very helpful in putting me through the process of doing it over and over and over again until I got it right. That was great. That class I really enjoyed. It was "[Psychology course]."

*Interviewer:* Okay. Were your "methods" courses also upper level writing courses, or did you have to take, you know, *[voice trails off]*?

*Interviewee:* Um, no. I've also taken two upper level writing courses separately from those.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* It was funny because my "Psych"—no, sorry, my "Comm" one, I didn't even know that I was taking it. I didn't realize that it was an upper level writing class, because I had already taken the one through "Psych." It wasn't necessary for me to do it, but I did it. I loved that class! That was a great, interesting class, but it was a lot of writing. I was like, "Man, why am I writing so much?!"

*Interviewer:* *[Laughs]*

*[In unison]* "Oh!"

Yeah, so I took—that was [Communications course], with [instructor] 00:12:27. That was a fantastic class for the content. Writing, not as much, I didn't as much enjoy, like the—

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I mean, it was just, like, I would have rather listened to him lecture to me all day, than have to go back and write, just because the content was more interesting than what I was spitting back, but—

*Interviewer:* Got it. Got it.

*Interviewee:* It was a great class.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, yeah. Okay. What are you thinking about doing with these two majors? You said you're not interested in being a researcher.

*Interviewee:* No, um, I am going to go into advertising.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* I hope to work at an agency next year. I have an internship at Chrysler this summer in advertising, their advertising department, which is great, but not a full-time job, but it's fine.

*Interviewer:* Very good. Right.

*Interviewee:* Um, that's what I'll be doing. I'll be doing agency life, so that's not a lot useful for my "Psych" degree, but it's fine. I enjoyed it anyway.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. You might find some—It will be—yeah. Who knows? Who knows?

*Interviewee:* —some. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Do you have any goals for yourself as a writer as you move forward?

*Interviewee:* Um, yeah. Just, in general, I don't want to stop writing because it is something that I feel like I've done for so long. I did, um, I feel like it's very similar to a language. I did the RC language programs. I took French. At the end of my sophomore year, I was entirely fluent in French; but then I haven't had an opportunity to speak French, 'cuz nobody else speaks French, so I've lost it a lot. I mean, not completely, but a lot of it.

I feel like the same thing will happen with my writing. If I don't—if it's not something that I push myself to do over and over again, it's not gonna stay at the same level that it is now. I'm sure I'll be writing, but it will be e-mails and, like, PowerPoint presentations. It's not the same thing.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* My sister is gonna be a freshman at [university].

*Interviewer:* Oh, cool!

*Interviewee:* I told her. I was like, “\*\*\*”, just send me all of your writing prompts, and I’ll just do them for fun.” She’s like, “You’re such a nerd!” I mean, “Yes, I am!” [*Interviewer laughs*] But it’s something that I want. I want to continue to explore ideas through writing. It’s fun to sit there and be frustrated at—I mean, it’s not “fun,” but it’s interesting. Like frustrated at, “I have the thing that I want to say in my head, but I can’t put it down.” I don’t feel like I’m done with that. I don’t feel like—I’m just, like, gonna set it aside, so, um—

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* My goal right now is just to keep going it.

*Interviewer:* Good for you! Follow that! Yay! That’s great.

Let’s think a little bit, and this will be interesting, I think, because you do have a double major.

*Interviewee:* Uh huh.

*Interviewer:* Let’s think a little bit about what writing means in your, sort of, whole experience at Michigan. As you think about your writing experiences here, what do you think it means to write well?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I think—that’s a very interesting questions, because it’s drastically different from my two majors. In “Psych,” when you’re writing, like, a summary of, or, like, research that you’ve done, which is a lot of the writing is that I did. Or, like, reciting facts back, it’s more about being clear, straightforward, to the point, like, [*snapping fingers*] “Here’s the research we did. This is how it’s incorporated with other research. Here is how it can be used in the future.” That’s a very straightforward “x-y-z,” organized, structured. It’s not about exploring the idea; it’s about presenting the facts.

Then, I mean, you can have it in the end, you can say like, “This is how it can be implied.” Like, “This is how the implications can be for the future.” It’s very straightforward, not a lot of flowery writing, right? I’ve gotten a lot of feedback for, like, “\*\*\*, stop! You don’t need to write this long of a sentence. It’s not necessary.” Like, “Calm down!”

[*Interviewer laughs*] Then, when you move to “Comm,” a lot of the ideas are far more conceptual. You’ve got exploring the ideas of “femininity,” or like, “gender roles,” or, “What is the role of media?” Like, “How is”—and so these are more philosophical, conceptual things that you need to have a large amount of space to explore them.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Writing—good writing there, it's not about being direct. It's not about being very straightforward. I mean, you want to be clear in your writing, definitely, but it's about taking a point at the beginning and then exploring it for the length of the paper, whether it be like three pages or thirty pages. You know, it's just about figuring out that concept, and kind of like pulling it apart and looking at it from all of its different angles.

If I were to do that “Psych,” it would be like, “Shut up! What are you trying to tell me?” I think, like, good writing is just about, um, understanding the purpose of what you're trying to say, and who are you talking to, because, do they care? Like, what do they care about? Then you have to talk to them.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, yeah. Okay. When you think about your two courses, you said, your two majors.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, yeah.

*Interviewer:* You said that good writing is very different for those majors. How would you characterize the difference?

*Interviewee:* Uh huh. Yeah, so, the difference is like the intent of the writing.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* The difference—it's like, “Psych” is intended to be for research. Or, much of the writing that I did, there was very little conceptual writing.

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah.

*Interviewee:* Whereas, like, it was, any conceptual writing that I did was very short papers. It would be like, “Explore the differences between ‘nature’ and ‘nurture.’” They're looking for you to recite back to them the facts.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* They don't want you making up your own stuff, because that would require the research. Whereas, in “Comm,” they want you (or what I felt the difference is) that you have to come up with things on your own. You have to bring your own information to the table, because, otherwise, they're like, “You're just copying from what other people have said. That's not what we want.”

*Interviewer:* “Comm” is more interpretative.

*Interviewee:* Right, right. Yes, definitely.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* “Comm” is like exploring an idea; whereas, “Psych” would be presenting an idea. That is, somebody else has already did it because they spent years and years researching it; whereas, “Comm” is always looking for new information.

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah. I see.

*Interviewee:* I mean, there’s definitely research, but it’s, I think, far more conceptual.

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay. I don’t know if it will be possible to do this, but to the extent that it’s possible, can you think about those two upper level writing courses—

*Interviewee:* Yeah?

*Interviewer:* —where you were, in theory—[laughs].

*Interviewee:* Right.

*Interviewer:* —in theory, being trained to write in the field.

*Interviewee:* Yes. Yes.

*Interviewer:* What effect did those have on your writing?

*Interviewee:* Um, I guess, because I’m a little bit cocky in my writing, it was kind of nice to have myself again, like, knocked down a couple of notches.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Um, and to have my professors very much explain what they want is not, necessarily, what I’m giving them. I think, across the board, that’s something I keep finding myself going through over again and again and again. I’ll finally get a good grade on a paper and I’m like, “Man, I’m the best!” Then I go to these upper level classes and they’re like, “You are a great writer, but also so much you can change!” [Interviewer laughs]

I think that if I had to find like a common denominator between the two, it was learning that you’re never done becoming a better writer. You can re-write the same paper 300 times, and there’s always gonna be some way you can fix it and make it better.

I found that especially in my “Comm” class. The assignment was exploring like, “Why an ad campaign, or specific ad, was effective.” There’s so many different



levels. Even the most basic advertisement, like, the understanding and the psychology behind it is, like, “wild.” Just understanding that you can never be done, and that you can always become better.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Okay. Do you still use any of what you learned in those classes as you [voice trails off]?

*Interviewee:* Oh, yeah. ‘Cuz I took them both as a junior.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Oh, wait. Maybe I took “Comm” last semester. I don’t know. But, definitely, it’s the mindset that will keep me going, understanding how, really, to organize a paper is something that’s very basic. You’ve think you’ve got it, ‘cuz, you know, in elementary school you learn about, like, whatever, the five-paragraph essay. But it’s not about the five-paragraphs, it’s about learning how to organize your paper.

Like that is something that I think I’ll definitely take away from it is, like, even if I’m not writing long essays (which I probably will never really do, like, to turn in) it’s about having an idea and knowing how to organize it most effectively; so that whomever you’re talking to, whether it be your boss in an e-mail, somebody in a presentation, it’s gonna get your point that you’re trying to get across.

You could have the best idea in the world, but if you’re not organizing it right, or in the way that somebody will be able to listen to, the point is, it’s useless.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Okay.

*Interviewee:* That’s something I definitely learned from those classes is, like—I mean, and I don’t—it’s hard to separate, specifically, at coming from those upper level classes, just because I feel like I learn it more and more with every class that I take. But, because they were such writing-focused courses, I feel like I hadn’t more space to really think about the organization in general.

*Interviewer:* Right. Did that differ from the “methods” courses where you were also doing a lot of writing, but it was oriented a little differently?

*Interviewee:* I mean, I think [sighs] it’s hard to say that it was “different,” just because those classes are so heavy on organization, that that’s kind of like the point of them.

*Interviewer:* Uh huh. Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It’s a different kind of organization, because a paper that you would write that’s not research oriented; it’s like, you have to come up with your own

organization. Whereas, like, in a research methods class, it's like you have to follow their organization, like APA, to a tee. Otherwise, they're not going to accept it.

*Interviewer:* Right. Okay. Let's think, explicitly, then. You've talked about organization being one of the big things that transfers. Are there other skills, or are there writing strategies that you've learned in one writing class that you've used in other courses?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Well, not that I've specifically used in other courses, but I'm taking my first English class right now.

*Interviewer:* Are you really?

*Interviewee:* Um, which is funny, but it was called, like, "[English course]."

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah.

*Interviewee:* The class is frustrating because it's like a 200 level class, and I want to be writing as a—but she wants me to be very, like, 200 level, which is fine, because that's the course. Just for me, I want to, like, get past that. Beyond that, one thing that I found was really helpful for all of these assignments, is that I started writing by hand.

*Interviewer:* Interesting

*Interviewee:* —which is something I've not once done before. I was really, really struggling with how to get this—I was writing a paper on Taylor Swift.

*[Interviewer laugh]* Like three weeks ago!

*Interviewer:* I love it.

*Interviewee:* —it was like, you know, 12:30 a.m., in the fishbowl, and I couldn't get it done. I just got out a piece of paper and I started writing by hand. Like, everything, it just worked! Since then, not that it's been very long, but I've been writing everything that I've been writing by hand. I wish that I had discovered this way of thinking three semesters, or three years ago, because it's so effective for me to be able to just—because, when I type, I feel that I'm just getting words out.

Now that I'm writing with my hand, it's a slower process, so I think more, and I don't feel as bad, like, crossing something out and like—but if you cross it out, it's not gone entirely, 'cuz you can still, like, kind of see it.

*Interviewer:* —still see it.

*Interviewee:* Um, that's a technique that, I don't know how it happened, but I wish that I had been doing it for far longer. Or, I wish that one of my professors, sophomore year, had been like, "Hey, if you're having trouble, try writing by hand."

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* That would have been great, just as far as a "method." That's—yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I think a lot of people would find that—people would be like, "Will it?!" But I am *exactly* that way! Like if I'm starting to get into something or, if, like—writing by hand can be so helpful.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I told my professor that. She's like, "Yeah, a colleague of mine wrote her entire dissertation by hand. I was like, "Omigod! That's wild!"

*Interviewer:* Wow! I can't even imagine that! Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. It definitely works for some people; it definitely works for me. I just wish I had found out, like, three years ago. *[They both laugh]*

*Interviewer:* Right. Well, now you know!

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Okay, okay. Got it. As you think back over the last couple of years, what experiences inside the classroom and outside of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

*Interviewee:* I think the fact that there's not been a semester when I wasn't writing has—that's just been the most impactful. It's just the fact that I've just continued to do it. I've never had, like, a time to stop, so it's something that's just been growing and growing and growing.

It's funny, 'cuz I turned in my last paper, whenever, two days ago or yesterday, and I looked back at my writing from freshman year, and I was like, "I bet it's exactly the same. I probably write exactly the same!" I looked back and I was like, "Omigod! I can't believe I turned that in!"

*Interviewer:* *[Laughs]* Right.

*Interviewee:* I think the fact that I've just had four years when I've been forced to just explore it, and sometimes even, I bet, it's good that I'm not even thinking about the fact that I'm growing as a writer. Just the fact that I'm just *doing* it. It's

like, if you run, you just continue to run, but you're not thinking about the mechanics. Eventually, you're gonna be a faster runner.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It's the same thing for writing, for me. It's just the fact that I've been doing it for so long, it's just made me better at it. I'm more efficient. I'm more articulate. Yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, I know. That's super-interesting. We have a common place in my field that meta-awareness is always a good thing.

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* It's interesting to hear you say that.

*Interviewee:* Yes. Well, because I think it's good to think about your writing. It's good think about what you are writing as you are going, because, if you just write blindly, I don't think that that's—so like thinking about the fact that you're writing, thinking about the fact that your organizing is really great in this specific paper; but the fact that I wasn't thinking about my growth as a writer, but instead, was just like doing it. That was what was effective.

*Interviewer:* Oh. Uh huh.

*Interviewee:* It wasn't that I wasn't thinking about my writing, because I was definitely thinking about my writing. It was just that I wasn't thinking about as, like, "Oh, man! This paper, I'm gonna be a better writer than I was last time."

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Instead, it was that I didn't have—I wasn't thinking too much about it. I was just doing it. So that's where the space of growth came from.

*Interviewer:* Right. You were aware of the moment. You were aware of the choices that you were making in that moment, but not thinking about how that compares to other previous moments.

*Interviewee:* Uh huh. Right. Yes—three papers ago, or whatever. Yeah, right.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Okay. That's really helpful. Thank you.

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* One of the ways that you suggested your process has changed, is that you now have this handwriting—

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* —technique—available to you.

Are there any other ways that you've seen your process changed over the time you've been here?

*Interviewee:* Um, it's a hard question. Um, I don't know. Really, it's hard because I don't feel like—I guess I just don't have a lot of memory of when I sat down as a highschooler to write a paper—

*Interviewer:* Sure.

*Interviewee:* —other than I would have, like, my mom and dad look over it when I was done. Now I'm the one looking over it, or I have a friend look over it. The actual process doesn't feel a lot different. I still, you know, I begin a paper, try and think about it, looking at the question. Then I outline, and then I write it. That's been the same process I've had for every single paper since I was a sophomore in high school.

I'm sure that the intricacies of it have changed. But it doesn't, like, the writing process, doesn't really feel much different. I don't know if everybody does—probably not everybody does it. I always start—I write the introduction. I begin to write the, like, uh, body (I couldn't think of the word). Then I always write the conclusion, and then go back to make the rest of my body, because I feel like that's easier, once I've found out what my conclusion is going to be. That hasn't changed since I got here. That's—I'm probably better at it, but the process itself hasn't really changed much.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Fair enough. Fair enough. If I were to use the term “reflective” right now, what does that mean to you?

*Interviewee:* I don't know. I've not heard that term used.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* —other than, like, I've had, like, teachers made me do journals, or write for like one minute about “what we've just talked about.” If that's what you mean by “reflective writing,” then I've always heard it as “journal” or “free write.”

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah.

*Interviewee:* Beyond that, it doesn't have a lot of, like —it doesn't ring a bell.

*Interviewer:* Right. I think the concept that we're getting at here is, um, quite similar to what you're talking about with the journaling or the free writing, in that the goal is to be reflective.

*Interviewee:* Right. Right.

*Interviewer:* But in this case, to be "reflective" about—sort of like we were just talking about with the meta-awareness, to be reflective about the choices that you're making as a writer. Is that something that you've ever used writing to do?

*Interviewee:* Okay. Okay. No. Not once. *[They both laugh]*

*Interviewer:* No. Okay.

*Interviewee:* Not really. I am a big "talker"—

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* —so when I am doing any writing process, and my boyfriend knows this, all he has to do is just nod, *[Interviewer laughs]* and I'll just be like, "Okay, so I'm trying to say this, and this is how I'm trying to say it." A lot of times when I'm having difficulty writing, or difficulty figuring out what I'm going to write, I will articulate it out loud to whomever is nearest to me, either a roommate or my boyfriend or my dog, when I've been at home. *[Interviewer laughs]*

For me, like, the "reflective process" is usually verbal, not written.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Was that true, also, when you went back and looked at your first few papers that you posted to the archives?

*Interviewee:* Yes. I've always been a "talker." That's always how I've done it. I remember that from the—I told you about the teacher in my senior year.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, that's right.

*Interviewee:* She was the one who brought it out. She's like, "\*\*\*\*, you just talk a lot. Just talk about it." I was like, "Okay. I can do that." *[They both laugh]*

*Interviewer:* No, that's great. That's wonderful. Yeah, okay. Um, have you done much working with other writers in your courses?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I actually just finished of—I'm in this "Comm" class. It's cross listed with the Business School. We just wrote a 42 page marketing and analysis. That was wild, because to take five people and, like, have us all write one thing together, was WOW.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Five? Yeah, especially something that big.

*Interviewee:* It was interesting, though, because all five of us happened to be “Comm” people in our group. It was funny how our writing styles were very, very similar. Like we were going back and editing it, and I was like, to my friend, I was like, “\*\*\*, did you write this; or did I write this?” She was like, “I don’t know. It looks my writing, but I don’t remember writing it.” [*Interviewer laughs*]

I’ve had that experience, and I’ve also written a couple of other group essays, which I find to be mostly useless as a writing technique, because it’s really frustrating to have to div—and I find that everyone here, that I’ve ever talked with, feels exactly the same way. Like, it’s hard because everyone wants to write their own paper, and everybody goes through the writing so differently, that to try to combine it with other people, it proves to be frustrating. I don’t think I really learned much as a writer from it. I learn a lot when I have had to exchange papers with other people, and gotten peer feedback. That’s every effective. But the act of, like, writing a paper with someone, like the same paper with someone else, is—I’ve only ever experienced frustration with it.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Um, because it slows down the process, and I always feel that it comes out like a lesser quality paper than had I written it and gotten feedback, and then, like, gone to edit it, just because writing is so personal, that it’s hard to, like—it doesn’t happen very consciously. It just sort of happens into, like, slow that down and have to talk it out. I’ve also had it where people have also wanted to divide the paper. Then it’s just messy, because you have one writing style broken into another, broken into another, and that just doesn’t work out.

Personally, I’m not a fan. [*Laughs*]

*Interviewer:* —which is totally fine. Let me just “clarify,” ‘cuz I have a million questions about what you just said.

*Interviewee:* Okay, okay.

*Interviewer:* It’s great. When you talk about collaborative writing, the process is you all get in a room and you write it together?

*Interviewee:* I have done that—

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* —especially with this last paper. What we did was, kind of that. We would write—everybody in the Google doc at the same time, like, and also having the conversation at the same time. That’s slow and arduous. What we’ve

also done is, assign, like, people to a section so like, “You write the consumer analysis. You write the marketing mix. You write this.” Then all five of us will go back and edit that person’s base, like, kind of like a “base writing.” That has been more effective, but it’s a really slow process. I don’t feel like it churns out much of a better product—

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* —um, than having someone, like, write something, and then go back and edit it, which is kind of what the executive process is. That was only effective because we had to write so much content that it would have been insane to try to have one person do the whole thing.

That’s the only—I mean, I guess it was effective in that sense, in that there was just so much content to churn out, that it wouldn’t be good to have one person do the whole thing.

*Interviewer:* What made the difference between that, with your big 42-pager, and one where you would just, you know, you said you’d “divvy” it up, and there are different voices?

*Interviewee:* Right. I had to write a “Comm” paper. I don’t know. It might have been sophomore year. It was shorter, so I think that that was the big thing, is that we had six, maybe five or six pages, to explore this, uh, (God, I don’t even remember what it was). I remember the girl’s face. She and I had to write it together. I just remember it being so difficult to take the parts that she had written and the parts that I written, because it was so like—it was, again, like, the “Comm” thing—

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* —it’s very conceptual. Her understanding of the exploring of the idea was not exactly the same as mine, even though we talked about it before we’d written it down. Then, to take those two separate things, and she had written one—like, the first half, and I had written the second half, and to put them together. We ended up both having to go back and, basically, re-write our parts—

*Interviewer:* Right. Well, and when you—?

*Interviewee:* —to have it “fit.”

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It just felt, like, both of us were compromising the things that we had wanted to say to sort of fit with the other person, so we could just turn in the paper.



*Interviewer:* That's—and when you have five people working on paragraphs, it's gonna blend more than if you've got two.

*Interviewee:* Well, it's because—right. And in that, like, the sections were very, very separate. It was totally fine because—okay, so I wrote the consumer analysis. Having the voice of the “consumer analysis” would be very different than the voice of our “marketing mix.” It's not a problem because they're very separate issues.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* You know, if it's slightly different; and then that was also very effective, because, in this class, one of the big things, is discovering the “voice of the brand.” We had already spent so much time talking about how we were gonna talk, and what kind of words, and, like, “Are we gonna use ‘we?’ Are we gonna use ‘you?’” Like, “How are we gonna be addressing these people?”

That, I guess, is just a by-product of having talked about it in the class, was already done. It didn't really matter if they were different. Like, \*\*\*, one of my group members, *[laughs]* she just writes with so many exclamation points. *[Interviewer laughs]* That's just the kind of person she is. We had to go back. The other four of us were like, “\*\*\*, you can't do this. This is too much.”

*Interviewer:* *[Laughs]* Yeah. That's funny.

*Interviewee:* It was having, like, four other people to go back and tone down, or flesh out someone else's writing. It was good. But we had so much more space to do it in so many pages.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. You find, peer review very valuable.

*Interviewee:* Yes. Ten out of ten!

*Interviewer:* Say more to me about that.

*Interviewee:* Okay. Peer review is great. I am always frustrated when you have to turn in a paper and it's always, like, you have to click the box. You're like, “I did not receive or give any advice on this paper.”

*Interviewer:* Oh, I've never seen that.

*Interviewee:* Okay, in both “Comm” and “Psych,” it's not like that in English. In the “Comm” and “Psych” program, they're like—you have to check, like a “honor-pledge box” to say that you didn't give or receive any help on the paper.

*Interviewer:* Well, that's dumb!

*Interviewee:* Absurd! It's very absurd, because that is not a writing process. I can look at the same process four hundred—

*Interviewer:* [Claps hands and laughs]

*Interviewee:* —I can look at my page, like, I'm sure you've done this, like, three hundred times. You're like, "Man, this is a great essay!"

*Interviewer:* Oh, yeah.

*Interviewee:* Give it to your friend, and they're like, "\*\*\*\*, this is not a sentence. You don't have a verb or a subject. What happened?" Like, I totally missed that.

I always send it to my sister, because she is [age], but she is so far past me in writing that it makes me want to cry. I always send it to her. She's like, "\*\*\*\*, this is great. However, you're saying something at the end of the paper that doesn't have anything to do with what you were talking about at the beginning. It's a great point; but if you want to talk about it, you should maybe say that you're gonna talk about it." "Thanks, \*\*\*." [Interviewer laughs]

Without peer review, you have—it's so hard to reflect on your own writing. You would need much more time to be able to put your paper down and then come back to it later. But just with the way that [inaudible 00:41:01] work, you can't. You have four papers, and you have to move onto the next one. There's no time.

Peer review is great in that everybody else can look at your writing from a different perspective and give you ideas, or offer you something that you never would have thought about, because you don't have that information in your head. It's so hard to take a step back from your own writing. Having other people give you ideas, or even, like, having a conversation with somebody else about it is great. Or, to find the fact that you're sentence doesn't have a subject or a verb, is great, because I've read that so many times and did not notice it.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Two things.

*Interviewee:* Okay.

*Interviewer:* First, 'cuz I am so fascinated by this. [Interviewee laughs] With the full disclaimer that you're graduating, no one is gonna see this until after you're graduated and have that degree in your hands, and this is fully anonymous, so—

*Interviewee:* Yeah, I did. I have—

*Interviewer:* You do it. Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Every single paper I've turned in has had my sister and my friend look over it. The same two people every time; because now that they've been doing it for four years, they know—

*Interviewer:* They know you,

*Interviewee:* —the things that I do; and I do it for both of them, as well. Like \*\*\* will send me hers, and I will look over it. She makes the same mistakes every time. She'll have a great conclusion, but it's nowhere in her thesis. I'm like, "\*\*\*\*, we've talked about this." [*Interviewer laughs*]

Yeah. I've also talked to professors in the past and like, "I don't why we do that." I'm like, "Okay, well, then, why don't you *not* do that!?"

*Interviewer:* Right. Well, then it's—

*Interviewee:* I think the point is that they don't want you to have taken someone else's work and presented it as your own, because both majors are very, very specific about, like, citations and stuff, which is fine.

*Interviewer:* That's interesting. But it's such a very different thing.

*Interviewee:* So frustrating, and very bizarre. Every person I've talked to, in either program, in my English class, has been like, "That's dumb." I've never heard person be like, "Yeah, we're really proud of that policy." [*Interviewer laughs*] It's been something that, like, since my sophomore year, I've kind of been asking people, like, "Hey, what do you think about how we have to say that we didn't give help?" Everyone's like, "I don't know. I do it."

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* It's, like, these boxes we have to check, and nobody goes with them, and—

*Interviewer:* It's so outside the, like, realm of what actually happens in academia. All of those professors are sending things out for peer review.

*Interviewee:* Right. Also, like, in the workplace, it's not like you're gonna give a presentation that you just sat in your office for six weeks, and came up with all this information on your own. You're just, like, you go to your boss and you just present it, 'cuz he would be like, "Hey, actually, that's not at all what we were trying to say."

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* I mostly ignore it, because I know it's impractical and—what, are they gonna be—like, “Oh, you know what, \*\*\*? This is too good. You must have had help.” [*Interviewer laughs*]

*Interviewer:* Oh, I love it! “Look up the author!” Yay!

*Interviewee:* Yeah, [*laughs*]. It is Shakespeare! [*They both laugh*]

*Interviewer:* I love that you just understood what I did. I just made a nerdy joke and you understood it.

*Interviewee:* It's fun. It's fun. [*They both laugh*]

*Interviewer:* Now that you're about to graduate, what advice would you give incoming students about how to begin their writing?

*Interviewee:* Um, “You're not the best!” [*They both laugh*] Every person who has come here was the best in the high school, at what they're doing. That's why they're coming here. You're not, because there are so many professors who are more intelligent than you, and so many peers who have so many different perspectives. It's just like, “Shut up and listen!”

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* That's what I would say is and, “Don't take your writing personally.” Like if somebody is critiquing you, they are critiquing you to help you, not because you are a ‘poopy’ person.” That was something I had to learn. “It's not about you; it's about your writing. They're saying it because they want to help you, not because they think you are unintelligent. If they thought you were unintelligent, they wouldn't have accepted you here.” Yes.

Also, make sure that your majors have to do with what you want to learn.

*Interviewer:* Interesting.

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Say more about that.

*Interviewee:* Oh, um, if I had known, entering into my college career, that I wanted to go into advertising, I probably would not have gone here, and I probably would not—and if I had, I would have gone to the Business School.

*Interviewer:* Interesting.

*Interviewee:* —because, “Comm” was advertised as a degree that’s very helpful for advertising, and they lied to my face. It’s a great major for somebody who wants to explore media as a concept and not really great—I critique it—and not really great for somebody who wants to go into that sphere.

*Interviewer:* —to implement it. Okay.

*Interviewee:* Right. Everything that I’ve learned about implementing it has been very self-driven, or something I’ve had to go out of my own way to do. I just wish that I had had a chat with somebody who was in the major before I did it, so that I could have understood, like, what kind of classes I’d be taking.

I love the classes. It’s all so interesting and so fascinating to explore these ideas and have time to really be like—I mean, the major is, like, the “philosophy of media.”

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* It’s great, but it’s totally useless for somebody, like, I have no idea how, until I took this Business School class, how to make a marketing mix, which is what I’ll be doing for the next 60 years. I would just say, like—and “Psych” was great! But I always knew that that was not what I was going to be doing. I just liked people.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Um, but I just wished that I had known what I was getting myself into, and I would have gone into the Business School. Even though I hate “Econ,” I would have suffered through “Econ,” in order to be able to take more classes about, like, “[title of course].” It’s what I need to know about. Um—

*Interviewer:* Interesting, yeah.

*Interviewee:* —but I’m a way better writer! They don’t write in the Business School.

*Interviewer:* [Laughs] No, they don’t. I was just talking with someone about that earlier today. Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Um, and so, I’m very glad that I’ve learned how to write, but I also don’t know anything about marketing mixes. I need to know about marketing mixes [laughs]. Those are my two pieces of advice, I would say.

*Interviewer:* Okay, sounds good. Have you had any experience with “new media writing” in your time with the university? Yeah? Tell me about that.

*Interviewee:* Uh huh. Oh, yeah. A lot of my professors have us write in blogs. I'm also taking this social media class.

*Interviewer:* Oh, right. Right.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. That's been great, and probably super-useful for me, just because that's more along the lines of what I will actually be doing. Very bizarre to have it in the same class as the classes when you write formally; 'cuz you write a blog, and it's a very different audience than when you're writing a formal essay.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* That's also probably really helpful to be able to understand the genres of who you're talking to, being able to change it. Sometimes it just weird to translate a blog post into a final essay, but it's a great exercise. It's just, kind of weird.

*Interviewer:* Yeah. No, I mean, it's very different. It's very different. I have my students do that too. I mean, they're like—and if they're no relationship to one another, is what they are.

*Interviewee:* Right. It's really helpful, mostly, because the blog—just like, you just have to get words out there. Sometimes that's the hardest process. Then, it's often very frustrating to translate the two; and I often find myself, like, I'll have the blog post open over here on my iPad, and I kind of will glance at it as I begin my new paper. I think it's more about getting the ideas out, and then having them be in another form.

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah. Have you done any work with Twitter, Facebook? Like any of the social media, or other blogs?

*Interviewee:* Hmm. Not through class a lot, but I run the social media for the marching band.

*Interviewer:* Oh, nice.

*Interviewee:* I mean, there's a group of five us. I'm not doing much anymore, since I'm graduating. But, um, yes, only in that—I have done it.

*Interviewer:* Okay. You've got some of that extracurricular—yeah.

*Interviewee:* Right. Yes. For this social media class, we're written—like a couple of times, she'll be like, "Tweet me your thesis." We'll do that, but that's not really about Twitter. That's—it's just on Twitter.

*Interviewer:* Right. What's the difference between it being about Twitter and being on Twitter? I think that's a fantastic distinction.

*Interviewee:* About Twitter is more like using those 140 characters to communicate to somebody. Like, okay. In advertising, you use social media and marketing as a method of creating your brand in the space that people usually have their friends. It takes a brand and it makes it more a part of your "friend" community. It takes it away from being a product and makes it more of, like, someone you have a relationship with.

That's what social media is about in advertising and using it. When I use Facebook or Twitter for the band, it's about showing people who have no idea what the band is doing, like, a glimpse into our practice or our trips or what we're up to on the off-season.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* It's using it to spread information in a way that people feel like they're part of the community.

Whereas, like, when I tweet my thesis statement to my professor, that's, like, embarrassing, because, out of my normal tweets—

*Interviewer:* —then suddenly, there's this random—

*Interviewee:* —it's suddenly, this—and, honestly, I've gone back and deleted them, because I'm someone who wants to go into social media. To have like—one of the things, when you send in a job application, they're like, "Give me your Twitter handle." I don't want them to think that that is how I use Twitter, because that's not how you—like, it's so anachronous (is that the word I want?) to everything else I've been doing. It doesn't make any sense to have it there.

In that sense, it's using Twitter to communicate something that would probably be a better fit for like an e-mail.

*Interviewer:* Right. Yeah, yeah. You're singin' my song. *[They both laugh]* There are so many things that we do in the name of social media that don't have any real *[whispers questioningly]* "assumption" *[voice trails off]*.

*Interviewee:* Yes. Correct. Some other time.

*Interviewer:* Anyway. *[Laughs]*

*Interviewee:* Okay.

*Interviewer:* Let's see here. How has all of this stuff, all the "E," electronic media stuff, impacted your sense of yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* Myself as a writer. Those, to me, are very separate.

*Interviewer:* Okay, say more about that.

*Interviewee:* Because what I—it's complicated because I am much better at social media when I'm being the band, than I am when I'm being \*\*\*.

*Interviewer:* I totally buy that. I totally buy it.

*Interviewee:* As \*\*\*, I go, "I'm sitting in the fishbowl. If anybody wants to come study with me. Like, hit me up." As the band, I'm like, "Look at all these great things we've been doing. Check out blah-blah-blah." It's so much more consistent and like "message." Because I've had the conversations, I'm like, "Wow, how is the band supposed to sound? What are we gonna be saying, and what are not gonna be saying? What kind of pictures are we gonna be posting? How many pictures? What kind of hashtags? It's all been decided."

When it's me, as a writer, or, like, as \*\*\* (not even as a writer) it's just, like, I put things out there. I'm much better at being a brand than I am at being myself. I would say that the writing itself has helped me be the brand.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* —far better than it has helped me be myself on social media. I understand like, "This is the message I'm trying to get out there." Then I do that. Whereas, when I'm being myself, there's no specific message I'm trying to communicate, other than, like, "I bought extra coffee. Somebody come pick it up for me. I don't want it anymore." [*Interviewer laughs*]

I bought coffee for a party at the end of the class, in one of those boxes of coffee. People had signed up for drinking it, and then nobody drank the stupid coffee. I was walking around [Angell Hall] with this box of coffee and I was just like, "Take it from me! I can't drink it anymore!"

*Interviewer:* That's great. You're like, "Come on!" [*Laughs*]

*Interviewee:* Those are the kind of things, but it's not a coherent message. It's not like I'm saying something specific. It's just like, whatever I just say—

*Interviewer:* —because you don't—because if you don't brand ourselves as people, and we don't necessarily want, as people, to be a single consistent brand—



*Interviewee:* Right. Right, and if you do, then you're doing it because you are trying to get a job, and then brand yourself. I'm like, "Okay!" [*They both laugh*]

As the band, I've got this "what I'm trying to say" and, like, the organizations we talked about before. It's like, "It's there. I've been using it."

*Interviewer:* Right, yeah. That's great. That's great. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the archive.

*Interviewee:* Yes, I have.

*Interviewer:* We've been hinting at this the whole time. How's that been going?

*Interviewee:* That's been great.

*Interviewer:* Good. [*Laughs*]

*Interviewee:* All I do is write a paper for the class, [...]. I never really know what to write in those little, like, summary things. If I had to give, like, a piece of advice back to you guys, it would be like, "Ask more specific questions about my writing or my process." There's a lot that I could be saying, but there's no real space—'cuz you ask like, "Where is this point in the writing?" Do you want me to be sending in things that are drafts? That was never clear.

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* There are also, you know, like all these click buttons. Like, "What kind of writing is this?" Not once have I really felt like what I have done has been able to be encapsulated by those little buttons.

*Interviewer:* Okay. That doesn't surprise me.

*Interviewee:* It's cool. I'm super-interested in reading this when it's published. Like, hit me up, 'cuz I want to know about it.

*Interviewer:* Okay, yeah.

*Interviewee:* Very interesting. I like it, but it's also—yeah.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, okay. More specific instruction there. Yeah, giving you a little more flexibility in how to categorize it and think about it. How do you choose what's gonna go up there? I mean, you have a very writing intensive college curricula.

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Um, I usually put in the piece of writing that I'm most proud of, for the past semester, or something that I think is most indicative of what I've been doing.

*Interviewer:* Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Last semester I turned in this piece of writing that I was really proud of. Then, actually, the GSI e-mailed me. She was like, "Can we use it as an example paper for next semester?"

*Interviewer:* Oh, that's great. Congratulations.

*Interviewee:* I was like, "Yeah." She was like, "We could take off your name if you want." I was like, "Nooooo!"

*Interviewer:* "Noooo, leave it on there!" [*They both laugh*]

*Interviewee:* Let everyone know. It was fine. I usually pick the thing that's most, like, what I've been doing, and what I'm most proud of.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, okay. When you looked at that paper from your first year, you thought, "Omigosh, I've learned so much." How would you characterize the ways that you saw your—that you had grown?

*Interviewee:* Right. I wrote about, like, "teaching creativity." My thesis statement itself, it was so clear that I had absolutely no idea what I was writing about.

[*Interviewer laughs*]

*Interviewer:* Teaching creativity. No, justice!

*Interviewee:* It was just more like—it was clear that my body paragraphs, like, I kind of had a semblance of all the research I had done, and I put it together. My thesis was just like a piece of confusion. It was not clear. It was not at all what I wrote in the paper.

*Interviewer:* Oh, interesting. Okay.

*Interviewee:* I mean, it was, but not to the same extent that I would turn it in now.

*Interviewer:* Now, yeah.

*Interviewee:* The writing just felt very juvenile. But that's probably how it should be, as I should be looking back at it, and be like, "Yikes!"

*Interviewer:* Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay. Has this made you—did that process of reflecting on that make you think about writing any differently?

*Interviewee:* Probably, not really, since it happened, like, yesterday at 2:00 a.m.  
[Laughs]

*Interviewer:* Fair enough.

*Interviewee:* —or two days ago it was, whatever.

*Interviewer:* It was 2:00 a.m. Who cares what happened?

*Interviewee:* I was like, “Man, like, I sucked!,” and then I went back to reading my paper I supposed to be writing, so it’s—[*Interviewer laughs*]

Um, I mean, I guess I’m just proud of what I’ve done.

*Interviewer:* Good.

*Interviewee:* Other than that, there’s not been enough time.

*Interviewer:* Right. That’s great. What would you—what advice would you give to instructors about teaching undergraduates to write?

*Interviewee:* Um, yikes! I think understanding that once we know how to organize something [*Interviewer yawns*—no, stop!

*Interviewer:* Okay.

*Interviewee:* Take that back! Get a sense of where all of your kids are, or students are, at the beginning of the semester. Have them turn in a short sample of their writing from beforehand, and then look at it and gauge what you’re gonna be doing from there. I’ve had—several times, when my professors have been teaching us something that three quarters of us have learned it in another class.

That is just not a good use of time. I know that all my professors are crazy intelligent, otherwise they wouldn’t be here. They have so much information that they could be giving us in those two weeks that they’re teaching us how to write a thesis statement. All 40 of us are like, “We’ve written so many, that I’d much rather get feedback. If you feel like my thesis statement, specifically, needs work, but you don’t need to be teaching me how to do it.”

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* I think that if I had to give a piece of advice, I would say, “Understand where your students are at the beginning of the semester.” Just because everybody is a 300 level class, doesn’t mean that we haven’t already all taken 400 level classes beforehand.

*Interviewer:* Right.

*Interviewee:* I think that would be really helpful.

*Interviewer:* Yeah, that's great. That's great. We are just about at—oh, we are right at an hour.

*Interviewee:* Nice.

*Interviewer:* Any other comments, things this has jogged, questions you've got, anything like that?

*Interviewee:* No, it's really cool. This has been fun. I really enjoyed being a part of this study, and I'm really looking forward to seeing how this impacts the University. [...].

*Interviewer:* Okay. Great. That would be very cool.

*Interviewee:* That's about it. Thank you.

*Interviewer:* Okay, good. You're welcome. Thank you. [...].

*[End of Audio]*