

USHEP Student Interview Transcript

Interview number: HC.S024 - Research Process

Transcriber: Christopher

Interview date: April 19, 2010

Subject sex: Male Subject age: 25

Subject major: English Language Arts

Length of time in college: Since 2004

Number of classes currently taking: 5 dropped one = 4

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INTERVIEWER: Okay, so if you could just describe the assignment that we're gonna be talking about today in your own words.

STUDENT: Okay, let's see, the research assignment I have to research an English language for one of my classes. The history of it, what I'm gonna be focusing on it is gonna be Brooklyn. Well, how English is spoken in Brooklyn.

INTERVIEWER: So is this a research project that you've already done or that you're still completing.

STUDENT: I'm in the middle of it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. I would rather if you could talk about one that you've actually completed.

STUDENT: Oh, okay.

INTERVIEWER: We can talk about the one that you're working on as well, but we wanna think about one you've already gotten to the end of.

STUDENT: That's no problem I've done another one it was about family structure. This I did for my "Children's Lit" class of using the Judy Blume books. I actually, well using those books, I had to find other outside information about how families are structured. Basically how everybody interacts with each other.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So when in the semester did you get this assignment? When was it given to you?

STUDENT: The assignment itself was given to me, it had to be around mid-term as we had just finished our midterm and she said here is your next assignment.

INTERVIEWER: And how was it presented? Paper or orally?

STUDENT: It was a combination of both. We got everything written down on paper - that was handed to us and then of course the professor explained it to us.

INTERVIEWER: And what were the requirements of the paper?

STUDENT: The requirements of the paper I believe had to be about a thousand words, that professor did everything by words not page numbers.

INTERVIEWER: Right. But that's about five pages I think, right?

STUDENT: Right. There had to be at least one outside source as well as using the...we had to cite the books we were reading as well.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and did you get any guidance about how to find that outside source? Did the professor give any guidelines for that, or tell you how to do that or how not to do that?

STUDENT: The professor, she told us, basically she gave us the website we can use. I believe it was, for the CUNY website, it's like library's resources. But the problem that I found, as well as some of my other classmates, was that we had a hard time navigating that site. It...you were trying to search everything by topic and then see what they could find by that topic and it was just rather jumbled. I kept getting sent to dead links and I ended up having to go through Google, type in "family structure" and then find all these different websites where it led me to other places of reputable, like reputable sites where I can find this information.

INTERVIEWER: And do you remember what kind of articles or information you ended up finding?

STUDENT: I can't remember the name. It was a doctor and she did family structure basically about how each, depending on birth order - the family structure and how that was set up.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. So from when it was given to you (it was after your midterm) when was it due? When was this paper gonna be due?

STUDENT: It was due right before the final, so I had about a month and a half I believe.

INTERVIEWER: And when did you get started on it?

STUDENT: I tend to procrastinate. I probably...the week before hand.

INTERVIEWER: The week before hand, okay. And about how much time overall would you say you spent looking for information, reading or thinking, and then actually writing? If you can calculate out a number of hours that you might have spent?

STUDENT: Let's see. I wanna say, roughly thirty to forty hours.

INTERVIEWER: All together? How did that split up between, like, looking for information, reading and writing? How would you?

STUDENT: Let's see. Once I got the idea of what I wanted to write about, let's see. That was quick. SO that was less than an hour. The next part was trying to navigate the CUNY website which did run me into about two or three hours worth of a headache followed by another fifteen minutes on Google, where immediately it was the first link. The rest of that, since I already knew what I wanted to write about was just figuring out how to use the information in my writing. So that's why it took up the remainder of it.

INTERVIEWER: And how do you do your writing? Do you write longhand? Do you type directly into the paper? Do you start with an outline? How do you approach that?

STUDENT: I should start with an outline! But what I generally do is sometimes depending on how much time I have, 'cause I shouldn't do this, but I tend to force myself to work under stress because I seem to write faster and get my ideas out quicker when I'm under stress. But...

INTERVIEWER: You mean with a deadline?

STUDENT: Yeah. What I like to do is write everything out, 'cause I find that my ideas flow easier as I'm writing, but I have...

INTERVIEWER: And you do it longhand?

STUDENT:

Right, longhand, just right there. Maybe a couple of notepads worth. Okay, I have my [*can't understand word*] writing. Or sometimes if I'm really close to my deadline I write straight into the paper.

INTERVIEWER: And where do you do your writing? Right here on campus? Do you have a favorite spot where you like to do that, or where do you do that at home? Somewhere in between?

STUDENT: I do it t about three locations. One is at home, the second one I'm a member of this club in Hunter and I use that space because they have a router and I can just plug straight into an outlet so I don't have to worry about my battery power. And if I need just lots of peace and quiet I do come here to the library.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, great. And at home you have a quiet space also, or semi-quiet.

STUDENT: Yes, I tend to write in my room.

INTERVIEWER: In your room, okay. What was the part of this project that you found the easiest? So what was the part you felt the most "Yeah."

STUDENT: Well this research paper it was coming up with the idea, 'cause we had (as I said) we had to do it based off the readings so looking at the Judy Blume books of *Super Fudge* and *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, so I basically just looked at the dynamics of the two brothers especially with their child coming in and...I believe that was *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, but...

INTERVIEWER: It's been a long time since I read those books.

STUDENT: But, I basically looking at that realized what I wanted to write about was just how these three children were interacting with each other.

INTERVIEWER: How much guidance were you given by your professor for picking a topic?

STUDENT: For picking a topic?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I mean, so it's a children's literature class so it's a kind of frame, but what did the teacher say?

STUDENT: Not too much. Just given the restrictions that it had to be about one of the books we were reading for class and we could compare and contrast the books and use an outside source but it can't be anything else.

INTERVIEWER: So there wasn't like a list of suggested topics or anything? You were really on your own for that?

STUDENT: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the hardest part?

STUDENT: Writer's block.

INTERVIEWER: At what stage did you hit that?

STUDENT: I tend to hit that from the midway point to the end. Just that different intervals where I'm just writing and I go, "What was the word I wanted to use?" or "Where was I going with this idea?"

INTERVIEWER:

And to what degree do you re-read or revise your own work? Do you just write it and you're done? Do you keep going back to it? How do you approach that?

STUDENT: A lot of this does kinda depend on how close I am to my deadline.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so let's say you had a little extra time.

STUDENT: If I had a little extra time I usually, I cannot look at it while it's still on the computer to edit it. I actually have to print it out if it's on the computer and read it through there, so I sometimes have scrap paper that's just marked up with my own handwriting to get rid of that line, "What was I doing here?"

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. Do you ever use the Writing Center here? I don't know what they call it here, I think they call it the writing center, yeah?

STUDENT: Writing Center. No, mostly because I have a lot of friends that go like "Oh, I'll judge your work!"

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you show it to other people?

STUDENT: Right.

INTERVIEWER: To your peers. Did you ever go to your professor, maybe not for this paper, but in general, have you ever taken a draft to your professor and said, "Am I going the right way?" Or do you stay away til the end?

STUDENT: Several times I have done that. Not for research papers, but for other papers. They'll generally just write just, "Fix up your grammar." Once again, writing so close to the deadline you, everything's fragmented sentences, run-ons.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it does that.

STUDENT: But generally I haven't, like...the amount of time I do have to write I find it...I stay on topic a lot of times.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and can I ask what grade you got on the paper?

STUDENT: That one I believe I got an A-minus.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel like that was an accurate grade? I mean, is that about what you expected and stuff?

STUDENT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and then when you look back on that particular paper is there anything that you would do differently? If you had a chance to do it again?

STUDENT: The only thing I'd really fix up was grammatical errors, because that's the only place where I lost points.

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