

**WE1S Focus Group 1
Non-Undergraduate Group
2 March 2020 12:00-2:00**

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“In any public outputs of the project, your real name and contact information will not be attached to any of the answers that you provide to written survey questions or oral responses. You may skip or decline to participate in any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering and you may leave the focus group at any time. You have complete control over the amount of personal information that you reveal. For research and transcription purposes, the focus group will be audio recorded, but such recordings will not be publicly released... Your responses and comments may be used or quoted for research and teaching purposes by the WhatEvery1Says Team or by individual project members, including, but not limited to, presentations, publications (such as blog posts, journal articles, and books), and advocacy and pedagogical materials. Your data and responses may be transcribed and added to our existing corpus of materials, to be analyzed through digital methods. Your responses may also be shared with project collaborators beyond UM.”

All names and other overtly identifying information have been removed from this transcript.

- 00:01 LT:** First I just want to go around the room and get everybody's name and your affiliation with the University and why you are here, we're kind of interested to know why you decided to do the group today...so Ashley you should start.
- 00:16 AH:** Sure, and I just hit record on that.
- 00:18 LT:** Yes, yeah, thank you.
- 00:18 AH:** I think you already aware, but you know here there is the microphone and it should be picking all of this up, let me stick it more in the middle...
- 00:24 LT:** Yes. We did say this on the consent form but we are audio recording this.
- 00:29 AH:** Yes...So hi everybody I am Ashley Hemm, I have spoken to most of you via email I am a third-year Ph.D. student this Department and the project manager for Everyone Says and mostly what I am looking at is science fiction and fantasy and digital humanities.
- 00:44 TS:** Hi I am Tarika, I'm a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the English department also, and I am also a graduate research assistant on the WhatEvery1Says Project. So I'll be here just helping to take some notes from the group.
- 00:55 E:** Hi, my name is E, I am a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Psychology Department, specifically, developmental psychology, and I decided to

participate 'cause kind of similar to what H was saying, you know I always appreciate when people participate in our work and I think it is really valuable to participate in other's work.

01:21 LT: Great, thanks.

01:21 B: All right I am B, I am a professor of meteorology at RSMAS and just having a mid-life boredom with reductions and rationality, mere reductions and rationality.

[laughter]

1:36 B: And any time I can meet some people who think a little different way just sounds fun to me.

01:42 S: I'm S, I'm um, faculty in English Composition, and I just believe that liberal arts is the best education you can have.

02:00 H: Hi, I am H. I am a sixth-year Ph.D. student. I am graduating in the summer, finally!

[laughter]

02:04 H: I am out at RSMAS, I do fisheries, and I also did my undergrad here. I came because like I said I like coming over to main campus and I also, you know, I like to have the opportunity to help the other Ph.D. students cause I think it's import that we stick together.

[laughter]

02:33 H: It's hard, stick together!

02:35 FB: I am Francesca. I am with the Modern Languages and Literatures department, and I also work in the WhatEvery1Says project, and I am taking notes.

02:51 LT: Great. Okay, and obviously it goes without saying if you like more food, please, at any time throughout the session. If you, once we close the door, we'll keep it open for a little bit longer, but it sometimes automatically locks behind you so if you need to leave to use the restrooms which are just down the hall past the elevator, please just grab that key and then you can let yourself back in. That's one issue with this room.

03:21 LT: Okay, so a sort of really brief introduction to the WhatEvery1Says project. It is a project where we're analyzing public discourse, broadly speaking, about the humanities. So how the humanities are talked about in news

and social media sources. Namely we are collecting data from news and social media sources. We have got over 4 million documents that we have collected over the course of the past two and half years, really. Mainly from publications in the US but also anglophone publications in the UK and Canada. And we're interested in how--and mainly since the year 2000. Since that's when a lot of the data get digitized...and we're interested in sort of overall trends in public discussions of the humanities, how they might have changed in and around the great recession, and also sort of how the humanities compare in public discourse to how the sciences are talked about in public discourse. So those are some of our two main research questions. We are also interested in how different groups and communities of people think about the humanities and so that why we decided to do the human subjects research--the survey and the focus groups that we are doing this year. We also did, our other branch of our project, we are also based in UC Santa Barbara, here and at Cal State Northridge in LA, and so the California, the UC Santa Barbara folks did surveys and focus groups last year at their institution at UCSB, and we are doing them here this year. And we are interested in how people in local contexts and local communities, local campus communities, are thinking about the humanities and how they are similar and how they are different across these two campuses. 'Cause our campuses are pretty different and they serve different populations.

- 04:53 LT:** So, that's the sort of large overarching one-minute precis of the project and why we're here. I have been working on the project in one form or another since the year 2012. I started as a graduate student on the project and so we have been going for a long time and we have had a Mellon grant funding our effort for the past two and half years. That has allowed us to hire these lovely research assistants and allowed us to do a lot of the stuff we weren't able to do before. So we got about, across our three campuses, 26 graduate and undergraduate research assistants working for us this year and there are four faculty PI's of which I am one and we have two postdocs. So we are a large group of folks. And so the data that we are collecting in our surveys and focus groups will be used in combination with our text analysis work that we are doing with the news and social media sources... broadly speaking. Any questions about that before we dive in?
- 06:01 B:** Is this what professors of literature do these days? Text mining million a documents?
- 06:07 LT:** No, not usually, [laughter] although all of the PI's on our project are professors of English so, we are mainly humanities folks. Well, we are all humanities folks from different disciplines, but all the PIs are from English and the postdocs in English and Architectural History...so.

06:30 AH: And not all of us here are English department so...

06:34 B: Well, I might not even know what the bounds of humanities are...

06:39 LT: Well, yeah, that's also what ...well, no, I won't say anything yet.

[laughter]

06:49 LT: But yes, we'll talk about that. So I just wanna briefly, sounds like many people have experience with focus groups in this group, but I just want briefly to go over basic ground rules. So obviously, this is voluntary and you should speak as openly as you feel comfortable. It's also fine to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable. All responses are valid. There are really no right or wrong answers. We've got a mix of science and humanities people here. We're just really, really interested to hear what you have to say, and so I just wanna emphasize that. Obviously please respect the opinions of others if and when you do not agree. We are gonna try to keep things moving. We do have some significant ground to cover and so we will be keeping an eye on the time and making sure we are keeping our conversation moving we will be out of here by 2 o'clock if not a little bit before. This does not really apply to us, but please avoid revealing very detailed information about your personal health and please help protect people's privacy by not discussing details outside this group. So we are going to be, as we've said recording this session, audio only, and we are also as you know taking notes about your responses. Recording of all the focus group sessions, they are going to be 4 in total, are going to be stored on Box, which is a file-sharing system that is protected by UM login and Cane ID login, and it is accessible only to the UM project researchers. We are planning to transcribe all of the focus group sessions and when we transcribe we are going to anonymize all the responses. So your name will not be written down on the transcription, but obviously feel free to say people's name. That is why we have them allowed during the session. Your responses are not gonna be linked to your identity in any way. Anonymous information from the session may be used in project reports, on project websites or other material and/or in research publications and may be shared with participants at the University of California Santa Barbara and Cal State Northridge anonymized when shared. Any questions about that?

08:52 LT: Okay. So a brief plan for the day. There will be two major parts for discussion. Part one is about the humanities more specifically and part two is more generally about your educational experiences. Obviously, there is going to be overlap and that's fine if and when there's overlap but just so you know that when I say "ok now we are going to move on part two" that is what I am talking about. Any questions? And thank you again, just so much. I just want to make sure that we thanks you so many

times we really, really appreciate you are giving us your time and energy. Thank you. It is very important. Okay, so you all should have a handout. And this handout contains two excerpts from some of our data, our many millions of documents that we have. One is an article from a student newspaper from Dartmouth and one is a post from Reddit. So what I would like to ask everyone to do right now is just to read through this handout, read through the excerpts. Reflect on it. I've got some questions at the top of the handout: what aspects of these articles resonate with your own experiences? Which do not? Do you recognize some of these sentiments, are you surprised? And we will discuss those questions after you have a chance to read, but just take a couple of minutes to read right now to just read through this handout.

[handing out documents]

14:02 LT: Okay so, it looks like everyone had a chance to read through it, so I'd just like to begin just asking generally what do we think of these excerpts, what aspects, if any, resonated with your own experiences, which don't, are you surprised by anything, did you expect anything, those kinds of general questions.

14:30 H: I guess for me one of the things that...it didn't necessarily surprise me, like this paragraph about the liberal arts education meant to prepare students not for a specific profession but to succeed in any field. I think it is one of those things where like, in my fields if I had majored in liberal arts I would not have gotten into grad school, I would have not had the job that I have lined up now, and I am not saying it should be that way, but I don't think-- I started preparing for my career in high school and even still with the way the funding works and I almost didn't get into grad school and that was with starting when I was in high school, getting really good grades in undergrad, doing well on the GRE...you know there is so little money through the government so they only take this many students and even with my job, you know I just got a job with a Ph.D., like it was still really tight, I applied and applied and applied, and it is still with all this education background there so many people who have a similar educational background and now it's like you have to start earlier and earlier in these fields, and I can only speak for my field, but you have to start earlier and earlier and earlier for them to consider you because it is getting more and more competitive and that has been my personal experience. I am not saying it should be that way, but in my field that is the reality. And if you have a liberal arts degree and want to do what I do you would have to go back to school which means it will take you longer and not everybody has the time or the money to do that.

16:34 E: For me that didn't really surprise me at all. Where it says some feel pressure to choose those they perceive as providing the strongest

practical skills and career opportunities like, from my own experience I did go to a liberal arts college, but I also feel I was part of the group that came into a liberal arts education kind with like a set path in mind and actually my liberal arts experience changed my path, but I do feel like a lot of my friends in college, you know, it was very much so like I want to go into finance after college I need to major in economics, I need to do business, that's what's gonna` provide me with the best skills after college and the best career opportunities. Whereas I felt like there were a lot of other people who came in really set to get that liberal arts experience, and they were much open to different opportunities and more so that these experiences will help me like, for after college if that makes sense. It doesn't necessarily mean like if I major in this then I will be you know I will pursuing that career afterward, but that experience will help me get there.

17:58 B: It seems like conventionalisms to me, somewhat backward-looking I suppose...you know I don't know the present... there might be different cohort-dependent things here like today's college students I just don't know at all. And the fact that Hank Paulsen in '68 could be an English major and end up on the track he's on, that's not necessarily replicable today right? And then again I just don't know the boundaries you know, government and [inaudible]. So there's the humanities that are about the present world, political science and current affairs and stuff... and then there's what might be more like the arts, which is what I thought English was. And then there's the social sciences including like economics which ends up being a quite a mathematical science. So I think I know where the boundaries are in all this, but...you know, stigma in society, these vague generalizations, but we all know what that means but on the other hand does it still mean that? Or is that just a dead trope now, like a virus flu. From a previous era, somebody coughed it up ten years ago and it just floats around, ready to infect another mind. Sorry that's where my brain is these days. And then the jargon prestige envy down here was a little sorrowful, that "all of my friends know how to use words that I can't use, they know how to use an exclusive secret language and I don't." And that geeky secret language is not that deep and wonderful, I can tell you. [laughter] It's fun at first, yeah, a secret language, and then you realize, then you can toil in that little mind for a lifetime.

19:53 LT: S, did you want to...?

19:54 S: I dunno, um, my personal experiences have been that, and I think we have to decide what liberal arts are and what humanities really means. You know I started off as a journalism major because I wanted to make sure I make money, and I eventually went straight into English, cause that's what I loved. I have never been without a job and I tell all my students that, who happen to be engineering students who are therefore, hell-bent on making the next bio-- discovery. But I think the issue is that

you have to do what you really love and like, as opposed to worrying about whether you are gonna have a job or not. And if that's your ultimate goal then I do not know why you are pursuing anything in the first place. If that's what it is. If that's your end goal is to have a job, I think you've got the wrong mindset why you are studying anything. Humanities and the liberal arts teach you how to think, more than anything, and I think that's a skill anybody uses and needs when they go out looking for a job. I think we put the cart before the horse and you have to like what you are doing and then decide what's it going-- how you are going to benefit from it or what you are going reap out of it. Before I was at UM I was at Carnegie Mellon, and that university has both one of the most outstanding science and technical background sand also the liberal arts and the performing arts, and most of my students were majoring in both. And we used to have sessions we called them the geeks and the freaks because they literally label themselves that but they both found something to gain from each other, and I do not think that there is such a division between the humanities and the sciences. There isn't. They are all critical thinking skills.

22:23 H: Yes, that was making me think, I think a big issue, at least through my heavily scientific education. Yes, I had certain like gen-eds that I had to do, but still at the end of the day especially as a scientist and someone who works in fisheries which, if you are not familiar, has huge implications on the everyday person, and a lot of the times in talking about things, and even like...so I am the scientist behind-- that tries to simplify, that tries to count how many fish there are and I communicate with someone who is a fishery manager who are making the decisions and the laws. They do not actually understand like what my work is, but I still need to be able to communicate with them and to the public what I am doing why I am doing it and how I got to the conclusion that I got to, and I think that it something I feel is an incredible lack in my abilities because I was I was taught so much about the science, we were not taught about like science communication which I guess would fall more under the humanities, so I agree I think there is ...there does need to be more formal overlap between a lot of these things because I think at the end of the day we are all using a lot of it.

23:42 LT: Yeah, so a couple of...almost anyone gave responses, but one thing I want to move to now is the question what are the humanities? What does that word mean to you? So I am gonna use the board for the this. We have talked about humanities so far we also used the phrase liberal arts, right. Which are sometimes used in interchangeable ways and sometimes not. So I am just gonna put...[writing on the board] What I would like to hear from you all is just some words or concepts that you associate with the term humanities right...any.

- 24:30 B:** And are there social sciences, is that like, the other side of the board, or...?
- 24:35 LT:** Yeah! That's a question that we can talk about...where do the social sciences fit in? So we have ...we know about STEM right, we hear a lot about STEM. Social sciences...what disciplines are those? Generally speaking.
- 24:50 E:** Like what I'm doing.
- 24:51 LT:** Like what you're doing, yes.
[laughter]
- 24:54 LT:** Psychology, sociology sometimes political science, right. I can put it here. Economics, yeah, there are more obviously...sometimes communication would fall under the social sciences. But I think you're right that the boundary starts to get pretty porous between social sciences and humanities. When we start thinking about communication and even some branches of political sciences and economics that are less perhaps, quantitative.
- 25:19 B:** Almost law, right, her fisheries stuff--
- 25:21 LT:** Yes, law, policy, international relations right
- 25:26 S:** Ethics.
- 25:26 LT:** I'll just put social sciences up here with a question mark. Other words or ideas that you associate with humanities?
- 25:37 H:** English.
- 25:37 LT:** English yeah ok...so that's a discipline, a subject.
- 25:44 B:** History, is one
- 25:45 LT:** History yeah, great.
- 25:48 B:** But I guess also horizontal history, geography, or whatever that is.
- 25:51 LT:** Yes, yeah.
- 25:54 H:** Religion, or like religious studies.
- 25:57 E:** Philosophy?

26:01 LT: Philosophy, excellent.

26:03 S: Languages.

26:13 LT: Languages, what else? So we've got a bunch of disciplines up here, what about words that aren't disciplinary?

[pause]

26:26 B: History is more than disciplinary.

26:28 LT: That's true.

[laughter]

26:33 B: Depth to anything, right, there's sort of a depth...

26:35 LT: Yeah, okay so a depth...and what do you mean by depth?

26:41 B: Um....perspective, and often that's sort of historical...you know, comparative across.

26:52 LT: [writing on board] Depth...perspective...

26:52 B: Context.

26:55 LT: Yeah good...other words that come to mind?

27:03 S: Global.

27:05 LT: Global okay, yeah.. [writing on board]

27:16 LT: Other words for the humanities?

27:24 H: Ideas.

27:24 LT: Ideas, okay, interesting. So why would you...So let's pretend that I have another board here that said sciences, right? Would, to you, ideas go under sciences as well?

27:35 H: Yes. I think there...I kind of mean it differently but for me a lot of the humanities are sort of like studying of thoughts and ideas themselves, and science is kind of like, more the exploration of the application of those ideas.

- 27:56 LT:** Ahh. Okay, okay. Uh huh. Yeah.
- 27:57 H:** That's sort of...I don't know if that makes sense
- 27:58 LT:** So like, we deal more with like...
- 28:01 H:** You are looking at concepts themselves. So yeah, that's more what I mean by ideas.
- 28:07 B:** Oh, and how those are rooted in people, we forgot anthropology...
- 28:10 LT:** Yes, hey, there you go. [writing on board] Anthropology basically is--
- 28:19 B:** Basically a translation of humanities in old Latin right?
- 28:27 LT:** Other words or concepts or ideas or values that we associate with the term humanities.
- 28:35 H:** People, like a lot of it ...like, all of it? Centers around humans.
- 28:42 LT:** Yes. It's called the "humanities."
[laughter]
- 28:52 LT:** No it's important, yeah. Other ones that we haven't put up here yet?
[pause]
- 28:55 LT:** Okay so if this is our sort of like rough beginning to a concept cluster around humanities, what about liberal arts, what do we see as the difference between humanities and liberal arts? Difference and/or overlap.
- 29:17 H:** I thought they were the same.
- 29:18 LT:** You thought they were the same. Okay. They are often used interchangeably.
- 29:24 B:** Well only this year did I learn, what "liberal" adds to the word arts.
- 29:31 LT:** Okay, so, tell us.
- 29:31 B:** And there are some seven things, there is the trivium and the quadrivium and all this all, I wonder if students are taught that, or just teachers among themselves secretly talk like that.
- 29:42 LT:** So tell us what you learned about what the word liberal adds...

- 29:44 B:** There's this trivium that...which is ...kind of, you know vocabulary, common [inaudible] logic and then rhetoric, and then you sing or whatever. And then the quadrivium is just the four things people knew about in the medieval era I guess, which was like music and astronomy. And those are really sciences almost, right, so the liberal arts include some sciences actually don't they? Yeah and so maybe, that's, so I don't know what you mean by that.
- 30:14 LT:** Well, no actually I'm just interested in what you--
- 30:16 B:** I know that arts and sciences is a thing together, but I do not know what the word liberal adds to the word arts here...
- 30:24 LT:** Yeah so...E? You said you went to a liberal arts, so what does that phrase mean to you as a graduate of a liberal arts college?
- 30:32 E:** Um...umbrella...like overall I just...I took it as like a well-rounded education. I like, I was-- I had the opportunity to engage in a lot of these disciplines, while also selecting a major within that, so to me liberal arts is a lot of what's already on this board but in addition to the social sciences, really getting at like....really ...teaching students how to really think, and like that thought process and just being a critical thinker through all these different disciplines.
- 31:07 LT:** So did you take science classes at your liberal arts college?
- 31:10 E:** Yeah, so I was a science major.
- 31:14 LT:** Yeah, so in my experience a lot of liberal arts colleges would obviously include science departments and humanities departments, and social sciences departments together and that...so yeah.
- 31:26 E:** I consider it all under--
- 31:27 LT:** It all goes under liberal arts, yeah. Other thoughts?
- 31:32 B:** I thought of that as like a style of education rather than a corpus of knowledge.
- 31:35 LT:** Rather than a collection of disciplines or something...so if it is a style of education what's that style of education?
- 31:44 B:** Well I don't know, it's just a way of thinking about-- I've been using it actually, since I learned this like, this is great, you know. Now I know how

to teach science you know as a liberal arts. Well the trivium...you know, is not trivial.

31:59 LT: And what were you going to say, S?

32:00 S: Well I think the word liberal, that's always bothered me it's not...as opposed to what? Conservative? But I think it's a way...I went to a liberal arts college as well. It's a way of thinking, it's curiosity it's Um...learning respect for all of this different disciplines and what they have to offer, and it's a way of looking at them. Inquisitive, um, questioning. And also respecting all of the things that we have gone before and their ideas.

32:40 B: So do you mean it's almost an art of how to orient your mind-- how to use your mind?

32:45 S. Yes, yes. In other words being open to things, I guess that's where the word liberal would work. But open to things and also understanding that things have changed. You know, philosophy. Any of them have changed, history, geography any of them have changed over the years and to understand the depth and the way we look at them. And how we learn from them and how we can build from them. And how to communicate. Um, what you were saying about-- you know-- and that's what I teach my engineering students. You can have the best idea in the world but if you cannot communicate it to people, and most of the time you are gonna be spending time communicating to people who do not have a clue what the hell you are talking about, and you have to communicate to them because they are gonna fund you, they are gonna understand you, or they are gonna listen to what you have to say, you know. And that's the key. Knowing who your audience is, understanding their background, how do you get to them.

33:50 B: Persuasion, almost.

33:52 S: It has to be.

33:54 LT: Rhetoric.

33:55 S: And when you say the word rhetoric people look at you like "what is that." It's how do you use your words.

34:04 LT: Good. Other thoughts on liberal arts versus humanities that we haven't touched yet. Okay so I'll flip this board around, we'll keep going with it. Okay so, we've talked about sort of general associations with the word humanities and liberal arts and now we are interested to understand sort of general impressions, your impression of the humanities. I really want to emphasize that there are really no right or wrong answers here. Like we

are all people from this team, "humanities people," but we are really, really interested in your general impressions on the word humanities, that's why we are doing this. And so, I would like just to discuss, what do you think about the humanities, what are your general impressions, what comes to mind when you think about the humanities? And whatever that word means to you, what are your general impressions.

35:02 B: A dismissive one, and a respectful one. The dismissive ones are from when I was back in college, or whatever, you know, they were like, subjective opinions written well.

[laughter]

35:13 LT: Subjective opinions...written well... [writing on board]

35:24 B: Yeah [inaudible] Well that's not what my mom sent me to college for.

35:25 LT: Sure, yes. Good. Other impressions...

35:31 H: S: guess to me, like as a whole, it always seems like a study of like the human experience, is how I always sort of thought.

35:44 LT: So that's a nice broad word, "experience." What do you mean by that word?

35:50 H: Um...like...it's- it's...to me it's sort of a study of how people view the world and like, on how the other things, how their perspectives and their contexts shaped their decisions, and obviously like those things shaped history. So it's sort of like looking at how all the pieces at a particular snapshot in time fit together to create our history. Sort of.

36:21 LT: Yeah. Great. Other impressions of the humanities?

36:34 B: A lot of reading.

36:39 LT: Yeah. You are going to be reading if you're studying the humanities.

36:42 H: Difficult to quantify.

36:45 LT: Ahhh. That's very interesting.

36:47 H: I am not saying it can't be done, but, I mean, we run into the same issue when looking at like animal behavior, any time you look at behavior you run into an extreme difficulty when it comes to the math part, which is what I do. Everything I do is statistics. In taking a lot of qualitative type of

information and quantifying it is very difficult. I can only imagine how y'all [inaudible]

- 37:13 LT:** Yeah so how or why is it difficult. For you, how is it difficult?
- 37:18 H:** Um...how, like....There are certain things like how do you turn what somebody says into a number. It's very difficult and there are ways like on a survey like having rankings but even then when you get to the-- I am getting into statistics here...but when you get to statistical methods it's still like purely in terms of statistics it's like, that's not the best way to do it. And we went back to the issue of is there a level of subjectivity to it, for better or worse, there is. And I think what people don't realize is that in a lot of science there is still a lot of subjective decisions as well, but I think it is a bit more obvious in the humanities that, how do we take, there is some subjective decision in how you take qualitative information and turn it into numbers regardless of what field you are talking about.
- 38:11 LT:** Great, good...And for a long time I mean, I'll just jump in as the humanities professor, for a long time there was just not the resources, to make quantification even possible a lot of the humanities disciplines, right.
- 38:26 B:** Now there, is right.
- 38:29 LT:** Good, other impressions? Of the word humanities, of humanities fields or disciplines, or humanities majors or how however you wanna interpret it.
- 38:37 B:** I think it's comforting, one of the roles is comforting, well this business of studying human experience, what you get from that is-- that it's-- it's okay to be the frail creatures we are because look at all the glories of humanity. But it is also discomfoting, you know [laughter] [partially inaudible] you all the paintings of the skull and stuff sort of reminds you--
- 39:06 LT:** The minefield of history.
- 39:08 B:** We're a little thin layer in a churning firmament that is...yeah.....
- 39:17 LT:** Good! Other impressions?
- [pause]
- 39:20 LT:** What do we...maybe this is moving into the realm of stereotype, but that's okay, general impression/stereotypes/clichés around the concept of the humanities major.
- 39:41 H:** I think that like for me and like I said this could be my own just lack of knowledge, and also my bias of knowing I wanted to go into a science field

but like, I do understand the need of like, needing to have a job, whether you are happy with that job or not you need to make money. Like for me I would have a very hard time if I had-- I don't know the answer-- if I majored in English I don't what kind of job, like I don't have an answer for that. You know with the caveat of me coming from a very biased background. But I do not know...I don't have an easy answer for that.

- 40:33 S:** So...are you asking for our biases or what we think what other people have towards it?
- 40:40 LT:** Really either. Both.
- 40:43 S:** Because I love it and [laughter] I have been in it for forty years. But I think that people do not understand humanities and have the wrong impression on what it is. It's not just sitting on a rock thinking about philosophy or you know what happened to Shakespeare twenty, thirty years after he was dead. But I think that people have the wrong impression of humanities is and that's why we could not differentiate between humanities and liberal arts and when you say humanities, you know, your son or daughter says I wanna study humanities, it's dear god what they are gonna do with that? And my retort is you can do anything you want with it. But that's coming from my bias and the overall I guess impression in society, is you are gonna walk around in sandals and...
- 41:51 LT:** Dare I use the word useless...
- 41:53 S:** Right, but yes, and that's--
- 41:57 B:** [inaudible]
- 42:00 S:** Well that second writing first of all was so poorly written [laughter] I really did not understand his point and I'd have told him that. But I think there is a usefulness, it is not useless, but people perceive it as being useless and I do not know who's at fault or why that is the impression, but, um...
- 42:27 LT:** No I think you are right. This is part we are doing this to understand this, right, even if the people in this room don't hold that impression, I think we can agree that it is a—a cliché...
- 42:37 S:** It's pervasive.
- 42:38 LT:** Yes.
- 42:39 H:** I think the application of it is a bit more nuanced, in science it's very, "oh you learn this equation so you can make a rocket, like it is very a to b, it's very-- and with the humanities, like, for example for my humanities

undergraduate requirement I took religious classes, religion studies classes, because I personally think it's how so many people make decisions and view the world, so everyone should learn about it, that's my personal opinion, it's something that's so important to so many people and it is very useful when you are talking to other people and understanding other people, but I think that's more nuanced, it's not as obvious, unless you really sit down and think about it.

- 43:27 LT:** Applications are less clear less...and I think also what I have heard in this room so far is that paths from college to job are often less clear when we're thinking about humanities majors.
- 43:41 B:** Kinda varies. I feel like if you prompt, uh, if you prompt the social mind with "blank" major, nobody puts humanities there, and then there are all the others, philosophy major and that's a thing, and then there's like English major, well but Garrison Keillor gave that [inaudible] but you know history major, and all of these actually sound quite different, you know, these all sound very different to me, so I do not have an single impression of humanities.
- 44:07 LT:** Okay let's talk about that then. So what is different to you about all those different-- majors.
- 44:12** Well some of them are I guess...like anthropology almost is a science, some of these are, you know, economics major, that's virtually STEM at that point right, or math major. Well now math is not considered humanities...there's just uh, there's just many, there's just many things.
- 44:31 LT:** So what about like, English major?
- 44:33 B:** Uh, yeah...if it weren't for Garrison Keillor it would be a lot worse.
- 44:40 LT:** Well, what is it then? What is it for you then? Again...totally fine. It's not being graded.
- 44:46 B:** Um....probably a grammar Nazi.
- 44:50 LT:** It is good to get that. I mean whenever I am on a plane and someone asks me what I do and I have to answer I am an English Professor-- usually I don't even say that because of what they'll say next which is, oh I have better watch my grammar...
- 44:58 S:** Uh-huh.
- 44:59 B:** Yeah.

- 45:01 E:** I get the, oh you're a psychology student, are you analyzing me?
[laughter]
- 45:10 B:** Ha, yeah you are a psychology major, that's uh, that's a whole, yeah—
yeah exactly.
- 45:11 LT:** What about history major? This is for anybody.
- 45:15 B:** Well that seems fascinating, then you gotta ask what period and then it's
like well, if it's something you know nothing about there is no conversation
there, but there is a respect for that certainly. Yeah. Cause it's specific and
real. English major is where it's more, a little closer to taste or something,
you know, it is going to be like music or something you know has opinions
about, um stories, whether, you know, everyone has opinions about
stories, how can you get paid to do that.
- 45:46 LT:** That's another conversation but yeah. [laughter] Good. Other impressions
of humanities major, that phrase, or specific humanities majors, like
history philosophy majors--
- 45:59 S:** Well in law schools they look for philosophy majors first and foremost.
Because it is not so much a period or a person in philosophy, but it's a
way of thinking and taking the question apart. So the humanities, it's not
the specific majors as much as the approach.
- 46:24 LT:** Good. Yeah.
- 46:27 B:** Yeah. Analysis right...there is....yeah.
- 46:32 LT:** And of course the sciences also involve analysis, right? So when we're
talking about the word analysis and we're talking about the humanities
what are we talking about? How is that different in other words from how
the word might be used in the context of the sciences? What do you think?
- 46:48 H:** Like what I kind of said before, to me a lot of these things have a lot to do
with like looking-- just for example like at an event in time and seeing what
forces that were present, the context, the perspectives, what went into that
event and shaped the history and sort of analyzing how different things
happening at once produced this like end product that is our history.
- 47:14 LT:** Yeah, yeah. Whereas in the sciences, I mean you are a scientist. How is
analysis different?
- 47:21 H:** Uh, it is a lot of...counting. Statistics, like very purely like there is no, like
there is not really like an attitude or a feeling or like what shaped this, it's

very just-- it is, it's yeah. I don't know how to put it into words but it is a lot less, it is a bit more sterile? I guess. Would be the word I would use.

47:55 LT: Whereas the humanities we're thinking about the cultural and historical context...

47:58 H: And actually it is-- in science we are trying to keep as many as those things out as possible. It seems bad science if you are putting in emotion-- like it depends on what you are studying but in fisheries, you know besides the fact that we are aiming for sustainability in just trying to count how many fish there are, I should not bringing my personal feelings into it or the fisherman's feelings like, however many fish we think there are, that's how many we think there are and that should be that.

48:29 LT: Great. Other impressions? Humanities or humanities majors. Can be yours or general that aren't up here.

48:46 B: Just in the newspapers and stuff there is always a sort of social justice frontier, there were always you know, Marxists, there's ways that it can be dismissed, uh, as, you know social engineering whatever, that it has an agenda...you know. Even history, I guess theories of history, there's Marx and all of that, so...

49:10 LT: Okay, so now I just wanna more formally jump to doing a similar thing for sciences, so if we have developed a sort of cluster of concepts around the humanities and developed impressions of the humanities and humanities majors, what about sciences? Let's do a similar thing for the sciences. Let's turn this back around...We'll throw the sciences up here.

[ERASING/WRITING ON BOARD]

49:49 LT: So sciences. What do we got? General concepts and or impressions. What comes to mind? Can be yours, can be society's in general.

49:57 H: Well like I said a lot of what I do I feel is very sterile. I do not think all the sciences are like that. But when it comes down to like the pure math or like what I do is partially theoretical.

50:15 LT: Great.

50:15 E: A psychology student I feel I've gotten like a lot of the soft science versus hard science.

50:23 LT: Uh-huh. So what would you say is that distinction for you? Soft versus hard sciences.

- 50:31 E:** Um... I mean to me they are all one thing, I do not distinguish between soft vs. hard, but I feel like society distinguishes it, and you know feels like psychology I think people perceive it kind of similar to what we read, it's like being easier, kind of field. The soft science--
- 50:52 LT:** The soft sciences are easier.
- 50:54 E:** Yeah and I feel like...I hear that stereotype a lot.
- 50:59 LT:** And would you say that psychology is often lumped in with the soft? Or hard?
- 51:04 E:** Soft, yeah.
- 51:05 LT:** Whereas hard would be like, physics, biology...
- 51:09 E:** Yeah, and perhaps I have gotten that I have a older sister who, you know was in hard sciences, so I think I get that from family expectations as well as societal ones...cultural context...
- 51:24 LT:** Great. Other thoughts, impressions, about sciences...
- 51:27 B:** You can be wrong.
- 51:29 LT:** Ah, you CAN be wrong in the sciences.
- 51:31 B:** Yeah, yeah in the sciences you can be wrong, which is what's scary about it, right, that you can be wrong--
- 51:36 LT:** Falsifiable.
- 51:36 B:** Yeah, exactly. But it's more, I mean it is more pointedly than that you know it...you may not be good enough. You can be wrong by being not good enough in some way it is judgmental I guess. Uh...but that comes from some real, it's also fundamental, you know. We have to all be in awe of the fundamental I suppose. So the flip side of that is then reductive. Which is kind of the same as fundamental, but more sterile, so when you think of a part are the parts alive or are the parts dead.
- 52:17 LT:** I see, okay. So when you are using the word fundamental and using the word reductive, what are those things meaning for you when you're using them in that way?
- 52:23 B:** Well fundamental is sort of profound, and reductive just means you chopped it into bits.

- 52:27 LT:** Ah. I see. Okay. So like fundamental like you've reached some sort of fundamental profound truth about something
- 52:33 B:** Yeah, right, nature is really made of those parts, and the others you just chopped nature into bits.
- 52:37 LT:** I see. And you are not understanding the context
- 52:38 B:** And it's hard to tell which one I guess.
- 52:44 S:** There is a word that I am gonna—and I think they have to be creative. And I don't think they get enough credit because all of your scientists that might have created something or invented something had to look at something and make a leap from all of those little numbers or all of that lovely data, and be creative and I don't think we realize that.
- 53:13 LT:** Yeah I think it's a good point, I mean I think like...again if we're are talking about out in society the word creative more often may be associated with humanities or the arts.
- 53:21 S:** But it's there as well.
- 53:26 H:** One thing I see a lot and uh—and you see it here too there is this like impression that it's like this hard thing that only geeky like super smart people and nobody will ever understand it and so that makes people afraid of it, like you see it on the news all the time like vaccines and things like that or there is this like distrust sort of like this awe, but also distrust of scientists.
- 54:00 LT:** Because what they are doing is so esoteric.
- 54:02 H:** Yeah it's so big nobody else understands, and it's like yeah, and it's—yes it may be very specialized but that doesn't mean it's actually as complicated as it sounds and I think a lot of time it comes out that way because we do also have a reputation for being poor communicators about what we do.
- [laughter]
- 54:25 B:** Jargon, right?
- 54:26 H:** Yes, jargon.
- 54:32 LT:** Jargon...great.
- 54:33 H:** And that we don't care about people.

- 54:35 LT:** AH: okay...so what do you mean by that?
- 54:38 H:** That we just care about the science itself for the sake of it and don't care about its impact on people or the application of the more humanities side.
- 54:51 E:** The translation of it.
- 54:52 H:** Yeah.
- 54:52 LT:** The translation to like life?
- 54:54 E:** Yeah the broader audience, people, society.
- 54:58 B:** It's a bit of priesthood feel to it, it seems like.
- 55:02 LT:** What do you mean by that?
- 55:03 B:** Cause well you learn special words, and maybe you feel like there's gonna be some, um, getting your degree matters a lot cause you had to not be wrong way in a lot of ways, it feels like a little bit of a, it's a threshold status to get to become a scientist or whatever.
- [pause]
- 55:29 H:** It's also I feel very male dominated.
- 55:36 LT:** Do you feel that that stereotype or... or, it is not often a stereotype right, that cliché also applies to, when you think about the humanities or is that something you associate more to the sciences?
- 55:45 H:** With the humanities as I say the stereotype would be that it's female dominated, like that the men do the hard sciences and women do the thinky-feely science, you know that's kind of how--
- 55:56 LT:** So it's not just male-dominated, it's like masculinized--
- 55:58 H:** Yeah it's very masculinized, and um, I have been told that I don't look like a...
- 56:09 E:** A scientist?
- 56:10 H:** A fishery scientist, several times, yeah. I mean it's changing, but it's definitely one of those things people think of...men.

- 56:25 B:** Biology is more female in these days and the way uh, it made sense to me I don't know I was too squeamish for it and so in a way....so yeah there's sort of the squishy oozy sciences and...
- 56:38 LT:** Okay. So there's even within the sciences themselves--
- 56:39 B:** Between soft and hard there is also like you know moist and dry.
[laughter]
- 56:47 LT:** I love that...that's great.
- 56:51 H:** Yeah cause even within it's like when I say I did marine biology they think I play with dolphins and it's like no, I do statistics thank you very much.
- 57:01 LT:** So it is like marine biology "play with dolphins" stereotype more feminine?
- 57:04 H:** Yeah.
- 57:05 LT:** Ok, yeah, good. Anything else I haven't put up here yet?
- 57:14 B:** Cool-minded and maybe cold-minded, I don't know...
- 57:18 LT:** So what do you mean by that?
- 57:19 B:** Um, you know observant, clinically observing something you know...
- 57:25 LT:** Not bringing one's feelings--
- 57:25 B:** Oh, look, one of my subjects is devouring the other one.
- 57:28 LT:** I see, yeah.
[laughter]
- 57:30 B:** It's the [inaudible]
- 57:31 LT:** So like distance, a kind of--yeah. I'm sure you never get that as a psychologist.
[laughter]
- 57:45 LT:** Anything else that's not up here ...
- 57:50 H:** Competitive.

- 57:52 LT:** Ah. Okay. So do you mean like within its own ranks of the scientists?
- 57:58 H:** Yeah I mean not so much at RSMAS which is really nice, but there are other places like where the grad school it's incredibly like, cutthroat as opposed to being more of a team. Like everyone trying to help each other and I think a lot of...
- 58:15 LT:** So kind of like a collaborative...
- 58:17 H:** Yeah competitive, I think it can be very competitive over collaborative, even when there are collaborative efforts I think it can still be incredibly competitive.
- 58:29 LT:** I see. Just as far as like who gets hired, and who gets on what projects?
- 58:31 H:** Yeah and even just trying to get into the PhD program it's—'cause, I mean like I said I'm speaking from my field where we get all of our, like, government funding which there isn't very much, there is more of us than there are space for us.
- 58:47 B:** Well and that's cause it's hierarchical unlike these humanities and stuff. Laboratories have their staffs.
- 58:55 LT:** I see. So hierarchical means in terms of how research projects are structured and run.
- 58:58 B:** Yeah.
- 58:59 H:** How many papers you have published and whether they are good or not.
- 59:03 B:** Although maybe now I see English is hierarchical, you can work for ten years on multi-institutional things.
- 59:10 LT:** We'll have a separate conversation.
- 59:11 B:** With grad students.
[laughter]
- 59:15 B:** Yeah, you are doing science here and you just don't know it.
- 59:22 H:** It can be incredibly specialized. Especially as you go up the hierarchy.
- 59:30 LT:** So as you go...
- 59:31 H:** Up people get more and more...

- 59:32 LT:** More and more narrow in terms of what they are doing.
- 59:34 H:** Yeah.
- 59:37 LT:** Do you think that word for you applies to the humanities as well?
- 59:42 H:** Probably, I don't know enough about it, but I would-- I think it happens a lot with people who just pursue further education in general. We go from missing college to this where we, like, only know one thing and know it really, really well. I mean I think that's more of an article of just like academic type of thing
- 1:00:01 LT:** A product of doing a PhD.
- 1:00:04 B:** Yeah and that abuts loneliness. Right. Lonely.
- 1:00:11 LT:** So lonely in terms of the work culture are you talking about or...?
- 1:00:13 B:** Well, just the specialization.
- 1:00:14 LT:** I see. So you are like the one person who knows...
- 1:00:16 B:** At first it's status and privilege, but eventually it's isolation.
- 1:00:20 LT:** I see.
- 1:00:23 H:** Yeah, even people in your field don't know what you are talking about.
[laughter]
- 1:00:27 LT:** Yeah.
- 1:00:29 B:** Yeah I have a secret language that nobody else can... that's actually makes me crazy.
- 1:00:34 H:** Yeah great conversations with yourself
[laughter]
- 1:00:39 LT:** All right, great any other...before we?
- 1:00:41 H:** I think that we're like, I guess aloof.
- 1:00:44 LT:** Aloof. Okay. Yeah.

1:00:45 H: And think we're better than other people...

1:00:48 LT: Ah, I see.

[pause]

1:00:52 LT: This is a good list. So I want to now shift us to part two of the conversation which is gonna be focusing more generally on educational experiences. Okay so...one—I am not going to ask you to read all of this but one sort of seed for this discussion—I'll just briefly introduce it. It's more for undergrads but sort of this thing on BuzzFeed, and—if you're familiar with BuzzFeed, right?

[laughter]

1:01:46 LT: Which one of our research assistants found: "Thirty jokes about every college major that are so, so dead on." Right and this is an amusing read, but we have things like "humanities majors be like damn I have a thought due on Wednesday, Agricultural studies majors be like damn I have a corn on the cob due this week, English majors be like damn I have depression, History majors, I have to steal the Declaration of Independence." It goes on and on like this. Let's get to a sciences one...um..."political science, I gotta become President this Friday, STEM majors, I have a robot due this Friday, Business majors I gotta exploit the working class by Tuesday, I gotta save the world by yesterday, environmental studies major." Psychology, here we go, "I have trauma to process by Friday." You get the idea, right?

[laughter]

1:02:15 LT: There's tons of stuff around like this you if just google it. And so for the kind of opening question to start us off with which then can lead us into your individual educational experiences, if you would like, or we can talk about in terms of the societal level...is what do you think about these stereotypes, what is your own, slash what are your own experiences with stereotypes surrounding your chosen major and/or field of study and/or profession that you decided to go in. So that's our kind of opening question.

1:02:57 E: Can you say that again?

1:02:58 LT: Yeah so sort like what do you think about the stereotypes as either they are represented by this specific BuzzFeed article, or just what this BuzzFeed article is telling us how about people in general think about different college majors, and what has been your experience, if any, with stereotypes surrounding your own major or field of studies or job?

- 1:03:22 S:** I see, absolutely, you know what's out there, and then, those are usually the ones that you hear. But if someone says to me what are you doing and I say I teach composition, oh, that's okay. But if I say I teach technical and scientific writing it's like, oh that's complicated. Well so is composition. But, um, it's all in how you couch it. If you say, you know...I am a humanities major, god knows what you are doing, but if I say I am a psychology major, oh you have a definite plan and you are going to have certain outcomes. So I think it's societal assumptions of when you say a certain area or a certain major, that therefore I can compartmentalize you into certain activities, or the way you think or the way you approach things, and it shouldn't be that way.
- 1:04:30 H:** I agree and even like here when I was in undergrad, like I said you have your gen-eds, but as I said I had to take, as a marine science and biology double major, and so obviously I had to take biology. And then a lot of my friends were in like the humanities and they had to take biology as well as part of their gen-eds but they took—there was a separate class it was biology for non-science majors, I don't how that class was different, I don't really understand why there is a different class. I never sat in on that class, but to me it was a little ridiculous, it's like I take the same English class that you do but why are you taking a different biology class and I think that definitely feeds in to that stereotype or that idea of science is too hard so we need a different science class for them, and I think that's absurd.
- 1:05:24 B:** Except for the little one-two with math and you know, sciences that use math, if you do not know math you get nothing out of the whole discourse.
- 1:05:30 H:** Yeah but the biology is not—at least here, the biology class is not math. I do not think there was any math, granted you can easily have a mathematical biology class, but like the bio 101 class has nothing to do with math, and it is you know concepts about the ecology and population versus a single unit, and you know, these big concepts and ideas that, you know, I get when you get specialized obviously you need to have a certain background or if there is math involved I get having calculus-based physics versus non-calculus-based physics I think that makes sense, you have to have the math background to do whichever, but with the biology class I think that's definitely like the university perpetuating this same idea, I think that, like, science is hard.
- 1:06:17 S:** And we can't handle it..
- 1:06:18 H:** Yeah and that's not true
- 1:06:20 LT:** The humanities is humanities majors.

- 1:06:23 S:** Even when I was an undergrad we had science class, and then we had philosophy of science, and we had history class, and then history of science, and then we had philosophy of science, so it was like they were separating the two, and it's really the same.
- 1:06:45 LT:** Good. Other thoughts on these major stereotypes or your own experiences with stereotypes at school or at work about your field?
- 1:06:54 B:** The main tragic thing is it's all, you know, by Friday for somebody else, which means all this is like somebody's else knowledge that they are showing down your throat you know which pipe do you wanna stick on your face. It's...none of it is like my knowledge, you know, or I'm gonna get knowledge, it's all just, what's been...it's sort of sad but...accountability system....
- 1:07:21 S:** For the longest time it has been STEM, and now they wanna have it as STEAM, okay so...
- 1:07:28 B:** What's that?
- 1:07:29 S:** Before it was STEM, science, technology, engineering and math. Now they want it to be STEAM, and they want arts in there. And they are people on both sides who say, no, arts don't belong in there and yet they do, but...it's all in the way you look at it.
- 1:07:49 LT:** So it's sounding to me from this discussion like people are saying that you believe, and tell me if I am wrong about this, that you believe that people have sort of preconceived ideas about you based on the field of study that you are in, slash your major when you were an undergrad? Is that correct? Would everybody say?
- [murmurs of agreement]
- 1:08:10 H:** Yeah. And I mean like I said, it's hard like I was in the science field I don't know what my friends were doing, I will say like, you know I'm a little older now, I'm a little wiser. But you know at the time it was I always seemed to have way more work to do than they did. Like so much more to do and I had to study so much more for my tests than they did. And like I said, at the time I was a little bitter about it. No I'm not gonna lie like I was...
- 1:08:43 LT:** Yeah. That's understandable.
- 1:08:48 B:** I went to a science only university, almost. There was one building called humanities and social sciences. [laughter] And then you know the Chemistry block and then yeah...

- 1:08:57 S:** Had a fence around it, to keep them in there.
- 1:09:01 LT:** So it was a little bit different, culture that, yeah.
- 1:09:03 B:** Yeah. And it was actually hard for me it was like here there's a book about Mary Queen of Scots, have an opinion about it by Friday, and it was like, you know here's a story, have an opinion about this story, you just can't force that stuff, I didn't have opinions about the stories, I don't mind reading stories but I never could have opinions that I'm supposed to have, and then write an essay about it. It was all just, I guess that was all somebody else's knowledge. But so that's a weird background, but within that, this whole idea that STEM is one thing it just blows my mind. Because to me you know the whole, the whole universe of knowledge was basically well here's biology, here, and chemistry here and physics there... and there's this thing called engineering, which is a whole different thing, totally unrelated, and like math is over here. And the idea that some larger world would think of all that as one big blur, you know like biology and math, are just one thing, to some other mind, that I just can't even imagine, one's moist [laughs] and one's...so, it's surreal to me that that word exists and I feel like it actually protects some science—inconvenient sciences like, the environment is suffering, because it's lumped in with, oh these things might make technologies, they get the rich people richer.
- 1:10:29 H:** Yeah, it's—
- 1:10:30 B:** And lucky that—it's a blessing that people put a ball around STEM and we environmental scientists get to be protected from slashing. 'Cause we are kind of vaguely associated with engineering, but it's saving our bacon right?
- 1:10:45 H:** There is—there is even in the sciences that you have to prove your worth for the funding, that you get slashed or not and get cut and like, for example you know they cut funding to you know basically to NOAA which is the oceanic and atmospheric administration. A hurricane comes in and they're like oh we should give them more money but then it's like only the weather service gets more money and it's like well the fisheries should get more money to because it's like we have our own issues and it's only until after there is a problem, like after the oil spill we got lots of money. You know it's—it's very reactive to, after the fact oh yeah this is important, oh right.
- 1:11:23 B:** But within this weird college of mine the big divide was science and engineering and one was you sell out, and the other is "pure."
- 1:11:30 LT:** And the science is pure...and engineering is [unclear]

1:11:31 B: Yeah, so science was pure in a way like we are you know, we are European enlightenment and you're know, what money can make off that or whatever--

1:11:39 LT: Applied, yeah. Yeah. Interesting. So I'd like to sort of shift to talking about people's own experiences and one of the questions we are interested in is the process of-- and I know not everyone's-- people here are at different life stages, farther or closer away to college so answer as you see fit, but the general question is did you feel ready to choose your major when you did and/or what was the process of choosing a major and/or for those who have been out of college for a while, a field of work, like for you. And was it something that you thought, sort of, very hard and intentionally about it or not was it not that.

1:12:22 H: Um, I'll start. I knew what I wanted to do from a very young age I knew I wanted to study the ocean, specifically that I wanted to study sharks because they're cool. So you know I started pretty much as soon as someplace would let me work for them, and so for me it was very easy picking a-- I had my major picked before I had a college picked

1:12:48 LT: Okay. So you then choose your colleges based on a major

1:12:51 H: Yes. I chose my college based on a major because I wanted to go to, you know a top whatever school for what I do, or for what I wanted to do you know. So for me that was very easy, I just knew what I wanted to do and I knew how to get there. With science career I think it is very like obvious that you get, like I said before like how you get from here to here to here to a job. I mean I did learn that is a bit more complicated than when I went in and like, what I'm going to do, now in terms of my job it's very different than what I thought I was going to do. Because I learned like the depth of my field. It, uh, like going, my path in going from undergrad to grad school, I was good at math, like I more wanted to like study behavior and stuff like that but um that is also seen as more of one of the more softer sides because you have-- dealing with behavior it's very hard to quantify, blah blah ... like... you know everyone wants to go out and play with sharks, like it's fun. But they don't hire anybody to do that or they hire very very few people. So I was good at math and I liked it, I got a math minor and decided to go into more of the statistical side, which was very much so that I could get that job but I also do like it a lot, I like math that's the way my brain works. So that's kind of how I...

1:14:14 LT: Great.

1:14:20 E: I really enjoyed science through my high school years, and I was pretty like, dedicated to pursuing the pre-med route and going to medical school,

but I also wanted a liberal arts education. And I'm glad I went because it really did change my career pathway and kind of my experience. I started to taking psychology courses and that's when I really got interested and I started working at a children's school nearby the college, and that really, kind of-- that in addition to kind of the liberal arts work, kind of was like a pivoting turning point for me, and that's when I got interested in child development and so... you know for me it was like I came in with this like I know what I'm going to do, but I wanted to keep the door open, which I'm glad I did. And that's what kind of led me to psychology and child development.

1:15:23 LT: Great.

1:15:27 S: I never liked math.

[laughter]

1:15:30 LT: So you knew what you didn't want to do.

1:15:32 S: But I think that that's a process and that's what I tell my students you know if you switch your major into something that you really like as opposed to this, at least you cross that off the list, okay? It's a process of elimination 'til you find what you really like and what you really want to do. If it results in a job...that's icing on the cake but I think you have to eventually decide, whether it's early on or later on...This is what I like and this is what I wanted to pursue. And then that's when it becomes more clear, the clarity comes that this is what I want to eventually study or work with or do...um...but it's a process of elimination more than inclusion I think. And that's how you get to where you're gonna be happy at. You know we have doctors that are miserable but they got through med school and know they're what they are supposed to be and yet they are the worst doctors because they're not happy at it. There's a lot of, I guess English major that are the same but...um....it's a process.

1:16:48 LT: Yeah. Yeah I mean kind of jumping off from that, we are also interested to hear—and this doesn't have to be necessarily your personal opinion but it could be sort of what you think people in society believe, what did general ideas surrounding the point or the value of the university education are. Obviously I think all of us in this room since we are working in a higher ed institution have pursued higher education would agree that it's valuable...probably...but I think we are interested to hear what you think other people or general views in society maybe that you think around the point of a university education, like why are we all here?

1:17:25 B: I felt like, um, I was just reeled in by the physical sciences which I think was just a Cold War social apparatus [laughter] let's just take anyone who

could do-- physical sciences were in real demand. And I was, that was you know, that was the Cold War, which it didn't feel like a war at the time, but I think, you know it was really a cultural, lock some things down that today are maybe a little looser. And then within that there is, math is hard even for people who are sort of good at math so, and, uh, chemistry had great huge million-dollar machines with whirring sounds and flashing lights that they would let the children play with [laughter] which I liked, and um, drugs are really fun and explosives are really fun.

1:18:20 H: That's true.

1:18:22 B: Yeah...you can imagine carloads of college students, with pipe bombs, you know driving down the highway.

1:18:30 LT: So you were really drawn in in terms of your interests, for you it was about, I am really into this and.

1:18:36 B: Yeah exactly.

1:18:38 LT: I wanna keep doing it.

1:18:39 B: Well, oh up to a certain age right. Then you get out of college or something and you realize this is my life and this is my body and everything and they'd love to have me standing on my feet working in a laboratory with poisons for them, you know. And chemistry, uh, you know it's just a certain maturation of, chemistry is not a thing to spend your life doing, you know in the presence of raw chemicals, it's not where you want to spend your life.

1:19:12 LT: Yeah. Other things people think about the point of going to college...

1:19:16 H: I think the societal view is that you can't be successful unless you go to college...That you won't make more than the minimum wage if you don't go to college which 'specially today, minimum wage isn't a living wage so, in order to support yourself or have a family or any sort of successful life you have to go to college

1:19:38 B: It's still a version of the Cold War, isn't it? There is just gonna be haves and haves not and that's all...yeah...

1:19:47 LT: Other thoughts on that one?

1:19:50 B: Depressing.

- 1:19:53 H:** I think it is definitely the whole like white collar versus blue collar type of situation you are seen as successful if you are white collar as opposed to if you are blue collar...Like the academic elitists.
- 1:20:10 LT:** Do you—we are also interested in how you all feel that your background has influenced your choice of field and/or field of study and/or job so, are there people in your family who went into this, are there people in your family who didn't go into this, are there people in your family who were telling you or friends who were telling you, you should study this or not...that kind of thing
- 1:20:33 H:** Well, so like my mother went to college. She, I come from—on my mother's side I come from a long line of Jewish accountants and I was determined to not do that. My father was a blue collar, he worked for the Metro in Washington DC, and it's funny because my father went into what he loved and my mother went into something where she could have a job and be stable. My mother told me do what you love, my father said you need to make money. I did what I love. To this day my dad still says oh you did the same stuff as a pre-med why you didn't become a real doctor, so....but I stuck with what I loved and I still feel that I have made good decisions in terms ofyou know...really what he was worried about was making sure that I had a job and a way to support myself which I did and I can, I got a job. So you know it's...but I definitely like ...even to this day with my like impending graduation, he's still likeyou are not a real doctor. But I think a lot of us probably get that. If you're not in the medical field you are not a real doctor. But yeah. Really supportive from my mom, not as supportive from my dad.
- 1:21:58 E:** Yeah I had a lot of family expectations. I come from a Persian background so...and Persian culture I mean, it's gotten a little better but if you are not you know a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer you are not deemed as high, um, in society. And it took a lot with, you know, to kind of go down this psychology route with my family. For them-- it took them a while to um, kind of appreciate it and even going to like a liberal arts college at first it was like a different experience for them, um, but with some time they—they realized the value of it afterwards.
- 1:22:40 LT:** So being a doctor of psychology is not considered to be a doctor
- 1:22:42 E:** Right—same, same thing, not like a real doctor. I also have a sister who you know she did the MD/PhD, so she is...very...
- 1:22:52 H:** She's a doctor-doctor.

[laughter]

1:22:53 E: Exactly, a "doctor-doctor", so there's just like a lot of family expectations there...

1:23:04 S: My sister is a lawyer so I can be what I want.

[laughter]

1:23:07 LT: She took care of that—of everything.

1:23:09 S: But I've never had that pressure, never. It's always do what you want, do what you like.

1:23:17 E: I think my parents are now realizing that when you do what you like and ...you know what I mean, there's more... meaning...

1:23:22 S: But I think parents would have to see that you're happy, and that is what they want.

1:23:28 E: I think that they are realizing that now.

1:23:28 S: That it's not so much how much you're gonna make, but are you happy doing it.

1:23:32 E: Yeah exactly.

1:23:33 LT: Were you the first of their children to go to college or did you have--

1:23:36 E: No I'm the younger one.

1:23:37 LT: Okay, all right, but the others have gone into more...

1:23:41 S: Acceptable.

1:23:42 E: Yeah, exactly. And my dad is an engineer himself so yeah.

1:23:48 LT: And so you said the liberal arts school was a new experience for them? How was it a new experience for them?

1:23:52 E: My sister went to, you know to university she knew very much so that she was going to become a doctor, a biology major, and so when I said that I wanted to go to a liberal arts college, you know really get the full experience, it's just different for them, also from they are coming from their educational background...so...

1:24:11 LT: They didn't have experience with liberal arts college...

- 1:24:14 E:** Right, exactly.
- 1:24:16 H:** Like with my dad it wasn't so much like all you need to be a doctor it was very much that like to him, me going into like marine science wasn't a useful science. Like how like people see humanities as like, it's not useful. Of the sciences my dad didn't understand that's how you're gonna get a job doing-- like to him, It didn't, you know like what job do you do, what do you do with that. Who's gonna pay you to do that.
- 1:24:40 LT:** So you think it was a question of the path, like your dad couldn't see the path...
- 1:24:43 H:** Yeah my dad couldn't see the path ...'cause like my brother does software engineering, like, you know he's not a doctor but, you know, my dad completely understood that, oh people will pay programmers. He didn't—I graduated early from my undergrad and my dad said, my dad was willing to pay for another semester of college, he was like, you should get a minor in accounting just in case. You should do accounting. I was graduating, I was helping—'cause I was very lucky my parents paid for me to go to college and my dad was willing to shell out more money so I could do what accounting—getting useful—which blew my mind. I didn't do that. But that's how much he didn't understand what I do. He gets it more now but he is still I think is like, you'd make more money if you did that. Even now I'm gonna work for the state. "You should work for private company you would make more money." I don't care about making money I care about being happy. Like as you said it's about doing something you love. Not everybody...he did...I think he would have understand because he did something he loved but...it was okay for him to do that. Not for me.
- 1:25:56 B:** My parents met at a liberal arts college. Grinnell of Iowa. Where they were both education majors. I don't know where all that sits in all this. And actually it meant different things to them. My mother on to become a schoolteacher, my father went on to get a PhD in education, which is like a psychology thing. With electrodes...you know ...put electrodes in our heads and stuff like that so...education is so many things
- 1:26:18 LT:** So did your dad work in a university?
- 1:26:21 B:** Yeah, he is a librarian at the University, eventually, and getting a PhD in education on the side, or whatever, yeah.
- 1:26:28 LT:** I see.
- 1:26:30 B:** So of course, of course I was on the track to get educated. But I think I was just was such an outlier in numbers and stuff, that just, uh, the world, the system reeled me in. The system has a place for people good at

numbers, and maybe because it's a rare talent or something, that it guarantees you a niche, in a way.

1:26:49 LT: Yeah.

1:26:51 B: But what if that's isn't what you wanna do you just happen to have a memory brain. That's a good question. Must we put everyone to their highest and best use? Are we really...

1:27:05 LT: Well one thing ...I mean ...it's, um...we are getting to the end here but one question that we are also interested in is, and this...we have people at different stages..., and I'm not sure how they will end up answering this question but I'll ask it anyways....the relationship that you see now between the studies that you did in college, in your undergrad degree, and the job that you have now, and/or the career path that you are pursuing now. So what do you see as that relationship between what you studied in undergrad and the job that you are doing now or that you wanna be doing, or that you know, you have been just hired to do, for instance, what is that relationship?

1:27:42 B: Railroad tracks.

1:27:44 LT: Okay for you, yeah.

1:27:51 S: Direct path.

1:27:51 LT: Direct path, yeah. So you majored in English, you said, yeah.

1:27:57 S: Eighteenth century minor poetry, to be exact.

1:28:04 H: Yeah, I think mine is very, very linear.

1:28:07 LT: Very linear. And what was your major in college ?

1:28:10 H: I did mine in science and biology. And then I just—when I knew I wanted to do the math focus, I added on the minor in mathematics. 'Cause I like math. 'Cause I think it's fun. And well, also like as you said there is also sort of this niche and I knew I wanted to do marine science and I wanted to be able to get a job so I was like, nobody likes the math part, I'll become an expert at the math part. And they have to hire me 'cause nobody else will do it. I like it so, it's very much, I was very lucky that what I like to do is what a lot of other people do not like to do

1:28:51 LT: Yeah. Did you...what was your major in college?

1:28:53 E: I was a neuroscience major.

- 1:28:54 LT:** Neuroscience, okay. So pretty directly related.
- 1:28:57 E:** Yeah...I just focus a little more on the psychology, child development...
- 1:29:04 LT:** And so you said earlier that when you went to college you sort of changed your thinking about what you wanted to do.
- 1:29:08 E:** Yeah I was expecting, you know, be a biology major, go to medical school, um, but it wasn't until I start taking psych courses and then working at the children's school, that was...
- 1:29:18 LT:** Ah, I see, okay interesting.
- 1:29:20 E:** That was kind of the turning point for me as well 'cause that was when I really got interested in child development specifically.
- 1:29:26 LT:** Okay so you had that experience working in that environment and then you decided you wanted to do more.
- 1:29:32 B:** Neuroscience is so many things. Electrodes over here, and children over there, and everything in between.
- 1:29:41 LT:** Okay, so we're getting towards the end here. I think we've had a really, really good discussion. We talked about the humanities, we talked about the differences between the sciences and the humanities, we talked about general educational experiences that you all had ...Any additional final thoughts before we wrap?
- 1:30:01 B:** Is there a goal here, is this a marketing and branding exercise? Get more people to sign up?
- 1:30:06 LT:** Yes, that's a good question, yeah. So our project is a public humanities project and we are, part of our goal is to use our research which includes the text stuff that we collected and the human subjects research, to create advocacy materials for the humanities for different types of audiences. Um, we are also however, because we are researchers--
- 1:30:27 B:** Is that a meme factory?
- [laughter]
- 1:30:30 LT:** I don't think it will be a meme factory...it could ...you know you might see on Buzzfeed--

1:30:34 B: You might do a little better if you're working on a meme factory than "advocacy materials."

1:30:38 LT: Yes. Our plan now is to develop various kits for different audiences. So for people in, um, educators and higher education, for administrators of higher education and for parents. And so that's one of our main public facing goals, but we are also a research team and so we are interested in particular research questions having to do with people's thoughts and feelings about the humanities and how the humanities are discussed particularly in comparison to the sciences in public. So you might have noticed that we talked a lot about the sciences as well. Because one of the things-- and I can now give away the ghost-- one of the things that we're discovering through our initial analysis is that the concept of the humanities does not travel nearly as well as the concept of the sciences in the public discourse, so when we have people talking about the sciences you get specific discussion of particular scientific fields whereas the humanities, that just doesn't happen. So that's one of our findings so far that we're interested in learning more about...so.

1:31:31 B: Every time a classicist opens their mouth I am dazzled, and humbled and delighted that they exist. And where are they? What is that? It is sort of history, but it is not exactly just like history?

1:31:43 LT: The classics?

1:31:44 B: Yeah. I wonder what happened to classics ...that's what I wish humanities were and then I wish lots of people were taking them.

1:31:50 LT: Sure, I did too...

[overlapping, laughter]

1:31:53 H: That would be my nightmare.

1:31:57 LT: We do have a classics department here.

1:31:57 B: Yeah. Yeah I know I got a friend who came through, was exploited as a lecturer here for a couple of years and then, still friends with him. And now he is a professor somewhere else. But through the long, lonely road to become a classics professor.

1:32:10 LT: Yeah...also a lonely road.

1:32:11 B: Yeah.

- 1:32:12 LT:** Yeah...so that's what we are up to in the project, any other—in a nutshell...
- 1:32:17 H:** I think the big thing for me and probably a lot of parents as well is like I said earlier the lack of a clear path of how A leads to B: leads to C leads to a job. Because also I think in, you know, in today's world we are very much-- even though I don't agree with it, we are very much taught that you, the reality is that you need to go to college to be successful, to have a job and there are others ways to not make minimum wage but, one truth is that you can't live off of minimum wage. The idea is that the only way you can do that is to get a college education and to make sure you have a job whether you like it or not...so I think. I think people should do what they wanna do and be happy and show that there is a way to do that that leads to financial success as well as personal success. And you know show people that there is a way to that-- that these paths exist even if it may not be as obvious, or like what those paths might look like. I don't think, like, kind of like he said earlier like these examples aren't particularly good, I think you need things that are more relevant to now, and perhaps not having to do with the government because I think that you can get into a political issue of like, oh like, Trump appointed whoever and they did not have a background in whatever and you get into a whole argument about like is it a good thing, is it a bad thing, you know so, but I think some perhaps more contemporary, or like, things people-- like younger people going into college and making these decisions can actually relate to.
- 1:33:54 LT:** Great.
- 1:33:57 B:** Computers are somewhere we all meet, aren't they? And so there is this digital humanities and kind of the, they are redefining it as scholarship rather than you know, take-- reading a bunch of stories and having opinions about them. And I think that's a fruitful area and uh, some of the computer, you know like game design or something right? That is almost a humanities ...even though it is-- maybe that would kind of go into communication which would have ties to computer science but you know the programmers over here and the game designers are over here are totally different people but that is a mighty industry. And you know so, kind of the uh, maybe that's arts almost, but again through the computers, in a way all these things meet in the computer nowadays, and that might be an opportunity for...
- 1:34:43 H:** I think--
- 1:34:47 S:** Well I think too, now when we were talking about getting funds cut. The first funds that are always cut are from the humanities, they are the least important and they aren't, and that's what we have to promote. That yeah, you can, and again, distinctly and directly say this is the kind of jobs that

you can get with a humanities degree. It is not just this ephemeral thing. It leads to actual jobs.

- 1:35:20 H:** And show like the application of—'cause I think we all mentioned it, that even in the science fields there are very important humanities components, and maybe highlighting the fact that a lot of the sciences would not be possible without-- I mean what I do, completely has to do with, like I said. you know, communicating to fishermen which can be very difficult when I am talking about this sort of more abstract idea, but at the end of the day it impacts their livelihood, you know? It has these huge implications for people lives and you know that is really important and a lot of people do not realize that is a huge part of what I do, and in a lot of sciences there are like these huge human components that I do not think people like think about, that they are actually humanities based and that they are critical to these more science parts of it.
- 1:36:16 LT:** Great. Okay. So I wanna thank you all again, really, very much. Thank you so much for giving us your time. You will all be entered to win a raffle for a hundred-dollar gift card
- 1:36:31 H:** Thank you, this was very interesting...
- 1:36:35 LT:** I just want to confirm that I have, I have consent forms from everybody, yes. So you are free to go. And please if you would like a bag of chips, or to take a sandwich with you, or to take some Oreos, please do. Thank you so much
- 1:36:49 AH:** And if you have any more questions about our project, the website is up, most of this is public-facing, we'll be putting more up over the next few months.
- 1:36:57 LT:** Yeah you can find out more about our project here.