Myself at the Semester’s End

At the beginning of the semester, I was worried about whether or not I would be able to keep up with my writing assignments. Aside from my freshman year at Kingsborough Community College, I have always viewed myself to be a very slow writer. Additionally, I was concerned about my lack of comprehension of grammar rules. These fears made me worry about my papers throughout this past semester. In this writing course (i.e. Writing for the Social Sciences), I hoped to become a better writer. Specifically, I wanted to improve on my ability to write papers more quickly, and I wanted my papers to abide to the rules of appropriate grammar. I believed these personal goals would be difficult to achieve. At the same time, I wanted my papers to reflect that I have met the course goals, which guides my ability to produce good ethnographic papers. I knew it would be very difficult to achieve all of these objectives. Even so, I am confident that I have succeeded in meeting both of my personal and course goals.

Achievement of Personal Goals

During this Spring semester at the City College of New York, I registered for five courses. All of them required the submission of essays, which made up a significant portion of my courses’ grades. As a result, I was able to receive many opportunities to develop my writing skills. In doing so, the time I spend developing my essays remained the same; however, the thickness of my essays increased. In other words, I am spending the same amount of time writing essays throughout the semester. The only difference was that I am writing more pages within the same timeframe towards the end of the semester. For example, my first Field Observation Essay, *Gym Subculture*, consisted of nine pages and took me two weeks to complete it. On the other hand, my most recently submitted paper, the research proposal, *The Most Effective Use of Music for Male Exercise in Gym Subculture*, consisted of seventeen pages and took me two-and-a-half weeks to complete it. This illustrated that my ability to write papers within the same timeframe has nearly doubled this semester. Therefore, I have achieved my first personal goal of producing academic papers more quickly.
 Additionally, I have met my second personal goal of improving my grammar usage based on the feedback and grades that I received on my papers throughout this semester. In this Writing for Social Sciences course, my grades progressively got better for each paper. In my first paper, the Letter of Introduction, I received a grade of a “B+”. According to Professor Elisabeth von Uhl’s feedback on this paper, I implemented fragment sentences, and I did not use a sufficient amount of transitions. On my letter of introduction, Professor von Uhl advised me to add one more transition and fix two fragment sentences. On my second paper, the first fieldwork observation essay, Gym Subculture, I received a grade of an “A-”. Although I received a better grade than my previous paper, I performed the same mistakes. On my second paper, the first fieldwork observation essay, *Gym Subculture*, Professor von Uhl advised me to add three more transitions and fix two fragment sentences. On my third paper, the second fieldwork observation essay, *Women in Gym Subculture*, I received a grade of an “A”. For this paper, Professor von Uhl advised me to add a single transition. This was an improvement compared to the previous fieldwork observation essay, because Professor von Uhl was asking for less corrections in terms of transitions and fragment sentences. On my fourth paper, the interview assignment, Music’s Role on Male Exercise in Gym Subculture, I received a grade of an “A”. For this paper, Professor von Uhl gave me no feedback to correct errors in terms of adding more transitions or fixing fragment sentences. Thus, the progressive reduction of errors from the second to the fourth papers demonstrated the improvement in my writing ability in terms of incorporating transitions and avoiding the use of fragment sentences. Therefore, I have achieved my second personal goal.
Achievement of Course Goals

I have achieved my course goal to write good ethnographic papers. On the syllabus, Professor von Uhl listed eight guidelines to help us develop good ethnographic papers. They are presented in the following bullets:

* Acknowledge your and others’ range of linguistic differences as resources and draw on those resources to develop rhetorical sensibility.
* Enhance strategies for reading, drafting, revising, editing, and self-assessment.
* Negotiate your own writing goals and audience expectations regarding conventions of genre, medium, and rhetorical situation.
* Develop and engage in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
* Engage in genre analysis and multimodal composing to explore effective writing across disciplinary contexts and beyond.
* Formulate and articulate a stance through and in your writing.
* Practice using various library resources, online databases, and the Internet to locate sources appropriate to your writing projects.
* Strengthen your source use practices (including evaluating, integrating, quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesizing, analyzing, and citing sources).

In my papers, I implemented these guidelines.

In accordance to the first guideline, I acknowledged the differences in our use of language and used them as resources in several ways. First, I drew on my informants as resources for my papers through direct quotations in my first and second observation essays, and interview assignment. Sometimes, my informants provided incomplete sentences. For the sake of my paper’s audience, I acknowledged the difference in our usage of language by supplementing the direct quotations of my informants’ words through the insertion of brackets to provide additional context. Thus, my papers abided to the first guideline.

In accordance to the second guideline, I used enhanced strategies in the development process of my papers. In fact, the instructor, Professor von Uhl, led this effort through mandated peer-reviews for our drafts in the classroom. As a result, my classmates pointed out grammatical errors, places to incorporate transitions, and other information that I should address in my papers. After the peer-reviews, I revised my papers to include these suggestions. As I edited them, I realized the areas that I need to work on as a writer to produce good ethnographic papers. Ever since, I have been using this process for my first and second observation essays, interview assignment, and research proposal. Therefore, my writing process abided to the second guideline.

In accordance to the third guideline, I negotiated my writing goals with my audience’s expectations through establishing a thesis statement in each essay. Afterwards, I supported the thesis by presenting evidence. Along with the evidence, I explained how such evidence supported my essays’ theses. They (i.e. my theses) served as mediums, which narrowed the focus of my papers on certain aspects of the gym subculture (i.e. genre). For example, my interview assignment, *Music’s Role on Male Exercise in Gym Subculture*, the thesis focused on addressing music’s impact males as they exercised in the gym subculture at the Elite Gym. This example exemplified that I abided to implementing the third guideline in this paper.

In accordance to the fourth guideline, I used collaborative and social aspects in the development of my writing process. Since I already demonstrated collaborating with others to develop my papers, I conformed with the collaborative aspect of the fourth guideline. Furthermore, I have already implied my writing involves the social aspect of developing my writing process. Specifically, I interviewed insiders of the gym subculture at the Elite Gym to develop my essays. Therefore, my writing process and essays collectively abided to the fourth guideline.

As a result of my implementation of supports for my essays’ theses to discuss aspects of gym subculture, I demonstrated the application of the fifth and sixth guidelines. Specifically, my analysis of the gym subculture in my papers through addressing gender differences and music’s role abided to the fifth guideline in my papers. Since I used theses, I have argued a particular position in my essays. In doing so, my papers abided to the sixth guideline.

In accordance to the seventh and eighth guidelines, I supported my second observation essay, interview assignment, and research proposal with evidence from peer-reviewed articles. The evidence was obtained from articles through the City College of New York’s online library resources. Thus, these papers abided to the seventh and eighth guidelines.
Conclusion

During this semester, I strived to achieve my personal and course goals to become a better writer. Fortunately, I wrote progressively better essays; however, there were two things that did not change in the feedback on all of my graded essays. First, I needed to provide more specific information to express ideas. Second, I need to explain the purpose of any ideas that I introduce. Furthermore, my essays abided to all of the course goals towards the end of the semester. Therefore, I am confident that I have achieved my personal and course goals.