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Writing 5

Course Reflection

- ❖ List of Writing Ideas/Strategies Presented to Me by Classmates and My Professor:
 - **Clarify the Main Idea**
 - Find More Credible Sources
 - Implementation Sources More Effectively
 - Synthesis Sources More Effectively
 - Expanding on Main Ideas
 - Make Nuances Clearer
 - Space Paragraphs More Effectively

Most Important Writing Strategy: Clarify the Main Idea

The writing idea that came up the most is clarity, specifically clarity of main ideas. Because most essay topics were open ended, there was a plethora of subjects that could be discussed. Because of this, I have a repeated history of trying to merge many topics into a general umbrella of an idea.

For example, both of my essays, and even my Definitional Text project, discuss the hacker group known as Anonymous as they were a large part of the conversations we would have in class. For me, part of the appeal of writing about this group is that a lot of what they do is obscure and touches on many topics from politics to local town activity.

Because the group has done a lot of work, most of which is controversial, their reputation has fluctuated over the many years they have existed. And so, I like to write about how people view them and how they interact with one another, considering that their identities are unknown to one another.

Therefore, I tried to tackle many stories about Anonymous activities in my essays. For example, in my Case Study essay, I discussed Anonymous' involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement considering that they both supported and went against it in different occasions. In my Literature Review essay, I used Gabriella Coleman, possibly the most avid supporter of Anonymous who has followed the group for many years as the main voice for the support of Anonymous activity and their role as hacktivists. Even in my Definitional Text medium, I compared Anonymous to many other vigilante figures of the past. Some of these figures are

often put in a positive light, like the hero Robin Hood, while others were known for being villainous, like Billy the Kid.

Anonymous can be viewed through many angles and their overall influence on America and the world over the past decade has proven their relevance to controversial issues that they have partaken in. Thus, I have tried to merge these issues on many occasions.

A lack of clarity in my main ideas have been present from peer and professor commentary, such as my revision plans. My revision plans for my essay have all had similar themes of being more concise.

In my Literature Review revision plan, I noted that “the main idea I wanted to express was not made very clear as my partner took my essay from a different direction than intended.” While essays should often be open to multiple interpretations in order to fully challenge reader’s thinking process, I believe that my essay at this point did not do enough for my reader. The reader, a fellow student, believed that my essay would revolve around a different topic from the very beginning which would be problematic because then the reader would have a different mindset going into the essay. A different mindset in reading a paper does not help the conversation of an essay but rather makes the essay more susceptible to critique. The reader would become confused as to how the essay would progress because the introduction hinted at a much different essay than what was presented, upsetting the reader as much as the author.

Therefore, I made my main idea much more concise, realizing that I did not need an argumentative thesis as much as a sentence to formalize the opposing sides of the controversy surrounding Anonymous. An example of my changes to increase clarity comes from the final draft of my Literature Review paper. In the introduction of the paper, I finished a conversation about the official definitions of hackers with the idea that “Of the eight definitions made, two stand out among them, one calling a hacker a person who ‘enjoys exploring the details of programmable systems and how to stretch their capabilities,’ while the other calls a hacker a ‘malicious meddler who tries to discover sensitive information by poking around’ (Yagoda). While the years have brought many advancements in technology, the views of hackers has not particularly changed, especially when considering Anonymous. Anonymous is a group of hackers of all ages who, without a particular rank or set system of organization, work together to promote social justice by their own means. Anonymous has been active for at least half a decade and in that time has made as many enemies as friends.” As can be seen in this excerpt, the two definitions of hackers made early on in the history of hackers is key to the main point of the essay since these two definitions are very different from one another and yet still exist today. People who do oppose Anonymous would believe that they are malicious and try to expose private information while supporters of Anonymous would paint them to be people with a curiosity and benevolent intention in their desire to hack. Both of these types of hackers exist today but whether or not Anonymous fits into one type more than the other is based on how convincing a supporter or opposer of Anonymous is.

A similar situation happened in my Case Study paper. However, what changed in terms of being more concise was the fact that I had a thesis that I had to argue. Also, the narrative which would come before discussing the thesis had to be relevant background information and context in order to explore the issues of the thesis in more detail. And so, now the problem was

not about distinguishing the sides of an argument but making an argument that was clear enough for context to be useful and relevant as well as establishing the path for the rest of the essay.

After a lot of revision from classmates and my professor, I believed I found the best way to present my thesis. The narrative, which gave one example of an instance Anonymous has successfully worked together and an instance in which they did not, gave a lot of context for my thesis because my thesis would be in support of both benefits and issues to the way Anonymous handles itself. Therefore, in the final draft of my Case Study essay, my thesis explained how “Anonymous’ anonymity is a major asset in tackling many of the world’s largest issues pertaining to social justice, internet censorship or politics. And yet, the same hidden nature which makes Anonymous so appealing also happens to be their most apparent weakness in terms of productivity, cooperation of beliefs and achieving favorable outcomes making Anonymous’ anonymity a double edged sword.” This thesis worked better than any before it because it did not try to take a side as much as it tried to prove the existence of both sides. To support both sides of an argument is, of itself, an argument, although often rare. From here onward I opened up a path for myself that would give me space to explain why both circumstances were true, opening up the conversation for readers much more than through a thesis of a single direction.