Personal Narrative Essay: My Journey to Cybercrime

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My Journey to Cybercrime

Introduction

When I first enrolled at Old Dominion University, I wasn't sure what my path would be. I had ambition but not much direction. I had an interest in technology and how it plays out in the world but at the time didn't realize my future in digital justice, which began as a casual interest in online security and technology grew into a serious dedication to the protection of others in digital spaces. This is how I found my love for Cybercrime.

Where Curiosity Began

I was always the kind of person who wanted to know how things worked. When I experienced technology the first time around my early teens, I was curious about the internet and how information moved across it. But I didn't immediately connect curiosity with a career. In high school, I knew I wanted to do something meaningful, something that would protect people, advocate for fairness and use my technical side. I just wasn't sure if there was a term for it. It wasn't until I started exploring majors for colleges that I found the term "Cybercrime". ODU offered a Bachelor of Science in Cybercrime, combining criminal justice and cybersecurity. The more I read, the more I realized this was it. A career that would combine logic, digital investigation and justice? It felt like it was made for me.

Working While Learning

My college experience wasn't purely academic, I learned so much from what I did too. Jobs that I worked while in college taught me so much about who I was and how I functioned. Working as a Team Trainer at Taco Bell taught me how to work under pressure, how to work together, how to multitask and how to resolve customer conflict. I also learned that I had the ability to think

clearly in the heat of the moment, a quality that is very much required in cybersecurity investigations, where speed of decision and staying calm are essential.

I also had the experience of working as a spa attendant for Mainstreet Spa. You may not think that the connection to cybercrime would be present, but it is. I learned about customer care, privacy, and confidentiality. When people come to the spa, they are most likely going to be open and vulnerable since they are looking for relief. It brought to mind that in the virtual world, individuals are vulnerable without knowing it or not. Guarding one's information online is just as important as being courteous while handling it in person.

At ODU I also held the position of Social Media Manager for Housing and Residence Life. Content strategy, metric tracking, and online interaction with students were included in my duties. Through this experience, I gained an understanding of what goes on behind the screen in online communication. This opened my eyes to data mining and what motivates behavior. I began to consider ethical concerns more intensely.

Turning Theory into Practice

My experiences at ODU have helped to shape my cybercrime identity. Courses in digital forensics, ethical hacking, and network security provided me with the technical skills necessary for the study of cybercrime, but they taught me something even more valuable: how to think like a criminal in order to catch one.

In one of my cybersecurity classes, we learned about the Facebook Cambridge Analytica scandal. That case really made me understand how personal data can be weaponized and how those in power often lack accountability. Learning about it made me very upset, and made me want to be someone who could recognize digital abuse and do something about it.

One of the most rewarding projects I ever worked on in my network security class was a network design project for a sample high school named Maury High School. The objective was to create a secure, optimized network with budgeting that was explicit for wiring, hardware, and access control. It was the first time I was able to visualize how what I had learned would be used in the field and not just theoretically. I had to think through everything from floor planning, hardware choices, risk assessments, budgeting, and policy recommendations. It pushed me to use all the knowledge I'd gained and apply it in a structured, real scenario. That project confirmed it, this is what I want to do.

Personal Brand

If I had to sum up my professional identity, I'd say I care about three things which are ethics, equity and impact. I'm not just drawn to Cybercrime because I like solving puzzles or because of my love for technology. I'm drawn to it because it allows me to protect people who don't always know they need protecting.

One perspective that shaped me came from Smith (2017), who described professionalism as "not just knowing how to do your job, but doing it with care, consistency, and concern for the greater good." (p.22). This is how I want to do my job, not just as a technician, but as a protector.

Whats Next for Me

My path to Cybercrime wasn't a straight line, but every twist and turn helped me define my goals with curiosity. I gained insight through work, I built skills in class, And I discovered a sense of purpose that drives me to keep going!

As I prepare to graduate from Old Dominion University this year in December (2025), I know what kind of person I want to be in the professional world. I want to solve problems, protect digital spaces and hold unethical hackers accountable. The internet is a powerful place. Without people who care, It can also be very dangerous. That's why I'm here and want to do what I'm passionate about. I plan to become a Cybersecurity Analyst for my career. I feel that this job best fits me because it will help me express my care for other people as well as show my love of passion for technology.

References

Smith, D. (2017). What it means to be professional. In J.P. Hart (Ed.),*Identity and professionalism in a changing world (pp.20-27). Bedford/St. Martin's.*