

Writing Assignment 2: Personal Narrative

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Opening

This narrative explains how my route toward cybersecurity has been influenced by both personal and academic events. As Nguyen (2013) explains, constructing a narrative allows individuals to make sense of their experiences and recognize patterns that may not have been obvious before. My goal in writing this narrative is to make connections between significant life events that influenced my choice to study cybersecurity and to have a deeper understanding of how those events together shape who I am now.

My First Laptop

My journey with technology started at a very young age. My dad has been an IT guy for as long as I can remember and he used to bring home laptops for me and my siblings to be able to play around on. At the time it seemed like nothing special, but it quickly became something much more significant to me. I loved being on the laptop, I would spend hours playing any game that I could get my hands on as well as browsing the internet to my heart's content. I loved using this piece of technology and it brought me so much joy that I wanted to understand how it worked. It felt a large sense of freedom and curiosity when using this technology and quickly gained a passion for it.

McAdams (2001) states that people develop a sense of identity by creating casual links between life events. Having access to this laptop was a starting point for me in my narrative identity. I didn't quite know it at the time, but my early access to this technology sparked a large

curiosity within me and would later influence a major part of my life. Who knew that my dad bringing home a laptop for me to have fun with would lay out the foundation for my future career. With this great experience the seed had been planted within me.

Curiosity vs. Reality

With all of that being said, not all of my experiences were great and positive. There was also a negative incident in my life that caused me to see importance in the security side of this technology. Another defining moment in my young life was when I became victim to a hacker in one of the games that I loved. This hacker gained access to my account, locking me out and taking away all of my access. I still remember the confusion and frustration that I had when I was locked out of something that felt very personal to me. The reality hit me that something that I trusted online could actually be compromised. You hear about it all the time, but you never think it can happen to you.

This was a pivotal moment in my journey. Suddenly, what had been an exciting and positive thing turned into something more complicated. I started to realize that there were people who took advantage of systems for personal gain and that technology was not always safe. As I stated before, I had never thought of being vulnerable before this encounter. I thought I was above and beyond and nobody would be able to hack me, but that was shut down quickly. This attack was a central conflict within my journey. Smith (2017) says that individuals refer to their life stories as either a redemption or contamination narrative. My case seems to align with the redemption narrative. Being hacked was a very bad experience that caused suffering for me, but it also gave me awareness of security and I needed to understand how I could prevent these attacks from happening again to anyone.

After this happened I began to look at technology completely differently. I started to obsess over how to keep all of my accounts and all of my technology secure from those attackers that stole my things. I became more curious but in a completely different way. This shift is like a rising action in my story, making my curiosity change into something more purposeful. Instead of simply enjoying technology now I wanted to try and find ways to make it more secure. This change in mindset began subtle, but later played a major role in shaping my academic and career decisions.

Rethinking My Path in College

When I came to college I initially thought computer science was the obvious choice of major for me. As I began to go through the motions I realized that this was not the right fit for me and it did not focus on the aspects of technology that I was really passionate about. I appreciated learning about the technical aspects of computer science, but I felt like I wasn't engaged with the heavy emphasis that was on theory and mathematics.

At first I struggled with the idea of changing directions after I had already committed to a path. However this time of uncertainty was essential to my understanding of my own personal interests and goals. McAdams (2001) emphasizes the importance of casual coherence in making sense of life transitions. In my case, dissatisfaction with computer science was more seen as a necessary step that led me down a more fitting route rather than a sign of failure.

Discovering Cybersecurity

During this time of uncertainty I started to put in more research towards cybersecurity due to having a lot of friends in this field of study. Immediately I felt a level of interest and engagement that I had never felt with computer science. Cybersecurity combined my interest in

technology with my growing awareness of vulnerabilities present in technology. I liked that it was more about protecting the systems than actually building them.

Everything started to come together. My early curiosity with technology and my experience of being hacked suddenly formed a clear and meaningful narrative. Two separate experiences felt like they were connected and I felt that I had found my calling. Using thematic coherence in my case the theme was clear. It was a progression from curiosity to awareness to protection.

Defining My Identity Through Experience

I started to understand myself differently as I pursued my cybersecurity education. I aimed to protect people from the same weaknesses I had encountered and I was no longer just someone who liked using technology. The climax of my story is this change in identity and my experiences have come full circle. My dad's laptop caught my interest and helped me grasp technology at a young age, I became aware of the dangers of that technology after being hacked, and the challenges I faced in college made me reconsider my course. My identity as a cybersecurity student and future professional has been influenced by all of these events combined.

Smith's (2017) concept of a redemption narrative is especially relevant here. What started off as a bad experience turned out nicely. Being hacked was not an isolated incident instead, it was a turning point that changed my outlook and pointed me in the direction of a profession meaningful to me. When I think back on my path I can see how each experience has helped me get to where I am now. Writing this story has made it possible for me to see connections and

patterns that I would not have otherwise discovered. As Nguyen (2013) suggests, reflection is a powerful tool for understanding one's identity and envisioning future possibilities.

In the future, I want to keep developing my cybersecurity skills and contribute to defending people and businesses from digital risks. In addition to pursuing a successful job, my objective is to make the internet a safer place for those who don't know how dangerous it really could be.

Conclusion

It wasn't by accident that I entered the field of cybersecurity. It was molded by a number of related experiences that started with my early exposure to technology, changed after a bad incident with a hacker, and were finally focused on my academic career. I now have a better idea of my narrative identity and the direction I wish to go thanks to this write up. I can see how each event contributed to my development by looking at them through the lens of narrative identity. What began as mere curiosity developed into a feeling of direction. This change is a reflection of both my personal growth and my dedication to applying my abilities to protect others in a world that is becoming more and more digital.

References

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