

Personal Narrative

IDS 493 / Spring 2025

Mary Lelina-Ford

Abstract

“You miss 100% of shots you don’t take” quote by Wayne Gretzky. This is one of the quotes I live by, and I will explain more as I tell you more about my story. My personal narrative is the opening to my “living portal” (ePortfolio), as Nguyen described it. I only get one shot to make a good impression, so I will make it genuine. (Smith, 2017) One of the significant contributions of psychology and psychotherapy research is that we can edit, revise, and interpret the stories we tell about our lives even as the facts constrain us. I will try to tell my story as simply as possible to avoid being constrained by the facts. I’m an American citizen born in the Philippines. I was a teenager with big hopes and dreams when my family and I migrated to the United States. I came from a family of successful conservatives. I’m not a Crazy Rich Asian, but I am successful.

My Personal Brand

I’m Jack of All Trades. I did more than what was listed in my job description in every job I held. It’s in my nature to go above and beyond without being asked. I worked for an airport retailer in my earlier career. This company manages multiple stores in the airport. It has its own warehouse, bookkeeping, and Human Resources departments. I was just an assistant to the Human Resources Manager, but if there was a need in another department, I always helped. I have helped cover the bookkeeping, the store floor, and the inventory whenever there was an issue of personnel. They called me Jack of All Trades because I can do any job from different departments. I did the same in my other previous jobs as well. Helping out provided me with the experience I needed.

What They Say About Me

All the jobs I have had so far have given me excellent reviews. I was rated outstanding. I have been granted some awards, such as Employee of the Month. I have received outstanding recommendations for promotions or other positions. One of the managers from my earlier careers would tell me it was always a pleasure for her to provide good referrals even though she did not like that she could lose me. She would always tell potential employers that I was the most reliable employee she had ever had. My current employer is also great at providing me with a letter of recommendation. When I decided to return to school, he wrote in my letter how highly he thought of me and how I exemplified a great employee.

When I was younger, I never understood how women manage to be full-time mothers, wives, employees, and students. Now, I am in that position and don't know the answer to that question myself. I enjoy being a mother to my daughter. She keeps me sane even though she keeps me super busy. With everything I have accomplished, there's always room for improvement. Like Gretzky said, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." It is still some time before my retirement years. I have plenty of time to establish new employment and relationships where I can retire comfortably. Electronic commerce is replacing many careers. It will be a matter of time until my current job becomes obsolete. I like to look ahead so I know what I could be facing. I know that a few years from now, my job in Human Resources will become one of the remote jobs that Artificial Intelligence will replace. I decided to take the first step before I let that happen. I decided to go back to school and refresh my brain. It's been decades since I earned a degree in college. Many things have happened since. I'm back in school to feed my brain with new information. I am studying to earn my Bachelor of Science in

Cybersecurity. Many people I have talked to regarding Cybersecurity say that I only need a certificate. I was told that most companies prefer experience and a certificate over a college degree. It won't be easy for me to transition from a human resources career to cybersecurity without the extra knowledge I obtained from Old Dominion University. I always believe that it's better to have extra than just enough.

My Academics

I had many interests growing up. First, I wanted to be an Early Childhood teacher. I was doing well until my patience ran out. I kept having to wait another semester to fulfill the requirements for my major. I switched my major to Computer Science. Computer Science did not work out because, unlike typical Asians, I'm not good at Mathematics. I earned a degree in Sociology and ended up working in Human Resources. I went back to school for my master's in Management and Business Administration while I started my career in Human Resources. I am currently pursuing another degree in cybersecurity.

My Career Path

I have only one long-term career, which is in Human Resources. I have held small and sideline jobs before and during my current job. I started in retail, working for one of the high-end fashion designers. I learned how to dress correctly and look sophisticated in times of need. I had a sideline job of interpreting for local courts. I am bilingual. I speak fluent Tagalog, one of the Philippines' dialects. My gig was to translate for the lawyer and judge for a client who was not fluent in English. It was an interesting experience. It was also something valuable to include in my resume. I worked at a military clinic where I was responsible for specialty referrals. It was different from anything I had done. I enjoyed it because I learned some

medical terms I had never heard of. I also learned a few medical procedures. I modeled and acted for a few years. I learned how to produce a short film and submitted it to film festivals. I have two movie scripts submitted to the Writers Guild of America. I also learned how the modeling works. You must have unique faces or long legs to succeed in modeling. I live up to what my previous co-workers called me: Jack of all Trades. I believe Cybersecurity is the final career for me. We live in two different worlds now. We have the physical world in which we are born. We have the cyberworld, which we are slowly shifting our lives into. All kinds of things happen in the cyber world, too, and that's where I'm heading.

The Inspiration

My husband and I enjoy watching documentaries. One day, we came across this YouTube documentary called Operation Toussaint. It's a story about a boy in Haiti who was rescued by an American man named Tim Ballard. It was then that I became interested in human trafficking cybersecurity. I researched and learned about Tim Ballard and Our Rescue Organization. Our Rescue is an organization that helps rescue people who are being trafficked, primarily outside of the United States. As a mother, I couldn't stomach the documentaries I watched about human trafficking. Have you seen the movie Sound of Freedom? When I decided to return to school, I immediately thought of Cybersecurity and the job I would like to pursue. I thought about my own child. What would I do to keep my daughter safe?

I want to help fight human trafficking. I want to help keep our children safe from these monsters who exploit the innocents.

Conclusion

I share my story and brand as mimesis by recalling my past and current state. Nguyen used mimesis in her study. (Nguyen, 2013) Three stages of mimesis mediate past understandings and an imagined future in the present. Besides being the “living portal,” my portfolio will be the mimesis of my past and future. I hope that made a good impression by telling my story and telling me what I am made of.

References:

1. Nguyen, C.F. (2013). The ePortfolio as a Living Portal: A Medium for Student Learning, Identity, and Assessment. Stanford University. Volume 3, Number 2, 135-148
2. Smith, E.E. (January 2017). The Two Kinds of Stories We Tell About Ourselves. Ideas.Ted.Com