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Definitional Text Cover Letter

When discussing piracy, the question that always popped into my mind was how, if possible, to stop piracy. We’ve seen various efforts against piracy as pirating rates have rapidly grown, such as the The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA). Like with most legislation attempting to address this issue, the question of security versus privacy arises. One of the main criticisms of SOPA was that in order to implement what it proposed, users of the internet would be under heavy surveillance and data passed between the users and the internet would be analyzed, stored in databases, and more. In essence, SOPA infringed upon the privacy of internet users. Thus, my interest in personal internet privacy was provoked, and hence I chose to define the term “Privacy.”

Privacy, at its very core, is defined by Dictionary.com as “the state or condition of being free from being observed or disturbed by other people.” However, with the dramatic improvement of technology, the definition of privacy has been greatly stretched covering much more than it had used to. In order to fully cover the definition of privacy, I decided to split the term up into three sectors: Corporations, Government, and Peers. Prior to splitting privacy up, I found my definition to be too convoluted and jumpy. In addition, I decided to primarily define privacy through a handful of central examples. After attempting to provide a concrete definition, I found that privacy was simply too vast and dynamic to put into a word definition. Thus, I tackled the definition from three directions.

To briefly go over my definition, I began with a very general definition of privacy, as “a term that expresses our desire and tendency to want to keep certain information private.” From there, I branched off into corporations, government, and peers.

The central idea behind the corporation aspect of privacy was the desire for personal information nowadays. Consumers interact with companies on a daily basis, and frequently exchange valuable information, such as credit card numbers and addresses. As a result, most people have a very trust-dependent relation with companies. The example I used to demonstrate this relationship was the Target credit card breach. This breach in customer confidentiality exemplified that much of a customer’s privacy was held in the hands of a company, and that perhaps there is information companies just shouldn’t have access to.

Similarly, the government sector definition of privacy revolves around the balance of security and confidentiality of personal information. Naturally, the government seeks to protect the people, but in order to do so, must gather information on individuals to properly analyze potential threats. I referred to the Edward Snowden Wikileaks which caused a great outrage from the public when one of the documents that was leaked revealed that the National Security Administration was practicing “Warrantless surveillance.” “Warrantless surveillance” granted the NSA the power to monitor all forms of communications within the United States. Citizens were not happy when they discovered this, as they felt their privacy had been invaded. Overall, this sector was primarily dedicated to exploring the balance between security and privacy.

Lastly, the last sector Peer privacy, primarily discussed the impact social media has had upon our privacy. In a sense, the internet is an extremely revealing and public place. With social media becoming a dominating sector of the internet, more and more information is being uploaded to the web and is freely accessible to anyone who can connect to the internet. With this in mind, privacy online is certainly different from the typical definition that we may think of. While on the internet, one is ALWAYS being observed. Whether we are aware or not, browsers are storing cookies and cache, our computer are in constant communications with networks, sending information back and forth. Hence, this is where the axiom “Once on the web, always on the web” stems from. To backup my claims, I used a study from the PewResearchCenter that demonstrated the general public’s growing awareness of privacy on the web.

Given that my definition comprised mainly of examples, I decided to utilize the form of an animation since I think it is the most engaging way to present my story-like examples. For example, I was able to provide related pictures in some of the specific examples, like a picture of Edward Snowden. The wordy parts of explaining my definition can be easily covered using the voice-over feature of Powtoon, while the smooth animating tools can be used to visually engage the viewer and further enhance my examples. In addition, I use empirical evidence to back up my claims that online privacy is slowly but surely becoming an issue that more people are becoming aware of. Moreover, I felt like my audience for a term like privacy in regards to the internet would most likely be technology savvy, and hence an online generated animation would be the perfect medium for such people.

In order to effectively present my evidence in a convincing manner, my animation consisted of voiceovers and the demonstration of my main points on the slides. Through these different techniques, I hope to mainly appeal to logos and ethos. My empirical data will mostly constitute to my appeal to logos, and the use of professional sources and a clean, well designed animation will be my appeal to ethos.

In order to actually create the animation, I split the task up into several parts. First, I wrote the script to be read over the animation. After completing the script, I converted it to a voice over by recording myself. Following my definition, I decided to break up the script into the three sectors, rather than have one cohesive monologue. I then added the voice over to an empty Powtoon movie, and then animated it slide by slide. I unfortunately had to split the animation into two parts since I only have a free membership of Powtoon, and free members are limited to five minute animations.

In conclusion, my definition of privacy revolves around the three sectors of corporations, government, and peers. This way, my definition of privacy changes with changes in society. I decided to convey my definition of privacy through a Powtoon animation, since I thought it was the best medium to discuss specific examples and exemplify empirical data. Overall, creating the definitional text was a very rewarding experience, as I was both able to explore the concept of privacy further and learn how to use Powtoon.