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Never Secret Enough

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Never Secret Enough

Cover Page Footnote

A special thanks to Dr. Scott Cheney for his support throughout my entire college writing career.

The Multiple Genre Argument

Research in progress for ENGL 1301: Composition I

Faculty Mentor: W. Scott Cheney, Ph.D.

The following paper represents exceptional research completed by a student in English 1301, the first course in the two-semester composition sequence at Collin College. Students in ENGL 1301 are introduced to the concept of academic research by learning to ask research-focused questions and then use library databases to find sources that provide answers. Because traditional research writing tends to emphasize sources over context, the following assignment works to disrupt the automatic methods that students have learned and asks them to think creatively about how research exists in the world.

In what follows, the student has written a research-based essay called the Multiple Genre Argument (MGA). In the MGA, the author uses research to creatively envision a possible group of documents that might surround an issue or conflict. In other words, the student imaginatively writes a collection of genres that constitutes the paper trail surrounding their specific issue. During this process, the author becomes familiar with various stakeholders' responses to the problem, and this imaginative engagement leads the writer to choose the most convincing side of the argument. Though an MGA includes some traditional academic forms, the point of the project is to invent a tangible setting with genres that communicate a nuanced perspective of the controversy.

In *Multiple Genres, Multiple Voices*, Cheryl Johnson and Jayne Moneysmith explain:

In a [Multiple Genre Argument], writers create an argument that explores alternative perspectives by using multiple genres written from different points of view. Genres might include a letter, a dialogue, a report, or even a poem—in addition to the traditional essay. Students bolster their argument with research that is reflected within these genres, creating an “organic” whole, though the “whole” may not be linear. By combining an array of voices, with the rigor of scholarship, the [MGA] offers a fresh and powerful approach to research and argument. (2)

Their idea of “combining an array of voices, with the rigor of scholarship” sums up the purpose of the MGA. To say it another way, the assignment pushes students to conceptualize and create various positions through research, moving them closer to the issues and helping them identify the most convincing arguments. In this paper, for example, the student skillfully presents different arguments by inventing journalists, FBI agents, researchers, and ordinary citizens.

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Never Secret Enough

I. National News Story on the ENGL Channel 13.01 website

NSA Targets Millions in Exposed Mass Data Collection

By Linda Heffernan

The country erupted in panic Tuesday evening as sensitive National Security Agency (NSA) documents detailing mass and unwarranted information collections were published to WikiLeaks. Although the files contained details on a handful of different surveillance techniques, the primary focus of the leak was to draw attention to government spying on telecommunications. The documents outline the anxiety present in the minds of lawmakers following the recent interception of a telephone correspondence between two suspected domestic terrorists. Although the specifics of the planned attack detailed in the classified NSA papers have been redacted by the publisher, the two suspects were known to have communicated primarily over the phone, inciting a large-scale telecommunications investigation. This newest NSA data surveillance cycle collected call data (also known as metadata) from random citizens' phone calls between July 2017 and August 2017. The release of these documents has caused many to wonder how the federal government is allowed to conduct these widespread metadata collections. This authority is derived from the Foreign Intelligence

Surveillance Act or FISA, which was originally passed in 1978 and was amended by the PATRIOT Act. Having been prompted by the calamitous terrorist attacks targeted at various well-known locations in the United States on September 11, 2001, the PATRIOT Act was designed to expand the surveillance powers of the federal government (Deist 289). The PATRIOT Act gave the government more power to request the assets of any business, and in 2006, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court began to approve orders that forced “certain telecommunications service providers to produce all business records created that contain[ed] information between their users,” often without much justification (Deist 291). This gives the federal government access to the phone numbers involved in conversations, the dates and times of calls, and their duration. In spite of a 2015 reform to the PATRIOT Act that puts private telecommunication companies in charge of storing bulk collected data instead of the NSA, the government can still request this data from those companies “with little change in the scope...of authority” (Deist 292).

The extreme outrage at the release of these documents reveals an uninformed public. For more information on FISA and the release of these new NSA documents, visit the ENGL Channel 13.01 website.

II. 1979 Memoirs of FBI Agent Who Served the Agency During WWII

I remember the balmy August day in 1936 when “Roosevelt met with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover” to discuss new planned surveillance activities (Theoharis 521). After a warning from Hoover that communists might be planning to influence labor unions in the

United States, Roosevelt became incredibly concerned about the effects of communism on the American people, and he would even be willing to break some probable cause laws in order to ensure that his spying would encompass their efforts (Theoharis 521). To make this surveillance less traceable, no written documents were associated with Roosevelt's decision, which shocked and appalled me. Hoover began collecting the data he needed through wiretapping, illegal break-ins, and extensive record-keeping on members of Congress (Theoharis 524-25, 527). Every night I would return from work exhausted, not only from the rigorous work that had been done, but also from the guilt that plagued my conscience all day long. The very thought that we were collecting information on what seemed to me to be the most random and irrelevant people raised my blood pressure and grayed my hair. We were monitoring Hollywood actors, writers, and producers; journalists; politicians; and even the first lady (Theoharis 522). Many methods we employed were illegal, and I remember many occasions where I was listening to some stranger's phone calls, scanning for signs of fascist influence. At the time, I had three young children that my wife stayed home to take care of. With no other means of income, I felt a job with the federal government was just what my family needed, and even my extreme disgust with what we were doing wouldn't allow me to leave the agency. My stance on these activities has always been plain and simple: what we did back then was a crime not only in the eyes of US law, but also in the eyes of the very principles of American democracy. In the effort to rid the United States of fascist ways of thinking, we became fascists ourselves, and with the recent passing of FISA

and the subsequent increase in the government's surveillance capabilities, this is something the American people should never forget.

Perhaps the most disturbing fact is that not only were these actions illegal, they were also kept in extreme secret. As a result, the US government was able to maliciously mislead the American people; the government was not truly working in favor of its citizens as it should have been. Instead, it was focused on its own distrust of the very people that were fighting the real war.

III. Radio Interview with National Security Expert John Spooner

Interviewer: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to 13.01 ENGL Politics Radio! Today, I am very pleased to be joined by John Spooner, national security expert and former *New York Times* political journalist. Nice to be here with you, John.

Spoooner: My pleasure.

Interviewer: Let's get right into the interview. For those listeners who are unaware of the second NSA document leak that occurred last week, new details of NSA spying efforts have been revealed. These new documents published to WikiLeaks contain information on certain kinds of spying that includes some things people might not know about. Would you like to give us some information on that, John?

Spooner: Absolutely. The government's spying capabilities are greater than what many Americans might believe is possible or legal. The documents published to WikiLeaks detail the NSA's attempts at rapidly ramping up the surveillance of personal devices. The government can, for example, "turn on the microphone or camera in your laptop or your phone and monitor anything that's going on around those devices" (Hosein and Altshuller 68).

Interviewer: Wow. I had no idea that the government had access to so much.

Spooner: The government is persistent and secretive with its spying. They take data "from you without your knowledge and consent or discerned about you without your involvement" (Hosein and Altshuller 70). The less the people know, the better it is for the government.

Interviewer: Do these spying efforts actually help? Do you think it is worth denying our privacy for any safety it might provide?

Spooner: This data collection has the potential to be very helpful. For example, an IED attack in Iraq was predicted with the bulk information the United States had gathered, indicating the government's ability to draw useful conclusions from the data it possesses (Spencer 506). However, it must be kept in mind how much information the government

has the ability to amass. I don't put it past any government agency to go to any lengths they see fit to collect information, so I do not think it is worth the limited privacy.

Interviewer: Is it possible people might modify their behaviors after learning of this snooping?

Spooner: Yes. I mean, isn't that the purpose of the government spying on us? They want to make sure nobody is doing anything they don't like, and once we find out about it, we're compelled to fear the government's power. This is the very definition of a dictatorship, and something needs to be done to make the government's behavior more transparent and to limit their spying capabilities.

Interviewer: What do you think could be done about this issue?

Spooner: I've always felt that the government oversteps its bounds when it comes to surveillance. The government should be able to conduct small-scale surveillance on questionable individuals, but random people with no connection to any suspicious behavior or crimes should not be the arbitrary targets of large-scale spying efforts (Deist 291-292).

Interviewer: Very good insight. Now we have to take a quick break, but we'll be right back with more of John Spooner with some more opinions on government surveillance.

IV. Transcript of Speech Made by FBI Director, November 2017

Good evening, everyone. I have called this meeting to speak my mind on the recent outrage towards government surveillance techniques following two highly illegal and treasonous NSA document leaks. One such subject that the American people, who have largely remained complacent towards government surveillance for many years, have recently become obsessed with is the government's inspection of traditional mail moved via the US postal service. I would like to explain why this outrage is preposterous and completely unjustified.

The US government has been under fire for its surveillance methods for a long time, especially after Edward Snowden released classified NSA documents—documents that detailed secret government surveillance programs—to journalists for the purpose of publication (Taylor 209). What most Americans do not understand is that all of our monitoring efforts are in their best interest, and without our surveillance technology, we would not be able to keep them safe. It is impossible for the American people to fully understand the extent of the impact of government surveillance programs on their daily lives, and I assure you that any suspicions that we are misusing our powers are greatly mistaken.

Although certain methods of spying, especially the investigation of mail in the postal service, “[occur] largely without opportunity for postsurveillance corrective litigation,” the monitoring of mail is absolutely justified by the Necessary and Proper Clause of the Constitution, something that I seriously doubt any of our critics are familiar with (Rooney 1629).

I would like to leave everyone with this thought: the government knows what's best for its people, and you must not question something that you can never fully understand. Thank you for your time.

V. Editorial Published in ENGL Channel 13.01 Newspaper

Disturbing Speech by FBI Director Reveals a Threat to Democracy

By Jackie Smalls

As I was preparing dinner last night, my attention was drawn to the television when I heard breaking news that a special speech was about to be made by the FBI director. What followed was an appalling display of incredible ignorance.

The director used his airtime to emphasize how unintelligent he felt the American population was for their reaction to the NSA document leaks. Throughout his speech, he made sure to use specific language that placed the "insight" of the federal government high above the concerns of the American people. In the United States, a country where representatives are elected into power to serve the people of the country, any suggestion that citizens are senseless and the government is all-knowing is a direct threat to our democracy. This is a language technique actually used a lot by politicians who argue that the government needs to spy on its people to keep them safe. The truth is, the more that the government can collect our phone call data, inspect our mail, or capture our voices through our phone microphones, the happier they are. "Intelligence officials downplay the...effect on Americans" that this surveillance has, and many Americans would be surprised to learn that by "2011, the NSA was acquiring two-

hundred and fifty million internet communications each year” (Goitein 6). If the government truly is interested in our well-being as people, any intrusive surveillance methods they are using would need to be clearly and frequently articulated to the public. If the government wishes to keep illegally intruding into our lives, then they should at least be totally transparent about their actions as it is a democratic government’s responsibility to provide for its people, not to divest them of their privacy.

The FBI director does not seem to understand the fundamental ideas behind democracy, and his ignorance toward his fellow citizens reveals his own power-hungry nature. As Americans, we must be critical about what our representatives are telling us about our own safety and how it relates to data collection, and we must remain educated on what the government has been doing behind our backs.

VI. Journal Entry of Concerned Citizen

December 4, 2017:

I woke up this morning still deeply concerned about recent developments in the news. With all these leaks revealing more widespread surveillance on US citizens, I can’t help but feel concerned about my own privacy. I am not a terrorist or a criminal, and I have nothing to hide, so why should my personal life be invaded? I was recently reading about the court case *Zanders v. Indiana* where “cops obtained Marcus Zanders’ cell site data without a warrant and used that information to trace back his whereabouts” around the times he supposedly committed a string of robberies (Root 6). I panicked at the thought that the government could just obtain information like this without a warrant.

What if my information were illegally seized and I was misidentified and falsely accused of a crime I did not commit (Theoharis 517)? What would happen to my kids? My wife? How could I prevent my information from floating freely out in the open for a court to grab it and charge me unjustly?

Despite my worries, I know that police can use data like this to catch criminals and that the streets are made safer for my family because of this. However, at what point do I start to fear for my children's future in a nation whose government openly takes information unjustly? I pray that when my children are grown, they will not have learned to fear the government and its secret doings, for a government that keeps its people in line with fear is simply a dictatorship.

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