Aditya Mishra, 3720

CSE 4314-004

Assignment #4

11/02/21

**Hacktivists are back by The Washington Post**

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Aditya Mishra, 3720

November 2nd, 2021

Professional Practices

CSE 4314-004

Prof. Ronald E. Cross

This Assignment is submitted towards and in support of the partial completion of the requirements for the Professional Practices Course.

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**Introduction**

                 Hacktivist is a person who finds a way to look at other people’s computer files without permission, in order to achieve or pursue particular social or political ends.[[1]](#_ftn1) It might be a group or individual. Ideology may be good or bad depends on every individual’s opinion. For example group of an organization that carry out cyber-attacks in oil or gas companies in support of climate change or a group of people who carry out cyber-attacks against an authoritarian government. Their one true motto is that “the ends justify the means”. But since the start of this year, we have seen a lot of hacks going on for political, natural, or emotional reasons. In this paper, I will discuss how frequent it is happening, why it is happening so frequently and my opinion about hacktivists and hacktivism.

**Timeline**

Let’s look at the most harmful and damaging hacks that have affected a lot of users or general people in 2021:

**January**: Parler, a far-right social media company, was hacked by “donk\_enby” organization (hacktivists), in the wake of the January 6 insurrection at the capitol. A lot of videos were used as evidence against the people who conducted or were somehow involved in the insurrection including some high-level politicians.[[2]](#_ftn2)

**February**: Another far-right social media company, GAB, was hacked in the name of hacktivism. Leaked data had videos and posts about Jan 6 insurrection.

**March:** Hacker Tillie Kettmann shared clips of some of more than 149,000 security feeds that administrators at camera start-up Verkada were able to access, to expose the pervasiveness of surveillance and lack of security in the industry. [[3]](#_ftn3)

**May**: Hacktivists group named, DarkSide, hacked Colonial Pipeline, a major US fuel pipeline for the southeastern united states.4

**September:** Hacker group Anonymous exposed more than 150 gigabytes of previously private data, including username, passwords and other identifying information of customers of Epik, again a far-right internet company.

**October**: Hacker dumped a colossal haul of data stolen from Twitch,” revealing what they said was not just million-dollar payouts for its most popular video game streamers but the site’s entire source code, written to keep the company alive.

Many smaller cyber-attacks are happening daily on different companies. It is not only against private companies or big companies but against school districts, the government, or the public.

**Consequences**

Any kind of cyber-attacks are harmful to someone and that’s a fact. For example: Even though if a hacker is forcefully entering into someone’s phone to prove that the phone owner is a criminal without the approval of the person, is still harmful to that person and against the right of that person. No matter what your means is, cyber-attacks or hacking without consent is not good. But let’s look at our above cyber-attacks and is the means justifiable or not. Out of these 6 examples mention above, three of them has happened against a far-right internet business group. I understand people are still mad because of January 6 insurrection but it is never right to invade someone’s privacy. There are different laws, different legal methods that can be used to get the information needed against criminals. Like against people involved in January 6 insurrection, information could have been gathered by getting subpoenas from the judges and then getting information directly from the company i.e. in a legal way. In the case of colonial pipeline, I also understand the activity of oil and petroleum companies that have affected the climate and caused global warming all around the planet but still, it is not justified to hack a pipeline and affect the lives of daily workers. A lot of people’s daily life was affected and mostly daily workers when It is also not justified to hack the government just because you don’t believe in the ideology of that government. I won’t like when someone is invading my privacy and I believe all other people, organizations or government won’t like it as well.

**Pro’s and Con’s of Hacktivists and hacktivism**

As a computer engineering major, I know sometimes it excites us to do illegal or unethical things to get quick results. Like in Jan 6 insurrection case, most of the people of United States wanted to see the rioter be prosecuted, and yes hacking helped the FBI or Washington DC police to quick arrest these people or in colonial pipelines case, many people might come to know about climate change and how our lives might be affected once the oil or gas finishes from the earth. There are the pro’s but there are many cons as well. Like there might be a lot of Parler or Gab users who never participated in the insurrection and yet their privacy was taken from them. A lot of daily workers couldn’t reach on time or many people’s flights were cancelled because of an oil shortage in the northeast part of the US. I believe to catch or punish a few people or organizations does not justify the means of hacktivists where more general people’s privacy or life gets hammered.

**Why Hacktivists and Hacktivism are more harmful than useful?**

Let’s take an example of Twitch users who were recently affected by the hacktivists group. To make a point about the bad side of Jeff Bezos and his organization, this hacktivism affected the lives of millions of twitch streamers and their online platform to make a living. They leaked data of top earners making them more targeted by other hackers, people had to hide bank information, passwords, usernames, etc. It created much more chaos for normal people than Jeff Bezos. In almost every case, more working people have been harmed than the targeted person or organization. We can do a lot better work in giving a point and making it heard to the people if we are serious about climate or public or our politics. But the way we should chose must be helpful not harmful.

**Conclusion**

If we consider quick results or short-term effects hacktivism or hacktivism may be considered a good way but in a broader aspect, it is not good for anyone. Why do things illegally or unlawfully when the same work can be done lawfully. Yes, maybe it will take a lot of time and work, but it will be respectful and ethical.

**Appendix A**

**Reference**

**1.** “Hacktivist.” *Hacktivist Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com*, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/hacktivist.

2. Schaffer, Aaron. “Analysis | Hacktivists Are Back.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 13 Oct. 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/10/11/hacktivists-are-back/.

3. Schaffer, Aaron. “Analysis | Hacktivists Are Back.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 13 Oct. 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/10/11/hacktivists-are-back/.

4. Russon, Mary-Ann. “US Fuel Pipeline Hackers 'Didn't Mean to Create Problems'.” *BBC News*, BBC, 10 May 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57050690.

**Appendix B**

**CSE - 4314**

**Professional Practices**

**Academic Integrity**

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**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

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