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Integer Pointers Program Analysis

For the critical thinking assignment due this week, I was asked to create another simple C++ console application. Like the previous assignment, this application was required to ask the user for three different inputs; however, unlike the previous assignment, this application required the user to input three integer values instead of three strings. While using new and delete operators to manage the memory, the program was required to store the user's input values into three different variables. I then needed to create an integer pointer to dynamic memory for each of the variables. Finally, the program was required to print the final values of the variables and pointer variables to the screen.

When toying with integer pointers, there are many things that could go awry. To avoid errors and vulnerabilities while playing with pointers, its important to start by initializing the pointer. If it is not initialized, the pointer will contain garbage. If the pointer contains garbage, it will not automatically be highlighted as a problem, but if it is called upon while containing garbage, that improper value can cause errors further along the application's run. Another important step to follow is to allocate memory for the points before assigning a value to it. If you assign a value to the pointer without allocating memory ahead of time, the program has the

potential of reading and writing the value to an invalid memory location. While the value being assigned to an unknown location may go unnoticed in smaller programs, it is still an issue that must be dealt with immediately. If left in the application, it can cause other important program data to be rewritten over, a segmentation fault to occur, and/or other mishaps to possibly occur.

Mishandling pointers may seem scary; however, that does not mean one should avoid using pointers in their code. They might have the potential to spark errors and create unusual bugs, but if the programmer double or triple checks where the pointer is pointing and what it is doing, they should work just fine. By learning how they work and the common misunderstandings that lead to their bugs, it will be easy to utilize pointers in one's program.