
Can You Hack it: The Ethics of Hacking

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Overview

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Hacking

- Defining Hacking
- Hacking: Past and Now
- Why Hack? and Hacker's Intentions
- Effects of Hacking
- Hack Case: Ashley Madison

Ethical Considerations

- Who benefits?
 - Who Loses?
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Hacking: What is it?

- A technical effort to manipulate
 - Affects network connection and systems
 - Usually Unauthorized
 - Most common among teenagers and young adults
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History of Hacking

Historically(Before)

- First popularized as a term by M.I.T engineers in the 1950s-60s
 - Before the internet became popular, telephones were being hacked.
 - Hacking had a positive connotation before it was seen as negative
 - Considered a form of socially non-acceptable computing activity.
 - Computer Fraud and Abuse Act and the Electronic Communication Privacy Act passed in 1986
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History of Hacking Cont.

Now

- Today, hacking still has a negative connotation as well as a positive connotation in which it is seen as a way of learning and exploring and aiding in security enhancement.
 - Eg. Pwn2Own, a computer hacking contest, allows contestants to exploit widely used software such as internet explorer and safari with previously unknown vulnerabilities.
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Why hack?

- Profit
 - Info can be sold
 - Challenge
 - Fun and problem-solving skills
 - Protest
 - Eg. Hacktivism:
hactivist(someone who
uses technology to
announce a social,
political or religious
message)
-

Intentions of hackers

3 groupings

- benign- the hacker whose intentions are purely educational and to perform defensive activities. Also known as White Hats
 - unsavory- the intruder whose intentions are not necessarily malicious but whose very presence can be negative
 - malicious- the intruder whose primary intention is to cause the system to crash or to wreck havoc in its operation. Also known as Black Hats
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Effects of Hacking

- Damage to Information
 - Damage to computer systems
 - Identity theft. Eg. Credit cards , social security numbers etc.
 - Businesses may suffer damaged reputation
 - Business secrets could be stolen and sold to competitors
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Ashley Madison Hack

- Over recent months, we've seen a hack that took place on an infidelity website called Ashley Madison.
 - The hackers had unauthorized accessed and leaked out private info of users
 - Hackers' reasons?
 - Due to morals
 - Privacy invaded
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Ethics And Hacking

Kantianism

1. We have a moral sense of duty
2. Moral agents are bound by the categorical imperative
3. The categorical imperative is divided into two subcategories

Kantian Perspective

Categorical Imperative

“Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

- Immanuel Kant
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Perfect Duty

Duties required for a human being

- If it is a maxim, it cannot be a logical contradiction
 - eg. Lying

Imperfect Duty

Duties beyond what is required

- Meritorious duties
 - eg. Giving to charity
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Where does Hacking fall

Perfect Duty

- Cannot be a perfect duty
- Not a required duty

Imperfect duty

- Could be meritorious
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Utilitarianism

Do what benefits the greatest
amount of people

Utilitarian Perspective

- If a hack were deemed to benefit more people than harmed, it would be considered a morally correct decision

Consequentialism

An act being morally right depends only on the consequences of that act

Consequentialist Perspective

- If its consequences are good and that it did not cause any ill outcome, it is seen as morally right
 - If not, morally wrong.
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US Policy on Hacking

1. Thousands of attacks on US government everyday
2. Thousands more on US companies
3. China is the largest perpetrator of these attacks

US Policy

Extremely difficult to track foreign attacks

- Chinese government claims it does not sponsor or support attacks, members of military have been indicted by US
- Remote countries

Damage unclear

- Information has been stolen, F35
 - No significant infrastructure attacks so far
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US Policy

Cyber Cold War

- Chinese vs. USA

Are countries willing to extradite their citizens?

Resolution

Ashley Madison

- If you assume that the consequences of the Ashley Madison hack (cheaters or potential cheaters being revealed) were good, was it ethical for the hackers to hack into the website to retrieve this data?



Jennifer

- No.
- Solution: contact the company & explain how they were able to get ahold of personal info
 - Helpful not harmful

Zach

- No.
 - Good intentions, broke the law.
 - Stealing.
 - Not their place.
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Wikileaks



- Are the individuals who dump secret information onto websites like Wikileaks right to do so?
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Jennifer

- No.
- Negative effect on defense department
- Things are private for a reason & our safety

Zach

- No.
 - Risking the lives of soldiers.
 - Agreed to not reveal data.
 - Or stealing.
-

Sony

- Are organizations just when they attack organizations like Sony because that company won't release a movie? (The Interview - 2014)



Jennifer

- No.
- Did not want to cause problems
- Not worth the risk

Zach

- No.
- Consequentialism.
- Dangerous without hind-sight.

Gary McKinnon hacks US military

- Scottish hacker Gary McKinnon
 - Solo
 - Hacked US military computers in 2001 & 2002.
 - Sought gov't info on UFOs.
 - Damage included:
 - Deleted critical files
 - Prompting a shutdown of the US Armys Military network
 - Deleted weapons logs
-

Gary McKinnon hacks US military continued

- Cost of cleanup = over \$700,000
 - London & fighting US extradition orders for over a decade
 - 60+ yrs in prison if convicted
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Question?

Should Gary McKinnon be extradited in the United States?



Jennifer

- Yes
- Committed a crime that is against the law in the U.S.
- If you can't do the time, then don't do the crime

Zach

- Yes.
- Committed international crimes.

News of the World hacking scandal

- Employees hacked phones for stories
 - 2002
 - Reporters & private investigators hacked voicemail accounts
 - PI tampered w/ official police evidence by listening to & inadvertently deleting the voicemails of a murder victim
-

Question?

Was it wrong for this respected newspaper to hack phones of celebrities, politicians & even murder victims for stories?



Jennifer

- Yes.
- Privacy Issues
- Illegal way of getting the story

Zach

- Yes.
- Stealing.

Sources

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Any questions?

