

CSc 59866 Senior Project I

Professor: Edward Camp

Group #4: Dark Web Ethics Final Report

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Dark Web Ethics

The dark web is one of the most mysterious parts of the internet. From criminal activity to social freedom, the dark web is accessed by millions everyday. Since regular search engines can't access dark websites; special tools are required to even interact with this part of the internet. Considering what the dark web can entail, one can say that in its purest form it is ethical due to freedom of information. To really dive into this argument, it is important to know what the dark web is and how to access it. Then, see a positive view that supports why the dark web is ethical. Although, it is important to play devil's advocate and see other views on why some believe that the dark web is not ethical. From these two opposite views, it needs to be discussed on why this is such an ethical dilemma. Lastly, looking at present events we can see real world examples of the effects of the dark web. After these discussions, it will be clear that the dark web is truly an ethical product.

II.

The dark web is the biggest parts of the internet because no one can accurately measure how big it truly is. Since the domains (url links) are unintelligible, people can't accurately determine how many sites are on the dark web. Before we discuss how to enter the dark web it is important what the company Tor believes about their tool. Tor is a browser by a nonprofit "The Tor Project" that was founded in the 1990's. The main belief of this company is that users should have private access to an uncensored web. The

method used to keep users anonymous is onion routing. The goal of onion routing was to have a way to use the internet with as much privacy as possible, and the idea was to route traffic through multiple servers and encrypt it each step of the way. In October 2002 the Tor network was initially deployed, the code was put up as open software license. By the end of 2003, the network had about a dozen volunteer nodes, mostly in the U.S., plus one in Germany. In 2007, the organization began developing bridges to the Tor network to address censorship, such as the need to get around government firewalls, in order for its users to access the open web. Tor began gaining popularity among activists and tech-savvy users interested in privacy, but it was still difficult for less-technically savvy people to use, so starting in 2005, development of tools beyond just the Tor proxy began. For the less technical users Tor began to create the browser in 2008, this allows the average user to access the internet. This not only protected people's identity online but also allowed them to access critical resources, social media, and websites which were blocked. One very popular user of the Tor was Edward Snowden. Snowden's whistleblowing on America used the Tor to put content of classified documents and allowed to be anonymous. Not to browse the dark web it is recommended to have a VPN to mask your IP address. Having the Tor Browser downloaded, it is safe to visit popular websites that dark web users tend to go to. Such as the Onion search engine which allows users to browser without cookies and javascript. Also some general tips is to avoid using your real information on the dark web to prevent anyone bad locating you. This means create fake email accounts, fake names and other identity information. Lastly, it is important to know the deep web protects personal information with certain limitations.

Such as if you enter your bank account online, the bank will still have access to your information. So clearly the dark web operates on the principle of total anonymity. Any business you decide to use the Tor is hidden. After all this background information, it is important to see why the Dark web is ethical.

III.

Dark web is ethical because of the secretive security one can have, making one to follow the principle given by dark web. Dark web can be used for virtue or dreadful. In the article "Ethical Pros and Cons of the Darknet" by Marc Davis says, "Criminal operators on the Darknet protect their identity through encryption – every Darknet dweller, as mentioned, is masked in anonymity and nobody knows anybody, unless a name is deliberately revealed". This refers to the fact that the principle stays the same even if the website is used for an illegal act. Meanwhile, Dark Web is helping unite people, which leads to protest against the authorities. For instance in the article the author states, " who are denied freedom of speech by their dictatorial governments may publish anti-government editorials or messages on rogue sites and leave nary a trace of their identities." This quote illustrates a user's power. Using dark web users have a sense of security where their information can't be tracked by the government and they won't be afraid to use freedom of speech in a dictatorial government. Hacktivist uses Dark to operate quest in purse of criminals and iniquitous web. For instance, "Recently a hacktivist operation took down a child porn site – frontier justice cyber-style, you might say. The destructive hacking of the site was perhaps unethical and maybe illegal, because there was no trial by jury". This quote is an example of how ethics dark web can be. On the other hand, people can utilize

dark web for murder and illegal marketing. Marc Davis states, "Powdered rhinoceros horn is a favorite of Chinese and Vietnamese buyers, although it is popular in many other countries as well. Rhino horn is mistakenly reputed to have mystical, psychoactive and various medicinal properties. A single rhino horn can sell for as much as \$500,000 and a kilo of the horn in powdered form sells for as much as \$90,000." this means that people all over the world has been selling animal parts causing to danger their species for their personal/medical gain.

IV.

Illegal activity on the dark web is the biggest danger right now for all of us. One of the main problem visitors to the Deep Web, also known as the Dark Web, experience is negative effects. Dark web websites can be access through special software's by using the VPN. The bad and ugly part of the dark web is the anonymizing dark net tools that allow strong encryption and decentralization. Dark web has so many advantages but in some cases, dark web can be dangerous and not ethical. Too much using the dark web might get you in legal trouble. Most common software to access the dark web is tor web browser. By using the tor addresses and the tor browser, the user can anonymously connect to web pages and grab important information from the user. The dark web was created by the US government to allow spies for exchanging information. US military researchers developed the technology. Though, tor browser provide security and even save the lives of people activities, but the browser also provides the ability to hide criminal activities. For example, any type of crime with covert transactions, whether it involves drugs, money, or even human beings, can be committed on the Dark Web.

There are unethical incidents that happen because of anonymity users browsing is obscured by software. The dark web in some cases can also be damaging to a user's psychological state. Indeed, some of the underground communities can be a source of highly illegal materials, such as pornography and drugs. These encountering materials can have a negative effect on some people. While you can avoid the material, your chances of encountering it while learning to use the Dark Web are much higher than they are on the Internet indexed by the search engines. Some material on the Dark Web is illegal to download, so never accept a file request without knowing for sure what will be saved on your computer.

Some methods used by LEAs in operations on the Dark Web involve the re-victimization of people who have been victims of crime. This related to police sharing of images of abuse, be it child abuse, torture by terrorists, or other kinds of abuse. Sharing of such kind of images and videos involves violating someone's basic rights and interests and it's not ethical. For example,

A mother interviewed for the Norwegian newspaper report on the Child's Play operation when she said she felt that police posing as pedophiles used her daughter 'as bait' with which to catch criminals when they shared images of her abuse with other pedophiles while undercover.

Moreover, there are some illegal side of dark web in business part too. A flourishing, global marketplace of illicit goods and services that operates in the dark recesses of the World Wide Web is creating new opportunities for cybercriminals and risks for business and consumers. For example, another layer of anonymity involves the way payments are processed. Silk Road, for example, only accepted payment via Bitcoin, which is an

unregulated cryptocurrency. As with the Dark web generally, there's nothing illegal about using Bitcoin. But the anonymity of Bitcoin payments is attractive to those making illegal transactions.

Sometimes, Dark Web is not ethical because this website access people important information without their knowledge or control represents a significant threat to their privacy. Therefore, an increasing number of people have begun to utilize anonymizing technology to secure their identity and online activity behind encryptions and auto-deletes.

V.

One of the reasons we call it dark web is because everyone is "dark" on the dark web. No matter who you are, you are anonymous on the dark web. No one can get your personal information unless you are willing to give. Compare to the surface, the dark web is a safer place for internet activity. This allows people to do everything without being known to others by their identity in the real world. This is the key point of the ethical controversy over the dark web.

The dark web can do some good things. Such as gives people the courage to confront powerful institutions and individuals. Because they cannot be hurt thought the dark web. The information they are given on the dark web helps some capable people to fight with those evil institutions and individuals and make the world better. However, the dark web also can do some bad things. Such as drug dealing, gun dealing, deal in human beings, pornographic materials, a professional assassin, and dealing with animal parts of certain endangered species. These well-known evil acts are carried out in the dark web in a decent way. This makes it difficult for most people not to define the dark web as an evil tool.

The users of the dark web are diverse. In CenterWatch Staff's *"Meet the Newest Ethical and Legal Challenge of Obtaining and Using Data via the Internet: The Dark Web"*, he mentioned

"Buchanan says users of the dark web include people who want to browse/chat anonymously, buy/engage in illegal acts, and provide illegal services/goods. Researchers use the dark web, as do hacktivists such as Anonymous and WikiLeaks, terrorists such as ISIS, researchers, and even all of us without our knowledge when our credit cards, medical information, social security number, and identify are stolen."

The dark web just a tool for people, we cannot define the good and evil of a tool. When good people use the dark web, the dark web helps many people, and when bad people use it, the dark web becomes an evil tool. The reason makes the dark web become not ethic is because most people have partial to be a bad person when nobody knows what he is doing. The source of sin has always been humanity itself.

VI.

The dark web has its fair share of illegal activities that users take part in, but it is important to note that a lot of people use it legally and for reasons that might bring you back to the question of ethical dilemma. The dark web in its own name gives us a preconceived notion of its activities and users. Yes, a lot of criminals and terrorists use it for the benefit of anonymity and illicit activities like selling drugs, planning attacks, hacking, stealing bank accounts, counterfeiting money etc. can happen. However, amongst the darkness of this web, there are also users and activities that bring some balance to this

debate of the ethical dilemma. According to a report by Intelligg in 2016, with the use of their machine learning algorithm, they suggest that “of the total number of sites analyzed, about half of the contents were classified as legal under U.K. and U.S. law”. In fact, it shouldn’t be a surprise that people taking advantage of the dark web’s anonymity are not always bad people. Whistleblowers, for example, are kept safe in the dark web not only by identity but with the benefit that their secrets will be released to the public in the case of death, jail, injury and even when the user does not regularly log into the site. Victims of abuse and discrimination use the dark web to share their painful stories with others while their identities remain anonymous; this can lead to proper consoling and help people recover mentally. Perhaps the biggest example of how the dark web pushes more to be ethical are the freedom fighters, journalists and others that fight oppressive regimes. Take for example, China, who are notoriously known for their “Great Firewall” that blocks a lot of foreign websites and slows down cross-border internet traffic. China does this to reduce the efficiency of foreign products as foreign companies need to adapt to this regulation while domestic companies benefit from this censorship. While this might not seem like a problem for China’s success in the domestic market, it does however undermine the freedom of the people of China. People cannot even use Google, Facebook, WhatsApp or watch movies as freely as they want to as the government bans these sites for reasons believed to be that they want to control their own internet without interference from competitors like the U.S. This results in people using the dark web for the simplest activities like social media, movies, and so on but it also becomes a place for the people to fight back the oppressive nature of the government on censorship. Using the dark web

enables people to plan protests and share videos and pictures of it that would otherwise be deleted. In fact, China's fight with Hong Kong today enables protestors of Hong Kong to voice their opinions and concerns to not just China's government but to everyone around the world. Having access to an unfettered web makes it possible for citizens of China and Hong Kong to share and see authentic stories and not those that would've been altered by the government. Considering these examples on legal and illegal activities, the recent events of the dark web, we obtain a better understanding of the usage of the dark web and this only takes us a step closer to answering whether the dark web is ethical or not. The dark web in its entirety may not be perfect but we cannot ignore all the good it does.

VII.

As one can see the dark web is one of the most complicated topics for discussion on the internet. Having so many benefits and faults, our group believes the dark web is beneficial to society. Not only it prevents 'big brother', it allows the freedom of information to travel. This is so important to people who live in oppressive countries and want a broader view of the world. It should be clear to an individual that not only the dark web is beneficial but it should be accessed with care and awareness.

Resources

CenterWatch, Staff. "Meet the Newest Ethical and Legal Challenge of Obtaining and Using Data via the Internet: The Dark Web." *CenterWatch RSS*, CenterWatch, 29 Oct. 2019, www.centerwatch.com/articles/13987.

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