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ITP125 Homework 2

1. What does the term “hacker” mean to you? Was it in line with the view/origin from the documentary? Did your view of the word “hacker” changed after watching the documentary?  
   Before watching, I considered a “hacker” to be someone who could break into systems that the average user assumed to be secure. My definition didn’t change after watching the documentary but I understand that there are many different types of hackers and that the word itself shouldn’t carry any negative connotation.
2. What are the differences between a black/grey/white hats?

The difference between them lies in to what degree their infiltration of systems is considered socially acceptable in the mainstream. A white hat’s hacking is considered acceptable because they are using their knowledge to improve their systems or the systems of others with permission. A black hat on the other hand breaks into systems to enable or enact criminal activity. Gray hats are considered to occupy the gray area between the two as “ethical vigilantes”. They may break into systems without permission, but they do not do so to commit crimes and often point out the weaknesses of the system they hacked to the owner of the system.

1. Do you feel it is okay to find vulnerabilities, exploit them, and then report them to the victim? How should people best handle finding issues with systems?  
   I do believe this is okay. Even if we don’t encourage it under the pretense of maintaining law and order, other countries and other radical groups will. Thus to minimize our involvement in such activities will come back to haunt us in by forcing us to remain naive to global threats.
2. Which country do you fear the most in a cyberwar and explain why? What do you think the US should do to defend themselves from an attack?   
   While I’m inclined to say I fear the middle east and radical islam, I do not feel they have the infrastructure to wreak as much cyber damage as does China since, as the documentary pointed out, China’s hacking is encouraged by the PLA of the government rather than by lone teenagers. Because the government is involved, full operations following cyber attack can be orchestrated and rehearsed. I hope the government is hiring expert hackers to creatively search for and address weaknesses in our own systems and although it may be considered unethical, I can’t imagine any method would be complete without the US having some type of understanding of what our cyber enemies are planning.
3. Who is Dmitry Sklyarov? What is he known for? Is what he did right/wrong? What is his situation now?  
   He is a Russian computer scientist who came to Nevada to give a presentation on a program that allowed people to enter locked Adobe ebooks. He was arrested, then later cleared of charges and released to Northern Calfiornia and then home to Russia. I can’t speak personally about the law surrounding this topic. To me, one one hand it seems like he just produced a product that no one expected would be produced. On the other hand, it does seem similar to using a lockpick to intrude on someone’s home for the purpose of theft. If there was no law at the time, (which it seems like in Russia there is not), I think it was wrong for him to be imprisoned. He is not back in Russia.
4. Who is Adrian Lamo? What is he known for? Is what he did right/wrong? What is his situation now?  
   He is known as the “homeless hacker”. He realized he had a natural predisposition for breaking into systems and hacked Yahoo, NYTimes, and NBC. He never asked for money and only did so to expose security weaknesses and encourage the companies to fix them. He was arrested after turning himself in to the FBI. He exposed Manning for planning to release classified government information and then accepted a job with the government to protect himself. I personally don’t think he did anything wrong but I do understand why the government was concerned, mainly because of how public he made his activity. The same thing that made him transparent was the what made him a threat to law and order.
5. “If I get a job, it will not be security-related. I have no intention of letting them whore out my talents at their command.” Do you agree with this statement? Research Desmond Morris: Biology of Art. What is you impression on the work that was done with the book? I am not a creative person by nature so personally, I do not identify with this quote. However I can see where it comes from. Someone so expertly skilled in breaking into systems doesn’t want to be told how to do so or risk failure or even imprisonment. I think The Biology of Art brings up an interesting and related point. If we turn art into something controlled by the rules of science (or any set of rules), we become like apes, and lose the creativity and innovation that brought us to invent computers in the first place.
6. What is ICANN? How do you feel about the organization?  
   ICANN is a company that sustains some of the domains of the internet. With one day of research on then, I do not trust ICANN. Just today, I heard that the government is trying to give total power of the internet to ICANN who can then give control over portions of the internet to countries that will not allow the internet to proceed uncensored. My dads family is from Malaysia and I can see how the advent of the internet has broadened my youngest cousins minds to what is really happening in the world beyond their censored news in a way that my older cousins and aunts/uncles can’t even understand. It would be dangerous to risk giving that up.
7. Use Google and try to find as much information you can about Midnight Maze.

I could not find much information except that there have been attacks on government information, potentially by Russia, and the FBI is looking into it.

1. Research SCADA? Do you see any news about issues with these systems?

There have been reports of attacks such as worms happening at plants in Ohio, Austria, and Germany. They are not very well updated systems and they’re not well watched, not regulated but competent people, and not well equipped to prevent false authentication. This is reason for concern given that these systems control our power.