

## A Comparison of Papers on Cybercrime

In this essay I will be attempting to compare the writing of the following three papers: "UK Cybercrime report", published by Garlik, "The Human Impact", published by Norton and "Fraud and technology crimes", published by the British Government's Home Office. These three papers will be referred to as Garlik, Norton and Home Office respectively henceforth.

### Definition

The prefix of cyber was first used in the form of 'cybernetics' in the title of a book<sup>1</sup>. After the publication of this book the term 'cyber' was used to describe activities using or based around a computer. Today, a plethora of terms with the 'cyber' prefix are defined in modern dictionaries, among these is: 'cybercrime', defined as: "criminal activities carried out by means of computers or the Internet"<sup>2</sup>. This definition, though, is vague in meaning as it contains: "criminal activities", which in itself is very vague, leaving a great deal of room for misinterpretation.

The definition of cybercrime is different in the three papers; Norton's paper does not specifically define the term, but simply writes a footnote<sup>†</sup> explaining that they will use the term to refer to a variety of different crimes committed on a computer. Garlik addressed the issue of definition in their first chapter, citing numerous sources<sup>‡</sup>, and later expanding on the four major issues which the writer believed to be the most prominent. The Home Office does not explicitly define the term of cybercrime, but instead lists offenses that come under the term of "Technology Offenses", which is the subject that the paper focuses on.

### Authors & Content

The way in which the definition of cybercrime is addressed and used indicates the choice of authors of the reports. Garlik, a company who deals with issues of online security, commissioned Stefan Fafinski, an academic in the field of Computer Science<sup>3</sup> to write a report explaining the current state of cybercrime. This could imply that the content of the report is reliable, and non-bias as it is written by a third party with the intention of evaluating rather than having any mercantile purpose. Conversely, Norton's

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<sup>†</sup> "For the purposes of this report, cybercrime includes: Computer viruses/malware; online credit card fraud; online hacking; online harassment; online identity theft; online scams (eg fraudulent lotteries/employment opportunities); online sexual predation and phishing." page 3.

<sup>‡</sup> "1 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/uk/2001/life\\_of\\_crime/cybercrime.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2001/life_of_crime/cybercrime.stm)

2 Definition derived from the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No. 185) 8 November 2001." page 3.

paper does not state a specific author but provides the reader with “expert insights, advice and tips” from academic personnel, one of which is a company’s employee<sup>†</sup>. This could be interpreted as biased research on the material of the paper and would indicate a lack of reliable information. The Home Office’s paper is based on the findings of two surveys<sup>‡</sup>, so the empirical data, as it is purely quantitative only shows results as they are found, there is no personal reflection. The reliability and accuracy of the data is another issue, which will be covered later, but as it is intended for governmental use, this annual report certainly indicates the data is real and precise, though as the report points out, many cases of cybercrime are not reported.

## Style & Presentation

All three papers use very different presentation. One side of the spectrum is Norton, which uses graphic imagery, a huge variation in colour and text to convey its content. What is interesting here, is that the paper uses images of guns, grenades and prison cells to convey the message of crime, thus comparing cybercrime with violence, which is regarded as a serious offense. The writing in this report is colloquial<sup>§</sup> and notably subjective. The other side of the spectrum is the Home Office, which is very plain in its style, simple titles are used with the occasional use of charts and graphs to illustrate the data collected. There is no use of imagery in the report, merely text and statistics. The style of writing is objective and constantly refers to the data shown. The Garlik paper is laid out in a professional and interesting way, a landscape format is used, similar to the Norton report, and the the text is formatted in a clear and concise way. The content is well written, citing numerical data and explaining it, pointing out problems or merits of data itself.

## Research

The Home Office took its data from two public surveys. Though this may seem reliable as the data is taken from questionnaires which have been conducted by trusted sources, people may not be completely honest when answering the questions. An example of this is that the paper writes that a quarter of internet users have downloaded software illegally<sup>4</sup>, however, the people who would have been admitting this would have known the legal issues, and thus the data might not be a reliable indication of the number of people who illegally download software. Norton too, uses statistics taken from surveys\* to show the current state of cybercrime. Again, as these surveys were conducted on the general public they would imply realistic data, however the

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<sup>†</sup> Adam Palmer, MBA, JD, Norton Lead Cyber Security Advisor.

<sup>‡</sup> 2003/04 British Crime Survey and the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey

<sup>§</sup> “It’s sad but true” p. 7 & “No laser surgery to remove a digital tattoo” p. 20

\* “The Human Impact is based on research conducted between February 2-22 2010 by StrategyOne” p.30

circumstances in which they were taken would indicate otherwise. This is because the survey was conducted online and therefore would only have been done by people who were either selectively chosen or by people who offered to participate in the survey; this would indicate biased data. Also, all of the data was taken from only one survey, which might not represent all issues. Conversely, the Garlik report uses data from a variety of surveys<sup>†</sup>, which shows that a number of issues were addressed.

I have shown that the three papers discuss the issues and topics around cybercrime, in varying amounts of detail and reliability. To conclude, I would note the following: Norton use imagery to their advantage in scaring the reader and use figures in large text to really emphasise the details, I find this misleading as it does not allow the facts to speak for themselves, which when read plainly I believe are vague. I believe that the Home Office paper is sometimes naive in its assumptions, but presents its data in a reliable manner. Overall, I believe that the Garlik report is well written and accurate, highlighting not only the facts around cybercrime but also problems around the facts which may indicate wrong assumptions.

## References

1. Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine by Norbert Wiener. Published MIT Press, 1948. ISBN 978-0262730099
2. Oxford English Dictionary, 11th Edition. Published 2004. ISBN 0-19-860864-0
3. Oxford Internet Institute: <http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/people/?id=183>
4. Offending, Crime and Justice Survey 2004: 26% of 10-25 year old internet users illegally downloaded software, music or films that year.

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<sup>†</sup> CIFAS '2006 Fraud Trends, British Crime Survey, Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance Scheme p.22