

Hacking the Hackers: Taking Advantage of Centralized Functions in Dark Networks to Monitor Organized Deviance

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Abstract

With the advent of the Internet and networked computers, more and more crimes are committed in a virtual environment. So far, this environment has remained rather opaque and data useful to criminologists are hard to find. This paper will show that despite the veil of anonymity that hides most organized deviance on Internet, there are ways to "hack" hacker networks and to surveil their activities. The first part will describe the data collection methodology we used for a research project focusing on the distribution of illegal copyrighted material on Internet. Our six steps process includes: 1) working with virtual machines; 2) finding new sources of data online; 3) storing locally data found on the Internet; 4) working with the data; 5) transforming the data and; 6) exporting the data. The second will discuss the conclusions of that study as well as the potential of using such techniques and tools. It was these techniques and tools that allowed us to get data on more than 3,000 hackers who distributed, between 2003 and 2009 over 100,000 copyrighted products online (movies, games, software). The data we collected includes their production levels (type of product, popularity of product, size, number of products, value of products, life span) as well as their network features (who do these hackers connect with).