

Cambridge Analytica

I. Introduction

A. In 2016 it was reported the company Cambridge Analytica harvested personality data with the purpose of selling this information to political campaigns.

B. Brief overview of the situation.

1. Facebook quizzes to determine personality traits.
2. Correlation of data to those that didn't take tests.
3. Impact on 2016 presidential election.

C. Ethical Responsibilities of the parties involved.

1. Should Cambridge Analytica change their own behavior?
2. Should the government protect its citizens from this behavior?
3. Is the whole situation ethically wrong?

II. Responsibility of Cambridge Analytica to behave in an ethical manner

A. Thousands of data mining companies harvest data on demographics and opinions, but Cambridge Analytica was the first to also examine personality.

B. Cambridge Analytica's privacy policy only states that "The information we collect will be used in order to gain insight into the behavior of the whole population."

C. Facebook decided that Cambridge Analytica broke their terms of service, is it Facebook's responsibility to be more judicious with what is allowed on their site?

III. Responsibility of the government

- A. Has the behavior of Cambridge Analytical been disruptive to the overall harmony of society?
- B. Could this behavior signal a worsening trend among companies that harvest data?
- C. Should the government enact laws to ensure data mining companies act in an ethical and transparent manner?

IV. Is this behavior ethical?

A. Least Harm

- 1. Is the harvesting of behavioural traits harmful?
- 2. Would shutting down Cambridge Analytica cause more harm due to employees losing jobs, and political campaigns being less effective?
- 3. It's difficult to measure harm without tangible metrics, but the number of individuals having their data being harvested without consent far outnumbers the number of Cambridge Analytica employees.

B. Deontology

- 1. Does Cambridge Analytical have any ethical obligation or duty to the people they harvest data from?
- 2. Does the government have an ethical duty to its citizens to ensure they are not having their privacy infringed upon?
- 3. Within the lens of Deontology Cambridge Analytica did not have any specific obligation to the individuals they harvested data from, but the government perhaps has some obligation to restrict the behavior of data mining companies.

C. Utilitarianism

- 1. Cambridge Analytica and political campaigns certainly saw some benefit from their actions.
- 2. Many individuals would say they had a net loss from Cambridge Analytica's actions.

3. Under the ethical theory of Utilitarianism Cambridge Analytica's actions brought upon a net negative benefit to the largest amount of people and is therefore unethical.

References

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