

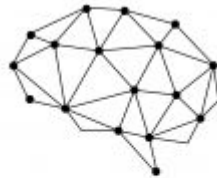


Cambridge Analytica

Eason P Mahone, John S Desenfans, Lucas L. Manker, and Rui Chen



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



Cambridge
Analytica

Overview of Situation

- The company gathered this information through Facebook personality quizzes.
- Even people who did not take the quizzes were categorized by personality traits based on friends lists.



The most troubling aspect of Cambridge Analytica's actions were that they sold the information to political campaigns in 2016

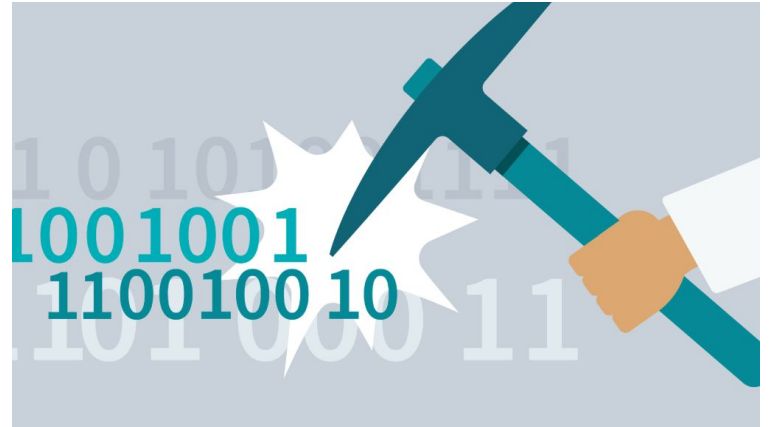


Ethical Questions

- Should Cambridge Analytica change their behavior on their own?
- Does the government have a duty to create laws to prohibit this from happening?
- Under which ethical theories were Cambridge Analytica's actions considered unethical?

Cambridge Analytica's Ethical Responsibilities

Thousands of companies harvest data from social media and other sources, but Cambridge Analytica was the first to integrate psychological traits into these data mining efforts.



- 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."**
- Is this statement too vague?
- Did people truly understand that their personal information was being gathered, and what it was being used for?



- Facebook eventually determined these personality quizzes broke their terms of service.
- Facebook surely should have known more about Cambridge Analytica's data mining efforts before they came under fire.
- Did Facebook have an ethical duty to prevent the harvesting of data from unsuspecting users?

Ethical Responsibility of the Government

- Many users would say that Cambridge Analytica's were unethical and the government should restrict the actions of the company.
- The same individuals that benefited from Cambridge Analytica's efforts are now in power, and presents a complicated dilemma.

- With the rise of social media, data mining companies have grown extremely large; and their methods have grown to be very sophisticated.
- Is Cambridge Analytica a sign of things to come?



Many would say the government has an ethical duty to protect and inform its citizens that their information is being harvested, and require some degree of transparency in how data is being used.



Has Cambridge Analytica Acted in an ethical manner?

Least Harm

- Is the harvesting of psychological traits inherently harmful?
- If so, would this harm outweigh the harm brought to the employees of Cambridge Analytica if they were to lose their jobs?
- It's difficult to measure "harm", but the number of individuals with their information surreptitiously harvested far outnumber the employees of Cambridge Analytica.

Deontology

- Does Cambridge Analytica have any ethical obligation or duty to the people they harvest data from?
- Does the government have an ethical duty to ensure its citizens are not having their privacy infringed upon?
- Within the lens of Deontology it appears Cambridge Analytica might not have any specific duty, but most would argue the government has a responsibility to restrict the behavior of some data mining companies.

Utilitarianism

- Cambridge Analytica and political campaigns certainly saw a net benefit from the harvesting of data.
- Many individuals would say they have seen a net loss from the actions of Cambridge Analytica.
- Under the ethical theory of Utilitarianism, Cambridge Analytica's actions almost certainly brought upon more harm to many more individuals than it benefitted.

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