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Project 2 Reflection Questions

1. If I were a software developer at Airbnb.com in charge of ensuring that each property had a valid license, I would use a slightly different system than the one currently used. I would recommend that Airbnb.com add a feature to listings in San Francisco that requires users to input the policy number that they have received from the city before they can even begin to register their housing on our platform. I would have the user enter the policy number at the beginning of creating the profile and the address so that our system can automatically check with the San Francisco database to ensure that users creating a listing are in compliance with local regulations before even attempting to list their housing. Based on this system, I imagine that my organization may have some objections over this new system design. I may hear of people within the organization that are concerned with relying on San Francisco data/information to verify that customers have the proper license, many may believe that the city will not update the information fast enough, or if the city runs into issues with their licensing and recording processes, that our customers will suffer immediate consequences of being unable to list their properties. Another argument that I anticipate could be brought up is that confirming regulation compliance as a first step towards registering properties on Airbnb will result in more challenges and hardships for our customers trying to register their properties, resulting in lost revenue for both Airbnb and our property owners.
2. When looking through information regarding housing insecurity in the United States, I noticed that the percentage of rented households facing housing insecurity in California is more than double the percentage of those who own a home facing housing insecurity. With the database I have created, I would be interested in examining the housing insecurity statistics specific to San Francisco or the Mission District to see how Airbnb.com may be contributing to increased housing insecurity or if they are driving up rental prices in the neighborhoods they serve. A further examination of this development

would be to see if the San Francisco Planning Office has helped alleviate some of the housing insecurity with policies like registering short term rentals in the city.

3. One factor that I believe is important to consider when discussing the legality of web scraping is what information that someone is scraping from another website. Because there is a lot of complexity to web scraping, it is important to understand that many times web scraping is used as a tool, such as researching the discrimination of algorithms or quickly retrieving facts. On the opposite end, if web scraping involves obtaining confidential or sensitive information about users or a company, in these cases web scraping does not provide benefits besides to the person or group doing the web scraping whereas in the prior scenarios, the web scraping results in advantageous information to help improve our systems. Because there is such a blur between web scraping for good and bad, I believe that it is one of the most important factors to consider regarding the legality of web scraping. Because answering the question of whether web scraping is good or bad is so nuanced and can change on a case to case basis, the legality of the practice must also contain nuance to account for the good while also stopping the bad web scraping.
4. One guideline that we must consider when deciding whether to use or not use public data is regarding the privacy concerns of the data you are going to use. If you are using public data that contains a lot of personal, private information it may be important to figure out if that information was willingly provided by those individuals or if it is information that they may not be aware exists or people have access to. The other important guideline to consider is whether you violate a website's terms of service by accessing this information. While you may be able to access the data, it may not be in your best interest if you violate a website's terms of service and could potentially be held criminally liable for accessing that information. Understanding the consequences of accessing information is very important when deciding whether or not to use data. It is also important to understand why you are going to be using the data that you gather, if you are unsure or it is not for a useful purpose, it may be better to not use the data than to use it anyway in hopes you find something useful or interesting.