**e-Porfolio Activity: Reflective Activity 2**

**Cambridge Analytica: Background and Use of Data**

Cambridge Analytica, a British political consulting firm, became infamous in 2018 for its unethical use of data harvested from millions of Facebook users. The data was acquired through seemingly harmless personality quizzes and surveys that users voluntarily participated in, often without understanding the extent of the data they shared. This data was then used to build detailed psychographic profiles of users and target them with personalized political advertisements, influencing elections and referendums, such as the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Brexit vote.

The main issue was that Cambridge Analytica did not just access the survey data of individuals who took the quizzes; they also acquired data from the friends and contacts of those participants—without their explicit consent. This exposed millions of users’ data to third parties, raising significant ethical, legal, and social concerns.

**Other Examples of Inappropriate Survey Use**

1. Target and Predictive Analytics: In the early 2010s, retail giant Target used predictive analytics to identify customers who might be pregnant based on their shopping habits. By distributing surveys and correlating the results with in-store purchases, Target created susceptible consumer profiles. In one case, the company famously sent coupons for baby products to a teenager, revealing her pregnancy to her unsuspecting father. This raised significant concerns about privacy and how companies can infer and misuse sensitive information to influence consumer behavior.
2. OKCupid’s Manipulative Experiments: The online dating platform OKCupid conducted multiple surveys and experiments on its users without informing them, aiming to understand how people respond to different match suggestions and what characteristics make profiles more appealing. In one notable example, the platform lied to users about their compatibility scores to study whether it influenced dating outcomes. This experiment revealed how companies could manipulate user experiences through surveys, raising ethical concerns around consent and transparency.

**Ethical, Social, Legal, and Professional Standpoints**

The examples mentioned above, including Cambridge Analytica, Target, and OKCupid, can be analyzed through several ethical, social, legal, and professional lenses:

1. Ethical Standpoint:
   * Violation of Informed Consent: In all these cases, users needed to fully understand what data was being collected or how it would be used. Using surveys without clear consent violated principles of autonomy and respect for individuals.
   * Exploitation of Data: The data was used in ways that could potentially harm the users, such as manipulating their decisions, targeting them with unsolicited marketing, or breaching sensitive personal information.
2. Social Standpoint:
   * Erosion of Trust: When companies misuse surveys, it diminishes public trust in both the platforms and surveys as legitimate tools for research or feedback. As a result, respondents may be skeptical and reluctant to participate in future surveys, even when they are conducted ethically.
   * Impact on Democracy and Public Opinion: Cambridge Analytica’s actions, for instance, had a profound social impact by shaping political landscapes and manipulating democratic processes.
3. Legal Standpoint:
   * Data Protection Laws: The Cambridge Analytica scandal led to increased scrutiny and the introduction of stricter data privacy regulations like GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and CCPA (California Consumer Privacy Act). These laws will hold companies responsible for data misuse and ensure that individuals have more control over their personal information.
   * Litigation and Fines: Both Facebook and Cambridge Analytica faced significant legal consequences, including multi-million-dollar fines and lawsuits, highlighting the legal ramifications of violating data privacy regulations.
4. Professional Standpoint:
   * Responsibility of Data Scientists and Analysts: Data collection and analysis professionals must adhere to ethical guidelines and codes of conduct. Misusing survey data violates professional standards, eroding the credibility of data science as a field.
   * Need for Ethical Oversight: These cases underline the necessity of implementing strong ethical oversight within organizations to ensure that data is used responsibly and transparently.

**Conclusion**

The inappropriate use of surveys, as exemplified by Cambridge Analytica, Target, and OKCupid, has far-reaching ethical, social, legal, and professional implications. It shows how seemingly benign data can be misused to manipulate individuals, infringe on their privacy, and undermine trust in digital platforms. These cases serve as cautionary tales and stress the need for stricter regulations, transparent practices, and a commitment to ethical standards in handling survey data.

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