**Module 6: Critical Thinking**

**Ethics of "Behavioral Analytics"**

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**Ethics of "Behavioral Analytics"**

Josh Breaker-Rolfe with Tripwire describes behavioral analytics as collecting and analyzing data relating to how consumers use a certain product. At which point the product can be altered in order to be appealing to the customers. The alterations to the product would be based on the data collected and analyzed. Thus essentially, customizing the product for their customers. In theory this helps boost the sales of a given product. This concept of behavioral analytics can be implemented in nearly every industry, including the political industry.

Politicians need people to support them in order to get elected and stay in office. Therefore, politicians are essentially selling themselves as a type of political product. Furthermore, political products could also benefit from the use of behavioral analytics. Collecting and analyzing data on a politician's following and their target audiences could help them appear more appealing to the masses. Thus, aiding the politician with getting elected and/or staying in office. The use of behavioral analytics can be extremely beneficial but is it considered to be moral?

Using behavioral analytics could be considered moral under one ethical framework, while not being moral in another moral framework. Therefore, for this paper the focus will be on two different moral frameworks. The moral frameworks to be used are Utilitarianism and Kantianism. Kantiansim is strictly black and white while Utilitarianism explores the gray area for the greater good. In the end, each moral framework will determine if using behavioral analytics in the political arena is considered moral or not.

Under Kantianism, the process of collecting and analyzing data could be moral if there is consent. Consent would have to come from those whom the data is being collected from. There would also need to be consent to analyze the data and use it to help a politicians political campaign. Under these consensual conditions, behavioral analytics would be considered moral within the eyes of Kantianism. However, if consent is not given for any aspect of the process, it would be considered immoral to implement behavioral analytics. Kantiansim may have a strict black and white approach to morality, but one of its competitors, Utilitarianism, dabbles in the gray area of morality.

Under Utilitarianism, behavioral analytics may be considered moral, but only if it benefits the greater good. Therefore, if the potentially immoral act of collecting and analyzing data on politicians' audiences creates a better outcome for the masses, then Utilitarianism would deem it moral. The problem is probably every politician believes they would benefit the masses, even though this is not the case. Political figures throughout history have shown us that their agenda does not always benefit the greater good. Take the political figure, Adolf Hitler, for example. Hitler may have believed he was creating the greater good for the world by growing his approved races of people and removing the others. However, his political campaign led to the deaths of millions. Therefore, we would need a way to calculate the benefit of a certain action. That way the greater good does not end up being the greater evil.

In summary, behavioral analytics can be a powerful tool to help a product be more appealing and ultimately sell the product. In the world of politics, the politicians themselves are the products and their audience are the customers. Therefore, politicians conduct behavioral analytics on their audiences to aid their political campaign. This approach could be considered moral within Kantianism, if and only if there is consent to gather and use their customer’s data. Otherwise, Kantianism would deem the process immoral. Now Utilitarianism is a bit of a different story. If the action of conducting behavioral analytics leads to the greater good, then it would be considered moral. Within the world of politics we would need to make sure the action actually leads to the greater good and not war. Therefore, behavioral analytics could be moral under both Kantianism and Utilitarianism.

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