

4.1 Systems Theory Description

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For my systems theory grid, I analyzed the Cambridge Analytica incident where they used fake social media accounts to influence the 2016 presidential election. For my technical and socio-technical systems, I split the situation up into different groups of different sizes. First, I broke down Facebook into the users and the administration. I then broke down the presidential election into singular voters and the 2016 election as a whole. Additionally, I added other social media accounts that were not directly correlated with this incident, political businesses that use mass data for propaganda purposes, and Cambridge Analytica itself. Each one of these systems was affected by some ethical quandary that occurred during this incident. The ethical quandaries that I included in my grid were split up by the different processes that the data went through before it was used for political gain. First, Cambridge Analytica collected the data through the use of a personality quiz on the Facebook application. For this to happen, Facebook users had to physically take the quiz that appeared on their application. In line with that, Facebook did not closely monitor who was using their platform to obtain data. After it was collected, Cambridge Analytica sold the data to external sources who had other intentions. The last quandary was the fact that the external sources used the obtained data to influence the 2016 presidential election.

For the first ethical quandary, the only systems that were truly affected by Cambridge Analytica gathering data through the quizzes were the Facebook users, Facebook itself, other social media accounts who were also obtaining data for other reasons, and Cambridge Analytica. Nearly the same group of systems was affected by the Facebook users taking the personality quiz. The only system difference was other social media accounts were not affected. In addition, the only difference between the first quandary and Facebook not closely monitoring who obtains their data is Cambridge Analytica is not directly affected. For the next quandary, the systems that were affected by Cambridge Analytica selling the obtained data were the external business built around political data and Cambridge Analytica. Lastly, the systems that are affected by those external businesses using the data to influence the 2016 presidential election were all the systems except for the other social media accounts. This is because the data was taken from the Facebook users via the Facebook platform, sold by Cambridge Analytica to external sources, and then used to affect the ideas of voters who partook in the 2016 Presidential Election.