Smart Charlottesville: Designing the Future
(Technical Report)

Using Care Ethics to Analyze the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal
(STS Research Paper)

An Undergraduate Thesis Portfolio

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My technical team worked on the Smart Charlottesville project. This project looks to strengthen the Charlottesville community. It is designed to allow University of Virginia students and Charlottesville community members to post well-researched ideas for making Charlottesville a better place. I felt like we were designing a social media platform for the city of Charlottesville. When thinking of topics to study for my STS research, our technical project made me think about the ethical issues prevalent within social media platforms. The popularity of social media platforms has risen as technology becomes more prevalent in society. Thus, the relationship between my technical project and STS research is the centralization of social media design and popularity.

Smart Charlottesville is a site that allows students and Charlottesville community members to publish "blueprints," or ideas on ways to improve Charlottesville, and enhance collaboration and implementation for these ideas. Ideas can take the form of either a project or problem. Projects are well-researched and fully developed plans to implement change in Charlottesville, while problems are smaller, less-developed ideas that should be further researched. There are different user levels, including student and admin. Admins are meant to monitor the page and while both roles can act as contributors to the site. The overall platform is designed to enhance the relationship between the UVA and Charlottesville communities.

Facebook has become one of the largest corporations in the world, while directly affecting the lives of people everywhere. Thus, they have a large responsibility to everyone to

protect the information they share on Facebook. Thus, when the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal surfaced in 2017, it is important to determine if Facebook consistently acted with the best interest of their users in mind. By using care ethics, it can be determined whether or not they provided the appropriate amount of care to their users. There are four main aspects of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. Through further research, it is evident Facebook failed to provide the appropriate care in each of the four aspects. The main argument centralizes around the fact that Facebook hid the need for users to strengthen their privacy settings, as by default, they were very loose. This seemed to be intentional, which is important because it shows the need for more transparency from major corporations.

Studying the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal while creating a smaller scale social media website was eye-opening. It displayed the moral responsibility we had to best protect the users of the site. Making sure only the correct people could access and maintain profile data for all of the users was important to our technical team. We also ensured we stored only the data we needed for them to create a profile, and have users voluntarily offer up other information with their posts, such as how to contact them. This was influenced by what we saw happen in the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica Scandal, where Facebook's access to user data was exploited for advertising purposes. Thus, doing the STS research alongside the technical project ensured we were designing our platform to meet ethical standards.