Power of Difference Assessment System
(Technical Report)

Facebook's Role in the "Unite the Right" Conflict
(STS Research Paper)

An Undergraduate Thesis Portfolio

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<div align="center">Socio-technical Synthesis: Hate in the Charlottesville Community</div>

My technical work and my STS research both center around the presence of hate in Charlottesville, Virginia. Specifically, my work focuses on the August 2017 "Unite the Right" rally, where hundreds of white supremacists gathered to protest the removal of a Robert E Lee statue in Emancipation park. This tragic event lead to the death of Heather Heyer and the injury of 19 other counter protestors. My technical project works with Heyer Voices, a foundation born in memory of Heather Heyer, to create a scalable web-based assessment system that can be used to identify and combat unconscious hate and bias. My STS research focuses on the role of social media, specifically Facebook, in the organization and recruitment of this rally. While my STS project works to gain a better understanding of the events leading to the "Unite the Right" rally, my technical projects aims to build a better Charlottesville community in its aftermath.

The Power of Difference Assessment (PDA) is an assessment system designed by The Sum, a Charlottesville based non-profit, that helps people learn about their demographic biases and understand how to better communicate with those who differ. My technical work was to redesign the existing assessment system, which was a simple website that displayed questions and recorded responses. In our new system, users can access the PDA through institutional access codes, or one time payments. After signing up and answering questions about their own demographics, users are asked to respond to 70 statements that range across various sociocultural locations, such as age, race, gender, sexuality, etc., on a likert scale. Once they are done, a report with results is generated and emailed to the participant. The results are categorized across

demographics, areas of strength, and areas of growth, and can help reveal people's biases, and allow them to understand the role they play in combating or sustaining existing socio-economical injustices. Upon completion of the PDA, participants can schedule a time to meet with a consultant from The Sum to learn more about their biases and understand how to better communicate across various demographic differences. This technical project directly combats hate in the Charlottesville community.

My STS research focused on understanding the role of Facebook in the organization of the "Unite the Right" rally. In the same way that Facebook allows ordinary users to build online communities, Facebook provides a platform for the alt right to recruit and organize. The morality of Facebook can be analyzed using the theory of care ethics as it relates to the relationships of care that Facebook owes to its users and the community. Care ethics is a type of virtue based ethics that emphasizes the importance of relationships over learning general moral principles. My claim is that Facebook is morally responsible for creating safe online communities. By studying how the "Unite the Right" rally utilized Facebook for recruitment and organization, I can better understand the responsibilities social media platforms have in combating hate online.

As I was working on my technical project, I became increasingly interested in how communities of hate are formed and propagated. I wanted to know how and why the "Unite the Right" rally happened in the first place. This steered my STS research, as I focused on the role of technology, specifically Facebook, in the recruitment and organization of the rally. Working on this STS research also furthered my commitment to my technical project, combating the hate that exists within ourselves and the community. Working on these two projects simultaneously allowed me to put together a more comprehensive picture of the hate that exists within the Charlottesville community.