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Case Analysis on Privacy
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   Based on the selection from *The Googlization of Everything*, by Siva Vaidhyanathan, I believe that a more ethical way to implement the Google Street View service for users would have involved, as Christopher Graham, the United Kingdom's information commissioner, had recommended in 2010, the censoring of all personally identifiable information (PII) from Google's systems as a security measure by default, rather than requiring individuals to submit an opt-out form when they are made aware of their PII appearing online. Vaidhyanathan's perspective addresses the concerns of individuals worried about their privacy being infringed upon by Google, as well as the users who greatly benefit from the Street View service. In this analysis of Google's Street View service, which launched in 2007, I will argue that Google should have taken additional preventative measures to minimize harm to individual citizens caused by their service. Most importantly, they should have sought to promote the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people in accordance with the utilitarian moral theory.

   The 4th Revolution, a book written by Luciano Floridi, delves into the concepts of information privacy and informational friction. Floridi defines information privacy as "the freedom from informational interference or intrusion that is achieved thanks to a restriction on facts that are unknown or unknowable." Additionally, he introduces the concept of informational friction as "forces that oppose the flow of information within a region of the infosphere, connected with the amount of effort required for some agent to obtain, filter, or block information about other agents in a given environment, by decreasing, shaping, or increasing informational friction." The central concepts of information privacy and informational friction will be crucial in assessing the implications of the Google Street View service in this analysis.

   Google initially launched the Street View feature in 2007 as part of their Google Maps and Google Earth services. The feature allowed users to explore an interactive panoramic view of various cities in the United States and later expanded to include streets worldwide. The service involves capturing images with a panoramic camera mounted on top of a Google Street View car. However, during the initial launch, the camera's height allowed it to view over privacy barriers like hedges, fences, and walls, leading to privacy complaints from property owners.

   During its initial launch in the United States, the Street View feature did not employ its "imperfect, machine-driven blurring technology." However, when Google decided to introduce the feature in Canada, they were required to implement their blurring technology to censor PII from its service in compliance with Canadian Data Protection laws. The utility that the street view feature provides significantly reduces the amount of effort required for agents to obtain information about other agents in a given environment. The blurring technology would promote information privacy by introducing informational friction that increases the amount of work

necessary for an agent to access information about another agent in the infosphere. Many users of the service noted in the initial launch that Google's process for requesting images that contain PII to be removed was difficult, but the service now provides a more streamlined process for requesting an image to be blurred. As the service continues to expand to more cities and countries throughout the world, the amount of informational friction will decrease as agents in the infosphere can more easily obtain access to information about other agents on a global scale. It is imperative that Google take the necessary steps to allow individuals to easily prevent their PII from being accessed by others in the infosphere without their consent.

"Privacy as Product Safety," an article written by James Grimmelman, discusses the idea of privacy being viewed through the lens of product safety using three key points:

1. "The first point implicit in the basic duty of sellers to make their product safe is that sellers can be held liable even when the consumer is at fault in the accident."
2. "A second implicit point in the basic duty of sellers to make their products safe is that disclaimers are not a substitute for a safe product."
3. "A third point is that sellers are liable for generic design defects as well as for individual manufacturing defects."

Grimmelman uses these three product safety standards to discuss privacy as it relates to social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook and the discontinued "Google Buzz," but these standards can also be used to discuss the privacy concerns associated with the street view service as well. Grimmelman suggests that the issue of privacy and SNS is how PII is accessible, the implications that certain social features have, and the consequences of the access to this information. In the case of Google Buzz, the user's profile was made publicly available by default and displayed their frequent contacts to other users on the service. Similar to Google's street view feature, this caused controversy amongst users of the service. There were many accounts of the service publicly displaying that a significant other was frequently exchanging messages with their ex, or an employee frequently exchanging messages with a competing business— causing harm to many users of the service. Likewise, there were many instances in which the Street View car had captured images of individuals who were in compromising situations such as exiting an adult video shop or vomiting in public.

The point that "disclaimers are not a substitute for product safety" relates to the idea that services should seek to adopt "opt-in" information privacy policies rather than "opt-out." Services that default to having users "opt-in" to share their PII would adhere to the utilitarian moral theory by minimizing the amount of harm and maximizing the amount of utility provided by their service. Such practices are particularly important with services such as Google's Street View where individuals do not "sign up" or agree to have their PII accessible on the service. To

adhere to the standards outlined by Grimmelman, Google should take the initiative to ensure that all PII is blurred from their service using their machine-driven technology by default and not rely on individuals to request that their information be removed when they are made aware of the exposure. It is important that Google ensures that communities are made aware of the Street View car's presence in advance and that it takes the necessary precautions in order to remove all PII from the captured images before they are published to the service.

According to the moral theory of utilitarianism, Google should have acted to promote "the greatest good for the greatest number" and "maximize the amount of happiness and minimize the amount of suffering." I believe that the utility provided by the street view service largely exceeds the amount of suffering caused by potential instances of infringement upon individual privacy. However, Google should have implemented the existing streamlined blurring process and machine-driven blurring technology during their initial launch of the feature in the United States in 2007. There will likely be disagreements regarding the extent of which Google Street View is considered to be an invasion of privacy and some people may argue that blurring the images detracts from the utility of the service, however taking these essential steps would adhere to the ideals of utilitarianism and minimize the amount of harm while maximizing the utility of the service. By adopting information privacy policies that default to "opt-in" rather than "opt-out" alongside the implementation of the machine-driven blurring technology would have been a more ethical approach to the initial release of the street view service by increasing the amount of informational friction between agents in the infosphere.