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September 17, 2021

PHIL 355E

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### Case Analysis 1

Having access at your fingertips to view any household or establishment at your pleasing is an idea that would have certainly not bode well in a society pre-technology. The reaction surely would have been more extreme than even the ones when Google Street View (GSV) first launched in 2007. As we as a society continued to grow technologically, I believe our tolerance of privacy grew as well. But as shown in Vaidhyanathas', *The Googlization of Everything*, different countries have separate views on privacy. Some, such as the village of Broughton in Cambridgeshire, were very reluctant to Googles operations. They went as far as to physically stop a Google Street View car from entering and photographing their homes. Others like Japan, were more formal and took to penning Google informing them that GSV "demonstrates a lack of understanding of some important aspects of daily life in Japan." Further grievances including Googles blur feature. This is their attempt at protecting identities by smudging individuals faces and license plates. However, as noted by Vaidhyanatha, the face is not the only feature that can identify someone. Height, weight, possessions, and clothing can all also play a factor. Under a contractarianism approach, Google should have protected identities from the beginning and researched the countries viewpoints on privacy before blindly implementing them.

Grimmelmann makes many interesting points of emphasis in the discussion of privacy laws and its relation to Facebook. One great metaphor I found very interesting is when he states that, "It is true that Facebook can be hazardous to your privacy, but a hammer can be hazardous to your

thumb...” He goes on to explain that both are dangerous, but both are needed. It is the job of policymakers to make sure things aren’t “unnecessarily” dangerous. It is much easier to determine if physical tools are unnecessarily dangerous compared to a social networking platform. Where is the line? What constitutes dangerous? How can it be repaired? According to Grimmelman, the United States and the Federal Trade Commission follow (although not binded by law) the “Fair Information Practices”. These principles set the standard of good conduct and practices for industries to follow. The idea is that information should only be collected for an outright specific purpose and solely be used for that purpose. Any use other than the one agreed upon is in the wrong. So, in respects to Facebook and its users, this protects users and keeps Facebook open as to what they are doing with your information. Now if we try and apply this methodology to Googles Street View implementation, we come into a problem. While Google may be open as to what they are doing with all the images and data collected from the public, they use that information for their service allowing anyone to access it. Even if Google does no harm with the data, who is to say some criminal doesn’t use the data for their own corrupt uses. While Google may be protected by the previously mentioned principles, they should still be concerned by this and find better systems to maybe prevent corrupt uses. Also keeping these principles in mind, they have to ask themselves if the same codes of conduct can be applied throughout various countries. Just because the US follow one set of principles does not mean another country sees it the same way. This has become a problem in Vaidhyathanas’, *The Googlization of Everything*. As previously mentioned, Japan had difficulties accepting GSV. Taking photos of their citizens homes were the equivalent to taking photos inside your home’s windows here in the US. They felt a total invasion of privacy and

made it clear there was a problem. If Google were to have researched all the countries they had planned on implementing GSV, they would have been more informed on the customs and ethics to maybe implement their service better. This is where a contractualist thinking can be applied. If the head team over at Google were to put on the so called, “veil of ignorance”, one would assume that they would want Google to do all they can to protect and secure as much data for the public as they can. As of right now, the best-case scenario would be to be at top of Google making millions off of Googles Street View, while the worst-case scenario would be having your personal information taken from Street View and used against you in a negatively way somehow.

Floridi gets into the comparing of the old ways of thinking about privacy to our modern day thoughts. Anonymity may be seen as the unavailability of personal information. Floridi explains that this anonymity helped increase privacy in “modern societies”. However as technology continued to develop, peoples views on privacy began to change and foster new ideas. In an article written by Samuel D Warren and Louis Brandeis in 1890 called *The Right to Privacy*, they wrote and believed that privacy was being challenged by, “recent invention and business methods... instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise... and numerous mechanical devices”. It seems that the old saying is true in that history repeats itself. As Samuel and Louis were fearful of new technology invading their privacy, similar reactions were created during the Google Street View launch in 2007. Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century though I believe has way more tolerance for the technologies only first being invented during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Floridi explains this better when she states, “The information society has revised the threshold of informational friction and therefore provides a different sense in which its

citizens appreciate their privacy... a different kind of privacy is the price we pay to enter into hyperhistory.” It seems that as society around the world continues to expand technologically or industrially, people need to also modify their way of thinking about privacy. It’s a give and take scenario. You cannot expect to keep the same standards while also depending so heavily on the technology being modified every day. Looking at Google Street View we can apply this same thought process. It seems that GSV is relied upon daily nowadays. In Vaidhyathanas’, *The Googlization of Everything*, he reaches out to his contacts via social media to ask what they use GSV for. One person explains that they use it for work. GSV became a heavily relied on tool for his business doing community designs and streetscape projects. Rather than having to commute to his next project for images, he is able to see even in better view what he needs using GSV. Another colleague explains that he used it to describe a location more accurately in his novel. Some people on the other hand are more discouraged explain that even Google’s attempt at smudging faces to hide identities was not enough. Their reasoning explains that the face is not the only identifiable feature. Things like body type, the type of car you have or even your dog can trace to your identity. So now begs the question what can Google do in response? Certainly, the clearest option is to smudge the whole body. Now circling back, it would not be fair for any of these people to use the service on a daily basis while also protesting that it is an invasion of their privacy. We have to allow society to evolve its technology which reshapes our world and in turn modify our thoughts on privacy and what it means to us.

As we can see, privacy is a tricky matter. Not only does protecting privacy get harder as we evolve technologically, but people’s ideas about their own privacy change. It is a constant battle of finding the line between secure and vulnerable. Is Google wrong for creating a service

that allows you access to pretty much every road in the world? That's a question that cannot be answered as it is very opinionated. One that can be answered is could there have been a better way of going about it. The answer to that is yes. Google could have avoided the Japan problem by doing better research about the different customs countries follow. The smudging of faces to hide identities can be improved by smudging entire bodies. Another addition Google can add is a way for their drivers to flag images they think could pose a problem. All these will help Google secure people's confidentiality a little better. There of course will still be people that can tolerate the service even after all of these, which is as one would expect. Having little control of your home being broadcast on the web can be intimidating. I say little because Google does allow you to request a removal of an image. This process however takes time and there's no telling if someone has already saved the images you want removed. This is the battle of finding that line. Privacy should be a top priority and the people have the right to fight for their own line whether or not it is different from someone else's.