Introduction

The recent rise in the juggernaut that is social media has revealed several issues with individual privacy online. The debate is rapidly growing with many new participants weighing in their educated opinions. Privacy in social media is a problem that is hard to resolve, making it incredibly interesting to discuss. Theodore Claypoole, Clay Shirky, John Dvorak, Mary Madden, et al, Sharon Johnson, and Johnathon Baskin join in the debate. This analysis of a debate will analyze how these authors agree that there is an issue with the social media system but disagree on the definition of privacy, and how this disagreement hinders the discussion of policy.

The Current Issue

By large, the debaters have come to a consensus that there is a social media privacy problem. Jayson, Shirky, Madden et al, and Baskin all add to the debate through their consensus. Jayson and Shirky both agree on how user data is being taken advantage of. As Sharon Jayson states, “Your every online move leaves cyber footprints that are rapidly becoming fodder for research without you ever realizing it.” Similarly, Jonathan Baskin argues that “the profitability of these services depends on users remaining unaware of the extent to which their privacy is (or will be) exploited”. This agreement adds to the debate by verifying that there is a problem with the current social media system as evident by companies’ behavior. However, Madden et al, and Shirky show the same problem through a different approach, claiming that keeping one’s
information private is difficult. Clay Shirky states: “it is keeping things private that requires effort”. Madden, et al backs this statement in her study, showing that “Teens take other steps to shape their reputation, manage their networks, and mask information they don’t want others to know; 74% of teen social media users have deleted people from their network or friends list”. The agreement between these authors also furthers the debate by providing further evidence of an issue. All four of these authors have agreeing ideas about the presence of a problem with privacy in social media. This issue is clearly present and is widely agreed upon, and so the debate can transition into an argument of definition.

What is Private

The issue at hand has been agreed upon, and so the debate can focus on how privacy is really defined. Shirky, Baskin, Dvorak, and Claypoole struggle to find common ground on how to define what is private. Shirky struggles to define privacy, saying that what individuals said and did before social media was either public or private, and the sheer inconvenience of collecting data that was in the public was enough to keep those actions out of the public sphere; now data really is public or private (Shirky). Baskin also feels privacy is hard to define, saying “I think there’s an inflection point lurking somewhere in the future, when the privacy muddle will become clearer”. Neither author can confirm how to define what is private, which hinders the progress of the debate. Two other authors disagree completely on what is considered private. Claypoole thinks all this sharing helps create communities but destroys privacy. He thinks shared information is still private but it is being taken advantage of. Dvorak doesn’t think that information posted online is still private, saying users are “too busy posting humiliating pictures of themselves… and why do Americans continue to do these dumb things? It is a reflection of short term thinking”. This disagreement on definition cripples the debate, not allowing it to
easily continue forward to a resolution. Shirky and Baskin cannot even define privacy, and Claypoole and Baskin have totally different definitions. These authors cannot agree on a clear definition of privacy, and this makes the transition into discussing what should be done about the issue much harder.

**Policy**

How should the issue of privacy online be corrected? Claypoole, Dvorak, and Jayson have three completely different ideas on how users should be reacting. According to Claypoole, the government should step in and has recently made moves in this direction: “States are tackling specific aspects of privacy intrusions that are raised in the news and that capture the imagination of legislatures and the public” (Claypoole). However, Dvorak thinks that users are the ones to ultimately blame and so they should change their behavior. “Those who don't consider the long-term effects of what they are doing online today… advice: stop it” (Dvorak). This disagreement due to a lack of consensus on definition causes the debate to never reach a resolution. Jayson adds to the confusion, arguing that users aren’t in immediate danger. “The sites will never provide personally identifiable information unless they have the consent of the users. And there is legal recourse if they're using it in any other way” (Jayson). This third alternative disagrees with the previous two authors, and further complicates the argument over policy. With this much disagreement over policy, no decision of what should be done can be made. A lack of agreement over definition causes the discussion of policy to become near impossible to resolve. The definition of what is private should be determined first, then arguments over what should be done can be settled.

**Conclusion**
Privacy in social networks is a highly debated topic, and these six authors have a lot to say. The issue is clearly relevant, but the definition of what is and what isn’t private isn’t totally agreed upon. This causes the debate over policy to become unclear and no real agreement can be made. In order for this debate to be resolved, a clear definition of privacy must be reached, and a policy must then be agreed upon. There is room for improvement in the area of definition, so one could add to the debate by attempting to define privacy. Privacy in social media affects most modern citizens’ lives, so this debate will remain relevant for quite some time.
Works Cited


