1. Social Networking has been popular since the inception of the internet, but really began to become popular with the implementation of the “World Wide Web in 1991” (Bryant, Martin.) Within six short years a social media site by the name of “Six Degrees” began to unfold (Terrell, Keith.) This site boasted many of the popular features that are still present in today's social media such as adding friends, a profile to showcase yourself, and of course the ability to upload content. With this evolution spreading like a wildfire it was only two years before blogging sites began to gain traction. Fast forward twenty years and we arrive in 2019 where major corporations have begun to reinvent social networking, but with a new objective, to create a social network that not only allows but encourages the facilitation of cultural participation. Today things people recognize as participatory culture include memes, and “viral” videos both of which are objects of participatory culture. By being promoted by content creators, memes feature captions that enhance the overall aesthetic of the image being captured, whereas viral videos can go “viral” for several reasons that include comedy or painful events. But what is a social network without their iconic features the foremost is the like function, followed by subscribe, follow, tweet, retweet, the list continues to grow as do the number of social network sites. Perhaps the most iconic platforms that allowed participatory culture are Vine, You Tube, Twitch, Instagram, and Twitter with varying levels of success.

2. (Creating Content)-YouTube=

While videos and memes are a result of Participatory culture, there are also platforms such as YouTube and Snapchat that operate solely on user made content. For now, let’s focus on YouTube. According to Henry Jenkins “Yochai Benkler has described as a ‘hybrid media ecology’ within which commercial, amateur, governmental, nonprofit, educational, activist and other players interact with each other in ever more complex ways.” (Jenkins, Deuze pg.1) there is substantial evidence that supports the idea that as social media advances so too do the uses that it plays in society. These range from commercial with the use of Google Ads, and short ads inserted into all monetized YouTube videos. Going back to the original question, on these platforms anyone can create content if they have some form of access to the internet and a device for content whether it be a phone, gaming console, personal computer, and many other forms. However, as digital media gathers a bigger following the lines between social networks and the use of participatory culture begins to diminish, according to Clement Chau “These Web sites combine media production and distribution with social networking features, making them an ideal place to create, connect, collaborate, and circulate novel and personally meaningful media.” (Chau, pg.1) With the use of these technologies there is great potential for higher levels of interaction whether that be for personal communication, group events, or even marketing that is inherently linked with the future of social networks. To truly understand the impact that participatory culture has, it’s important to contrast two of the largest social networks today these are Facebook and Snapchat.

3. Further explore what the topic means to our area of study

Snapchat is a social platform that allows users to take pictures, or videos and then add captions to them and either post to their story or send them directly to other users on their friends list. By redesigning the way users create media there is an inherent link to a younger group, whereas Facebook features a static environment in most ways including the profile, gallery, notifications, and messages. According to Aaron Delwiche “*The Wealth of Networks*, hailing ‘new opportunities for how we make and exchange information’, while calling on readers to pay close attention to the laws and institutions that influence the digital environment” (Delwiche, pg.7) Inherently this has some reminiscence of foresight into the Facebook scandals that have happened within the last several years however, Delwiche wrote this in 2012 and wouldn’t have been aware of the misuse of a platform like Facebook to sell user data to advertisement groups. Regarding overall applicability most people use Facebook for family ties, friends, and local groups and events. As Stefania Manca and Valentina Grion noted “According to recent surveys carried out in the USA by the Pew Research Center, 65% of adults use social networking, Facebook remains by far the most popular site with 1.71 billion monthly active users” (Manca, pg2.) This means that 71% of adults in the United States use Facebook each month. These numbers show just how effective participatory culture can be when paired with a form of social networking to allow users to not only create content but share it directly to others.

4.Finish with what this could do for the future

As previously mentioned most adults in the United States use Facebook, this leaves the teens and what their choice of platform is, as Henry Jenkins notes “A 2005 study conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, more than half of all-American teens and 57 percent of teens who use the internet – could be considered media creators.” (Jenkins, et al. pg.1) While there isn’t an established reason as to why the youth of the world has taken to content creation, surely there is a correlation between the number of teens creating content and the demographics associated with the use of Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube. Jean Burgess also found a correlation between demographics and platform when she stated, “YouTube can help us to cut through the hype, and to better understand some of the more complex characteristics of participatory popular culture online.” (Burgess, pg.2) However, Burgess wanted to cut through the “hype” but the term itself is directly associated with content creation and the attention it receives within its platform. There is already a clear connection established between social networks and participatory culture, but where does that leave the future of these two powerful components of connection and content creation? One theory is that utilizing both aspects of these components would be to recreate social media using either augmented reality, or virtual reality to create a fully immersive space where people can connect their created media with that of their daily lives. This isn’t unlike *Dreams* for the PlayStation that allows users to create and link their content to other players.