

Pick, Play, Produce: Revisiting the Concept of Participation Through a Quantitative Study of Film Consumption Practices Amongst Youth in Flanders (Belgium)

Escull, reprodueix, produeix: revisió del concepte de participació a través d'un estudi quantitatiu de les pràctiques de consum de cinema entre els joves de la regió flamenca a Bèlgica

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This article proposes a framework that revisits the concept of participation through three non-mutually exclusive categories: pick, play and produce. Each category involves a different way of participating: through composing media consumption, to extending story worlds through existing materials and expanding media by creating content. In doing so, we question the emphasis on case studies that explore specific contemporary audience practices through the (online) traces left behind by audiences. These case studies are often set as exemplary for broader audience practices. Instead, we propose

Aquest article proposa un marc que revisa el concepte de participació a través de tres categories no excloents entre si: escollir, reproduir i produir. Cada categoria implica una manera diferent de participar: des de la composició del consum de mitjans, fins als universos de narratives esteses mitjançant materials existents i l'expansió de mitjans en crear continguts. Amb això, es qüestionen els casos d'estudi que exploren pràctiques contemporànies específiques de les audiències a través dels rastres que han deixat els usuaris en línia. Aquests casos d'estudi sovint són exemples per a pràctiques d'audiències més àmplies.

an approach that builds on the practices identified in these case studies, but starts from general audiences by surveying a representative sample of 1015 high school students aged 16 to 18 in Flanders (the northern Dutch-speaking region of Belgium). Each student completed a 94-question questionnaire in the first half of 2015, designed to measure contemporary film consumption. Our analysis confirms the need to further explore participation; when researching audience practices we find different patterns in participatory practices. A vast majority of audiences picks, about half of all audiences play and only a fifth participates through producing. Furthermore, audiences take part in different practices within and across categories. In short, participation is a multi-faceted concept.

Key words: participation, film, audiences, youth, quantitative.

Per contra, en aquest article es proposa una aproximació que construeix en les pràctiques identificades d'aquests casos d'estudi, però comença per audiències generals en portar a terme una enquesta d'una mostra representativa de 1.015 estudiants de preparatòria entre les edats de 16 a 18 anys a la regió flamenca de Bèlgica (situada a la part nord del país i que parla oficialment l'holandès). Cada participant va respondre un qüestionari de 94 preguntes durant el primer semestre del 2015, dissenyat per mesurar el consum de cinema contemporani. La nostra anàlisi confirma la necessitat de continuar explorant la participació, ja que en estudiar les pràctiques d'audiències hem trobat diversos patrons en les pràctiques de participació. La majoria de les audiències tria, al voltant de la meitat de totes les audiències reproduceix i només una cinquena part hi participa a través de la producció. A més, les audiències prenen part de diverses pràctiques a dins i transversalment entre categories. En resum, la participació és un concepte multifacètic.

Paraules clau: participació, cinema, audiències, joventut, quantitatiu.

As media change, the possibilities of the new participatory modes of consumption draws attention: a seemingly unlimited access to media content through a variety of devices (Tryon, 2012) and a Web 2.0 environment in which audiences can contribute to and create media within the platform structures (O'Reilly, 2005; Blank and Reisdorf, 2012). Building on a legacy of active audiences, Jenkins (2006) is one of the most prominent voices in audience participation. He identifies 'a movement towards a more participatory model of

culture, one which sees the public not as simply consumers of preconstructed messages but as people who are shaping, sharing, reframing, and remixing media content in ways which might not have been previously imagined' (Jenkins *et al.*, 2013: 2).

This participatory model echoes the characteristics Jenkins (1992) once exclusively ascribed to fans: a particular mode of reception, a particular set of critical and interpretative practices, a specific base for activism, particular forms of cultural production and a specific social community. In short: active and engaged audiences that contribute to their own media consumption. The specificities of fans would be translated to general audiences in his work on convergence culture. Here, Jenkins (2006) argues that 'the power of participation comes not from destroying commercial culture, but from writing over it, modding it, amending it, expanding it, adding greater diversity of perspective and then recirculating it, feeding it back into the mainstream media' (p. 268).

Jenkins' focus on film audiences slightly diverges from a long tradition of researching (active) television audiences through qualitative approaches (Stai-ger, 2005; Elsaesser, 2012). Well-known examples include applications of the encoding-decoding model (Hall, 1999 [1973])¹ and gender politics in handling the remote control (Morley, 1999). Gray (1992) is one of the few to include film in her analysis of gender in the domestic use of VCR technology. But even in this study, television continues to linger at the surface; the time-shifting practices by recording broadcast television are explored before she turns to hiring videotapes. Today, it is not much different; television audiences still dominate the work on audience practices (Schenk, Tröhler and Zimmermann, 2010; Elsaesser, 2012), even when film audiences did gain in attention over the past few years.

Ethnographic studies of audience practices continue to inform contemporary research on participating (fan) audiences. Often, this entails a textual analysis of their digital traces. We will explore a selection of these studies more in-depth in subsequent sections. Indeed, each of these studies contributes to a rich variety of participatory practices that concern choice in content, activities surrounding media products and creation of new content. It is within this variety that we find the first weakness in the argument of participation: there is no clear definition of what it means to analyze 'participating audiences'. Any audience practice seems eligible, as long as it involves Web 2.0: from watching foreign television content (Bourdau and Hong-Mercier, 2012) to creating and distributing independent magazines (Le Masurier, 2012).

The second weakness concerns limits in the subject of study. Jenkins (2006) argues that today's participatory practices can be analyzed as forerunner of general audience practices: '(...) we should read these case studies as demonstrations of what it is possible to do in the context of convergence culture' (p. 258). Others question this (predictive) generalizability by problematizing who gets to practice participation (Couldry, 2011), what the (industry-set) limits of participation are (Bird, 2011) and how many actually participate (Van Dijck, 2009). In summary, we have a rich body of literature on how contemporary audiences *can* consume media products. But we lack in understanding on how contemporary audience actually *do* consume media. This article hopes to con-

tribute to the latter, by researching film consumption practices amongst youth in Flanders aged 16 to 18.

This article aims to revisit the concept of participation through identifying three different types of film audience practices: pick, play and produce. In a quantitative analysis of these practices, we expect to temper the possibilities ascribed to a contemporary participatory culture by Jenkins *et al.* (2013). The reasons for studying film consumption are manifold. Film sits comfortably at the heart of a large cultural industry (Maltby, 1999). This industry entails a well demarcated media product in film titles (Ellis, 1991), as well as a long tradition of versatile consumption and participation practices (Elsaesser, 2000; Gray, 2010; Evans, 2010). As such, this media consumption practice fits well in a study of participation.

Film is especially popular amongst technology-savvy youth (British Film Institute, 2015; Hay and Bailey, 2002; Bennett and Robards, 2014). Therefore, they are an especially suitable demographic to study contemporary film consumption practices. Through analyses of a survey amongst a representative sample of 1015 students (obtained in 2015), we provide generalizable data on film consumption. One out of the ten questionnaire sections is devoted specifically to participatory practices in film consumption. In measuring participatory practices amongst a generalizable sample, we avoid the risk of ‘idealizing the studied phenomenon—such as Jenkin’s *Convergence Culture*’ (Macek and Zahrádka, 2016: 337)—. But before turning to the results, we will first explore and contextualize the types of participation in (contemporary) media consumption.

CONTEMPORARY MEDIA PRACTICES: TYPES OF PARTICIPATION

The issue with participation is its often ambiguous status. The theoretical approach proposed by Carpentier proves helpful. He states: ‘participation cannot be equated with “mere” access to or interaction with media organizations, as authors for instance Jenkins do’ (2011b: 520). He concludes that there is a distinction between interaction with media, and participation that exists both in and through media. Carpentier (2011b) relates interaction with the more traditional processes of signification and interpretation. In doing so, he avoids equating non-participating audiences with passive recipients.² ‘Participation through media’ entails mediatized self-representation. ‘Participation in media’ concerns nonprofessional generation of media output. The former, Carpentier insists, ‘played this role long before Web 2.0 even became conceived’ (2011b: 528). Participation in media, we argue in the following sections, also existed before Web 2.0.

In a later conversation with Jenkins and Carpentier, Jenkins argues that interactivity is an affordance of technology. Participation, he argues, ‘emerges from social and cultural processes and practices’ (2013: 272). In a further comparison to Carpentier, Jenkins states: ‘as should be clear by now, you work through abstract definitions which then may or may not be applied to specific examples, whereas I tend to work outward from specific case studies, looking for conceptual

tools to explain what we are observing' (2013: 276). A distinction within the concept of participation between 'in' and 'through', he argues, is therefore only fruitful on a theoretical level.

That Carpentier's abstract definitions can be fruitful in their application, is demonstrated by Macek (2013). In his article on online participation, he includes three (potentially) participating practices: (1) creation and posting of unique generated content, (2) reception of content made and posted by others and (3) sorting and recirculation of content made by others. We follow Macek (2013) in the usefulness of breaking up the concept of participation, even though our types of participation are broader for they also include offline practices. And like him, we build on the work Carpentier (2011b) in selecting all practices that involve 'participation in media'. But what are the audience practices to include? To answer that question we turn to the observations made through the many case studies on participatory practices of media audiences.

We find three overarching nonprofessional practices in media participation: picking media, playing with media and producing media. These practices are ideal typical and non-hierarchical. That means that the intensity of participation does not have to be related to the type of participation. Furthermore, one can practice several types of participation simultaneously or independent of each other, for one or more media products. The case studies included below are not comprehensive for all participatory practices. They do however provide wide-ranging illustrations of the central themes in the literature on participatory audiences.

PICK

Audiences can pick whatever media content pleases them, well beyond the traditional structures of the cinema and broadcast television. As such, they compose their own media consumption patterns. Exemplary of selection in contemporary media consumption practices is access to content not available via traditional cinema programs and/or cinema schedules. Atkinson (2014) for example finds engaged audiences to consume content made specifically for the tablet, such as the film *The Silver Goat* (2012). Based on platform, rather than screen, web series serve exclusive online consumption. *The Guild*, led by subcultural star Felicia Day, is for example not accessible via traditional broadcasters (Ellcessor, 2012). Foreign broadcast content is also accessed online. In this context, Bourdaa and Hong-Mercier (2012) analyze fan practices of television shows *Battlestar Galactica* and *Dorama-World* in online communities. These television shows are not broadcasted on national television, and thus in France can only be accessed online. There is an interesting parallel between the latter two studies: both emphasize the social aspect to accessing this content through Twitter connections (Ellcessor, 2012) and forum communities (Bourdaa and Hong-Mercier, 2012).

Selecting content unavailable via windowing frameworks³ includes piracy through downloading and streaming. The practice of accessing media through piracy can be traced back to the introduction of the VCR (Decherney, 2013). Recording from (mostly) cable television proved to become widespread from

the mid-1970s onward, at least in the United States (Levy, 1980; Levy and Fink, 1984). It was the sharing of recorded copies via contact ads that raised copyright issues (Ostrosky, 1980). Since then, a cat-and-mouse game developed between distributors and producers (who coined the term piracy) and audiences (Decherney, 2013). In more contemporary practices, an internet connection is indispensable to access media through piracy. This practice is not necessarily subversive or countercultural (Vonderau, 2014), as is well illustrated in a study by Evans and McDonald (2014): in Britain broadcasters provide high quality media online (for example through curating themed online channels, see Sørensen (2014)). This explains why Brits feel more entitled to online content, including streaming and downloading. The internet connection that is crucial in this practice, is also an important condition in our second category of participation: play.

PLAY

Before turning to examples of how audiences play with media content, we first have to make a distinction between cross-media content and transmedia content: a cross-media text is distributed via different media, where a transmedia text consists of parts spread over different media (Simons *et al.*, 2012). Audiences mainly participate through play in transmedia products. Reinhard (2011) for example elaborates upon virtual and physical puzzles that lead audiences to clues on the releases of *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *Cloverfield* (2008). Both marketing campaigns were celebrated for the buzz they created amongst potential audiences and the engagement and mobilization of dedicated (fan) audiences.

Hunting for clues is not reserved for film releases. The television show *Lost* invites audiences to unravel the clues presented in the story, like a detective, to gain full understanding of the story (Mittell, 2009a). He dubs this practice ‘forensic fandom’. Audience observations can be accessed via Wikipedia-like forums dedicated to specific television shows or films. Mittell (2009a), like Bourdaa (2013), states that the online environment is crucial in facilitating forensic fandom: ‘the forensic engagement finds a natural home in online forums, where viewers gather to posit theories and debate interpretations’. Those that participate through producing content on these forums will be explored in the next participatory category: produce.

The lack of online environments did not prevent the unraveling of clues in and across media through transmedia storytelling before the introduction of Web 2.0. The practice can be traced back to the turn of the twentieth century with *The Wizard of Oz* (Freeman, 2014). Different storylines could be found across newspapers, posters and a musical. More recent pre-Web 2.0 examples are *The Matrix* and *Star Wars* franchises. The first enables forensic fandom across a series of media products that include films, comic books and videogames (Jenkins, 2006). The latter, amongst others, introduces further story lines via additional figurines (Gray, 2010) and the release of one of the first film related arcade videogames in 1983 (Juul, 2001). Stories can also be extended through quests for additional information. Examples include consumption of carefully directed behind-the-

scenes materials (Gray, 2010) such as documentary on the 1980s *Superman* films (Evans, 2010), and visits of film locations (Reijnders, 2009).

Not all media-related play is reducible to hunting for clues and solving puzzles. It also includes audience participation through voting on the course of a media product. An early example is the film *Kinoautomat – One man and his house* (1967) (Carpentier, 2011a).⁴ During the film, audiences are presented choices in how the film continues—using a voting system installed in the cinema—. It was rumored that any path would lead to the same ending, and with time the popularity of the film faded. There have been some revivals of this type of participation through play. The recent horror film *I Victim* (2016) for example invites audiences to vote on how the story line evolves via an app. More common ways of audience participation through voting can be found on television; in talent and (scripted) reality shows, audiences get to vote on who is staying and/or leaving (Jenkins, 2006).⁵

In short, audiences play with media content through a variety of practices, both online and physically. Practices surrounding play extend a media product through deepened understanding; either through puzzle solving, or through additional information. Audiences participate in expanding media products in the next category: produce.

PRODUCE

Participation through production concerns audiences that create original content. In doing so, audiences expand the story worlds presented to them by media producers in ways they deem fitting. The wide variety of audience practices included in this section is in principle deployed by non-professionals.⁶ This does not mean that audiences that participate through producing original content are laymen—they can (and sometimes have to be) highly specialized to engage in expanding media products—. There are many examples of audiences creating original content. *Lord of the Rings* fans, for example, were asked to contribute to and reflect on the process of making the film (Shefrin, 2004).⁷ Audiences build their own augmented reality games (ARG's) in response to television series (e.g. *Omnifam* as backstory for the US television series *Alias* (Örnebring, 2007)). They remix existing culture (Lessig, 2008) in new imagery with distinct meaning through memes (e.g. the confession bear (Vickery, 2014)). There are huge collections of *Harry Potter* fan fiction. And audiences clip existing soap operas so that only the gay scenes remain, such as in *Verbotene Liebe* (Dhaenens, 2012). In short: audiences create new media content within and from the media content they consume. A practice that reminds us of the photo-collections of female movie stars, scrapped by girls in post-war Britain (Stacey, 1994).

The wide variety of practices speaks to the imagination, as it best approaches the engaged audiences in participatory culture described by Jenkins (2006). But also this type of participatory practices is limited. One of these limitations is potential copyright infringement charges. Then again, too much regulation of participatory can backfire. In the case of Comedy Central's *Colbert Report*, audiences departed the show's message boards when regulations got too tight (Burwell,

2014). Further limitations are found in the most prominent observations of participation through production: the Wikipedia-like forums dedicated to specific media products. Examples include *Lostpedia* and *Fringepedia*. *Lostpedia* is created to unravel clues for the television series *Lost* (Mittell, 2009b). In an analysis of the forums, Mittell remarks that participation through content production is common, but not as communal as suggested by some. The low number of response threats lead him to conclude: ‘this relative lack of response suggests that wikis are often transformed not by a unified community, but by individual decisions passively accepted by the user base’ (2009b: 3). As such, the share of audiences that produce media content seems limited, even if those that do participate in this way create a wide variety in media products.

Building on both Mittell (2009b) and Jenkins (2006), Bourdaa analyses the forum *Fringepedia*. She nuances audience production by arguing that the strength of transmedia storytelling is not to *demand* participation, but to *facilitate* participation. Those willing to participate can reconstruct the story world scattered over multiple platforms, by ‘picking up, collecting and sharing information they found in the platforms. They [the fans] are in charge of rewriting and re-agglomerating the encyclopaedia of the universe’ Bourdaa (2013: 212). This means two things. First, audience practices are steered and facilitated by producers. And second, only part of the audiences produce original content. As summarized by Vainikka and Herkman (2013: 133) in their study of participatory practices amongst students in communication: ‘The majority of online participation was revealed to be linked to commercial Web 2.0 applications and the communicative practices of social media, whereas a minority of it could be categorized as original content production or committed peer-community participation’.

METHODS

To measure participation practices amongst general young audiences, we presented a 94-question questionnaire to 1015 students in Flanders dispersed over 36 schools. The 45-minute questionnaire was completed during school hours. One researcher visited all but three schools, which preferred to supervise completion themselves, in the first half of 2015. At the time of the questionnaire, students were enrolled in the final two years of high school education. This means they are about 16 to 18 years old. The questionnaire counts ten sections of questions. Each explores a different aspect of watching film. The final section concerns demographics. All completed questionnaires were digitalized using Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) software and analyzed using SPSS software.

Table 1. Sample stratified for type and level of education in population (P) and sample (S)

Level of education	Type of education					
	Official P	S	Free P	S	TOTAL P	S
ASO (+KSO)	11360	101	43996	257	55356	358
	07,90%	09,95%	30,58%	25,32%	38,47%	35,27%
TSO	10985	78	35918	260	46903	338
	07,63%	07,68%	24,96%	25,62%	32,60%	33,30%
BSO	15122	136	26500	183	41622	319
	10,51%	13,40%	18,42%	18,03%	28,93%	31,43%
TOTAL	37467	315	106414	700	143881	1015
	26,04%	31,03%	73,96%	68,97%	100,00%	100,00%

Representativeness was achieved through a stratified random sample. A stratified sample is useful in distributing the sample in the same way the population is distributed (Bryman, 2004). As table 1 indicates, we stratified for both type and level of education. The first stratification, type of education, consists of ‘official’ and ‘free’ education. These solely have to do with the organization of the school which can be either public (official) or private (free) (Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, 2014). It is no mark for quality, both school types can be found on either side of the spectrum. The second stratification concerns the level of education: ASO (general education, mainly theoretical), KSO (applied and theoretical education, mainly focused on the arts), TSO (applied and theoretical education, mainly focused on technology), or BSO (applied education).⁸ Grounded in these school levels, taste patterns proof to vary greatly amongst Belgian youth (Elchardus *et al.*, 2003), underlining the importance of this stratification.

FINDINGS: PARTICIPATORY AUDIENCES THAT PICK, PLAY AND PRODUCE

We operationalized audience participation within the overarching themes pick, play and produce. For each, a number of practices that relate to film were selected. We will elaborate upon these choices and our findings in the subsequent sections.

Audiences That Pick

In our section on practices related to content selection, we focus on the way youth in Flanders access film. Watching film is popular, both as practice and in

appreciation: 87 percent saw at least one film in the seven days prior to the questionnaire and only 3 percent indicates not to enjoy watching film. How do youth in Flanders select the content they watch? Much of the choice in contemporary media is related to online access, as the examples illustrated earlier (Atkinson, 2014; Ellcessor, 2012; Bourdaa and Hong-Mercier, 2012). Online access does not equate content selection. However, it is identified as the most important condition for a broad media access—flexible in time and/or place (Jenkins, 2006; Tryon, 2012)—. Furthermore, access to media content through piracy is not limited to niche content unavailable via more traditional means, it also includes access to mainstream media products (Decherney, 2013). We therefore focus on the condition for broad media access, rather than on the specificities of consumption practices through film titles.

Almost half of all students download films at least once a month, making it a common practice (see table 2). That is: ‘not paid for downloading’. Not all practices in this category equal piracy. Films can for example be freely available for download. In doing so, we do not explicitly question minors on possibly prosecutable practices. The same applies to ‘not paid for streaming’. While this category includes Popcorn time, YouTube was also mentioned as an example. The practice of streaming is measured over different screens. Especially not paid for streaming on the laptop/PC is common practice with almost 60 percent of youth in Flanders accessing film this way at least once a year. This number rises if we combine all streaming practices between never (22.9 percent) and at least once a year (77.1 percent)—regardless of screen—. If we include the practices of downloading, online access to film climbs to 85.7 percent. This means that some audiences download, some stream and some download and stream. A total of 78.9 percent of youth aged 16 to 18 access films without paying for the content—either via stream or download—. This means that the vast access to media content is indeed practiced by youth in Flanders via online means.

Table 2. Downloading and streaming practices - in percentages

Practice	Frequency						
	Every day	Every other day	Every week	Every month	Every year	At least once a year	Never
Paid for downloading	0.6	0.5	2.4	9.6	8.7	21.8	78.2
Not paid for downloading	2.1	3.5	17.3	24.8	14.2	61.9	38.1
<i>Television</i>							
Pay per view stream	0.4	0.6	2.3	5.5	6.9	15.7	84.3
Not paid for streaming	2.5	5.2	20.0	19.2	9.3	56.1	43.9
Via separate film subscriptions	2.9	1.7	8.0	8.0	5.4	26.0	74.0
<i>Laptop/PC</i>							
Paid per view stream	0.2	0.5	1.5	2.6	4.3	19.1	90.9

	Frequency						
Not paid for streaming	3.3	6.8	18.6	18.8	11.2	58.7	41.3
Via separate film subscriptions	2.0	1.7	4.1	6.7	3.8	18.3	81.7
<i>Tablet</i>							
Paid per view stream	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.1	1.6	3.9	96.1
Not paid for streaming	0.8	0.9	3.4	6.0	4.6	15.7	84.3
Via separate film subscriptions	0.8	0.9	2.6	2.6	2.3	9.2	90.8
<i>Smartphone</i>							
Paid per view stream	0.1	0.0	0.4	1.2	1.5	3.2	96.8
Not paid for streaming	0.7	1.6	2.6	5.5	3.9	14.3	85.7
Via separate film subscriptions	0.9	0.7	1.6	2.3	1.8	7.3	92.7

Audiences That Play

The wide variety of practices through play in film consumption include on the one hand practices related to games (video games, augmented reality games and role playing) and on the other hand practices that involve further understanding of a media product (finding additional information, visiting online forums and visiting film locations). There are two non-screen related practices included (role playing and visiting film locations) and one practice that is both physical and virtual (playing ARG's). In doing so, we not only focus on the online practices often ascribed to contemporary media consumption practices (Mittell, 2009a; Jenkins, 2006), but also on the physical practices related to film (Gray, 2010; Reinhard, 2011). As summarized in table 3, these physical practices matter: 15 percent participates at least once a year in role playing, and 17.5 percent visits a film location at least once a year.

Table 3. Film consumption practices through play – in percentages

	Frequency						
Practices related to film	Every Day	Every other day	Every week	Every month	Every year	At least once a year	Never
Playing videogames	01.46	01.04	04.91	06.78	14.20	28.39	71.61
Playing ARG's	01.26	00.52	02.10	03.67	07.24	14.80	85.20
Role playing	01.47	00.32	01.89	03.68	07.98	15.34	84.66
Finding additional information	00.74	00.42	02.42	07.47	15.14	26.18	73.82
Visiting online forums	00.32	00.32	01.05	02.84	05.89	10.42	89.58
Visiting film locations	00.11	00.32	00.63	02.00	14.50	17.54	82.46

Youth participating in a type of play at least once a year fluctuates between 10 and 28 percent. But how wide-spread are these practices? 51.9 percent of youth is involved with one or more film consumption practices through play at least once a year. That means that a considerable number is engaged with two or more practices at once. As a consequence, the studies on practice through play might have differed in media, but have researched similar populations. In other words, those practicing forensic fandom in unravelling the story world of *Lost* (Mittell, 2009a), may match the people that hunted for clues with the release of *The Dark Knight* (Reinhard, 2011) and the ones that visited film locations (Reijnders, 2009). This does not affect the wide number of practices found through play, and the usefulness of studying their characteristics. It does however make us question whether the number of people involved in those practices is overestimated.

Audiences That Produce

The final section of our findings is concerned with film consumption practices through production. Here, we questioned respondents on general practices. These practices may or may not find their final homes online—fan fiction may for example be published or kept in a physical diary—. We argue that Web 2.0 is not a condition for these to take place (on pre Web 2.0 practice, see for example Stacey, 1994), even if most analyses of film related practices focus on online expressions (Jenkins, 2006). The only exception is blogging, here Web 2.0 is a condition. This practice is least popular with high school students (in line with the findings of Vainikka and Herkman (2013)), with a mere 7 percent of students engaging with this practice in relation to film at least once a year. The remaining questions include overall categories such as artistic expressions, writing fan fiction and making film. The categories are rather broad, to cover the wide spectrum of practices that are found in the literature on participating audiences.

Table 4. Film consumption practices through production – in percentages

Practices related to film	Frequency						
	Every day	Every other day	Every week	Every month	Every year	At least once a year	Never
artistic expressions	00.31	00.52	00.63	01.99	07.35	10.81	89.19
writing fan fiction	00.42	00.32	00.95	01.68	06.74	10.11	89.89
making film	00.74	00.32	00.95	01.27	04.77	08.05	91.95
blogging	00.32	00.21	00.74	02.00	03.68	06.93	93.07

As with the categories pick and play, the total number of respondents who engage with one or more of the four selected film related practices is lower than the sum of all participants. 20.7 percent of all audiences in Flanders aged 16 to 18 participate through production at least once a year. Again, this means that

parts of producing audiences are engaged with two or more practices at once. So writing fan fiction (Jenkins, 2006) might be part of a wider range of activities that also include contributing to forums (Bourdaa, 2013) and remixing soap operas (Dhaenens, 2012). Like in the category play, this means that only a limited number of audiences are involved in this type of participation.

Participation Through Pick, Play and/or Produce

If audiences engage with two or more activities within the categories pick, play and produce, they can also engage with activities across categories. When we combine practices through play and produce, we find that 44.6 percent of audiences never engage with either one. Consequently, almost half of all audiences in Flanders aged 16 to 18 never plays, nor produces. Furthermore, we find that one out of ten does not participate through either pick, play or produce. That means that the core demographic in the work of Jenkins (see the critique by Couldry, 2011) that adores film (British Film Institute, 2015) and easily adapts to using the latest technologies (Bennett and Robards, 2014), rarely consumes film beyond its traditional boundaries. Half of all audiences participate in film consumption through either play or produce. 34.8 percent only participates through play, at least once a year. Of the remaining 20.7 percent, 16.7 percent engages through both play and produce. Those that only produce make up the smallest category with only 4 percent. This means that almost a fifth of all audiences that participate through produce, do not participate through play. In conclusion, picking film is practiced most widely, followed by the extension of these story worlds through transmedia storylines. The practice of expanding these story worlds through the 'power of participation' (Jenkins, 2006: 268) in writing over, modding and amending media content is rare—at least in film consumption practices amongst youth in Flanders aged 16 to 18—.

CONCLUSION

This article set out to explore the concept of participation through audience practices. Building on a rich body of contemporary and historical case studies that highlight a wide variety of practices, we find three non-mutually exclusive types of participation: pick, play and produce. There is no hierarchy in commitment between these categories. We argue that audiences who compose their own media consumption through downloading and streaming can be as engaged as audiences that publish their fan fiction on online forums. We do however observe a hierarchy in agency between different audience practices. This hierarchy holds profound implications for how we understand contemporary media audiences.

Participation as described by Jenkins (2006), can only be found in the smallest category of audience practices: produce. That means that part of today's audiences indeed alter commercial culture—a characteristic Jenkins (2006) firmly attributes to a participatory culture in which audiences hold increasing agency—. Yet, the vast majority of audience practices concern participation through pick

and play; means of participation that are carefully designed, guarded and steered by media producers (Bourdaa, 2013; Bird, 2011; Murray, 2004). This means that the dynamics of media consumption have not changed as profoundly as one might assume at first sight. In other words, audiences may have broadened their practices surrounding film. But the argument that participatory practices allow for increased agency in film consumption amongst a wide range of audiences does not hold.

This study contributes to the understanding of how audiences do consume media. In doing so, we surpassed the specificities of the case studies that explore specific participatory practices. Yet, there are limitations to our approach. For example, we operationalized pick, play and produce through a limited number of practices. Further inclusion of other practices will narrow down the proposed categories. An inclusion of other media use, for example the television practices that lead many of the case studies touched upon in this article, will broaden our understanding of participation. And lastly, a more qualitative audience approach may contribute to a further understanding of *why* audiences participate in the ways they do. Like this article, each of these approaches takes audiences as a starting point, rather than the (online) traces of their practices. In doing so, we can further disentangle participation in contemporary audience practices and understand the limitations they encounter.

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Notes

1 For a critique on the simplified mentions of Hall's encoding-decoding model, see Gray (1999).

2 This concern is voiced more often, see for example by Van Dijck (2009).

3 See Nelson (2014) on how windowing remains relevant in contemporary media supply, and how it has changed with the introduction of digital distribution.

4 The film has recently been released on DVD, in which audiences can make their choices using the buttons on their remote control.

5 It should be noted that having audiences vote, also is a means of engaging them with a television show at the moment of first broadcast and measuring television watching practices (Lee and Andrejevic, 2014). In other words, producers ignite the relevance of 'momentary fandom' (Hills, 2010) by engaging audiences. Furthermore, audiences also share

opinions on television content as it progresses via other channels, such as Twitter (D'heer, Paulussen and Courtois, 2013).

6 Participation through production comes precariously close to what Carpentier (2011b) dubs 'participation through media'. In this type of participation, audiences participate as (aspiring) professionals. This type of participation is also explored in the context of convergence culture. Le Masurier (2012) for example argues that the online endeavors in (print) media can be partly instrumental; seen as a gateway to mainstream publishing or to incite a profitable independent enterprise.

7 For a critique, see Murray (2004).

8 In accordance to earlier research on film consumption of Flemish youth, we decided not to include dBSO (part-time applied education) and to combine the rather small group of KSO with ASO (see Meers, 2003).

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