The case for media engagings: Minutia Reception Studies and a reconceptualization of studying media use, reception, and effects

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Abstract:
This essay argues that the term 'media engagings' allows for more broadly conceptualizing and operationalizing the processes of reading, writing, playing, listening, watching, clicking, and so forth as a complicated network of interpretive and physical interactivities that occur within specific media reception situations. A broader conceptualization like 'engaging' over 'engagement' allows for mapping media reception situations to understand the multiple ways in which engagings with media product may converge and diverge between people, across time, and across space. Additionally, focusing on the situational nature of media engagings can increase understanding of the complicated network of factors that constitute that media reception situation (e.g., historical, material, social, cultural, environmental, psychological, etc), thereby furthering knowledge about the complex nature of how people use and/or are affected by media products. To demonstrate the applicability of this term, the essay contains a case study measuring people's media engagings with superhero films. Think-aloud protocols and Sense-Making Methodology provided the methodological framework for measuring people's media engagings during and after the media reception situations. The results of the case study are presented along with a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of this empirical approach.

Keywords: media engagings, media reception situation, Sense-Making Methodology, minutia reception study, film

Reading. Watching. Listening. Playing. All these verbs are also nouns we use to explain our experience with different forms of media. We read books, comic books, newspapers, magazines, as well as photographs, charts, and other still visuals. We watch television, movies, videos, and other moving images. We listen to music, speeches, podcasts, and other

audio-only texts. We play video games, MMORPGs, virtual reality, and other types of games. As verbs, these terms help explain what is being done to engage with the specific features of the objective texts to access the content transmitted through and held within that specific media product, with all its affordances and constraints that shape how the content appears and can be received and interpreted. We then take these verbs that describe the process of engaging and treat them like nouns or entities that we can measure: reading skills, watching habits, listening abilities, playing styles, and so forth. Across all these different terms and their uses exists the commonality of engaging; regardless of the type of media product and its impact on the content or our reception of that content, we must engage in some way with the text to do anything with it.

With digitization, the types of media products people may experience have grown exponentially. This observation is rather old news at this point. Yet we still struggle with how to respond to it. We still have separate disciplines to focus on specific types of media products, with discipline-specific terms, theories, and methods to study how people engage with those media products. Susanne Eichner and Elizabeth Prommer (2017) offer a potential solution with their 'doing media' approach that considers the moments of media reception within the larger sociocultural contexts of the person's life. 'Doing media' refocuses the understanding of 'media usage' from the medium or text and onto the processes or activity flow that is involved in such usage. By focusing on the individual's agency in being a media user, this approach seeks to retain the complexity of contextualized media usage, which would include the possibility 'to analyze media understanding at the perception level and thus the micro-level' (p. 586) in reception studies, audience studies, user studies, and fan studies.

In this essay I align with Eichner and Prommer's call and propose a method for measuring such 'doing media' by studying an individual's moment-by-moment media engagings. Minutia reception studies involves narrowing reception analysis to specific moments of media engaging through think-aloud[1] (Ericsson & Simon, 1993) and Sense-Making Methodology (Dervin, 2008) protocols that allow for contextualization of specific interpretations as well as comparison across individuals to uncover divergences and convergences of interpretation. Content analysis can be applied to map the patterns of both interpretive baggage (i.e., interaction of objective text with subjective experience) and individual-in-situ comparisons. Doing so could better illuminate the tripartite relationship of context, text, and outcome. Rather than seek to understand this relationship through aggregate or recalled measures, minutia reception studies would both focus reception to moments as well as expand those moments to situational and subjective contexts to complicate these interconnections more fully. Media engagings is then used as a term to reflect the minutia nature of the analysis, the procedural nature of reception, the cumulative nature of that process, and the potential for such processes to result in both active and passive impacts, uses, effects, outcomes.

What I present in this article is a minutia reception case study wherein I utilize the following measurements of people's experience with a superhero film: moment-by-moment

during the experience; immediate questionnaire items after the experience; and, an interview after more time has passed to recall the experience. The analysis then presents comparisons between individuals' overall experiences as well as to specific moments from the situation; additionally, the complex media reception situation is measured from the individual's perspective, allowing the examination of connections from their past experiences, their expectations, their engagings with the film, and their overall impression of and impact from the film. The article seeks to present the minutia reception study and media engagings approach to possibly answer this question: how can we analyze the complex network of factors involved in a media reception situation?

Media Reception Situation

Any encounter with a media product is a series of actions that include internal and external behaviors (including thinking, feeling, and acting) and occur within certain time- and space-based situations that provide context to the encounter. In one of my collaborations with Brenda Dervin (2013a), we presented our perspective of what defines the media reception situation. Aligning with and influenced by other scholars,[2] we presented a media reception situation as involving some combination of the media product, the person, and the context – all of which contain features that present points of comparison to locate convergences and divergences in the experience of the media reception situation. Media products are combinations of technology and content, whereby the affordances and constraints of the technology impact the nature of the content: for example, some technologies allow for more multimodal forms of communication than others, thereby changing the presentation of the content and, in acting as an interface, impact how the individual engages that content. The person embodies sociodemographic and psychographic characteristics that coalesce into a sense of self or identity – but one that can be primed due to the nature of the context. The context is comprised of the situation (or, the specific series of time-space moments the individual experiences), which are impacted by various material, ideological, and historical factors. The person's recognition – consciously or unconsciously – of these factors can activate a specific schema or identity, and thus the associated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which becomes interpretive baggage that influences their actions and reactions within the situation while engaging the media product.

This model presents the importance of measuring both the objective and subjective factors involved in any experience with any media product. Any media product is a combination of some technologies (e.g., interface, container, platform, etc.) and contents (e.g., modalities, messages, signs, etc.), they thus contain objective features that will impact how people engage with them (e.g., watching a movie in a theater versus smartphone) and thus impact the experience with and through the media product. However, those features are not the only – or even most important – factor influencing the experience of engaging with the media product. The objective nature of any media product extends beyond the material object with which we physically and interpretively interact; embedded into this

object are the power dynamics, symbolic meanings, and other immaterial structures that utilize the media product to propagate, challenge, critique, construct, etc., the system. That system, as a social construct, exists as both objective and subjective, and can further be found in and through any user and any situation. Thus, by extension, because of the media product's relationship to the system, it is simultaneously an objective and subjective entity as well as a process that operates to maintain, examine, critique, etc., that system. Given this complex nature of media reception situations, a transdisciplinary, multi-methodological approach could help illuminate the complex and detailed interactions (Reinhard & Dervin, 2013b).

In the media reception situation model, we identified reception as the 'processes of engaging with media products' (Reinhard & Dervin, 2013a, p. 83). We called for attention to the timeline of the situation as experienced by the person. Of course, this model's call for emphasizing agency was nothing new. Similar arguments stem from German literary scholars in the 1960s and 1970s as to the role of the reader and the need to understand how they engage with a text's points of indeterminacy or gaps (Allen, 1992; Holub, 1984; Iser, 1978). While these theories were developed specifically for literary texts (which were oddly resistant to doing such empirical research), film studies and reception studies scholars have adopted the idea of 'gap-filling' to explain the role of the spectator in constructing the film's meaning (Allen, 1992), as seen in David Bordwell's (1989) ideas concerning a cognitive turn in understanding film spectatorship. Additionally, Martin Barker (2008) has argued the need to measure the strategies of response that connect a person's 'prior knowledge and expectations' of a media product with the conditions of the engaging as well as 'the processes of meaning-making during the immediate encounter with the film; and the unfolding processes, after viewing' that lead to an judgment of the experience (pp. 4-5). From different approaches to media studies comes agreement on the need to understand the media reception situation from the perspective of the person processing it to understand the conditions leading the person to that situation, the moment-by-moment activities of moving through that situation, and the effects and takeaways after the situation concludes.

Media Engagings

My own work on understanding what happens during a media reception situation builds on Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology (SMM) work as it develops Richard Carter's ideas to understand how a person experiences a situation. While most applications of SMM to audience and reception studies happen after an experience, measuring an individual's recollection of a specific situation, the method can provide insights into how to measure the before and during of a situation. This article focuses on measuring the during and comparing it to what was measured after the media reception situation.

I have previously presented terminology to help understand a person's activities in those moments of engaging with a media product. In those moments, individuals engage in a combination of interpretive and physical interactivities (Reinhard, 2011). Interpretive

interactivities constitute the cognitive and affective actions and reactions while physical interactivities involve the voluntary and involuntary embodied actions; the former is typically most involved with making sense of content (e.g., decoding signs for meaning),[3] while the latter is concerned with manipulating the technology or interface to engage the content and fulfill the purpose of the media product in that situation. I use the term 'media engaging' to account for both types of interactivities and all the actions involved in those interactivities. Any specific moment of a media reception situation involves a media engaging, and that engaging could involve a variety of proactive and reactive behaviors as the individual interacts interpretively and physically with the media product.

I use the term 'media engaging' with the assumption that at any moment in the media reception situation the individual is actively doing something with the media product. Barker (2006) reiterates the need to understand the complexity of 'active' and 'passive.' Seeing each moment of media engaging as interwoven interactivities presents a view of every moment being more or less active, with the judgement of passive being more observation than experience. Assuming someone is always active by being interactive aligns this approach with uses-and-gratifications theory (Reinhard & Dervin, 2009). Such theorization suggests that the end goal of using a media product explains why an individual experiences any media situation; however, this link of goal-sought and goal-obtained obscures the additional steps or moments existing between those goal posts. Given the complicated nature of a media reception situation, that chain of interactivities that occurs during the experience with the media product could make or break that cause-and-effect relationship. Specific moments of engaging comprised of some combination of interpretive and physical interactivities could dictate a cascade after which the individual is both impacted by and using the media product in their lives. If one moment is 'off' or 'weak' in that chain of media engagings, it can dramatically alter the entire situation's outcome, suggesting the need for studying these media engagings on that micro-level (Eichner & Prommer, 2017) of the media reception situation.

I use the term 'media engagings' to discuss the processes that constitute the moments of interpretively and physically interacting with the specific features of the media product. Media engagings requires an attendance to the during as much as the before or after, and to understand the circular, layered, and transactional relationships between various 'befores' and 'afters.' In essence, if the 'before' focuses on the factors leading to the situation or 'media use' (which can range situational, psychological, cultural, communal, and more) and the 'after' focuses on what resulted from the situation or the 'media effect' (which could include anything from cultivation of beliefs to appropriation for personal everyday use), then the 'during' comprises the moment-by-moment experience (which includes physical and observable actions as well as decoding, interpreting, making sense, and other internal actions). The call to measure 'media engagings' involves magnifying the during of a media reception situation to understand the individual's experience with a media product.

Presenting this concept of media encounters as a verb rather than the noun 'engagement' better encapsulates the processes the individual experiences before, during, and after they encounter the media product (Dervin, 2003). The goal of this work is to understand the processes or verbs of the media reception situation, not just the entities or nouns that structure and influence the situation (Dervin, 1993). From an observational perspective, a media reception situation can be conceptualized as an entity, whole onto itself, with defined boundaries that can be measured and used for categorization purposes. That conceptualization, however, does not hold when appreciated from the individual's perspective within the situation. From such a perspective, the situation is a series of actions undertaken in relation to the entities (e.g., media product, environment, society, culture, etc) encountered. Thus, any 'engagement' of a media product is the result of a series of media engagings. The engagement can be studied in recollection as a holistic entity, but to fully understand the complex network of actions and entities in the media reception situation requires a measurement of the moment-by-moment media engagings.

Additionally, I prefer 'media engagings' given the connotations layered onto the term 'media engagement.' As discussed above, a media engagement is commonly measured as an aggregate of moments after the media reception situation to understand who did what, how and why. This framing is seen when measuring relationships between producers and consumers or industries and audiences to understand the audience's engagement with some text or technology. Terms like 'audience engagement,' 'social media engagement' and similar uses of engagement largely focus on brands using media products for relationship-building to create and maintain loyal consumers.[4] Corporations seek to know who engaged with their social media post, how they engaged, and why; they are less concerned with the experience of engaging. When used in media industry analyses, the term 'engagement' appears more focused on top-down corporate power to engage audiences for profit-driven purposes, at least in capitalist-driven media ecologies. From this perspective, 'engagement' becomes a corporate buzzword to discuss how an organization engages the 'media' to reach and influence a particular audience. In other words, engagement becomes 'a commodity good; it is a consumer/user action (or reaction) which is necessary for a media product to succeed at a minimal level' (Corner, 2017, p. 3). Whereas in the past, audience studies may have theorized the 'audience-as-commodity' per the work of Dallas Smythe (1977), it appears the new focus is 'engagement-as-commodity.'

This shift suggests media producers are savvier about the notion of an 'active audience,' likely due to their education in media studies and communication studies. Rather than define a consumer-base as a homogenous yet nebulous 'audience' that is hard to quantify, they instead analyze specific actions taken by members of that audience since those objective, observable actions can be tracked, monitored, and, ultimately, manipulated. On the one hand, this rebranding is welcome as it suggests no longer 'selling' to people based on *who they are* but instead on *what they do*. This shift in metrics contains the recognition that the audience does more than just accept what is presented to them without question, thought, or feeling. However, this shift also reflects concerns regarding corporate co-

optation and exploitation, whereby the audience's activities serve the profit-driven aims of the media industry. While the corporate use of 'engagement' is a specific application of the term, its increasing presence suggests a potential for semantic confusion.

Rather than label the moments in a media reception situation as 'engagements' and thereby potentially align understandings with corporate language, I use the term 'media engaging' to recognize a variety of interactivities in a transactional and situated relationship between the individual and the media product. Because of this, I employ the term 'media engagings' when conducting audience, reception, user, and fan studies. To me, this term emphasizes how any encounter with a media product is a series of actions that include internal and external behaviors and occur within certain time- and space-based situations that provide context to the encounter. Researching media engagings requires understanding different factors that are holistically tallied to determine the nature of the media reception situation. These factors include the features of the media product, the individual's personal preferences and interpretive stances (i.e., their pre-existing interpretive baggage), the sociocultural environment, and the situation of the encounter. Any of these factors may cue or constrain the media engagings. A media product may trigger a specific and consistent engaging, or the engaging may result from the individual's contextualized needs. Regardless of how the process starts, progresses, or concludes, it exists at the intersection of these various factors. Additionally, the relationship between these three components (media, user, context) may change over time, and may change from person to person or from situation to situation, requiring a measurement of such situated experiences that allows for comparison across people, time, and space. To understand media engagings and thus better comprehend the complex network of factors involved in a media reception situation, I utilize a minutia reception approach.

Measuring Media Engagings with the Minutia Reception Approach

I seek to employ a minutia reception approach to understand those moments, and how those moments relate to larger contextual factors. To do so, I draw on Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology that mandates a focus on the phenomenological experiences of the media audiences/users (Dervin & Foreman, 2003). Thus, methodologically speaking, Sense-Making mandates that the study of a human being's engagings with a phenomenon be considered from the individual's perspective on a situation. By looking at a particular time-space intersect, the human being can discuss the processes or hows of sense-making that s/he was engaging in for the purposes of determining how to act/react/counteract in that situation. I seek to study situations from the agent's perspective of themselves and the contextual structures to understand patterns in internal and external behaviors within the affordances and constraints of those contexts as agents both co-constructing their subjective realities and as subjects being co-constructed by objective physicalities that can be embodiments of convergent or divergent subject realities (e.g., sociocultural, political economic structures). This approach further allows for the identification and utilization of various units of analysis for descriptive, predictive, and comparative purposes (Dervin,

2008): specific sense-making moments, individuals within situations, entire situations, individuals holistically, and entire communities.

This axiological need to focus on situated moment-by-moment reception led me to embrace Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology due to how it structures interviews. For example, with SMM Q/ing Interviews (Dervin, 2008), interviewees experience an SMM questioning protocol while engaging with the media text or technology to record their reactions toward the material object as it happens.[5] The interviewee controls when to pause the engaging to discuss it and the type of sense-making reaction to discuss. In the version I used, participants paused the film to record their reactions on a worksheet that I later code according to the SMM Triangle Metaphor. Presented in the next section is a case study that combines quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to understand the moment-by-moment and recalled experiences with a novel media product (in this case, a movie the individual had never watched before). The analysis considers how two individuals watching the same material object can have completely different experiences due to the specific factors of their lifeworlds (both objective situational factors and subjective interpretive baggage).

Focusing on the situational nature of media engagings can improve our understanding of the complicated network of factors that constitute that engaging (e.g., historical, material, social, cultural, environmental, psychological, etc.), thereby furthering understanding about the complex nature of how people use and are affected by media products. A broader conceptualization like 'engaging' allows for mapping media reception situations to understand the multiple ways in which experiences with different media product may converge and diverge. The verbing of this concept can then also be pluralized, 'engagings,' to allow for the understanding that an engaging occurs in specific situations and can occur in different and/or similar ways across time and space, which can be useful for fan studies, user studies, audience studies, and so forth. For example, this conceptualization calls attention to how the fan experiences their object of affection when repeatedly returning to it, as each engaging becomes a unique unit of analysis for comparison purposes (Reinhard, 2020; Reinhard & Dervin, 2012). Thus, media engagings research can consider the multiplicity of media engagings, recognizing how they impact each other, and comparing how different subjectivities interact with same material object. A focus on media engagings means measuring the moments of a person's subjective experience with the objective features of the text. This comparison would promote a consideration of internal and external structures, without reducing to a technological or sociocultural determinist perspective, from the individual's and/or collective's perspective, centering research on the processes of interacting with all these structures within specific contexts (Reinhard, 2012).

Minutia Reception Case Study

This analysis comes from my post-doctoral research project on sense-making in virtual worlds with the Virtual Worlds Research Project at Roskilde University. The original study

involved 14 people living in Denmark who experienced four novel media products (e.g., film, video game, and two virtual worlds) in a qualitative experiment framework (Reinhard, 2010; 2012). The analysis presented here focuses on the film experience to understand interplay of physical and interpretive interactivities. Being the least physically interactive of the four conditions, the film experience allowed for more examination of interpretive interactivity from moment-by-moment and recalled perspectives.

The analysis consists of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis: qualitative and quantitative minutia reception to understand the moment-by-moment re/actions to the film (Reinhard, 2016), as informed by Dervin's (2008) SMM Q/ing Interview; qualitative and quantitative questionnaires, to measure the immediate considerations of the film; and qualitative Sense-Making Methodology Micro-Element interviews (Dervin, 2015), to measure how the participant made sense of the specific situation in relation to the other conditions as well as their lives at that time (Reinhard & Dervin, 2012; 2013). Additionally, the analysis focuses on comparing these measurements for the same media product as experienced by different people: two individuals watched *Spider-Man* (Sam Raimi, 2002), two watched *Elektra* (Rob Bowman, 2005), and two watched *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008).

Textual Analysis: All three movies happened before the rise of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which officially launched after the success of *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008), and thus before the heightened focus on superhero films. Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* was one of the first highest grossing and critically acclaimed superhero films, and Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* had similar popular and critical success. *Elektra*, on the other hand, was a considerable box office failure, among the audience and critics. Both *Spider-Man* and *Elektra* present origin stories for their titular characters that involve the hero battling one enemy, while *The Dark Knight* presents a more complex narrative involving two villains and messaging about post-9/11 surveillance and terrorism culture in the United States.

As the participants watched their self-selected movie, they were instructed to pause the playback any time they experienced a cognitive or affective reaction to it (Reinhard, 2016). They utilized a provided worksheet to record the timecode of that moment in the film as well as the nature and strength of their reaction. In their own words, participants indicated what in the film spurred their reaction and what that subsequent reaction was. At a basic level, these worksheets contain information about the movie's characteristics that generated a reaction. One analytical issue arose due to a desire to empower the participants: due to the onerous nature of the minutia reception method, they were allowed to stop recording their reactions after a watching the film for half an hour. While four participants did watch the entire film, two only watched the first half hour, although they did record numerous reactions during that time span. This lack of consistency indicates the method should undergo further refinement by testing it in shorter media reception situations.

All participants reported at least 20 interpretive interactivities in relation to different aspects of their films. For *The Dark Knight*, Torben recorded 47 moments and Mette

recorded 51 in the first 25 minutes of the film. For *Spider-Man*, Astrid reported 35 moments and Grette had 25 in the film's first 28 minutes. Finally, for *Elektra*, Flemming and Sofie watched the entire film and recorded 37 and 22 moments respectively. Across the three films, four main types of cues appeared to trigger these reactions: visual cues (e.g., the shot composition, mise-en-scène, special effect, etc.), sound cues (e.g., sound effect, music, etc.), action cues (e.g., specific sequences, choreography, martial arts, etc.), and dialogue cues (e.g., specific quotes, lines, conversation, etc.). These cues do not always tally to equal the number of recorded moments, as some recorded moments contained more than one type of cue. As seen in **Table 1**, the participants reacted more to visual and action cues than sound or dialogue cues, perhaps reflecting the 'motion picture' nature of the media products' technology.

	The Dark Knight		*Spider-Man*		*Elektra*	
	Torben	Mette	Astrid	Grette	Flemming	Sofie
Visual	11	12	12	11	7	9
Sound	2	1	1	3	2	0
Action	28	22	22	13	26	11
Dialogue	6	1	1	2	2	2

Table 1: Interacted with Film Cues Frequencies

Timeline Analysis: Utilizing the three data collection methods, it becomes possible to map out each participant's experience with their selected film to gain insight into what happened (interpretively and physically) before, during, immediately after, and removed after the media reception situation. I have reported on the reactions the participants recorded while they watched the movie in a previous publication (Reinhard, 2016). During their media reception situations, the participants expressed ten types of interpretive interactivities leading to being entangled or detached from the text. Entanglement appeared to occur when the person felt present, transported, or highly involved in the movie, as seen by their interactivities including questions, guesses, conclusions, surprises, and positive and negative emotions (p. 222). On the other hand, specific moments could have them not directing full attention and feeling involved in the text; such detachments included confusions, disbeliefs, annoyances, and judgments (p. 223). Overall, Mette reported more entanglement with *The Dark Knight* than Torben while only watching the first 25 minutes. Flemming did not report any detachment while watching *Elektra* while Sofie did. Finally, Grette and Astrid indicate similar levels of entanglement to detachment with *Spider-Man*, although Grette only watched the first half hour. However, those findings were based only on what they recorded on their worksheets, and thus only provide some of the story.

For this essay, I analyzed these during reactions in relation to the before and after experiences of their movie-watching experience. In previous publications from this study (Reinhard & Dervin, 2012; 2013b), we developed a mapping tool to understand the various aspects of the situation as experienced by the participant; however, we did such analysis

specifically regarding the virtual world conditions. This mapping helped demonstrate what the participants went into those situations with, how their situations unfolded during the engaging, and how they reflected on it afterwards. Specifically, we identified five sense-making dimensions as potential sites for overlaps during comparisons (Reinhard & Dervin, 2012): past experiences, expectations, questions, helps, and hindrances. To this mapping I add bridgings and outcomes, as they relate to the SMM Triangle Metaphor (Dervin & Foreman-Wernet, 2003): bridgings are the ideas, emotions, and sources of information involved in trying to make sense of the movie; outcomes are the evaluations of the experience. Questions emerge as the individual attempts to traverse the situation, going from what they know and expect to what they hope to accomplish. Questions can slow progress towards the outcome and bridgings are meant to facilitate the handling of those questions and thus aid progression through the situation. During such movement, the individual will find themselves helped and/or hindered while negotiating the questions. After the situation ends, the individual reaches some outcome, which could be exactly what they sought to anything that they needed just to reach a conclusion. From this mapping emerged timelines for the six movie-watching experiences using what was said on the worksheet, the questionnaire and the SMM interview.

Utilizing this mapping procedure resulted in a variety of each type of sense-making. Observations about past experiences and expectations and helps and hindrances came out more in the SMM interviews at the end of the experiment, as the interview was designed to elicit such reflection; however, this reflection occurred even before those questions were asked. Questions and bridgings arose more while watching the film and were recorded via the worksheets; when the participants mentioned these moments during the SMM interviews, they usually just reiterated what had been recorded on the worksheet – and oftentimes they did not recall the recorded specific moments. Outcomes emerged in the post-viewing questionnaire that would then be reaffirmed or contradicted by the SMM interview.

For sake of analysis, **Table 2** portrays the frequency of these seven sense-makings to reflect the timeline in which the participants experienced them.[6] Past experiences happened before the media engagings and helped generate expectations. The interaction with the media product then led to questions and bridgings that helped and/or hindered the person's experience with the film, thereby impacting the final outcome of the media engagings. Of course, this is only a quantitative assessment, but it is interesting that Flemming and Sofie both reported the most questions in watching the least successful film; indeed, Flemming had the most questions of all, and the smallest ratio between questions and bridgings: for every question he had, he only had one bridging, suggesting a more difficult time traversing this situation as he experienced more questions than the others. Now, the questions were more focused on understanding the film than judging it, suggesting he was entangled – but given his overall reception of the film, the entanglement did not determine his enjoyment of the situation. The qualitative nature of these sense-making reactions is addressed in the final two analytical sections.

	The Dark Knight		Spider-Man		Elektra	
	Torben	Mette	Astrid	Grette	Flemming	Sofie
Past Experiences	9	8	10	13	9	16
Expectations	1	3	5	5	8	6
Questions	7	6	7	7	24	12
Bridgings	48	57	39	48	37	39
Helps	3	4	3	7	1	1
Hindrances	0	2	1	1	2	2
Outcomes	6	6	4	8	11	12
Ratio of Q:B	1:6.9	1:9.5	1:5.6	1:6.9	1:1.5	1:3.3

Table 2: Frequency of Seven Sense-Making Reactions

Relational Analysis: Utilizing the different data collection methods at different points in time relative to the media engagings allows for an examination of different relationships: between past experiences and expectations; between expectations and sense-making; between expectations and outcome; between sense-making and outcome. I find a narrative approach is most effective in presenting and understanding such relationships. Thus, this section presents these stories, with the goal of then comparing participants who watched the same film in the final analytical section.

As an academic, Torben went into the media engagings interested in the minutia reception studies method being used: 'since I am also interested in how people experience media… It was interesting to monitor my own experience of that particular movie.' Along with this mindset, Torben went into the situation being familiar with Batman, having watched 'one of the TV serials with my sons' but not as familiar with the superhero genre as 'it's not one of my preferred movie genres.' His lack of preference for the genre, with all its fantastical features, could explain why his expectation revolved around the improbability of what it portrayed. While he did have questions related to being entangled, such as wondering what was going to happen after Batman crashes his motorcycle chasing The Joker, he also discussed having problems following the plot and 'keeping some of the characters apart.' His bridgings, however, contained emotions and thoughts that belied his overall perception of the 'ingenious plot' that 'leaves you cold.' While watching the film, he mentioned more feeling that the film was funny, expressing feelings of disgust and relief over what was unfolding – until the action ratchets up with the car chase, and he started describing his annoyance, boredom, and how unbelievable events were. At the point when The Joker threatens hospitals, leading to their evacuation, he detached from the film to exclaim 'Plot goes overboard!' So, while he thought it was interesting how the film handled the moral battle of good and evil, which helped him to finish the film, he found the film entertaining but not one he would ever seek out again for his own amusement.

Mette was seemingly a fan of superhero films and Batman. At the very least, she was familiar with the Nolan Batman series, as she had seen *Batman Begins* and remembered it well enough to recognize actors in *The Dark Knight* as connected to it. On the one hand, this intertextual reference seemed positive, as recognizing an officer from the first movie gave her 'a sense of familiarity' to connect to. In a larger way, however, seeing a different actor assume a role from the first film produced a negative reaction: 'And I was very, very, very annoyed that it was a new actress playing the main female lead. […] That's an annoying thing when you especially have that continuity and then you shift some of the actors.' Having this film connect to the previous one and related genres helped her make sense of the film: 'So that's just a mental thing, you just categorize it in a way.' And it also helped establish her expectations going into and through the film. She said her expectations were 'pretty high' because 'I heard it was very good' and having those expectations 'rewarded' helped her appreciate the movie. Indeed, although she only recorded her reactions for the first 25 minutes, she recorded 51 of them – the most of these participants – and many bridgings here involved positive emotions and wonderings about what would happen next. For example, when a robber shoots another robber who had just opened a bank safe, she noted the dialogue and said 'Lol, got it about the same time as the now shot robber ☺.' Immediately after doing these 25 minutes, she responded with high marks on how entertaining and interesting she found the film, as well as how likely she would be to watch it again or watch something like it. She explained her numerical evaluations with 'Looking forward to finishing it!!' and 'So cool! ☺.' While she thought having to record her reactions was 'fun work, but it was still work,' she also recalled watching the full film within a week and planning 'at some point I'm gonna watch it again. It was a very good movie.' She recalled past experiences where movies would bore her and send her looking to see how much time is left, whereas 'I didn't do that in that movie' because 'It's very entertaining and there's a lot of stuff happening so you don't get bored.'

Grette likes romantic stories: 'I am very romantic, I love love stories…' This preference helped her appreciate the subplot of *Spider-Man* depicting the love story between Peter Parker and M.J. She felt that it was rather formulaic, but it had enough for her to 'sort of let myself into that romance' because 'I never get tired of that.' On the other hand, her familiarity with the Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde story hindered her experience of the film's villain. When Osborne talks to himself, the film shows a doppelganger, and Grette was confused because 'I was under the impression that he was one guy.' Here, the director's decision to represent Osborne's split psyche visually annoyed her – as did a connection she made to *Star Wars*, thinking that the Green Goblin looked too robotic. She also related the film to *Superman*, which helped her feel calm whenever Spider-Man was in trouble: 'I all along kind of felt very calm…no matter how bad a situation he got into, he would get out of it. […] Well, that's because I know from prior films that concept, that the hero usually survives everything.' Her past experiences appear to have helped her understand and become more comfortable with the film. While she felt that 'there were some pretty tacky places,' she was 'quite surprised, actually, that I wouldn't think that the whole thing was totally tacky…it did

sort of convince me, took me to its universe and I went along with it.' Having elements she recognized and liked – especially the love story – helped her get into, and stay into, the film. Indeed, she recalled being so into the film that she thought about it 'for several days,' which is unusual for her.

An academic like Torben, Astrid's past experiences with film led her to see watching *Spider-Man* as a 'conventional' and 'sort of sit back' experience. This 'conventional' framework repeatedly came back in her recollection as it impacted her expectations for the film: 'I had imagined something more far off in relation to conventional movies.' However, she saw the heroism and romance as reflecting conventional films, allowing her to feel this movie was more familiar than she had anticipated. This sense of familiarity helped her feel that the experience 'wasn't alienating' and that she could 'deal with that.' However, just because she could deal with it did not ensure she liked the film. She reflected on how rare it is for her to 'get totally absorbed by a movie' since they sometimes 'feel like an intrusion, you know, into my life.' She felt the same here, that the film did not 'see the difference it makes for me.' Additionally, while she saw the storylines as familiar, she continually criticized them while watching. Astrid found moments to be 'too sentimental,' 'too much, semiotics gone crazy,' 'formulaic,' and 'becoming repetitive,' leading her at times to feel annoyed and bored. Indeed, when Peter and M.J. talk in the denouement about ending any possible relationship, Astrid wrote 'Embarrassed with girl's stupid feeling for Spider-Man.' She was only ever really confused about the villain and had a hard time accepting the unrealistic science in the film ('it was something that I couldn't let the academic go'). Otherwise, she found it amusing and felt that she 'got some cheap points' with her son and his friends for watching it.

Flemming had read the comics and knew about the characters portrayed in *Elektra* before watching it; however, while his knowledge helped him understand the film, it also made him highly critical of the story and how it was told. Flemming knew what to expect from Elektra and the Hand, but he felt that the story did not explain these characters to match his knowledge, leading him to say 'it was also quite annoying that it was never explained.' Having 'seen a lot of superhero movies,' he felt that *Elektra* was too cliché and 'just a mess of storytelling.' He went into this media engagings with 'very low expectations' which usually 'works when I watch a movie,' such as *Fantastic Four*. In this instance, however, his low expectations made the situation worse because the film, for the first half, 'actually raised those expectations and then it just shattered them in the end. And that annoys the hell out of me.' Indeed, looking over his minutia reception, he indicates learnings, questions, and emotions that demonstrate entanglement. He liked a moment where a villain throws a club through a tree, noting it during the situation and recalling long afterward. Interesting, his sense-making moments suggest he was entangled throughout the film, but upon recalling the situation, he indicated that the method made him more critical of the film than he otherwise would have been:

… stopping the movie for every five minutes to write down some notions […] gave
me some thoughts about it also, made me think about the movie a lot more than
I would have. […] it was a matter of over rationalizing. […] I still think that the
questions would be in the back of my mind but they would have been more like,
well, okay, I hope this will be answered in some way.

While this critical gaze was not apparent in the worksheet, Flemming recalled this
experience as disappointing because the story went 'from having something to say' to not
communicating information about what was happening and ending with 'some action that
didn't have anything to do with the story.' He had such a negative experience that he
declared he would not watch it again unless forced to by someone else, and 'Even then I
think I would, I don't know, fake a heart attack or something to avoid it.'

Sofie watched *Elektra* while traveling by train. Doing so perhaps helped her like the film,
as 'it was the useful use of time, you know, where I didn't have anything else to do.' She also
was a media student, learning how to make films and television, and watching something
was 'a situation that I know very much […] I really like watching something on a screen.'
However, having so much experience and interest in films also led to problems. She recalled
being able to predict everything that would happen and criticized the film for not being
more surprising: 'Couldn't they do it more out of the box?' She particularly did not like the
romance in the film, feeling that such forced romance is done too much. Sofie also did not
like lead actor Jennifer Garner and criticized her performance. These thoughts and feelings
came out during the reflections afterward, but they also emerged while watching the movie.
About a half hour in, she recorded 'I was right! – this movie is easy to predict.' She did
appreciate some of the visual effects, especially regarding a person's superpowers related
to tattoos, and did have questions about what was going to happen, all indicating
entanglement. Sofie particularly liked the special effects concerning birds, because she does
not 'like anything with, what you call, a beak? […] So that's why I'd pay very much high
attention to that.' However, her annoyance with the predictability detached her from the
experience: 'it kinds of takes your attention away, because you're more hung up on your
irritations.' In the end, she felt the film had an 'interesting story' but was 'too cliché and
predictable' and would also watch it with 'somebody else – if there was nothing else to
watch.'

Comparison Analysis: Finally, the data collection allowed for a comparison between the
different interactivities of participants to the same material object. As discussed in the
previous publication (Reinhard, 2016), the same textual characteristic could lead to
convergent or divergent experiences. What the previous publication lacked was an analysis
of the multimodal aspect of the film that generated these convergent or divergent
experiences. This essay compares the participants on their specific media engagings (i.e.
their physical and interpretive interactivities to specific moments in the media reception
situation) as well as their overall experience of the media reception situation. Specific media

engagings were seen as overlapping if they happened within 10 seconds of each other to allow for differences in how quickly participants paused the film.

Table 3 contains that comparison for Sofie and Flemming in watching *Elektra*. Even when they were reacting to the same multimodal aspect of the film, they have divergent reactions, with Flemming's suggesting more detachment from the film than Sofie – a difference also seen in their overall impression of the film. Neither Flemming nor Sofie were particularly positive about *Elektra*; Flemming was more critical, but only in his reflection, whereas some of Sofie's criticism came out while watching the film. Flemming was a Marvel fan before seeing the film, and his knowledge of the comics hindered his ability to accept the vagueness of what the story portrayed. Sofie just found the story predictable. Her experience and interest in film-making perhaps led her to pay more attention to these details and to stop paying attention to deal with her irritation. She did feel that the situation of watching while traveling helped her keep paying attention, while Flemming felt having to record his reactions made him even more critical. They both liked certain action and visual elements, but overall, they both came away less than impressed with Elektra. Sofie did rate it slightly higher on the questionnaire in terms of how entertaining it was, but Flemming gave it a 2, calling the last half hour boring when all questions were answered and only action was left. In their final interview on the experience, Sofie indicated more willingness to rewatch the film with her boyfriend, and Flemming said he would 'fake a heart attack or something to avoid it.'

Sofie			Flemming		
Timecode	**Film Cue**	**Reaction**	**Timecode**	**Film Cue**	**Reaction**
00:42:11	Visual	Judgment	00:42:11	Visual	Question, Question
00:48:22	Action	Surprise	00:48:25	Visual	Conclusion, Guess
01:16:00	Action	Question, Guess, Conclusion	01:16:00	Action	Confusion

Table 3: Comparisons of Specific Media Engagings for *Elektra*

Table 4 presents this comparison of specific media engagings for Torben and Mette watching *The Dark Knight*. Unlike Sofie and Flemming, Torben and Mette had more overlap both in the multimodal feature they reacted to and the nature of that reaction. Thus, for at least the first half hour, their experiences with the film appear rather convergent. But one reaction could help explain their divergent overall experience with the film: to the same moment, Torben indicated skepticism. Having such a reaction so early in the experience suggests more detachment with the film, and their backgrounds and expectations could explain this divergence. While they both liked it, Mette's fandom for superheroes perhaps primed her to receive it more favorably. Torben liked the requirement to record his

reactions, while Mette found it to be a distraction, leading her to only do the first 25 minutes of the film this way. While Torben found the fantastical elements increasingly improbable, it is doubtful that Mette would have recorded the same, given her enthusiasm for the film. Indeed, she may have appreciated Rachel's death due to her annoyance over the recasting. They both found something to keep their attention with the film: for Torben, his experiences and desires tended more toward the academic; for Mette, hers came more from a fandom for such movies in general and this franchise specifically. They had different journeys into and through the film, but both saw value in it, even if their enthusiasm for it diverged in the end.

Torben			Mette		
Timecode	**Film Cue**	**Reaction**	**Timecode**	**Film Cue**	**Reaction**
00:02:46	Action	Surprise	00:02:45	Action	Surprise
00:04:19	Action	Skepticism	00:04:23	Action, Dialogue	Positive Emotion, Conclusion
00:04:51	Visual	Surprise, Judgment	00:04:52	Visual, Dialogue	Surprise, Judgment
00:05:06	Action	Positive Emotion, Guess	00:05:06	Action	Surprise, Positive Emotion, Judgment
00:06:11	Visual	Judgment	00:06:08	Visual	Judgment
00:06:45	Visual	Positive Emotion	00:06:45	Action	Positive Emotion
00:08:15	Action	Positive Emotion	00:08:03	Visual	Positive Emotion
00:21:08	Visual	Judgment	00:21:11	Visual	Conclusion, Conclusion, Positive Emotion

Table 4: Comparisons of Specific Media Engagings for *The Dark Knight*

Finally, **Table 5** presents the overlaps in media engagings between Grette and Astrid to *Spider-Man*. While their reactions indicated similarity regarding what they responded to in the film and how, Grette's reactions suggested less entanglement than Astrid's experience. Grette and Astrid both appreciated the storylines in *Spider-Man* that helped alleviate their concerns about the fantasy elements of the film. They also questioned aspects of the villain, from how he acted and looked to why he did what he did. Grette took more joy in the romance subplot, given her history loving such storylines, while Astrid appreciated it but

also found it uncomfortable at times. Both also felt that their past experiences with movies impacted how they experienced this one. For Grette, those past experiences both helped and hindered her enjoyment of *Spider-Man*, as it generated both confusion and enthusiasm. For Astrid, she saw this experience as just more of the same: just another movie she had to contend with and get through. Interestingly, they were very similar in how they evaluated the film in their questionnaire directly after watching the film. On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 not at all, 7 very much), when asked how entertaining they found it, Grette rated it as a 6 and Astrid as a 5, with both mentioning the romance as a part of their reason for doing so. In this comparison, different experiences with films led to similar expectations but then different reactions to this specific film, suggesting that experiences and expectations impact media engagings but cannot entirely account for the outcome of a media reception situation.

Astrid			Grette		
Timecode	**Film Cue**	**Reaction**	**Timecode**	**Film Cue**	**Reaction**
00:06:00	Visual	Conclusion, Question	00:05:58	Visual, Dialogue	Judgment
00:14:15	Visual	Judgment	00:14:09	Action	Judgment
00:18:01	Visual	Positive Emotion	00:17:53	Visual	Positive Emotion, Judgment
00:21:15	Action	Positive Emotion	00:21:22	Action	Positive Emotion, Conclusion
00:26:30	Action	Positive Emotion	00:26:20	Action	Guess

Table 5: Comparisons of Specific Media Engagings for *Spider-Man*

Discussion of Benefits and Drawbacks

Across all six media reception situations, each person had a completely different set of experiences and expectations going into the situation. Although the content of these past experiences and expectations did not overlap, overlaps did exist in the relationships between that pre-existing mental state, the sense-making reactions, and the evaluations of the media engagings. As an identity impacting their engagings, Torben and Astrid brought their academic gaze into their experiences, never able to completely feel transported into those fictive realities, but both could still find something to connect with in their respective films. For Torben, it was experiencing the study; for Astrid, it was realizing how conventional the fantasy really was. Both Flemming and Mette approached their situations basically as genre fans; Flemming a Marvel fan, and Mette a Batman fan. However, Mette's expectations were met and Flemming's were raised and then dashed. Grette and Sofie

brought their extensive histories with film into their experiences, but that knowledge helped Grette where it hindered Sofie.

People will never have the exact same experiences, expectations, and sense-makings in terms of their quantity or quality. However, when media engagings are measured, patterns in the convergences and divergences emerge to help explain how people's lives and their interpretive baggage interact with the objective features of the media product. While characteristics of the media product could prompt such entanglement and detachment, those characteristics do not consistently predict such experiences. The participants here indicated some overlap as to what aspect of the multimodal text they attended, perceived, interpreted and reacted to – but how they reacted and why differed. What the audience member brings into the situation will shape that unique media engagings. This claim is nothing new, of course, as it aligns with uses-and-gratifications, interpretive communities, and other theorizations, especially those concerned with the co-construction of a subjective reality. The media engagings concept and minutia reception study approach, however, provide a means by which to create and analyze audience and reception studies to illustrate, understand, and perhaps predict the nature and impact of such interpretive baggage. Interpretive interactivity, then, impacts a person's entanglement or detachment from the content (Reinhard, 2016), aligning with reception theories as proposed by Iser, Bordwell, Barker, and others.

Additionally, the analysis demonstrated the importance of expectations on media engagings, aligning with work done on interpretive communities and paratexts (Gray, 2010). Past experiences led to the individuals developing ideas of 'what they heard' about the movie, which impacted 'how important' they saw different aspects of the movie. These expectations, then, prepare or prime an individual for engaging with the media product. They drew upon activated schema, based on past experiences, that then cue and/or constrain their possible cognitive and/or affective reactions to the movie's structural characteristics (whether aesthetic, rhetorical, semiotic, ideological, or otherwise). However, the type of previous experience and expectation may matter less in predicting the media reception situation's outcome. Indeed, it may be how the individual utilizes these past experiences and expectations in the specific situation to produce high, low, or little expectation. Even then, it appears to be the extent to which their experience with the media product meets this level of expectation that impacts the outcome. This complex pattern seems to indicate that bias for or against a media product is not a guaranteed method of predicting evaluations of being entertained by it. Instead, it is only one factor that needs to be accounted for when the desire is mapping the complex sense-making processes involved in media engagings. Thus, their media reception situation was not predetermined by such expectations, as their media engagings depended on their interpretive interaction with the media product.

One expectation, however, did rather consistently impact the media engagings, which requires a shift to consider the drawbacks of this approach: all the participants had previous experience with film as a more passive experience – at least, passive in terms of their

physical interactivity. The participants commented on how the minutia reception method employed interrupted their experience with the movie. The artificiality of this situational factor was noted, suggesting that the internalized nature of movie-watching became such a consistent experience that their expectation of the same here was broken. On the one hand, this reflection just furthers the distinction between the two types of interactivity, as well as spotlighting the importance of past experiences and the expectations they foster. The study of remindings, or how past experiences impact the engagings with a media product, will also measure such in-situ interpretive interactivities (see Miles & Berntsen, 2015; Seilman & Larsen, 1989; Tullis et al, 2014), although perhaps in a less obtrusive way. Think-aloud methods are more commonly used to measure physical interactivity, where a stop-start experience is more expected. This suggests an issue with adapting think-aloud protocols to study interpretive interactivity. The method may not be causing the reactions to the text, but it may be priming individuals to attend more to these reactions than they otherwise would. In comparison, Amanda Miles and Dorthe Berntsen (2015) found more remindings recorded when reading a text versus writing a text, reflecting the 'less engaging' nature of reading (p. 71). The same could be said of watching a film, which could have similarly 'generated more boredom and diffuse attention' (p. 71). This intrusive measurement could produce detachment, but detachment does not preclude a return to entanglement. This minutia reception study approach may not be detrimental to the overall media reception situation, but such a possibility requires experimental investigation.

My desire to empower the participants to control the film's playback led to inconsistencies in how much of the text was engaged with for the study. The films being longer media texts suggests the need to study shorter texts. Such reception analysis has been done in the past (see Shields, 1994, for example) with texts that also do not contain as much multimodality as films. Perhaps future research utilizing the minutia reception study approach to measuring media engagings should test different materials for recording interactivities on texts of varying lengths and multimodality. Possible short multimodal texts include pro-wrestling matches, paranomal investigation videos, news stories, and pornography. Shorter texts would involve less time investment for the participants, which may result in the method being seen as less onerous. This issue of passivity and the impact of the method may diminish over time as more people experience longer forms of content where they control playback. Individuals comfortable with such control may have less issues with the method's requirement for stopping/starting the media reception situation artificially.

This approach combined both think-aloud and SMM protocols to measure the before, during, and after aspects of a media reception situation. The method allowed for an understanding of all factors in a media reception situation from the individual's perspective: views on text features and content; on their relationship with the text; on how the experience with the text related to their life, the world, and how they see themselves. Barker (2008) found similar importance ascribed to the viewer's agency in connecting the film to their own lives and identities; interestingly, however, he related those findings to a

person's desires of what to be, and not just who they are and have been. This type of self-projection suggests another 'after' measurement that actually would impact the 'during' measurement as it builds on their 'before' sense of self as brought into the media reception situation. Such timeline analysis would be aided by more directed recollection and complication of the recorded media engagings. Measuring the media engagings helped to build the timeline of their experience with the film, while measuring their sense-makings retrospectively demonstrated new insights while also losing specific interactivities. Future minutia reception studies should consider bringing the record of media engagings to a recollection interview and direct conversation to each specific moment to obtain more insights into how the person viewed their past, present, and future relating to that specific moment.

Additionally, a full media engagings analysis that considers all the material objects and immaterial structures is necessary to understand these moments. What remains unknown from this study are the larger contextual factors involved in this media reception situation of which they might not have been cognizant. A variety of contextual factors operate in, through, and around people, and they are engaging with those factors to varying degrees and in varying ways. To fully understand how people interact with a media product, we must also know how they interact with the other structures in their lives: from being unaware to being invested in those structures. Kim Babon (2006) argued for the need to understand the context of an artistic expression to better appreciate the work's public reception; even the physical location and the person's experiences with that place and space can impact how they respond to the art piece. We need to be both objective and subjective in our research to capture this range. We need to understand how they engage the media, meaning a phenomenological analysis that allows them to connect the different actors in the network to one another in terms of how they as agent make sense of the actors. And we need to understand how the media engages them: we need a semiotic/rhetorical/ideological analysis that demonstrates the objective nature of the mediated message and the interface used to convey it, all of which present a material object for the person to make sense of. More needs to be done to align such a subjective perspective on an experience with a more critical appraisal of the situation and its context, bringing this interpretivist approach together with political economic, rhetorical, and discourse analyses to more fully understand the complex nature of the media reception situation and each media engaging.

Conclusion

In this essay, I sought to deconstruct the term 'media engagings' to explain my preference in using it to understand how the various internal (affective, cognitive) and external (bodily, expression) behaviors that are involved in an engaging intermingle to produce the final experience of a media product. Data collection in this case study involved having the participants give their reactions both during the engaging and afterwards. The analyses presented here used these measurements to understand what in the film people interacted

with, how they interacted, and why. A more complex understanding of their experience with specific films occurred by examining the timeline of their media reception situation as well as comparing these experiences between the individuals. While not perfect, the case study demonstrates the utility of the minutia reception study approach to measuring media engagings to map media reception situations. Moment-by-moment analysis can help to understand the interplay between these interactivities and through comparative analyses help identify the media engagings that led to convergences or divergences between individuals. Such identification could help explain how political ideologies impact the perception of 'fake news,' or how difference of opinion can devolve a fractured fandom into harassment. Additionally, demonstrating convergences could provide common ground on which to build a constructive conversation about the content.

We engage the media, and the media engages us. Media engagings means recognizing the dual-pathway of this experience: person engaging media, media engagings person. It is a transactional approach to media studies while simultaneously a contextualized approach to focuses on the network of structures operating in the situation. By doing both in-the-moment and in-recollection interviewing, I can start to understand the person's ability to self-report and recollect 'accurately' what happened and was said during the sessions. In doing so, the study embodied the axiology, epistemology, and ontology behind my use of 'media engagings.' I hope, essentially, to live up to Corner's (2017) observation on studying audiences: 'It is the experiences, both shaping and shaped, which variously precede, inform, and then follow media engagements that are often the real matter at issue. Research into media engagement is often, if only partly, an inquiry into the real of the experiential and its contemporary cultural resources, with all the challenges that implies' (p. 5). I do not believe I am fully there with this method, but I do believe the conceptualization and operationalization informed by media engagings can help me toward that goal.

Biographical note:

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Notes:

[1] This methodology also has similarities with the thought-listing technique presented by John Cacioppo and Richard Petty (1981) and used by Hans Peter Peters (2000) to measure people's reactions to news stories.

[2] For example, see Barker, 2006; 2008; Eichner & Prommer, 2017; Condit, 1999; Fiske, 1986; Hall, 1973/1993; Hasebrinke, 2004; Levy and Windahl, 1984; Morley, 1992.

[3] Of course, interpretive interactivity could also be important for making sense of the technology or interface even before making sense of the content; for example, a user learning a new smartphone interface first has to make sense of the technology before they can experience the content and use the technology as they desire.

[4] For examples, see Chan-Olmsted and Wolter (2018); Corner (2017); Hill (2017); Hill et al (2017).

[5] See Vickie Shields (1994) for another application of this interviewing approach, one that aligns more faithfully with the original intention.

[6] Given the small sample size reported here, more advanced inferential statistics were not attempted; however, the systematic nature of SMM can be utilized with content analysis to produce such quantitative analytical data.