Pierre Bourdieu and actor training: Towards decolonising and decentering actor training pedagogies

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In response to issues with the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of marginalised communities in the texts used for actor training, actor trainers and scholars have theorised and brought to the studio race, gender, crip, or class critical theories to evaluate the social representations that the actors create with their body, voice, and imagination. Such interventions narrow their scope for valid reasons, but problematise actor training studios that involve trainees with multiple and intersecting identities, both dominant and marginalised. This essay argues that Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social power can sustain a holistic and comparative exploration of how actors can mobilise the positive representation of communities with multiple and intersecting marginalised identities. The first part of the essay brings Bourdieu's concepts *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* to text-based training thinking and constructs a critical framework to assess actor training practices. The second part of the essay uses the framework to theorise the potential of Bertolt Brecht's Marx-inspired pedagogy of the *gestical actor* to decolonise and decenter contemporary actor training. The essay finishes with positioning the Bourdieu-inspired framework among contemporary pedagogies that address social inequalities. It invites actor trainers to utilise theoretical models to mobilise social dynamics in training and explore the actors' unconscious biases.

Keywords: actor training; Bourdieu; *gestus*; representation; decolonise

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Introduction

Text-based actor training across universities and conservatoires in the UK and the US is concerned with the lack of visibility of marginalised communities and the reinforcement of historical stereotypes in the classical canon scripts (Stamatiou 2019a; Ward and Edwards 2004). Even though there are crucial differences, such problems are often shared for people with multiple and intersecting marginalised identities, such as people of colour (Cutler 2010; Espinosa and Ocampo-Guzman 2010; Opal Reese 2010), women (Agarwal et al. 2015; Bechdel 1985; Jenkins and Ogden-Malouf 1985; Malague 2013; Werner 1996), people with disabilities (Lewis 2010; Sandahl 2008), gay people (Mudd 2010) and people from a working-class background (Prior 2012). Shared strategies of interventions that tackle the problems involve the development of *actor-authors* who create the roles that they perform (Landon-Smith 2008, as cited in Hingorani 2009; Lewis 2010); the use of practices from 'theatre of the real' (Hingorani 2009; Oram 2018; Thompson 2003), which can be defined as performances that, using different methodologies including verbatim and documentary, involve 'specific relationships with events in the real world' (Martin 2013, 4); and devising critical and reflexive frameworks that target the internalised ideologies of the actors (Evans 2014; Kapsali 2014b; Gow 2018). Reflecting the varied contemporary forms of authorship (Radosavjevic 2013), the diverse processes of the *actor-author* tackle underrepresentation because more characters of marginalised identities are developed and analysed in training. Theatre of the real brings social conflict into the studio and the representation of social identities becomes the central concern. However, as suggested

by debates about the works of established practitioners that draw on training against the canon, such as the Deutsches Theater ensemble (Cheesman 2012), Robert Lepage and the Théâtre du Soleil (Valiante 2018), the Schaubühne ensemble and Complicité Theatre Company (Wake 2019), and Alecky Blythe (Stamatiou 2020b), even authorial acting and theatre of the real, or other non-traditional text-based processes, can result in controversial representations of marginalised groups. So addressing the internalised ideologies of actors to tackle the stereotypical representations of marginalised communities is key regardless of the practices used. This article calls the new generation of actor trainers to acknowledge and challenge the problems in current training lineages and create interventions that address the biases of the actors in training.

Few interventions of this kind have been documented and shared for wider use and study, potentially because of debates concerning who is allowed to decolonise actor training. Educators with dominant identities such as white and male, across HE, find it difficult to refer to social inequalities (Hobson and Whigham 2018). Educators with marginalised identities are often burdened with an activist role (Mohanty 2003), which is uneasy in the typical educational settings of the English-speaking world that involve students with multiple and intersecting identities, both dominant and dominated. This highlights the importance of developing student-actors to decolonise themselves through interventions that can be applied by all and target all, given the consideration of individual positionality and the different manifestations of inequality for the various groups. Positionality is understood here as the idea that 'people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed' (Maher and Tetreault, 2001, 164). It suggests a complex automatic categorisation of all social agents, including teachers and students, that can be

productively analysed through the key concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's social theory of power: the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990), *field* (Bourdieu 1983), and *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu 2011). Bourdieu's theory illuminates how, in actor training, the positionality of the trainees and the trainer play with and against the positionality of the fictional characters that are represented in the narratives used for theatre-making.

Such mobilisation of social dynamics in actor training was pioneered by Bertolt Brecht, who invited actors to perform text-based characters and narratives using the *gestus*: theatrical signs that were associated with broader social issues. Brecht drew on Marxism to create practical devices that invite the actor to expose social structures with their acting processes and as a critical framework to evaluate at key moments of the process how specific decisions promoted the interests of marginalised groups. But Brechtian practice mobilises Marx's theory, which is problematic for contemporary interventions. Postmodern thinking about social struggles proliferates from a more complex and relational matrix to include multiple and intersecting axes of oppression concerning gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and class. Many theories address social struggles in such a way and can be useful to actor training. Often combining feminist, disability, queer, and critical race theory with cultural materialism, actor training scholars have exposed how studio practices facilitate or resist the reproduction of dominant ideologies (Kapsali 2014a; Margolis and Renaud 2010). An example from practice is the use of Judith Butler's notion of identity as theatrical, as constructed, as exterior rather than interior, and as something that the individual does rather than has (Thompson 2003, 132). Although Butler focused on gender, her theory can be modified and applied to other identities. Because Bourdieu's theory provides a relational set of structures against which social identities can be measured, I argue here that it can be used flexibly to encompass all social inequalities that are manifested in

actor training simultaneously, and illuminate the complexities of having to train actors with multiple and intersecting identities at once.

Actor training scholarship has not yet utilised Bourdieu's theory to analyse and mobilise social conflict in the studio. The philosophical aspects of Bourdieu's theory are an established tool in discussions about education and, although they have been used only occasionally in theatre, they are prominent in the discussions of music scholars (Prior 2011). Because actor training combines elements of education and culture and there is growing interest in how to expose and challenge domination and inequality in its structures, using Bourdieu's theory to foreground critical approaches can generate substantial insights. Most importantly, actor training pedagogies can exploit Bourdieu's argument that all individuals embody their social structures to invite trainees to explore their unconscious biases.

In my postgraduate thesis (Stamatiou 2021), I present the theory comprehensively. I also construct, apply and analyse a creative intervention that theatricalises Bourdieu's theory to develop *actor-authors* to explore their unconscious biases and make holistic, comparative, and critical theatre-making choices. In that larger project, I do not engage with how Bourdieu's theory can contribute to text-based actor training or contemporary applications of Brecht's text-based practice. But because the engagement with established scripts is ongoing and can be highly problematic even if adapted to tackle social inequality—for example, by implementing inclusive casting strategies (Rogers 2013; Stamatiou 2020; Thompson 2006)--, this article brings Bourdieu to training thinking to inspire decolonising and decentering pedagogies in contemporary text-based actor training.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory the first part of the article provides a deeper understanding of the role of the trainees' embodied social structures in characterisation

training. It theorises the potential to tackle the dominant ideologies that underpin actor training processes, and therefore decolonise them. The proposed decolonising mechanism presupposes centering the trainee's embodied processes and inviting them to explore and address how their acting reproduces social inequalities. This suggests decentering text-based actor training, which traditionally gave a central role to playwrights and directors, rather than actors. To inspire actor trainers to utilise Bourdieu's theory or other theoretical models for decolonising and decentering purposes, the second part theorises the contemporary potential of a key process that drew on theory to develop actors with social purposes: Brecht's *gestical* actor.

The capacity of Bourdieu to decolonise text-based acting

Bourdieu's theory of social life offers a holistic foregrounding of contemporary issues with social equality in actor training. Among the plenty of discussions about decolonising education, Bourdieu's framework resonates with Boaventura de Sousa Santos's suggestion that in order 'to decolonize the teaching materials and methods' it is necessary to consider how 'socioeconomic inequalities combine with racial, ethnocultural, epistemic, and sexual inequalities' (2018, 272). Santos refers to Higher Education in general, but the need to address multiple, and also intersecting, axes of oppression holistically is also crucial for investigating acting processes. Bourdieu's theory can be positioned among the critical theories inspired by Marx that have been developed in the past 200 years with the 'specific objective of transforming the world' (Santos 2018, 6-8). It can be distinguished from other Eurocentric critical sociological theories of the 20th century because its critical framework encompasses the body as a site of conflict and of knowledge (63-64). The bringing of Bourdieu to training thinking

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investigates holistically how acting processes: underrepresent or misrepresent marginalised communities; are interconnected with wider societal issues, and; can be targeted through the body of the trainees. Bourdieu's theory maps and structures the shared experiences of individuals concerning wider societal issues. Influenced by both sociological and philosophical writers, as well as structuralists (Loyal 2017, 11-13), Bourdieu offers an analytical framework that can be seen as a philosophy of social structures, which allows for objective observations that embrace and analyse shared social experiences productively. In ways that might seem oppositional to certain phenomenological approaches, Bourdieu's theory suggests that trainers and trainees can make objective observations concerning the positive representation of marginalised communities in training studios that involve multiple and intersecting identities, considering there is a flexible understanding of the complexities involved.

To present how Bourdieu's theory relates to phenomenological thinking and provides a canvas for the trainees' embodied structures, it is useful to introduce the term 'acting offer'. Acting offers can be defined as manifestations of acting processes through the actor's body, voice, and imagination that: respond to stimuli, such as narratives and characters; draw on learnt techniques, such as Stanislavski, Brecht or others, including post-dramatic forms; and are always projected to an imagined audience, which, if in training, includes the trainer and fellow trainees. The term, as developed in Phillip Zarrilli's theory, mobilises the idea of *'the actor as doer'* who creates *'a performance score'* through embodied processes (2013, 8). In traditional Stanislavskian approaches that consider acting as a dual process that is both psychological and physical, the acting offers can be viewed as the 'physical manifestations of a role' (Stanislavski 2010, 183), which are a result of tacit processes that make the 'inner score of a role' (149), involving 'inner tasks, moods, actions and

their consequences' (158) elsewhere described as 'impulses' (174). The acting offers are created through tacit/invisible processes and become manifested/visible in the body of the actor. Bourdieu's theory illuminates how the potential misrepresentations of marginalised communities in acting are a result of how the actor's biases interfere with the tacit processes of acting.

To understand how the visible and non-visible parts of the performance score play in the process of acting and actor training, contemporary research on psychophysical acting draws on phenomenology, cognitive science, and anthropology to tackle assumptions concerning mind-body duality and investigate acting and actor training processes across genres (Zarrilli, Daboo, and Loukes 2013). Even though characterisation training broadly embraces the idea of an 'embodied mind' (Whyman 2016, 166) the research is ongoing concerning how acting offers are shaped and transacted through processes that involve an embodied mind, elsewhere discussed as 'bodymind' (Zarrilli 2013, 2). This article invites this body of research to engage with Bourdieu's theory, which can illuminate trainers and trainees to consider the structuring dominant ideologies as inseparable from the bodymind processes of the trainee. Such consciousness is a step towards decolonising and decentering acting offers. The creation of performer training methodologies that mobilise such consciousness can decolonise and decenter training studios.

If scholars and practitioners of the Zarrilli tradition consider that 'discussions of body, emotion, feeling, mind, memory, and action, among others, are being viewed as aspects of a unitary embodied human process' (2), Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* offers a deeper understanding of how such embodied process affects in structured ways the actor's embodiment and presentation of a character and, ultimately, affects the representation of marginalised social groups. Most commonly understood as 'the

internalization of externality and the externalization of internality' concerning how individuals embody biases (Wacquant 2005, 318), an individual's *habitus* is 'a system of structured, structuring dispositions' that 'is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions' (Bourdieu 2008, 52). All actions are a result of the *habitus,* which derives from an individual's family and schooling (50), which is also true for actor training. In the context of theorising the logic of human actions and practices, Bourdieu writes that such dispositions:

> generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor. (53)

This suggests that the reproduction of stereotypical representations through acting offers results from the unconscious dispositions that each trainee embodies. Schooling perpetuates dominant ideologies (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979, 1990), but it does not have the power to 'shape consciousness over and above the power of the family; nevertheless, it plays an active role in legitimising the habitus that the individual acquired from their family' (Nash 1990, 435). Therefore, to decolonise and decenter actor training studios, individual actors' dispositions need to be targeted during processes of shaping acting offers through transactions with the trainer and other trainees. Other trainees can influence individual offers during reflective discussions, or because of interactions that happen during improvisations. A more direct targeting involves a trainer implementing a critical lens to scrutinise the social representations of acting offers, as happens more often in Brecht-inspired practices. Depending on their used techniques, actor trainers can consider how their studios can challenge the *habitus* of trainees through processes of shaping acting offers. In other words, Bourdieu's

theory suggests that actor training can support individuals to develop acting offers that mobilise biases towards decolonisation.

Because the potential negative dispositions that reproduce historical stereotypes through the trainee's processes are unpredictable until manifested through initial acting offers, decolonising and decentering interventions proliferate from acknowledging the interconnectivity of multiple and intersecting axes of oppression across various aspects of social life. Bourdieu's concept of the *field* illuminates how the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of marginalised groups within training are interconnected to systemic racism, sexism, ableism, and classism. The *field* is '[a] network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1994, 97) and suggests that social groups operate in relational terms (Bourdieu, 1983, 311). In other words, a *field* is determined by the interactions that take place in it, so, for example, interactions that relate to actor training can be discussed as the *actor training field*. Because actor training interactions relate to both cultural and educational interactions, the *actor training field's* interactions are both independent and contained within the broader interactions of the *cultural* and *educational fields.* Bourdieu suggests that all *fields* are ultimately contained in the *field of struggles of the symbolic order*, which is organised 'around the opposition between orthodoxy and heterodoxy' (1977, 5). This implies that all actor training interactions, including processes of acting, involve a struggle between a dominant ideology and its oppositional ideology, such as patriarchy/feminism or white supremacy/anti-racism. So the hidden mechanisms that perpetuate inequalities in actor training should be addressed not in isolation, but holistically and in the context of identity struggles. Interventions that address isolated manifestations often achieve tokenism and do not necessarily improve social equality. For example, the use of inclusive casting to tackle the lack of leading roles for actors of

colour in contemporary performances of Shakespeare introduced new racial discriminations in the theatre industry, described as the '"black canon"' (Rogers 2013, 128). Their impact of casting becomes even more complicated in the context of actor training: because of the multiple and intersecting identities of the trainees, multiple and intersecting axes of oppression should be considered. So even though the complexity of the *field* muddies the design and evaluation of targeted interventions, actor trainers can begin to understand actor training and systemic inequalities holistically through Bourdieu's notion.

The acknowledgement of multiple and intersecting axes of oppression in the actor training studio requires the acknowledgement of the characters' and the trainees' identities and how they affect the social positioning of individuals. Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic capital* illuminates how identities play a hidden role in social positioning. *Social agents* occupy *field* positions depending on their *capital*, which is not only economic but also comes as *symbolic capital* in various immaterial forms, both embodied and objectified, such as academic or cultural knowledge and qualifications, or social connections (Bourdieu 1983). Such *symbolic capital* achieves recognition as a result of unconscious mechanisms. As social inequalities in the *actor training field* and beyond reveal, *agents* do not accumulate the various forms of *capital* equally but depending on their identity, which suggests that different identities hold different power or different *symbolic capital*. The trainee's *habitus* is the embodied process that connects the unconscious mechanism of unequal distribution of *symbolic capital* among communities and the trainee's acting offers. So actor training can tackle the systemic domination of marginalised groups by exposing the hidden mechanism in the *habitus* of the trainees that assigns unequal *symbolic capital* and perpetuates inequalities through their acting offers.

In text-based actor training, the stereotypical representations of marginalised groups that are suggested in the narratives and characters of scripts, and the training processes that assume and reproduce such negative representations, have been established and perpetuated through the dispositions of trainers and trainees of both dominant and dominated identities. However, there is no binary of dominant/dominated but multiple relational positions that involve variations of *symbolic capital*, which becomes more complicated with intersectional identities. Discriminatory dispositions can be explored in training concerning how the trainees embody them and unconsciously reproduce them to fully understand how they surreptitiously dominate acting offers. Interventions can address multiple axes of oppression without eliminating their differences because Bourdieu's *habitus* provides a shared mechanism for individuals of all identities. Actor training can exploit such mechanism to create models that address multiple and intersecting axes of oppression in combination.

Also, even though the manifestations of discrimination may vary in the various *fields,* the hidden mechanism that perpetuates them is established across *fields*. Dispositions are inculcated (learned in childhood), structured (reflect the social conditions in which they were acquired), durable (part of the individual's life history), generative and transposable (capable of generating practices and perceptions in *fields* other than those in which they were originally generated) (Navarro 2006, 16). Since dispositions are generative and transposable, when dispositions in other *social fields* are challenged, the *actor training field* is also affected, and vice versa. Because acting offers present and represent the various *social fields* that are implied in narratives and characters, and because the trainees' dispositions that legitimise the various forms of *symbolic capital* are inculcated, structured and durable, actor training plays a crucial role in legitimising or challenging trainees' biases.

The process of actor training for text-based work plays with and against the dispositions of trainees uniquely. Stanislavskian and Brechtian methods invite different engagement with characters and narratives, but ultimately both rely on embodied experience—discussed as psychophysical or social, respectively,-- to create acting offers. The acting offers are always projected to an imaginary audience and communicated via theatrical signs. The texts play a primary role in that, as language is a set of theatrical signs that generate meaning for an audience (Pavis 1985, 209) and, as Bourdieu writes, it is also an instrument of power (Bourdieu and Thompson 2003). But actors also play a crucial role in creating complementary theatrical signs with their voice, body, and imagination, which can likewise operate as instruments of power. Training processes concerning character and narrative invite an engagement with how the trainee embodies social power. Processes mobilise the trainee's dispositions about the *symbolic capital* of marginalised identities and bring them to the surface through their acting offers. The trainees have not necessarily experienced situations in the *fields* that are represented in fictional narratives, but they draw on other *fields* of their lives to make their offers and, ultimately, on the *field of struggles*.

Training processes usually apply frameworks to evaluate acting offers, against the playwright's suggestions or a set of agreed values. For example, drawing on Marxism, Brecht evaluated the acting offers of actors who played Macheath in *Threepenny Opera* against how they subverted the power of bourgeois men, which is clear from his notes to actors to play the outlaw Macheath as 'peaceable' 'a good businessman', 'a bourgeois phenomenon' (Brecht 2000, 92). Because the acting offers are predisposed, evaluation frameworks for actor training also scrutinise the trainee's dispositions. For example, with his intervening in the characterisation processes of the actor who played Macheath Brecht invited the subversion of the disposition 'that a

bandit is not a bourgeois… that a bourgeois is not a bandit' (92). If this disposition was subverted, then the marginalised community of outlaws was represented as equal to the dominant bourgeoisie. The success in doing so manifests that the actor both explored their *habitus* during the trial and error characterisation process and understood how to promote social equality.

So actor training can tackle discriminations holistically because it processes the positions and dispositions of trainees from the *field of struggles* through the predisposed acting offers of trainees that respond to the narratives and characters of texts. Because meaning, in both theatre and social life, which is represented in theatre, is constructed through gestures, images, and sounds, if actor training environments exploit that the theatrical signs that are produced in the form of acting offers are always associated with the social position of *agents* in the various *fields* and their *habitus* and *capital*, they can invite trainees to confront and explore their relevant dispositions. On the contrary, if actor training environments detach theatrical signs from their social meanings, they ignore how social power structures interfere with acting offers and contribute to perpetuating inequalities. Actor training environments that target the unconscious dispositions of trainees through their acting offers and make them conscious can be transformative. If the trainee realises their *habitus*, they can work towards the positive representation of marginalised identities, which is a form of social change.

Bourdieu's theory invites actor training to tackle discrimination holistically across *fields,* and comparatively, as an umbrella term, by targeting individuals with negative dispositions rather than people with marginalised identities. This can be illustrated by Bourdieu's formula [(*habitus*) (*capital*)] + *field* = social practices (2010, 95), which can be adapted for actor training to the following version: [(embodied

dispositions) (previous training and positionality)] + fictional interactions = acting

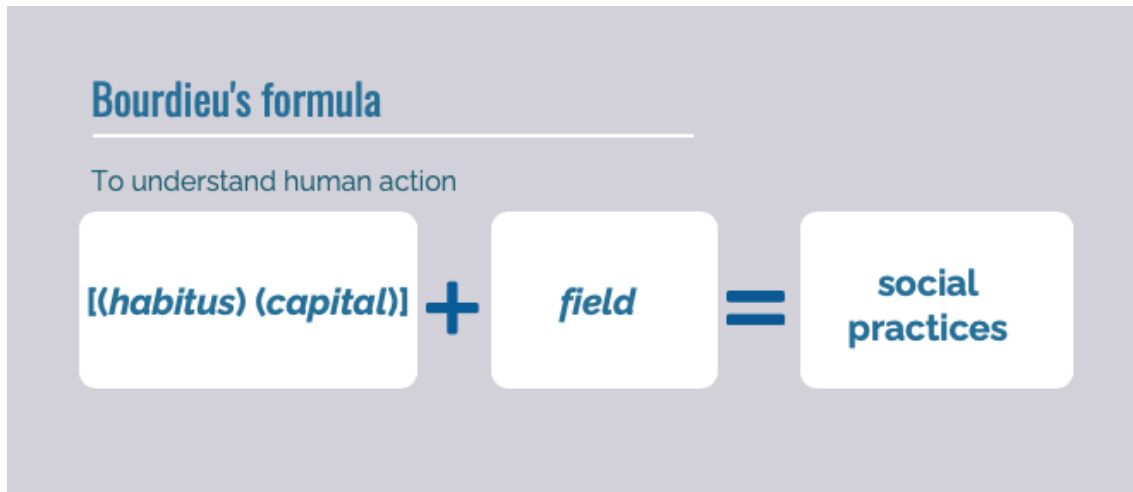offers (for emphasis, see Figures 1 and 2 below).

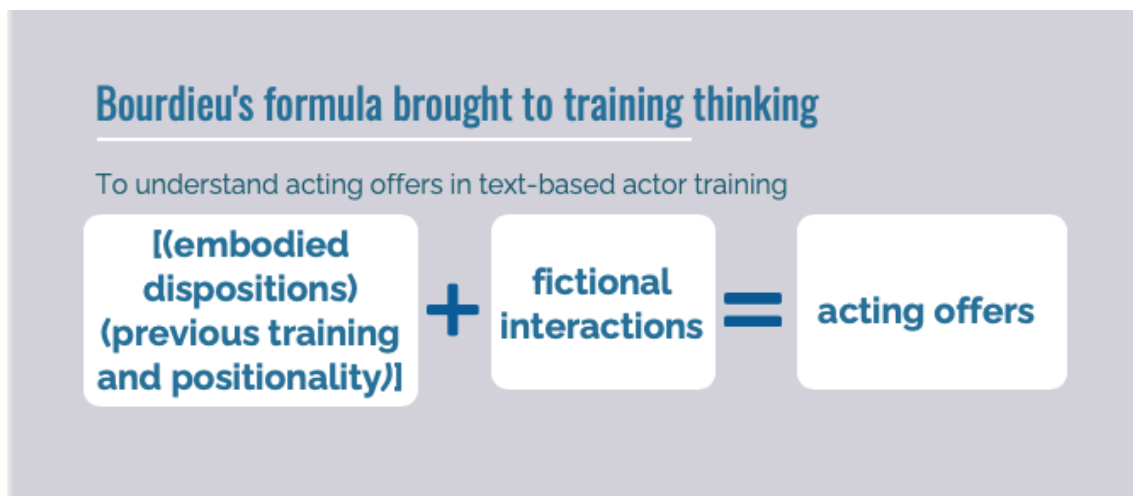*Figure 1 Bourdieu's formula for human action.*

Figure 2 Bourdieu's formula for human action adapted to text-based actor training.

In the adapted version of the formula: 'embodied biases' refer to how the trainee's

habitus predisposes them to the identities of the characters and narratives they work

with; 'previous training and positionality' refer to the trainee's learnt acting techniques

(*cultural capital*) and various identities (which imply various forms of *capital*); and the

'fictional interactions' refer to *fields* implied in the narratives that mobilise the trainees'

body, voice and imagination. Considering the mathematical visualisation suggested by

Bourdieu, social practices change when the *habitus,* the *capital,* and/or the *field* change. Similarly, acting offers change when embodied dispositions, previous training, positionality and/or fictional interactions change. In text-based training, the fictional interactions are, often, a stable component in the above equation. The embodied dispositions, the training *capital,* and the positionality of the trainee are flexible and are expected to change as a result of pedagogies, but not necessarily towards decolonised and decentered versions. The challenge for actor trainers is to create pedagogies that invite trainees to explore their embodied dispositions, previous training, and positionality in ways that encourage reflexivity and acting decisions that tackle the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of marginalised communities.

To inspire actor trainers to utilise the above formula as a conceptual framework to target trainee's biases and decolonise and decenter their processes, the following section uses the adapted version of Bourdieu's formula to evaluate Brecht's *gestical* actor as key for contemporary socially inclined pedagogies of text-based training.

A Bourdieusian evaluation of Brecht's *gestical* actor

The use of the adapted formula from Bourdieu to evaluate Brechtian practice offers to contemporary actor trainers a deeper understanding of how to assess their teaching and learning processes and how they play with and against the unconscious biases of trainees. The key criteria used to interrogate the *gestical* actor, which can be applied to other pedagogies, include: the recognition of acting offers as social practices; the processing of fictional interactions in given texts as exchanges of power; the embracing of previous training as integral to the body of the trainee with social connotations but

also as work in progress; the exploration of positionality concerning how it affects acting offers; the development of reflexivity to target the embodied biases.

Brechtian practice resonates with Bourdieusian thinking because it acknowledges acting offers as social practices. The *gestical* actor was developed to critically engage with narratives and characters and create representations that mobilised social conflicts. The *gestus* is 'the aesthetic gestural representation of the socio-economic and ideological construction of human identity and interaction', and 'the externalization of the socially significant' (Mumford 2001, 144-145). For the actor, a *gestus* consists of acting choices that can be isolated but, if considered in the social context of the narrative and characters, they are associated with wider social meanings. The practical applicability of the *gestus* invites actor training to visualise the practical possibilities of bringing theoretical models to their studios. Brecht's *gestical* actor, as conceived in the first half of the 20th century and brought in the studio of the 21st century (Barnett 2015), is developed during the rehearsal of given scripts if the actors consider the plot from an agreed viewpoint (*fabel)*, embrace stage positions (*arrangement*) and character attitudes (*haltung*) that resonate with the viewpoint and contribute with acting choices (*gestus*) that represent the characters as social rather than psychological entities (85)*.* Their understanding and commitment to the *fabel* are tested through their acting choices in response to questions about the characters, such as 'How do they sip, how do they eat, who offers to who, does this have connotations for gender etc.' (95). The actors are invited to draw consciously and critically from their experience to create *gestus* that represent the characters in ways that serve the agreed social aims, even if they contradict the original script. As the actors consider how their conscious acting choices change depending on the agreed *fabel* and embody the most appropriate choices, they practically explore their *habitus*. Therefore, the critical ability

of the *gestical* actor is practical and applicable. In Bourdieusan terms, Brechtian practice suggests development of *habitus* through the acting process. Actor trainers can ask how the acting processes that they apply in their studios involve processes of developing acting offers as social practices and, in particular, manifestations of social dynamics.

Through a Marxist understanding of social relationships, Brechtian practices consider the fictional interactions of given scripts as exchanges of power. However, because Marx identifies social struggle primarily as economic and material, the *gestical* actor's social representations can focus on material and economic struggles and ignore immaterial struggles, such as identity struggles. This suggests that Brechtian practice acknowledges and embraces that acting offers are influenced by what Bourdieu discusses as *field* in his formula about social practices, but such consideration can be isolated. Marx's understanding of class has been applied for other social inequalities, such as gender (Gow 2018), where there is a form of *symbolic power* considered, but its function with the Marxist understanding of social divisions can similarly reinforce binaries and one-dimensional understandings of social power.

At the level of play analysis, the fictional interactions involve power dynamics beyond mere economic exchanges: gender, ability, and sexual orientation struggles are also intertwined in complex ways and irrespectively to whether playwrights address them in conscious ways. If Brecht invited the actors to create *gestus* associated with certain identity struggles, contemporary training needs to find ways to invite trainees to create acting offers that address multiple and intersecting identity struggles. Mere materialist readings of plays neglect the more complex matrix of the social conflicts at play in fictional interactions, which are presented and represented through the acting offers. Actor trainers need to consider how their practices process fictional interactions

involving axes of oppression beyond capitalism and encourage understanding of social positions and exchanges as relational rather than binary, aiming for social representations that do not correspond to a single agreed viewpoint but are nuanced and bring forward postmodern possibilities for character representation.

The idea of previous training as a form of *embodied capital* is implied in *gestical* acting. To oppose Stanislavski's individualistic basis, Brecht used Marx's writings to theorise his practice and enacted the core values of the theory to inform his work (Barnett 2015, 22). Brecht's model developed actors to illustrate how the historical and social circumstances play a crucial role in performing characters of marginalised identities, instead of relying on 'natural' or 'human' acting choices. In Bourdieusian terms, psychophysical acting entails a staging of the actor's *habitus* that can lead to revelations about social dispositions, but the characterisation process leaves little room for bringing this to the conscious level and changing the actor's embodied biases. *Gestical* acting involves the staging of embodied biases at a more conscious level. The actor's choices that are understood beyond the presentation of characters to represent social groups, imply the development of a critical ability to engage with the identities of given characters. Brecht sustained the development of the actors' critical ability with the practical framework that the *fabel, haltung,* and *gestus* provided. Actor trainers can consider how these practices were constructed to tackle the lack of social aims in Stanislavskian practice. It is useful to interrogate established practices, not as oppositional but as relational. Actor trainers can decolonise and decenter actor training through devices that develop established pedagogies or can be applied alongside them.

Even though Brechtian devices imply an understanding of the actor's training *capital*, they problematise how the positionality of the actor can be explored with the postmodern understanding of flexibility and relationality. The complexity of *symbolic*

capital and its relevance to underrepresentation and misrepresentation reaches its peak in the process of characterisation, which involves both the actor's dispositions about the character's identities and their own identities. As shown in Bourdieu's adapted formula for actor training, the above are interlinked and inform acting offers in multiple and intersectional ways. In Brechtian practice, the identities of given characters are considered at the level of the *haltung*, which explores the attitudes of the characters. But the identities of the actors, or in other words their positionality, are not openly considered as influencing character attitudes and, ultimately, character presentations and social representations. Training methods that aspire to invite reflexivity concerning embodied dispositions through acting offers need to invite an exploration of the trainee's positionality, as a form of knowledge gained due to their social interactions with social agents that related to them in ways that imply social identities. Actor trainers can capitalise on Bourdieu's formula to develop tools that link acting offers to the trainee's positionality.

To assess whether Brechtian practice invited the actors to develop reflexivity and address their embodied biases, we need to see beyond how the practice targeted the biases of audiences. The actor's dispositions have been at the centre of Brecht's discovery that a kind of acting for 'particular social purposes' (Brecht and Bentley 1961, 134) was possible when actors use their body, voice, and imagination to produce theatre signs that offer complex rather than singular interpretations. Brecht understood that the actor's body is crucial for bringing social conflict to performances and, if such capacity is not acknowledged, the actor's body perpetuates dominant ideologies (1948, 55). This resonates with Bourdieu's argument that individuals embody social structures and unconsciously perpetuate dominant ideologies and begs for explorations that access and develop the actors' embodied ideologies through their offered signs. Nevertheless,

because Brecht's work with the actor was focused on the manifestations of embodied dispositions through acting offers, it has been broadly understood that 'Brecht was far less concerned with acting method than he was with the interpretive basis of the actor's work' (Rouse 1984, 26). This quote implies that Brecht did not aim to develop the actor's reflexivity concerning their personal engagement with the character and narrative and the acting offers that they produced. The *fabel* as a viewpoint adopted by the company of actors does not unpick how individual actors have internalised in unconscious ways various problematic ideologies, both relevant and irrelevant to the *fabel*, or how such an awareness would be useful for future representations.

Nevertheless, Brechtian practice offers possibilities for reflexivity in indirect ways. Brecht brought Marxism into the acting studio as a critical lens to evaluate acting offers and develop *gestus*.. Because acting choices derive from the actors' *habitus*, Brecht scrutinised it during rehearsals and potentially interrupted it. Such a practical exploration invited an ideological awareness. The adoption of the *fabel* does not happen in a vacuum, but through the point of view and unconscious dispositions of the actor. The description of the process as 'actor sensitization' (Barnett 2015, 110) implies gaining a new awareness of situations. This suggests a changed *habitus*, a changed individual, and therefore, social change, which resonates with the aims of contemporary actor training to address the internalised ideologies of actors. Brecht could tell that actors were "sensitized" when they found 'the most appropriate ways to perform their roles' (110), creating a new awareness of how symbolisms play a role in that. However, the critical framework from Marxism involved a dialectical polarisation of thesis/antithesis, which implies a binary for the dominant/dominated rather than a gamut of multiple and intersecting positions. For example, Brecht had found similarities in how different marginalised groups are discriminated against and invited actors to

consider how a black man versus a white man experience love or how a woman versus a man assert working positions (Brecht and Bentley 1961, 135). The invitation itself implies absolute binaries. Actor trainers can aim for similar but more flexible critical frameworks to invite the actor's new awareness of how the symbolisms of their acting offers affect the representations of people with marginalised identities.

An actor who mobilises Bourdieu's formula, develops their acting offers as products of the fictional interactions implied in narratives and characters, considering previous training and positionality, and unconscious embodied biases. Actor trainers can consider what training processes can provide such possibilities. The Bourdieusian logic resonates with Brecht's development of the *gestical* actor and enriches it with a post-dialectical perspective that brings postmodern possibilities to the forefront. At the same time, the *gestical* actor implies practical actor training possibilities for Bourdieu's formula.

As analysed in this section, Brecht's model of the *gestical* actor helps actor trainers to visualise how theories can be applied practically to decolonise and decentre actor training through the bodies of the trainees. It highlights the importance to mobilise *capital* both in material and in immaterial forms, such as identity. Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic capital* contributes to a framework that encompasses the discriminated positions of all marginalised identities such as gender, race, and class. In doing so the social power of the various identities and relevant discriminating situations can be explored with greater nuance and relational perspectives. By inviting actors to understand social power as having numerous immaterial/symbolic dimensions, their representations can illustrate more complexity and also an optimism, because power will be shown as something up for negotiation.

Conclusion: towards holistic actor training models

The bringing of Bourdieu to actor training thinking invites a systematic addressing of the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of marginalised social groups with multiple and intersecting identities. The Bourdieu-inspired critical framework for text-based training can improve other pedagogies if they adapt its key criteria: acting offers recognised as social practices; fictional interactions of given texts processed as exchanges of power; previous training embraced as integral to the body of the trainee with social connotations but also as work in progress; positionality explored for how it affects acting offers; reflexivity developed to target the embodied biases. This critical framework aspires to inspire relational and flexible models of creating acting offers that address social issues, inviting actors to a holistic and comparative exploration of their biases. The practical applications of Marxism in Brecht's practice offer ideas concerning how Bourdieu can be used practically.

Because Bourdieu's theory explores and exposes the symbolic means that result in the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of marginalised groups in staged performance, it has currency and significance for contemporary socially inclined pedagogies that aim to decolonise the actor training studio. It fulfils in productive ways most of the shared strategies that contemporary actor training interventions have mobilised: it brings social conflict to the core of the actor's process, focuses the role of the actor in creating theatrical signs that promote marginalised groups, aims to develop the actor's reflexivity. Even though developed for text-based actor training, it fulfils the aim of decolonising the actors' bodies in distinct ways. It brings the actor's interpretation of character and capacity to manifest social conflict with their body, voice, and imagination at the centre of the training process and offers a deeper

understanding of how actors can develop reflexivity, which is the aim of contemporary socially inclined actor training as a skill that can be carried forward.

The Bourdieusian framework addresses certain limitations of contemporary interventions. Firstly, interventions that aim exclusively at trainees with marginalised identities (Luckett 2019; Opal Reese 2010) currently segregate them. But Bourdieu's thinking can complement current critical frameworks for actor training with a holistic and comparative model that acknowledges differences but also puts forward similarities of the multiple and intersecting axes of oppression. Secondly, interventions in casting create new discriminations (Rogers 2013, 123) or mask issues with authorship (Stamatiou 2020; Thompson 2006). The bringing of the trainees' positionality in focus in Bourdieu's framework invites explorations concerning marginalised groups with multiple and intersecting identities, including several that the playwright ignored. And thirdly, Western actor training might adopt non-Western practices in inauthentic ways (Evans 2014; Schechner 1992), which becomes cultural appropriation. Bourdieu's framework embraces the trainees' training capital and its ideological orientations, aiming to develop existing problematic practices or create new practices, depending on the actor trainer involved.

Moving forward, the bringing of Bourdieu's theory to training processes invites trainers to reflect on how their decisions concerning the planning and facilitation of improvisations and reflective discussions in text-based training can deconolonise and decentre the acting studio. Bourdieu's theory can be used to foreground the construction of training exercises that target the students' *habitus* and to evaluate whether particular acting offers represent marginalised communities positively. It can also inspire trainers to update their practices by looking at how the theoretical models that underpin them fulfil the current aims of actor training.

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