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Embodied Critical Learning through Performance Teaching

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A critical mode of being is not only written into the Swedish law of university education as a learning outcome for all students, but also vital for Media and Communication students approach to their studies and their future lives as media producers. Taking on this challenge, I created an experiment 15 years ago, which I term performance teaching. It was a way to force students out of their uncritical absorption of course-content only focusing on exams, into a critical mode of thinking and doing. At first this performance teaching entailed lecturing in totally different lifestyle outfits every day, with the aid of colleagues and the city theatre. The following 13 years, however, only the first day of term was used for the performance and the experiment turned into a permanent teaching method, tied in with theories of critique of sources and media critique. This is the case that will theoretically discuss in this article. I will argue for didactically designing learning processes that tackles the issues embodied critical thinking and doing. My main argument is that by acknowledging that we, as lecturers and students, are physical beings and that learning should take place through one's entire body, learning processes can be didactically designed to better learning processes. The aim of the article is showing how performance teaching can create a positive base for critical learning, thinking, and doing media, and theoretically analysing and discussing this. Theoretically, the concepts I use are mainly based on bell hooks' works on feminist critical pedagogy. I also lean on Bourdieu's (2001) concept hexis and habitus, and Larsson and Fagrell's (2010) The Conception of Performed Body. I'm furthermore inspired by Selander and Kress' (2010) book on didactic design and Toke Gissel's (2016) work on Media Didactics, which ties my research to my subject Media and Communication studies. Methodologically the case study is based on student questionnaires and interviews. The result shows that students yearn the familiar, they want what they believe a university education and a "proper university lecturer" should be. When taken out of their pre-understandings of this and when the course didactics are consciously designed to foster criticality, they start to think and do critically. The performance lecture is but a small starting point in achieving this, but its effects seem to last students' entire bachelor program (and possibly beyond). The article does not argue for a performance lecture as such, as it could be a hard act hard to follow, but that university lectures should aim for what bell hooks terms practical wisdom. Furthermore, we need to bring embodied learning into the classroom, and we must acknowledge that fostering critical thinking and critical doing is key to any university education.

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Introduction

In today's world of troll-factories, fake-news, and social media algorithms and of course AI it is more than ever important for media educators to include critical thinking and doing into syllabi. However, the past decades I, as a university lecturer, have experienced more and more students being less and less critically aware, not only of media content. Although the media reality was different twenty years ago, the need for enticing critical thinking and doing in students was equally important. Aiming to force students out of their uncritical absorption of course-content only focusing on exams, into a critical mode of thinking and doing, I worked out a kind of performance teaching, which started as an experiment for first semester media and communication students at Malmö University, Sweden. The experiment entailed performing lecturers in totally different lifestyle outfits every day, with the aid of colleagues and the city theatre. What started as an experiment and a way to challenge myself as well as my students, has (albeit slimmed down to one day) become an integral and important part of enticing new students into a critical mode of being.

With 15 years hindsight it is time to critically analyse this and to draw conclusions which could help colleagues tackling lack of criticality which is vital to approach in today's (media) society. I place my analysis within Media- and literacy education (MLE), which has been challenged from critical pedagogy to focus more on enabling future media producers and citizens to navigate (and change) the culture and technology of the current media-scape. Thus, critical approaches to MLE are necessary, both within content, context, and creation of media. How this should be done is, however not clear. This article aims to address this through a discussion of the importance of and challenges to critical thinking-and-doing.

The design of the article is fairly traditional. After a background description of the performance teaching, the main part of the article is a theoretical analysis and discussion of this. First, however the introduction will provide the necessary bits to enable the reader to put together the jigsaw puzzle of my arguments: aim, theoretical concepts and method used.

Aim of the Paper

In this paper I will show one way of didactically designing learning processes that tackles the issues embodied critical thinking and doing. *My main argument* is that by acknowledging that we, as lecturers and students, are physical beings and that learning should take place through one's entire body, learning processes can be didactically designed to better learning processes. The general goal I have with this is to educate democratic, ethical critical, competent and creative media workers.

This paper aims at showing how performance-teaching can create a positive base for critical learning, thinking, and doing media, and theoretically discussing this. I will show and discuss how I performed intersectional criticality over a period of 15 years, and what responses this performance got.

Main Concepts and their Theoretical Base

In this article several theoretical concepts are used, and I will briefly describe and discuss them here.

Critical Pedagogy

When discussing critical pedagogy, my framework is based mainly on bell hooks (2000; 2010) critical feminist pedagogy. Her theoretical base is critical theory and feminist thoughts, and through that she points to that knowledge and education (and thereby academia) is always political. Particularly interesting is her work on democratic theories from a feminist class-perspective (that which today would be termed feminist intersectionality cf. Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016). In one of her first books *Feminist theories from margin to centre* she focusses on the importance of education for liberation, particularly for black women. The importance of education is further explored in *Feminism for everybody:*

> If we do not work to create a mass-based movement which offers feminist education to everyone, females and males, feminist theory and practice will always be undermined by the negative information produced in most mainstream media (hooks 2014: 24).

When exclaiming that education is seen as a practice of freedom, strongly inspired by Paulo Freire (1970), she argues for a feminist pedagogic praxis. We need to learn how to reflect and act in the world in order to change it. For this we need "engaged pedagogy", participation from teachers as well as students to create an interactive learning process.

Critical thinking and Critical doing

Dissecting critical thinking Brookfield (2012) argues that there are four parts to critical thinking that we as university lecturers must be aware of: First, we *hunt assumptions*, which means that we deliberately try to discover what assumptions influence the way we think and act. Secondly, we *check assumptions* i.e., we assess whether or not our assumptions are valid and reliable guides for action. Thirdly, we *see things deliberately from different viewpoints*, e.g., we try to understand our assumptions from our different roles or other's perspectives. Fourthly, *we take informed actions*, i.e., based on our assessments of our assumptions we make decisions. This taking-apart of what critical thinking is can be helpful in creating a didactic to increase students critical-way of being. Brookfields latter point, to take informed actions, is to me not only thinking, but also doing.

Again, I lean on hooks (2000; 2010; 2014) who argues that critical thinking needs to be *done* "outside the box", trying to challenge (societal) norms, as to create more innovative and engaged learning. However, this must always be thought and done through a self-reflexive and responsible way. hooks highlights the importance of addressing issues of race, gender, class, and other forms of oppression within the educational context. She argues that a truly transformative pedagogy must be intersectional and inclusive, acknowledging the diverse experiences and identities of students. By critically examining power dynamics and engaging with issues of privilege and marginalization, educators can help students develop a critical

consciousness and become active participants in dismantling oppressive structures (hooks 2000). Thus, to create deep learning with propensity for change, learning should always start with *doing* and *practice.* The end-result, according to hooks, is "practical wisdom" (hooks 2000; 2010; 2014), which, I argue, is similar to Nussbaum's ethical consciousness and possibly Aristotle's *Sophia* (Nussbaum, 1990). Fostering critical thinking and critical doing is thus key to any university education.

Media Didactic

I place my research in the field of Media- and Communication Studies (in which I teach) and thus the term *Media Didactics* has been invaluable. Didactics is here what to teach, why, to whom, how. I am particularly inspired by Toke Gissel's (2016) work, where he states that media students must not only learn *about* media, but media must be learnt *in* and *through* media, i.e. learning about media whilst doing media.

When deciding *what* didactic to use, Selander and Kress' (2010) book on didactic design is useful. They state that university lecturers should approach didactics as a designer creating a course with the students in different stages, like in a design-process. They also state that in order to create deep learning the learning process should be multimodal and that the entire body should be used in this process.

Although writing about the necessity of that hand and head, and indeed the entire body, should be used in multimodal approaches to learning it is interesting to *not* read about the body in Gissel's (2016) and Selander and Kress' (2010) books. This is not strange. The body is namely almost non-existent in theories of teaching and learning, particularly that of higher education (Larsson & Fagrell 2010).

Embodied teaching

We are our bodies. Our bodies are we. Everything that is I is shown in and through my body. Judith Butler (2006) argues famously that our gender cannot be, unless we perform it, act it. My gender is therefore shown in and through my body and the way it (I) acts. Likewise, Pierre Bourdieu (2001) argues that we embody our habitus, i.e., what our social situation and inheritance has made us. That habitus is embodied means that we show – unconsciously – who we are through our body and by routine behaviour. Hexis is embodied habitus. Class, geography, sexuality, gender, ethnicity – the list is endless of what we show through our body, our hexis, and everything we decorate it with, like cloths, tattoos, jewellery, hairstyles.

Lifestyles has been an important concept in sociology and cultural studies, where taste is and self-identity is manifested through lifestyles, e.g., clothing, hairstyles, media use, music-taste (Featherstone et al 1991; Giddens 1991; Davis 1992; McRobbie 1999). Tying this to Media and Communication Studies, Barnard (1996) argues that fashion must not just be seen as "lifestyles", but a medium and as communication for who we are and want to be. Hence, Barnard is closer to Bourdieu's concept of hexis, as the showcase of habitus. Hexis is more than lifestyles, it is not just who we want to be, not just what we add to our body, but it is also who we intrinsically *are*.

It is therefore surprising how little space the body has in pedagogy and didactics, at least in tertiary education. As opposed to in schools (here I speak about the

Swedish school-law LGR), the body is not mentioned in learning outcomes of (most) university courses (obviously except for medicine, odontology, sports science and similar subjects) (Larsson & Fagrell 2010). In their interesting book *Conceptions of the body* (or *Performed body* – the title carries a double meaning in Swedish) Larsson and Fagrell argue for a conscious embodied teaching practice:

> A teacher of today must not only possess good subjecrt knowledge but must also continuously be prepared to over and over again concour respect and appreciation through their personal approach, an approach that is coloured by current discourses and attitudes about how a good teacher should be (Larsson & Fagrell, 2010:94, my translation).

They furthermore argue that it is important to bring the body into education as pupils (and students) need to be aware of how the body is influenced in today's risk-society by societal and cultural processes, not the least through the media. They show that the body is what executes the demands of advertisements (cf. Larsson & Fagrell, 2010).

My performance teaching will obviously not do all of the above, but is inspired by it, and together with other parts of the didactic design works to create a ground for the fostering of students' criticality. The term *Performance teaching* is my own. It is more than embodied teaching. It is embodied feminist critical pedagogy, and an *act* of feminist critical pedagogy. The act and acting are important and students are invited into the act as an interactive audience to feel, think, intervene, judge, make decisions. Thus, they learn through the acting act, the performance.

Method

The empirical base of the paper is questionnaires with students made over years, i.e., at the end of each course where the performance-teaching took place. In 2008 interviews were made with all students in the course, and 2023 a selection of 2nd and 3rd year student plus alumni were interviewed. The latter interviewees were self-chosen as a response to a question that was asked on the program Facebook site.

As is common when analysing interviews the method of analysis used was thematic textual analysis, which means that deep knowledge of the text is achieved through thorough reading (cf Kvale & Brinkman 2014). During this reading several themes were found. Thereafter another round of reading was done with the aid of these themes, i.e. the texts were divided into themes, and then were theoretically analysed. The "texts" in this case refers both to the transcribed interviews and to the answers of the questionnaires. The latter consisted of a few fil-in questions, asking about Margareta's age, marital status, ethnicity et cetera, but most of the questions were open-ended with analysable texts.

Performance Teaching over 15 years

The way the performance teaching was carried out varied over the years will be briefly describe as a background to the analysis.

Frustration and Experimental Acting

The performance teaching was borne out of frustration. I experienced that students got less and less critical over the years and more and more instrumental. "Which books do we *need* to buy?" "What pages do we *have to* read for the examination?" "Exactly what pages do we need to read for tomorrow's lecture?" were frequent questions. For the first year, first course *Cultural Industry* I decided to try an experiment that I had thought of for some time. I dressed in very different lifestyles and decided to carry on until one of the students questioned what I was doing. The course lasted five weeks and every day I wore very different outfits, with the help of all colleagues in the department. Most of my colleagues were involved and supported the experiment with interest. I wore for example gym-clothes, a ballgown, paint-stained dungarees, a punky outfit, a biker-outfit, dressed like an old woman and as a man. In figure one there are some of the 20 outfits I wore. I carried on teaching in the same way as I would normally do, and the only thing that differed was the outfits.

Figure 1. *Different Styles 2007*

At the end of the course not a single student had asked what *why* or even showed signs they had noticed my different outfits. Consequently, I decided to spend a three-hour lecture on discussing the experiment. The very last day wore a traditional Swedish folk costume. I gave all the students a questionnaire where they were asked to fill in what books, films, newspapers, and music they thought I liked, what was my "real" lifestyle, my marriage status, sexuality, family constellation, class background, where and how I lived, and to describe what my living-room looked like. They were also asked to say what they thought the experiment was about, what they thought it had meant for their learning of the cultural industry, and their attitude towards it.

With a Little help from the Theatre

Based on student responses I decided to repeat the performances the following year. I decided, however, both to step up and scale down the performance and only do it the first five days but add quality. Again, I had the support of my colleagues, but I also got help from the Malmö Theatre with make-up, wigs, clothing, and acting coaching. On the first lecture I acted an older, strict professor and as a contrast, the following day I wore baggy army pants, a hoody and a Palestine shawl and acted

more as a sloppy student. The third day I dressed as, what in Sweden is term a "culture lady", being calm, cool, speaking about what cultural activities to see and do in Malmö. On the fourth I enacted a rather giggly, whimsical happy-go-lucky colourful blond girl. Finally, the fifth day I wore a hijab and a niqab. I removed the niqab after students asking me to repeat sentences as she could not *see* what I said. At the end of the lecture, I took off the hijab and underneath wore a kilt and a black t-shirt and long red hair, which students thought was the "real Margareta". At the end of the class, after the debriefing (see below), I ended by removing the red-haired wig and saying that the students should never take anything at face value, always remain critical. And then I started the de-briefing.

Figure 2. *Different Styles 2008*

10 Minutes of Provocative Performance

Figure 3. *Professor Signe*

The third year, I decided to only do the performance on the very first part of the very first lecture (on the first course on the first semester), as the performances were very tiring for myself: it takes courage, time and energy to carry out this kind of

performance lecture. I also decided to choose a character that provoked the students, but only a little, and not the characters that got the most positive or negative responses. I thus chose "Professor Signe" (the name I gave her in honour of a professor I had at school). Professor Signe is grey-haired women of certain age, dressed in old-fashioned tweed skirt-suit, a silk scarf, old women's shoes and beige socks to the knees. She was very strict and took no nonsense. Students being late were challenged, as were those wearing a cap, or students talking during the lecture. She used a walker as she seemed physically disabled, and she was not comfortable at all with new technology (like power-point). The power-point took a while to start up, and she got more and more agitated. The power-point slides were all in English (albeit a Swedish class), packed full of text and of typologies of poor quality. Professor Signe read with very poor English from the slides, and with her back to the students. In short, she did all the pedagogic mistakes possible. Meanwhile, Professor Signe got "very hot" and removes, scarf, and jacket. At this point, she stated that "she is still hot", change slide to stop-mark and exclaimed that enough is enough, whereby she let the skirt drop, removed her shoes and half-socks. However, a black dress was worn underneath the tweed suit. She looked at each of the students (who by now realise that it was a performance) and removed the grey-haired wig and the make-up (pale skin and lots of wrinkles). This part took 5-10 minutes depending on students' responses. During these performances it was indeed very important to keep track of student's reactions to stop the performance if needed, in case any student got too agitated. However, that never happened.

During the second part of the performance, I let the students dress me. Standing barefoot with a simple black dress on, I placed several items of clothing on a table, and let them choose the shoes, scarf, jacket, jumper, jewellery, make-up et cetera that I would wear, whilst all the time asking why- and what-questions. Through those I explained and discussed the performance and connected it to the course, which the past ten years has been *The Changing Media-Scape*, where critical thinking and doing and visual methodology has been the core of the pedagogic design (Lindskog & Melin, 2023). Then the de-briefing started.

Debriefing

After the first year's experimental style changing, I realised that for the effectiveness of the pedagogic idea, a de-briefing is vital. Students need to ask, to feel, to think, and to do, as a response to what they experienced. Also, the pedagogic design behind the performance is important to discuss.

The second year, when I performed five days, I held a 3-hour workshop where students, again, filled in a substantial questionnaire. I furthermore held a lecture about critical thinking and critique of sources and tied this to the course and to their assessment. I also interviewed all students in groups of five. This was done to reiterate and strengthen the message behind the pedagogic design.

The thirteen following years, I spent one hours after the performance of "Professor Signe" asking about feelings, thoughts, attitudes. Together we discussed the purpose of the performance and of the importance of critical thinking and doing. Although this seemed to have been enough for years, the past two years, however, students

have asked for more information and more discussion. Possibly, the current situation with fake news and AI has prompted this. This year the performance took place during a 3-hour lecture on critical thinking, critical doing and media critique. As I have not received the questionnaire responses from this years' students an analysis of this will have to wait.

That a kind of de-briefing and pedagogic discussion is needed shows other performance teaching I have done over the years, as I have several times been asked to give this kind performance lecture, e.g., in conferences, as part of a university wide education, to give speeches to other organisations. What I have learnt from painful experience is that it never works without a context. I cannot go into a lecture hall and just start to change cloths, because it becomes a cloth-changing session. I need to contextualise it and spend time explaining the pedagogy and involve the audience. Furthermore, the audience cannot be too big, as I need to keep eye-contact to check that no one feels too bad (provoked is good, panicking is bad) about the situation.

Theoretically analysing the Performance Teaching

The first year's teaching was born out of frustration and a wish to make students more critical. The second year was grounded in experience and the results of students' questionnaires. With further experiences, questionnaires and interviews over the years I could theoretically explore the performance teaching, and indeed deliberately and consciously carry it out on theoretical ground and with a clear pedagogic and didactic purpose. That I want to discuss here.

Embodied teaching

Through my performance teaching I have indeed become conscious myself of my body and the way it influences students, and through the performance try to make students aware of hexis, not the least their own. Butlers performed gender and Bourdieus habitus and hexis are important concepts in the first course, and thus my performance teaching the first lecture becomes an excellent didactic base for discussions of these concepts during the course. Students embodied pre-understandings and stereotypes are also continuously worked with and discussed, as are how these have become embodied. One didactic example is that the students are asked to sit like a "proper girl", and then like bloke. This simple exercise makes it abundantly clear to all male students how uncomfortable sitting like a proper girl is, and how physically comfortable, but mentally *un*comfortable sitting like a bloke is to most female students. The assessment students do is also about hexis and performed gender, and focus on students' own selfies in social media, and how *the body* is at risk in our current risk society (Lindskog & Melin 2023).

It is, however, not strange that most lectures are not aware of how their body influence students. It is not in the university discourse to talk of bodies (Larsson & Fagrell 2010). Bourdieu (2001) argues, however, that we are partly aware of our hexis and indeed use it to create identity. I am sure all us lectures have chosen certain

clothing because it is a "teaching day" and possibly other cloths when it is only a sitting-in-the-office research day. Most of us, as Larsson and Fagrell show, are however not aware how much the students both judge us and are affected by us.

A Proper Lecturer

After the first years' performance it was made abundantly clear to me that that students always react to *who* and *how* the lecturer is. Students do not necessarily talk to us, the lecturers about it, but they discuss it amongst themselves. Over the years, only *one* person asked *me* why I was doing the performance, and that was the second year in 2008. When afterwards asking the students, they told me that they discussed the performance amongst each other, but also about how all lectures were and looked like.

Only three students have been openly negative towards the performance teaching. The first year two students reacted negatively through the questionnaires they filled in:

> I really don't see the point of the exercise. It was too much like playschool for my liking (male student, 2007, my translation).
> I was really frustrated about all the changes because I did not know what Margareta I was writing the paper [examination] for. In the end I chose the Margareta that was dressed like a man in a suit, because that was the most trustworthy (female student, 2007, my translation).

In 2022 one student reacted in the course assessment to the lifestyles that I had previously done:

> To dress like a black-faced muslim is not suitable (student assessment 2022, my translation).

These reactions are all interesting. The first one is the kind of attitudes I had expected and was prepared for. What has surprised me is that not more students have expressed this. Regarding the third quotation, that a student reacted to what I did 16 years earlier, I believe can be explained by a general increased sensibility amongst students regarding race, ethnicity, and LBGTQI+ issues. The second quotation is tied to trustworthiness of the university lecturer and to what kind of lecturer they find trustworthy, and "a proper lecture".

Figure 4. *A Proper University Lecturer*

So, what is a proper, trustworthy lecturer? For 20 years I have let my students, in every course I do, make drawings of the important concepts of the particular course I teach. Male and female are always there, as is university lecturer (Melin 2012; 2015). When doing this exercise with first year students, regardless of subject, the same pattern emerges and has remained the same over these 20 years. Almost all students (my guess is 98%) see the university lecturer as a man. A trustworthy, rational, objective, knowledgeable man with glasses and a beard. And this is so even though a woman university lecturer, standing in front of them, just asked them to draw the concept. In 2008 I showed the students images of different lecturers clad differently and with the head removed from the photograph. *All* students replied that what they thought of were men were more trustworthy and more like *a proper lecturer* (figure 4). The outfits they preferred was casual suits with a shirt but no tie, and a shirt and chinos in the summer. This view has been confirmed every single year in the de-briefing discussions and in the drawing exercises (Melin 2012; 2015) I have had with my students. From this perspective, the female student choosing to write her paper to the trustworthy "male" Margareta is understandable.

Figure 5. *"Professor Signe" 2008*

The second year in 2008, when de-briefed, students also filled in what they thought of each style I wore. When checking for age and gender it was clear that

women and those really young students preferred the older grey-haired stricter style (figure 5):

> Strict, somewhat severe. A typical teacher stereotype (female student).
> Strict and decisive teacher. Imposing and distanced (female student).
> The style the first days felt strict and gave a boring impression. I had not expected that, but I felt respect for her (female student).
> A bit severe and very proper. East German? (male student).

The style male students preferred was the blond happy-go-lucky girly type (figure 6).

> This Margareta is funnier and more relaxed (male student).
> I felt absolutely the best with this one. More female, girly, sexual appeal, which made feel good (male student).
> Relaxed, very kind, interested, happy, bubbly (male student).
> Strange. Mid-life crisis? Nursery school teacher-vibes. Wanted to be cool and hip (female student).

Figure 6. *"Blond and Happy" 2008*

Female students reacted very negative to attempts to dress "mutton as lamb" and were particularly negative towards the different coloured converse sneakers I wore, as "only young and really cool people wear shoes like that" (female student).

Figure 7. *"Severe and Arty" 2008*

The character most students had expected as a university lecturer in Media and Communication was this this (figure 7):

> Academic but not as strict as the first older style, but more bohemic. This is when I really started to like the changes in style and thought it was exciting (male student).
> Looked like a language teacher, who likes to go to the theatre (male student).
> Artist from Österlen [an arty Swedish district]. Charming, warm, funny (female student).
> Creative, but more awe-inspiring, informative, artistic, interesting to discuss issues with (male student).
> Strict, harder, competent and extremely self assured (female student).

Figure 8. *"Palestinian Student" 2008*

The character that the student in 2022 reacted against as racist when hearing about my previous performance teaching was perceived negatively by students in 2008, but of totally different reasons. It was not wat the 2022-student called a "black-face" they reacted to, but the general style of the character (figure 8).

> I did not understand it was Margareta. I thought it was a fishy type that walked about. Why sunglasses indoors? (female student).
> Before I realised it was Margareta I thought what a fishy person, what is she doing here. But when I realised [it was Margareta] then she just became a bit bohemic, odd person in my view (female student).
> What kind of buffoon is that? My first thought was that it was a suicide bomber (male student).

There were many more comments like these, and during the de-briefing students said they reacted the strongest against the sunglasses (indoors) and the Palestine shawl, as they wanted to see the eyes and that they perceived that any kind of ideological symbols were forbidden for university lecturers. Also, the niqab was perceived negatively for both these reasons. Interestingly, the hijab was not perceived negatively, but as a rather natural piece of clothing in multi-cultural Malmö. However, students did not expect a university lecturer to dress in hijab and thought that a lecturer in hijab would have religious perspectives in the course. These thoughts on religion were, however, not directed against "Professor Signe" despite her having a large crucifix in a chain around her neck. Religious influence was apparently perceived as only connected to Islam.

Figure 9. *Improper Folk-costume 2007-2008*

If the most proper university lecturer is a man clad in casual suit and shirt, the worst of the worst, the most improper style (as stated by *all* classes over the years) is a lecturer dressed in folk costume. When asked, students give vague remarks that "it is just *wrong"* or "it is the wrong place for a folk-costume". They could not fathom a lecturer in folk-costume, but they could understand that some lecturers might show their ideology. Throughout the years, a university lecturer showing ideology is what the students reacted the strongest against. It was seen as highly improper.

This must be understood as more than a (dis)likeness for a certain lifestyle, and indeed more than that fashion is a medium communicating lifestyles (cf Barnard 1996). It might be applicable when only looking at the style, the clothing and jewellery, but the performance *itself* and where it took place must also be considered. As Bourdieu (1988; 19939) hexis is tied to habitus and thus one's social position in society. A university lecturer has through her place in the academic field, achieved a certain status. With that comes expectations, and consequently students' beliefs of what the university should carry: *The* impartial, neutral, objective *Truth* and that the lecturer is the impartial, neutral, objective and distant carrier of this (cf Bourdieu 1988; Larsson & Fagrell 2010). For this, I argue, an antidote is needed.

Critical doing and critical thinking

The antidote I sought for students' uncriticality in 2007 was my first experimental attempt at performance teaching and their responses showed me I was on the right path. In a group interview from 2007 some students discussed what they had learnt:

> I loved it. the whole experience made me question the way I see school and seee knowledge. And it was fun and exiting (female student 2007).
> The pedagiogy is good. One puts the finger on important questions like identity and class (male student 2007).
> I was a bit confused and thought at first that she must have a huge wardrobe. The whole experiment open up ones' eyes. One doesn't want to be a person that puts people in boxes. But… (female student 2007)
> I don't really agree. I think it could be interesting to place people in boxes. During the 1800s there were clear class-markers that showed where you belong. Today it is not the same at all (male student 2007).

> But that is the whole point. The experiment showed that I *do* have stereotypes, and I *do* make judgements like what's his name Bordeaux [sic] sais. I have started being critical to my own views (female student 2007)
> That's right, me too (male student 2007).

They show that they have reflected on their own pre-understandings and that they connect this to societal structures, which to hooks (2010) argues is necessary in order to change the world. This is why it is so important for students to learn critical thinking. According to Brookfield (2012) it is law-bound as societies need critical citizens that can make informed decisions and act accordingly (cf. Brookfield 2012). This is reflected in the Swedish university law (1992:1434) that states that all BA-students must develop ability to make independent and critical judgments. In a subject like Media and Communication Studies, developing criticality, particularly media critique is vital for students to learn. They are after all going to be working in the media industry, producing content. Having a critical approach to their sources and competitors are a vital part of being a media producer. Göran Svensson (2015) does a thorough study of criticality and critical practices and focuses on the importance of media critique. Like Svensson, I argue that criticality, an inherent critical approach, is important for students to develop.

To Pierre Bourdieu criticality is embedded in his entire field theory. Our tastes entail criticality, being critical towards everyone that is not like "us". He has famously stated that taste not only signifies, but signifies the signifier, i.e., our judgments and critique and the distinctions we make, say more the one making the judgments than about the object of it. This is at the core of my performance teaching. With it I try to make students understand that they (all of us) always make judgments, that stereotyping is a necessity for our brain, that they come into the classroom full of pre-understandings (cf Melin 2012; 2015). According to the response received, I have succeed.

> The experience was unique and not at all what I thought would happen [starting university], but I think now that it was necessary in order to break the stereotypical [view of] university. I also think it was an eye-opener (1st semester student 2022).
> Yes, you absolutely have to do the Signe thing for next years's students as well. It really taught me a lot about the way I think about things, and about objectivity, that it does not exist (female 3rd year student 2021).
> Every time I have written an assignment I have thought about Aunt Signe. She is kind of with me and whisper to remain critical to what I read (male 3rd year student 2021).

This kind of criticality is necessary in institutions like academia, journalism and the media (Svensson, 2015). To me, however, thinking critically is not enough, with criticality should also come critical *doing*. Particularly bell hooks's theories in her book *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* is inspiring for this. Like hooks I have tried to develop a framework for empowering students through transformative learning processes. Education should be a tool for social justice and liberation. Thus, when I myself state that I want to educate democratic, ethical critical competent and creative media workers, my inspiration comes from hooks.

To do so, hooks stresses, the significance of creating a democratic and inclusive classroom environment, where students are actively involved in the learning process, where their experiences and voices are valued, and where they can participate in the co-creation of knowledge. This participatory approach fosters a sense of community and empowers students to become critical thinkers and agents of change (hooks 2010). Starting from student's own experiences and taking them seriously is important, and from hooks I have drawn to let students' feelings, thoughts, attitudes, stereotypes become visible in the classroom. Thus, to understand the ever-changing media-scape and give to students tools to change this in the future, I designed a didactic where the starting point is their own feelings, thoughts, pre-understandings, and of course their own social media use. Through the performance-teaching, the drawings of their pre-understandings of key concepts, and the analysis of their own social media use they will not only learn about hexis and performed gender, but also critically reflect on it. That is, thinking critically. But what about doing critically?

The performance teaching will not do all of this, but it will, together with other parts of the course's didactic design become a ground for students' realisation that thinking and doing critically are important. By performing the first hour of the first course of the first semester of the BA course, I set the ground for a different pedagogic and didactic design. Students, as evident from all the response I have had over the years, appreciate that learning can be done differently from how they are used to or what they expect. Learning can be playful and political at the same time. Never objective. The performance teaching is followed up with a group-based assessment where student must *do* criticality, by making an intersectional analysis (critical thinking) of their own social media selfies, and then make norm-critical images based on their analysis (critical doing) (Lindskog & Melin 2023). Their first experience of the university (the performance teaching) is, hence, tied to an embodied and visual learning design, where students not only learn, but learn to live, to paraphrase John Dewey.

Conclusion

In this paper I have aimed at showing a way enticing students' critical thinking and doing through performance-teaching and attempted to create understanding of the theoretical basis for this. Theoretically, the paper draws on feminist and critical pedagogy, particularly bell hooks' works. I also draw on Bourdieu's field theory, Selander and Kress' work on didactic design that ought to be multimodal, and Toke Gissel's definition on media didactics.

The result of the paper shows that students yearn the familiar, a "proper university lecturer", but when taken out of their pre-understandings of what university education and university professors are, they start to think and do critically. Interviews with students show that the effects of the performance-teaching last their entire bachelor program (and beyond?).

From a lecturer's perspective, the performance is an act hard to follow, as it is risky (cf Biesta 2013), takes courage and takes time. The latter is a rare commodity for us lecturers. Albeit not following my act of performance teaching there are other

learnings to be made. I argue with hooks (2000; 2010) that we need "engaged pedagogy" from teachers to involve students to create an engaged, interactive learning process. I also argue with Larsson and Fagrell (2010) that the body must take up more space in the classroom and in teaching. We as university lecturers should acknowledge that we and our students are physical beings, and that learning should take place through one's entire body. That way learning processes can be delilberatly didactically designed to better learning processes. For media students, achieving criticality, a critical mode that is reflected in critical doing, is vital for them as future media workers. Media didactics should therefore entail multimodality with a conscious focus on the body's learning potential, of critical thinking and doing, and all this from an intersectional perspective. Perhaps then what hooks terms practical wisdom can be achieved.

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