

The Truth About Casting: An Analysis of Typecasting in the Boston Theatre Market

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RUNNING HEAD: THE TRUTH ABOUT CASTING



BOSTON COLLEGE

MORRISSEY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

THE TRUTH ABOUT CASTING:

AN ANALYSIS OF TYPECASTING IN THE BOSTON THEATRE MARKET

A SENIOR HONOR THESIS

BY

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Abstract

As a young woman who plans on pursuing acting after graduation, I have begun to learn how I must craft myself in the professional world. In theatre, the importance of accurately portraying one's "type" is a concept that has been consistently stressed. One sees the irony of "type" if they consider the very premise of acting, to portray someone other than oneself. If acting is actually "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" as Meisner suggests, then any actor should be able to play any role. However, actors are constantly pigeonholed into roles that objectify them to a particular type.

Academic research has failed to sufficiently address casting conventions, especially in theatre. My study aims to address this gap by gaining insight on casting practices from the director's perspective. To put it simply, it is my hope that this thesis will reveal the intricacies of casting, including the prevalence of type. Consequently, this will generate a better understanding of the process so that others and myself can learn how to breed success and simultaneously maintain our dignity whilst adhering to a field that requires one to brand themselves.

Keywords: casting, typecasting, theatre

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ask any actor and you will find that typecasting is a phenomenon they have all undoubtedly experienced. Despite its negative connotation, it is something that has become expected and normalized within the industry. A prime example of its ubiquity can be seen in the reactions toward a season announcement. Actors have this tendency to gossip and create mock cast lists; where they try and guess who will get what part long before auditions even start. Sometimes directors even take part in this custom, urging certain students to audition for their play or hinting at future shows. This is something I have witnessed since high school, and continue to witness here at Boston College. I cannot claim that I am not guilty of partaking in this charade. Every theatre person has at least once said “Oh, I could totally see him/her as this character”, or “You know who would be perfect for that role?”. It’s an inherent part of human nature. We like to make assumptions, we like to label, and these are formulated from focusing on a few key attributes of a person. So, when casting (or mock casting) individuals are reflecting mass culture and its use of stereotypes. In the world of theatre this is referred to as typecasting. Like most actors, typecasting was something I simply accepted. It was not until my sophomore year that I began to actively question its leverage.

In the spring of 2016, I was not cast in a single production at Boston College. This was a particularly difficult time in my life due to a number of personal reasons, and so this was quite a blow to my self-esteem. I was depending on being cast in a production so I could have something to put my energy towards, a site of escape, and ultimately a source of happiness. What made this more upsetting was the fact that I had been cast as the lead that fall, Lydia, in Charles Mee’s *Big Love*. To jump from a leading role to ensemble, or even not being cast, is not unusual. However, my situation attracted the attention of one of the theatre professors. Although I knew of this

professor (as he is pretty revered in the department and I had auditioned for him in the past), I had no real relationship with him because I had not been his student. I can still vividly recall our first meeting. He said to me, “I noticed you did not get cast this round, why is that?”. Certainly, I had no real answer for him beyond the fact that I was perhaps not the best candidate for any roles (although admittedly I certainly did not believe that to be completely true). Essentially, he confirmed my estimate. He told me that due to a lot of my intrinsic factors I was not well suited for any of the shows, especially because they were all contemporary plays (apparently I have an affinity for classical work). I was too educated sounding, too mature, too put together, too kind, etc., and he made it apparent that I was also being evaluated on my appearance. All of these aspects of my identity made it impossible for me to be seen as a tough girl, or anyone of a lower status, qualities that happened to describe most of the female roles of that season. Essentially, I had been the victim of typecasting. It is impossible to know whether or not this was influenced by the fact that I had auditioned for my peers who know me personally, but regardless I felt that my talent as an actor had not been properly assessed.

It was that day that we began to do acting work. Once a week, I would spend an hour discussing, analyzing, and performing monologues. I also spent time outside of these sessions reading new plays, and sometimes even watching films. Nearly every character he assigned me was one that opposed my perceived “type” as the pretty, blonde, and innocent ingénue. Instead, he gave me the opportunity to play fierce women, deranged women, women of a lower class. He allowed me to begin to expand the spectrum of the roles I could play. But, how would this fare outside of the BC bubble? I had come to learn throughout my time at Boston College that branding oneself is central for entry into the professional world. And so, I was at a crossroads. I loved exploring characters that were vastly different from myself, but I knew that this was

discordant with the conventions of the industry. Further, I was discontent with the restrictions my type has and may continue to bring me. I found myself feeling desperate to find a balance that would aid me as I pursue an acting career. Thus, my fascination with typecasting developed.

The irony of “type” lies in its disunity with the very premise of acting, to be someone other than oneself. This assertion assumes then that any actor should be able to play any role. Actors however are constantly cast in roles that objectify them to a particular type. Whether this is based on physicality or personality, it calls attention to inherent parts of an actor’s identity. Even though this may provide an easy point of initial entry for actors, type is notorious for being inescapable. Some actors may be okay with this; as to them the real success is having constant work. But for others it may become a nuisance, a practice that does not allow them to expand or showcase their talents. Type is believed to be more widespread in the fields of film and television. As a result, an understanding and proper execution of one’s type has become a stressed in acting pedagogy because most of the available jobs are in those two fields. But how prominent is the use of type in theatre?

Previous academic research has failed to address casting practices in theatre. Further, general discussion on casting has left it shrouded in a cloud of mystery. The only solid fact that has been made evident is that there is a universal faith in those making the casting decisions to select the best actor for the role. At times, this may be true. But as an individual who works at youth theatre camps, I have observed first hand how subjective casting can be and that there are several potential ways to cast a single production. At Apple Tree Arts, often times we try to spread the wealth and allow different children to have the opportunity to shine. Another illustration of casting’s subjectivity was in my high school’s director metaphoric explanation of casting. She used to say that it is like a puzzle, you have to play around until you make all of the

pieces (actors) fit. This idea is also contested in the use of seniority (casting the eldest participants due to their impending graduation or due to the reliability of their experience). Though these refer to amateur, academic settings, they nonetheless provide inside into the complexity of casting. Then, in order to address this gap I interviewed Boston theatre directors with the hope of learning how casting functions in a professional setting and further finding the answer to my research question: How, if at all, prevalent is “type” in casting processes?

Through my research, four salient codes emerged: “Identity”, “Decisive Factors”, “Relationships” and “Roles “. “Identity” revealed all aspects of an actor, both physical and personal, that are assessed during the audition process. Interestingly, my participants only regarded physicality as a factor of type and not personality despite that they all deliberately cast actors based on their persona. “Identity” ties into the assumption mentioned above that an actor could play any role. The typing of an actor takes away from this supposed transformative quality. Next, “decisive factors” refer to external forces outside of the actor that influence casting decisions. These include influential individuals such as the director or playwright, the size of the market, company policy, and money. This secondary code verifies that casting is reliant on a multitude of factors, and that it is situational as to which ones take control. Then, “relationships” defines the necessity of networking. The field is truly about whom you know, and the more people an actor has as sites of references, the more opportunity available to them. Finally, “roles” discusses the current stories being told and the representation that we see onstage. Although Boston professionals are taking responsibility and are aiming for greater diversity in representation (racially, gender wise, etc.), there is still a long way to go in this regard.

In conclusion, my research confirmed that typecasting is not only present but is central in theatre. Typecasting takes on many forms. It still functions in its traditional sense as an

assessment of one's appearance. Additionally, it now also involves the judgment of one's personality. The relational aspect of the field has also become a form of type, where directors can surpass the formality of holding auditions, or go into auditions with a preconceived bias. The recent industrial shift toward honoring authenticity has awakened the need for diversity. As ideal as this shift is, it nonetheless contributes to typecasting as it demands realism, and draws upon the raw qualities of an actor that make them a cookie cutter version of the character in question.

Chapter 2: Context/ Description of the Topic of Study

Type casting

Entertainment revolves around viewer consumption, feeding the audience's desire for the portrayal of a more perfect, alluring, and more opulent world (Miller, 1992). This standard of perfection causes an audience to desire predictability, just like they do in society (Fusco, 2013). Thus, the producers and directors of entertainment industries often center their work on the expectations of their audience.

If an actor associates himself or herself with a single category (such as ingénue), it restricts his or her range for future opportunities (Hannan, Hsu, and Pólos, 2011). Hannan, Hsu, and Pólos (2011) state that typecasting can have a positive, neutral or negative valuation. It is the audience's positive response to characters that meet societal expectations that give type casting its positive valuation. When life is portrayed differently than what has become customary/ socially acceptable the result is negative valuation and ultimately discrimination (Chamberlain, 2016). However it is crucial to note that this valuation is positive only in terms of the producers/ directors, and not the actors themselves.

An actor's "type" is based on the first impression provided by their physical attributes and personality. An actor's career, most specifically at the start, depends on their marketability and this is directly associated to their "type" (Green, 2014). Actors are trained to learn their type, and to properly execute this in auditions via material choice, headshots, etc. As actors internalize this discourse of type, they perpetuate it by trying to get cast in a role they are "appropriate for". According to Herrera (2015), the mythos of casting presumes that the "best actor" is always chosen to play a role. More accurately, this process of casting is based upon auditions that reduce an actor to a commodity, so that they begin to regard themselves in that light (Herrera, 2015).

An actor's type is seen as fundamental, regardless of whether the actor themselves identifies with it. This causes one to embrace a type they may not conform to, or change who they are until they find a type with which they can be content (Chamberlain, 2016). It is not until an actor has established some degree of success that they then have the possibility of breaking out of this image. But successful examples of this are not the norm.

It should come as no surprise that limiting oneself at the onset of a career confines one's vocational growth. By initially holding oneself to this standard of "type", they fashion a longer, more strenuous path of transgression (which may never come). For many young women, typecasting has its roots in sexual attractiveness. This misogynistic standard placed on women is apparent in many fields, including film and television (Chamberlain, 2016). Theatre tends to be forgotten in this scope. But, theatre serves as the primary training ground for actors. Therefore physical beauty is likely an underlying issue within the realm of theatre.

Gender and casting

Typecasting influences females differently than males seeking a career in theatre. There is an "unconscious" gender bias in actor training that reflects the gender imbalance of the industry. Despite the fact that fifty-one percent of the population is female, and sixty-eight percent of Broadway's audience is female, women are still fighting for gender parity in theatre (Evans, 2015). The recognition of this gender gap began after a feminist theatre study group protested at five shows in London's West End in 1978 ("A Brief History of the Gender Parity", 2017). They questioned the implications of female characters portrayed on stage in their pamphlets: Blondes are dumb? Wives are nags? Older Women are sexless? Inspired by their pickets, the group Action for Women in Theatre looked into US theaters between 1969 to 1975, and the results were shocking. They showed that a mere 7 percent of playwrights and directors

from regional and off Broadway theatres were women (Evan, 2015). The lack of female playwrights and directors also translate into limited opportunities for female actors. Even today the available roles for females tend to be stereotypical, insulting, or passive and are characteristic of a “world dominated by the male imagination”(“A Brief History of the Gender Parity”, 2017).

One disturbing aspect of the industry, especially in Hollywood, is a phenomenon called the “casting couch”. The casting couch refers to the supposed practice whereby actors or actresses are awarded parts in return for granting sexual favors to the casting director. Despite the 2015 creation of the Manifesto for Casting, a set of good practice guidelines that recommends, among other things, that “no sex act should be requested at any audition” and “a performer should not be requested to undress in whole or in part unless a mutual agreed upon observer is present” (par 2) the casting couch is still very much alive and in practice (Jones, 2017). Numerous actresses such as Helen Mirren, Jenny McCarthy, Megan Fox, Gwyneth Paltrow, Susan Sarandon etc. have stated that either they were sexually propositioned for future career advancement or sexually harassed in the audition room, or production process (Jones, 2017; “15 Actresses Who Spoke Out”, 2017). Actress Lena Headey of *Game of Thrones* reveals that in her 20s she was told by a casting director that "the men take these tapes home and watch them and say, 'Who would you f---?'" Headey believes she lost out on roles because she refused to flirt or use her feminine wiles in the audition room (“15 Actresses Who Spoke Out”, 2017). It is important to note that all of these incidents happened in the early stages of their careers, while the women were in their 20s. This is problematic because female actors who are just starting out will most likely be fearful of speaking out against harassment, because if they do then their career may very likely be over (Jones, 2017).

This topic is currently driving the daily news. Ever since Harvey Weinstein was accused by dozens of women of sexual assault in October 2017, there has been a flood of other sexual harassment allegations. A prominent film producer and executive, Weinstein's accusations brought attention to a major issue in the entertainment industry. However additional accusations involving other influential individuals such as politicians, prove that this is not unique or isolated to entertainment mediums, but is an issue in society at large.

Another main issue for women is that their "expiration date" arrives much earlier than men. While male actors reach their peak in their mid 40s, female actors reach their professional pinnacle at the age of 30 (Wilson, 2015). A prime example of this can be seen in the love interests of Hollywood's leading men in films (such as Denzel Washington, Tom Hanks, Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt, Harrison Ford, etc.). Studies have shown that as leading men age, their love interests stay the same, and often that is under the age of 40 (Buchanan, 2013). The female co-stars that these actor are meant to woo range anywhere from 10 to 30 years younger (Buchanan, 2013).

Current view of casting- the demand for authenticity

Casting conventions have seen a tremendous shift over the past decade. We are now in the era of *Hamilton*, where casting has flipped from being "color-blind" (selecting actors without taking ethnicity into account) to "color-conscious" (understanding the profound implications of skin color) (Gelt, 2017). Therefore, new roles are being written and there is greater diversity in casting in order to provide more opportunity to minority actors. This change has sparked numerous conversations around race in casting, but has neglected to open up dialogue on how it with impact other factors of an actors identity.

Rationale

As a young woman who plans on pursuing acting after graduation, I have begun to learn how I must craft myself in the professional world. Yet, I have found myself grappling with the harsh reality of the field I love, and want to immerse myself into. In theatre, the importance of accurately portraying one's "type" is a concept that has been consistently stressed. One sees the irony of "type" if they consider the very premise of acting, to portray someone other than oneself. If acting is actually "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" as Meisner suggests, then any actor should be able to play any role. Actors however are constantly pigeonholed into roles that objectify them to a particular type. These concerns prompted me to think about the actor as a commodity.

In light of my preoccupation with the commodification of actors, the following literature review is comprised of three sections: the casting process and typecasting, body image and objectification, and finally actor training/ pedagogy. First, I will explore the history of the casting process in the United States. I will assess how its transformation has largely been impacted by the star system of Hollywood and, as a result, has led to the demand of "realistic performance" and the use of typecasting. This is necessary because it validates that the images we see in pop culture helps determine the stories we tell in theatre (or at least the stories that get produced). Then, I will look at how consumerism has impacted body image, in order to demonstrate how the conception of beauty in America has ingrained itself into many disciplines. Finally, I will conclude with how current actor training at universities has the goal of getting their students into the professional field despite the competition and scarcity of jobs. Therefore, theatre educators emphasize the importance of understanding one's type, and promote typecasting.

Through these sections I will demonstrate that research on typecasting has the following gap: a general lack of inquiry on casting conventions, specifically in theatre. My study aims to

address this gap by gaining insight on casting practices from the director's perspective. To put it simply, it is my hope that this thesis will reveal the intricacies of casting, possibly highlight if there is any discrepancy between how males and females are judged, and most crucially address the prevalence of typecasting. Consequently, this will generate a better understanding of the casting process so that others and myself can learn how to breed success and simultaneously maintain our dignity whilst adhering to a field that requires one to brand themselves. We live in a commercial world, and in order to progress and escape from its consumerist trap we must interrogate images of people as objects versus subjects. Theatre is the foundation from which all mediums (film, television, etc.) evolved and is where most actors learn their craft (Smit, 2015). Although the jobs in the industry are turning toward film and television, theatre is still the root. Therefore, theatre has the potential to influence culture. We should assess how theatre educators and professionals are currently addressing this power, what images they present of humanity and finally devise ways to change any flaws for the betterment of society.

The Literature Review

Casting- the evolution, the process, and typecasting. Previous research has found a scarcity of historical or theoretical inquiry on casting, the process by which an actor is assigned a particular role. Robinson (2007) explores these issues in his work on casting and auditions. He argues that the casting process balances between two tensions. First, casting falls under the First Amendment right, which protects artistic freedom. This means that we may not view casting that echoes a script's race and sex preferences as unreasonable or offensive. The First Amendment allows casting directors to disregard the Title VII enforcement that prohibits any job posting that indicate a preference for applicants of a certain race and/or sex, in so far that discrimination in casting is deemed "necessary for the purpose of authenticity or genuineness" (3). Second, casting

is subject to employment regulations that ban hiring decisions based on these same factors and thus can be seen as problematic. In lieu of the first issue, casting based on certain desirable traits should not be viewed as problematic or offensive because it adheres to demands of the script. But, in light of the second topic, casting decisions can be seen as perpetuating prejudice (Robinson, 2007).

That said, studies have shown that casting is skewed toward certain actors based on race, gender, appearance, age, or socioeconomic status (Rea, 2014; Freidman, O'Brien, & Laurison, 2016). Specifically, success (success meaning one is publically acknowledged) in the profession is easiest if you are white, middle class, or male (Freidman, O'Brien, and Laurison, 2016; Rea, 2014). In a world dominated by social capital, it is not surprising that actors with money, higher education, or both have an easier time becoming professional actors. These possessions allow one to have an arsenal of professional contacts and/or exposure to agents. Therefore, the success of an actor corresponds to whom they know (Freidman, O'Brien, & Laurison, 2016; Rea, 2014). Further, because we live in a patriarchal society, theatre is ostensibly a masculine realm (Young, 2012). Therefore, there are fewer jobs available to women, as well as fewer roles written for their "type" (Freidman, O'Brien, & Laurison, 2016). According to Chamberlain (2016) one in five protagonists are women and, overall, one in three roles go to a woman. Age is also a filter for casting. Actors are treated differently and have a varying spectrum of roles available to them depending on how old they are (and this evaluation also deals with how their age has impacted their appearance). For example, if a young actor is considered to be conventionally good looking, they will be offered more opportunities to act and, as a result, have more successful careers due to the experiences available to them (Rea, 2014). On the other hand, old age is not in great demand and often is constructed as an illness role. This shows how stereotypes of the

elderly play into the types of characters available to older actors (Harpin, 2012). All of these physically based circumstances display how one's identity is inextricable in determining the roles they will play. The more familiar an actor's type becomes, the stronger the bias toward seeing them cast as this type will be (Chamberlain, 2016). This snowballs into a reduced or completely absent job variety.

The limited research regarding casting supports the notion that as a process, it is so subjective and complex that it takes on a mythical quality. The main crux of this "mythos of casting" is the public's faith in its function to find the best actor for a role despite the secrecy veiling the actual process (Herrera, 2015). I believe it is this very faith in the meritocratic ideal of the casting process that allows for the persistence of typecasting. Typecasting has the potential to be problematic because it can normalize and perpetuate stereotypes in society. Thus, the images we see and the stories that are presently created and told will shape how we perceive the world around us in the future. Even though stereotypes can be detrimental to society, they are still being represented. This representation comes down to individual choices. Currently, the theatre realm has seen a shift to honoring authenticity in casting; a shift that assumes typecasting is no longer in use. Yet, I personally have reaped the effects of being typecast as well as have been taught to understand and market my personal brand (another word for type) while receiving my BA in Theatre Arts. My research has proven to me that typecasting is in practice, but that it is functioning under a new definition. Traditionally, typecasting has been solely associated with one's physicality. Yet, I have learned that the current form of typecasting is now focused on personality and relationships. It is difficult to comprehend that typecasting is still a turbulent force because people are unaware that it is functioning under a new behavior. Therefore, it is my

fervent belief that typecasting is a topic that still has prevalence and therefore it calls for further exploration and comprehension.

An actor's type does not necessarily match how the actor perceives his or herself (Chamberlain, 2016). If it does not, this places the actor at a crossroads where they must either adapt to fit their type in order to get noticed, or retain their identity ultimately sacrificing recognition. The actor who changes to match their type is doing what Erving Goffman coined "impression management". This is the process by which individuals understand cultural expectations and change themselves to subscribe to acceptable norms in order to positively alter the perception others have about them (Lester, 2011). All humans enact impression management regularly. However, despite the normalcy of this action, actors' enactment comes from career necessity. Whether an actor does or does not participate in impression management is a crucial decision because the roles an actor initially accepts can set a precedent for their entire career (Tymchyshyn, Meyer, & Ott, 2014). Although fitting a particular type may serve as a gateway into the profession, typecasting is a labor issue that comes with pitfalls; even being coined "one of theatre's deadly sins" (Robertson, 2003). Studies have proven that actors with prominent types have difficulty obtaining versatile roles in the future (Hsu, Hannan, Polos, 2011; Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, & Rittmann, 2003; Mainiero, 1990). For instance, famous actors such as Lucille Ball, Jerry Lewis, and Harrison Ford were failures at broadening the range of characters they played (Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, & Rittmann, 2003). This often translates into frustration with the similarities of their roles, and a general feeling of discontent that they are not being challenged enough. It is only once an actor is well established or respected that they have opportunities to break out of this mold (Chamberlain, 2016; Robertson 2003).

Although many actors complain of the limitations of being typecast, they also appreciate that it can lead to a line of roles (Freidman, O'Brien & Laurison, 2016). Of course, this greatly depends on the characteristics of the actor because certain "types" have a greater number of roles written for them. Roles available to women often reflect the dominant culture. This causes women, especially young women, to be frequently exploited and marginalized in their careers (Blair, 1992; DiCenzo, 2008; Robinson, 2007). For instance, when the ingénue first makes her appearance, the costuming, lights, blocking, etc. all aid the audience in seeing her as the male protagonist does, as an object of love or lust (Case, 1988). The casting of beautiful (often blonde) women as ingénues is connected to contemporary cultural ideas about innocence, and desirability (Case, 1988). We know this because scripts often do not call for such characteristics, i.e. Shakespeare did not expect Juliet to be attractive considering he wrote the part with the knowledge that she would be played by a young boy (Case, 1988). Cultural ideals of attractiveness can also lead to women not being cast at all due to an undesirable physical characteristic, or they are cast as secondary roles (Young, 2012; Case, 1988). The entertainment industry's use of sex-based casting is pervasive because sex sells thus sex is a common component to plot lines (Robinson, 2007).

A major dilemma of typecasting lies in the double-edged sword of audience perception. Robertson (2003) has revealed that people often criticize actors who consistently accept roles in which they are type cast as lacking talent. That said, audience's expectations—aligning with the star system of Hollywood—are what continue to cultivate the practice of typecasting (Hsu, Hannah, Polos, 2011). Although people may complain of a performer playing predictable characters, this is what the cinema demands (Crippin, 2016). Film calls for a realistic impression of life, and typecasting was, and continues to be, linked to realistic performances (Crippin, 2016;

Robertson, 2003). The typical Hollywood star often portrays a character similar to him/her, or is “face-cast” based on external appearance. Consequently, this has led to audiences’ pleasure in seeing a star play a character that reflects them, and thus filmmakers use this tactic to reap box office success (Crippin, 2016; Robertson, 2003). Therefore, cinema has made it hard for actors in any medium to subtract their personal selves from their roles. For example, some of the best Hollywood stars become intertwined with their character: James Stewart is George Bailey and George Bailey is James Stewart (Crippin, 2016). So, if an actor defies their type, they risk rejection by audiences (Zuckermna, Kim, Ukanwa, & Rittmann, 2003). Currently, in the acting profession it is disadvantageous to have a generalist identity, audiences are more receptive to specialists (Hsu, Hannan, & Polos, 2011). So actors are trained as such, and this is why typecasting thrives (Mainiero, 1990).

Compared to film and TV, Crippin (2016) claims that theatre actors are held to a different standard. In theatre, characters live in a world of suspended belief. They are registered in the imagination and therefore the performers are seen as separate from the roles they play. It is true that in antiquity theatrical performances were extremely melodramatic, and further that today theatre is meant to present the audience with a heightened sense of life. However, since its creation, theatre has possessed a didactic purpose. As Freedman (1988) suggests, we must consider to what extent theatre is already framed by culture and to what extent it reframes. Theatre is meant to simultaneously contend with and emulate reality, allowing spectators to contemplate, criticize and empathize with humanity. Therefore, actors do, in fact, want to be grasped as their character, not themselves. Further, the style of acting is contingent upon other factors. A classical work will require different skills especially regarding language, than a contemporary piece (i.e. the use of iambic pentameter). Space will also dictate how “larger than

life” an actor must perform.

Although theatre provides the foundation for actor training, it has been adapted by television and film (Chamberlain, 2016). Film has led audiences to expect realism, even in the theatre. Consequently, method acting (derived from Stanislavski) has dominated actor training in America for its roots in realism (Case, 1988; Goldstein, 2009). The problem with realism for women lays in their historic roles within the domestic sphere and the family unit that enforces them as the sexual “other” (Case, 1988). Thus the psychological construction and portrayal of character within this method is detrimental for female actors because of the characters that are made available to her. The works used in Stanislavski’s method present women with weak, passive and dependent characters that model the very systems that oppress them and provide inaccurate representations of female sexuality (Case, 1988). Overall, because contemporary theatre has been shaped by the film industry it is increasingly losing appreciation as an art, and is instead becoming valued as commercial amusement (DiCenzo, 2008). The focus on commerciality for both those doing the casting and those being cast, leads the actor to be viewed, as well as view his/herself, as an object.

Body image, women, and objectification. Scholarship on physical attractiveness states that people have a stronger desire to initiate and maintain social bonds with attractive individuals (Lemay Jr., Clark, & Greenberg, 2010; Zaikman & Marks, 2015). This contributes to the assumption that beautiful people are good people, also known as the “beautiful-is-good” effect (Lemay Jr., Clark, & Greenberg, 2010). On a biological level, attractiveness actually elicits positive emotional responses. Attractive faces stimulate the same brain neurons activated by rewarding stimuli such as food, pleasant music, etc. (Lemay Jr., Clark, & Greenberg, 2010). The coupling of affirmative perceptions, along with the motivation to connect, ultimately translates

into a yearning to get to know attractive people. As a result, these individuals are not only viewed more positively, but also known at a more personal level (Zaikman & Marks, 2015; Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010). Due to the positive expectations regarding attractive individuals, physically attractive people are likely more comfortable in social interactions and therefore exude cues for understanding. (In this instance, cues for understanding refer to the target individual's unique characteristics). This combines with perceivers desire to connect with attractive individuals, making them more attentive and motivated to understand them (Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010). This may reveal a bias toward hiring attractive actors and thus explain why the majority of famous actors are extremely good looking. But again, the stars that first come to mind tend to be those of TV and film. So if casting in these mediums is based on the assessment of one's appearance (a form of type that assesses physicality), then it should be researched to see if this also rings true in theatre.

The rise of consumerism in America has fashioned a cultural obsession with ideal image. Consequently, this generates a societal pressure to be perfect based on physical appearance and demeanor, a pressure that is profoundly pressed upon women (Anthony, Okorie, & Norman, 2016; Csank, P.A.R & Conway, 2004). Throughout history, women have been seen as "other" in relation to men. Therefore it is not surprising that women are perceived more categorically than men. Forster, Gervais, Suitner, Maass and Vescio conducted an experiment that tested the "sexual body part recognition bias" derived from cognitive psychology (2011). This test demonstrated that global processing (the focus on gestalt approach to observation) rather than local processing (focus on individual aspects rather than the whole) tends to be used in person recognition. For example, previous experiments showed that a door could be equally recognized in isolation, or with an entire house. In contrast, images of an arm are better recognized in the

context of an entire person (Forster, Gervais, Suitner, Maass & Vescio, 2012). In order to test the person versus object idea, they utilized the parts versus whole body recognition paradigm. They selected waists and chests (secondary sexual characteristics) to represent sexual body parts because genitalia are not usually visible during an interaction when one is engaging in gender categorization, and both sexes have desirable features regarding these areas. For example, women are desired who have large, round, perky breasts. Results found that often the whole body was needed to identify a male where as only one body part was necessary in the identification of a female, suggesting that perceivers tend to adopt a local focus on women's bodies, focusing on their sexual body parts, rather than their body as a whole (Forster, Gervais, Suitner, Maass & Vescio, 2012). This is particularly shocking because it proves that women are judged in the same manner as object recognition. A consequence of this objective gaze could be that women will value themselves in term of appearance rather than other individuating attributes, which could ultimately lead to body shame and anxiety (Forster, Gervais, Suitner, Maass, & Vescio, 2012; Moradi & Huang, 2008, Gervais & Vescio, 2011; Gervais, Vescio & Allen, 2011). In fact, researchers have connected the term "normative discontent" to explain how body dissatisfaction is a rule among all women, rather than an exception (Gervais, Vescio, 2011). This could prove to be problematic if my research validates that theatre also perpetuates the objective gaze of women.

One of the results of the representation of women as "other", is that they become "other" to themselves, and subsequently judge themselves in relation to other women (Case, 1988; Wolske, 2011). Those women who are not deemed beautiful can experience powerlessness due to the social implications of unattractiveness. However, those women who are considered beautiful may also be powerless because they are restricted by societal rewards that define their

worth solely on appearance (Anthony, Okorie, & Norman, 2016). This sort of evaluation that negates a woman's intellect and agency can lead them to place more pressure on themselves physically because they feel that is the only worthy aspect about themselves. Therefore, we can see a cycle where all women – regardless of being deemed beautiful or not— fixate on their physicality. This corporal valuation persists in the current myth of Hollywood that accentuates the upward mobility of a pretty face and attractive figure (Pullen, 2005).

Overall, researchers have proven that women's value is often assessed physically and presumptions about a person's character are associated with their appearance (Lemay Jr., Clark, & Greenberg, 2010; Zaikman & Marks, 2015; Lorenzo, Biesanz, & Human, 2010). These are typically more favorable if the person is attractive. Because typecasting is comprised of physical appearance and/or demeanor, and women are judged more critically in these conditions, typecasting could have more negative effects on females than males. Additionally, it has been proven that the impact of stereotypes that typecasting draws upon is greater when there is little information known about the individual (Zaikman & Marks, 2015; Hsu, Hannan, & Polos, 2011). This is precisely why all actors within university programs are currently taught to understand their type and play to their strengths.

Actor training/ pedagogy. In 1914, the Carnegie Institute of Technology became the first institute of higher education to establish actor training (Zazzali, 2016). But, it was not until the 1960s that the professional actor training we know today truly began (Zazzali, 2016). Now, there are over 150 BFA and MFA acting programs in America that all have the same purpose –to prepare actors for the professional world (Zazzali, 2016; Gressler, 2002). Theatre educators accept that most of the students aspiring to perform professionally will not be successful. Not only is the market extremely competitive, the jobs are sparse and currently plummeting (Brandt,

2016; Zazzali, & Klein, 2015). Yet, despite these figures, the number of training programs has grown (Zazzali, 2016). Due to the current nature of casting, actors find themselves more willing to accept typecasting, rather than question or criticize it.

For aspiring actors, it is easier to gain recognition through film and television because they can be constantly replayed, a quality that live theatre lacks. (Zazzali, 2016). Yet, theatre academics have hardly changed over the past three or four decades (Zazzali, & Klein, 2015). The curriculum still includes voice, movement, and other classes that lend themselves to classical work. This conflicts with the educator's goal of return investment for their students because their teaching does not coincide with the work available as opposed to those offered through film and television. Roznowski (2015) argues that theatre educators must revamp their curriculum to supplement theatre skills with those for film and camera. Additionally Zazzali (2016) and Klein (2015) have suggested that undergraduate and graduate theatre programs take an entrepreneurial approach, emphasizing the skills that theatre uses and applying them to other professions.

This concept of return investment also translates into season selection. The performance/play titles a university chooses for their season often reflect a product-over-process approach. It has been acknowledged that Broadway shows are produced to make money and therefore there is a constant tension between producers and designers (Brandt, 2016). Designers refer to anyone on the production team: Director, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Light Designer, Costume Designer, Props Master, etc. Universities also find themselves in an artistic bind as many university theatres are self-supporting, thus shows must be selected for cash flow purposes (Dolan, 1993; Gressler, 2002). Because consumer reaction and money are the deciding factors, typecasting is perpetuated to ensure the audience gets what they want (Dolan, 1993; Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, & Rittman, 2003).

Research has also revealed how actor training has a different, and often adverse impact on its female students. Actors as artists are encouraged to use their bodies. But, it is important to realize that women are judged more than their male counterparts on the expressiveness of their bodies. This judgment can be seen in the double standard of sexual content in the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAAA) that gives severe ratings to films that represent females as the subject, taking risk and/or receiving sexual pleasure (Chamberlain, 2016). Therefore due to society's scrutiny of females bodies, actresses face confusion when they are told in the classroom to explore their physical selves because this instruction goes against what culture tells them, that they are not meant to be agents of their bodies but rather objects of male desire. So, often they contain and restrain their bodies, struggle to be free in movement classes, and have difficulty being open in rehearsals and in expressing desire on stage (Young, 2012). This demonstrates how heterosexual gender expectations impact how we expect each other to act, both in reality and in the profession of acting (Gibson, & Meem, 1996).

As stated earlier, actors work with their bodies in space, and are encouraged to be vulnerable and to take risks (Chamberlain, 2016). Sadly, due to the images society presents to women, this risk translates into many lead actresses who sexualize their bodies (Chamberlain, 2016). Analyzing the academy nominees of the past twenty years validates the conception that physically exposing oneself is a requirement for success in Hollywood (Chamberlain, 2016). Nine out of twenty-two nominees appeared nude, and all of the nominees admitted to having appeared nude at some point in their careers (Chamberlain, 2016). Although male actors also bear all onscreen, when they do it garners response and an extra warning classified as "male nudity" (where as with females this is just classified as "nudity") (Chamberlain, 2016). This demonstrates society's hypersensitivity to the exposed male body and that female nudity has

become commonplace, making women fair game to be exploited (Chamberlian, 2016). Little research has addressed how to fix this issue other than mentioning how gender blind casting can empower actresses to work against the usual sexualized and passive roles offered by American Theatre (Dolan, 1993).

Conclusion. Casting is commonly understood as a process that successfully selects the best actor for the job without being fully understood. It is this “mythical” quality that has allowed it to slip past an in-depth inquiry on its function. Existent research describes how casting conventions have changed throughout history in conjunction with the occupations available to actors. But it does not explain how and why the professionals hiring actors cast the way that they do. Through considering the effects of appearance, and calling attention to what is taught within acting pedagogy, we are given some context clues into this mysterious process.

Human beings, now more than ever, are highly visual creatures. The rise of consumerism as a path to identity development has generated an unhealthy obsession with our outward appearance. Previous research has proven the “beautiful is good effect”, the belief that attractive individuals possess the interpersonal skills and honorable qualities required for relationship formation (Lemay Jr., Clark, & Greenberg, 2010). This leads attractive people to be viewed more positively, and also conceived more accurately. This phenomenon could explain why physicality functions as an aspect of type. Women were historically and continue to be the more objectified sex. As a result, women are more negatively impacted by body image than males. In fact, it has been deduced that every woman expresses dissatisfaction with some aspect of her appearance. This proves how women have come to value themselves solely based on appearance. This would lead me to believe that typecasting (in its traditional sense) may be more detrimental to women.

At the moment, there are no studies researching this beyond stating that there are fewer roles/types written for women.

Finally, the amount of undergraduate and graduate theatre programs are at an all time high whilst the amount of available acting jobs are slipping away, especially those in theatre. The desire for return investment on the thousands of dollars spent on education means that these programs all have one goal: to get actors into the professional world. Currently, this stresses the importance of networking and properly displaying one's type. This face value of an actor conflicts with the classes one takes which focus on voice and movement.

Despite the overarching goal of educators, the values explored in the classroom seem to defy the commodification of the actor. Students are encouraged to be vulnerable, and take risks. Essentially, they are pushed to find the roots of their emotional self. This is far from the idea of type that educators stress as essential for entry into the market. Research has not adequately addressed the irony of this. Further, as the "inferior" sex, simultaneously stressing emotional freedom and external appearance may lead women to expose themselves in physical rather than sentimental ways. So, if type is verified to be as present in theatre (especially in a corporeal sense), this could have a slew of consequences.

Overall, I believe that typecasting has been overlooked as a predominant issue. Research claims that most actors who are typecast have difficulty escaping their type in future work, and further that many actors express negative attitudes toward being typecast. Nevertheless, type casting has become an integral and fixed part in the field of performance. Yet, there is a lack of analysis on directors in general and why they cast in this manner.

In order to address this gap, I will ask the following research question:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How, if at all, prevalent is "type" in casting processes?

Chapter 3: Theory

I used two general theories to guide my analysis. These were Impression Formation Theory and Stereotype Theory. The first was used to assess how professionals make casting decisions, and the latter was used to determine the impacts of these choices.

Impression Formation Theory

This is a condensed overview of major research that has contributed to impression formation theory, specifically mentioning the key theorists who have influenced my analysis.

Asch (1946) firmly believed that the impression of an individual comes quickly and easily. He believed that a trait is realized in a particular quality, and that the total impression of a person is the summation of the independent impressions that arise from each trait. In his research, he asked participants to form impressions based off of a list of traits assigned to fictional target people. Asch realized that traits do not hold the same weight, that certain traits are central and thus have greater impact on the overall impression of an individual. Those that have less impact he termed as peripheral. Further, the weight of a trait varies from subject to subject as well as varies depending on the context in which it is evaluated (for example, perhaps trait weight varies depending on the production being cast). The “halo-effect” was also a significant discovery that shows how certain trait’s evaluation translated to the impression of other traits. He also noted that changing one trait could produce change in the entire impression. Asch also stated that actual observation is required to discover the traits one is using to form an impression. To identify a trait means that the judge has experienced them in the past. In addition, he recognized that this concept gains significance when it concerns impressions that will extend over a long period of time. Overall, Asch believed that impressions are complex and have structure and that

they depend on the meaning of elements (traits) and how this depends on how they play off of the other elements present.

The main issue with Asch's research for my analysis is that this was based on purely descriptive terms, and not an actual social interaction. However, the idea that certain traits of an individual take the forefront of our impressions and impact the integration of everything that makes someone unique could prove to be particularly useful. Therefore one of my contributions is to use impression management in research on social interaction and then explain its value.

Of course like any theorist, Asch faced much criticism and thus many researchers extended his theory. A trait is central when it correlates highly with the other traits that are present. Orehek, Dechesne, Fishbach, Kruglanski, and Chun (2010) proved that this depends on perceivers' beliefs about traits' unidirectional implications for other traits. Thus, individual beliefs mediate one's impression.

Williams and Bargh (2008) added to Asch's theory by showing how bodily experience could impact one's perception of traits. They chose to further the analysis on the transformational power of "warm" and "cold" on personality traits. They did so by having a participant evaluate a trait as warm or cold while holding either a warm or cold cup of coffee. Participants were unaware of the unconscious bias that the stimuli had on their impressions. This greatly reminds me of a comment one of my professors made once regarding the subjectivity of casting; "You didn't get called back. You have green eyes. The director's wife has green eyes who he had an argument with this morning".

Cronbach (1955) began the exploration of stereotype accuracy (SA) in impression formation. SA expresses how close an individual's interpretation of the other being observed agrees with reality. Cronbach believed that people (a judge, J) assumes that others (those

observed, O) are similar to themselves if and only if J's prediction of O differs minimally from J's self-description. If this occurs, then the impression was accurate. Cronbach found that social perception is a process that is dominated by what a judge brings to it more than what he takes from the process of impression formation. It is this aspect of Cronbach's beliefs that I found striking. Thus, if J has favorability toward O either before or after his observation of them, this can determine perception (in combination with his personality theory that he/she has acquired through his/her experience). This would prove to be helpful when analyzing the effects of networking that links this field.

Rosenberg et al. (1968) identified two dimensions of trait impressions. She questioned whether impressions reflect the underlying structure of personality and behavior (realism), or instead represent perceivers' conception about what things go together (idealism). I am curious to know as to whether professionals casting choices reflect either realism or idealism, or perhaps a combination of the two. But assessing this is highly complex. The distinct biases that every perceiver holds are difficult to measure an impact accuracy This is because each perceiver possess their own goals, values, attention, memory, and others from who they can acquire new or more information, etc. An example of this complexity comes from the research of Anderson and Shikaro (2008). Their research predicted the influence behavior has on one's reputation. They discovered that an individual's reputation was only mildly related to the history of their behavior. However, they did deduce that the link between reputation and behavior was stronger for those who were better known (more socially connected). This will prove to be beneficial to my analysis because as I continue to learn more about the field, I have been presented with the importance of networking. It will also help me assess whether the research found in my literature review about the greater use of type in the casting of young actors rings true.

In 1999, John A. Bargh researched a case of the controllability of automatic stereotype effects, in what he coined was part of the “Cognitive Monster”. Using the works of Fiske (1989), Devine (1989), Blair & Banaji (1996), and William James (1890) to deduce that the ability to evade automatic stereotyping is incredibly small. First, according to Fiske (1989) an individual is able to make the conscious choice to overcome the influences of automatically activated stereotypes. However, this requires that the motivated individual is both aware of unconscious influence and then is able to practice control responses. Devine (1989) divided automatic stereotypes into two events, stereotype activation and stereotype application. He argued that the first is inevitable, because everyone is vulnerable to automatic stereotypes. However, the believed the latter can be avoided. Blair and Banajai (1996) found a new discovery, that expectations leave automatic stereotype effect if it is inconsistent with a stereotype. However, automatic stereotypes are also enhanced if there is consistency. Although they also believed an individual could exercise control, they ironically found that repressive attempts often backfire. William James (1890) argued that the mere thought of behavior increases the probability of its occurrence due to the nature of human consciousness (this is particularly interesting because casting different shows would clearly involve the seeking of specific characteristics that fit the roles). According to this research, stereotypes are an inherent aspect of impression formation. If this is the case, then how can professionals claim that either they do not practice typecasting or that it does not permeate the medium of theatre? This connects into the other theory that I used to conduct my analysis and interpretation, Stereotype Theory.

Stereotype/ Representation Theory

Stereotypes are an aspect of impression formation that has garnered much of its own detailed inquiry. There are four parts to any stereotype in media: appearance, behavior,

constructed to fit a medium, and a comparison with normal behavior. (I find it ironic that the first two deal with physicality and personality, the two factors that I define as aspects of type). This section will provide an overview of three key theorists who appeal to my research.

In 1979, Richard Dyer analyzed stereotypes through his attempt to combine theories that contribute to stardom in his book titled *Stars*. He said that stereotypes reduce an individual to a few characteristics, represent exaggerated versions of a person and then are applied to everyone in that group as if it is essential, and finally are represented in the media through media language. To Dyer, the creation of stereotypes is completely based around power relations and therefore the most recognized stereotypes of are marginalized groups. The problem is the media's selectivity in which stereotypes they present and how this in turn will build the audiences perception by reinforcing certain values and assumptions. This could potentially highlight if any types appear to be more prevalent in my data, and then I could assess if these are related solely to minority groups or not. Also, I can assess if there are fervent assumptions amongst participants regarding the actors they evaluate.

In his article, *The Role of Stereotypes*, Dyer (1999) stated that stereotypes create boundaries when there are none. That there are even some social categories that are invisible, in the sense that you cannot tell from mere observation if a person belongs to that category, unless the individual dresses in a culturally defined manner (this greatly applies to the concept of choice / message presented in in audition attire). Thus, stereotypes function to make the invisible visible. Dyer also introduced the terms countertypes (those that oppose stereotypes) and hybrid (a combination of stereotypes and countertypes). It will be interesting to see how participants view and whether they practice the use of stereotypes, countertypes, or hybrids.

Next, Medhurst (Stark, 2013) expanded on Dyer's initial beliefs. He claimed that stereotypes exist as media shorthand, that they provide a point of contact in order to communicate efficiently and quickly with an audience. According to Medhurst, certain mediums such as TV (especially advertisements and sitcoms) lend themselves to the use of stereotypes. I used Medhurst's ideas to see whether or not theatre is one of these mediums. Further, Medhurst believed that mediums that do use stereotypes gradually may challenge them but only once they have established a good relation with the audience. This reflects what was explored earlier in the literature review that proved how individuals have greater freedom to challenge their type once they are older/ have established themselves in the market.

Finally, Tessa Perkins (1979) rethinks stereotypes. According to Perkins, stereotypes are shorthand references to complex social relationships. She claims that there are many false assumptions associated with stereotypes. In reality, there is a degree of truth behind them. The problem arises when a stereotype is the only representation of a particular individual or group within a given medium. Thus, similar to Dyer, media is not regarded as the culprit, but rather the blame is placed upon audience's application of their assumptions of a representation to every member of a particular group. This proved to be beneficial because prior to starting my research I fell into the trap of the negative connotation of "type". However, I now am open and receptive to understanding type on a more profound level, the positives and the negatives. But one question I am pondering is whether we should group the professionals casting with the media or with the audience? Or do they function as a conduit between the two? Personally, I believe that these individuals are hybrids. Depending on context, they may adhere more to the media's overarching wants, or they may use their intuition to assume what would impact the audience. Often, I believe the director may think that their audiences' desires align with their own. It is

most likely this hybrid quality that makes them hard to study.

Cultural Industry

Horkheimer and Adorno (n.d.) created the idea of cultural industry as a result of late stages of capitalism that impacts all products and forms of light entertainment in culture. They believe that all forms of pop culture are aiming to satisfy the needs of the mass consumers that have become a quality of sameness. They are critical of any and all forms of cultural economy that claim to be artwork because even these sources are dependent upon the most powerful industries and the economy. Essentially they are concerned with profit. Thus cultural industry is mass deception, and as a result art has become commoditized. This will benefit my study because it highlights how those making the casting decisions may unknowingly adhere to another level of authority when casting.

Chapter 4: Method

I conducted interviews in order to gain the richest insight into the views, personal experiences, and motivations behind casting techniques, especially in regards to “type”. This method was best for my study because qualitative methods allow for a researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of social phenomena that cannot be achieved under quantitative means. Therefore interviews are specifically a good tool to use when there is little known about topic/ phenomena, as well as are effective means of discussing sensitive topics that an individual may be unwilling to discuss in a group or larger setting (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The topic of casting falls under both of these characteristics. Through my literature review, I outlined how little scholarly research discusses the casting process, and especially fails to address this process in the realm of theatre. Also, because the result behind casting decisions is occupational, discussing one’s reasons for the employment or rejection of an individual is inherently a touchy subject.

Specifically, I conducted interviews of directors of theatre. In this field, directors are considered influential, prominent, and/or well informed. Directors were selected to provide insight on the decisive aspect of the casting process. Twelve directors mainly based in the greater Boston and were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Four agreed and were interviewed in September and October 2017.

Participants were recruited through an initial email (Appendix A) of interest sent in July and August. I was able to make a connection with many of the potential participants due to past collaborations. This email outlined the general background and purpose of my research. I gave each participant an incubation period of 2 weeks before I sent out a follow up email. Once a participant expressed interest, I provided them greater detail including the consent form to

review prior to our official meeting and the interview questions (Appendix B), and set up a time for the interview. All but one interview was conducted in person at a location of the participants' choice (the other was conducted via video chat on Skype). This ensured that the participant was as comfortable as possible. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of each meeting. I went over the consent form with each participant prior to interviewing and then collected their consent form once I felt assured they were well informed, and truly eager to begin.

All of the participants were older than 25 years of age, had bachelors degrees and had spent anywhere from 14 to over 25 years working in the field in the director capacity. Two participants were female and two were male.

Upon consent of the individual, responses were recorded on my iPhone. These interviews were then transcribed within a 48-hour period prior to the interview. My first interview was a handwritten transcription that was then inputted into an electronic database stored on my MacBook. For the rest, immediate electronic transcription was more efficient, and I continued to transcribe in this manner. All data whether in hard or electronic copy was stored in a locked physical space or a passcode protected device. Therefore only I had/ have access to this data. All of the data was de-identified in order to minimize risks as much as possible. I used pseudonyms (chosen by the individual) for each participant. Recordings, and transcriptions were titled with their chosen pseudonym. All of this data must be kept for three years post completion of my thesis. After this time, the data will be deleted and/or destroyed, along with the codes to identify participants.

The interviews ranged from approximately 43 minutes to nearly an hour. In total they summed up to about three and a half hours, equaling 28 pages of handwritten notes, and 52 pages of typed notes. Some questions were skipped due to time constraints and the fact that every

participant answered multiple questions simultaneously within a response. In fact, I was thoroughly pleased with how prepared all of my participants were in their interview. They each were able to address/ recognize when they were answering an upcoming question in their response.

The interview opened with light hearted, “getting to know you” questions such as asking individuals about how they got started in theatre, what one of their favorite memories regarding a rehearsal or production is, as well as a more serious question of what advice they would give to a person pursuing acting professionally. My generative questions mainly sought to uncover their conception and/or their possible use of “type”, if their formal training or education ever discussed “type” or casting, if they think females face more challenges in casting than males, what factors influence one’s “type”, etc. The closing questions asked if there was an aspect of the current theatre industry, pedagogy, etc. that they wish they could change. This also was the point at which I asked for and collected participant’s pseudonyms.

In coding I used an iterative framework in the analysis of my data. Iterative analysis derives meaning from emergent data by encouraging continuous reflection. This required me to revisit the data and refine my focus and understanding based upon the interests, literature, theories, etc. that I, the researcher, brought to the data (Tracy, 2013). Due to the abstract nature of the casting process, I felt that a method that revisits the data would be the most effective. I chose to organize my schemata based on type, in this instance “type” translated to organizing them by question. According to Tracy (2013), when data are organized in a certain way they will encourage the researcher to notice certain comparisons, but also can cause a researcher to overlook others. Due to the diverse experiences of the participants in terms of their education, the types of shows they direct, the number of years working in the field, etc. I knew that

chronologically organizing my data would be insufficient. Further, because I am interested in an overarching view of casting, I also knew that it would be inadequate to organize based on source. After I organized the data from my transcriptions, I created generated units of meaning through coding. Codes are short words or phrases that capture the essence of language based or visual data that help identify this data as belonging to or representing a phenomenon (Tracy, 2013). As a visual learner, I chose to perform my coding manually. I marked up, highlighted, cut and pasted data together in order to make what Tracy (2013) refers to as “tabletop categories”. This process labels chunks of data into appropriate categories in order to see how one can map out the processes, structures, and connections within one category and in relation to others. Further, I chose to fracture my data. Fracturing involves breaking data into numerous small pieces, a tedious process, but one that provides a more vivid picture of data (Tracy, 2013). Fracturing produces a plethora of codes, so I chose to organize my codes into a systematic codebook. A codebook is a data display that lists codes along with their corresponding abbreviations, definitions and examples (Tracy, 2013).

During primary cycle coding, I used two types of first-level codes: descriptive and in vivo terms. First-level codes focus on “what” is present in data and therefore help uncover richer salient codes (Tracy, 2013). Descriptive coding summarizes the primary topic of an excerpt and requires little interpretation (Tracy, 2013). In-vivo coding uses the participant’s own language, and allows one to become informed on the vocabulary of a certain community (Tracy, 2013). A different color pen or writing implement designated each code. I then transferred these codes into an excel spreadsheet, organizing them via question and by the participant who responded. The two types of codes were differentiated by a highlight that corresponds to the color pen that marked their earlier distinction. This transferal made the future process of axial coding simpler

and more efficient. Some examples of these descriptive primary codes included: conduct, essence, market, opportunity, societal pressure, test, vibe, etc. A few in-vivo codes were “circle of trust”, “cart-blanche”, “intangible, and “expiration date”.

Once I completed primary cycle coding, I used the constant comparison method, a process where one modifies codes to fit any new data that surfaces or completely creating new codes (Tracy, 2013). This ensured that I was not missing data applicable to each code (a trap that I could have fallen into based on my organizing schemata by question).

Next, I conducted secondary cycle coding, which narrows in on the first-level codes previously discovered and categorizes them into interpretive concepts that can capture and label subjective perspectives from the data (Tracy, 2013). This allowed me to determine the most dominant patterns that provided insight on "type" in casting. Two forms of secondary codes that I used included axial and hierarchical codes. Axial codes simply reorganize the codes that were initially obtained during fracturing (Tracy, 2013). I conducted axial coding by using the sorting tool on my excel spreadsheet. This placed the acquired primary codes in alphabetical order, which I was then able to easily copy down and tally each code for frequency. The more frequency a code proved to have, the more influential it became in creating my hierarchical codes. Hierarchical codes group these various primary cycle codes under conceptual umbrella categories (Tracy, 2013). These categories were Identity, Relationships, Decisive Factors, and Roles. Each category has a series of subcategories and codes that are associated with it. These also surfaced from my primary coding. For example, the subcategories of “Identity” are age, appearance, personality, the actor, and assumptions.

Finally, I found major themes that additionally linked these categories through the creation of analytic memos throughout the entire coding process. Analytic memos are analytic

asides that focus on the meaning behind codes and the connections between them (Tracy, 2013). Further, I fashioned these memos into a loose analysis outline so I could expose the potential ways in which these codes are attending to the primary research questions (Tracy, 2013). I used this outline to generate my interpretations on the prevailing criteria. My major themes included: Contingency, Script's influence, Casting against type (especially being paralleled with Experimental Theatre), and Ignorance (of personality as an aspect of type).

After IRB review was completed and this study was granted approval on September 12, 2017^{*}, and requested and was granted an amendment on October 12, 2017[†]. I began the process of researching more about the Boston Theatre scene. Primarily, I acquired this information firsthand from Boston theatre professionals who have been featured lecturers to my class titled "Theatre in Boston: The Critical Eye". However, I also obtained information from various workshops offered at BC with theatre professionals including Lindsay Mendez, Wayne Wilderson, and Maile Flanagan. I also obtained insight throughout my daily life from comments made by my colleagues and professors due to the plethora of time spent in the Robsham Theatre.

^{*} IRB Protocol Number: 18.043.01

[†] IRB Protocol Number: 18.043.01-1

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

Primary coding

During primary coding, 305 codes emerged from the data. Some of these codes were documented multiple times, and thus became sites of inquiry for further levels of coding and analysis. Some of these codes were descriptive codes that simply explained what the participant said. Some examples of descriptive codes found during primary coding include “advice”, “confession”, “connections”, “conduct”, “honesty”, “impulse”, and “women’s roles”. A variety of *in vivo* primary codes that use the direct language of participant’s responses were also discovered (Tracy, 2012). These codes included words and phrases such as “authenticity”, “goes out on a limb”, “given circumstances”, “type can be attractive”, “spare the audition”, “showcase”, “work your way up”, and “no-jerk policy”. Although a small chunk of the primary codes initially appeared to have less to do with the focus of the study, nearly every code could be sorted into one of the primary codes that proved to be prevalent through axial coding.

Secondary coding

First, all of the descriptive and *in vivo* codes were extrapolated from my excel spreadsheet and documented for each codes’ corresponding frequency. This process of reorganizing the fragmented data is a form of interpretive coding known as axial coding. Some axial codes that stood out as extremely pertinent based on their frequency were “age”, “assumptions”, “conduct”, “education”, “factors”, and “larger markets” to name a few. Thus, I narrowed down the axial codes into 38 larger categories that were then converted into hierarchical codes. Hierarchical codes are the broadest conceptual umbrella categories that arise from the data and connect the discovered primary codes. During hierarchical coding, it became evident that the relevant primary codes merge into four overarching categories: “Identity”,

“Decisive Factors”, “Relationships”, and “Roles”.

Analytic Memos/Asides

Throughout the coding process, I wrote down analytic memos/ asides about my thoughts pertaining to the data. Upon revisiting them, four themes surfaced: Contingency, Script’s influence, Casting against type, and Ignorance. Contingency relates to the nature of casting. Casting is contingent upon the individual visions of influential production team members, designer, etc., plus a slew of other external factors outside of the actor to be cast such as the chemistry with other actors, equity rules, and company policies. Script’s influence relates to the “given circumstances” of the script, that the playwright has written as necessary to the vision of the play. In terms of characters, these usually deal with their race, ethnicity, or age. Or, the genre of the script could inherently influence casting decisions. For example, almost every classical play has more men roles than women. (In fact this is a practice that still perpetuates in many modern plays. However on the same token, classics are so far removed from their publication date that if the people casting are willing, they can readily choose to gender swap many of the roles. Performing a classic allows a lot of freedom in terms of a design concept, because they have been done so abundantly that designers must be extremely creative and bold in order to keep the show exciting and fresh. Casting against type was often connected to the idea of experimental theatre. This implies that “type” has been an integral aspect within the theatre tradition. An interesting finding was a few participants’ rejection of the notion of typecasting. They claimed that they do not consider type when casting a show. However, based on their responses, they are regarding type as solely an actor’s physicality. For example, one participant who we will refer to as, Cris, garnered this response when asked how he views typecasting, “I’m not trying to judge who you are as a person, not your physical representation. That's not

something you choose" (personal communication, October 2, 2017). However I find something inherently flawed in this response. I would argue that a person does not choose their personality. That one's persona is an inherent part of them, as stable as one's physicality. Both can fluctuate slightly as one matures but there are certain aspects of a person that are permanent. Therefore, there is an established ignorance to personality as an aspect of one's type. Overall, I utilized these four themes to enlighten, interweave, and solidify my interpretations of the four secondary codes that emanated from my data. Another participant who we will refer to as A said "You know in a minute monologue you generally know in the first 10 seconds" (personal communication, September 19, 2017). This was in response to the question, "How long does it take you to determine whether or not you can see an actor play a particular kind of role?" This validates that professionals are making snap decisions while casting, and thus are making judgments based on assumptions.

Identity

The first crucial secondary code that I developed from the data is "identity". Identity encompasses all of the factors that create a person's identity, the actor's individual perception of their identity, as well as how others perceive them and the assumptions that arise as a result of this perception. "Identity" encompasses a variety of smaller subcategories that were initially primary codes. These include: "age", "appearance", "personality", "experience", "education", "actor's ability", "actor's choices", "actor's comprehension", "professionalism", and "assumptions".

Assumption. There is a renowned assumption in theatre that any actor should be able to play any role. Statements such as "I do think that pretty much any actor can play (with the right support) could play any role" (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017),

and "In its purest form in the theater any actor can play any role right? Because what acting is, is imagining the circumstances of that character..." (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) verify that an actor's versatility is a prominent belief. Not surprisingly, this belief is gender biased, and is skewed toward men, as was confirmed by R. Mutt who said, "I do think that there's a sense that a good talented male actor can play a wider range of things" (personal communication, September 16, 2017). This assumption that men have a greater spectrum of roles emerged in ageism in casting.

Age. For instance, all participants expressed that age is a crucial factor in casting decisions. Primarily, it is more difficult for young and or inexperienced actors who are just starting in the professional world to get hired. Statements such as "It also makes it difficult to hire as many non unions actors as you want. And that's how actors get experience when they start out" (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017) and "I think it's particularly in a town like Boston, its unusual for people to get cast their first time" both validate how challenging it is for young actors to "work their way up" due to the larger rules and regulations that dominate the field. This is problematic because it hinders these actors from gaining the initial work they need in order to become (hopefully) successful.

However, there is a limitation in the roles an actor can play as one ages.

If you are in TV or film and your character is supposed to be 25 and you are in your 30s, you know the cameras going to see that... however if you're on stage and you're kind of a youthful thirty something you could certainly play in your 20s because its a little different. The view that the audience has is different, they don't come up close you know (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017).

Statements like the one above indicate that age restrictions are not as poignant on stage as

in film or TV. However, this statement, though perhaps once true, is losing its validity.

Numerous plays nowadays are performed in smaller black box theaters, found spaces, etc.

Contemporary plays tend to have fewer characters and therefore require a smaller space to help capture the intimacy. Thus, the audience members are seated much closer to the actors on stage and so age becomes more distinguishable. Due to age being more discernable, the idea of “believability” comes into question. R. Mutt stated “We need to believe that’s a family, and that those two human beings made that child depending on how realistic you want to be and some of that is purely physical” (personal communication, September 16, 2017). R. Mutt added “that you have to use actors that could realistically be that person's mother or from that particular part of the world, or in a relationship with that other person. And that’s where casting more to type comes into play, at least a little bit more” (personal communication, September 16, 2017). These statements offer that despite the fact that theatre tends to suspend belief, that there is a degree of realism that has become expected, and cannot be ignored. It is important to note that the perception of how old an actor can play is as contingent as the casting process itself. In fact, participant “A”, perfectly illustrated how based on an individuals own age, experience, etc. they perceive the age range of actors differently.

Its interesting actually because we hire work study assistants from local colleges, its affordable for us and is part of their financial aid package as students. And so they are generally at oldest 20 or 21, so their perception about how old someone is or could play versus my perception... versus like my boss (who is much older than I am), versus his perception about how somebody is or how old they could play is pretty different, is pretty malleable (personal communication, September 19, 2017).

Yet, every participant agrees that age is more restrictive for women in the field. Statements such as “As women get older, the sort of range of roles available to you gets narrower” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and “there was a study that as men get older, their leading ladies stay the same age” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) contribute to participant’s belief that women’s possibility of roles shifts and shrinks as they age. Phrases like “women over the age of 30 are the largest fraction of the population and yet they are the smallest fraction of what we see onstage” as well as “So women cap out at 30” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), and “Their expiration date comes a lot sooner... once you’re above even 30 sometimes it can feel like ‘oh, now she only plays old characters’” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) all contribute to the conception that that 30 years old is the age that starts this limitation for women. This contrasted with the emergent data about the casting of men. Phrases such as “When men are in their 40s they can still play the sort of romantic lead” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017) justify that participants feel that men do not experience their “expiration date” until a much later age. Responses like “I think age has a lot to do with it. I think women broadly tend to be judged more on their appearance” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), attribute this “age gap” between men and women to physicality.

Appearance. In our increasing visual world, society has become obsessed with images of perfection. Inevitably, the representations we see in media impact the roles that playwrights write and that appear onstage, either as a reflection of culture, or to challenge it. Although this certainly hinders actors as they age and gravity takes its toll on our bodies, it is especially prohibitive to young actors. Phrases like “Particularly young actors in college, conservatory age actors are under an incredible amount of pressure around their appearance first and foremost” (R.

Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) and “So I do think there are absolutely certain forms, kinds of gender biases that are culturally about our expectations for men and women, American expectations that are based on other things in the media” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) both prove that young actors are highly concerned with their outward appearance and that the expectations they hold themselves to differ depending on their gender.

This statement embodies the very pressures dealing with appearance that not only a young actor faces, but that all youth experience in their daily lives.

Unfortunately even in for instance in the small little world of Boston live theatre, we are influenced by what we see in films, on TV, in magazines, and so forth...

And sure, it goods for actors to be in good physical health and shape for the kind of work that you do, your body is your instrument, and so yes there is some reason to say actors should be working out, and getting exercise, and eating well and watching their weight so that their instrument is more useful and viable instrument. But again, so much of that is to the extreme, or what constitutes a healthy body. The reality is there is a lot more variety there than what the media shows. So that has an impact, again particularly I think on female actors (R.

Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017).

Despite that one may not seek to cast based on one’s physicality; some participants revealed that impulses about some aspects of an actor’s appearance are powerful. Statements such as “I have a 6 foot 6 actor in the show I am about to go to rehearsal in... that’s not the only reason that I cast him, but I love that he, that just his physical stature makes other people in relation to him, feel different” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) and “A

profound influence on me in terms of the casting process was William Ball's book, *A Sense of Direction*... One of the things he says- he talks about type- and he says type can be attractive” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) both support the notice that an actor’s physicality can be so enticing as to dictate casting decisions.

Although this obsession with attractiveness impacts all genders, traditionally this was more to detrimental females in the field. Phrases such, as “I don’t think about typecasting at all I think that’s a kind of... that’s a term that may be used in film or television perhaps but I don't think that’s a term we tend to use much in the theatre, at least not anymore" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017), “I don't know what your type is. I don't really think about it” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and “Cause it [previous casting practices] was much more sexist. I remember the teacher saying to women you should wear a dress to auditions so that way they can see your legs” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) reveal that some participants do not feel that type casting is currently in practice (or at least they individually do not consider it in their own casting). Further it informs that type (in terms of physicality) is something that was in practice within the theatre tradition, but now is more pervasive in other industries. But, what is fascinating is that all of these responses fail to recognize an actor’s personality as an integral part of one’s identity and thus must also be an aspect of their “type”.

Personality. Shockingly, essentially all of the participants did not consider an actor’s personality an aspect of “type”. Yet, statements such as “That's their energy, their personality, its many elements of their multi-faceted identity that are accessible to me, whether I've known that actor for a while or whether I'm just meeting them for the first time“ (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), “Certainly personality and I'm searching for the essence,

what's beautiful about this person, what's damaged about this person, what's interesting about this person." (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017), and "I'm trying to judge who you are as a person, not your physical representation. That's not something you choose" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) prove how pivotal an actor's demeanor is in casting decisions.

As I have taken acting classes here at Boston College, I have learned that it is impossible for an actor to completely separate themselves from the roles they play. An actor must tap into real moments in their life or utilize real people or things from their life and place them in an imaginative scenario in order to create and live emotionally as a character on stage. Responses such as "I often have actors do a lot of journal writing and other exercises to think about the full range of their personality and the kinds of elements of their identity ..." (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) and "So do you have qualities as a person, dimensions as a person that will then take a fictional character and illuminate them" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) support the idea that who an actor is inherently is the foundation of the role they will play on stage.

The Actor. Although a lot of the casting process is contingent upon several factors outside of the actor's control, all of the participants discussed ways in which an actor can shape their audition and career.

Resume. First, an actor should present a solid resume. This was said to be especially important if you are just starting out. Professionals may also look at the resume to see if you possess certain talents required by the show, whether that pertains to the genre of the show or special skills. For example casting a classical show demands certain skills, "I am more inclined to cast somebody who has some sort of classical training, an MFA is always preferable to me.

Someone who has advanced training and has some a lot of Shakespeare experience on their resume” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017). This response confirms that the more experience an actor has in a certain style, skill, etc. the more professionals feel they can trust them to take on a role. Thus it can be said that the actor’s resume gives clues to an actor’s experience and education. Based on statements like “I look to see where they’ve studied” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and “It is useful to know what they have done. 'Ah if some other director has cast them in a lead role is some certain kind of play that gives you at least some idea of their ability or at least their experience" (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), and “I want to see what their level of education is and if they have experience which is relevant to the play” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017). Further, an actor’s education can provide insight into the choices that an actor will make, as well as reveals what the industry asks for.

Choices. Nearly all of the participants emphasized that actors do have a degree of control in how they are cast based on the choices they make. Statements such as “so that always interest me, when someone goes out on a limb [in their audition]” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), “How you dress in an audition can suggest that. You know if you came in a t-shirt and a leather jacket and leggings and your hair punked out and no makeup on you present yourself in a certain way” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017), show that these choices can range from the material they choose, to they way the present themselves. Preparation is also a deliberate choice, and can really make our break whether an actor will be considered for a role.

Cris’ example of two actresses who differed in level of preparation provided some insight on this concept.

Sometimes it's a prep thing. For example, I was auditioning a play last spring, there were two actresses I was very interested in and I had seen both of them before. One of them came up from New York City and she had a long monologue in her audition. She kept losing her place... so she said I should have spent more time on this... I thought wait a minute. You just took a 4 hour bus ride up from New York City, what were you doing if you didn't spend time looking at the monologue. The other actress I was interested for the part came in and she had it memorized. She was off book. So it showed me a different level of interest or commitment that was different from the audition (personal communication, October 2, 2017).

Professionalism. If an individual is not committed to a piece, then the professional casting them may believe that will translate into their work in the rehearsal room. This is specifically problematic if they have worked with the individual before. As I will discuss later in this section, relationships are the fundamental factor in casting decisions. So although there should be a degree of comfort, this should never defer from one's devotion to the craft. This ties into the concept of professionalism. Phrases like "I really always from the beginning of my career have looked to cast an actor based on their audition, their experience, and their professionalism or reputation less than their type" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) and "Boston overall, because it is such a small market, if you are unpleasant to work with, it's going to get around and people are just not going to work with you" (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) validate that professionals seek actors that they think would be enjoyable to work with and have no tolerance for those who will inhibit the rehearsal process.

Capability. Professionals also seek actors who can make deliberate choices when given impromptu adjustments in an audition. Responses such as “So generally I give an adjustment if I can in an audition” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), “often times when I have the opportunity in an audition process, I’ll say alright lets do that monologue again...” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), and “I give the actor a couple of opportunities to show me” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) prove that this is common practice. They are seeking to see whether you can take direction and whether the two of you would collaborate well as a team. This was highlighted in statements like “That person might have a fantastic audition and good credits but I don't feel-- this is the intangible thing-- I don't feel a connection with you or you were rude to the reader or you have a reputation for being difficult or quarrelsome or showing up late” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) and “To me, its just intuitive, impulsive, connection, when I respond to an actor” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017). Similar to the way that those casting make their judgments based off of impulses, they appreciate actors who are able to fearlessly make snap decisions.

Further, it is crucial that an actor can connect to the character on a deeply personal level. Statements such as “There’s this weird idea in the theatre, in acting, that a good actor – I just totally don’t believe this—is a blank slate, on to which the role is somehow projected...” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), “You’re trying to see, does Noelle understand Juliet? How deeply does she understand Juliet?” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017), and “Then its up to me to assess how I think their talent, or their persona, their life experience, what makes them unique, might be right for the show” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) demonstrate that professionals seek out and encourage actors

who can relate to their character based upon what they can draw from their own life. This ties into the notion that personality is a major factor in casting decisions.

It also became clear through further analysis that an audition could have lasting impressions outside of the related production. Therefore, actors must be strategic and careful in the how they choose to present themselves. Auditioning is a “long game ... You are not auditioning for that one show but you are auditioning for that show I don’t know about yet” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017).

Type and Authenticity. Upon asking participants what they would say my type is, I was able to recognize the eminence of one’s appearance on conception of type. Most of the participants’ responses confirmed that I would be cast as an ingénue, love interest, or leading lady based on being “young”, “white”, “attractive” and “blonde”. Fascinatingly I found that the male participants provided much more straightforward answers to this question. But, the most insightful discovery was learning how much my type could play against me.

R. Mutt’s response perfectly captures the restriction one with my type could potentially face, as well as provides insight in managing said restriction.

But because, to be totally frank with you, because if you walk in the room, I might think you know “Uh, just another pretty white blonde girl”, so if you really surprised me by launching into something that was a little unexpected, something that had some edge or some bite, uh something that showed another side of your personality that made me think oh she’s got a lot going on inside, she’s not just a pretty white blonde girl. Having to repeat that phrase over and over again reminds us that prejudice can work in all kinds of directions, right, and just classifying a huge group of the population as pretty white blonde girls isn’t fair.

But, because in so many settings the pretty white blonde girls, (again I am using that very loosely, you know with a little bit of a wink knowing that you loosely fall into that category), but they get a lot of things in the world, again more generally construed... So If you play something that's a bit against that type, even if I'm going to cast you as the pretty white blonde girl in my play, I know now she's got other things going on here and she's interested in being more than simply being the ingénue, being the love interest, being the sweet young girl, being whatever those most boring traditional elements are. Now that's me, I think, I pride myself in doing work that resists a lot of the temptations of the purely conventional, commercial theatre (personal communication, September 16, 2017).

This proved to be a particularly impactful discovery because it ties into the recent shift in casting conventions. As Chapter 2 addressed, casting has shifted from being "color blind" to "color conscious", and this ultimately has impacted the ideas around casting within as well as beyond racial boundaries. The following responses offer examples of this:

Because now there is an emphasis in many many places, lets have more diverse casts and so forth... because someone is more interested in someone with a different background, or that brings some other kind of diversity to the table (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017).

More and more in this age where we are doing non-traditional casting where we cast beyond boundaries of race, and sometimes even now gender, some of those are less important than they once were (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017).

It is important for us to reflect the diverse communities of Boston on stage and off (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017).

All of these responses emphasize theatre's new and growing task of honoring authenticity in casting. But along with authenticity come new challenges. The major question that arises is now "Who can play what"?

Cris embodied this concern perfectly in his response to the question "Is there anything about the current procedures in the current theatre industry, pedagogy, profession, that you wish you could change"? Although his response does not deal with making a change, it does express a curiosity with where theater is headed.

But I am wondering, what's the end result of that. Can we... because part of an actor's job is transforming themselves into other people, that they aren't. So where's that balance? Do we have to cast an actor you know without legs to play a character without legs? Can we only cast gay people as gay people? That would be inappropriate to do. Like you would do in any job interview, you wouldn't ask that. And yet somehow we're expected to follow those rules to some degree. So does that mean only Jewish people can play Jewish characters? Do I ask your religion? Do I ask your sexual orientation? Do I ask your lineage? (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017).

This points out the issues that navigating authenticity surfaces. For example, when Cris asks "Do we have to cast an actor you know without legs to play a character without legs" (personal communication, October 2, 2017), it calls into question whether an actor who is not disabled can accurately convey that story. This makes us consider whose voice gets heard and whose gets silenced, and also causes us to look into how power is expressed and or misused. Although this may allow people who fit specific descriptors to ensure that they are being properly represented, it also shrinks the casting pool. This is where Cris' concern and curiosity

lies, in the sudden removal of the transformational actor. He expressed this concern when he said “But I am wondering, what’s the end result of that... because part of an actor’s job is transforming themselves into other people that they aren’t” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017). Thus those with the power are creating a new realm of theatre where realism is fore fronted, and the traditional metamorphic quality of an actor’s craft is being diminished.

Despite that all participants agreed that authenticity has become prioritized in casting, some provided conflicting information regarding the casting conventions of the industry (specifically in larger markets like NYC or LA). Answers such as “The actors in my program were talked to a lot about what their type was and because of looking for agents and looking to larger markets... And that sort of delineation is just about how the industry deals with the sheer volume of people” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) prove that recently type was a part of the discussion in acting pedagogy. Other statements like “All of that said, much casting happens around the idea that certain actors are appropriate for certain types and therefore would be considered for those specific kinds of roles” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) validate that type overall is widely used, even in a smaller market like Boston. So which is truly being used? Both? And if so, how can those coexist? These are the swirling questions in my mind.

Perhaps questions of authenticity have taken precedence in directors and casting director’s minds rather than old notions of categories or type, but truly how different is honoring authenticity from typecasting? In fact, does it not perpetuate type even more and also narrow the scope of potential actors for a role? It seems to me that authenticity could be taking the superficial quality of typecasting and deepening it, involving the more intimate aspects of one’s identity. Regardless, both typecasting and seeking authenticity both reject the previously

mentioned belief that an actor has the capability to play any role.

Decisive Factors

The second key secondary code from my data is “decisive factors”. Decisive factors are any external forces outside of the actor that impact if said actor is cast or not. This code’s smaller subcategories include “Director’s influence”, “Playwright’s influence”, “designer influence”, “budget”, “Equity rules”, “company conduct”, “casting pool”, “given circumstances”, “market”, “chemistry” and “authenticity”.

Influential Individuals. My data proved that the main influential individual in casting decisions varies depending on the show. This can range from being the playwright, casting director, director, or other individuals such as the Artistic Director, or a Licensing Agent.

Playwright. More often than not, there is no direct correspondence between the playwright and a theater or theater company. But statements like “We just did a play called *Intimate Apparel* here and several of the characters are African American women. So for those roles I would not be looking for white women” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and “And certainly there are some gender requirements, some age requirements, sometimes race is specified by the script, sometimes not” (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017), both highlight how a playwright’s influence exists in the demands of the script, via explicit character descriptions or clues provided by the text. These descriptors provided by the playwright are referred to as the “given circumstances”. However, statements such as “Certainly to a certain extent you want to serve what we would call the vision or the intention of the playwright. But even then I approach that idea cautiously myself” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), and “So I think typing comes out of the playwrights but also in the types of plays that people are selecting” (A, personal communication,

September 19, 2017), confirm that although participants recognize the need to adhere to the “given circumstances”, they also acknowledge their own autonomy. Often this leads to a level of typecasting, usually in terms of age, gender, or race provided in character descriptions.

Director. Then, participants spoke about the adherence to the vision of the director as being much more common practice (as expected considering they are all directors themselves). One response in particular demonstrated the contingent nature of casting, "You know is it really important to them that this person plays a particular age or can you fudge that?" (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017). But the most profound discovery came from statements like “It depends on sometimes what the director has, you know, sometimes the director will have a really strong feeling about someone” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and “Now then also I say, there’s someone that you don’t know about who I think would be fantastic and I would like to see them too, bring that person in” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) that attest to the director’s use of actors whom they have worked with before or have seen previously. This ties into the third secondary code, Relationships, that I will discuss momentarily.

Other influential individuals. There are times when those making the casting decisions will defer to someone else within or outside of the company who holds a position of power. Miss Quigley provided insight onto the hierarchical power within a theatre company, which not all that shockingly involves money.

If I don't have a strong preference one way or the other I will defer to the Artistic Director... Probably not on like the major role. But if it's a less significant role and the Artistic Director wants somebody, they're the one who's paying, so that's the person I work for (personal communication, September 25, 2017).

In other instances, external individuals come into play. Statements like “most rights agreements have a standard line of you have to do a play as written and any changes have to be approved.... But also they didn’t want to give us cart blanche “ (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) and “we have these union ratios like you have to hire the first 8 people have to be union, then you can have one nonunion... that makes it really expensive to produce a Shakespeare play” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017) show that at times licensing agencies or Equity rules can restrict casting freedom/ flexibility. Further, this can make casting decisions increasingly dependent on finances because equity actors are often paid a lot more than nonunion actors. This emergent data led me to wonder who has the most power? Is there a dominant individual or is does it vary depending on the show, market, etc.? Or does it tend to be more collaborative, more of an open discussion?

Market. A major finding of my data was the comparison between markets, and especially the unique character of the Boston Theatre market.

Background History. Through my class Theatre in Boston: The Critical Eye, I have not only seen performances, but have also learned about the history of Boston Theatre. Boston started as a “try-out town”. This meant that it was a site for plays to workshop and develop a piece before it would go off to the New York critics. However, that movement faded with the founding of two League of Resident Theaters (LORT): The American Repertory Theater (A.R.T) in 1980, and the Huntington Theater shortly after in 1982. Since then, the Boston Theatre Scene has grown immensely and is now an area where theatre professionals can more or less make a living if they so desire.

Large markets. R. Mutt supported the notion that larger markets tend to utilize type “Once you leave this perfect utopian world of our college campus, how you go into the real

world, where you will be cast on type” (personal communication, September 16, 2017). Cris gave insight onto the use of casting directors in these large markets, “that would probably be different with a casting director in New York than here or Seattle or Chicago or other cities where we don't use casting directors” (personal communication, October 2, 2017). They function as a mode of handling the immense pool of potential actors.

Small Markets. Although places such as Boston which R. Mutt coined the “small little world of Boston live theatre” (personal communication, September 16, 2017), have a much smaller casting pool than the NYC or LA scene, there is still a great number of people trying to make a living in the field. Phrases like “those sort of metrics that help you cut the pool down so that you are not calling in 2,000 people every time, come down to those descriptors” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), “Sometimes you kind of see something a little different and that might work, but usually once you kind of narrow it down and you have a smaller group of people” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and “here are 200 acting students, they are each going to come in for 4 minutes and do two monologues and then be out the door, make a choice of which ones you want to see... In that situation, again, I am more likely to just make an intuitive, immediate response” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017) prove that even in smaller markets, forms of delineation (mainly based upon physical characteristics or what visceral response you get from superficial factors) are utilized to shrink the casting pool and make decisions.

Academic Settings. From my data it became apparent that casting in academic settings often does not coincide with industry conventions. Phrases such as “Most actors in high school or in a college setting are going to have to play against type of their age because most plays are not just about people between 18 and 21” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16,

2017), “Often in a college setting there is [casting] against gender, just to create more gender parity in casting. Many plays, classical plays in particular have many roles that are for men than for women”(R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), and “when you are in high school for instance, its usually the really tall women or the kind of stocky women who get cast in the older women parts. And that’s true with guys too” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017) indicate that academic settings fudge the roles an individual may be considered for in the professional world and also bend the scope of believability. It is interesting to note that the issue lies with age, and that physicality becomes a way to bridge that gap rather than acting skill.

Company Conduct. My data also revealed that company conduct might regulate the casting pool. Statements like “Part of our mission is to support local artists. So we rarely cast outside of the greater Boston area” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), show how a company’s values may restrict those actors who can audition.

Another interesting uncovering was how equity rules factor into company policy. Statements such as “We are required by our agreement to do an open call for our union actors” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) and “I mean usually we go through a couple rounds of EPA generals. So those are, anyone can come and sign up, any equity member...They don't actually need to fit the bill of what you are looking for” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017) show how this forces a theater or company to be more open in an audition process, but on the same token, limits this opportunity to those with this title.

Money. Not surprisingly, money proved to be a major issue for theatre companies. Money is particularly impactful because many of the theatres in the Boston market are non-profit. Statements such as “But we don't have a choice you know. I mean financially we can't

afford to hire you know 15 actors" (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and "you know there are people who are definitely making a living, but... you know no one is doing this for vast sums of money" (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) confirm that Boston theaters/companies do not have vast budgets. Thus this deficiency in funds impacts the actors they hire because depending on status, certain actors are more expensive than others. Further, a theater or company may choose to showcase someone based on the prospective revenue they could bring it.

The following response supports the notion that an actor may be cast because they can bring in revenue from either ticket sales or donations.

Its not only that you think they'd be good, its that you also think they would sell tickets. And if you're working with a theatre company, they need to stay in business so you want to hire somebody who is going to sell tickets... Or [the actor is] a board member's husband or wife or daughter or son. So you have a really influential person on the theater board and you might want to make sure they continue to give your theatre company money. (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017)

The final part of this quote introduces my third secondary code, the influence of relationships on casting decisions.

Relationships

"Relationships are important in the theatre, we enjoy building relationships, and we enjoy collaboration" (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017). A third secondary code that I discovered is "relationships", which I would argue is the most salient code that emerged in my analysis because it was unanimously discussed. The subcategories include:

“chemistry”, “previous work” (done with the professional conducting the casting), and “point of connection”.

Chemistry. Often there are numerous actors who could potentially play a role. However, if they do not match well with the other actors, then this will ruin the dynamic of the show. Thus, relationship between individuals becomes crucial. The following statements: “You know sometimes those things play out when you think about the chemistry of those actors” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), “not just about what you can do but what you do in concert with people” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), There’s a kind of chemistry, there’s a certain kind of alignment with the stars” (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), all reveal how one actor’s potential to be cast depends on others and further that this is referred to as the “chemistry” between actors.

Another mode in which an actor in question is evaluated in concert with other people has to do with availability. The statement “So the actual casting comes about what’s your schedule in relation to other people schedules” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) supports this idea, and further explains why one should have a flexible schedule in order to pursue this career.

Previous work. The most salient discovery that emerged from my data was the universal phenomenon of casting actors whom a professional has a solid relationship with; sometimes these roles are even offered without an audition. Every participant made a statement regarding this phenomenon. Responses such as “You might be saying well I already know this actor, I’ve worked with them a lot, they’re perfect for this role, just offer it to them, I don’t need to see them audition” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), “And so a lot of directors want the comfort of people that they know what they can expect from, in terms of their work

ethic, and their demeanor in the rehearsal room, but then also what they are capable of as an actor" (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), "We have actors who our audiences really love, they're not famous actors but they have been with the company a long time and they are wonderful actors. So, we might think of doing a show with them in a certain lead role" (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), and "And sometimes I think spare the actor the audition. If I've seen an actor work enough and I've worked with them before, then why have them audition when I just know that somebody I've seen enough and I know they would be good for the part" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) all verify how prolific this practice is. Now although this may not fall under what we typically define as typecasting, it seems obvious that to an extent this is a form of that application, a sentiment that was backed up by R. Mutt "Sometimes a director already knows, as so to an extent is that a form of type casting, well yes" (personal communication, September 16, 2017).

Connections. Another thing that professionals are seeking are points of connection, a "circle of trust" as Cris called it (personal communication, October 2, 2017). Phrases like "I also am very interested in whether or not I know anybody on their resume if they've worked with somebody I like or respect. We have people in common, that suggests sort of the same value system" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017), "You know it happens in other fields right... call people for references" (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), "I look to see whether they have worked with anyone I know. Or with a theater I know, where I know people" (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), "People are really looking for who you know. Frequently they talk about that in auditions. Oh I see you just did a show with xxx, he's a friend of mine. And that's a point of connection" (R. Mutt), personal communication, September 16, 2017), all affirm that in this field, like many others, its all about

who you know, the network that you have established. The more people you know, the more feet you have through the door.

Roles

The fourth and final secondary code that emerged from my data is “Roles”. Roles refer to what is available for actors, because inevitably the roles available will impact the amount of opportunity available to an actor. “Roles” has a couple subcategories and codes such as: “stories told”, “representation”, and specifically “women’s roles”.

Stories/ Representation. The stories being told (therefore not only what plays are being written, but even more critically what plays are being produced) naturally create and reinforce the representation we see on stage. Phrases like “When kids come to the theatre and they see people that look like them in roles such as heroes, you know it opens up a world of possibility for them, and that’s the future of it” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), and “Unfortunately even for instance in the small little world of Boston Live theatre, we are influenced by what we see in films, on TV, in magazines, and so forth” (R. Mutt. September 16, 2017), connect all mediums of entertainment/ media and show how culture impacts what we present but conversely that we can effect society by what we choose to display.

Women’s roles. However, throughout my analysis I became acutely aware of how women face more challenges than men. Statements such as “Professionally there’s just vastly more women, vastly more women than there are men... but the parts haven't caught up” (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), “I think yes within plays, yes the types of roles for women perhaps feel more circumscribed, more tightly, you know that only certain kinds of women can play those roles” (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), and “Almost any classical play has more men than women and some have way more men than

women. And even many good modern plays have more men than women..." (Miss Quigley, personal communication, September 25, 2017), all reveal that there are more females in the field, and yet considerably less roles available to them. Further, responses like "Roles for women by in large tend to be about their relationship to men and so they are the mother or the girlfriend or wife, you know as sort of a midline point... so those types that writers are writing or that tend to get produced are where the limitation begins" (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017) prove that the proliferation of roles reinforce the tenants of the patriarchy. Of course this is not unique to gender, as it also proliferates the marginalization of other minority groups.

Combining this finding with the previous data that revealed that the assumption around an "actor's ability" (the assumption that men are more versatile actors) may very well be related to the larger amount and greater quality of roles available to men compared to women.

Solution. Thus, many participants spoke to the responsibility they felt they had as theatre professionals. Phrases like "That was part of the training about you know whose are the stories we are telling and how do we change that" (A, personal communication, September 19, 2017), "that would ultimately, presumably, provide more opportunities for everyone [pushing the boundaries of type]" (R. Mutt, personal communication, September 16, 2017), and "I think in the non-profit regional theatre world... most directors are feminists. And there are more and more women casting, we have more and more women directors. So historically we have men directors but that's changed, and continues to change and gets better" (Cris, personal communication, October 2, 2017) exhibit that there has been a recent shift toward variety in the stories we tell, that increases and expands the portrayal of females. But, there is still much progress to be made.

Additional resources

This semester, I have had the pleasure of talking to numerous Boston theatre professionals separate from my research. These individuals were made accessible to me through workshops provided by the Boston College Theatre Department, The Boston College Dramatics Society (DS), and through my class titled Theatre in Boston: The Critical Eye.

The Boston College Dramatics Society. This September, The Boston College Dramatics Society (of which I am the president) had the honor of hosting a Broadway actress who ran a musical theatre workshop for BC students, providing advice on their pieces and insight onto her personal experience as well. As a curious student, I asked her if she could comment on the use of type in the New York theatre scene. Her opening remark pushed students to challenge typecasting, telling them to never try and be what you think they want you to be.

She explained how casting has shifted since Hamilton came to Broadway, that now it's easier to get cast if you are ethnic and on the same token is now more difficult if you are white. This change has induced other modifications as well. Representation is broadening beyond the scope of race, and so we see pervasive images that were created by type dissolve. For example, ingénues (as traditionally seen) are no longer required to be blonde or a size 0. Thus, now there are more roles being created to represent reality of the diverse population. The expanding representation is therefore present in every size market. Ironically each of these statements refers to an actor's physicality. A notion that proves how despite the redefining of typecasting, that remnants of its traditional denotation can still be found.

She further supported the notion that theatre opens its doors to you once you have received recognition and built connections. She attested that you have a greater chance of getting cast after you have been cast at least once before. They like people who they have seen. She also pointed out a searing problem for transformative actors. She said that if an actor can be seen as

playing multiple parts, then their potential to land a role becomes less likely. This ties into the notion of authenticity that seeks actors who closely identify in some manner the character they are portraying.

Another comment that struck me was when she perchance happened to touch upon what my type is. She told me she could see me as either an Elle Woods or a Bright Star. What resonates with me is the fact that these two characters align with my physicality and/or my personality. Elle Woods is blonde, bubbly, and intelligent. Bright Star's lead, Alice Murphy is wild, young, romantic, smart, and strong. These are all qualities that I think others would associate with me either based on my looks or from knowing me as a person. Her snap judgment of who I could play based on our brief interaction proves the ubiquity and instantaneous quality of impression formation that generates and perpetuates the idea of type. However, I was surprised that a lot of her impression related to my persona rather than my appearance. This then reflects the alterations that are being made to casting practices that I have discovered.

The Boston College Theatre Department. Our department also provides students with opportunities to listen to, speak with, and work alongside theatre professionals. During a casual lunch and conversation with two previous BC alums that are currently professional actors, they validated the idea that type can pigeonhole an actor. They also explained that once an actor has status then they have the ability to try and challenge that. They both agreed that there is more diversity in the market now, however they still stressed the importance of knowing one's strengths and what you look like. It is fascinating that despite the transgression from traditional casting, that its roots in physicality are still viewed as pivotal.

Theatre in Boston: The Critical Eye. In November, my class had the pleasure of speaking with a professional theatre critic who provided us with insight onto her career. In fact,

she is arguably the most prolific theatre critic in the Boston area who has been writing reviews since the seventies. Therefore, she has witnessed first hand the dynamic changes that have shaped the current Boston Theatre market. I chose to wrack her brain in terms of what she has noticed in regards to casting from the massive running list of shows she has reviewed. For example, does she think typecasting is prevalent or does she see a lot of the same actors? Her immediate response was “typecasting is out”. But she fervently agreed that typecasting was prominent in the Boston theatre scene decades ago. Especially due to her long-term presence in the Boston theatre scene, she has seen actors perform in multiple roles. She has viewed professionals who are very transformational in the types of characters they can play (which she said may indicate that they are a character actor) as well as those who fail to do so. However, she stressed that an actor does not have to be transformational to be talented.

Before we departed at the end of class, she asked me for more information about my thesis and what I have discovered thus far. I explained that I think typecasting does still exist and permeate theatre, but that it no longer fits the definition it once had. Many people still attribute type to physicality but ignore personality. But now, persona is arguably the dominant factor in casting decisions. Unanimously all participants discussed how they assess and play upon an actor’s persona. She seemed impressed and agreed with me. She provided an example of renowned actress and professor, Tina Packer. At one point in her career Packer was cast as Cleopatra. She recalled that it was not her age that made her unsuitable for the part but rather her essence. Cleopatra is said to have a spirit of fire and water, and Packer is distinctly earthy. Her remark supports the distinction of how an actor’s personality highly contributes to the characters they play (but perhaps not for those actors who can be transformational).

My classmates and I were also fortunate enough to speak with a Founding Artistic Director of a popular Boston theater. His knowledge is especially intriguing because he also works as a director, and so he could provide rich insight onto both the production and creative side of the process. He mentioned that it is usually the Artistic Director who exercises the most power in casting decisions. He mentioned that if he disagrees with a director's desired cast, he always provides his opinions in a subtle manner. He gets the directors to reflect upon the possible options as a way to guide them to the best actor for the part, rather than tell them point blank to cast a particular actor. It is important to acknowledge that the Artistic Director inherently has different overarching concerns than a director because they are preoccupied with finances. So when casting, an Artistic Director will often consider who they can afford to hire (that to a degree depends on equity rules, i.e. the seventy to thirty percent ratio of equity actors to non-union) as well as what will sell tickets. He informed us that what sells tickets depends more upon the season selection than the individuals cast. Even if an actor is considered a "Boston star", the success measures of their previous seasons have proven to them that this has no real impact in attracting a larger audience. He did however mention that it is different in a market like New York. Overall, by gaining the knowledge of this theatre professional I was able to gain a better understanding of the power hierarchy behind casting.

Interpretation

It is the contingent nature of casting that causes people to be ignorant of the omnipresence of "type", in both its traditional sense (e.g. the petite blonde ingénue etc.) and how it has changed over the past few decades, especially in the last 10 years. As pointed out by Asch (1946) impressions are impulsive and unavoidable. Therefore, it is ignorant for us to assume that type will not be used as a basis or component of casting. But it is important to realize the

subjectivity of casting. As William and Bargh (2008) discovered, our bodily experiences can impact our perception of personality traits. I would go further to say that a casting director's lived experiences may influence the casting decisions they make, causing them to favor some actors over others. As Cronbach (1955) argues, impression formation has more to do with the judge rather than the one being observed. Traditionally, actors are assumed to have the skill of transformation, being able to morph into any kind of role. Assuming this is true, if an actor is cast as their “type” then this is a result of individual choice (the director, casting director, etc.). It is a consequence of a conscious selection that chooses to focus on certain (often superficial) characteristics of said actor rather than an assessment of their talent. At times these decisions are merely reflecting a “given circumstance” provided by the playwright. But that inherently is questionable because a director can decide if or how they want to honor the playwright; the degree to which they adhere to or fudge the script’s descriptors, and to what extent they are willing to stray from believability.

If a stereotype of a human being is a simplified, fixed image that centers on a few key traits, then stereotypes are certainly still widespread in the realm of theatre. Despite Boston directors’ general belief in and encouragement of actors who challenge their type, their opinions do not resonate with what is actually being practiced. Although they preach the casting of countertypes, they still hiring actors based on stereotypes. This research, however, has identified that casting based on stereotypes can and does move beyond physicality into the realm of imagined personality. Specifically I argue that the casting director's evaluation of the personal aspects of one’s identity play a consistent and legitimate role in theatre casting. Mainly this pertains to their demeanor and pays specific attention to their professionalism. A positive evaluation of an actor’s personality will most likely allow them to eventually be cast, and then

they have their foot in the door. As my participants unanimously stated it, theatre is a relational field and especially in a small market like Boston, it thrives upon these connections. Therefore the more people an actor knows and has pleasantly worked with, as well as the more diligent and collaborative they are during the rehearsal process, the more opportunities they will have presented to them. At times the roles an actor acquires may be offered to them, without competition or a formal audition process. This follows Anderson and Shikaro's (2008) idea of how reputation and behavior are more greatly associated when someone is well known. Selecting a show for an actor, or hiring them in this casual manner is in and of itself a form of typecasting.

But these new definitions are working alongside the old conception of type. It is only hard to recognize because it has been given a new label: authenticity. Authenticity initially arose out of purely physical evaluations: color-conscious casting. Casting people based on race may capture greater diversity onstage, but it nonetheless is adhering to physical descriptors. Additionally, the rise of authenticity has spurred a rumbling under the foundation of an actor's craft. It may start pushing gender parity, squelch ageism, etc. But by spreading its influence into the new perception of type, casting strictly based upon an actor's actual personal aspects of themselves (sexuality, religion, etc.), it causes those in power to reconsider whose stories are told, but who is capable of telling them. It feeds into the belief that only people that possess or identify with a trait, ideology, or what have you have the ability to give a proper performance. Essentially, it ignores the transformative nature of the actor. It should be noted that this newfound determination toward honoring authenticity has immense potential to do well, to cause an internal clean up that will lead to the reflection of the actual makeup of the population and add breadth beyond the scope of the white cisgender male. However, if not handled carefully, authenticity could be silencing voices as well. It could also lead to an intensified expectation of

realism projected onstage (an expectation that has already been set by film and television).

Following Medhurst's (Stark, 2013) view of stereotypes, it seems that by striving for authenticity director's casting decisions can be viewed as shorthand because their choices communicate a very specific message to their audiences, a push for diversity. In line with Rosenberg et al. (1968) their choices reflect realism even though they are rooted in idealism.

It is important to note that this movement toward authenticity started in larger markets, i.e. New York and the explosion of *Hamilton* (although I know there are thespians who would argue that this shift began before this musical, it is inarguable that *Hamilton*'s success has gained it national, perhaps even international, attention). Therefore we should consider the power dynamics at play. Although my participants voiced that Boston is a place that goes beyond the conventions of the commercial industry, my data demonstrated that directors are mimicking the desires of those at the top of the hierarchy. Therefore directors are also contributing (even if uneasily, they are still doing so) to hegemony. This can be viewed in the misogyny that persists even in an inclusive field like theatre. For example, this can be traced to the plays theaters or companies choose to produce, and the voices they let be heard (based on who they are casting). The lack of gender parity in theatre is unnerving. There are fewer published female playwrights, and consequently less roles for women. This compiled with the fact that women are scrutinized more harshly based on their appearance and age leads them to face more challenges when being cast. Although in Boston there is greater effort to achieve gender parity in casting, the participants support of assumptions towards the roles women can play (based on attractiveness, age, etc.) validate that misogyny exists even in the smaller markets.

All of this connects to the big picture issue of cultural industry that Horkheimer and Adorno (n.d.) introduced. As a result of capitalism, theatre (along with all forms of pop culture)

aims to satisfy the needs of mass consumers and therefore is primarily concerned with profit.

According to them, the current desire of consumers is a quality of sameness. This quality is very much reflected by the new push for authenticity. This push calls for realism that causes an actor to portray a character that is representative of a critical aspect of their identity. Numerous statements from participants revealed the financial influences over casting, whether it arose from hiring equity versus nonunion actors, who will sell more tickets, etc. Henceforth, actors are viewed as commodities as a consequence of the commodification and commercialization of the theatre industry as a whole. So it is the cultural industry and not the individual casting who exercises the power.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

An actor is their own business, their own boss, as well as the product they are trying to sell. In order to gain entry into the business, actors are encouraged to understand and play to their type. Type refers to the potential roles an actor may be considered for as a result of the impression they give off. Traditionally this has been linked to impressions mainly based on face value. The portrayal of ones type goes beyond the audition material they select. It seeps into audition attire, their headshot, and the experience they chose to highlight on their resume. It even invades their social media platforms, as uniformity is crucial in order to adequately brand oneself. Thus, the actor is viewed as a commodity.

Yet, a universal belief exists that greatly conflicts with the conception of type. An actor's craft requires them to be someone other than themselves, and so the actor's dogma preaches that an actor should be able to play any role. In line with this conviction, actors are encouraged in the classroom to be vulnerable, to take risks, and challenge themselves. Simultaneously, acting students are told to adhere to type for success in the professional world. This adherence is deemed necessary for initial entry into the field. However, it becomes extremely difficult to escape the confines of one's type once an individual has been cast in this manner. The only chance of liberation lies in accrued experience along with a well-established reputation in the market. Regardless of which market an actor works in, nearly every theatre professional has to supplement their career with an additional job. Therefore, the amounts of professionals who achieve "star quality" status are far and few in-between and so the majority of actors roles will correspond with their type. This is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. In fact, many actors appreciate being consistently cast as their type because they can make a living off of playing the same kind of role. But for others, it becomes monotonous. Despite what an actor feels towards

being typecast, it is inarguable that type contends the transformative quality of acting that is considered central to the profession.

Research has proven that type is potent in the mediums of film and television. Due to greater amount of jobs available in these fields, the conventions of these mediums have shaped acting pedagogy. Many actors receive their education or get their start in theatre. So how helpful is this to those who are pursuing acting in theatre? Is type still as tumultuous a force in this field? Academia has failed to adequately research casting in general, and significantly has neglected to analyze it in theatre. As an undergraduate acting student at Boston College, I have witnessed typecasting of my peers and of myself. I am constantly cast in roles that reflect an aspect of my own personality (i.e. the responsible character, the rationale one, the nurturer, etc.). Interestingly, my collegiate roles greatly differ from those of my high school career that typically pinned me as ditzy, innocent, and often the love interest (it seems to me these were more based on my appearance). However, the scope of this knowledge is limited to academics settings. Therefore, I was curious as to whether type was as prevalent in professional theatre, specifically Boston. I chose to analyze the Boston theatre market due to its convenience and also because I plan on auditioning in this city post graduation.

By interviewing four professional Boston theatre directors, I gained insight into the intricacies of the casting. Through my data analysis, it became apparent that casting is an extremely subjective process that is dependent upon a number of factors. I grouped these factors into four major categories: “Identity”, “Decisive Factors”, “Relationships” and “Roles”.

First and foremost, casting is influenced by the actor’s identity. This includes several sub categories such as “assumptions”, “appearance”, “age”, “personality”, “experience”, “education”, “actor’s ability”, “actors choices”, “actors comprehension”, and “professionalism”.

“Assumption” relates to the belief that an actor can play any role. My analysis further showed that this assumption is gender biased, believing that men are able to play a wider range of roles. This notion was reflected in the amount of roles available to each sex, an imbalance created by the harsh effects of ageism.

“Age” was unanimously mentioned as a crucial factor when casting. Often age is listed in the character descriptions in the script. When these are provided, the director has to choose how important this descriptor is and whether or not to submit to believability. As an actor ages, there is a limitation to the roles they can play. This limitation comes at a much younger age for women, around the age of thirty. Ironically women in their thirties make up the majority of the population and yet are the smallest fraction of what is represented onstage. This age gap can be attributed to the severe judgment of female’s appearance.

“Appearance” is directly linked with the assessment of age. However, it also proved to be an immense source of anxiety for young actors in the field who feel pressured to match the images of perfection presented by society. Appearance can also be hard to ignore. There are times when aspects of an actor’s physicality are particularly powerful (i.e. an extremely tall actor who towers above the rest of the cast). Or when they have to complement the other actors around them (i.e. how Broadway ensembles at times tend to all be individuals of the same general height, body type, etc.). Historically, females have been judged more critically on their attractiveness. One participant mentioned how actresses used to be encouraged to wear clothes that showed off their legs in the audition room. This disturbing example demonstrates how sexist the field used to be.

The most salient subcategory of identity that emerged was “personality”. “Personality” proved to be a paramount factor in casting decisions. Yet, none of the participants considered

personality to be an aspect of type. But when one hires an individual based off of an aspect of their persona that they feel matches or will further illuminate the character, then that is casting based on type.

Then, an actor is evaluated based upon their “ability”. “Actor’s ability” refers to the skill sets they have acquired through their education and experience, both of which can be assessed from the actor’s resume. A resume lists the roles and classes that an actor feels are most telling. The resume serves as a tool for those casting because sometimes a show calls for a unique talent, and the special skills section of a resume can help find these unique individuals. Also different genres may require specific qualities, such as classical works that require an actor to handle complex language.

Actors do have a degree of control in the perception of their audition. An “actors choices” such as how they dress, the monologue they select, and their level of preparation, all send a particular message to directors about how they want to be evaluated. Sometimes this displays their strengths, and may even complement their type. Other times they may challenge their type, suggesting that they are more complex and versatile than their first impression may imply. Another aspect of an “actor’s choices” is their ability to be impulsive. It is common practice to ask actors to make adjustments in an audition. Participants revealed that this is a way to test actors to see how well they can take direction, how open they are to trying new things, and if they will collaborate well together.

The decision to prep for an audition ties into an actor’s “professionalism”. Being committed, memorized, having read and also possessing a thorough knowledge of the play, being timely, etc. will all make an actor more appealing as a potential person to work with. Due to Boston being a small market, word of mouth spreads if an actor is unpleasant in the workspace.

Professionals do not want to collaborate with or tolerate actors who are rude, unprepared, or careless.

The second salient code that I found was “Decisive Factors”. This can be broken down into “influential individuals”, “market”, “company conduct”, and “money”. Essentially, decisive factors are forces outside of the actor that impact casting decisions.

“Influential individuals” refers to the professional who may exercise the most power in casting decisions. My data proved that this varies from show to show. The power could lay with the playwright, and the requirements they write in the script. Or it may be in the hands of the director and whom they think is the best fit. Sometimes a theater or company defers to the Artistic Director, as they are the one who deals with finances. Also, at times it may depend upon an external individual such as those behind rights agreements.

“Market” discusses the similarities and differences between large and small theatre markets. Large markets proved to be areas where the traditional views of type are widely used. Also, they utilize casting directors as a way to quickly manage and cut down the sheer number of actors, prior to the final round of auditions. On the other hand, smaller markets like Boston are sites of more experimental work. Yet I learned that even in these smaller markets, databases, metrics, and visceral responses are used to shrink the casting pool and make decisions. Separate from the industry, I also analyzed the casting in academic settings. My data showed that casting practices at schools often do not coincide with the conventions of the commercial industry. Students inevitably are cast outside of a realistic age range, and so physicality becomes way to overcome this issue. Also, most universities tend to cast across gender in order to create more gender parity in casting (as most plays tend to have more male roles than female).

“Company Conduct” refers to the ways in which a theater or company regulates those

they cast. For example, some theaters in Boston strive to only cast locals as part of their mission statement. It also deals with equity rules and company policy. Theaters are required to hold annual open auditions where non-union actors are welcome to audition.

My data verified that “money” is a majorly problematic for many theaters (as most are non-profit). Therefore financial security is particularly important when they consider who they can afford to hire. This ties into Equity rules and regulations. Depending on the genre, theaters are required to hire a certain percentage of equity actors before they can cast a non-union actor. Equity actors are more expensive to hire. So, if a theatre or company is lacks sufficient funds, this will impact their season as well as whom they cast. On the flip side, they may also cast an actor based upon the potential audience they could attract.

The third and arguably most pivotal secondary code was “Relationships”. It’s subcategories were “chemistry”, “previous work” (with the professional doing the casting), and “point of connection”. Chemistry implies how well an actor works with another person, how believable they can make their fictional relationship (i.e. if two actors are playing Romeo and Juliet, you need to believe they are madly in love). The concept of chemistry verifies that one’s potential to be cast relies on others, and so is partially out of their control. Theatre is a relational business, and the more you work with someone, the greater your chances become of getting cast. In fact, they may not even have to audition at all. My data displayed that directors often have particular actors in mind when casting a show, or sometimes an actor is the motivation for show selection. It became apparent to me that this process of “pre-casting” is in itself a form of typecasting. Professionals are also interested in points of connection, especially in the small world of Boston theatre. If director finds that they have people in common, then they can assume that they share similar values with the actor. Also, like any occupation, they can use these other

professionals as references to get more information. Networking is of the utmost importance in this field, and the more people you know, the more you can get your foot in the door.

The fourth and final secondary code was “Roles”. Roles refers to what parts are available to actors. “Roles” had a couple of subcategories, “stories told/ representation” and “women’s roles”. The stories being told rely upon not only what plays are written, but more importantly what plays are produced. How a director chooses to cast a production directly impacts the representations we see onstage. My data verified that even in a smaller market like Boston, we are influenced by the commercialization of the entertainment/media that pervades culture. Through my analysis, it also became apparent that there are fewer roles for women. Further, the roles that do exist tend to consider the female character in relation to or secondary to man. This is a result of the historical lack of gender parity in theatre (as classical plays have more men than women, and even many contemporary plays follow this trend). It is plausible that the insufficient amount of roles for women may have contributed to the gender bias of the actor’s dogma. There are a greater quantity and quality of roles written for men, and so naturally they would be thought of as more versatile. For many, it is hard to believe what you cannot see and women have not had the chance to flaunt their skills.

Throughout my data analysis four themes emerged from my analytic memos/ asides: contingency, scripts influence, casting against type and ignorance. I interweaved these themes into the interpretation of my salient secondary codes. Due to the contingent nature of casting, professionals remain ignorant to the new conception of type. They preach to cast against type, but they are unknowingly adhering to it. Sometimes these instances of typecasting can be drawn to the given circumstances of the script. However, in these circumstances the director holds the power to decide to what extent they honor the playwright. It is up to them as to whether they

want to strive for believability, or whether they can fudge these descriptors. Although the Boston Theatre Market has recently begun to test the waters and considers itself a site for more experimental work, it still is a market that utilizes typecasting.

Initially, my interest in typecasting sought to uncover how casting challenges women more so than men in addition to its overall presence. Throughout the fifteen years I have been performing, I have witnessed from how male actors have a much easier time than females. They always have less competition, and a handful of roles available to them. (Once again, it should be noted that my observations were restricted to scholarly atmospheres.) My data did reveal that women are viewed more critically in terms of both appearance and age, and that there is a depletion of female roles in the field. However, this was not the breakthrough of my research.

The real discovery was the change in the denotation of type. Typecasting, as regarded by my participants, deals with the impressions formulated based upon one's appearance. They also claimed that type (under this definition) is outdated. They mentioned how physicality only tends to become a decisive factor if it is a given circumstance of the script. Contrary to their belief, typecasting in its traditional sense is still very much in use. However, in recent years it has had a significant shift in focus from physicality to personality. It is this transformation that has made professionals ignorant to their practice of and contribution to typecasting. All of my participants touched upon casting actors for strong personal qualities, and how they can bring those aspects of their identity to shape the character. This then assumes that who an actor is, is an integral part of the creation their character. Thus, one's type (though to varying degrees) must always be present in casting decisions. This goes against the "blank slate" hypothesis that assumes the actor is a blank slate onto which any character can be projected. This is another part of the actor's dogma discussed earlier.

Typecasting has further hidden itself under a new label, “authenticity”. In our post-Hamilton world, the theatre industry has shifted from “color-blind” to “color-conscious” casting. This adaption has the potential to go beyond the scope of race. It causes us to consider the larger question of “Who can play what?”, and brings sexuality, gender, religion, etc. into the conversation. “Authenticity” then calls for diversity by demanding realism. So despite its strife for diversification, it is a new practice that welcomes type.

My research has contributed to both Impression Formation theory as well as Stereotype theory. Professional’s commentary on the guttural or impulsive reactions they have to actors in the rehearsal room, as well as their ability to “type” me after a brief interaction both validated Asch’s (1946) belief that impressions of individuals are inexorable. The significance of networking in theatre supported Cronbach’s (1955) idea that one’s favorability toward another is a major factor in their perception of said individual. Additionally, it displayed how reputation and behavior are greater linked when an individual is well known. This is why directors tend to hire actors who are pleasant, professional, and who they have previously collaborated with. The emergence of authenticity demonstrated that directors are idealistic in their efforts to diversify representation, but that ultimately this lends itself to realism. Consequently, type still functions as shorthand for the industry. The main difference is that type now encompasses more than solely an actor’s physicality.

The purpose of my research was not to label typecasting as either good or bad. Rather, I aimed to understand the complex and subjective forces at work behind casting decisions and whether or not type was still a dominant part of that process. In summation, my research has proven to me that typecasting is inevitable, but it is how we define it that is conditional.

Moreover, the eminent conception that an actor can transform into any character is losing its significance. To be honest, I wonder to what capacity it has bared any truth.

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Appendix A

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Noelle Scarlett and I am a rising senior at Boston College pursuing a double major in Theatre and Communication. This fall I will have the daunting and rewarding task of creating my Honors Thesis. I am interested in the notion of casting, specifically in regard to one's "type". As a young woman who hopes to try and pursue acting professionally, this is a topic that piques my curiosity (now more than ever as my final year at BC approaches). Additionally, it always intrigued me that people tend to be cast as someone whom they resemble physically or personality wise, although the basis of acting is (or perhaps was) to portray someone else.

Background/ Purpose: After creating my literary review, it became apparent that there is little to no scholarly research on casting, especially in the realm of theatre. It also became clear that "types" have always been present, and will remain an intrinsic part of the process. Further, I hypothesize that females are more subject to their "type" than their male counterparts. This hypothesis stems from the fact that females face greater objectification in their daily lives, and this projects onto their representations in entertainment and media.

I am currently reaching out to casting directors in the Boston area in hopes of finding interested individuals to be participants in my study. I am seeking insight on the process, in hopes of gaining an understanding and appreciation for the intricacies of casting.

Research Methods/ Data Collection: This would require an interview of anywhere from 30-60 minutes. The participant will determine the location of the interview, in order to ensure absolute comfort. To begin, we will review the consent form together, and I will receive verbal validation before accepting the signed paperwork and proceeding. Then I will ask if they have any questions for my prior to the interview questions. Finally, I will inform them that I plan on taking notes during our conversation, and ask them if they are comfortable with me recording their interview. Once the interview is complete, I will once again allow them the opportunity to ask any questions they may have regarding the research. Your identity would remain confidential, and you would also have the ability to drop out of the research at any time, no questions asked.

Participating in this research is not expected to provide any direct benefit to you, but you may enjoy the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the dynamics of the casting process, and you might feel gratified knowing that you helped contribute to the body of knowledge in this research area

I would be extremely honored to have the opportunity to work with some of _____'s directors. Thank you so much for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing back from you soon!

Sincerely,

Noelle Scarlett President |The Dramatics Society
Boston College '18
(508) 277-7358
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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Opening questions:

- How did you get started in theatre?
- What is one of your favorite memories regarding a rehearsal, a production process, lesson, etc?
- What advice would you give to a person who is pursuing acting professionally?

Generative questions:

- How do you view typecasting?
- How crucial is it for an actor to audition as their “type”? Does its importance diminish over time as an actor builds their repertoire?
- Do you consider physicality or personality more influential on one’s type?
- Did any part of your formal education or training discuss the idea of typecasting?
- How influential are an actor’s headshot and resume on casting decisions?
- How long does it take you to determine whether you could see an actor in a certain role?
- How influential is age on casting? Race?
- Have you ever selected a show based on an actor(s) you wanted to work with?
Is this common practice?
- Do you think females are more disposed to typecasting than males?
- Can you recall a time when an actor surprised you? (Meaning that they were able to perform as someone completely different from himself or herself).

- Have you ever casted a role based on type because it was more reliable or convenient?

- Upon first impression, what would you say my type is?

Closing questions:

- Is there anything about the current procedures in the theatre industry, pedagogy, profession, etc. that you wish you could change?

- What would you like your pseudonym to be?