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# RESEARCH TRADITIONS IN DIALOGUE

COMMUNICATION  
STUDIES IN LATIN  
AMERICA AND EUROPE



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# INTRODUCTION

# History, Debates and Main References of Cultural Studies in Europe

Leonarda García-Jiménez<sup>36</sup>

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Filipa Subtil<sup>38</sup>

## Abstract

This chapter outlines some of the main features that characterize cultural studies in Europe by providing a historical, theoretical, and bibliographical review of their main authors, debates, and texts. In particular, we start by tracing historically the origins of this current of thought situating it at two research centers: the Birmingham School at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the United Kingdom and the Centre d'Études de Communications des Masses (CECMAS) in France. To complete this European analysis, we have also considered the Italian, Portuguese and Spanish cases, which we will contrast to the British and French contexts. We then present the debates and theoretical tensions currently characterizing cultural studies in Europe. Finally, we analyze qualitatively some of the key reference texts used to analyze culture and media within Europe. Ultimately, the present text is an invitation to think of what has been carried out so far in order to plan the future challenges that a European culturalist research will have to provide answers to.

## Keywords

Cultural studies, European thought, metatheory, reference texts, critical thought, sociology of knowledge, interpretative thought, Marxism, Birmingham School, CECMAS.

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## 1. Introduction

Cultural studies (CS) is an eclectic and heterogeneous field preoccupied mainly with the study of consumption and meanings around popular culture. This perspective argues that popular culture includes the cultural and ideological values of its age. However, this does not mean that audiences dully consume and accept any ideas promulgated by the media. This original idea initiated a revolutionary paradigmatic change in communicology in the 1970s and points out that depending on the cultural baggage of the individual, they will accept, interpret, and redefine the different proposals by the media.

Cultural studies is nowadays consolidated as one of the primary perspectives from which to analyze media industries, popular culture (also known as participative culture), and digital technologies. In this context, the analysis of the so-called hypermediations (Scolari, 2015), processes of symbolic change which go beyond mediations (J. Martín Barbero) for they also include digital communication, is seen today as one of the great challenges to be answered from the culturalist paradigm. We must bear in mind that in contrast to the descriptive character of some research studies on digital environments, cultural studies delve further because they answer to the communicative phenomena from a cultural standpoint.

This chapter outlines cultural studies in communication in Europe. First, we present the historical development in the countries that have led this discipline: the United Kingdom and France; then we complete this historical outline with the situation of CS in Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The chapter then discusses the primary debates and current directions of this field. Finally, we provide a critical review together with a qualitative analysis of the key reference works used in cultural studies in Europe. With this, we complete a state-of-the-art review, which is in turn an invitation to reflect and debate around the vibrant field that is the cultural analysis on communication and the media.

## 2. Historical notes: from the CECMAS to Birmingham

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, some intellectual projects born in Europe (namely France and Britain) looked for new theoretical ways and new research avenues outside the restrictions of the established disciplines. In the context of social sciences, a

theoretical revolution took off against the trends set by American empiricism (Columbia School). The academic Marxism, as developed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, was also subject to revision, although these traditions had practically hegemonized the research carried in the inter-war and the post-war periods. It was necessary to understand the new cultural and social ways that were emerging in the most advanced societies. New technological means in the fields of communications and culture had flourished at a vertiginous pace, allowing the emergence of new modes of information and cultural manifestations. In the new European society, television, rock music and concerts, the proliferation of large-circulation publications, and popular cinema were all phenomena that awoke an interest towards social and humanistic thought. Hence, research projects such as the Centre d'Études des Communication de Masses (CECMAS) in 1960, in France, and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in 1964, in Great Britain, appeared. Despite the differences between both centers – especially concerning politics – both advocated for change. This turn was based, on the one hand, on the criticism of the academic model, where intellectual practice existed far from the complexities of social reality; and on the other hand, on the insistence of European universities on building and teaching overwhelmingly (single) disciplinary knowledge. Furthermore, both schools established their social reflection upon the concept of *culture*, reinterpreting the notion by Adorno and Horkheimer of mass culture. Culture was understood as a place for exchange and negotiation between the individual, the social class, and the competition or search for the *hegemony* between cultures.

In 1960, the CECMAS was created in France at the initiative of sociologist Georges Friedmann, in a joint endeavor by the École Pratique des Hautes Études and the Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). The CECMAS was preceded by works of anthropologist Edgar Morin, who, in the late 1950s, had published essays and books on cinema and its *stars* (1956; 1957), and of semiologist Roland Barthes, who, in 1957, published *Mythologies*. Besides these authors, Friedmann<sup>39</sup> invited personalities such as Christian Metz, Abraham Moles, Eliseo Veron, Algirdas J. Greimas, Julia Kristeva, Jean Baudrillard, Jules Gritti, Jean Cazeneuve, Tzvetan Todorov, André Glucksmann, Violette Morin, Olivier Burgelin and Claude Brémond, among others. The aim of this collective was

<sup>39</sup> The planning for the creation of the center began in 1958, from an encounter in Paris between Friedmann, Paul Lazarsfeld, Roland Barthes and Edgar Morin (Morin, V., 1978).

for French academia to take a step forward and be at the avant-garde of the research centers in western universities, making mass communication its primary subject of study (Dagenais, 2007: 179).

By uniting thinkers of intellectual stature, belonging to different research universes, the CECMAS provided academic status to research on culture and mass media, at a point in history when European academia was not very interested. As opposed to the Marxism of the Frankfurt School, the CECMAS researchers, coming from a multidisciplinary perspective, wanted to show the richness and the complexity of mass communication, while trying to understand its mechanisms and relations. To a large extent, this period can be considered in France as “the golden age of the discovery of popular culture” (Dagenais, 2007). Meanwhile, the center was not exempt from polemics and criticism among its members. A case in point is Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron’s criticism of Barthes in their text “Sociologues des mythologies et mythologies des sociologues” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1963: 998-1021). This essay dialogs critically with the analysis that Barthes proposes on *Mythologies* regarding media and mass culture. Despite his attraction for the “anti-philosophical attitude” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1963: 998) of the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, Bordieu does not share a structuralist approach that seeks to unveil the role of language in the production of systems of meaning that frame multiple ways in which the contents/texts can be read. Not being convinced by “a priori deduction” operation, Bordieu and Passeron advocated a valorization of the social experience in a way that the systems of meaning could not be separated from the social practices. To them, the study of mass media practiced by Barthes, Morin, and others, was metaphysic – in the Kantian sense (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1963: 1007)– for it refuses to operate an analytical attitude associated with social and cultural practices.

The main means of expression of CECMAS was the journal *Communications*, founded in 1961 and first edited by Georges Friedmann. The content of the first yearly issues was of a generalist nature, until the journal was published twice a year starting in 1964 when the issues became themed. The journal aimed to become an academic reference publication in mass communication and semiological analysis in France. The first issues were devoted to semiological research, erudite culture and mass culture, songs and albums, radio, television, reflections and research, censorship, vacations and tourism, among others. This journal soon acquired international recognition as

it showcased well-known theorists from Germany (Theodor Adorno), Italy (Umberto Eco), and the United States (Paul Lazarsfeld, Robert Schulze, Morris Janowitz, Leo Bogart, George Gerbner and Herbert Gans). The CECMAS combined its sociological and anthropological concerns with the introduction of semiotics and discourse analysis as research methods. Barthes is, perhaps, the figure whose work appears as the main model of influence and causing a rich debate in other names such as Umberto Eco, among many more.

In the United Kingdom, combining empirical and multidisciplinary research, a critical vision and practice was also the goal of the intellectual project behind cultural studies. This term refers to a body of work written by British theorists, published towards the end of the 1950s, including *The Uses of Literacy. Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (1958), by Richard Hoggart, in literature, and *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell* (1958), by British sociologist Raymond Williams. Generally speaking, the works understood to be as cultural studies can be defined generically as a critical ethnography of mass culture, and of the British cultures and subcultures of the disadvantaged classes (Hall, 1992: 33).

Hoggart aimed to describe the changes taking place in the lives and practices of the working classes, in particular with reference to work, sex life, family and leisure, and how these were a step away from capitalist culture, embracing instead the traditional ways of life of working communities. On the other hand, Williams, with similar aims to those of Barthes, proposed in *Culture and Society* a genealogy of the concept of culture in the industrial society and its systems of cultural dissemination. By sharing an inclusive and non-elitist notion of culture, Hoggart and Williams abolished the cultural dualities and hierarchic dichotomies between high and popular culture<sup>40</sup> and contributed to the creation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The center was eventually founded in 1964 at the University of Birmingham by Hoggart, its first director, and Williams, who joined Edward P. Thompson and Stuart Hall – Hall would follow Hoggart in directing the CCCS.

The founders of cultural studies found much intellectual and institutional resistance. The CCCS members shared a strong inclination toward what the university mainstream considered to be somewhat eccentric, by innovating the subjects of study considered until then

<sup>40</sup> The tradition of culturalism goes back to an emergent English current of thought by the end of the nineteenth century denominated *culture and society*, pontificated by authors such as Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, and William Morris, among others. Despite some political differences, the three share the same critical attitude of culturalist nature associated with “modern civilization” (Mattelart and Neveu, 1996: 11-16).

less deserving of academic interest. This is the reason why they started an ongoing dialog with other European research centers. Since its foundation, the CCCS developed a critical analysis, with a certain influence from French neo-Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, around the notion of *ideology*, the construction of sense and the *image of reality* through complex symbolic processes. The legacy of Antonio Gramsci must also be acknowledged, especially his concept of *hegemony*. The British culturalist approach adopted an extended definition of culture, which was considered as an open process, in permanent construction and – without being paradoxical – also in systemic deconstruction, as was clearly inferred in many of these studies. Hence, culture is not understood as a practice, nor as a simple description of the habits and costumes of society, but as something transversal to all social activities and to the sum of their interrelations (Hall, 1980).

In the 1970s, after overcoming the difficulties of integration in the university and the training/teaching of the first students, a favorable environment contributed to the increasing visibility of the center. In 1972, *working papers* started to circulate, which were later compiled in a volume and where the best production of a vast generation of young researchers can be found, including Andrew Lowe, Angela McRobbie, Charlotte Brunsdon, Cas Critcher, David Morley, Dick Hebdige, Dorothy Hobson, Paul Gilroy, Paul Willis, Phil Cohen, Simon Frith, and Tony Jefferson.

The young subcultures were one of the analyzed fields where researchers of the CCCS were more political and inventive. This is the case of the well-known work of Hebdige on *punks* and *mods* (1979). The social and identity differences, symbolized by the immigrant communities, as well as racism, also occupied a prominent place in the *The Empire Strikes Back* collection (CCCS, 1982).

The interest in social practices, without an elitist bias, led the CCCS researchers to pay attention to the cultural products consumed by the popular classes. The Birmingham group was one of the first to use social sciences in order to analyze advertising, rock music, and soccer. An interest in the audiovisual media followed, when a difference was made between informative programming and entertainment. We must also refer to a text from then that today is considered “canonic” (Gurevitch & Scannell, 2003: 231-247) in media research: “Encoding/decoding”, by Stuart Hall (1980). It is well-known that Hall developed an innovative hypothesis at that time which placed an emphasis on the production of messages, since the functioning of the media could not be limited to a mechanical transmission between the sender and the receiver.

The subjects of study implied favoring research methods capable of capturing common lives with greater precision: ethnography, oral history, and analysis of written documents (legal, industrial, and parish archives). These studies mapped cultures, learned their coherence, and showed to which extent going frequently to pubs, soccer matches, and other popular events can constitute a set of coherent practices. Gender issues was another one of the matters that was greatly developed, via the feminist sensibility of Charlotte Brunsdon, Dorothy Hobson, and Paul Willis. Ultimately, the activities of the popular classes were analyzed as a way of resisting and challenging social domination.

Historically speaking, it is worth highlighting the interaction between the English and the French culturalist approaches with the appearance, in 1975, of Pierre Bourdieu and his journal *Les Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. This publication followed the same line as cultural studies, that is, it challenged the political implications of culture.

Furthermore, this journal published the first translations into French of texts by Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, and Willis<sup>41</sup>. At that time, Hoggart and Thompson were invited to Paris by Bourdieu, which coincided with Williams' visit in 1976. There, his book, *The Country and the City*, was presented at the École Normal, within the context of a seminar organized by Bourdieu on "Sociologie de la culture et des mondes de domination". However, cooperation among the investigation centers was rather limited.

### 3. The Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish cases

Besides the exchanges indicated in the previous section, the CECMAS had a great influence within the intellectual circles in Italy and Portugal and, to a lesser degree, in Spain. In Italy, one of the best-known names of the culturalist turn, Umberto Eco, had a close relation with CECMAS. He regularly attended its seminars and published in the journal *Communications*<sup>42</sup>. After completing his PhD in 1954 in medieval aesthetic philosophy at the University of Turin, the young Eco published articles and essays *about pastiches et postiches* in the journal *I Verri*, collaborated with the Italian national television (RAI) in cultural programs, continued his reflections about art in the *Rivista Estetica*, and

41 See issues 2-3 of 1976 and 17-18 of 1977 and 24 of 1978. In France, Passeron was the main disseminator of the works by Hoggart (1999).

42 It is important to remember that, in Italy, the reflection on mass culture goes back as far as the Nobel prize winner Luigi Pirandello, who said harsh words against Americanism and cinema products, as he accused them to be at the service of money.

edited collections of essays in philosophy, sociology, and semiotics via the Editore Bompiani publisher (Gritti, 1999: 38-40). Some of the books Eco published as a young man in the 1960s and 1970s dialogued with the work on semiotics by Barthes (Eco 1962; 1964; 1973).

*Apocalypse Postponed (Apocalittici e integrati)* was a collection of texts produced in the early 1960s that fired up a debate in social sciences and communication sciences in Europe. The book proposed a media research program, advocating that media had to be seriously researched and understood and for that, it was fundamental to use the different instruments of analysis from sociology, anthropology, and the new developments in semiotics. Like Barthes, Eco found in semiotics a unified method to study the mass media (Escudero-Chauvel, 1997: 256). With regard to his subjects of study, Eco focused on the issues of consumption, music, comic-books, and kitsch aesthetics. The arguments he developed were supposed to overcome the trends that had dominated the analysis of culture and communication of American liberal nature (*integrati*) and the German Marxist perspectives (*apocalittici*). Eco continued in the 1970s to research radio, television, and Chinese comic-books, and in the 1980s he devoted himself to analyze Italian porn artist and parliamentarian Cicciolina but also the movie *Ginger and Fred* by Fellini (Eco in Escudero-Chauvel, 1997: 245). A work, influenced by Eco, of great importance in communication sciences in southern European countries was *Teorie delle Comunicazioni di massa* (1985), by Mauro Wolf, a disciple of Eco.

Despite Eco's importance, cultural studies in Italy is not limited to his work. Authors such as Paolo Fabbri (who also studied with Barthes), Franco Fabbri, and Tullio de Mauro, among others, also deserve to be taken in consideration<sup>43</sup>. As for the British variety of cultural studies, it would only reach Italy in the late 1970s via literary studies and of some fringe areas of cultural sociology. This perspective would definitely be adopted by communication and media studies (De Blasio & Sorice, 2007).

On the other hand, the Portuguese case was characterized by a context of dictatorship and repression in academia, particularly in the case of social sciences, at least until April 1974 with the reinstatement of democracy. Nevertheless, European culturalist tendencies (French and English) began pushing in since the early 1960s. The field of cultural studies began to take shape with the contribution of literary studies, due to the influence of culturalist French currents. University exchanges contributed to this cultural pollination, via three routes:

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43 On the reception of cultural studies in Italy see Forgacs & Lumley (1996) and De Blasio & Sorice (2007: 3-28).

the Portuguese students' stays in France, where they would attend seminars with Barthes or Kristeva, among others; the translation and publishing of French authors in journals and books/collections; and the arrival of French authors to Portugal to give conferences<sup>44</sup>. Despite the French presence being practically hegemonic, the work of Williams and Hoggart is not completely unknown in Portugal (Carmo, 1964).

Among the most prominent academic and non-academic intellectuals in the reception of French culturalism we find Eduardo Prado Coelho, Eduardo Lourenço, Vergílio Ferreira, António Ramos Rosa, Maria Alzira Seixo, José Augusto Seabra, and Arnaldo Saraiva<sup>45</sup>. After the instauration of democracy in 1974 and the development of social sciences, the sociological study on daily life and culture was established, having the work of Bourdieu and Certeau as the main reference (Santos, 1998).

The cultural studies of Anglo-Saxon and German root were only institutionalized in the 1980s and 1990s, largely due to the impulse of communication sciences. It is in this moment when the main universities in the country began to create degrees, masters, and doctorates.

One last note on cultural studies in southern Europe relates to the development of this current in Spain. Generally speaking, Spain has been little permeable to contributions from the culturalist perspective (Palacio, 2007; Tarancón, 2014; Balibrea, 2010). There are several explanations for this. First, the plug on international communication trends research during the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) set the country back from a scientific growth perspective. Communication studies at university reached Spain in the 1970s (particularly the academic year 1970-71), that is, decades later than in countries such as Germany, the United States, or Mexico. The Frankfurt School and mass communication research were studied for the first time in Spain in the 1970s and 1980s when these currents had already lost their influence and had given way to other approaches. Second, Palacio (2007) also points out at the lack of interest in popular culture in Spain. Gender studies, the representation of minorities, or identity processes stimulated by media text consumption, so relevant in cultural studies, have occupied "a fringe position" (Palacio, 2007: 70). We could add here the Spanish research of functionalist, empirical, and quantitative perspectives against studies carried out from culturalist and critical

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<sup>44</sup> In the early 1970s, Julia Kristeva gave conferences in Portugal (at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon and to the Portuguese Society of Writers).

<sup>45</sup> Maria Alzira Seixo, José Augusto Seabra, and Arnaldo Saraiva attended, in the late 1960s, the CECMAS seminars. The first two were co-supervised by Barthes in their doctoral theses.

positions. Tarancón (2014) also points out that the disciplinary rigidity, the interdepartmental restricting limitations, and the hyper-specialization of the Spanish university created an environment providing little support to tackle an eclectic, interdisciplinary, and heterogenous field such as cultural studies. Nevertheless, this incompatibility should not have been an obstacle if we consider that cultural studies emerges, among other matters, precisely as a challenge and criticism to disciplinary immobility.

Ultimately, the Spanish university has its own idiosyncrasy that makes it rather inflexible and close to the culturalist perspectives we are describing. Martín Alegre (2009: 11) claims: "In Spain, the work is based on a very intensive, very territorial specialization that makes any attempt to open to the multidisciplinary to be seen as a threat". Finally, we can also note the limited knowledge of the key foundational texts, which often have not been translated into Spanish. It is extremely significant, for instance, that out of the twenty-five works of reference of the European cultural studies that we have analyzed in section four, at least 15 of them have not been translated into Spanish, which, without a doubt, has influenced the limited knowledge and handling of this by the Spanish epistemic community.

The presence of cultural studies in Spain has been attached, mainly, to the departments of English philosophy and from there it extended to "communication sciences, sociology, and anthropology," (Martín Alegre, 2009: 3). Within academia, Palacio (2007: 71) highlights the following authors: Chantal Cornu Gentille D'Arcy, Celestino Deleyto, Luis Miguel García Mainar, and the members of the working group known as "Ciento Volando." Balibrea (2011) assessed the departments in Spain that work in cultural studies such as the department of English Philology at the University of Zaragoza, the Department of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication at the University Carlos III, the Department of Journalism at the University Rovira i Virgili, and the UNIA Art and Thought Department at the International University of Andalusia. With regard to journals, the majority of the Spanish publications specialized in communication have a generic nature, so they collect diverse perspectives and methodologies. Even so, it is possible to identify some of the journals that are paying the most attention to this analytical perspective, such as *Revista I/C. Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación* (University of Seville); *Comunicar* (University of Huelva); *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies* (University Rovira i Virgili); *Torre del Virrey. Revista de Estudios*

*Culturales* (independent production); *Scripta Nova* (University of Barcelona); *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i cultura* (Autonomous University of Barcelona), or *Redes.Com* (University of Seville).

Ultimately, as we can see, communication cultural studies in Spain is still at a very undeveloped stage, despite the fact that, generally speaking, the context of the communications research is at a high point, with more than 50 university faculties sharing these studies and more than 50 specialized journals, according to the DICE index (Dissemination and Editorial Quality of Spanish Journals on Humanities and Social and Legal Sciences). Incidentally, Balibrea (2011) points out that cultural studies in Spain is mainly present on the fringes of academy, in art and education initiatives in museums, and in cultural and political activism, but this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

#### **4. Directions and debates of European cultural studies**

In general terms, the internationalization of cultural studies must be considered as a reflection of theoretical debates and not as the simple transposition and/or translation of texts. Furthermore, to interpret that its origins are exclusively within the Birmingham group is a distorted narrative of its development (Stam & Shohat, 2005; Wright, 1998). In fact, today we find important developments within European cultural studies works with a lesser critical imprint –they are important to understand popular culture in its capacity for identity construction– but in which the most purely critical or neo-Marxists questions fall in a secondary plane: this would be the case of the so-called “fan studies,” which are more focused on the processes of identification than those of domination (Kustritz, 2015). But even if we are limited to the canonic report of the origins of cultural studies (Hall, 1990), as we saw in the first chapter, it cannot be argued that CS has always been characterized for its multiculturalism, reflected as much in the variety of its themes as in the origin of its interlocutors. Quite a different issue emerges when we discuss the influence that these international voices have had in the debate around CS in terms of the leadership role of the English hegemony. It is not accidental that one of the most enthusiastic debates about this was precisely whether it was necessary or not to gain some distance from the British core. It has been noted that, despite its radical and anti-elitist origins, CS is on its way to become a “Eurocentric way of Anglo-Americans staring at their navel” (Stam & Shohat, 2005: 481), in part due to the pressure they

exert by means of the influence of their academic institutions and the extended use of English as a scholarly language. However, despite all the above, in the history of the movement from a wider international perspective, maintaining certain ties with Birmingham seems to be a constant. In this section, therefore, we present the main debates and current directions that are currently being discussed with regard to the classic body of French and British Cultural Studies:

### *Marxism and its influence. Between Theory and Social Action*

Either as a criticism to his determinism or by revisiting his terminology and *ethos*, Marx cast a shadow over CS. At its heart, culture is bound to *power* and *control*, the only mechanisms that can sustain the asymmetries among social groups (Williams, 1977). Once again, the narrative of CS determines the emergence of new debates. While in Europe Williams' *cultural materialism* has a strong influence, this aspect is hardly touched upon among American authors, who do not participate in the "sense of community of the working class" which William so celebrates (Martínez Guillem, 2013: 195).

Marxism is in the middle of many other (dis)agreements, such as the conflicting relation between CS and political economy. For instance, in the CCCS texts, cultural manifestations are understood as *superstructure*, also referred to as ideology, and political economy is assimilated in the concept that is the *basis* of these relationships (Castle, 2007: 72). As time passed, there has been some distancing from these postures. On the one hand, the one defended by those who support political economy to be incorporated in media studies (Garnham, 1979; 1995). On the other hand, the one defended by those who consider separation necessary to avoid the influence of economic reductionism. Ultimately, it is necessary to leave the Marxist vocabulary behind in order to safeguard the study of culture since "one can't differentiate inherited compatibility between the basis and the superstructure" (Grossberg, 1995: 79). Despite being an open discussion, more recent positions have been defending an articulation based on a materialistic vision of meaning. Away from the ontological distinction between *economy* and *culture*, we conceive "the social world as a dialectical field of the practical human activity and the materialization of such activity" (Pack, 2006: 120).

### *Uses of Power and Symbols*

One of the requirements for a relation of power and subordination between individuals to exist is the presence of a shared system of codes

and symbols. It could be argued that all cultural elements participate in this power relationship through its political dimension since, as Bourdieu (1994: 161) points out: “the symbolic power that imposes the principles of reality construction – in particular, social reality – is the primary dimension of political power.” Cultural studies is the direct heir of this premise, exemplified, for instance, with Stuart Hall’s classic distinction between Culturalism and Structuralism (Hall, 1980: 72). This distinction supposes the articulation of influences and theoretical debates between power structures, the definition of culture and the methodologies of proximity to the text. The entire cultural process is subordinated to the status of social relations, in turn influenced by gender, race, age, and social class.

Nevertheless, social action can be considered as an expression of a social condition, for it is encrypted and endowed with meaning, culture being the ultimate manifestation of the ensemble of social actions (Hall, 1997: 208). Cultures, much as individuals, establish relations of power and subordination. Here, Gramsci’s interpretation by the British has been criticized for being considered almost exclusively structuralist (Martínez Guillem, 2013: 199), as well as being the basis for the well-known Encoding/Decoding model proposed by Stuart Hall.

To analyze the relations between the upper classes and the hegemony of cultures, Hall uses the term “regulation” (Hall, 1997: 227), and assumes that in one way or another all cultures are regulated (or “reregulated,” “deregulated,” etc.); in other words, submitted to a political power even though this power is not always exercised directly by the state but from the hegemonic position of the upper classes. Nor is it always manifested explicitly as would be the case with censorship, propaganda, or messages of protest. On the opposite side and always under the suspicion of falling into populism and banality, popular culture (its consumption, its production, its recycling by its fan audiences) is celebrated as an opposition act. One of the great questions that CS tries to answer is to define which cultural manifestations are to be considered relevant and which ones could be left outside since the classic distinction between low and high culture seems to have been completely abolished.

### *The concept of Identity*

Culture, for the original group of cultural studies, is not self-sufficient nor a finite field of study but a stage for debate (Johnson, 1987: 39), which can lead to confrontation. In light of this, the political sphere is

determined by theories and manifested in the protests of the minority social movements. The group plays a fundamental role in the study of multiculturalism and approaches the issues related to immigration and diaspora (Castle, 2007: 75). By supporting the feminist sectors and the fight against race discrimination (CCCS, 1982; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978), CS motivates the so-called *new social currents*, which are not based on class but on another identity feature. With the passing of time, we can differentiate two very distinct groups. The first refers to *individual identity* such as sexual orientation, sexual identity (queer studies), and ethnic origin. This category also includes women's studies, which has finally developed by incorporating perspectives on masculinity and identity, also covered by gender studies. The second group constructs its discourse around the *making of collective projects* including community life, the environment, and aid to developing countries.

The relation between social action, including (or not) political corporatism, and academia in CS is an unchallenged fact, perhaps erroneously. This would be the case of the ties between the movement and the anti-capitalist left (something particularly contrasted in the case of Stuart Hall). This interpretation would not be fair to the vast political spectrum and when comparing all protest movements with an extremely specific answer within the available socialist options. Furthermore, the freedom to carry out and support a public political option should not be exclusive of CS but of the personal beliefs of the researchers (Gilbert, 2006: 185).

On the other hand, the way identities mix up, merge, or transform is a subject of study in this interdisciplinary theoretical framework. Simon During refers to this as a non-rigid way of identity, based on the concept of "hybridization" and defined as "the performative acts that build identities" (During, 2005: 150). Identity is a complex construct that can be discussed at all levels. Although the term *globalization* did not emerge with CS, the paradigm that the exploration of the concept itself means has enjoyed great popularity in CS. The term creates debate around its existence, its scope, and its historical development. Numerous other terms have emerged from this discussion such as the global/local dichotomy or the articulation with other terms of the CS lexis (diaspora, identity, and culture). The alternative formula, under the concept of "transnational flow" (Iwabuchi, 2002), entails the adaptation to the diverse nuclei of influence and exchange worldwide.

### *Self-definition of Cultural Studies*

Cultural studies is an extremely reflective and self-critical body of work. Its history has produced several episodes of debate, including the movement's origin as an object of discussion (Stam & Shohat, 2005; Wright, 1998). This idiosyncrasy might be due not only to its recent history but also to the evolution of the institutions and the development of an increasingly connected worldwide academic community that has allowed a more fluid interaction. It is therefore difficult to talk about homogeneity either in its subjects of study, the relevant disciplines, and their theoretical approaches. If the different discourses shared a common thread, this would probably be self-defense. This justification is made by applying it to the real or *political* world, regardless of the level of theoretical abstraction and the political leaning, not necessarily to the left, which, ultimately, is an exercise of "self-criticism" (Hall, 2006: 48).

We could theorise whether it is possible to talk about CS as a well-defined dialectical community. Certainly, it seems to share the same language, and proficiency in it (e.g. command of Marxist or deconstructionist terminology), is a pre-requisite to participate in its conversations. On the other hand, the way institutions have become big managers of knowledge has not followed any other logic than that of pure evolution, in a Darwinist sense. In each country, the disciplines show a different scenario of influence and the connections with the state's power, which ultimately differentiates them in terms of the adopted interdisciplinary approaches and the existence of powerful lobbies promoted by a single academic subject. Following this metaphor, cultural studies, just as expected, has mutated by adapting to environments that differ in hostility and levels of competence. Together with communication and media studies, for instance, CS has formed attractive symbiosis with different degrees of success. Ultimately, CS arose as an answer to an academic and political environment the crisis of which had been represented by one only discipline: humanities. As years went by, the contributions of the movement have turned into the creation of new disciplines and collaborations. One should expect that some of these schools face a similar crisis to the one faced by the British humanities. Fortunately, that was not the end of humanities and this will not be the end of cultural studies; we might see, however, the mere addition of new species in the academic ecosystem.

## 5. Reference works within European cultural studies

In order to continue charting the reconstruction of some of the main trends of CS in Europe, it is pertinent to pay attention to the most often cited texts, that is works that have been the basis, in Europe, of the analysis of media and culture. In order to answer this question, we have carried out a bibliometric study of 249 articles published in *Media, Culture & Society*, a reference journal with one of the longest trajectories within European CS (it was published for the first time in January 1979). It was one of the first journals to publish media analysis from culturalist perspectives and it is one of the most important European journals today in the field of communication (it is ranked at number 33 out of 77 journals included in the Journal Citation Reports in 2015). The bibliometric study covers the period 1979-2013 (Hernández-Pérez and García-Jiménez, unpublished) where we have found the 25 most used references (in appendixes, see table 1. Most cited references in the journal *Media, Culture and Society*, 1979-2013).

What do these references represent? What are the disciplines that contribute the most? What are the subjects of study? What perspectives have been cited the most in Europe? To answer these and other questions, we have carried out a qualitative study on the articles and have established the following categories as starting points:

1. Title and author
2. Year publication of the original edition
3. Discipline in which the study is sited
4. The main subject of study analyzed in the article, as per the following classification (García-Jiménez, 2007):
  - a. Metatheory. Manual-like publications whose purpose is to provide a state of the art and trends within a specific area.
  - b. Message production. Works centered on the characteristics, features, and analysis of the production processes. They range from studies on professional routines, the role of media in society, characteristics of the emitters, etc.
  - c. Audience and consumption. Research centered on how the audience creates, interprets, redefines, expands, or exchanges the symbolic content of popular culture (e.g. fan studies).
  - d. Texts and messages. Articles analyzing texts and messages produced within popular culture (e.g. comics, soap operas, news, etc.).
  - e. Effect studies. What are the effects generated by media and mass culture?

f. General-holistic. Studies that do not focus on only one element of the communicative process (i.e. emitters, receivers, or effects, etc.) but tackle several, making the comprehension of the communication more difficult. In this category, we have also included those references tackling the analysis of media, culture, and society from macro-social perspectives.

5. Medium. This refers to the medium (support) analyzed: television, cinema, video games, comics, magazines, newspapers, radio, internet, music, or media in general (when the study tackles several media or discusses media with no greater specification)

6. Perspective. We were interested in distinguishing whether the research was of a critical nature, or rather descriptive, interpretative, and hermeneutical.

7. Metatheory or innovative research. This final category is connected to the first, answering the question whether the research develops a new theory or, on the contrary, it is a summary of previous works.

From the list of references and the analyzed categories proposed, the main challenges of some of the books and articles most cited in Europe are summarized in table 2 (Analysis of a selection of the most cited texts in Europe) in the appendices.

Among the results, it comes to our attention the vast spread and heterogeneity of European cultural studies. In the bibliographical sample of 249 research articles, we find that the most commonly cited text, *Imagined Communities*, is only cited 13 instances, which represents merely 4% of a sample spanning over three decades (1979-2013). According to the analyzed sample, we could say that there has been a great dissemination of knowledge, a fact, perhaps, that can be explained by the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies, as we have seen in the previous chapters.

The most cited text, *Imagined Communities*, does not belong to any of the hardcore nuclei or theoretical lines that have been described in the first section of this chapter. The importance of Anderson's work, a text of historical nature about the origin and formation of nationalisms framed within political theory, probably addresses the open fronts of the many European debates on national identities (as is the case of Scotland, Catalonia, Sarajevo, or the Flemish community in Belgium) and to the reflection, not always peaceful, about the nature of European identity. The second place in this ranking is occupied by Pierre Bourdieu with his book *Distinction*, which attaches a certain weight to the French school of thought and his collaborations with the CECMAS.

We also find, among the texts considered as historically foundational, two works of the Frankfurt School, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, and two others from the Birmingham school, *Encoding/Decoding* and *Television, Technology and Cultural Form*. Some important Marxist absences need to be highlighted, such as Antonio Gramsci and other authors from the Frankfurt School, Birmingham, or the CECMAS. There are also no references to Karl Marx, which might be a consequence of the debate and tensions which, as we have seen in section three, the German philosopher has awakened within cultural studies. In its place, the text *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order* seems to be answering the critical analysis of the capitalist economy. A last note on the most cited foundational texts is the importance in the analyzed sample of the sociology of journalistic knowledge of Gaye Tuchman as two of the works of this American author appear: *Making News* and *Objectivity and Strategic Ritual*. This fact could be reflecting the importance that European cultural studies have also given to the routines of the emitter. Therefore, emitter, critical analysis of texts, audience studies, and culture (capitalist) would make up the elements of the communicative process that work as a reference in the European context.

Furthermore, from a historical point a view, as we have seen, the 1970s and the 1980s have been so far the most influential decades in the analysis of media culture from the cultural studies perspective, bringing a total of eight publications each (out of a total of 25 references). The referential works published in the 1990s are reduced to five, 1995 being the most recent year, that is, two decades ago. In other words, according to the sample analyzed, no theoretical reference works have been published in Europe since then.

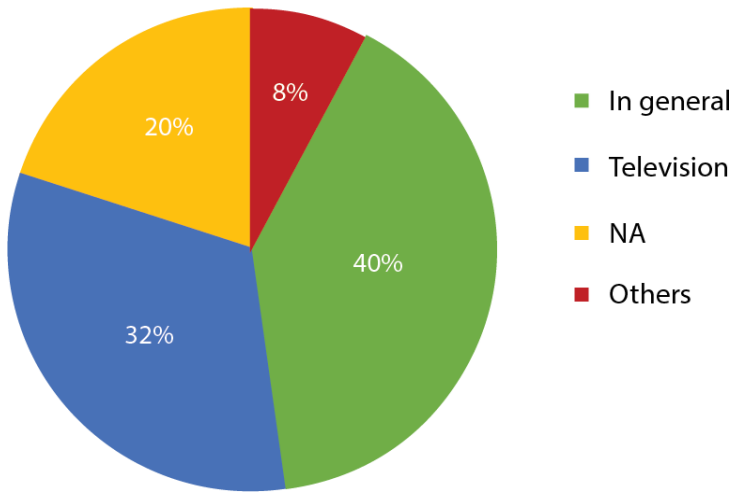
The authors within the subject of communication/media are better represented in the referencing texts. This was expected, given the nature of the journal (focused on communication and media). The second most cited discipline is sociology, considered both historically and methodologically, the most influential discipline in epistemological terms in the area of communication. The list of most cited works shows very limited presence of other social sciences such as psychology, history, or economics.

As per the subjects of study showing a greater influence, the general-holistic category shows that it acts as a reference to European cultural studies in 13 texts out of the total 25 references. This includes ambitious theoretical and empirical proposals that have addressed the analysis of media from its influence in modern cultures paying special

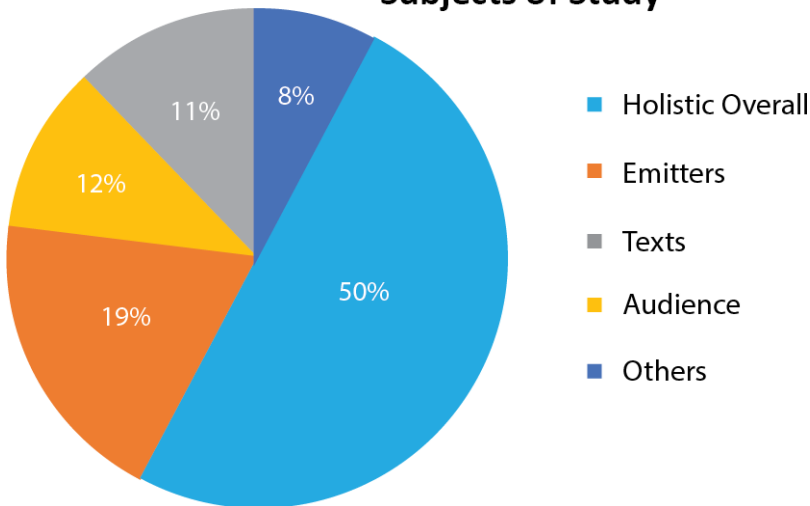
attention to topics such as public opinion, democracy, capitalism, or the construction of nationalism. The second subject of study that has functioned as a reference within the analyzed sample is the emitters (five references), in particular the analysis of professional routines, the processes of informative selection, and the role of the media in western democracies. The importance of this element of the communicative process in the analyzed sample reflects the shared interests with the political economy of communication. The analysis of the texts, together with the audience studies are also reference subjects but to a lesser degree (both with three works each). We have found no effect studies to be considered as reference works in European research, which is a clear consequence of the fact that the impact of media or popular culture is object of interest contextualized in other perspectives of analysis (behaviorists, for instance). Ultimately, the aspect of how media culture impacts audiences is answered through cultural studies not via the classic effects paradigm, but through how audiences consume, use, and identify themselves with the media. This type of research has been included in this bibliographic analysis within the category of *audience and consumption*.

As well as looking at the subject of study, we have also paid attention to the hegemonic media in epistemological terms, in other words, the media whose analysis have constituted as a basis for cultural studies in Europe. In line with the dominance of the general-holistic subject of study, the type of research that has focused the interest of reference texts is media in general (ten texts out of a total of 25) where the authors have mainly focused on analyzing several media. Following this generic approach, television has been the media that has mostly functioned as a reference (eight of the articles focus on the quintessential audiovisual media). This is due to the important push that television gave to popular and visual culture in the twentieth century. Finally, we find that five of the reference works have a non-media nature, in the sense that they are formulated around interests such as economics, nationalism, or identity. In these works, the media are addressed as a secondary role, in other words, they emerge as an element that articulates and influences the social (social, political and economic perspectives), though they are not at the core of the analysis. Ultimately, the research is not built from a communicational perspective, in the sense described by Craig (1999).

## Media



## Subjects of Study



Furthermore, the dominant perspective presented as the main reference is the critical one. This could not be any other way due to the history of the European communicology, philosophy, and sociology. Seventeen of the surveyed texts (over 60%) are critical. The Birmingham School, the Frankfurt School, Structuralism, Marxism and its review by Gramsci, as well as feminist studies, are the primary currents that act as a reference to the European thought. Acritical texts include historical and interactional (Erving Goffman) perspectives, those belonging to the

sociology of knowledge (Alfred Schulz or Gaye Tuchman), or in general terms, hermeneutical perspectives, the purpose of which is to explain/interpret reality as opposed to the Marxist critic whose purpose is to transform society.

Finally, as table 2 shows, all reference texts propose something innovative. It is unsurprising then that we have not found meta-theoretical or manual-like texts within the main references of the analyzed sample. Perhaps this fact manifests a certain spread in the research lines and topics of interest.

## 6. Conclusions

Following the historical, theoretical, and bibliographical revision of the development of cultural studies in Europe, we will briefly synthesize some of the concluding aspects of this work.

The Birmingham and the CECMAS centers were an answer, within the intellectual and academic environment, to the turbulent times of the 1960s and its numerous social challenges. Its answer was based on the adoption of a “culturalist turn” (Hall, 1980) that has marked a before and after in social thought.

Approaching cultural studies from different geographical points has revealed the unequal development and the different idiosyncrasies that CS has manifested in Europe. In contradistinction to the leadership of Britain and France, Italy, Portugal and Spain have shown smaller development yet demonstrated striking differences among the each other.

Concerning the main debates characterizing cultural studies today, *cultural materialism* seems to have replaced social analysis from an economist-Marxist reductionism or *historical materialism*. Culture, in a more inclusive sense of the individual and the collective experience, is both the subject and the main approach to theoretical problems, just as Hall (1980) had predicted. The analysis on the different identities coming from gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, along with the rise of new social movements, the environment, and aid to developing countries are some of the other questions creating a greater debate now.

Finally, if we look at the main references cited in the European journal *Media, Culture and Society*, our attention is caught by the spread and heterogeneity of European CS. As an example, the most cited work, *Imagined Communities*, only gathers 13 quotes. Chronologically, it is the

1970s and the 1980s that are more influential, and the general-holistic approaches bring most reference studies in this context. It is equally necessary to note the balance between the critical and interpretative thought, and the presence of classic foundational texts from the Birmingham School (more precisely, by Hall and Williams), CECMAS (Bourdieu), the Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer), and the sociology of journalistic knowledge (Gaye Tuchman).

It is clear that among the biggest challenges of European cultural studies is a theoretical and methodological innovation that responds to the social changes deriving from the current sphere of the media, communication, and technology. The analysis of culture and media must come from the understanding of the technological convergence and the digital culture. Many diverse open questions come from this perspective: how is digital communication interpreted by the users considering their cultural background? Is participative communication a resistance tool in front of the media and political power? What is the underlining ideology in digital interactions? What is the role of minorities in the construction of meanings within the digital public sphere? How are the hegemonic and colonizing processes built within the new environments? What are the identification processes in social networks or the analysis of the so-called *active audiences*? The debate continues.

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## Appendixes

TABLE 1. MOST CITED REFERENCES IN THE *MEDIA, CULTURE AND SOCIETY* JOURNAL (1979-2013)

Type of publication	Idiom	Reference
book	English	Anderson, B. (1991) <i>Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism</i> . London: Verso.
book	English	Bourdieu P (1984) <i>Distinction</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
book	English	Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer (1972) <i>The Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> . New York: Herder and Herder.
book	English	Gitlin, T. (1980) <i>The Whole World Is Watching</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press.
book	English	Fiske, J. (1987) <i>Television Culture</i> . London and New York: Routledge.
book	English	Habermas, J. (1989) <i>Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</i> . Cambridge: Polity Press. (Orig. pub. 1962.)
book	English	WILLIAMS, R. (1974). <i>Television: Technology and Cultural Form</i> , New York, Schocken
book	English	Curran, J. and J. Seaton (1988) <i>Power without Responsibility</i> , 3rd edn. London: Routledge.
book	English	Ang, I. (1985) <i>Watching Dallas. Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination</i> . London: Methuen.
book	English	Morley, D. (1980) 'The Nationwide Audience', <i>Television Monograph</i> , 11, British Film Institute.
book	English	Glasgow Media Group (1976) <i>Bad News</i> . London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
book	English	Tuchman, G. (1978) <i>Making News</i> . London: Free Press.

<b>book</b>	English	Gans, H. (1979) <i>Deciding What's News</i> . New York: Pantheon.
<b>book</b>	English	Dahlgren, P. (1995) <i>Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media</i> . London: Sage.
<b>book</b>	English	Giddens, A. (1991) <i>Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age</i> . Cambridge: Polity.
<b>chapter</b>	English	Hall, S. (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding', pp. 128-38 in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (eds) <i>Culture, Media, Language</i> . London: Hutchinson.
<b>book</b>	English	BARAN P A and SWEEZY, P M (1968) <i>Monopoly Capital</i> , Harmondsworth, Pelican
<b>book</b>	English	Downing, J. (1984) <i>Radical Media. The Political Experience of Alternative Communication</i> . South End Press.
<b>paper</b>	English	Tuchman, G. (1971) 'Objectivity and Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity', <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 77(4): 660-80.
<b>book</b>	English	Billig, M. (1995) <i>Banal Nationalism</i> . London: Sage.
<b>chapter</b>	English	Garnham, N. (1986) 'The Media and the Public Sphere' in P. Golding, G. Murdock and P. Schlesinger (eds) <i>Communicating Politics</i> . Leicester: Leicester University Press.
<b>book</b>	English	Tracey, M. (1998) <i>The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.
<b>book</b>	English	Williamson, J. (1978) <i>Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising</i> . London: Marion Boyars.
<b>book</b>	English	Thompson, J. (1995) <i>The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media</i> . Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
<b>book</b>	English	Herman, E. and N. Chomsky (1988) <i>Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media</i> . New York: Pantheon.

TABLE 2. ANALYSIS OF A SELECTION OF THE MOST CITED TEXTS IN EUROPE

	<b>Publication year original edition</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Study object</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>Perspective</b>
Comunidades Imaginadas	<b>1983</b>	Benedict Anderson	Political-historical Policy	Holistic-general, society: the social construction of nationalism	Nonmedia nature	Acritical-History and political theory
La Distinction	<b>1979</b>	Pierre Bourdieu	Sociology	Holistic-general: French culture and how the sector population with higher capital defines taste (a way of symbolic violence)	Mediatic nature	Critical-Structuralism

Dialéctica de la ilustración	<b>1944</b>	Theodor Adorno y Max Horkheimer	Critical-Marxist philosophy	Holistic: capitalist society and alienation processes from the use of instrumental reason	Media in general	Critical-Frankfurt School
The Whole World Is Watching. Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left, With a New Preface	<b>1980</b>	Todd Gitlin	Communication	Holistic: media and journalism	Media in general	Critical and interpretative. Symbolic interactionism (Goffman) and hegemony (Gramsci)
Television Culture	<b>1987</b>	John Fiske	Communication	Holistic: text and audience (active)	Television	Critical and semiotic
Historia y crítica de la opinión pública	<b>1962</b>	Jurgen Habermas	Philosophy-Theoretical policy- Communication	Holistic: building the public sphere in modern societies	Media	Critical-Frankfurt's School
Television: Technology and Cultural Form	<b>1974</b>	Raymond Williams	Communication	Text: compares the British and North American television contents	Television	Critical Marxist
Power without Responsibility	<b>1981</b>	James Curran and Jean Seaton	Communication-Media studies	Holistic- develops press, television and Internet history, in the United Kingdom. Includes the review of laws on the media (political economy)	Media (Press, television and Internet)	Noncritical- important historical aspect
Watching Dallas. Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination	<b>1985</b>	Ien Ang	Communication and Culture	Audience: how the audience interprets the Dallas series	Television	Critical- feminist studies
The Nationwide Audience, Television Monograph	<b>1980</b>	David Morley	Communication and media	Audience: How the audiences interpret the television show Nationwide	Television	Critical- Birmingham's School

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Bad news	1976	Glasgow Media Group	Communication and media	Text: analysis of television messages, more precisely, news from BBC1, BBC2 and ITV	Television	Critical
La producción de la noticia	1978	Gaye Tuchman	Sociology	Emitters: journalistic routines and processes of news construction in newsrooms	Media (press, television and communication departments)	Noncritical-sociology of knowledge – constructionism
Deciding What's News A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time	1979	Herbert J. Gans	Sociology	Emitters: journalistic routines and constrictions in news selection processes	Media (television and weekly information magazines)	Noncritical
Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media	1995	Peter Dahlgren	Communication and journalism	Holistic-general: public opinion and democracy	Television	Critical
<b>Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age- Modernidad e Identidad</b>	1991	Anthony Giddens	Sociology	Holistic: contemporary society and the processes of building the self	Nonmedia nature	Noncritical
<b>Encoding/Decoding</b>	1973	Stuart Hall	Sociology	Audiences	Television	Critical-Birmingham's School
El capital monopolista: ensayo sobre el orden económico y social de Estados Unidos	1966	Paul Sweezy and Paul A. Baran	Economy	Holistic- society: on how the capitalist economy works	Nonmedia nature	Critical- Marxist

<b>Objectivity and Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity,</b>	<b>1972</b>	Gaye Tuchman	Sociology of knowledge	Emitters	Media	Noncritical: constructivism (Alfred Schutz)
<b>Nacionalismo Banal</b>	<b>1995</b>	Michael Billig	Social psychology	Economy- holistic, society and nationalism	Mediatic nature	Critical
<b>The Media and the Public Sphere'</b>	<b>1986</b>	Nicholas Garnham	Communication – Media Studies	Holistic- public opinion and public sphere. Building the public sphere and inequities in the access from economic constrictions	Media	Critical
<b>The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting</b>	<b>1998</b>	Michael Tracey	Media Studies	Emitters: role of public television in democratic societies	Television	Critical
<b>Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising</b>	<b>1978</b>	Judith Williamson	Film studies	Text-Messages: advertising from the perspective on image	Written media	Critical- Marxist
<b>Los media y la modernidad</b>	<b>1995</b>	John B. Thompson	Sociology	Holistic- society, media and culture. How the media influence modern societies, a long-term influence that includes the building of the self, the experience and the public place	Media	Noncritical
<b>Los guardianes de la libertad</b>	<b>1988</b>	Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky	Economy-media	Emitters	Media	Critical