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Rethinking Power Relations in Critical/Cultural Studies: A Dialectical (Re)Proposal

Susana Martínez Guillem

This essay argues for the need to rethink dialectics as part of our understanding of power relations, and as a fundamental component of critical/cultural approaches in Communication Studies. As a first step in this project, I will critique the main contributions by Michel Foucault, highlighting his influential theorization of discourse, knowledge and power as intrinsically related constructs, as well as how this perspective has enabled the revisiting of other keywords in critical theory—such as Gramsci’s “hegemony.” I will then (re)introduce the notion of dialectics as theorized in the work of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams. My goal is to emphasize underestimated aspects of these authors’ contributions that, in my opinion, may help us construct alternative starting points for a critical/cultural project in communication scholarship and, more specifically, for a theory of power that can create the space needed to account for people’s (in)capability to overcome adverse social conditions.

Keywords: Antonio Gramsci, critical/cultural studies, dialectics, power relations, Raymond Williams

“It is impossible to discuss communication or culture in our society without in the end coming to discuss power.”¹

Starting Points: Power, Theory, and Change

This essay argues for the need to rethink dialectics as part of our understanding of power relations, and as a fundamental component of critical/cultural approaches to

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communication.² The exigency for such a project, in my view, stems from a persistent paradox present in much of the work currently contributing to the development of this, by now, well-established perspective in our discipline. Thus, on the one hand, a foundational motto for communication scholars interested in critical examinations of inter/cultural practices is the need to expose or uncover the mechanisms through which power operates in societies.³ Based on this, these accounts often present intellectual and political intervention in such processes as a way to foster general social (good) changes. As Halaulani and Nakayama put it in reference to critical intercultural communication: As “organic intellectuals” [...] we must navigate through and stay true to the highest quality of analyzing power and paving the way to transgress and break down that with which we interrogate.”⁴

However, I would argue that this strand of scholarship often relies on an understanding of societal processes that strongly limits what can be said or envisioned with regards to people’s (in)capability to overcome adverse social conditions. The roots of this paradox, I would argue, can and should be explored by examining the ways in which the study of power relations has relied on, while at the same time producing, a “selective tradition”⁵ mediating the reception of critical and cultural theory in communication studies in important ways. Through this mediating process, the work of authors such as Michel Foucault is often invoked against the background of a “received” and reductionist understanding of Marxist approaches that, as Cloud points out, tends to “misunderstand the dialectical relationship between economics and consciousness, confusing dialectics with crude economic determinism.”⁶

As a result, the study, in communication, of how power relations permeate all kinds of inter/cultural practices has often taken a particular, “skeptical” shape that refuses to establish clear differences between “power up and power down.”⁷ In spite of its normalized status, I would argue that the unproblematic embracement of this understanding of power is linked to partial readings of a series of theoretical constructs that, first of all, tend to disregard their dialectical and materialist aspects as outdated explanatory routes, and second, are not always self-reflective of the practical implications of this move.

This paper aims at intervening in this selective tradition by disrupting it, tracing and highlighting the main features of the intellectual trajectory that have taken us to the present moment, and in the process identifying those elements have been emphasized and, by implication, those that have not been considered essential for the study of power relations in critical/cultural approaches to communication. As Hay argues, in a context where “the work of historicizing and mapping communication research and theory is seldom front and center of most studies about communication,” contributions to a critical/cultural perspective necessarily involve “a reflexivity about the conditions and institutional/disciplinary regimes of intellectual and academic work.”⁸

My argument will proceed as follows: I will start by concisely reviewing the turn to discourse as a foundational feature in critical/cultural scholarship, addressing how Michel Foucault’s framework—especially in its later, “genealogical” stage—has often

been (mis)appropriated in this literature as the panacea to account for power-related dynamics, even allowing a revisiting of other influential notions for critical/cultural work, such as Gramsci's "hegemony"—a move that, in my view, has set important limits to the phenomena that we study, as well as to how we study them.

I will then attempt to offer what I see as a more comprehensive conceptualization of power relations, arguing that a grounding in people's experiences, but also the continuous relation between these experiences and the social whole, are preferable starting points for a critical/cultural project in communication that can create the space needed to envision and account for change. As I put forward this argument, I will critique what I see as an overskeptical, ultimately paralyzing aspect of Foucault's framework, drawing on the work of two authors that, in my opinion, have not been adequately and/or systematically incorporated into critical/cultural approaches in our discipline: Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams.

Through a discussion of some of these authors' contributions, mainly found in the notions of hegemony and cultural materialism, I will argue for a necessary complication of dialectics, and thus for an effective theory of power relations that accounts for the materiality of people's experiences, seeing these as contradictory and intrinsically related to historical processes. In closing, I suggest that our goal as critical/cultural scholars should be to collaborate in the political project of not only describing and understanding those experiences, but ultimately incorporating an explanatory dimension to our analyses that enables concrete political intervention.

This project is, therefore, mostly concerned with the history of ideas, and more specifically, with revisiting some of those ideas as they were developed by different thinkers, as well as considering how they have (not) been taken up by some communication scholars as they developed a critical/cultural project across particular areas of study.⁹ This, at a first glance, would seem to be at odds with a commonsense understanding of what a critical stance entails since, as I mentioned, for many scholars contributing to a critical project, intervening in "real" social issues is seen as a primary concern. However, as I will try to show in this paper, the practice of critique is intrinsically linked with theoretical reflection. In other words, if we want to know where our intervention needs to start and what its consequences may be, we also need a deep understanding of the functioning of the processes we want to affect. My goal in this essay will thus be to bring us closer to a more explicit kind of knowledge about some of these processes.

Discursively Turning, away from What? The Selective Tradition and Critical/Cultural Communication Scholarship

In her seminal 1994 essay, Dana Cloud addressed what she saw as a "significant and growing minority of critical scholars" who, according to her, were at the time enthusiastically embracing the "poststructuralist shift towards discourse theory," and thus proposing "the materiality of discourse hypothesis" as a way to overcome the limitations of idealist and economicist approaches to social organization.¹⁰ Almost 20 years later, it is probably unproblematic to argue that what Cloud called a

“growing minority” is now a well-established critical mass in communication scholarship in general and in critical/cultural studies in particular. Thus, a plethora of analyses that highlight the constitutive nature of discourse have been welcome in the last two decades and have come to dominate most discussions, not only amongst critical rhetoricians, as Cloud pointed out, but also in broader critical/cultural academic circles.¹¹

In this section I will briefly retrace the so-called “discursive turn” in communication scholarship as intrinsically related to a mostly uninterrogated rejection of “received” Marxist accounts of power relations, which are incessantly reduced in this literature to economicist, exclusively class-oriented, and therefore rigid explanations—an interpretation that, in my view, does not do justice to the complexities, nuances, and competing histories within this tradition. Thus, a foundational assumption of much contemporary critical/cultural scholarship is the implicit or explicit evaluation of Marxism as “too narrow” and focusing only on “economic phenomena”—a condemnation that has come to constitute the unavoidable preamble framing most current analyses within this perspective.¹²

Needless to say, the work of Michel Foucault, and especially his more recent theorization of discourse, power and knowledge as intrinsically related constructs, has been key in facilitating this transition. However, I would argue that the very notion of a “discursive turn” relies on a distortion of the perspective away from which critical/cultural scholars are expected to direct their intellectual efforts. Thus, introducing a binary between discourse-oriented accounts and so-called economicist accounts of power relations has become a commonplace in much of our critically oriented scholarship. This polarizing critique of what Raymond Williams called a “received” version of Marxism is often seen as facilitating a more flexible understanding of the locus of power, and thus more comprehensive accounts of the possibilities to resist it.¹³

Rather than simply rejecting these assumptions, my goal in making them explicit is also to reflect on the broader implications of this selective move. Specifically, I argue that the turn away from (seen as) reductionist, absolutist, and “fixed” conceptualizations of power relations has often led to an equally absolutist “diffused” or “fluid” understanding of the ways power operates in societies, where the capacity to act upon reality is ultimately diminished by the fact that this action cannot take the form of a specific, coherent and therefore strong enough aim. In what follows, I trace what I see as two interrelated and important processes in the construction of this selective critical/cultural tradition in communication: first, I briefly review Foucault’s theoretical framework, with special attention to his theorizing of discourse and/as power in his later, “genealogy” stage.¹⁴ I also problematize certain aspects of this account, arguing that Foucault’s tempting call to avoid establishing causal relationships so readily answered by many critical/cultural scholars carries with it important and ultimately paralyzing implications that are not always reflected upon. Second, I discuss the pervasive embedding of such account of power relations in the ways Gramsci’s notion of hegemony tends to be adopted in critical/cultural approaches within communication.

In the Beginning, There was Discourse: The Legacy of Michel Foucault

Foucault's early writings were the result of his wrestling with different philosophical approaches to language and meaning. As such, they evidence his rejection, on the one hand, of the preclassical renaissance epistemology that saw language as a mere reflection of an external, objective reality, and on the other hand, of the classical Enlightenment epistemology of representation.¹⁵ For him, and along the lines of Saussure's work, a more useful starting point is located in signification practices. Accordingly, Foucault theorized meaning as a product of the structure that constitutes the condition of possibility for its existence. Discourses, in this context, comprise his "primary unit of analysis," since they are seen as serving the primordial function of constituting subjects by setting the limits within which those subjects can exist, mainly through two interrelated processes: subjectification and objectification.¹⁶ Thus, in this account, discourse constitutes individuals as subjects and objects at the same time. In other words, people are both created and constrained by the discourses they inhabit.

In his later writings, Foucault progressively emphasized the fundamental link between discourse, knowledge and power, seeing discourse as "a system of possibility [that] makes possible a field of knowledge."¹⁷ This, in its turn, situates discourse as a product of power, since Foucault conceptualizes power and knowledge as mutually constitutive. He thus rejects the idea of knowledge as a path towards an objective "Truth" that can enable people to question—and potentially do away with—particular material conditions. Rather, as an episteme of "objective reality," the discourse of a period that we embrace is a way to exercise power through the constitution and governing of individual subjects. In this scenario, "discourses make up specific systems of knowledge that allow for things to be (im)possible through their limiting of our thinking and imagination."¹⁸ For example, different disciplines intrinsic to social institutions and practices will value some ideas and subjects and exclude others, thus disciplining individuals by setting the limits of who can speak and what can be spoken about.¹⁹

One of the most influential moves in Foucault's discussion of power is his critique of what he calls the "repressive hypothesis," a way of understanding power that, he argues, limits it to oppression and coercion. Instead, he contends, power is also productive, since it produces the meaning of things, discourses and subjects.²⁰ In this view, power is relational rather than substantial. Thus, it cannot be possessed, used, or imposed from above. The goal, then, becomes to develop an "analytics of power" that uncovers how power is a "cluster of relations"—for example, the relations between institutions and the rest of society, or among the different subjects who participate in these societal processes.²¹ Identifying what power *is*, or where it comes from is thus replaced in this account by an understanding and description of *how* it operates on a specific, everyday basis. As Foucault puts it: "to understand power in its materiality, its day to day operation, we must go to the level of the micropractices" instead of trying to abstract power at the ideological and/or state levels.²²

Foucault's account certainly constituted a revolutionary contribution to the way power relations were understood up until that moment. As Fraser states, his work was key in ruling out inadequately narrow understandings of power and leading a needed turn towards the "politics of everyday life"—a turn that arguably lies at the core of most current critical/cultural work in communication.²³ At the same time, the often ambiguous understanding of discourse that emerges from many of Foucault's writings has arguably played a significant role in the different ways critical/cultural scholars have embraced this notion—as well as, as I explain below, the turn towards particular (re)readings of other critical theory keywords such as Gramsci's "hegemony." Thus, even though discourse is often described in Foucault's work as encompassing both linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects, in practice this distinction is far from emphasized in many Foucaultian-oriented analyses—including his own.

Some analysts of Foucault's work object that he "never intended to isolate discourse from the social practices that surround it," and it may very well be that this progression into an autonomous dimension was not Foucault's intention, although it seems to be an important way in which his considerations have been incorporated into critical/cultural approaches in communication studies.²⁴ As Cloud points out with reference to critical rhetoricians, "discourses" nowadays tend to be studied with little or no reference to the material conditions that influenced their production, and the different struggles are located not "in the political or economic realms anymore, but in those of the text."²⁵ Thus, disconnected from its specific structural constraints, the notion of discourse has often been turned into an "immaterial and timeless structure that exists in an autonomous fashion with respect to thought and matter, which are articulated through relative senses of difference and identity."²⁶

Another important element of many critical/cultural applications of Foucault's work is the move from an identification of productive *aspects* in power relations towards an understanding of power as *always and only* productive. This "entirely productive view of power," has been challenged as "the view that power *necessarily* produces its own resistances or that it produces knowledges and discourses that are themselves *invariably* productive." Instead, and drawing on Foucault's analyses, scholars have argued that discourses such as those around sexuality did not participate in the creation of particular sexual subjects on their own, but were incited by agencies of power and ultimately confined to particular closed spaces "presided by the institutions of the church or psychoanalysis." In this context, and importantly, "the voices of those who speak in this place, the voices of resistance, are never heard."²⁷

Apart from these debatable, strong or weak interpretations of the roles of discourse and power in Foucault's writings, one could also argue for a progressive rejection of a normative dimension in his work whose consequences have not always been critically examined by critical/cultural scholars. Thus, within a genealogical Foucauldian framework, the task of the analyst is restricted to the description of *how* subjects come to be in a particular place and time. Accordingly, his analyses of different cultural practices and institutions, such as those related to madness or sexuality, are geared towards determining how specific discourses, as well as the different rules that

govern them, are constituted in a society, that is, how different “discursive formations” regulate social organization. Importantly, because of the constitutive skepticism of all kinds of knowledge that informs this account, this kind of critique can never be carried out within a normative framework; it is instead a critique of “a form, a technique of power” through the emphasis on “mechanisms of subjection” that Foucault considers “as important as mechanisms of exploitation and domination.”²⁸

Nancy Fraser provides a useful starting point to reflect on the implications of these assumptions for the critical/cultural project. She strongly criticizes Foucault’s latest notions of disciplinary power, biopower, or power/knowledge as based on “the suspension of the standard modern liberal normative framework which distinguishes between the legitimate and illegitimate exercise of power.” This, according to Fraser, allows Foucault to look at power in new and interesting ways, but it also precludes him from asking particular—and necessary—questions. Furthermore, it leads to the simultaneous embracement of contradictory accounts of power as “both politically engaged and normatively neutral.” Based on this assessment, Fraser concludes that Foucault’s work “ends up inviting questions which it is structurally unequipped to answer,” since one cannot argue for the need to resist domination without introducing some normative notions that tell us why this is preferable.²⁹ Along similar lines, Whiteside argues that “if all we can do is change forms of domination and if no form of domination can be judged less oppressive than another, then there seems to be no ground for demanding change.”³⁰ Thus, ultimately, the unwillingness to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable forms of power clearly undermines Foucault’s compelling arguments against “crude ideologism, statism and economism.”³¹ In the next section I address in more detail the ways in which Foucault’s project has influenced some contemporary understandings of another keyword in the study of power relations: Gramsci’s “hegemony.”

Gramsci Revisited: Hegemony and/as Discourse

Foucault’s prolific mind and his thought-provoking writings earned him a very influential place in contemporary social thought, and certainly within critical/cultural approaches to communication. His groundbreaking link between discourse, knowledge, and power relations opened the door for all kinds of analyses focusing, for example, on how different kinds of subjects are constituted and disciplined via discourse.³² At the same time, and perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this discussion, this framework also enabled a revisiting of other critical keywords, and most notably of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony. Thus, on its way towards an unavoidable buzzword in critical/cultural scholarship, hegemony has often been incorporated into a Foucauldian understanding of power, even though the affinities between the broader political projects behind these two constructs are, I would argue, far from apparent.

As different critics have shown,³³ Gramsci’s notes were far from offering a clear, straightforward view on hegemonic processes. Not surprisingly, then, we can find

scattered elements of his different accounts throughout much of the critical/cultural scholarship informed by the notion of hegemony. Most authors have acknowledged the copresence of mechanisms of control within civil society and the State when explaining hegemonic processes, although usually this has not translated into a full embracement of the coercion + consent formula outlined by Gramsci in some of his writings. Rather, scholars have typically opted for adopting a notion of hegemony that emphasizes mechanisms of consent³⁴ or coercion.³⁵

The emphasis on the “consent” aspects of hegemonic processes is usually enabled, implicitly or explicitly, through a Foucauldian understanding of power as “capillary,” operating “at the lowest extremities of the social body in everyday social practices.”³⁶ The work of so-called “Western Marxists” such as Ernesto Laclau or Louis Althusser has also been very influential in enabling this emphasis.³⁷ Althusser, for example, discussed the possibility of an integrated State/civil society through his concept of “ideological state apparatus.” His assessment also involved an upgrading of the notion of ideology from the epiphenomenal status to a crucial aspect of the mode of production. Ideology, in this view, is emphasized as the total environment in which individuals are constituted (through interpellation) and operate.

Stuart Hall can be credited with introducing a similar argument into cultural studies circles, as he addressed the possibilities that the notion of hegemony opened for a theorization of the intersections between class and race. Drawing on Gramsci’s view that class unity is “never assumed a priori,” but internally fragmented, Hall invited practitioners of cultural studies to explore the conflicting interests that inform particular group identities, as well as the centrality of contradictory discursive formations in the (re)production of popular hegemony—a view that arguably paved the way for a plethora of studies based on an understanding of hegemonic processes as a negotiation of ideological give and take by which state and individuals set the limits of what is adequate, beneficial and possible to pursue.³⁸

This (mis)appropriation of Gramsci’s work, however, has been subject to strong criticism by scholars who identify in it a dangerous move away from the original Gramscian project. Richard Johnson, for example, laments how an understanding of Gramsci within what he calls an overall poststructuralist framework has become the dominant discourse in much contemporary social theory, mainly through a “post-Althusserian discourse theory and a Foucauldian view of power.” For Johnson, these readings mistakenly “reduce hegemony to an operation within specifically cultural forms (language, symbols, signs, discourses).”³⁹

Ultimately, a progressive disconnection between hegemonic processes and coercion practices has often translated into an important shift: from the study of dominant ideologies and the uncovering of the processes through which they ultimately sustain unequal relationships among particular groups, to an emphasis on the ways in which subordinate groups may engage in “resistance” through their appropriation of dominant discourses or, more recently, an interest in revealing ways in which apparently disruptive representations of historically marginalized subjects are used to gain consent for exclusionary practices in even more pervasive ways.⁴⁰ Critical/cultural scholarship in communication reproduces this tendency when it

proposes, for example, “retheoriz[ing] culture as an ideological struggle between and among competing vested interests,” a goal that is linked to hypothetical analyses where “perhaps, the scholar would develop a theoretical notion that ethnic women resist dominant Anglo patriarchal culture in their ‘talk’ about oppressive meanings and texts and use this construct to critically analyze the ‘culture.’”⁴¹

Through a revisiting of the notion of hegemony and its relation to power, traditional understandings of resistance and subversion have been given new meanings that potentially disconnect them from material emancipation, since even though people may be “free” to appropriate and use discourses for their own individual purposes, thus resisting their dominant readings, these purposes, one could argue, will always already be delimited by the systems that created them. Nevertheless, an interest in this kind of struggle has heavily influenced and continues to inform most contemporary critical/cultural theory and practice. Thus, as Eagleton ironically notes, “it is [the] lack of stable identities which for some cultural theory today is the last word in radicalism. Instability of identity is ‘subversive’—a claim which it would be interesting to test out among the socially dumped and disregarded.”⁴²

Building on these critiques, in the next section I argue that, even though a focus on the potential of everyday practices should be an important component of a comprehensive approach to power relations in critical/cultural studies, the study of these “micro” levels of societal relations does not necessarily imply an understanding of all human activity as taking place within particular power/knowledge regimes—as many current research in critical/cultural studies directly or indirectly suggests. Instead, I propose a rethinking of the notion of dialectics as intrinsically linked to an acknowledgment of everyday practices within an overall project that incorporates not just a descriptive, but also an explanatory dimension, thus enabling concrete political intervention.

Rethinking Dialectics in Power Relations

In this section, I address the possibility of incorporating the value of everyday social practices into a critical/cultural project, while at the same time avoiding seeing power as a normatively neutral phenomenon. In short, and drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams, I argue that the careful description of how power is embedded in our most intimate practices, of showing how it operates, does not need to be the ending point of our research endeavors. Rather, it could be a *means* to theorize the need and capability to locate and oppose unequal societal dispositions. Such shift seems especially significant in the context of a critical/cultural perspective in communication that often explicitly states its investment in “social change.”

Rethinking Hegemony

As a first step in this rethinking effort, I argue for a (re)consideration of Antonio Gramsci’s work as a historical, materialist, and dialectical account of power relations,

and thus for an understanding of the notion of hegemony as intrinsically tied to a political and historically grounded context. In order to do this, I draw mostly on Gramsci's body of work included in the collection titled *The Prison Notebooks*, which was first published posthumously in 1957. In these "notebooks," Gramsci outlined his reflections on the society around him, mostly affected by the consolidation of capitalism and of absolutist regimes, a new and painful reality that, at a first glance, seemed to disqualify previous Marxist analyses of societal processes that predicted an inevitable revolution led by the working class.

Gramsci's reading of Marx tried to accommodate the existence of this new social reality, and he did so by questioning the so-called economic aspect of Marxism that was assumed to presuppose a clear division and a linear deterministic relationship between the "base" and the "superstructure." In Gramsci's words: "The claim (presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism) that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure, must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combated in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx."⁴³ Gramsci thus argued for the need to examine Marx's empirical work in order to find a much less simplistic conceptualization of social determination.

Based on this reading of Marx, Gramsci concluded that "changing socio-economic circumstances do not themselves 'produce' political changes," but that "they only set the conditions in which such changes become possible," and he continued: "what is crucial, in bringing about these changes, are the 'relations of force' obtaining at the political level, the degree of political organization and combativity of the opposing forces, the strength of the political alliances which they manage to bind together and their level of political consciousness, of preparation of the struggle on the ideological terrain."⁴⁴ It was in this specific context and with this specific set of goals in mind that Gramsci developed his most important theoretical contribution to the study of power relations: the notion of hegemony.

The radically different ways in which scholars have made use of his work demonstrates that Gramsci's writings are far from offering a single conceptualization of hegemony in the *Prison Notebooks*. As Perry Anderson contends,⁴⁵ the concept of hegemony incorporates a fair dose of ambiguity and contradiction—thus making its possible application and the consequent analyses inherently complicated. However, and in spite of this, I would argue, in agreement with Hall,⁴⁶ that it is precisely this dialectical nature what makes hegemony such a useful concept when theorizing power relations, and that the full heuristic potential of hegemony as an analytical tool cannot be completely unleashed without taking into account its material, force-related, aspects. Also, as I explain below, this understanding is the one that I think makes most sense once Gramsci's work is examined in a holistic way.

Let us consider, first of all, Gramsci's particular contextual and personal circumstances that, I would argue, strongly influenced his resolute endorsement of what he called the "philosophy of praxis." As Forgas argues, Gramsci cannot be separated from political realities "since even his widest generalizations are invariably concerned with the investigation of the practical conditions for transforming the

world by politics in the *specific* circumstances in which he wrote.”⁴⁷ In line with his rereading of Marxist dialectics, Gramsci argued that the philosophy of praxis conceives the development of the structure and superstructure “as intimately connected and necessarily interrelated and reciprocal,” and that it does not “tend towards the peaceful resolution of the contradictions existing within history” but it “theorizes those contradictions” instead.⁴⁸ This is the framework within which Gramsci developed his notion of hegemony.

Second, we may want to recall that Gramsci was, above all, a political activist. His writings, therefore, had the major purpose of mobilizing what he saw as the subordinate groups in his society in order to overcome oppressive conditions. With this cause in mind, identifying the weak aspects of a hegemonic project was a crucial step because, according to Gramsci, this would allow individuals to act upon these weaknesses in order to develop an alternative hegemonic project that would better their condition. As Morgan puts it, “the objective was to create a socialist hegemony in Italy.”⁴⁹ For Gramsci, therefore, it was important “to look at relations of force” but, as he explained, “such analyses cannot and must not be ends in themselves [...] but acquire significance only if they serve to justify a particularly practical activity, an initiative of will. They reveal the points of least resistance, at which the force of will can be most fruitfully applied.”⁵⁰

It seems, therefore, that the both the weak and the strong aspects of the concept of hegemony stem from its tight association with grounded social criticism (understood here as a reconciliation between theory and praxis). Thus, on the one hand, if hegemony is abstracted as a theory from its historical praxis, then ambiguities emerge. Moreover, an understanding of hegemony as dissociated from reality, history, and ultimately from material existence defeats the ultimate purpose laid out in Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis. If, on the contrary, hegemony is always conceived as linked to a political project, this ambiguity turns into a dialectical strength that can account for the contradictions embedded in our everyday practices. I would argue that it is through this praxis-oriented, normative link that Gramsci’s work can better inform a theory of power in critical/cultural studies.

(Re)thinking Cultural Materialism

As a second and last rethinking move, in this section I will show how explaining Gramsci’s work in materialist, historical, and dialectical terms allows us to shed a more comprehensive light on the contributions by Raymond Williams, another foundational intellectual figure in cultural studies that, I would argue, has been often ignored or too easily dismissed in critical/cultural academic circles in our discipline. I argue that, as a continuation of Gramsci’s nuanced critique of dialectics, Williams’s framework constitutes a prolific starting point to account for the relationship between power dynamics and social change, mostly through an engagement with his groundbreaking “cultural materialist” perspective (Williams, 1976).

As Aune pointed out in his account of *Rhetoric and Marxism*, the work of Raymond Williams was never considered fundamental for U.S. versions of cultural

studies. For Aune, this lack of engagement stemmed from the fact that the specificities of the U.S. context made it hard for American authors to identify with the working class-based sense of community that Williams so enthusiastically celebrated some times.⁵¹ The best exponent of this distant and even distrustful relationship with Williams's writings is Lawrence Grossberg, whose influential account of "Strategies of Marxist cultural interpretation" arguably shaped the ways in which the current generation of critical/cultural scholars came to understand the (im)possibilities of critique.⁵²

In spite of his more sympathetic interpretation of Williams's project, and the acknowledgment of its potential contributions to a comprehensive kind of cultural studies in the U.S., Aune's account ultimately presents this approach as too preoccupied with the "fictional moment of the cultural over other elements," a preference that he implicitly links to a contemporary overemphasis, in critical communication research, on "the cultural dimension of communication, especially television, film, and popular music," together with a "drift away from class analysis."⁵³ Along similar lines, Dana Cloud situates Williams's interest in culture as a fundamental site of production and reproduction as a bridge for a nondialectic kind of thinking that, according to her, would eventually excise class-based relations from critical scholarship in communication. As she puts it: "beginning with Williams's articulation of a 'cultural materialist' and his rejection of the base-superstructure dialectic, cultural studies has on the whole focused entirely on political relations in discourse rather than economics."⁵⁴ In what follows, I offer a slightly different account of Williams's framework, one that emphasizes, not a rejection, but a rethinking of dialectics through the notion of cultural materialism, as well as the potential contribution of such rethinking for critical/cultural approaches in communication.

Much like Gramsci, Williams (1977) was concerned with the supposed-to-be simplistic explanations of the relationships between the different levels of society attributed to Marxism. He thus tried to offer an alternative reading of Marx that would overcome the problematic "base determines superstructure" equation without completely dismissing dialectics. Williams's project was motivated by what he saw as a "received" version of Marxism, and thus he argued for a different understanding of dialectics that, still within Marxism, would allow for an exploration of distinctive areas of society such as economics, institutions, forms of consciousness, or political and cultural practices, *not* as separate from each other, but as interrelated. In his own work, Williams strived to retake this approach as his starting point, emphasizing the need to study "all the activities and their interrelations, without any concession of priority to any one of them we may choose to abstract."⁵⁵ This kind of thinking translates into Williams's claim that the allegedly "superstructural" aspects of society are not a mere reflection of those that have been isolated as the "base," although, as I will explain below, this did not necessarily imply seeing those aspects as completely autonomous elements.

A key element in his rethinking and expanding of the notion of dialectics is Williams's rereading of the concept of determination. Importantly, Williams's goal

was not to get rid of the notion of determination as a whole, but to overcome its restriction to a *limiting* process. As he explained, “[a] Marxism without some concept of determination is in effect worthless. A Marxism with many of the concepts of determination it now has is quite radically disabled.”⁵⁶ He thus reconceptualized determination as a dialectical movement through which the economic base sets the limits and exerts pressure over other societal spheres, whereas at the same time the cultural sphere exists not as a mere result of these pressures, but can also react to them and exert its own influence over the “base.” This conceptual framework, far from understating the importance of economic factors as agents of change, leaves room for the possibility of an alternative and even an oppositional kind of social organization that emerges from the relationship between the different levels of society and is not just a result of particular external conditions and the interests of a few.

In the process of developing his approach, Williams found in the work of Gramsci an important source of inspiration, adding to it a particular sensibility for culture as a crucial and material site of production. For Williams, the notion of hegemony was especially useful because, just like his own framework, it incorporated a flexible understanding of determination, refusing “to equate consciousness with the articulate formal system which can be and ordinarily is abstracted as ‘ideology.’”⁵⁷ For him, such a view accounted for the human capacity to break through oppressive dynamics, since it emphasized the unstable character of hegemonic processes. As Williams put it: hegemony is “a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting;” therefore, it is “always a process” which is historically sensitive and constantly defended *and* challenged. This understanding thus incorporates the possibility to “grasp the hegemonic in its active and formative but also its *transformational* processes.”⁵⁸

Hegemony, in Williams’s account, also allows for a reconciliation of macro structures and micropractices, since it “relates whole social processes to specific distributions of power and influence.” Williams advanced this necessary reconciliation through his notion of “cultural materialism,” which he defined as “a theory of the specificities of material cultural and literary production within historical materialism.”⁵⁹ Thus, for Williams, incorporating the materiality of cultural practices was a necessary step in theorizing the possibilities for change, and it was something that classic Marxism had failed to do. As Eagleton put it, Williams’s account “will out-Marxize the Marxists by going the whole hog, extending materialism full-bloodedly to cultural practices too.”⁶⁰ At the same time, however, the historical and political determinants of cultural practices could not be overlooked.⁶¹ Rather, the overall goal of a cultural materialist approach goal was to engage the relationships between different societal levels in order to account for how, to use a well-known slogan within Marxism, change happens. As Williams put it: “we cannot understand the process of change in which we are involved if we limit ourselves to thinking of the democratic, industrial and cultural revolutions as separate processes.”⁶²

Williams’s understanding of communication as “a whole social process,” rather than a separate entity that we can then relate to society, constitutes a fundamental

element of his cultural materialist framework. Thus, this conceptualization is the starting point in his attempt to reconcile two notions that had traditionally been seen as mutually exclusive: art and reality. As Jones puts it, Williams innovatively challenged the reduction of culture to an “‘immaterial’ phenomenon in contrast with real ‘activity.’”⁶³ In this context, communication, seen as “the process of making unique experience into common experience” is what allows art to become part of reality.⁶⁴

At a larger scale, this view allowed Williams to resolve the traditional opposition between “the meanings of culture as ‘creative activity’ and ‘a whole way of life,’”⁶⁵ arguably his major contribution to a cultural studies project.⁶⁶ With this move, he was able to place human activity at the center of his framework and emphasize human practices as the vital processes that have the capacity to advance societies. A “cultural materialist” perspective is thus one in which economic, social processes and cultural symbolic ones are not mutually exclusive, where “we see language and signification as indissoluble elements of the material social process itself, involved all the time both in production and reproduction.”⁶⁷

Williams’s sometimes misunderstood emphasis on the importance of the cultural dimension of societies earned him critiques from the next generation of scholars in cultural studies, and most notably from Stuart Hall—whose work has also mediated between British and U.S. versions of cultural studies in important ways. In his classic study of what he saw as two “incommensurable” paradigms, Hall pointed out the split between what he labeled a “culturalist” and a “structuralist” approach to research within Cultural Studies. A “culturalist” perspective, exemplified by “first generation” scholars such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, or E. P. Thompson, “emphasized human experience and practical activity as the source of culture.” In contrast, a structuralist perspective, advocated by a “second generation” of scholars trained at the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Culture in Birmingham, “stressed the structural and ideological features of culture as the ultimate conditions or determinants of human praxis.”⁶⁸

In readings such as Hall’s (see also Eagleton, in Jones, 2004), Williams is seen as paying too much attention to experience and human praxis as opposed to structural conditions and how they infuse these practices. As I mentioned before, the scarce references in communication to Williams’s work, even though they serve different purposes, share this skepticism towards an allegedly overemphasis on culture as a material site of production. For Grossberg, for example, Williams problematically collapses “the social into the cultural,” understood as “the structure of social experience (which can be read off of the surface of class position).”⁶⁹

Based on these critiques, it may appear like a “culturalist” approach can only touch on the superficial levels of power relations, as its alleged prioritization on the “cultural” manifestations in a society would seem to underestimate the importance of its structural dispositions. However, as I hope to have shown, a closer look at this framework reveals that, theoretically, it offers a crucial standpoint that can help us address societal dynamics holistically, through the overcoming of a dualist perception of the cultural and the structural as separate spheres. Reflecting on his intellectual

trajectory, Williams referred to the focus on the “specific primacies” of culture—and the reading of this as an idealist position—as just a needed stage in a moment when, within received Marxism, there was no other way to conceptualize cultural practices. As he put it:

What turned out to be, when developed, a materialist (but non-positivist) theory of language, of communication and of consciousness was assigned, along the way, to “idealism” just because, in received Marxist theory, these activities were known to be superstructural and dependent—so that any emphasis on their primacy (a primacy coequal with other forms of the material social process, including those forms which had been abstracted as “labour” or “production”) was known a priori to be “idealist.”⁷⁰

Overall, following Raymond Williams’s rescuing of the concept of culture from the realm of the “superstructure” and its insertion into the material, productive level of society, we can argue for and legitimate the study of those aspects of society that were previously thought of as mere reflections of bigger, more primary dynamics and therefore not relevant objects of analysis, *while still* seeing them as part of the economy, institutions, or public policy. What a “culturalist” perspective has to offer, therefore, is a commitment to study not just “culture’s constitutive role in making power relations” but also “the embeddedness of power, including economic power, in cultural relations.”⁷¹ Ultimately, such view can help us bridge the gap between political/economic and cultural analyses, a project that has been identified as crucial for the next generation of critical/cultural communication scholarship.⁷²

Conclusions: Planting “Seeds of Life”

There are ideas, and ways of thinking, with the seeds of life in them, and there are others, perhaps deep in our minds, with the seeds of a general death. Our measure of success in recognizing these kinds, and in naming them making possible their common recognition, may be literally the measure of our future.⁷³

In this essay, I have reviewed several keywords in critical theory in an attempt to reflect on whether they can inform a more comprehensive approach to power relations in communication studies, and more specifically, in critical/cultural approaches within the discipline.⁷⁴ Needless to say, I am not arguing that these should be the only important keywords to consider, nor am I suggesting that only the authors reviewed here can help us rethink dialectics, power, and the critical project in our discipline. Rather, my concentration on Williams, Gramsci and Foucault’s work was motivated by what I saw as a need to reflexively historicize and push against a current dominant trend in critical/cultural scholarship, where successive selective readings/re-writings of particular intellectual legacies have led to what I see as sometimes unreflective, sometimes problematic understandings of different theoretical frameworks. As a result of the mediating function of these selective readings, Williams’s ideas have been mostly not engaged or rapidly dismissed, whereas Gramsci’s work is often reoriented towards idealist grounds and away from dialectical perspectives. On the other hand, Foucault’s framework, especially his

later contributions, is usually (and ironically) presented as the only valid point from which to narrate the (im)possibilities for social change in our current times.

Overall, with this rethinking exercise I hope to have shown that there is certainly value in a “discursive turn” that points out the existence of complicated societal process that cannot be translated into perfect formulae to predict human behavior, and uncovers how unequal systems are reproduced with our own consent—especially in places where a superficial look would suggest the opposite. However, I would argue that we are still, for the most part, missing something. That something is the ability to conceive of power dynamics in a way that allows us to envision social transformation. Thus, even though attention to everyday, local practices can definitely help us overcome simplistic and overdeterministic accounts of society, a rejection of absolute values doesn’t need to imply the (absolute) rejection of all values,⁷⁵ or what McLaren refers to as a substitution of the “tyranny of the whole by the dictatorship of the fragment.”⁷⁶ Instead, we might argue, the evaluation and explanatory stages are necessary moves within any project committed to social justice and critique.

As I think this review has shown, the theoretical contributions by Foucault, Gramsci, and Williams can all be seen under different lights and with different emphases. There are, importantly, similarities in their work that need to be highlighted, most notably the motivation to overcome a binary way of understanding the world, and more specifically, the relationship between individuals and their societies. Thus, a common view in all three authors is that people are both shaped by processes that they cannot control, while at the same time they possess the capacity to act upon the world. This dialectical impulse can be seen at the core of notions such as Williams’s “cultural materialism,” Foucault’s “discourse,” or Gramsci’s “hegemony,” although it has not always been explicitly acknowledged or emphasized.

However, I believe that the present review also reveals that each author takes this starting assumption in different directions and with different goals in mind. This is partly due to the array of commitments and motivations that guide their projects, as well as to the fact that their accounts address different audiences—Williams, for example, was embedded in the literary criticism tradition, whereas Foucault’s account could be seen as working across various areas such as philosophy and sociology. It is important, therefore, to reflect on how these different motivations and their corresponding emphases may contribute to a critical/cultural project in communication that incorporates a comprehensive theorizing of power relations.

One way to start this reflection could be to consider why these authors may have been interested in addressing power relations. As Edward Said has wittingly commented, “one’s concept of power is importantly shaped by the reason why one wishes to think about power in the first place.” Said continues to argue that Foucault’s imagination seems to be “with” rather than “against” power, in the sense that he understands the world from the perspective of the ruling groups and is not necessarily interested in exploring how the present conditions may be improved for those who find themselves at a material disadvantage.⁷⁷

In agreement with Said, I would argue that, on the one hand, Foucault's framework is extremely useful when exploring how, in a given scenario, specific processes—subjectification or disciplining, for example—are geared towards maintaining the *status quo*, often by means of incorporating in them the appearance of change. As I mentioned above, most of the current research under the “critical/cultural studies” label emphasizes these kinds of processes—and I would certainly include some of my own work here. From this perspective, the focus is on how structures are reproduced, and how even our own “agency” is part of that reproduction. At the most, all we can do is be aware of this reality and, when possible, strategically appropriate dominant practices. On the other hand, Gramsci and Williams's conceptual frameworks seem better equipped to account for instability and change. Through their emphasis on constant movement and on the transformational aspects of societal processes, they leave more room for individuals to produce new relationships that may be liberating, instead of paralyzing any possibility of consciousness-raising and therefore any human action that may result in social transformation. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough argue:

we agree with the post-structuralist view that all social practice is embedded in networks of power relations, and potentially subordinates the social subjects that engage in it, even those with “internal” power. At the same time, we believe that the view of modern power as invisible, self-regulating and inevitable subjecting [...] needs to be complemented with a view of power as domination [that] establishes causal links between institutional social practices and the positions of subjects in the wider social field.⁷⁸

Ultimately, my review tried to highlight the problems of operating within what I see as a predominantly conformist theoretical framework, while at the same time calling for radical activism and intervention. In this context, I would argue that recovering a more nuanced understanding of dialectics can be a fruitful starting point for the development of a type of critical/cultural work that retains a fundamental aspect: the capability to understand *and explain* the interrelations among different societal spheres, as well as the contradictions that they generate, against the background of a set of normative assumptions, and incorporated into a given political project. When put into practice, this should allow scholars to identify viable paths towards a different kind of social organization in which the well-being of some does not come at the expense of the oppression of many. As Threadhold puts it, “we need a theory of power that recognizes that our practical daily activity contains an understanding of the world—subjugated perhaps, but present.”⁷⁹ In other words, our understanding of power needs to recognize the *difficulty*, not the impossibility, of creating alternatives.

I must recognize the appeal of some aspects of Foucault's framework for current research agendas in general. It is undeniable that this type of account seems to fit better with most of what happens in the world around us—although the recent “Arab spring,” the arousal of social movements like the Spanish *Indignados*, the North-American “Occupy,” or the heated student protests in countries like Chile, Israel, the U.K. or Canada, even with all their internal contradictions, may be good

indicators of the saturation of such model, both within and outside of the scholarly bubble. However, I wonder if part of the attractiveness of the focus on reproductive aspects of power and agency is the result of some kind of “trained incapacity” that does not allow us to explore our objects of study in different ways. And I wonder, like Raymond Williams did, if the academy, as it stands nowadays, can account for the kinds of questions that this essay has framed as fundamental.⁸⁰

Notes

- [1] Raymond Williams, “Communications and Community,” in *Resources of Hope*, ed. Robin Gable (London: Verso, 1961), 19–31.
- [2] Admittedly, this is a very broad term that encompasses many different domains of study; see Kent A. Ono, “Critical/cultural approaches to communication,” in *21st century communication: A reference handbook*, ed. William F. Eadie (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 74–81. In this paper, I use the term critical/cultural studies to refer to a current generation of scholars, mostly U.S. based, whose work is often featured in the Division of the National Communication Association called Critical and Cultural Studies, as well as in the journal sponsored by this same Association: *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*.
- [3] See Rona Tamiko Halaulani, S. Lily Mendoza, and Jolanta A. Drzewiecka, “‘Critical’ Junctures in Intercultural Communication Studies: A review.” *The Review of Communication* 9 (2009): 17–35; Raymie McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91–111; Ono, 2009; Kent A. Ono, “Critical: A Finer Edge.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8 (2011): 93–96.
- [4] Rona Tamiko Halaulani and Thomas K. Nakayama, “Critical Intercultural Communication Studies: At a Crossroads,” in *The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication*, eds. Thomas K. Nakayama and Rona Tamiko Halaulani (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 1–16
- [5] Raymond Williams, “Hegemony and the Selective Tradition,” in *Language Authority and Criticism: Readings on the School Textbook*, eds. Suzanne de Castell, Allan Luke, & Carmen Luke (London: Falmer, 1989), 56–60.
- [6] Dana L. Cloud, “Change Happens: Materialist Dialectics and Communication Studies,” in *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point is to Change it*, eds. Lee Artz, Steve Macek, and Dana L. Cloud (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2006), 54.
- [7] Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Sheena Malhotra, “(Un)hinging Whiteness.” *International and Intercultural Communication Annual* 29 (2006): 166–92.
- [8] James Hay, “Introduction.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 10 (2013): 1–9.
- [9] Because of my specific interests as well as my limited space, my references will be limited to two main areas in communication research: rhetoric and intercultural communication.
- [10] Dana L. Cloud, “The Materiality of Discourse as an Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric.” *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 141–63, 141–42.
- [11] See for example, Ronald W. Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 15 (1998): 21–41; Ronald W. Greene, “Rhetoric and Capitalism: Rhetorical Agency as Communicative Labor.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 37 (2004): 188–206. J. L. Jackson, *Real Black. Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke, 2006)
- [12] See, for example, Ono, 2009.

- [13] Kirby Moss, *The Color of Class: Poor Whites and the Paradox of Privilege*. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 2003); John Preston, *Whiteness and Class in Education* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2007); Simon Springer, "Neoliberalism as Discourse. Between Foucauldian Political Economy and Marxian Poststructuralism." *Critical Discourse Studies* 9 (2012): 133–47.
- [14] Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Raymie E. McKerrow, "Foucault's Relationship to Rhetoric" *Review of Communication* 11 (2011): 253–71.
- [15] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, [1969] 1972); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1973[1966]); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1977[1975]).
- [16] Mark Philp, "Michel Foucault," in *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, ed. Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 65–81, 68
- [17] In Philp, 1985, 69; See also Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1986.
- [18] Philp, 1985.
- [19] Michel Foucault, *The history of Sexuality: An Introduction* (London: Penguin, 1981).
- [20] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980), 78–108.
- [21] Foucault, 1980, 198.
- [22] In Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, 185.
- [23] Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," *PRAXIS International*, 3 (1981): 272–87.
- [24] See Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, 10. For a summary of implications in the area of rhetorical studies, as well as responses to these criticisms, see Dana L. Cloud, "Materiality of Discourse," in *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, eds. Steven W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (London: Sage, 2009).
- [25] Cloud, 1994, 143.
- [26] William Riordan, "Prolegomena to Sartre's Materialist Dialectic: Towards a Recovery of the Subject" (unpublished manuscript, University of Colorado, 1988), 98.
- [27] Terry Threadhold, *Feminist Poetics: Poiesis, Performance, Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), 60–70.
- [28] Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, 212.
- [29] Fraser (1981, 273; 281)
- [30] Kerry H. Whiteside, *Merleau-Ponty and the Foundation of Existential Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 301.
- [31] Fraser, 1981, 280.
- [32] See, for example, Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); John M. Sloop, "'A Van with a Bar and a Bed': Ritualized Gender Norms in the John/Joan Case," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 20, 2000: 130–50.
- [33] See, for example, Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 100 (1976): 5–78.
- [34] Burnham, 1991; Condit, 1996; Cox, 1994; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Zompetti, 1997, 2008); Peter Burnham, "Neo Gramscian Hegemony and the International Order," *Capital & Class* 45 (1991): 73–93; Celeste Condit, "Hegemony, Concordance and Capitalism: Reply to Cloud," *Critical studies in Mass Communication*, 13 (1996): 382–84; Robert W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method," *Millennium. Journal of International Studies* 12 (1983): 162–75. Joseph Zompetti, "Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Economy," *Argumentation and Advocacy*

- (New York, NY: American Forensic Association, 2008); Joseph Zompetti, "Toward a Gramscian Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 61 (1997): 66–86; Nicholas Thoburn, "Patterns of Production: Cultural Studies after Hegemony," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2007): 79–94. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1986).
- [35] Arrighi, 1994; Aune, 2004; Cloud, 1994, 1996; Taylor, 1996). Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of our Times* (London: Verso, 1994); James A. Aune, "An Historical Materialist Theory of Rhetoric," *American Communication Journal* 6 (2004): 1–17; Dana L. Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in "Oprah" Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 13 (1996): 115–37; Peter J. Taylor, *The Way the Modern World Works: World Hegemony to World Impasse* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 1996).
- [36] Fraser, 1987, 271.
- [37] See Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London: Verso, 1977); Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1971).
- [38] Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 5 (1986): 2–24, 15. See, for example, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985. In communication, see Condit's notion of "social concord," which she defines as "the active or passive acceptance of a given social policy or political framework as the best that can be negotiated under the given conditions," arguing for need to emphasize the active and voluntary role that people play in accommodating—together with the rest of political entities—into a "best possible concord" that can incorporate the interests of a wide variety of groups. Condit, 1994, 1996; Celeste Condit, "Clouding the Issues? The Ideal and the Material in Human Communication," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 14 (1997): 197–200.
- [39] Richard Johnson, "Post-hegemony?: I Don't Think So," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2007): 95–110, 98. See also Cloud's response to Condit's arguments, where she offers a critique of a "discourse-centered appropriation of Gramsci," arguing for the need to pay attention to "the limits of compromises within the available conditions," and the ways in which "a social order remains stable by generating consent to its parameters through the production and distribution of ideological texts that define social reality for the majority of the people." Cloud, 1994; 1996: 118.
- [40] Jackson, 2005; Johnson, 2003; Helene A. Shugart, "Crossing Over: Hybridity and Hegemony in the Popular Media," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4 (2007): 115–41.
- [41] Halaulani and Nakayama, 2010, 9.
- [42] Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 16.
- [43] Antonio Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1971), 190.
- [44] Gramsci, 1971, 190.
- [45] Anderson, 1976.
- [46] Hall, 1986.
- [47] David Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), 12, emphasis in original.
- [48] Gramsci, 1971, 193; 196.
- [49] W. John Morgan, "Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams: Workers, Intellectuals and Adult Education," *Convergence* 29 (1996): 61–74, 65.
- [50] Gramsci, 1971, 202; 209.

- [51] See Aune, 1994.
- [52] Lawrence Grossberg, "Strategies of Marxist Cultural Interpretation," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1 (1984): 392–421.
- [53] See Aune, 1994, 95; 115.
- [54] See Dana L. Cloud, "The Point is to Change It: Reflections on Academics and Activism," in *Activism and Rhetoric: Theories and Contexts for Political Engagement*, eds. Jong-Hwa Lee & Seth Kahn (London: Troubador Press, 2010), 66.
- [55] See Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Columbia University Press, 1961), 45.
- [56] See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 83.
- [57] See Williams, 1977, 109.
- [58] Williams, 1977, 110–13, my emphasis.
- [59] Williams, 1977, 5; 109.
- [60] Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976).
- [61] See John Higgins, *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- [62] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Columbia University Press, 1961), xi
- [63] Paul Jones, *Raymond Williams's Sociology of Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 47.
- [64] Williams, 1961, 55.
- [65] Williams, 1961, 56.
- [66] See Aune, 1994.
- [67] Williams, 1961, 99.
- [68] Jere Paul Surber, *Culture and Critique: An Introduction to the Critical Discourses of Cultural Studies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 240.
- [69] Larry Grossberg, "Strategies of Marxist Cultural Interpretation," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1 (1984): 392–421, 401.
- [70] Raymond Williams, "Notes on Marxism in Britain since 1945," *New Left Review* 100 (1976): 81–94, 88.
- [71] See Richard Johnson, Deborah Chambers, Parvati Raghuram, and Estella Tincknell, *The Practice of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE, 2004), 146.
- [72] Ono, 2009; see also Susana Martínez Guillem and Marco Briziarelli, "We Want Your Success! Hegemony, Materiality, and Latino in America," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29 (2012): 292–312; Janice Peck, "Why We Shouldn't Be Bored with the Political Economy Versus Cultural Studies Debate," *Cultural Critique* 64 (2006): 92–126.
- [73] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958).
- [74] See Ono, 2009, for a comprehensive review of critical contributions of scholars working away from the Marxist and/or European frameworks.
- [75] See Ben Agger, *Cultural Studies as Critical Theory* (London: The Falmer Press, 1992).
- [76] Peter McLaren, "Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique: Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation," *Cultural Studies* 7 (1993): 118–46, 207.
- [77] In Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: a Theory for Women?," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (Routledge: London, 1990), 173.
- [78] Lillie Chouliarakis and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 24.
- [79] Threadhold, 1997, 553.
- [80] Raymond Williams, "The Future of Cultural Studies," in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, ed. Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 1986).