

Does Social Class Still Matter For Reception? An Analysis of PHD and Master Thesis (2010-2014)

Volume v.36
issue 1 / 2017

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577
Niterói (RJ), 36 (1)
apr/2017-jul/2017

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

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WHEN CITING THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING REFERENCE:

Grohmann, R. (2017) Does social class still matter? Na analysis of PhD and master thesis (2010-2014) Contracampo, 36 (1), 42-60.

Submitted on: 5th January 2017 / Accepted on: 13th April 2017

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v36i1.970>

Abstract

This paper analyses a selection of 16 dissertations and theses from communication programs in Brazil focusing on social class in a study of reception between 2010 and 2014. Bibliometric and qualitative analyses of the selected papers were performed in order to understand the concepts of 'reception' and 'class' as used in the papers, reflecting on the theory and methodology which impact studies of reception and, in general, communication studies.

Keywords

Reception; Social Class; Epistemology; Communication.

Introduction

The issue of class in communication studies is not a new one. One of the arguments against it is that it is too 'sociological' and does not address 'specific' communication. Yet, isn't communication a human activity realized by social subjects (Wolton, 2010)? A communication theory which does not take society into account is a sterile science according to Wolton (2010).

We think of communication and reception studies as 'place of conflict' (Fígaro; Grohmann, 2015) which therefore makes it important to have a critical perspective of social classes in studies in reception and communication theory. As Sodr  (2012) claims, the reputation of communication studies comes from its social and political value, especially regarding the 'financialization of communication'.

But what have studies of reception meant to social classes? Are they still a category for analysis? Grohmann and Fígaro (2014) show how the concept of class has been presented in Brazilian publications of studies on reception between 1970 and 2000, the most recent ones coming from Andrade (2003), Junqueira (2010) and Ronsini (2012). Only two works from Comp s Meetings between 1992 and 2009 were found to contain the keyword 'class': Andrade (2004) and Ronsini (2007), the latter being the only one of the two to have been presented in the GT Media and Reception. The GT Reception: processes of interpretation, use and consumption in the media presented three works between 2010 and 2015: Fígaro and Grohmann (2013; 2014) and Sifuentes (2015).

And what about post-graduation programs? What are the studies that have worked on social classes in reception over the last few years? This paper is intended to produce more questions than answers, in other words, it evaluates and arranges theses and dissertations in communication that address social class in studies of reception between 2010 and 2014. This paper considers reception as a *locus* for analyzing the theory, epistemology and methodology of communication studies.

Methodology

This paper is part of a broader study on the concept of social class in communication studies. The *corpus* of the article was put together by researching digital libraries¹ from every post-graduation program in communication² in Brazil in order to locate works which were defended between 2010 and 2014, and contained the term 'class' (or 'classes') either in the title, as a keyword or in the abstract. 42

¹ The CAPES database, at the time, was not updated.

² By the end of 2014, the area had 46 programs.

studies were found. We read the abstracts from those studies, looking for ones that dealt with reception on some level. 16 works were found, a representative number of 38% of the studies in communication involving class taken from theses and dissertations which had been defended during the same time period. Note: there are 16 works but only 15 authors as the *corpus* includes both a Master's thesis and a PhD dissertation from Sifuentes (2010, 2014).

Why was the period between 2010 and 2014 chosen? Jacks, Menezes and Piedras (2008) had already researched the theses and dissertations on reception from the 1990s, and Jacks (2014) had done the same between 2000 and 2009. Therefore, this most recent time period was chosen to represent material produced within the first half of the current decade. The empirical objects of study were the theses and dissertations we considered to be the main 'products' coming out of post-graduation programs (including their focus areas, research topics, research projects and mentors) capable of showing how research is being conducted in Brazil.

The category of class was chosen in order to see how it is discussed or viewed (or even not viewed) within communication. To paraphrase Murdock (2009): communicational life is put together by paving stones, not just the beach. 'It is the refusal to acknowledge that class remains a fundamental structuring principle of every aspect of life in late capitalism, including communications, that blocks a comprehensive view of contemporary conditions' (MURDOCK, 2009, p. 32).

The research done for this paper is a 'metaresearch'; a mapping out of the achievements and continuances within the field and looking at 'the problems experienced and the knowledge obtained during researching, and from that point forward, working towards shedding light on new dimensions of communication phenomena' (BONIN, 2008, p. 123).

In order to do this, the analysis was divided into two steps: the first one used bibliometrics (Spinak, 1998; Araújo, 2006; Romancini, 2006) to find out who the most quoted authors were and what their theories implied. To a certain extent, quoting authors reveals what their place is and how they are viewed within a given scientific field (Bourdieu, 1983). An author was quoted only once; self-quotations were excluded. Afterwards, the abstracts, introductions and excerpts from authors' works on 'reception' and 'social class' were read for qualitative analysis.

Overview

The *corpus* is made up of 16 works; 12 Master's thesis and 4 doctoral dissertations. 12 came from universities in Rio Grande do Sul, two from São Paulo

and two from Minas Gerais. This shows that studies on reception are, to a certain extent, coming out of the southern region of the country which makes us ask the question: how do we get research on reception to be conducted throughout the country (remembering that our *corpus* deals only with studies on the concept of class)? Six of the 16 total works represented in this paper were mentored by Professor Veneza Mayora Ronsini from the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), which shows her importance to the concept of class in the field of communication, especially in studies of reception. As for the universities, even though we do not have all the data from all the studies on reception carried out between 2010 and 2014, we did find that the University of São Paulo (USP) had not produced any works on reception and class, which is odd considering that the university had the highest number of studies on reception between 2000 and 2009, according to Jacks (2014).

Previous works from Jacks, Menezes and Piedras (2008) and Jacks (2014) have already showed that television was the medium which was studied the most, present in 11 theses or dissertations. Eight of these focused on television fiction and two on TV journalism. At least five from this group focused directly on youths³ and four on gender involving women. As for studies on reception involving youths between 2000 and 2009, Schmitz (2014) had already pointed out that the concept of social class had been addressed in at least half of the works, especially on youths from lower classes.

As for the approaches used in studies of reception proposed by Jacks (2014) - in particular, sociocultural, socio-discursive and behavioural ones - there were 14 that were sociocultural and two that were socio-discursive⁴. The lack of studies on behaviour may be explained by an epistemological incompatibility with studies on social class in reception due to their more individual nature.

Ethnography was the most common technique applied in the studies, especially for participant observation and interviews which were present in 12 of the 16 works. In some cases, apart from the actual analysis of 'reception' there is an examination of media representation (or media discourse) and how the studied groups (particularly the issue of class) are represented. We found this perspective in seven works, one of which using a socio-discursive approach.

There are 59 authors cited in at least four works. 29 of these authors are Brazilian (49.1%) and 30 are from other countries (50.9%). These figures are similar to what Romancini (2006) found in dissertations and theses from post-graduation courses in communication in 2004; 48% from Brazil and 52% from

³ Adding these works to the ones on children gives us seven studies.

⁴ However, we agree with Jacks (2014, p. 14) that: 'classifying is always problematic'.

other countries (Romancini, 2006, p. 239). Yet only 4 of the 12 most cited authors were Brazilian; one of these 4 being a joint study from Jacks and Escosteguy (2006), recorded as one 'author', meaning only three of the authors represented were actually from Brazil: Nilda Jacks, Ana Carolina Escosteguy and Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes.

The author cited the most was Jesús Martín-Barbero, appearing in all 16 works. Just behind him was Néstor García Canclini, cited in 15 works. Stuart Hall and Pierre Bourdieu both had 14 citations. In fifth with 12 citations were Guillermo Orozco Gómez and Nilda Jacks. Ana Carolina Escosteguy had 11 citations. Finally, rounding out the list with 9 citations each were Roger Silverstone, David Morley, Ana Carolina Escosteguy and Nilda Jacks and Manuel Castells (see FIGURE 01 below):

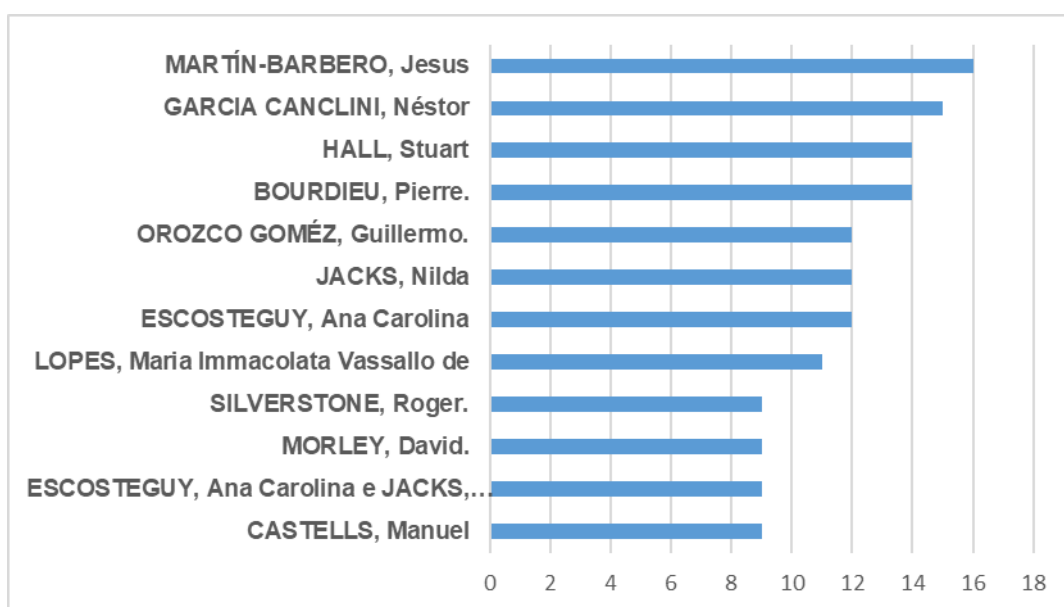


Figure 01: authors with the most citations in theses and dissertations

Source: Author

What do these authors have to say about studies on reception? Firstly, there is a predominance of authors associated with Cultural Studies such as Stuart Hall, David Morley and Roger Silverstone from Britain, and Martín-Barbero, García Canclini and Orozco Gómez from Latin America. Included in this list are Brazilian authors Nilda Jacks, Ana Carolina Escosteguy and Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes. On one hand, this shows a consolidation of authors in the field of reception in Brazil, something that Jacks, Menezes and Piedras (2008) have already attested to, specifically in the trio of Martín-Barbero, García Canclini and Orozco Gómez who, to a certain degree, have become synonymous with studies on reception in Brazil. On the other hand, without overlooking the importance of these authors, this

information brings us to the question: how can more researchers be included in this list over the next few years? This is not about 'adding authors to the list just because'; it's about a scientific field which has advanced with both new empirical findings and conceptual discussions. For example, most of the authors make use of the concept of a nocturnal map for mediations, as proposed by Martín-Barbero (2009) in the 1980s. The concept of mediation has its importance, revisited recently (Lopes, 2014) in debates on media, but the rhetorical question here is of a different nature: which concepts will be on the debate agenda for Brazilian researchers from this field over the next ten years?

The other authors cited in the graph are Pierre Bourdieu and Manuel Castells. The latter is associated more with technological devices and the Internet (Ampuja, 2015). Pierre Bourdieu is the only author referenced who works with the concept of social class. Our intention is not to discuss how the author views the concept. We are drawing attention to the fact that studies on reception, specifically cultural studies, appear to be well-represented among the most cited authors, but the same cannot be said for social class (at least among these most cited authors) as Pierre Bourdieu is the only author from these most cited who addresses this concept. Does the concept of class need more discussion in studies of reception?

Five of the most cited authors in our study also appear on the list of the most cited authors for post-graduation communication programs in Brazil in 2004, according to Romancini (2006, p. 245). They are Pierre Bourdieu, Jesús Martín-Barbero, Néstor García Canclini, Stuart Hall and Manuel Castells.

Seven other authors not included in the list in Figure 01 were cited in eight works. Veneza Ronsini is the only one from the field of communication in Brazil. Jessé Souza is the Brazilian author most associated with the theme of social class, strongly influenced by Pierre Bourdieu (Souza, 2009). Rounding out Brazilian authors, we have cultural researcher Renato Ortiz who has participated on an international level with anthropologist Clifford Geertz, sociologists Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman, as well as philosopher Douglas Kellner.

Overall, the cited authors give us a profile of the *corpus*, marked by influences from authors from Rio Grande do Sul.

Notes and Thoughts on the *Corpus*

One of the main theoretical-methodological problems already addressed by Lopes (2005) and which appear in studies from Jacks, Menezes and Piedras (2008) and Jacks (2014) is the separation between categories discussed in theory and empirical studies on the object. Schmitz (2014) attests that the concept of class in

studies of reception involving youths between the years of 2000 and 2009 'regularly appears in theoretic discussions or on an empirical level yet the subjects are selected according to their social class' (Schmitz, 2014, p. 205). So, how do the studied works deal with the concepts of 'class' and 'reception'?

We start by addressing the works mentored by Veneza Ronsini from the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) – Sifuentes (2010), Prediger (2011), Wottrich (2011), Renata Córdova da Silva (2011), Júlia Schnorr (2013) and Flora Dutra (2014). In general, these studies focus on a concept of reception which merges the so-called 'critical ethnography of reception' (where subjects are observed and interviewed) with media representations of class and inequality in an attempt to understand the role of class mediation in this process. Stuart Hall's and Martín-Barbero's theories of reception are used the most; the *encoding-decoding* model of Hall (2003) mixed with the mediations proposed by Martín-Barbero (2009) with rituality, technicality, institutions and socialization being the concepts that the texts mainly deal with. An idea of circulation is being drawn up here even though the authors do not really talk about or address this concept in the field of communication. There is a sense of collective research being done in most of these works which strengthens the studies on reception and in communication.

As a general rule, Pierre Bourdieu and Jessé Souza are the authors whose theories are referenced most in the works (Lopes, 2005). However, the authors most referenced for the use of the concept in empirical research are Quadros and Antunes (2001). It is important to apply this concept to Brazilian reality and to a theoretical basis to support the choice of the subjects selected for interviewing. However, what we noticed was that there are no thoughts offered on the theoretical and epistemological consequences of 'using' these authors and how their concepts relate to those of Bourdieu (2007) and Souza (2009). Do they communicate with each other? Are there conceptual differences? For example, Quadros and Antunes (2001) speak more on 'socio-occupational classes' than on 'social classes'. What are the results of these choices in terms of how the research is carried out?

A positive point is the dialogue between the authors' works, something which has been quite rare in studies on reception in Brazil, as pointed out in works from Jacks (2014). A bibliometric analysis showed that studies from Renata Córdova da Silva and Laura Hastenpflug Wottrich were cited in other works (three used da Silva and two used Wottrich). This total excludes self-citations. Aside from these two authors, Lourdes Pereira Silva from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) was cited three times.

In addition, we would like to make a few comments on works from the group mentored by Veneza Ronsini. We draw attention to the objects studied by Schnorr

(2013): the rural youths involved in social movements. This introduces communication to the politics of daily life. Even though this work does not develop a concept on this, it does offer an empirical view of the class struggles involved in communication processes. Also, it does not really discuss the concept of work, but it does try to relate the relationship between the life experience and work of the subjects. One of the author's findings is that 'having proximity with social movements does not in itself guarantee its involvement in politics' (Schnorr, 2013, p. 2).

We would also like to make reference to a study by Prediger (2011) in which she analyzes representation and reception among youths for the television series *Malhação*. The discourse of the characters in the episodes under analysis did not contain the term 'class' when referring to their relations; instead, any inequalities in their relationships were summarized as being mere differences (García Canclini, 2005).

Dutra's thesis (2014) may separate itself from other works from this group due to the actual object of study: cellular phones. 'Use and ownership' are two words used in the title of her article. In her abstract she uses the phrases 'transmedia reception' and 'cellular phone consumption' even when referring to mediations of rituality, socialization and technicality (Martín-Barbero, 2009) in empirical research. The theoretical-conceptual approach does not offer any justification for the different terminologies used nor does it make a clear definition of the relationship (which appears distinctive in the reading) between reception and consumption, as observed in the excerpt below:

authors often opt to combine the meanings of consumption and reception, but that is not the case here. Consumption is often understood as merging with reception. From materiality to the drama of life experienced by youths of society's lower class, the capability of reception and its corresponding media texts directed at helping readers understand consumption and its 'social uses' on cellular phones is neglected. This study uses the map of mediation for interpretative purposes (DUTRA, 2014, p. 38).

The text from Toaldo and Jacks (2013) could be a conceptual inspiration here, from the dimensions of 'cultural consumption', 'media consumption' and 'reception', making the concepts and their theoretical-methodological results clear. Of note is the work of Dutra (2014) in which the concept of reception disappears throughout the text, viewing consumption as communicative and distinctive, especially in the works of authors such as Néstor García Canclini, Thorstein Veblen and Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. Along the same lines, the concept of class appears to be more related to consumption: 'consumers from all social classes tend

to seek out what is new, what is different' (DUTRA, 2014, p. 65). Authors with works on classes and differing theoretical perspectives such as Antonio Sérgio Guimarães, Jessé Souza and Cinthya Sarti are used in the discussion without appropriate theoretical-epistemological reflections.

Lirian Sifuentes' Master's Thesis (Sifuentes, 2010) and doctoral dissertation (Sifuentes, 2014) are included in the *corpus*. Both of her papers express similar concerns with an 'ethnographic criticism of reception' (Ronsini, 2003) as interrelations between social class and gender are discussed only once. Sifuentes (2014) also criticizes the marketing bias of the concept of class. From a communication viewpoint, she analyzes representations of class in a television series called 'Caminho das Índias' (Pathway to India) and reception in society and rituality (involving ways of reading and viewing). Sifuentes (2014) talks of 'television series consumption' as forms of perceiving media and forms of perceiving and living the television series. She goes on to discuss the differences and nuances between analysis of reception, media consumption, social uses and studies on identity (Sifuentes, 2014, p. 101-102), preferring to classify her study as 'media consumption'. As far as how the concept of class works, Sifuentes (2014) provides a coherent theory that offers adaptations of Jessé Souza's discussion (2010) and applies them to the empirical analysis, categorizing the classes into fighters, hard workers and the middle class.

Rosa's works (2014) deal with television's participation in small businesses in Pelotas/RS and how classes are mixed. Her concept is based on 'sociability', 'social class' and 'mediations'. The main concept is not reception, but sociability. In other words, communication occurs from human interaction. However, there is no deeper understanding of the interrelations between reception, sociability and the concept of communication itself, appealing to authors such as Georg Simmel when defining the concept of sociability.

Silva (2013) tries to show how 'members of the middle class' see everything they want to see on the 'Noon Newshour' on RBS TV in Rio Grande do Sul, mainly from mediations of institutions, rituality and technicality. If the concept of reception is built on that of Martín-Barbero (2009), then the idea of class is not seen as social and communicational subjects but as a *target* in which 'it is possible to state that the content produced [...] has not yet been able to conquer and adjust to the economic stratum – the middle class – that is its audience' (Silva, 2013, p. 6). The term 'economic stratum' (the author sometimes replacing it with 'economic class') originates from what is known as the 'class alphabet', an expression representing the socio-economic levels of A, B, C, D and E. There is a certain generalization that comes with the term 'middle class' (or 'class C'); for example, 'the current social

pyramid in Brazil is diamond-shaped, the greater majority used to be classes D and E but now it is class C' (Silva, 2013, p. 38). From a theoretical point of view, there are authors like Neri (2010) and Giddens (1975) who relate class with income and present a Neo-Weberian class (Crompton, 2008) linked to income, stratification and life opportunities. However, there is no epistemological reflection on the part of the author that connects the theory to empirical research questions.

There are two works from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS): Grijó (2014) and Silva (2012). Both of them do not focus on the concept of class. They focus on the reception of television series in the Quilombola Communities and how family identities are formed by melodramas like soap operas and the folk theatrical tradition in Brazil called 'bumba-meu-boi' (or, *hit my bull*).

Grijó (2014) discusses mediations from Quilombola Communities on the reception of television series considering ethnicity and race. He looked at nine categories: Quilombo history, violence, prejudice, citizenship, black history, human relations, class relations, gender relations and ethnic relations. These themes are used to understand class as coming from the mediation of sociality. The author conceives the concept of class from the questions of power; this is demonstrated by the use of the term 'subaltern group' as a synonym for class and by his reflections on communication in hegemony, trying to dialogue with 'academic works on production, transmission and reception (in other words, the entire communicative process) stemming from hegemonic relations in society' (Grijó, 2014, p. 93). The author then goes on to analyze one family's appropriation of narratives contained in a variety of programs mentioned by the family when being interviewed (from 'Ninho da Serpente' broadcast on Band in 1982 to 'Sangue Bom' broadcast on Rede Globo in 2013). Nonetheless, despite Grijó (2014) having a chapter called 'media consumption', there is no discussion on studies of reception.

Silva (2012) speaks about 'uses' and 'consumption' and 'reception'. However, there is no clear organization of these concepts and no mention of the dimensions and scopes of either one. An example of when the 'uses' do not fall within the author's objectives can be seen in Silva (2012, p. 101): 'from the perspective of reception and cultural consumption, our option is in [...]' (Silva, 2012, p. 101). A debate on these ideas would help us to refine the concept, theory and the epistemology of studies on reception. The author does, however, present an important discussion on the concept of communication in the beginning of her paper: in a broad sense it belongs to, but is not restricted to, the 'media', capable of producing feelings with a priority for analyzing the 'complexity of daily family life' (Silva, 2012, p. 22). As in Grijó (2014), the concept of class is not the main issue here as the study objects are melodramas and the bumba-meu-boi. However, the

author does say that 'throwing aside any analysis of class when discussing these identities in such unequal societies as those in Brazil shows a lack of perspective' (Silva, 2012, p. 41). The concept of class should therefore be understood 'not as an all-encompassing economic organization but as a determiner for all other social relations as proposed by Laclau' (Silva, 2012, p. 31). However, Laclau does not further any discussions on the concept nor does he develop the main argument. He goes on to discuss household income *per capita* without linking it to any theory. The empirical part of the study looks at class in the workplace, describing interviews with subjects: it places status and reputation as indicators of class, but there is no theoretical or conceptual discussion offered on it.

The study from Márcia Bernardes (2012), from University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), deals with social uses of the internet and sociability among female youths in a foster home and how these 'sociabilities' are marked by issues of gender and class. The title alludes to the concept of 'uses', and the author refers to Certeau (1994) for discussion, but the main concept of reception is the same as mediation (Martín-Barbero, 2009). In this sense, sociality and interaction are ideas that lend support to communication's place in the study: the 'communication interactions'. The bibliography mainly used for discussing class stems from current social interactionism (for example, Georg Simmel, Georg Herbert Mead, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann), which is epistemologically in line with the issue of 'communication interactions', but makes us ask the question: does this view of communication allow us to link these interactions to the class struggles on a macro level or to the circulation of class struggles (Dyer-Witheford, 2015) in communication processes?

Works of Paula (2013) and Sobral (2014) come from São Paulo and the Higher School of Marketing and Advertising (ESPM). Paula (2013) places the idea of reception in Cultural Studies but it is consumption which is the protagonist:

Cultural Studies, when working with reception, tend to move away from criticisms of consumerism in order to allow for an anthropological analysis of attributing symbolic value to material objects, which is one of the first forms people use to build their relationships and their social identities (PAULA, 2013, p. 37).

What we see here is that Anthropology of Consumption plays a central role in her research, borrowing from authors such as Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (2009). One question is: to what extent does Anthropology of Consumption use the concept of class in reception studies and in communication studies itself? As far as reception, mediations from family and school make up part of the empirical research but the study does not offer any developed theory. In her final

considerations, Paula (2013) also states that the references from the children in the study 'are not limited to media reception' (Paula, 2013, p. 121), stating that social and cultural relations occur before any relation to consumption, brand or media. The term class appears regularly in the study, but there is no consistent definition or discussion of the concept, it appears as a natural by-product of socio-economic levels, labelling the children as 'class C' (cf: Paula, 2013, p. 14) or 'low income class' (cf: Paula, 2013, p. 69). There is also no attempt at explaining what she means by 'importance of the low income class' – as shown in the following excerpt:

Low income classes are important to the country's economic and social landscape, as important as children are to the world of marketing, which takes advantage of the power it has to influence consumer choice and in the home (PAULA, 2013, p. 121).

The only moment that a similar discussion takes place is with the concept of poverty (anthropologically biased), which is explored more than the actual issue of social class. The idea that reducing poverty will lead to less inequality⁵ is not necessarily true.

The dissertation from Sobral (2014) is also a study on children from low income classes, but these children are taught by a non-governmental organization in São Paulo to understand representations of love, eroticism and sex as displayed in the media. There are four main theoretical concepts: active reception, family mediation, peer culture and interpretive representation, and four analytical concepts: love, friendship, romance, and sex/eroticism. The question of class is approached by borrowing from authors with backgrounds in child research, such as David Buckingham and Annete Laureau, but there is no discussion on how class relates to communication and does not even appear as mediation in the empirical research. The theory mainly references Martín-Barbero.

Lastly, we have two works, defended at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC-MG), which are different from the others as they have more of a focus on media and not mediations. Sena (2011) analyzes the media of religion by looking at Father Fábio de Melo and his fans/followers from a 'low income community class' located just outside the city of Contagem, in the state of Minas Gerais. As far as social class, the term does not carry much weight in the paper's theoretical-methodological structure, it appears as something natural, synonymous with the socio-economic level ('classes A and B', for example). Reception is not raised in the theoretical part of the paper, preferring the concepts of 'media' and 'celebrity'⁶ instead. However, the empirical part of the study immediately discusses

⁵ Cf: Singer, 2012.

⁶ Another point to be highlighted is that there is no problematization of one of the current strands of reception studies: fan studies (cf, for example, Lopes, 2015)

the issue of reception in Cultural Studies as well as socio-discursive issues (Jacks, 2014). The relations and limitations are not clear between the more sociocultural approach and the socio-discursive one which ends up not articulating the different methodologies in the study (Lopes, 2005).

Drumond (2014) has a consistent methodological structure for tackling circulation and social interaction in the context of the television series 'Avenida Brasil', broadcast on Rede Globo in 2012. In it he looks at narratives and circulation on *Twitter* (referred to as an 'interactive device'). Mikhail Bakhtin and Jesús Martín-Barbero are the main authors used for reflections on Drumond's concept of 'Teletopia' (2014), mainly through questioning genres of discourse and television. The concept of media is also used, mainly borrowed from José Luiz Braga (2006) and 'the media of a new middle class'. There is no discussion on class in its original sense, but there is a debate around the concept of a 'new middle class' through recent socio-economic factors in Brazil, always making reference to television series. The author also analyzes how the television series are represented through symbolism and story-telling and how this representation reflects on the image of the country. Drumond (2014) concludes that the discourse in 'Avenida Brasil' is an elitist look at common life, a kind of false classicism. What is of interest to the author is this connectivity through television series, the 'specialization of subjects and society within the same teletopia' (DRUMOND, 2014, p. 175).

The last two works have shown us that the studies in the *corpus* are what most mobilize the concept of media. However, as in the case of Drumond (2014), this does not mean a distancing, it means a dialogue with authors who focus more on Cultural Studies. The studies from Rio Grande do Sul appear to be more anchored in reception in Brazilian research while the two studies from the Higher School of Marketing and Advertising (ESPM) in São Paulo try to articulate the issue of reception, straying from the issue of mediations and consumption.

A Few Questions

This survey of theses and dissertations on reception and classes between 2010 and 2014 maps out the theoretical and conceptual terrain of studies on reception over the last few years in post-graduation programs, including the issue of social class, which allows us to think of the field on a broader scope.

This will then allow us to infer problems affecting studies on reception, such as: how much have the theory, methodology and epistemology of studies on reception advanced over the last few years and how does this affect the way we think about the field of communication? How will the *corpus* in this paper help us to

reflect on changes and continuities in the frameworks of thought on reception? What are the theoretical and methodological challenges of 'reception and classes' from here on?

Some general results are: a) the continual presence of television as an object of studies on reception; b) the importance of Pierre Bourdieu and Jesús Martín-Barbero for studies which articulate reception and social classes; and c) a focus on 'mediations', even though the term 'media' appears in some studies.

Theoretical and methodological problems often arise from a lack of discussion on the concept of social class and a lack of articulating the concept epistemologically to the study. Furthermore, the authors analyzed in this paper, with a few exceptions, do not generally cite other recent Brazilian studies on similar objects, something that impedes the development of knowledge.

The 'struggles' and 'conflicts' among classes are also underutilized in these studies. Thinking of classes as a stratum or *target* leads to developments in theory, methodology and epistemology for studies on reception and communication in general. We believe it is important to not envision social class as a stagnant concept, but rather one that is mobile, both in social contradictions and processes of communication. Therefore, placing class in studies of reception is not a 'social thing', even though it does originate from sociology. It deals with including class in the circulation of communication, just as some of the works in the *corpus* seek to do. This also means that class can be considered as more than a mediation, it can be inserted into communication itself: the social classes inside communication relations and communication processes.

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Corpus of the study

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