VOICE OF AMERICA AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: A COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

BY

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES ................................................................. iv
- LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ...................................................................................... v
- ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................... vi
- CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ................................................................................ 1
- CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................... 13
- CHAPTER 3: METHOD ............................................................................................ 19
- CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ........................................................................................... 25
- CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION ...................................................................................... 40
- CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION .................................................................................... 44
- EPILOGUE ............................................................................................................... 48
- REFERENCES ......................................................................................................... 50
- CURRICULA VITAE ............................................................................................... 56
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES

Fig. 1: a framework for critical discourse analysis of a communicative event (Fairclough, 1995) – page 20.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis
OWI – Office of War Information
RM – Radio Moscow
USIA – United States Information Agency
USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOA – Voice of America
ABSTRACT

The following thesis work looks at programs by the United States government broadcaster, the Voice of America to international audiences during the Cold War. It analyzes news articles about the civil rights struggles in America in the 1950’s and 1960’s. This comparative discourse analysis identifies media frames and answers the question if there was an influence by the State Department in news output that was targeted towards audiences in the Soviet Bloc. The goal is to examine if there were propaganda elements in the stories or there were an objective account of events that questioned democratic ideals in the United States. This work explores reporting on five key events from the Civil Rights Movement and compares the coverage to the Soviet propaganda station Radio Moscow.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Timothy Hood, a World War II veteran who served in the United States Army, was able to survive the fight with fascism abroad. He represented United States’ ideals for freedom and democracy on the field while fighting Nazi soldiers. He participated in the liberation of occupied countries in Europe and witnessed renewed appetite for equality in countries recovering from some of the greatest atrocities in human history. Hood survived the war overseas, only to become a victim of lynching by his fellow countrymen in Bessemer, Alabama on the 17th of February 1946. He was killed for protesting the Jim Crow laws. Hood was shot five times by a streetcar conductor for trying to remove a sign that encouraged segregation and discrimination. Severely wounded, this war veteran returned home and looked for help. Upon his arrival, he was followed by the police chief who fired a shot into his head.

Lynchings in the American South were commonplace for many African Americans growing up in the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1946, Senator William F. Knowland, Republican of California, commented that “this is not merely a blot upon the escutcheon of a single local area, but this and this sort of thing is a blot upon the entire United States of America” (79th Congress, 1946).

Even though slavery was abolished in 1865, in the twentieth century black people in America still experienced inequality. Segregation and violence were the norm in the South. In the award-winning *Eyes on the Prize*, a documentary movie about the Civil Rights Movement, Henry Hampton describes an American reality where most blacks had to go to separate schools from whites, live in separate houses and step aside when a white
person was passing by on the street. The majority could not vote and could work only as servers. When African Americans demonstrated against inequality, they faced brutal violence (Hampton, 1987-1990).

The inhumane acts associated with segregation were publicized in local newspapers and described in horrific details maintaining white supremacy by spreading fear among blacks. Abroad, the press also focused its attention on the struggles of African Americans. The killing of George Dorsey, his wife and two of their friends in summer of 1946 in Georgia, was the lead story in an article on “Position of Negroes in the USA” in the Soviet publication Trud. The August 1946 story mentioned the incident as just one example of “the increasing frequency of terroristic acts against negroes” in the United States. The U.S. embassy in Moscow found this story to be “representative of the frequent Soviet press comment on the question of Negro discrimination in the United States” (Dudziak, 2000).

In the 1960’s the Soviet bloc exploited America’s racial problems. On one hand, the United States was a beacon for freedom and democracy for oppressed communist countries, but on the other, race oppression gave an opportunity to the Communist regime to challenge the status of American ideals. The Soviet propaganda machine was quick to reflect the fight for civil rights and put the blame on capitalism. Every time America blamed USSR of violating human rights, the counter-argument was, "...And you are lynching Negroes." According to the official party line, in communist countries, everyone was equal and the American democratic ideals that were supposed to be an alternative to authoritarian communist regimes were valid only for a specific group of people.
During the Cold War, the USSR and America communicated actively through the means of international broadcasting and public diplomacy. Each side claimed that it was telling the truth. With limited sources of news, citizens of communist nations were exposed mostly to one medium, a government owned radio channel.

Journalists in the Communist bloc were following directives of the Soviet Union. Since the Bolshevik revolution in the 1917 freedom of speech had been perceived as something detrimental to the ideology. Thus, channels of information had to be controlled by the regime. The USSR media was an agent that frequently carried “commercials” for the state. The main purpose of broadcasting was to “support the basic ideologies of Communism, of the Communist party, and of the current government policies and practices.” There were many programs devoted to educate “new, politically broad-minded people with communist traits and widely developed aesthetic tastes” (Paulu, 1974). Western values were condemned as detrimental, and in reporting about the West, the propaganda machine focused on events that they thought demonstrated essential failings in the democratic system.

For example, when in 1962 James Meredith became the first African-American student admitted to the segregated University of Mississippi despite Governor Barnett’s opposition, Radio Moscow’s New York correspondent asked, “James Meredith had been admitted to Mississippi University, but for how long?...Barnett has given way. But for how long? Thousands and thousands of Barnettts are lording it in America. And that is why the main thing in the Meredith case is not the fine shades of the phony struggle between the Federal Government and the so brave Barnett. The main thing is that here, in the country of skyscrapers and millions of cars, one of the most shameful phenomena,
racialism, is blossoming forth in the second half of the 20th century. This is fundamental lesson of the shameful Meredith case, instigated by the American racialists.” (BBC Monitoring, 2014) The official Soviet account emphasized the problems and ignored the progress. The story was broadcast thorough that lens in the South Eastern European areas as well.

Programs emphasized propaganda and ideology, but suffered low ratings. Data showed “low credibility for domestic newscasts, along with increased listening to Western transmissions” (Paulu, 1974). During the 1958 World’s Fair in Brussels, 300 Soviet citizens were contacted, and “out of 138 who discussed radio at all, 92 percent said they listened to foreign radio stations. The most listened to was the BBC with 66 percent; close behind came VOA with 64 percent” (Nelson, 1997). Among the listeners of foreign station or “enemy stations” as they were known in Bulgaria, there were educated officials and leaders.

The radio waves were an important channel of communication and an important tool for the propaganda war. Each side wanted to be portrayed as credible. The channels were reflecting government’s policy and fought for audiences by disseminating information around the clock. The United States was targeting the Communist bloc, and Soviet Union mostly wanted to reach the same audience and demonstrate that its account of events was more credible. Media was a weapon to gain support and journalists from both sides of the Iron Curtain had to decide whether to be objective or obstruct the truth and use unfortunate events in their favor.
The audience behind the Iron Curtain was able to hear Western programs in their own language and in English. In the Soviet Union, the Russian language service of the US-sponsored VOA was jammed and general audiences were listening to its English-language programs. VOA was one of their outside news sources and even though according to the communist regime its role was to “undermine the socialist camp from within, sow lack of faith in the existing system, compromise leaders and calumniate the political parties that are in power” (Golyakov, 1966, March 17 & 18), it had large audience.

In this propaganda war, America’s outlook was presented by United State Information Agency (USIA). USIA was founded in 1953 with the mission of “Telling America’s Story to the World.” The agency was viewed as a public diplomacy tool that would serve to “understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad” (Cull, 2008).

USIA was the largest global organization of its kind and was viewed as an instrument by which the U.S. government could explain itself to the world. One of its goals was showing the progress, made in terms of reaching higher democratic ideals. If communist media shaped news stories from America in a negative way, some media channels managed by USIA aimed to provide audiences with the most positive image of the events taking place in the U.S. In constructing messages for that purpose this government sponsored agency put its own spin of events. Within an hour of the Brown v. Board of Education decision being handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court, the Voice of America, a USIA service, broadcast the news to Eastern Europe. An analysis accompanying the
news broadcasts emphasized that “the issue was settled by law under democratic processes rather than by mob rule or dictatorial fiat”. The Brown broadcast received “top priority on the Voice’s programs” and was to be “beamed possibly for several days, particularly to Russian satellites and Communist China.” It was seen as a necessary step to show that African Americans in the United States were not only slaves and declassed citizens, as portrayed by Soviet media (Dudziak, 2000). The Civil Rights movement had to be presented with a positive spin as USIA executives thought that any other depictions of this movement were bad for America’s image.

USIA’s main international service was Voice of America. VOA’s audience profile is very similar to that for the other major international broadcasters like the BBC and Deutsche Welle, “a young to middle-aged, relatively prosperous, well-educated, urban audience, many of them the so-called “opinion leaders” (government officials, business executives, teachers, sometimes military and religious leaders).” Its largest audience is in countries with a lack of media pluralism, where sometimes VOA can reach a weekly listenership of 30 to 40 percent and comes second in popularity to the BBC. (R.Browne, 1982). During the 1960’s, VOA’s ratings reach between 20 and 48 percent in the Soviet Bloc (A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, 2005).

VOA went on air in 1942 after America’s involvement in the World War II. The first broadcast started with the words, “We bring you Voices from America. Today, daily from now on, we shall speak to you about America and the war. The news may be good for us. The news may be bad. But we shall tell you the truth” (Heil A. J., 2003). As soon as VOA went on air, US government officials tried to influence its editorial decisions. Initially the service was part of Office of War Information (OWI). The historian Cowan
Shulman says, “Men from the Department of State, War and Navy met with leaders of the Office of War Information at regular intervals. British propaganda leaders sent representatives to work in the OWI as well as political guidances to steer American propaganda toward British political goals. Congress reviewed the workings of OWI and established limits beyond which the OWI was not to go.” Shulman talks about many interests within VOA which led to “a second war, a domestic battle of control” (Heil A. J., 2003).

That battle continued through the Cold War. VOA was expanding and after the end of the World War II its role changed. In 1945 people assumed the broadcast would go off air, but the State Department initiated a debate on the future of the service and a commission advised the United States to have a medium through which to portray America in other countries. The State Department was not sure what to do because newspapers at home criticized the program and Congress was hesitant to fund something that could be perceived as propaganda. In 1946 the geopolitical climate changed. With the descending of the “Iron Curtain” and Radio Moscow’s attacks to the West, lawmakers voted to keep VOA on air. Late 1940’s and early 1950’s saw new turmoil. The budget was increased but pressure from the government increased. Journalists at VOA did not approve of political influence and were insisting on telling the truth.

In 1953 USIA started managing VOA. Before that time, it was a practice for diplomats to guide editorial policy and VOA journalists wanted to make sure it would not happen again. Barry Zorthian, who was a head of the News Division in the early 1950’s, called for “document to shield its broadcasters from constant second-guessing by the State Department, and at times USIA.” Hundreds journalists initiated a petition. Editorial
guidelines were implemented in the 1960’s. However, it would take ten more years until a charter is signed into public law. It guaranteed that VOA programs are accurate, objective, and comprehensive (Heil A. J., 2003).

All that raises the question to what extent the image of America presented by VOA was accurate during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Was the station a propaganda machine that simply put a positive spin on racial struggles or was it a source of accurate, objective, and balanced news, and information?

In 1991 VOA interviewed journalists who worked at the station as part of its 50th anniversary special programming. Some of them shared opinions that explain editorial policies during the Cold War period. Henry Loomis, who was appointed as a director in 1958 and resigned in 1965 because of pressure from President Lyndon Johnson to curb news that create negative image of the White House during the military involvement in Vietnam, argued that VOA was telling the whole story, while according to him, Radio Moscow focused on specific details.

“In the late fifties there was a very unfortunate incident where a busload of Afro-Americans were traveling to a city for some sort of a demonstration and they were met on the outskirts by the – by a crowd, and they were pulled out of the bus and they were – some of them were beaten, and the bus was turned over, and the bus was set on fire. The mayor of the city stated that this was a terrible thing. The head of FBI said this was a terrible thing. The governor of the state said this was a terrible thing. And I think maybe the President did, too; I forget.
If you listened to Radio Moscow, they spent a lot of time describing this incident in considerable detail, indicating – if you listened to it casually – that some of the people were killed that were pulled out and that, when the bus was turned over and set on fire, there were people inside the bus; they were burnt alive. It didn’t say they were burnt alive, but they implied that they were burnt alive. And of course they didn’t say anything about what the mayor had said or the FBI or the governor or anybody else. That is an example of where – if you got there first, they at least know that the government of the United States, the authorities of the United States regretted the incident, and the incident was nowhere near as bad as the Russians indicated” (United States Information Agency, 1991).

VOA’s Philomena Jurey started working at the station in 1961. She points out that the civil right movement was covered in an objective manner by the broadcaster.

“There was a study conducted of VOA’s coverage of the civil rights problems. And the study said that VOA did a spotty job, that their reporting was spotty and so forth. But that’s what the civil rights moment was like. I mean things – there was violence here and there and then there was progress there. We always tried to put in, to write about progress that was made, but for quite a period, there was a lot of violence and a lot of civil rights abuses. VOA carried that and I think on order to be credible news organization, in order people to listen to you around the world, you have to tell the truth” (United States Information Agency, 1991).

I could not locate the study, but personally conducted interviews for this thesis with past and current VOA employees and they pointed out that the broadcaster was always trying
to stick to its journalistic principles, even when it was faced with the difficult task of covering events that challenged the country’s perception of the “land of the free.”

Hans Tuch, who with Marvin Calb co-authored of the book *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 1990) was a VOA correspondent in the 1950’s and then deputy director of the Voice of America from 1976 to 1981. In a phone interview he told me that during the early years of the cold war there was some interference from the government. According to him until 1959 the station was “propagandistic”, but after that the journalists decided to broadcast the news as it was so it’s credible. Tuch said, “We did not have much attempts of interference from the State Departments or embassies abroad on reporting on the issue [of the civil rights]. We were trying to present the facts. In our commentaries and news analysis we would try to explain what the issues were and how they were being handled in our country” (Tuch, 2014).

One current journalist at VOA, Chris Simkins, who reported on the anniversary on the March on Washington and covered recent civil rights issues for the station shared in a video interview with me insights from his research work at the station. “From everything that I’ve been able to learn that VOA did report all the events that happen during that time and I didn’t find any evidence to suggest that we somehow tried to make the situation look better than it was it terms of how blacks were denied equal opportunities or how the United States was going about trying to solve this problem” (Simkins, 2013).

According to my interviewees, VOA news editors during the Cold War were committed to objective journalism and rejected any propaganda materials with the argument that
such reports would be used in Moscow’s advantage. They did not want to give an opportunity to USSR to label VOA broadcasts as propaganda, because that will lead to loss of credibility. Alan L. Heil Jr, author of *Voice of America, a History*, commented that VOA has always stood by its principles of objectivity and even though there were instances when the USIA wanted to interfere with editorial content, VOA was able to defend its editorial independence. Heil worked at the service during years of the Civil Rights Movement and I interviewed him in November 2013 (Heil A., 2013).

The purpose of the following study is to find out to how particular events from the Civil Rights Movement were covered by VOA as opposed to another public broadcaster. The following research is of social importance because it is looking for ways to understand the narrative of VOA, and how it managed to balance between keeping the good image of America and telling the truth.

I have picked VOA in particular because it is a broadcaster sponsored by the Department of State and at the time the major media outlet that informed audiences from the other side of the Iron Curtain about life in America. The purpose of this research is to identify to what extent VOA was reflecting U.S. government’s policy on Civil Rights Movement versus presenting an unbiased account of events that formed American life during that period.

Voice of America was not the only international broadcaster, but the only one who was telling America’s perspective to the world. It was part of the government and there are some who believe that it is just American propaganda, but VOA has demonstrated that it
follows its principles and has independent editorial policy in broadcasting to an audience that consisted of opinion-leaders in Communist countries.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, I’m going to use the term “discourse” to identify any communication between media and audiences. According to Fairclough “discourse” can be used to talk about language seen in particular way, as a form of social practice. In this study “discourse” will be interchangeable with “text”, “narrative”, and “frame” (Fairclough, 1995). Researchers describe a “frame” in the news as a tool to shape public opinion, “a schema of interpretation, collection of anecdotes, and stereotypes that individuals rely on to understand and respond to events” (Cissel, 2012). Goffman was the first to define “framing” as a “schemata of interpretation” that helps people to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” life experiences (Goffman, 1974).

Media outlets help society learn about reality. In most cases audiences don’t have front row experience of events that shape reality and thus journalists’ role of mediator is important. They usually witness a story and after that select a specific way to tell that story. Thus media creates boundaries between public and private life and institutions. (P. Scannel, et al., 1992) (Thompson, 1990). According to Fairclough media can “influence knowledge, beliefs, social values, social relations, social identities.” He discusses the process involved in constructing a message before it is broadcast and talks about a presence of “chain of communicative events”. Each step of the production (e.g. editorial decisions) can have an impact of the outcome.

According to Fairclough, “media texts do not merely ‘mirror realities’ as it is sometimes naively assumed. They constitute versions of reality based on the social positions, interests and objectives of those who produce them. They do so through choices which
are made at various levels in the process in a text. Therefore, [it] comes down to an account of what choices are made – what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded…what process types and categories are drawn upon to represent events, and so on” (Fairclough, 1995). That is why analysis of media messages is of importance to get insights and speculate about possible effects.

Media effects research starts early in the last century. In the 1920’s Lippman suggested that media can control public opinion by focusing on particular issues (Lippman, 1922). During the 1960’s Klapper suggested that in terms of media, personal influence was reinforcing existing attitudes (Klapper, 1960). Later, the focus was on cognitive effects and some findings speculated that media had limited effects on people without constructing the whole reality and mostly clarifying a controversy and showing the focus of an issue. “Media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists….develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse” (Modigliani, W.A. Gamson & A., 1989). On the other hand, McQuail argued that there was a strong impact since media is constructing social reality “by framing images of reality…in a predictable and patterned way” (McQuail, 1994).

Budd, Craig, and Steinmen pointed out that, “media meet recommended or endorsed bias at the most fundamental levels: consistent framing in favor of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, individualism, consumerism, and White privilege, among other deeply entrenched values that help allocate power in American society” (M.Budd, S. Craig, & M. Clayton, 1999).
News analysis has been a subject of discussion for many scholars. One applicable approach is that of Van Dijk. According to him social influence is accomplished at micro-level, i.e. during the process of production. He studies “structure” of news and explores relationship between news production, text and wider social practices that can be found in them. Van Dijk makes distinction between ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ configurations of news where ‘macro’ is the overall context and ‘micro’ is the ‘schematic’ structure (Dijk, News Analysis, 1988) (Dijk, News as Discourse, 1988) (Dijk, Racism and the Press, 1991). “Macrostructure” is pivotal for analyzing overall themes and topics. It can help us identify the main focus of the story. Sometimes it can be found in the headline or the lead of a story.

Fairclough accepts those concepts as central to news production and comprehension analysis. “These wholistic structures are seen to generate text, and the interpretation of texts involves identifying the wholistic structures that underline them. Such structures are intrinsic to the mental models of events and situations which reporters bring to bear in interpreting events and source texts, models which reporters try to convey to audiences in a way they write reports, and model which audiences (readers etc.) draw upon in interpreting reports. The cognitive perspective helps to specify how exactly the “news values” that have been identified as shaping news coverage influence the way particular reports are produced. It also sheds light on how the texts which journalists get from news agencies and other sources are transformed in producing a report, on the forms in which news reports are memorized, and on the longer-term effects they are likely to have on perception, cognition and action” (Fairclough, 1995).
Such effects can be a result of changing the context of an event. Media can transform reality and Leeuwen calls these representations “recontextualization” (Leeuwen, 1993). The process is determined by the goals, priorities, and values communicators have and can lead to biases and manipulations. It can be related to following an ideology and making it an integral part of the spread of information. “Ideological representations are generally implicit rather than explicit in texts, and are embedded in ways of using language which are naturalized and commonsensical for reports, audiences, and various categories of third parties – presuppositions or taken for granted assumptions upon which the coherence of the discourse depends, or the ordinary ways in which interviews are conducted” (Fairclough, 1995).

Ideology in discourse serves those in power. It “carries notions and assumptions that are opposite of truth. But this denial of truth is mostly hidden in discourse and difficult for the less powerful to detect” (Barkho, 2010). According to Neuman, Just & Crigler, journalists can be influenced by ideology and thus media can “give the story ‘a spin’...taking into account their organizational and modality constraints, professional judgments, and certain judgments about the audience” (R.W. Neuman, M.R. Just, A.N. Crigler, 1992). Factors that can influence journalists in reporting a story to an audience include “social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological and political orientation of journalists” (Scheufele, 1999).

Scheufele develops a detailed model of framing. In it, he examines four processes where certain inputs influence the process and therefore the outcome:
- Frame building - the process of creating media frames where organizational pressures, ideologies, and other elites lead create media frames;
- Frame setting is concerned with salience of issue attributes where focus on specific facts for example may lead to creating greater relevance to the audience;
- Individual-level effects of framing where he explores how framing impacts the importance of an issue and then how it affect audience attitudes about the issue;
- Journalists as audience where journalists’ attitudes and editorial decisions are susceptible to influence by other news outlets (Scheufele, 1999).

It is a journalistic duty to represent social reality in an objective and comprehensive way. Newscasters are a “passive register of events, like a human tape recorder”. By observing an event they are supposed to use and “create what was. Yet no one knows how anything ‘was’. What was can only be constructed by what other people say” (Heinz von Foerster & Bernhard Poersken, 2002).

Voice of America’s journalists spoke about following similar principles regardless of the notion that were an arm of the official propaganda. The following research will investigate how VOA was shaping perceptions of the country and what discourse was dominating its programs that targeted audiences behind the Iron Curtain.

**Research Questions**

*RQ1: Did United States Information Agency influence Voice of America to frame the Civil Rights Movement in a way that it reflected the views of the United States’ government or did it report events in an objective manner?*
RQ2: What were the frames Voice of America used to report on the Civil Rights Movement?
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

I will use Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to focus on the ways in which VOA makes and uses stories to interpret American life. It will discuss how actions and characters and plot lines that shaped VOA’s broadcast to the outside world were portrayed. News stories will be deconstructed and analysis will concentrate on conveying a meaning.

Fairclough’s research is in the traditions of textual analysis and helps clarify the relationship between discourse and wider social and cultural processes. Fairclough’s analysis is aimed at revealing embedded meanings in a message. CDA can reflect ideological values that stay behind literal text. It is an attempt to show systematic links between texts, discourse process and sociocultural practices and answer questions on how the world is presented, what identities are set up for those in the story and what relationships are set up between those involved.

According to him the term “discourse” pertains to a process of representing particular social practice from a specific point of view. It is related to knowledge and knowledge construction.

In terms of analysis, CDA of a communicative event consists of the following elements:
The literal interpretation of text is “analysis of vocabulary and semantics, the grammar of sentences and smaller units, the sound system and the writing system. But it also includes analysis of textual organization above the sentence, including the ways in which sentences are connected together (cohesion)” (Fairclough, 1995).

Fairclough looks at text as a combination of clauses. He focuses on the accent, whether it is on the process, participant on circumstances. For example, if the focus of the communicator is the process (The building has been attacked) that leaves out questions and opens to different interpretations about the participants (oppose to ‘Angry protesters attacked the building’). The linguistic approach to news items looks closely at what has
been left out and the presumption is that the missing parts have been constructed/explained somewhere else. That also can mean deliberate omission in order for the communicator to avoid presenting a reality that can lead to a negative image of some of the participants.

For the purpose of the textual analysis Fairclough is using grammar principles and types of sentences used in the English language. They can define:

1. Action, where the structure is Subject + Verb + Object;
2. Event, where the stress is on the affected part and usually the structure is Subject + Verb;
3. “State – being”, where the structure is Subject + Verb + Complement;
4. Mental Process, where it is implied that decisions have been made with influence from outside;
5. Verbal Process, where the most important point is what has been said.

The text production and consumption are part of Discourse practice and are related to the mechanics of producing the actual news story, including editorial decisions and how it reached the audience. They are “institutional processes”, whereas Sociocultural practice help us understand particular event and can be economic, political and cultural. The latter deals with questions of values and identity.

In a detailed description of CDA framework B. Hodge discusses three ways that help us understand journalism mechanics:

1. Examine editorial policy;
2. Explore the process how news is shaped;

That methodology will also answer the question of whether ideology is part of the message. By asking how discourse is constructed we can find out if there is ideology when it comes to covering specific issues. “The questions are (a) what are the social origins of this option? where and who does it come from? (whose representation is it, for instance?) (b) what motivations are there for making this choice, including its effects (positive of negative) upon the various interests of those involved?” (Fairclough, 1995).

By using CDA to analyse broadcast material, I will be able to identify the news discourse characteristics of different international radio services on a controversial issue in period when telling “the truth” could have tarnished a reputation of all of the powers in the Cold War.

Textual study of language in transcripts from VOA will illustrate what goal particular stories do have on the government broadcaster’s news agenda and how it communicated experiences within the country to international audiences.

Structural analysis of discourse will emphasize on the way a certain story is told, how a communicator selects particular devices to make the story persuasive.

**Method application to VOA**

The discourse analysis will take the following steps:


2. Inter-textual analysis:
a. Comparing main actors’ official discourse to the one that has been analyzed on the same topic.

3. Linguistic analysis:
   a. Words/metaphors that have been used;
   b. Links to other texts on the same issue that exist in the public domain;
   c. Use of labels;

4. Content analysis:
   a. Who is the main character in the story (the one who the broadcaster spent most of the time allotted);
   b. Which actor is changing the direction of the status quo (who is bringing the positive change, is it action or event);
   c. How are the perpetrators presented? As defending an unlawful violence or normally decent people frustrated by the ineffectiveness of the law.

For the purpose of this research I’m going to juxtapose different news stories originated from VOA. My counter point will be Radio Moscow (RM). Stories will be based on their presence of the front pages of The New York Times and The Washington Post. All events were on the front pages of both newspapers simultaneously for at least three consecutive days. When in November 2013, I interviewed Chris Simkins, a current VOA journalist he confirmed that decisions on the running order of news/stories most of the time is decided on the front pages of these newspapers (Simkins, 2013).

As artifacts I’m going to use VOA and Radio Moscow transcripts from radio programs that inform the audience about five significant events that shaped the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The first event is the sending federal troops by President
Dwight Eisenhower to Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 to open the way for the admission of nine African American students to Central High School in 1957. The second one is the attack on the Freedom Riders from 1961. Next, I’m going to analyze stories that depicted Mississippi Governor Ross Barent’s defiance to court orders and stopping the enrollment of an African American student in 1962. The following event is the Birmingham bomb attack that killed four African American girls in 1963. Finally, I will focus on media presentation of the killing of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the following riots in 1968. I will start with summary of the reports and simultaneous content analysis, followed by implemented analysis of the origins of the discourse practice; inter-textual analysis and linguistic analysis.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Summary of reports and content analysis

Event #1

The VOA news program called *Early Morning News Analysis*, presented by Ronald J. Dunlavey from 25 September, 1957 commented on the clashes in Little Rock and the sending of Federal Troops to assist the enrollment of nine African American high school students. The scene was described as a situation of “volatile and highly emotional nature”. According to the transcript, the trouble was provoked by people who opposed the Supreme Court’s decision that ended segregation in 1954. Dunlavey talks about a small minority who oppose the law because of deeply enrooted customs and traditions. Many of the perpetrators are “agitators, imported into the city”. The story claims that African American students had always been able to go to school and that they have the support from an overwhelming majority of people. Americans in general were “appalled” by the events (Voice of America, 1957).

The main actors in the story are the Government, represented by the President Dwight Eisenhower, legislators and their actions; the American people as a whole; people who provoked the violence; and those who were affected by the violence. Majority of American people were depicted as a body that supports the government’s efforts to integration. Those who were affected were mentioned in only one sentence. There were no details on, for example the extent of the injuries they suffered during the violence. The main clash was between the Government and the agitators.
We can split the sentences into two broad categories - one that creates a positive image of the United States and another that creates a negative one. I would consider creating a positive image as description of a process that leads to improving people’s lives, whereas a negative demonstrates an issue that is difficult to resolve. From that perspective, most sentences (21 out of 30) show positive image of America as a country with a competent president, supported by the majority, who is following the principle “government of laws, not men”. The sentences that acknowledge a problem were succeeded by clear statements that indicated that the problem was incidental and easy to deal with:

Yet, in spite of the volatile and highly emotional nature of the Little Rock situation, the President’s tone was moderate and reasoned. He examined the situation, which not all observers have done, in its proper balance. He pointed out that the violence in Little Rock was the work of a small band of extremists…

(Voice of America, 1957)

In Little Rock In Perspective from October 4th, 1957, the same author reminds the listeners about the 1954 Supreme Court’s decision to end segregation in schools. The context is a legislative measure that sets a date for Little Rock to start integration on September 3rd, 1957 and allows until 1963 to finish it. The expectations were that the process would be smooth like in other areas. According to the news item, the American people had the chance to decide how and when to integrate and hundreds of communities in the South followed the decision to end segregation. The violence came as a surprise and shock and was provoked by local militia’s “frustration” of the law which resulted in actions to prevent the nine Negro students from entering the school. Once the militia was removed, “disorderly mob” appeared and established a situation that called for
interference by the Federal Government. The president acted since it was an obligation of the Executive Branch to see that the law was being obeyed at the moment.

In addition, “as many observers are pointing out”, the fact that other governors joined forces with the President shows “spirit of moderation which prevails in a large part of the Southern and border states”, something that was ignored by the public in light of the conflict at one school (Voice of America, 1957). Here, the majority of sentences were designed to talk about government’s actions. The story creates a positive image of the government. For example, the Supreme Court had declared the segregation unconstitutional; the President used the Federal troops only to make sure that the law was obeyed. On the other hand, the militia called by the governor to frustrate the law.

In contrast, when discussing the same event on Radio Moscow for an English speaking audience on 26 September, 1957, Nikolayev Andreyev argues that Little Rock struggles prove that in America “a mob of rowdies could beat up children and go unpunished”. He concludes that US is not part of the civilized world and adds:

   Would it not be better for the leaders in Washington to be more energetic about putting their ability to use in their own country, and to realize at last that the people of other countries certainly do not want any recipes from Washington in settling their own domestic problems? (BBC Monitoring, 1957)

It is evident that Radio Moscow broadcast implied that Little Rock violence was an example of how US leaders were not concerned with violation of human rights. The leaders acted only when the world reacted. The author comments that it was hard to
imagine that it had taken so many years for integration, pointing out to the failure of US
democracy model.

Event # 2

The riots in Alabama during the Freedom Riders Tour in 1961 were a subject of an
analysis of VOA as well. The violence was described as another incident that put
American people in a state of shock. The nation was “frankly chagrined” by the “recent
racial flareups”. In the report it is stated that the conflict came after a clash between
those who opposed integration and those who supported it. No one was able to prevent
the incident, or was prepared to prevent it because it happened suddenly and
unexpectedly. The location was near Montgomery, a city where “de-segregation of local
buses was achieved peacefully several years ago after a Negro riders’ boycott”.

On the other hand, Montgomery was part of the Deep South, “where the issue of
integration versus segregation of races [was] most deeply felt”. Attackers’ image is one
of criminal elements: “organized bands of segregationists, some of them said to belong to
quasi-secret organizations that have resorted to violence in other occasions”.

At the same time, the Federal Government’s position was clear and its policies pointed
“inexplicably toward the end of discrimination against Negro children”. The Federal
government was not worried by Alabama race riots because it had the means at its
disposal to “quell the disorders”. It also had the support of the majority.

According to the commentary, the main issue was related to keeping the law and order.
Most sentences reassure that those in power can deal with such challenge. In its analysis,
VOA speculates that Alabama riots were “only a difficult incident in the transforming of
the national principle of democratic behavior into a fact.” The commentary concludes that the violence would not stop integration. Most sentences describe the crisis and its main actors; the consequences; and the expected outcome for those involved. The crisis is presented as an issue of disobedience by the local government. The expected outcome is positive for the forces of the Federal Government. The rest of the news story text is devoted to the shock and disapproval by the American people (Voice of America, 1961).

In a different broadcast, from May 29, 1961, the chief political commentator of VOA Raymond Swing follows similar line of commentary. He adds that discrimination was an institutional problem because of “the difficulty of getting Southern juries to convict white officials in civil rights cases.” The broadcaster concludes:

Southern opinion may seem to change slowly, buy it will change. The latest Gallup public opinion poll showed that 76 % in the South believe that segregation is coming to an end as against 45 % four years ago. The recent resort to violence may be due a frustrated sense of the inevitability of the change. (Voice of America, 1961)

The riots in Alabama were reported by Voice of America as a surprising outburst of violence. The clashes were unexpected since the region was an example for integration. Even though the situation was out of control, the government was able to deal with it.

*Radio Moscow* reports on the riots in Alabama with the idea to attack America’s image. In its *Summary of World Broadcasts* for May 23, 1961, the BBC published a commentary made by Alexandr Petrov to listeners North America:
….the outrageous events in Montgomery made one wonder whether one was living in the 20th century. Giving factual account of the riots with emphasis on the attitude of Governor Patterson and the Alabama State authorities, he said that the story would enlighten Africans and other coloured people who were offered aid from members of the American Peace Corps. Who was going to believe their propaganda after what happened in Alabama? (BBC Monitoring, 1961)

The Radio Moscow’s artifact is another example of reflection of communist propaganda in Soviet Union’s government broadcaster. The main focus of the report is to challenge directly the values America defends on the world stage. It is an accusation against the United States in hypocrisy and reluctance to move forward. The commentary implies that the country is violating the same norms it requires others to follow.

**Event # 3**

The third item for my Critical Discourse Analysis is a transcript from program segment about disturbances in Mississippi when Governor Ross Barnet tried to defy court orders and stop the enrollment of James Meredith. The story was included in a weekly news magazine called America This Week, edited by Rhett Turnipseed and broadcast on VOA on September 28, 1962. From the beginning of the feature the incident is presented as a clash between the Federal Government and the powers of the state of Mississippi as “the Justice Department attempted to see to it that Negro James Meredith was allowed to register at the all – white University of Mississippi”. There is an account of actions of both parties. On one hand, the governor Ross Barnett used force to prevent Meredith from entering and that made necessary deploying of US marshals. VOA explained
Mississippi officials’ opposition to the enrollment. For that purpose the broadcaster uses excerpts from interview from a senator.

Senator James Eastland is defending Barnett’s actions in 42 seconds pointing out that the governor was protecting the Constitution of the State and resisting “judicial tyranny in this country”. According to him, the powers by the Federal courts were “usurped” and “they have taken from the rights and liberties of the people of this country”. He concluded that if the governor is guilty, he “is entitled to a jury trial in the State of Mississippi, by a jury of his peers”.

Preceding Eastland’s commentary is a 48 second interview with Senator Phillip Hart who argues that “a Negro is going to be admitted to the University of Mississippi”. He adds that some regions have their own read of the Constitution, but America as a whole has a unified approach and respects Supreme Court’s decisions.

The narration ends with reassurance that the Federal Administration’s efforts have the support of both former President Eisenhower and former Vice President Richard Nixon. In addition, Spessard Holland, a southern senator from Florida, says “we must obey the law, even if we do not agree with it”. In this news piece there is a balance between representing the Federal Government and the South. The point of view of the Negro student is missing and is presented by Senator Hart (Voice of America, 1962).

In a news analysis from October 1, 1962 on the same topic, Ronald J. Dunlavey begins with painting a picture of Mississippi as a “slow to change” place where people “still [brood] over the lost Civil War a century ago”. Mississippi was the only state where integration was not “a common – place”. With the help of the Federal Government
military personnel, the process of integration began with the enrollment of James Meredith right after the Governor was “in no position to resist the full power of the United States”. While the first half of the piece is focused on Barnett’s actions and description of the customs in the South, the second is detailed information of the President John F. Kennedy’s speech. He talks about “an adjustment period” for those communities who are not progressing.

The story is focused mostly on the official response to the event but also mentions some consequences of the clash. The news of the deaths of two people comes in the 12th sentence (out of 27) and the commentary implies that the attackers were “irresponsible elements, many of them not connected with the University and some of them the kind of out-of-state agitators who seem to have a habit of turning up at trouble points in the South”. In conclusion, the report acknowledges that there is segregation, but comments, “it is clear that its end is inevitable”. Overall, two main actors are present – a slowly progressing South and a Government that is capable of make a difference (Voice of America, 1962).

In its broadcast to North America in English on October 1, 1962, Radio Moscow’s Vladimir Afonin talks about an article he had read in New York Times. In it, there was a picture of a smiling Negro student in New York. The article was about success, but the commentator saw a long story about “right-ranking racists, beginning with the Sheriff and ending with the Governor, prevented young Negro from entering the whites-only university”. There is a very dramatic and detailed description of the situation. Afonin compares it to a “war”. He tells his audience about how “racists” in Mississippi scream “Death to the Negroes” and how the Governor is ready to go to jail rather than letting
Meredith. According to Radio Moscow, the incident was preventable, but “the government did absolutely nothing to cross the racists and to guarantee the Negroes their rights”. All that disqualified America from being an example of democracy because the Meredith case showed the world once again that American democracy model was not working (BBC Monitoring, 1962).

**Event #4**

My next choice for an event that shaped the Civil Rights Movement in America is the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama on September 15, 1963 that killed four children. A day after, VOA broadcast a news analysis peace by Ronald J. Dunlavey, titled *Tragedy in Birmingham*. It starts with describing the shock. It was a “tragedy that everyone had feared but had hoped would not happen”. Before the attack there was a “social revolution” that was sweeping the country. There was “relatively little violence and few fatalities”, and now “no one can guarantee that there will not be more deaths”. The bombing led to “a tremendous wave of anger and sympathy” all over the country. Dunlavey speculates that the bombings are “almost certainly work of a lunatic frindge” but the “blame will be to some extent transferred to political leaders who by word or gesture have encouraged a policy of contempt for legal purposes and defiance of the federal government’s integration efforts”. To supports his statement, the narrator quotes Martin Luther King who accused the governor of Alabama. As an outcome, VOA comments that the tragedy in Birmingham will create a “desired awareness”. (Voice of America, 1963)
One September 17, 1963 there was another news analysis under the title, *Impact of Birmingham Crime*. It is narrated by Harold Courlander. He begins with a reminder to the listener that the previous year status quo was changed by demonstrations for civil rights. Then he talks about the accomplishments of the Federal Court and the Federal government to begin desegregation policies despite opposition of the Alabama governor (who was forced to step back). The next paragraph illustrates different opinions. There were negative attitudes towards state officials. Many, but “not necessarily a majority - - felt that the Governor had gone out of his way to create problems and dissension in local communities which were peacefully integrating their schools”. Some thought the Governor was violating laws, but there were also some who supported him. Another group was concerned about the “psychological climate created by the Governor’s declarations and actions”. People’s feelings are described as “horror over the death of innocent victims of the racial strife”.

In the report, whole nation was “stunned” by the bombing:

> There had been uncertainty in the air, an uneasy vigilance. But the bombing was something that had not been anticipated. Birmingham’s citizens were thoroughly shaken by the callousness of their home –grown extremists. (Voice of America, 1963)

Similarly to previous features, it is emphasized that the full resources, including the Federal Government were working to restore the peace. In addition, in a quote, Martin Luther King blamed the Governor for the violence, whereas President John F. Kennedy
pointed out the “public disparagement of law and order”. There are expectations of other similar acts and uncertainty about the future:

   Whether what happened will bring a closer feeling or understanding and sympathy in the community, or greater estrangement, is yet to be seen. (Voice of America, 1963)

On 20th of September 1963, the topic was included in the This Week In Review, edited by Semi Ustun. The feature has a sound bite from the President who said that the bombing showed the nation that there is “folly of racial injustice and hatred and violence…then it is not too late for all concerned to unite in steps toward peaceful progress”. There is information about President’s meeting with civil rights leaders in the White House. Among them was Martin Luther King who was happy with the talks. The President is seen as someone who takes steps to “relieve racial tension”. In the report there are two additional interviews. One of them, with a journalist from a Southern newspaper. He is hopeful that the South “will rise to this challenge of racial understanding and common humanity”. The other interview is with the Republican senator Jacob Javits who was pushing President Kennedy for “prompt action” in creating new civil rights because the delay in Congress couldn’t be justified. Meanwhile, the issue of uncertainty is not ignored, but VOA tells its listeners that it is possible to deal with this situation. (Voice of America, 1963)

In Soviet Opinion, a program of Radio Moscow in English for listeners in North America on September 17, 1963, Kozyakov argues:
Somehow none of the racists of Birmingham or any other American city had ever been seriously punished for their crimes. It was not the criminals who were arrested, but those Americans who were fighting for their rights and the observance of the law. Governor George Wallace, Alabama’s leading racist, had also gone unpunished, although the American people have for long been demanding his arrest and trial. This kind of freedom, so vaunted in the USA, made it difficult for progressive democratic organizations to work for their goals of peace, freedom and equality. But the Ku-Klux-Klan and other reactionary organizations were permitted to function freely. (BBC Monitoring, 1963)

The author speculates that the bomb explosion was a deliberate murder, and one of a long series of crimes committed by the U.S. racists. He guesses that people in other countries who read about these things were led to wonder how much human life was worth in “Free America”.

**Event # 5**

The reporting on the killing of Martin Luther King and the subsequent riots in America is the final artifact in this research work. A day after the assassination, in a political analysis feature Ronald J. Dunlavey talked about the violence. Clashes were expected from the moment it was known that doctor King was dead. The civil disorder happened “as a kind of emotional aftermath, particularly in the poorer sections of the cities”. The news analysis stresses out more than once that the violence was “sporadic” and “much of it appears to be looting of stores in poorer sections, and it appears to be rather aimless and unorganized”. There is no profile of those who initiated the violence.
President Lyndon Johnson address to the nation was reported as an appeal to avoid violence. To maintain order he called in Federal Troops. Similarly to reports on previous events, VOA demonstrates that the President’s strategy is supported by the majority Americans. On the other hand, Johnson was portrayed as some who is aware of the needs of the Negro communities. He takes the unusual step to ask for a joint session of Congress and to urge it to pass a civil rights bill, which “includes a national fair housing last”. The political analysis concludes:

In any case, it is clear that Mr. Johnson sees this as a major event in America’s national life - - not only a tragic moment, but also a moment of challenge. (Voice of America, 1968)

A week after the assassination in the program *Currents* written by Dorothy Crook, the announcer introduces a visitor from the Soviet Union to the United States who was looking for explanations and asked questions like “What was behind disturbances of such proportions?” and “What was being done about them?” At the end of the intro the statement promises an attempt for an in-depth exploration of the issue.

The piece argues that Americans are confused as well. It gives background on the riots which started “last summer” and were provoked by discrimination in rent, something that already had been amended by the government with the passing of a new law. The challenge was to figure out how to implement those measures.

There is a sound bite by the new Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Wilbur Cohen, who met with Martin Luther King just before the assassination. He acknowledged the presence of race prejudice, but VOA clarifies that it is rather local than widespread. In
another quote Mr. Cohen comments that housing segregation creates problems with education because “children are often racially segregated”. The next issue is lack of jobs, for which the Wilbur Cohen blames the businessmen who needed to “provide jobs, jobs conveniently located in places that are accessible to workers, including disadvantaged.” According to the report, welfare system presents another problem but a special Presidential Commission was working on improving it so that it guarantees minimum annual income for everyone.

Further issues faced by African Americans in some cities are voiced by Mr. Cohen and explained by VOA. After listing “some of the major lines of actions that are being pursued to meet the discontent and bridge the gap between white and black Americans”, the broadcaster concludes that the quest for further answers will go on and inserts a saying by a philosopher:

A grievance patiently endured so long as it seems beyond redress becomes intolerable once the possibility of remedy crosses men’s minds. (Voice of America, 1968)

Overall, this piece is an attempt by VOA for a thorough analysis of possible reasons for African American struggles in the United States. It presents different opinions and gives enough background so that information can be understandable by international audience who may not be familiar with all facets of the issue. The feature is an objective representation that tries to find explanation and indicate possible solutions.
For its listeners in North America on April 7, 1968 Radio Moscow broadcast a commentary with Alexandr Chakovsky, Editor-in-Chief of Literaturnaya Gazeta and Lev Kassil, Secretary of the Moscow writers’ organization. Chakovsky thinks that:

…the killing will invariably run rampant in a country whose citizens daily kill hundreds of innocent people on foreign territory, in a country where racism has actually become a social institute. When one gets used to killing outside one’s country it is probably difficult to withstand the temptation to kill at home too. After all, soldiers with fighting experience in Vietnam were used last year to suppress Negro unrest. The shot will make Americans look at themselves from the sidelines... (BBC Monitoring, 1968)

According to Kassil, the killing “bears the stamp of America’s national disgrace”. He recalls the explosions in Vietnam and points out that the American officials paved the way for the shot by their “police policy of suppressing the civil rights movement” (BBC Monitoring, 1968).

Radio Moscow is relating the killing to America’s war in Vietnam. The argument is that by getting used to kill in another country, soldiers were transforming into killers who were ready to kill at home. Soviet Union’s broadcaster insists that the American government was to blame for the killing of Martin Luther King and the assassin was someone influenced by the official policy that is condoning racism in the country.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Origins of the discourse practice

Voice of America is a U.S. government sponsored agency that broadcasts only to international audiences, mostly to countries behind the Iron Curtain. During the 1960’s VOS had a large array of programs dedicated to the Civil Rights Movement. The majority of their articles presented in this paper are produced by the German born Ronald J. Dunlavey who was considered an expert in the Middle East as well as other global issues (Heil A. J., 2003). He has been described as one of the best VOA writers. In an interview for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Information Series, one of the former news directors, Barry Zorthian calls him “the great genius of the round and mellow words” (Zorthian, 1988) and Claude “Cliff” Groce, another employee who worked at VOA in the 1960’s, puts Dunlavey in the category of those broadcasters who were “very fine people, they're very, good writers, they're very good thinkers, they certainly knew policy backwards and forwards, and they did a good job whatever they turned out (Groce, 1988). Another news analyst included in this study whose broadcasts were aired on VOA was Robert Swing. He was one of the strongest opponents of government influence in the VOA programming and resigned for a brief period in protest of the State Department’s interference. Swing returned to VOA as a senior news analyst in 1959 and stayed there until 1964 (New York Times, 1968).

On the topic of civil rights there was a contribution by Harold Courlander as well. He was an anthropologist who specialized in the study of African, Caribbean, Afro-American, and Native American cultures. Barry Zorthian placed him in the same
category of prominent writers as Ronald J. Dunlavey (Zorthian, 1988). The majority of commentaries were created by journalists famous for keeping up with high professional standards, instead of writers who followed directives from the State Department. Their expertise establishes them as credible authors. The fact that VOA selected them to talk about the Civil Rights Movement could indicate that the issue was of special importance for the broadcaster. We can speculate that the authors’ choice is an element pointing out that the radio station wanted to have an objective representation of the topic.

**Inter-textual analysis**

In the VOA transcripts of the first event there is a similar line of presentation that can be compared to the speech of the main actor, President Dwight Eisenhower. The broadcaster reflects the statement, made by Eisenhower on September 25th, 1957. It explains Federal Government’s actions by giving background information. There is almost sentence by sentence paraphrasing, especially in the *Early Morning News Analysis*, presented by from 25 September, 1957. For example, both the address and the radio commentary start with the significance of the location for the speech. The President said:

> I could have spoken from Rhode Island, but I felt that, in speaking from the house of Lincoln, of Jackson and of Wilson, my words would more clearly convey both the sadness I feel in the action I was compelled today to take and the firmness with which I intend to pursue this course until the orders of the Federal Court at Little Rock can be executed without unlawful interference. (Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1975)

Voice of America uses the same introduction and explains the reasons behind it:
Early in his speech - - the third sentence, in fact - - the president mentioned that he was speaking, appropriately, from the White House - - the house where Lincoln, Jackson, and Wilson had lived. Mr. Eisenhower did not choose the names of these illustrious past presidents at random. He obviously chose them to indicate the theme of his speech, to make sure that no one misunderstood how he conceived his duty. (Voice of America, 1957)

The report is an explanation of the meaning of the speech without giving details on its future implications and possible outcome. VOA sticks to the definitions giving by the President in describing the perpetrators, “mobs”, “agitators”, and “extremists”. At the same time however, there are differences. Where’s Dwight Eisenhower statement is mostly focused on the need to send the Federal troops, VOA has two lines of narrative. The first one is the sending of Federal troops, and the second one is the isolation of the problem. The President mentions that the issue is localized and overwhelming majority supports the government’s efforts to integration, but VOA stresses out on the isolation of the incident and transforms it as one of the main argument.

At the same time the station did not include Eisenhower’s concern that Little Rock’s problem can be used in favor of communist propaganda. Eisenhower’s statement not reflected in the VOA program reads:

At a time when we face a grave situation abroad because of the hatred that communism bears toward a system of government based on human rights, it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed the safety, of our nation and the world. (Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1975)
As a whole VOA reporting was a reflection the official discourse of the main actors and there are elements that were not reported to the international audience. The political aspect in the propaganda war between East and West is ignored in favor of the actions that can improve the situation and help move forward in terms of integration in America.

**Linguistic analysis**

During the **linguistic analysis** I noticed that the most events were described as “emotional situation”, “disorders”, “difficult incident”, “tremendous wave of anger and sympathy”, “sporadic violence”, and “moment of challenge”. They all try to give an objective account of what happened and at the same time explain the reasons behind protestors’ actions. The violence was not a common place and was provoked by emotional outbursts, and anger. *Voice of America* wanted to make sure that audiences were aware that the looters were “out of town agitators” and “disorderly mob”. One interesting point is that throughout its reporting, the broadcaster emphasized that the problems are not just between the government and the states who wanted more autonomy, but “racial flarups”. There were racial struggles that are connected to basic human right violated by “slow to change” states, governors that defy government orders and “lunatic fringe”. The stories presented selective quotes from other texts on the same issue that exist in the public domain to pinpoint the progress in the issue of the civil rights. They acknowledge that there is segregation, but “end is inevitable”.

43
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The 1950’s and 1960’s saw a difficult period for the United States, the country that was supposed to be beacon for freedom and democracy. A large group of the society was disenfranchised by some officials. Local media was exposing the injustice with detailed reporting from cities torn by violence and destruction. At the same time, audiences behind the Iron Curtain were getting conflicting messages about the situation on the ground. The Soviet propaganda, defending its totalitarian practices, flooded its channels with commentary arguing that the civil right struggles in America were a certain sign that democracy and capitalism don’t work. In this environment the only American broadcaster in the area had to make important decisions with regards to its editorial content. Should inform about everything that was going on in the Southern states and risk fueling the Communist propaganda, or should they fight the propaganda with its own propaganda.

Radio Moscow provided comprehensive description of events, talked about increasing terror only to argue that the war on capitalism was justified. The station focused on what happened and only gave context when it fit the communist party line. There were few background facts. Most of the conclusions were that the government in America did nothing to stop the violence.

Voice of America, on the other hand, looked beyond the actual events and wanted to make sure that its audiences are aware of the historical reasons and judicial implication in a country where rule of the law is the only apparatus for social change. Instead of the dramatic accounts of the riots, they focused on things that can be changed by law.
In its programs the international radio station lacked the horrific pictures described in the local press, looked beyond the violence and put emphasis on explaining the conflict and presenting the two sides that participate. One was the government that was trying to make a difference in African-American lives, whereas the other one was a small fraction that frustrated the law. Government actions had overwhelming support. The country as a whole was supporting the government. The country was pro-integration. America was pro-integration. The disturbances were portrayed as a work in progress, a problem that can be fixed.

Did United States Information Agency influence VOA to frame the Civil Rights Movement in a way that it reflected the views of the United States’ government or did it report events in an objective manner?

Keeping in mind that USIA wanted to show progress in the highest democratic ideals, we can speculate that VOA was indeed sending a similar message, but at the same time the station’s programs were different from other USIA materials in the 1950’s and 1960’s that used propaganda rhetoric to talk about the civil rights movement and stressed out on accomplishments. Personal interviews with current and past VOA journalists reveal that there was a pressure from the State Department to frame the content in one specific way, but there were rarely successful. Analysis of the texts prove that. VOA reports admit that there were difficulties and things were not flawless, but pinpoint that those issues are being solved by the federal government and majority of Americans support the measures. The only influence I was able to detect was describing in detail the positive role of the federal authorities which did not interfere with the objective representation of reality.
Another element that helped VOA keep its journalism principles of accurate and comprehensive programs was assigning the topic to experts on the subject. Anthropologists and historians were among those who wrote the commentaries about the civil rights. Others were prominent journalists who opposed the State Department guidance. All those factors let me conclude that during the Cold War period VOA told the truth also kept the good image of America. Its mission can be summarized by a VOA T-shirt slogan that Alan Heil pointed out during our interview, “You don’t need to make an agenda, get own impression /Tell the truth and let the world decide” (Heil A., 2013).

On the other hand, however, it is questionable whether presented the government as the good actor in situations like the civil rights can be deemed as propaganda. Does the focus on that line in the VOA reports makes the radio station an instrument that reflects official policies of the United States?

Federal government’s voice was the major component of the stories and I couldn’t locate opinions from protestors or those students who didn’t get access to schools because of their color. There were experts on this issue, but we can’t be sure if they were getting their stories from being on the ground where violence happened or they were writing scripts from an office in center of the nation’s capital, far from the disturbances in the South. That could be seen as VOA being away from the various perspectives on this issue and on the side of the government. In the stories from this research, the government was the main actor, but historically when human rights are violated federal authorities were the only ones that amend the situation. Even now, with the debate on racial profiling surfaced again, the Federal government in reality is the one that listens to the people’s needs, indicate problems and promotes measures. Reporting on its action in detail
shouldn’t be labeled as propaganda, but it may seem like propaganda if people’s voices are not included and instead presented via their congressmen in Washington.

This research analyzed the way civil rights issues in the 1950’s and 1960’s in America were presented to international audiences by a state funded American broadcaster. It can be a starting point to a more detailed study that can examine the effects of those messages to the perception of the United States. Also, it can be developed further by comparing transcripts of VOA and RM about events that occurred in the Soviet Union. It will be interesting to see if there was a political agenda in VOA’s stories about the life in a communist country.
EPILOGUE

A couple of months after I started classes at Wake Forest University, I became an American correspondent for the Bulgarian National Radio, a public station that reaches around 20 per cent of the population in Bulgaria. I had the social responsibility to shape the reality in America to foreign listeners. That was something new for me and for help I looked up to VOA, the station that shaped my image of the United States when I was growing up in post-communist Bulgaria and at the same time inspired me to become a journalist. My friends told me that VOA was propaganda. I didn’t believe them but questioned if my inspiration was a product of political PR or a recognition of a quality journalism? One of my professors, Mike Hazen, suggested testing VOA objectivity by analyzing their programs on events that created negative image of the country. This is how my research started.

It took me a little over a year to finish this journey. Some of the artifacts were guidelines for reporters and memos from program directors. Initially, I read them; taking notes with my career in mind, but the key files that facilitated my growth were the transcripts from actual on-air material. During the long hours spent in the BBC Witten Archives, National Archives, and Library of Congress, I was reading news pieces and realizing how important for every reporter is to be objective, comprehensive and non-judgmental. The files saved on a microfilm were great examples of what to do and what not to do when telling your audience what is happening and why should they care. Thanks to my research experience I moved forward as a journalist.
Half a century has passed since the Civil Rights Movement happened in America. There is progress in the inter-racial relationship, but incidents like the recent shootings of unarmed black young men re-ignited social tensions. The killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, for example, and the following demonstrations remind us of the protests in the 1960’s. The government’s narrative hasn’t changed much and media are operating by the same principles of objectivity. The dynamic in official communication strategy of officials can be a subject of another study but in terms of journalistic approach, I find areas of improvement in the public service role of reporters. At the same time, there also some issues that we all need to be aware of. I’ve learned from my thesis research that objective journalists avoid using labels for a particular group. Describing people just by their actions is more beneficial for a progressive social discourse. My second point is, give floor to diverse participants to express their arguments. This will create clearer picture of reality and educate your audience. Finally, explain the context. It is tempting for media to go after the most dramatic aspect, but most of the time that is just the surface of more complex issues that need to be addressed in the society.
REFERENCES


http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/history/story/2007/02/070122_html_60s.shtml


CURRICULA VITAE

MLADEN K. PETKOV

EDUCATION

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Graduation 12/2014
Master of Arts in Communication
GPA: Cumulative: 3.7

University of Westminster, London, United Kingdom, Graduation 09/2011
Master of Arts in Broadcast Journalism (International)

Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria, Graduation 05/2009
Bachelor of Arts in Clinical Social Work

WORK EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, USA, September 2012 – May 2014
• Assisting faculty members with classroom instruction, exams, and record keeping in Introduction to Mass Communication, Public Speaking, and Interpersonal Communication.

Content Tutor, Student-Athlete Services at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, USA, September 2012 – May 2014
• One-on-one tutoring in Communication subjects.

Mentor, Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute for Youth, Wake Forest University, July 2012; July 2013
• Teaching international high school students about principles in journalism and media content creation.

U.S. Correspondent with media credentials from U.S. Department of State/Radio Presenter –Bulgarian National Radio, Sofia, Bulgaria, July 2012 – present
• U.S. correspondent on current affairs and lifestyle.

Communications Officer, Wake Forest Advantage Program, Winston-Salem, NC, September 2013 – May 2014
• Developing communication strategy, using technology and social media to reach out to Chinese high school students who want to attend U.S. colleges and universities.

Co-producer, The Imagination Project: Artists of the Holocaust, Wake Forest University Documentary Film Program, January – May 2013
• The project’s aim is to educate a younger audience about anti-semitism and promote the common good of greater understanding, identification, and respect for different
religions and cultures. To that end, the short digital films and digital book will be
designed from dissemination on the Yad Vashem YouTube channel.


Presenter/Producer, bTV Radio Group, Central European Media Enterprises, Sofia,
Bulgaria, February 2009 – May 2012
  • Lifestyle and current affairs radio show host/producer.

Work Placement, Markettiers4DC, London, United Kingdom, August 22 - 26 2011
  • Research special interest stories. Tailoring content for regional audiences. Assisting
on location filming of a video.

London Correspondent, Dnevnik newspaper, Bulgaria, April 2011 – May 2012
  • Writing articles about life in London. Creating podcasts, videos, and slide shows for
the online edition of the newspaper. Reporting on Royal Wedding and London Riots.

Presenter/Producer, May 1996 – February 2009, Radio Energy, Bulgaria; Radio
Atlantic/Vitosha, Bulgaria; Radio FM Plus, Bulgaria; Radio Ekstaz, Bulgaria

SKILLS

Personable, interact well with diverse groups.

Computer: Proficient with Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Audition,
Final Cut Pro, Dalet

Other foreign Languages: Working knowledge of Russian (oral and written), Bulgarian
(fluent)

INTERESTS

International journalism and current affairs. Producing and directing audio/video material.
Learning about other cultures.