

date ? mid-1950's

PROSPECTUS

A study of American radio scripts, by the technique of content analysis to determine the absence or presence - and if the latter the extent - of communist propaganda in the script output over American AM radio and television stations.

AUTHORSHIP

The proposed study is to be conducted under the joint auspices of the Stanford Committee on Social Science Research, the Committee on Communications, Stanford University, and the Hoover Institute and Library on War, Revolution, and Peace.

FORWARD

It has recently been alleged by persons appearing before the McCarran Subcommittee on Internal Security hearings that a communist or communist dominated leadership of the Radio Writers Guild is subtly injecting communist propaganda into American radio scripts and that a large part of the output of American radio is to be suspected of subverting national ideals and advancing the Communist Party line. The allegations regarding the presence of a latent or overt Communist Party line in the words that are daily heard by many millions of American listeners of all age are most serious. This is evidenced by the immediate wholesale coverage of the allegations in the press. Inasmuch as the Congressional Committee plans further hearings on this subject in Hollywood late this year we cannot expect that these allegations of fact will subside. In fact, not only may they increase in the specific context with reference to the Radio Writers Guild but they may also spread to other areas of the media of communications and to other interests. Segments of influential public opinion often respond forcefully to allegations of this kind, whether they be made with reference to the school systems, the movies, the universities, the government bureaucracy, or to the media of communications directly. What is good or bad policy for the radio industry is not a matter presently before this study. Rather, this study is designed to confront squarely the factual question regarding the communist or non-communist content of the words that are spoken to American audiences. Without a scientific answer to this question any judgment about public policy or network policy or writers' policy will be weak, uninformed and unstable. More than that, without such a scientific answer, the arena of radio will be thrown open to every conceivable irresponsible contestant who can paint an exaggerated opinion picture of the inside of American radio. Even in the unlikely event that a true answer to the question about the subversion of contents of American radio is arrived at by one or another means, there will have been created, meanwhile, a highly unfavorable atmosphere surrounding the American radio industry.

SCIENTIFIC VALUE OF STUDY

Besides being of considerable contemporary significance in the realm of public policy formation, this study has large promise in the development of the techniques of content analysis. Among the promising features of the problem are:

1. The ability to make a retrospective and on-going study at the same time, permitting thereby a fusion of techniques for historical and current analysis, and also allowing the predictive projection of content trends in radio scripts.
2. The development of new techniques of sampling in content analysis, both internal and external.
3. An approach to the problem of determining differences between latent, unconscious, and deliberate propaganda in the mass media.

Such would be the methodological advantages of this study at this time. It can be said that the moment is auspicious for such a study in the career of the science of content analysis. Additional use of the materials will undoubtedly be made by the associated social sciences. The study will have interest for policy scientists who may be interested in rationalizing decision-making in the public sphere. Practitioners and professors of constitutional law would also use the technique and materials, especially if they are working the area of the Bill of Rights.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PROJECT

An interdisciplinary organization is proposed.

The Department of Speech and Drama has an immediate and theoretical concern with this project. Apart from its theoretical concern with content analysis, the Department in its courses on radio writing and radio organization and production may weave the study materials into its work.

The Committee on Communications, particularly the representative of the Institute of Journalistic Studies in it, is directly concerned with improving techniques of communication research as well as the related problems concerning regulation.

Political Science is interested in the study from several standpoints: constitutional law, administrative regulation, and propaganda and opinion analysis.

The Hoover Institute has already contributed technical studies in the field of content analysis and has in addition a special collection on communications including many valuable historical materials on radio regulation and policy. Moreover, since this study is concerned with communism, and the Hoover Institute experience and collections in the field of World Communism are of the first order the study will receive expert consultation and supervision with

respect to several of its crucial problems relating to the symbols of world communism as they may be reflected in the output of radio script.

In sum, Stanford University is uniquely equipped to undertake the analysis of the content of radio programs. Library materials, practical experience and skills, and theoretical experience and skills relating precisely to the contents of this study are all present at this University.

In addition, it is contemplated that several persons directly involved in American radio but not immediately connected with the University will be called upon to play an active role in guiding the research.

The projected organization of the research is as follows: A policy guidance committee consisting of perhaps eight persons would be set up. Among those who might serve on such a committee would be Dean Ernest Hilgard, Professor Stanley Donner, Mr. H. H. Fisher, Mr. Ithiel Pool, Mrs. Inez G. Richardson, Professor Meyer Girshick, Professor Robert Walker, Professor Clifford Weigle, Messrs. David Faville, and Donn Tatum. The administrative arrangements for the project would center in the Executive Office of the Stanford Committee for Research in the Social Sciences. A project director, approved by the policy committee, would conduct the investigation independently and would select his technical staff.

RESEARCH SCHEDULE

The design of the study would be completed by October 20. The study itself would in its entirety consume eighteen months beginning October 1, 1952. Interim reports, progress, and findings may be asked for from time to time but not more than quarterly as the policy committee deems necessary and the project director deems feasible.

The final Report Monograph will be made available to supporting agencies and to scholars and the general public on an equal basis.

Upon approval of the study design as soon after October 20 as is possible by the policy committee, the research team will undertake the assembly of materials sampling the radio programs representing the listening habits of most of the American people, most of the time, on a national scale. This will require an historical sample of scripts now in the files of radio stations, of wire recordings of past programs, and a scrutiny of on-going programs, either by an examination of script or by means of wire recordings of programs. This process and the various cross-tabulations connected with this process will have been completed by September 30, 1953, and the remaining period would then be devoted to an analysis and reporting of these studies and findings. In presenting the final report no attempt will be made by the project team of the Policy Advisory Committee to recommend public policy in connection with radio scripts. Of course, any and all interested parties may thereafter employ the results of the study in presenting their own viewpoints on the character of American radio programs and public policy.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

The cost of the study is estimated at \$115,000, budgeted at \$35,000 for the first six months, \$65,000 for the second six months, and \$15,000 for the third six months. In addition, the study requires the co-operation of several radio stations and broadcasting systems to reduce the cost of sampling scripts and programs and assessing the materials put on the air in past time periods. Furthermore, the research team would benefit from the use of various listener-habit studies that one or more stations or networks may have had done for them in the past. It is believed that none of these last requirements would prove expensive or inconvenient to the stations and interests involved.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The resources required for this project will be sought among the following groups: the Senatorial committee concerned (through the Library of Congress Legislative Reference Division), the Radio Writers Guild, the radio and television networks and their affiliated stations, the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters, and the American Advertising Council.