

HOW AMERICA FOUND OUT ABOUT THE GULF WAR



A Birch Scarborough Study of
Media Behavior

Birch
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Research

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifty years, the number of research studies conducted in the United States in the field of mass communications and the diffusion of news has grown exponentially. The bulk of these studies falls into one of two broad categories: commercial or academic research. Studies in the former category are usually proprietary and designed to further the goals of a business, whether for marketing new products or services, or changing or promoting an image. The quality of the work is usually quite good because the buyer can "pay the freight" of the high cost involved.

Academic research on mass media, on the other hand, has generally looked into finding new information about how individuals and groups use the media or how they are affected by it. Studies are conducted to lend support to (or perhaps disprove) theories about the media. While the intellectual activity behind the work is often excellent, the quality, primarily due to lack of funding, may suffer. All too often we see convenience samples of university students or passersby at a local shopping mall as the "evidence" lending support to the findings.

Through a unique collaboration between Birch Scarborough Research Corp. and Michigan State University, this study combined the best attributes from both categories of research: the quality inherent in Birch Scarborough's research methodology as well as its desire to provide a public service for the media combined with Michigan State's desire to find out new information about America's media choices and behavior.

For the media professional, the results of the study offer new insight into how Americans used the media in a time of national crisis: how did they find out about the war, what did they do, what were their television choices and why, how did they feel about the media coverage. For the academic, this is the first large scale study (over 7,000 respondents) conducted *as the events unfolded*, with no time lag or convenience samples involved.

BACKGROUND

A generation ago, the Viet Nam war was referred to as the first "living room" war in America's history. Before that, World War II radio coverage by Edward R. Murrow, reporting from London's rooftops during German bombing runs, became the stuff of journalistic legend. In 1991, the war in the Persian Gulf was soon dubbed the "instantaneous war" as satellite links and fiber optics enabled the media to gather information and transmit it instantly to an anxious American public a world away.

These kinds of advances in communication technology have also enabled us at Birch Scarborough to collect and analyze data almost instantaneously. Birch Scarborough, a commercial research firm whose clients include advertisers and advertising agencies, as well as radio and TV stations, and newspapers, conducts over 100,000 personal interviews via telephone each month from its seven centralized WATS interviewing centers, collecting data primarily on America's radio listening habits as well as their television viewing, newspaper readership, and product consumption habits.

At the time of Pearl Harbor 50 years ago, personal interviews via telephone were still in their infancy and subject to biases, thanks to limited telephone penetration and technology. Coming off the Great Depression, many American households did not have a telephone and the idea of WATS service was still a dream. The costs were prohibitive and a national sample was an impossibility.

Today, we expect not only instantaneous information, but we have become accustomed to instantaneous public opinion polls. During a presidential campaign, daily polls are the norm. Low prices for long distance service, plenty of capacity, and the growth of the telephone research business, as well as tremendous computer speed and capacity, have combined to give us the ability to find out instantly what the American public is thinking and doing.

As a public/community service and for the benefit of the electronic media, Birch Scarborough believed it was important to find out how the public used the media for news on the Persian Gulf War. Our Research Department, together with Dr. Bradley S. Greenberg, a distinguished professor in the Department of Telecommunication at Michigan State University, combined talents and facilities and developed and implemented several special questions relating to the diffusion of news about war in the Persian Gulf. Immediately on Thursday, Jan. 17, 1991, the night after hostilities began, by virtue of our telephone methodology, we were able to quickly add four "war specific" questions to our "normal" Birch Radio interview questionnaire, and several other "war related" questions for Friday - Sunday, Jan. 18-20.

Altogether, across the four nights (Thursday - Sunday), we were able to personally interview 7,674 Americans via telephone (with 5,734 respondents having been asked the full array of questions Friday-Sunday night) in 105 of the largest U.S. markets, across five time zones. Sampling error for the full sample was less than 1.5% at the 95% confidence level. The sample represented over two thirds of the nation's population. And because of our use of independent sample replicates for each night of calling, the sample was a random sample of the 105 markets under study. Thus, unlike previous diffusion studies, the patterns described here are representative of the nation as a whole, as well as certain demographic subgroups -- providing unique insights for both the media professional interested in the impact of his/her medium and the academic looking for new data on news diffusion.

To what media did America turn? Following are results from the additional Birch Scarborough interview questions on Jan. 17-20, presented in two parts -- one directed primarily at the media professional, and the other primarily directed at the academician.

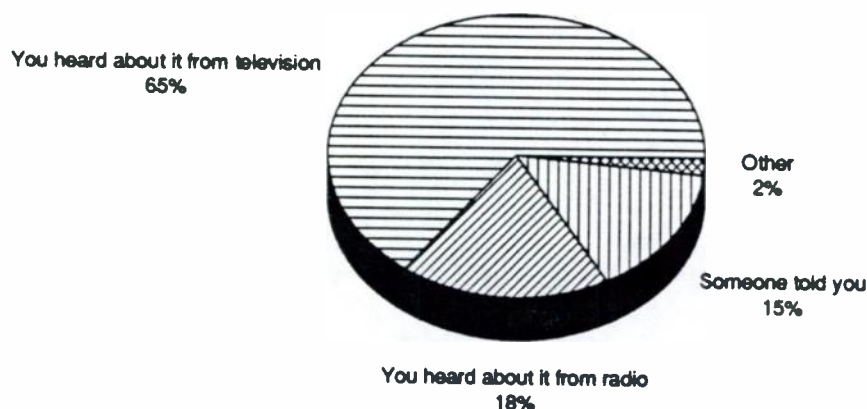
Data was reviewed by respondents' age, sex, income, and education levels. As you will soon see, the electronic media served the American public well. To what degree and in what respect is detailed here.

THE BIRCH SCARBOROUGH STUDY - Part I

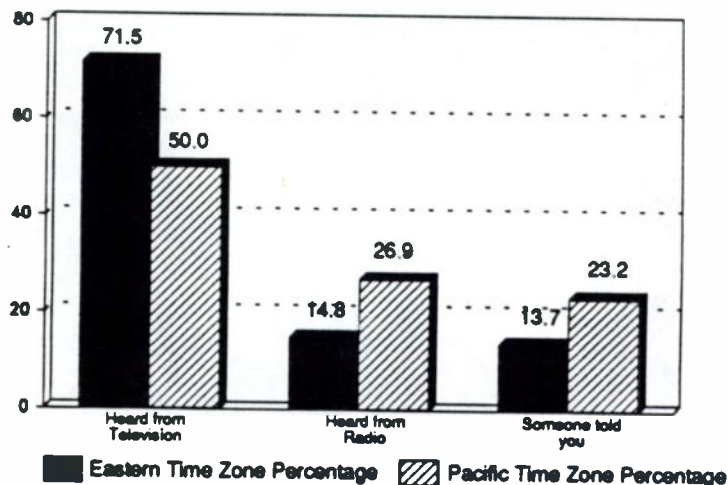
RESULTS - FINDING OUT WAR HAD STARTED

All respondents on all four nights answered the Birch Scarborough radio listening questions prior to answering what became known as "the war questions." Results from the first war question – "How did you first find out the war had started?" – showed that over 4 out of 5 people in the sample found out from the electronic media as shown in Chart 1. Although television drew the largest audience overall, its share of the audience was not consistent across all markets. Because news of the war was being transmitted to an American audience across five time zones, geography affected the respondents' choice of medium for initial information. Radio use was stronger in the West where the war was a "drive-time" event than in the East where the news broke during prime time. When comparing the 14 Pacific time zone markets plus Honolulu against the 52 Eastern time zone markets, as shown in Graph 1, radio's share of the initial audience nearly doubles. From these data, it became clear that the most interesting results come from looking at what part of the country a respondent lived in and how soon after the outbreak of the war they were asked this first "war" question.

CHART 1
HOW DID YOU FIRST FIND OUT THE WAR HAD STARTED?
(Sample Size=7,660)

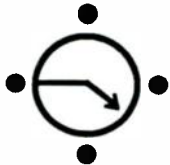
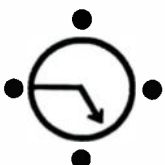
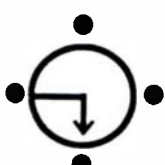
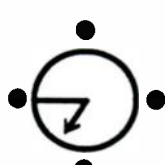


GRAPH 1
HOW DID YOU FIRST FIND OUT THE WAR HAD STARTED? BY TIME ZONE
(Sample Size=3852 IN Eastern Time Zone, 1132 IN Pacific Time Zone)



The initial news announcement about the war occurred Jan. 16 between 6:30 and 7 p.m. in the Eastern Standard time zone of the United States, when most of the residents there were already home; in the Central time zone, it was 5:30 p.m. and in the Mountain time zone, it was 4:30 p.m. In the Pacific time zone it was between 3:30 and 4 in the afternoon when most residents there were still at work. Table 1 below displays these findings.

TABLE 1
AMERICA'S FIRST SOURCE OF WAR INFORMATION
By Time Zone and Day

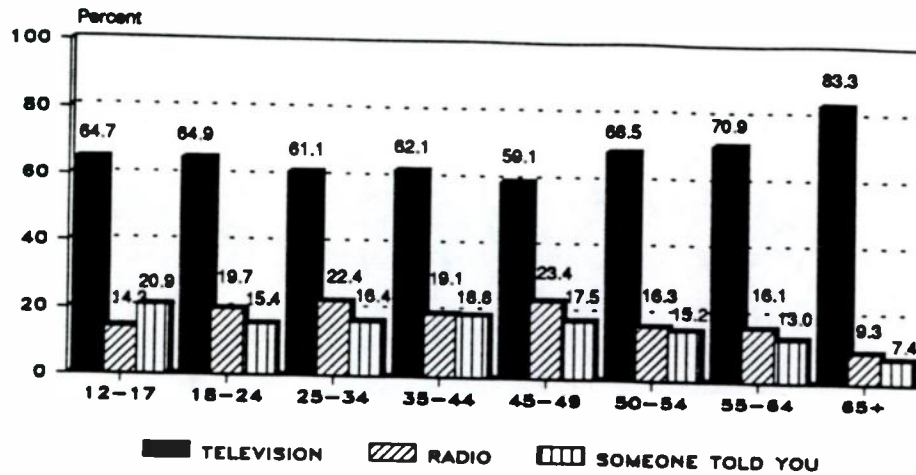
																
	3:45				4:45				5:45				6:45			
	Pacific				Mountain				Central				Eastern			
Day	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
% Someone	29	22	26	20	21	21	17	13	15	17	13	14	16	12	16	12
% Radio	21	30	31	28	26	27	17	22	18	13	20	21	16	14	14	15
% TV	50	48	43	52	53	52	66	65	68	71	67	64	68	74	71	73

Day 1 = January 17; Day 2 = January 18; Day 3 = January 19; Day 4 = January 20.

For those in the Pacific and Mountain areas who were interviewed on Thursday, within 24 hours of the start of the war, 25% first heard from interpersonal sources, compared with 15% in the Eastern areas. This confirms that those who are at work or out shopping are likely to be more active in interpersonal channels for initial news about a crisis than those who have arrived at home. For those in the West, radio was a first source for 23% of Americans, compared with 17% in the East. Television then was the majority first source in every part of the country; but in the west, 50% first heard from television compared with 68% in the East.

First source differed by gender, with women more likely to first hear from television, particularly on the West Coast where more women than men were at home for the initial announcements. As shown in Graph 2, age differences were also very prominent; those 55 and older were far more likely to get their first information from television (71% of those 55-64, and 83% of those over 65), with parallel decreases in both radio and interpersonal sources for these older groups. Income and education worked in tandem – those higher on either attribute were significantly more likely to be informed first from interpersonal and radio sources.

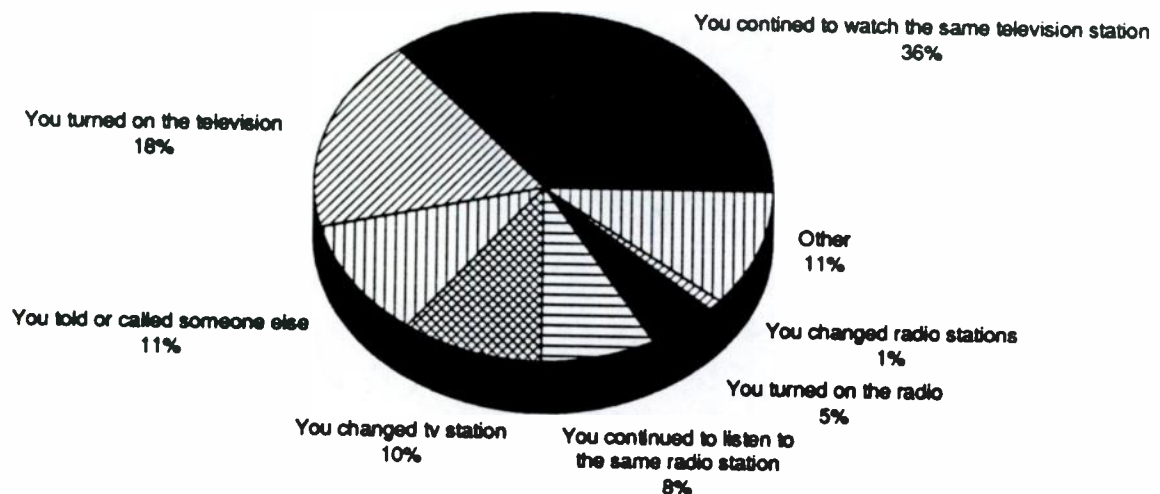
GRAPH 2
HOW DID YOU FIRST FIND OUT ABOUT THE WAR? (BY AGE)
 (Sample Size=7,505)



RESULTS – FIRST RESPONSE TO FINDING OUT ABOUT WAR

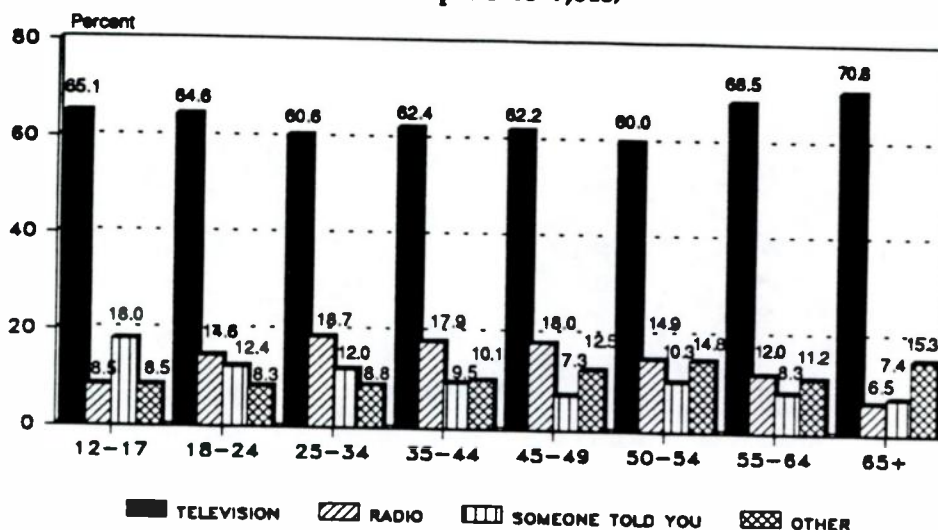
As soon as Americans found out that the war had started, they overwhelmingly turned to radio and television for news and information. As you can see in Chart 2, nine out of ten people began or continued to watch television or listen to the radio once they heard the news. Eleven percent told or called someone else. Another 11% did something else entirely – with the “other” responses running the gamut from prayer to people shouting various expletives, to a respondent in Honolulu who put on a gas mask.

CHART 2
WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU DID WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THE WAR HAD STARTED?
 (Sample Size=7,646)



Men and women did not differ in their first activities. However, as shown in Graph 3, age was a strong correlate of the extent to which these respondents said the first thing they did was tell someone else about the event – 18% of those 12-17 years old did so, 12% of those 25-34, 9% of those 45-54, and 7% of those 65 and over did so. The younger age groups were also slightly more active in doing something with radio, while the older age groups were slightly more dependent on television. In a similar vein, upscale groups (both income and education) were more oriented to radio in these initial hours, while their downscale counterparts were more active with television.

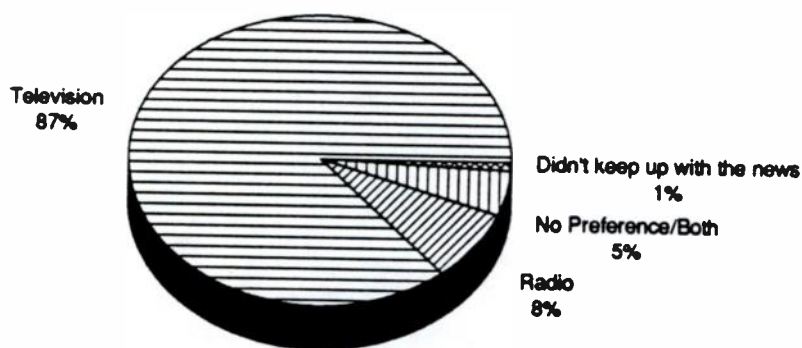
GRAPH 3
WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU DID? (BY AGE)
 (Sample Size=7,646)



RESULTS -- WHICH MEDIUM HAD BEST INFORMATION ON DAY WAR STARTED

Respondents were then asked: "Who had the best information for you on the day the war started, radio or television?" As shown in Chart 3, the choice for news on Wednesday night was television. In the areas outside the Pacific time zone, television averaged 88% of all responses; on the West coast, where we have already seen that there was more reliance on radio and on other people, TV averaged 79%. Men and women alike credited television with providing the best information. This did not differ among age, income or education subgroups. It should be noted that the sheer "tonnage" of television coverage, particularly on that first night, worked in the medium's favor.

CHART 3
WHICH MEDIUM HAD THE BEST INFORMATION FOR YOU ON WEDNESDAY?
 (Sample Size=7,656)

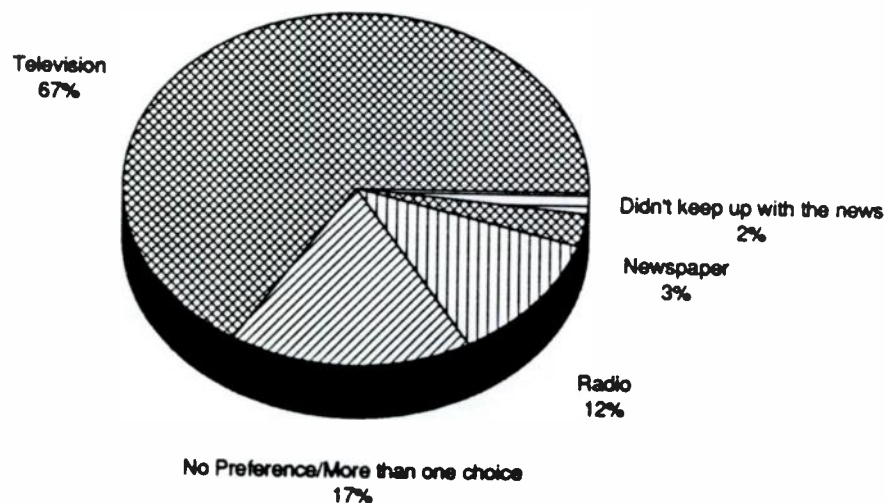


RESULTS – BEST SOURCE FOR KEEPING UP WITH WAR NEWS

The fourth and final question asked on all four nights was: "Since Wednesday, have you kept up with the war news mostly by radio, television or newspaper? Chart 4 shows the results. Here, three trends are important. First, television continued, albeit to a lesser extent, to dominate as the preferred source, cited by two-thirds of the respondents in each time zone. Second, in each time zone, there was a distinct trend across the four study nights for respondents to say they had "no preference" among these media; on the first night, 11-12% had this response and it increased to one-fifth of the respondents by the fourth night (This phenomenon called reattribution will be discussed in part II). Third, radio decreased as a preferred source. Cited by nearly 25% of the sample in each time zone on the first night as the main way for keeping up with war news, it dipped to 10% by the second night and below that on each subsequent night. Newspapers are not in the same ball game; on any given night and in each time zone, they were preferred by only 3% of the samples. Although radio is a strong initial source of information, it is not sustained as a preferred source for continuing information; television serves that role as well as that of a major initial source; newspapers have no utility as an initial source or as a source used to keep up with a breaking news event. In the instantaneous information world of the '90s, it would appear that newspapers serve the function of giving greater depth and insight to the breaking news.

Women consistently indicated that they kept up with the news more so by television than did the men, who used radio more for this purpose in the first and second days of war coverage. Over this same time period, all age groups increased their citation of "no preference" among media for keeping up, but this choice was initially larger among the older respondents and it increased even more so for them. Higher educated individuals used multiple sources for keeping up with war news after Wednesday night.

CHART 4
SINCE WEDNESDAY, HOW HAVE YOU KEPT UP WITH THE WAR NEWS?
(Sample Size=7,650)

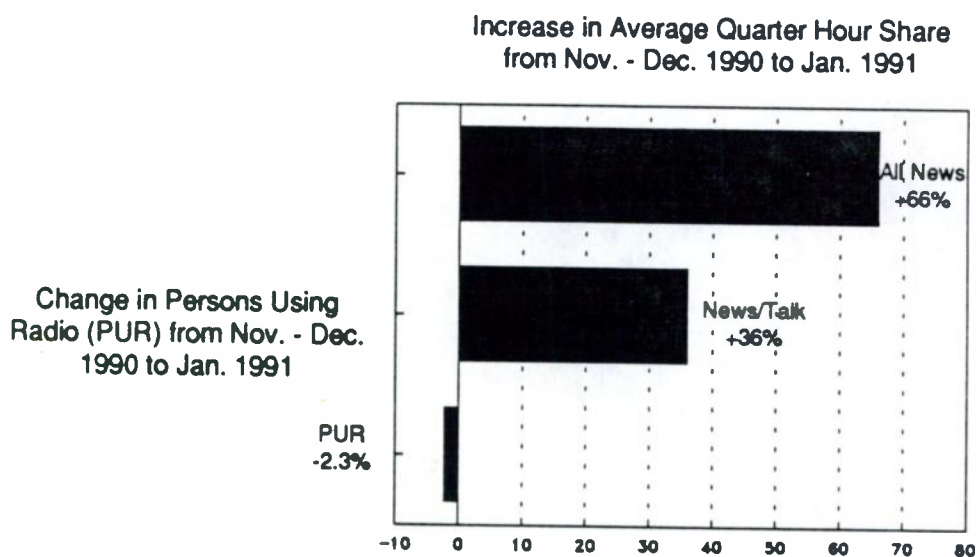


NEWS, NEWS/TALK RADIO SHARES JUMP

Birch Scarborough Research is best known for radio ratings so Birch was especially interested in what effect the war had on radio listening. Overall, radio did very well during the crisis. Approximately 18% of the American public first found out about the war through radio, doubling the listening level in the 7 p.m. – Midnight daypart when the news broke.

The top ten markets (New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, Detroit, Dallas, Washington and Houston) were examined to determine where the radios were tuned. Ratings for the month of January were compared to the previous two-month Birch Radio report (November-December 1990). Not surprisingly, the share for All News stations went up in all markets except one, with an average gain of approximately 66% as shown in Graph 4. News/Talk (as differentiated from All News) stations also showed a large increase of approximately 36% compared to their overall share from the previous two-month report. However, radio listening (as measured by the Persons Using Radio (PUR) figure) did not show any significant decreases or increases in the ten markets. Therefore, radio listeners were adjusting their listening habits, looking for the latest news rather than increasing their radio listening.

GRAPH 4



Above Percentages represent average changes in share and Persons Using Radio for News and News/Talk formatted stations in the Top Ten Markets.

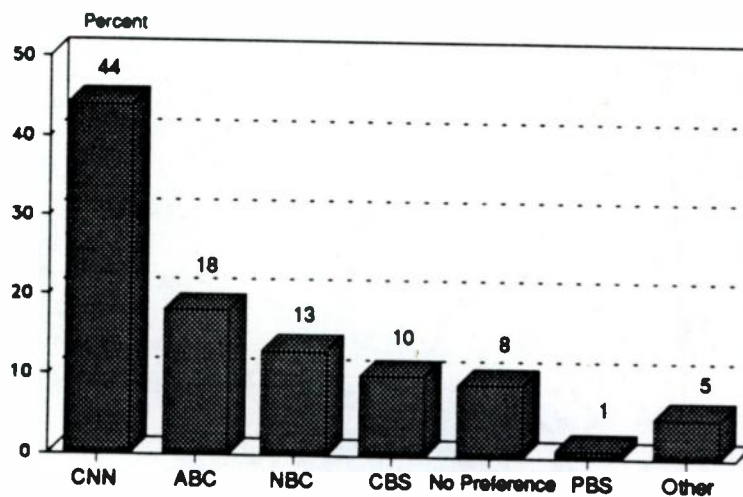
RESULTS – TV NETWORK SPENT MOST TIME WATCHING

Two related questions were added to the surveys done on the second, third and fourth nights. The first asked the respondents to identify the television network (ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC and PBS) they spent the most time watching. Graph 4 shows the results.

CNN was the choice of 49%-54% in all areas of the country, save for the Central time zone; there, 44% chose CNN. CNN was favored by significantly more men than women, by higher income groups (only 36% of those earning less than \$20,000 cited CNN, but this is likely due to lesser access to cable), and by those with at least some amount of college. CNN was more preferred by those 25-44 than by younger or older respondents, but among those 65 and older, only 32% opted for CNN. Among commercial broadcast networks, ABC was the first choice across the country, ranging from 15% of the first choices in the Pacific time zone to 22% in the Central time zone. Recognizing that CNN is available in only about 55% of the homes in the country, its domination of viewers is even more remarkable. In a large majority of the homes with access to CNN, it became the first choice.

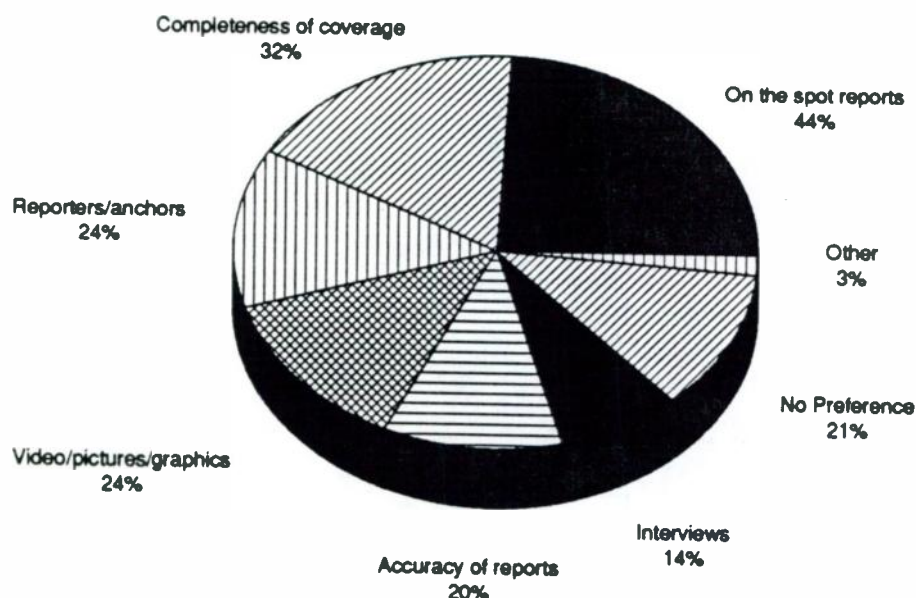
GRAPH 5

WHAT TELEVISION NETWORK HAVE YOU SPENT THE MOST TIME WATCHING
FOR WAR INFORMATION?
(Sample Size=5,666)



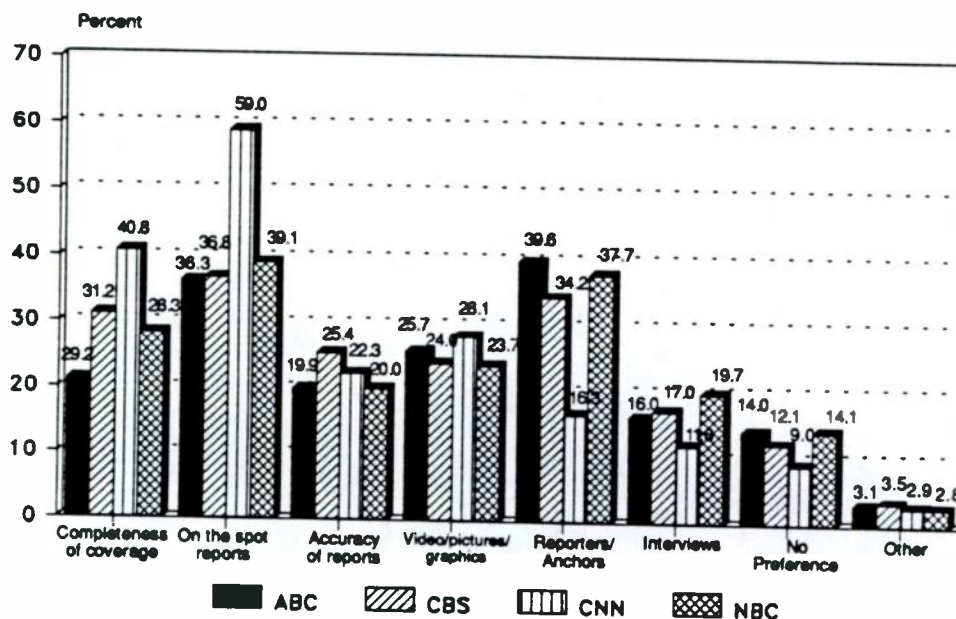
After identifying the network they spent the most time with, respondents were asked: "What did you like most about the war coverage on that network?" Responses were coded by the interviewers into the following: completeness of coverage; 'on the spot' reports; accuracy of reports; video/pictures/graphics; reporters and anchors; and no preference. (Respondents were allowed two choices so the total adds to more than 100%.) Nearly half of all responses, as shown in Chart 5, fit into the "on the spot" reports category, with one third fitting into the completeness of coverage category; about 22% cited accuracy of reports and 28-29% cited the quality of the video or the reporters/anchors. The citation of these attributes did not vary substantially by gender; higher income and higher educated viewers gave more priority to completeness of coverage, while younger viewers favored greater 'on the spot' reporting as the basis for their choice of network. Across all viewers, reporting of a critical news event is judged for its comprehensiveness and timeliness, more so than for its personalities.

CHART 5
WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE WAR COVERAGE ON THE NETWORK YOU
WATCHED MOST?
 (Sample Size=5,499)



When the choice of network is cross-tabulated with the major reasons for that choice as shown in Graph 5, the most evident finding is that CNN was chosen because of its ability to provide 'on the spot' and completeness of coverage; the commercial broadcast networks were still favored more so for their particular anchors and reporters. We wonder if surveys done later in the war period would have provided greater name recognition for CNN's featured reporters, e.g., Bernard Shaw, Peter Arnett, etc...

GRAPH 6
WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE WAR COVERAGE ON THE NETWORK YOU WATCHED?
 (Sample Size=4,850)



PROFILES OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA USERS

The Birch Scarborough study also showed two different profiles of media users during the opening days of the war. Specifically, some respondents could be categorized as "radio users" and another group as "television users." The behavior of each group shows a definite predisposition toward one of the two electronic media based on how they found out about the war.

RADIO LISTENERS AND TELEVISION VIEWERS

When we look at the total number of stations mentioned by respondents in our regular Birch Radio interviews compared to how they found out about the war, the differences are quite clear. Those who found out about the war via radio listened to more radio stations and spent more time listening as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

The television group spent the least amount of time listening to radio (presumably they were watching television instead) and used the fewest stations. The group that found out about the war from radio spent nearly two hours more with the aural medium no matter which of the four days were measured. The "someone told you" group fell somewhere in the middle.

TABLE 2

RADIO STATIONS MENTIONED BY HOW YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT THE WAR (Sample Size=6,952)

How Did You Find Out the War Had Started	# of Stations
Heard about if from television	1.91*
Heard about if from radio	2.33*
Someone told you	2.17*

*All groups are significantly different at .05 level (ANOVA, $F=73.01$, $df=2$, 6950)

TABLE 3

QUARTER HOURS LISTENED BY HOW YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT THE WAR (Sample Size=6,952)

How Did You Find Out the War Had Started	Quarter Hours
Heard about if from television	10.88*
Heard about if from radio	18.71*
Someone told you	12.53*

*All groups are significantly different at .05 level (ANOVA, $F=138.51$, $df=2$, 6950)

*ANOVA (ANalysis Of VAriance) is a statistical test that determines statistical differences between the means (averages) of three or more groups of data. The Scheffé post hoc comparison allows a conservative comparison of means between any two of the groups within the three or more groups of the ANOVA after the overall statistical significance of the ANOVA has been determined. Statistically significant differences mean that we are 95% or more confident that the differences in means are related to differences between the groups and not due to sampling error.

Each of these three groups presents a different profile. The television group is older and more heavily female. The radio group is younger and primarily male, while the "other" group is younger but more heavily female as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
DEMOGRAPHICS OF DIFFERENT GROUPS
(Sample Size=7,505)

Group	% Male	% Female	% 12-34	% 35+
Radio	54.9%	45.1%	48.3%	51.7%
Television	46.2	53.8	41.2	58.8
Someone told you	45.5	54.5	47.8	52.2

The extended demographics show that the radio group is generally better educated, with higher incomes. There is little difference when compared with the "other" group, but both the radio and "other" groups offer more desirable profiles within the income and education categories than does the television group. On the other hand, it could be said that the sheer size of the television group tends to outweigh the disadvantages. Tables 5 and 6 show the income and education profiles of the two groups. Members of each appeared to react to the war news based on how they found out about the war. Table 7 notes radio, television, or "other" answers to the question: What was the first thing you did when you found out that the war had started? "Radio answers" consist of turning on the radio, continuing to listen to the radio, and tuning to another radio station. "Television answers" are the same for that medium. The "other" answers include telling or calling another person and the catchall "other" category.

TABLE 5
INCOME PROFILES OF DIFFERENT GROUPS
(Sample Size=4,455)

Income Level	Radio (Sample Size=842)	Television (Sample Size=2965)	Someone told you (Sample Size=647)
Less than \$20,000	17.8%	26.0%	19.4%
\$20,000-\$34,999	25.7	29.6	26.4
\$35,000-\$49,999	25.1	22.5	25.8
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.8	13.4	17.8
\$75,000 or more	12.5	8.6	10.5

TABLE 6
EDUCATION LEVELS OF DIFFERENT GROUPS
 (Sample Size=5,226)

Education Level	Radio (Sample Size=972)	Television (Sample Size=3654)	Someone told you (Sample Size=801)
Less than High School	16.2%	22.6%	19.2%
High School Graduate	31.8	33.8	27.2
Some College	23.0	21.0	21.0
College Graduate	16.1	14.8	18.2
Post Graduate Work	12.9	7.8	14.1

TABLE 7
**WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU DID WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THAT THE WAR HAD
 STARTED?**
 (Sample Size=7,487)

Group	Radio	Television	Other
Radio	55.9%	24.2%	19.9%
Television	2.2	79.8	18.1
Other	18.7	47.2	34.1

The data show the immediacy of the impact of the news that the war had started kept people "glued" to the medium that brought the initial information. Fewer than one out of four radio listeners switched to television to find out more, while only two percent of those who found out from television went to radio for more information. Meanwhile, those who found out by non-electronic media means quite often did something else, either telling another person or some other action. Only a plurality chose television and fewer than one out of five turned on a radio. It should be noted, however, that we can only speculate on the circumstances behind some of the choices. Someone at work may not have had a radio or television handy when told of the news. Some people noted they were in unusual places, including two different respondents who were on cruise ships at the time the first bombs were dropped on Baghdad.

Again, we will separate the respondents by how they found out about the war to determine which medium had the best information for them on the first night and then, how they kept up with the war news after the first night as shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Television usage was heavy in terms of media use for war news, both at the beginning and for the next few days. However, after the first night's shock wore off, radio's importance as a primary source of information grew. It is interesting to note that the "other" group falls approximately in the middle between the radio and television groups, with no clear preference to one medium or the other in terms of the profile.

TABLE 8
WHICH MEDIUM HAD THE BEST INFORMATION FOR YOU ON THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE WAR?
 (Sample Size=7,497)

Group	Radio	Television	No Pref/both	Didn't Keep Up
Radio	23.9%	66.2%	9.0%	0.9%
Television	2.6	93.7	3.0	0.7
Someone told you	11.3	81.5	5.8	1.4

TABLE 9
HOW DID YOU KEEP UP WITH THE WAR NEWS?
 (Sample Size=7,492)

Group	Radio	Television	Newspaper	No Preference	Didn't Keep Up
Radio	24.2%	51.7%	3.0%	19.9%	1.2%
Television	8.4	71.9	2.2	15.9	1.6
Someone told you	15.5	63.1	3.0	15.7	3.2

THE BIRCH SCARBOROUGH WAR STUDY - PART II **REATTRIBUTION AND DIFFUSION OF RESPONSE** **BACKGROUND**

For nearly 50 years, scholars have studied how important news events such as the war in the Persian Gulf diffuse (spread) through a city or a country. The first news diffusion study focused on how students on a college campus heard about the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945. There have been dozens of reported studies since then and almost all have continued to concentrate on crisis events – natural catastrophes, assassinations and attempted assassinations, and unnatural disasters, e.g. airplane bombings.

All of these studies have two significant shortcomings which were offset in the Birch Scarborough war study. First, typically previous studies have been done with an entirely local sample of respondents, e.g., a phone sample with the college community or in the nearest large city. Seldom, if ever, has there been a national data set involved in these studies. National data are essential if one wishes to understand the diffusion pattern across an entire nation. In the United States, different portions of the country are in different time zones, with a full three hour difference from the East and West coasts. Second, most diffusion study interviews have been completed over a matter of days (or nights), and the final sample consists of all those who have been interviewed – regardless of when they were interviewed. Some portion of most of these samples has been interviewed several days or even a week after news of the event first became available. The respondents are asked to recall what they were doing at the time, who they were with, what they did next, etc...All these memories are subject to distortion and forgetting the longer it takes to complete the survey.

FINDING OUT WAR HAD STARTED

Looking again at the first special war study question then – How did you first find out the war had started – it became clear that the responses from the sample interviewed on the first night differed considerably from the responses of people interviewed on the second, third and fourth nights after the war had started. The responses of those interviewed after the first night identify a phenomenon not previously reported in any diffusion studies, likely because no prior studies reported results separately for each night of interviewing. Over time, there is a significant decrease in the reporting of use of interpersonal sources as the original source of information about the war, and a significant increase in attributing that initial information to radio and television. From the first to the fourth night of interviewing, stating that interpersonal channels were the very first source of information decreased from 25% to 16% in the Western half of the United States while the attribution to television increased from 51% to 58%; radio showed gains in the Pacific and Central time zones. With the passage of time, then, a substantial portion of individuals forget that they first heard of some major news event from another person, and they attribute it to a mass medium which is their more normative original source of major news. This can be called reattribution.¹

FIRST RESPONSE TO FINDING OUT ABOUT WAR

The phenomenon of reattribution was reaffirmed in the second war question: "What was the first thing you did when you found out the war had started?" Respondents were still asked to recall the first night's experience in finding out about the war.

Nationally, on the first night, 19% said the first thing they did was to call or tell someone else; by the fourth night, recall of doing this first had dropped to 11%. Attribution of initial activity to the mass media yields original finding from these data. On the first night, about 36% reported that the first thing they did was turn on the TV set; by the fourth night only 14% said they did this initially on the first night of war. The contrasting memory is in the extent to which they said that the first thing they did was to continue to watch the same station they had been watching; on the first night of interviewing, 16% reported this behavior and by the fourth night, it mounted to 43%. Although the percentages are smaller, the same pattern existed for radio – more of those interviewed early recalled that they had to turn on the radio and more of those interviewed on subsequent nights recalled that it was already on and they stayed with it. Over time, more individuals are likely to believe that they already were using the media when a news event broke; when asked quickly after the behavior takes place, they are more likely to recall taking some action to use a given medium. This points to the problem with research methodologies that allow a respondent to recall events occurring more than two days prior to being asked to recall. (e.g. seven-day diary methodology).

¹Greenberg, Bradley S., Ed Cohen, and Hairong Li, "How the United States Found Out About the War" (unpublished manuscript).

DISCUSSION

For the diffusionist, new and important considerations from the findings in this study have emerged. The distinct possibility that interviewing even two days after a news event provides a distorted view of the relative role of interpersonal and mass media activities is advanced here. Perhaps a nation of media fans comes to believe that the origin of most of its information is the media (which it is), and that even when the interpersonal system is activated – in both receiving and giving cycles – it is subsequently attributed to a media system. One wonders to what extent interpersonal influence, rather than information, might also be misattributed. Henceforth, diffusion data generated three days or later after an event must be examined with skepticism.

CONCLUSION

The one overarching conclusion from all these data is the incredible extent of the role of the mass media in disseminating news to the American public. Dependency on and positive evaluation of television are dominant. Other media play a role at the start, especially radio, and over time most media are used, with a substantial portion of the public indicating no preference among them.

Also, it became clear that media habits are malleable. Before the Gulf crisis, CNN was not competitive for audience loyalty with the three major commercial broadcast network news operations. Overnight, it was leading the field. Before the crisis, News and News/Talk formatted radio stations' share remained steady. Overnight, in many of the major markets, shares jumped by nearly 66%.

Finally, one other point is worth noting. For all the money television spent to get its pictures, the most memorable coverage was the reporting from a Baghdad hotel describing the scene on the telephone, so similar to the way Murrow brought home the word picture of World War II to the radio audience a half century before.

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