News Diffusion Among South Dakota State University Students

Vadakkeveetil Alexander Thomas

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NEWS DIFFUSION AMONG SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

BY

VADAKKEVEETIL ALEXANDER THOMAS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science, Major in Journalism, South Dakota State University

1974
NEWS DIFFUSION AMONG SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Science, and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Thesis Advisor

Date

Head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Date
This study attempted to determine the pattern of news diffusion of Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation October 10, 1973, among the students of South Dakota State University, Brookings.

The study was conducted by using a five-percent simple random sample of SDSU students. A questionnaire, which asked the 224 respondents the first source of information, the time of hearing the news, location of hearing the news, if they had told the news to anyone else after hearing it, and if they had sought further information from any source, is the basis for this study.

The most important finding from this study was that when the event had "extraordinary significance," interpersonal source became the most important first source of information, followed by television and radio, in order. Newspapers became the least important first source.

One conclusion was that as interpersonal communication became important due to the "extraordinary significance" of the event, the role of females in interpersonal communication also became dominant. It was found that more females had interpersonal source as the first
source of information; more females told someone else after hearing it from the first source, and thus activated the word-of-mouth communication channels; and more females sought further information from interpersonal sources.

A brief review of fifteen important news diffusion studies conducted in the United States is also included.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank his thesis advisor, Dr. Ben C. Markland, for his guidance and suggestions on this project, and the Head of the Journalism and Mass Communication Department, Dr. Vernon A. Keel, who headed the project, for his kind patronage and advice.

Dr. Carl E. Edeburn, Assistant Professor of Education, kindly helped with further suggestions and advice, and thanks go to him.

Thanks are also due to Mrs. Irene Vick for typing this thesis.

VAT
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It has been found that news diffusion in any given community follows a certain pattern depending on the "news value" of the event, and the time of its occurrence. In the last three decades, many investigations of news diffusion have been conducted in a variety of settings, and in regard to various types of events. The study of news diffusion comprises not only the field of mass communications, but also psychology, sociology and speech.

Statement of the Problem

In this research study, the author is trying to determine the pattern of news diffusion of Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation on October 10, 1973, among the students of South Dakota State University, Brookings. The major research questions proposed in this study are: (1) How the students came to know about the resignation of Agnew? What was their first source of information about the event? (2) How did they seek further information on the subject? (3) How did they spread the news by word-of-mouth communication with others? (4) How the findings of this study can be compared with the conclusions drawn from other studies of news diffusion.

Besides drawing general conclusions, the study will make suggestions for further research. The SDSU study in this paper is preceded by a brief review of literature on 15 news diffusion studies
conducted in the United States since 1945 to provide background information.

**Need for the Study**

News diffusion studies throw much light on the changing trends in the basic communication theories such as the two-step flow and the role of opinion leaders.

With the advent of the so-called communication revolution, sparked by the development of the broadcast media, a constant, never-ending debate has started among the students of mass communications on the different roles of mass media news breakers. The industry of each media is vying with others to establish its own superiority as the vehicle of mass communication, because of the commercial importance involved. So, the study of news diffusion is becoming increasingly important.

**Limitations of the Study**

This paper is not intended to be an all-inclusive study of news diffusion. The sources of information in this study are drawn only from South Dakota State University libraries. The survey is conducted only among the students of South Dakota State University.

The telephone survey used in this study was conducted by the students of the Journalism and Mass Communication Department of South Dakota State University, who had no previous experience or training in opinion poll interviewing. Also, the questionnaire that served as the basis for this study was not pre-tested.
The demographic details were not taken into account for the study, as it was assumed that the students of SDSU are somewhat homogeneous in demographic and socio-economic categories.

The review of literature in this paper deals with investigations conducted only in the United States, as the SDSU study is to be interpreted in terms of the American social environment.

So, it cannot be assumed that the conclusions reached in this study will apply to all situations and case studies in news diffusion. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the conclusions reached here will be indicative of the general trends in news diffusion.

**Definition of Terms**

**News Diffusion**

News diffusion is defined as the process by which the news of any given event is disseminated in any given community. It has been found that the process of news diffusion always follows certain patterns.

**Two-Step Flow**

The two-step flow of communication is defined as the flow of ideas from the formal media to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population.

**Opinion Leader**

The opinion leader is the person who exercises personal influence on the less active sections of the population in the process of the two-step flow of communication, and tries to convince others of his
own opinions, or a person who is sought out by others for his opinions.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review of literature, ten articles on news diffusion, published between 1945 and 1973 in American Sociological Review, Journalism Quarterly, Public Opinion Quarterly and Quarterly Journal of Speech are discussed, outlining the important news diffusion surveys conducted during a span of 28 years. It presents the development of news diffusion studies and their findings in chronological order, showing various trends, and a brief summary.

Development of News Diffusion Studies and Their Findings

One of the first known studies of news diffusion was conducted by Miller (1945) on the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The President died on April 12, 1945, at 3:35 p.m. (EST). In the survey conducted among a sample of 143 students at Kent State University the day after Roosevelt's death, it was found that 112 students (85.31%) came to know about the event by word-of-mouth, 16 by radio (11.19%), three by telephone (2.1%) and two by newspaper (1.4%). The total number of uninformed persons who were informed by persons of the sample was 287. Miller interpreted the findings into four generalizations:

1. The rapidity of spread of news item from the time point of announcement is directly related to the routines of the people in the community and the availability of mass communication devices (p. 691).
2. Radio speeds the spread of a news item by its swift transmission to mass listeners which activates rapid word-of-mouth communication lines (p. 692).

3. Radio and newspapers serve the dual functions of informing and verifying news items (p. 693).

4. The mass spread of a news item occurs by deliberate and casual social contacts (p. 693).

Based on the findings of how and when the students heard about the President's death, Miller (1945) drew five conclusions:

1. Most persons heard about the President's death by word-of-mouth. Each person who heard by word-of-mouth told, on the average, one person who had not heard.

2. Radio informants, though proportionately small, are responsible for informing an average of seven persons, thus activating word-of-mouth communication lines.

3. These word-of-mouth communication lines reached out by both deliberate and casual social contact.

4. The radio, telephone and newspapers serve both as informing and as confirming sources of news items.

5. The time it takes for news to spread depends upon the routines of daily association and the accessibility to mass communication devices at the time of announcement (p. 694).

Larsen and Hill (1953) conducted a study of news diffusion on the death of Senator Robert A. Taft among the adult residents in a housing project for faculty members of the University of Washington, Seattle, and among the adult residents in a low-rent housing project located near the industrial sector of Seattle. The event occurred on Friday, July 31, 1953, at 7:30 a.m. (PST) and the first news was broadcast by 8 a.m.
Twenty-four hours after the first report of the event, the survey was conducted in the faculty community and 147 adults were interviewed. The attempt was to interview the entire adult population, that is, to interview independently both the husband and the wife of each household. Two-and-a-half days later the faculty-community-survey, alternate dwelling units in the labor community, were surveyed. One hundred thirty-seven interviews were secured, obtaining, where possible, independent information from both the male and female adult members of each household.

The Larsen and Hill Study (1953) found that 88% of the faculty community and 93% of the laboring-class knew about the event. Within the faculty community men and women knew the news in almost equal proportions, while slightly greater proportions of men knew the news in the laboring-class community. The differences in knowing by sex, like the differences in knowing between communities as a whole, were not statistically significant. Significant difference did occur when separate consideration was given to the whites and non-whites in the laboring-class community: 99% of the whites and 86% of the non-whites knew the event. Thus, the whites in the laboring-class community were the most informed group in both communities.

Radio was the most important single source of the news: 54% of the faculty community and 43% of the laboring community reported radio as their initial source of the news. Not only was radio most important for both populations in general, but it was the most important initial
source for all sub-groups within those populations. While the faculty community, the females in both communities, and the non-whites in the laboring community learned the news from radio in greater proportions than their respective counterparts, the differences between these groups were not statistically significant.

Television informed more people of the news in the laboring-class community: 25% against 5% in the faculty community, while more people were informed via interpersonal communication in the faculty community: 35% against 17% in the laboring-class community. The newspaper was referred to as the initial source of news by 15% in the laboring community and six percent in the faculty community. In interpreting the role of the newspaper as a minor initial news source in this study, it must be remembered that the event occurred at least seven hours before any newspaper account became available to the public.

It was also found that members of the faculty community in the sample, on the average, talked with 2.9 persons about the event, while it was three persons in the laboring-class community.

On the basis of the findings, Larsen and Hill (1953) concluded that there was some indication that learning the news through interpersonal channels stimulated further interpersonal communication in both communities to a greater extent than by mass media. While the two communities were similar with respect to subsequent interpersonal communication, the faculty community consulted secondary sources of
information to a greater extent than did the laboring-class community. Relatively similar patterns of reference behavior were exhibited by males and females. Non-whites were found to consult more additional sources than whites, although the whites engaged in interpersonal communication to a greater degree.

Comparing those findings with those of the Miller study of news diffusion of President Roosevelt’s death (Miller, 1945), Larsen and Hill (1953) suggested that the degree of interpersonal communication present was a function of the interest value of the given news event. It was also indicated that the particular daily routine of the population in question was one major factor in determining the pattern of diffusion. Accessibility to the media and social contacts with other individuals was probably greatly influenced by this routine. This would suggest that news events of equal importance, but which were released at different times of the day, would follow different patterns in their diffusions.

They (Larsen and Hill, 1953) further suggested that the degree to which a population was informed of a given event was related to that population’s evaluation of the event.

Bogart (1950) investigated the diffusion of news concerning a purely local event in a prairie community of 25,000. In the study, it was found that the newspaper and the radio played a more important part than word-of-mouth in spreading the news of the event. Sixty percent of the respondents named the newspaper as the source of
information, 48% mentioned radio and 21% mentioned conversation. The overlap in the percentage was due to the multiple use of media by respondents. The study also suggested that the news of the event was not widely diffused to all social levels in the community.

Danielson (1956) studied the news diffusion pattern of President Eisenhower's announcement of his decision to run for a second term among a sample of 129 residents of Palo Alto, California. The survey was held during the two days following the announcement at 7:52 a.m. (PST) on February 29, 1956. It was found that 39% of the respondents got the first information of the announcement by radio, 27% by newspaper, 20% by interpersonal contact and 14% by television.

Respondents were asked which media they used to get further information about Eisenhower's decision. The newspaper was reported as a supplementary source by 86% of the respondents. Television was reported by 54% and radio by 46%. The overlap in the percentage was due to the multiple use of media by respondents.

Based on those findings, Danielson (1956) suggested that radio functioned to get news quickly to many respondents, who later used television and the newspaper for "filling in" purposes. The findings also indicated the presence of a single underlying dimension of supplementary media use. As communities became more heavily saturated with television sets, and as old habits of the pre-TV era died or changed, that single dimension might emerge: if radio was used as a supplementary source of information about an event, the television
and newspaper would also be used; if television was used, then the newspaper would be used also; only the newspaper would be used alone as a supplementary medium by any large number of people, and if people did not use newspapers, they would be unlikely to use either radio or television. If the newspaper was not used, neither radio nor television would be used.

Deutschmann and Danielson (1960) reported an elaborate study of the patterns of news diffusion of President Eisenhower's light stroke in November, 1957, in Lansing, Michigan; Explorer I satellite launching in January, 1958, in Lansing, Madison, Wisconsin, and Palo Alto, California; Alaskan statehood news in June, 1958, in Lansing and Madison. Altogether, six samples were obtained over three stories and three communities.

In the survey of Eisenhower's stroke news in Lansing, it was found that, in a sample of 205 persons, television was the most important first source of information, accounting for 38%. The radio accounted for 32%, followed by the newspaper 18%. The interpersonal source of communication accounted for 18%. That is, for 82% of the sample, the mass media were the first source of information, and for 18%, it was interpersonal communication.

In the study of the Explorer I satellite launching, conducted in Lansing, Michigan, among a sample of 167 persons, it was found that 40% of them first knew about the event by television, 20% by radio, 17% by newspaper and 23% by interpersonal communication. That is,
for 77% of the sample, the media were the first source of information about the event, followed by interpersonal communication accounting for 23%.

Surveys were conducted in Madison and Palo Alto almost at the same time for the Explorer I satellite launching.

In the survey in Madison among a sample of 125 for the Explorer story, it was found that 36% first knew about the event through television, followed by the radio, 29%; newspaper, 22% and interpersonal communication 13%. So, mass media were the first source for 87%.

In Palo Alto, for a sample of 38, television accounted for 61%, followed by radio, 18%; newspaper, 10% and interpersonal communication, 10% approximately. That is, media were the first source for approximately 90%.

In the Alaska statehood study in Lansing, among a sample of 84, it was found that 33% first knew about the event by newspaper, followed by the radio, 32%; television, 20% and interpersonal contact 15%. That is, mass media accounted for 85%.

In Madison, among a sample of 165, it was found that approximately 41% first learned of the event by newspaper, followed by television, 34%; radio, 24% and interpersonal communication, 2%. That is, mass media accounted for nearly 98%.

From these findings, Deutschmann and Danielson (1960) concluded that the diffusion process was far more regular than they suspected.
Time of day, nature of society, and other factors did not seem to alter the gross results very much. The diffusion curves followed about the same pattern. It was also suggested that television played a major role in delivering important news, and radio was still doing a big news job. Newspapers tended primarily to supplement the broadcast reports. On the matter of the two-step flow of communication, Deutschmann and Danielson (1960) suggested:

1. Initial mass media information on important events goes directly to the people on the whole and is not relayed to any great extent.

2. People talk about important events they have learned about from the media.

3. At this state, opinion leaders, who have more information, may do some relaying of information. But, this is a supplementary relaying. When the subject comes up, the informed leader contributes the additional information he has on it—adding, subtracting, correcting, confirming, etc. (p. 355).

They also concluded that the relay function was supplemental in nature, probably took place at the same time as the reinforcement function, and was hard to distinguish from the latter. Thus, it was also urged that the Katz-Lazarsfeld two-step flow hypothesis, as a description of the initial information process, be applied to mass communication with caution and qualification.

Hill and Bonjean (1964) studied the news diffusion of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Texas, the place of the killing, in a sample of 212 residents, one week after the event. The President was shot on November 22, 1964, at 12:30 p.m. and the first news
bulletin was released at 12:34 p.m. It was found that the news spread through Dallas with great rapidity. Within one hour after the first news bulletin, 92.8% of the sample had heard about the event. The pattern closely resembled that reported by Miller (1945) in his study of the diffusion of Roosevelt's death. The similarity of those two patterns was particularly striking because of the contrasts between the two samples: the Dallas sample was the population of a metropolitan area, while Miller's study (1945) was based on a sample of college students. When contrasted with other studies of diffusion, the Dallas findings suggested that the speed of the diffusion process was a function of the "news value" of the event rather than of the particular characteristics of the population being investigated. Indeed, ranking the events of the percentage of respondents informed of the event one hour after its initial release appeared to Hill and Bonjean (1964) as a ranking of the events by their "news value": (1) Roosevelt's death and Kennedy's assassination, (2) launching of Explorer I, (3) Eisenhower's illness and (4) Alaskan statehood.

It was found that 57.1% of the sample came to know about Kennedy's assassination through interpersonal communication, followed by television, 25.9% and radio, 17%. Nobody mentioned the newspaper as the first source of information. In the Miller investigation (1945) of Roosevelt's death, 87.4% of those informed first heard of the President's death through interpersonal channels.
By contrast, in Deutschmann and Danielson's study (1960) of the announcement of Alaskan statehood, only 6% were first informed of the event in that manner.

Again, Kennedy's assassination news diffusion findings were in substantial agreement with Roosevelt's death news diffusion. Interpersonal communication was the single most important source of initial learning. This was particularly striking given the differences between the Dallas sample and Miller's (1945) sample, and the differences in media use during the time of Miller's study and the Dallas study. The television was not in use at the time of Miller's study of Roosevelt's death. In short, the data indicated that the importance of interpersonal communication as the initial source of information was directly related to the "news value" of the event. Thus, while the relay function of word-of-mouth communication might be a minor matter in the case of events having low or moderate "news value"; and for news of major importance, the two-step flow of communication was of considerable significance.

It is also suggested that as the importance of interpersonal communication increased, the importance of the newspaper as the source of initial learning diminished. Not only was interpersonal communication found to be the single most important source of learning of the event studied here, but it was as rapid as was learning from the mass media sources. Of those learning through interpersonal channels, 89.1% had been informed within an hour of the first news
On the basis of those findings, Hill and Bonjean (1964) concluded:

1. Diffusion rates may follow the same pattern for stories of approximately equal "news value"; however, different diffusion curves are observed for stories having separate news values. The news value of the event appears to be a more important factor than particular characteristics of the samples in determining diffusion rates.

2. Television may play the major role in delivering news of average importance, but interpersonal communication became the most important single source for news stories of extraordinary significance.

3. The possibility that diffusion patterns may be altered significantly by the time of first news release needs to be investigated further. If the news is released during working hours, the exposure patterns for males and females will differ where the event is of great importance. The existence of such differences in cases where news of great impact is released during non-working hours remains to be determined.

4. Sex is related to source of first exposure although this may be primarily a function of location. The relation of occupational class to source of first exposure may not be as pronounced as previously reported. In the case of events with high news value, the classes evidence considerable similarity with respect to source of original exposure.

5. Even during working hours, more people learn of the news in a private home than in any other setting. In this location television is the most frequent source of first exposure; however, for events of extraordinary importance, interpersonal communication plays a major part in the diffusion process regardless of the location of the individual (p. 342).

Hill and Bonjean (1964) also suggested that with respect to the regularity of the diffusion process, certain qualifications must be
introduced. Regular patterns had been observed but it appeared that those patterns were influenced to a greater degree by the impact of the news. The direction of that influence, if not its magnitude, could be suggested and while those suggestions were offered as hypotheses, they were supported by the available data:

1. The greater the news value of an event, the more important will be interpersonal communication in the diffusion process.

2. The greater the news value of the event, the more rapid will be the diffusion process.

3. The importance of the various media as sources of information is in part a function of the daily routines of individuals. When those routines are interrupted by the occurrence of a major news event, the importance of the various media may be altered significantly.

4. While certain socio-economic class differences may exist with respect to media use, these differences tend to be diminished in the case of the diffusion of an event of major impact (p. 342).

Greenberg (1964) interviewed a sample of 419 adults about the news diffusion of President Kennedy's assassination in a northern California city of about 200,000 population, over a four-day period after the event. The findings indicated: (1) almost nine in ten heard of the shooting of the President prior to the announcement that he had died; (2) among those who heard of the shooting, two-thirds heard within a half-hour; (3) location at the time of the shooting dictated the means by which adults heard of the events--those at work were told primarily by others, those who were out were evenly
divided between the mass media and personal sources as the first means of knowledge, those at home were informed primarily by radio and television; (4) those informed by personal sources immediately turned to radio and television for confirmation and additional information; (5) those informed by personal sources were likely to talk to a greater number of other persons about the event.

Greenberg (1964) concluded that the study of the initial diffusion of knowledge about the assassination of President Kennedy and subsequent use of mass media and interpersonal communication channels did more than replicate previous studies. First, there was the event itself. Very few events disrupted normal patterns of daily activity, changed work schedules, altered week-end plans and brought an entire nation, save the mass media, to a slow walk.

Second, all channels of communication had a single focus. There was a maximum opportunity to receive information about the assassination. In previous studies of news diffusion, except in the case of Roosevelt’s death, competing events, competing messages, and competing channels were present. In the case of the Kennedy assassination, only the physically isolated could avoid hearing of the assassination on the day it occurred. This saturation of the communication channels created the maximum opportunity for diffusion of news to occur either by mass media or by interpersonal means.

Third was the time element involved in that particular event. Earlier studies, including the more general diffusion of influence,
or of innovation, had been concerned with the events transpiring over much longer periods. Diffusion of the knowledge of Kennedy's assassination was a matter of minutes for most of the population. In that rapid flow of information about the day's events, personal communication was far more critical in an initial and supplementary manner than previous studies had indicated.

Greenberg (1964) suggested that together those factors established a set of conditions for that event that made it possible to study the relative role of mass media as a first source of information without concern for the length of time of the diffusion process or the availability of information. The natural considerations were sufficient for diffusion to occur either by word-of-mouth or the mass media. It was not necessary for one mode to be paramount as a first source of information. Although the assassination was in one sense a "limiting" case of the process of diffusion of information—all communication systems were operating optimally and immediately on a single event—knowledge of the process under just such conditions was essential to the probing of more general problems of diffusion.

Adams, Mullen and Wilson (1969) reported a study of news diffusion of a "minor" foreign affairs news event in the United States. On March 28, 1967, in a Papal Encyclical, Pope Paul announced the Church's approval of government information programs in family planning. The first word of the Encyclical reached the United States
at about 9 a.m. EST. A sample of 2,646 adults in 13 cities were interviewed on the diffusion of the news, during the next six days.

Adams, Millen and Wilson (1960) in this study hypothesized that:

1. If an event is of little personal relevance and has little emotional impact, but is covered by the mass media, the message will diffuse to about half the population.

2. If an event, though covered by the mass media, is of little personal relevance and has little emotional appeal, interpersonal communication will be minimal.

3. Given an event of little significance to respondents, diffusion would tend to follow normal media patterns, with some respondents learning of the event on Day 1, some on Day 2, and with little subsequent diffusion occurring.

4. If an event deals with a subject of relevance to a segment of the population, that segment would be more apt to learn of the event than would non-members of that segment.

5. Those to whom the event has the most relevance would be more apt to try to verify the report than would those to whom the event is less important.

6. Those to whom the event is more relevant would be more apt to tell others about the event than would those to whom the event is less relevant.

7. Those to whom the event is most relevant would be more apt to have someone tell them about the event than would those to whom the event is less relevant.

8. Respondents with foreknowledge of a significant aspect of an event will be more apt to learn of the event than those without such foreknowledge.
9. Exposure to reports of an event will vary according to sex, age and education level of the respondent, with more learners among males, younger persons and those with higher educational levels than among less-educated, older, female respondents (p. 546).

It was noted that the Papal Encyclical was a long-awaited one and speculation that such an announcement would be made was frequently reported in early 1966.

It was found that 55% of the sample had heard about the event by the time they were interviewed. The first source of information was the mass media for 97.8% and interpersonal channels for 2.2%.

On the basis of the above and other findings, Adams, Millen and Wilson (1969) concluded that their hypotheses were confirmed, with education, age and sex as important variables, and the knowledge of the event was most likely among better educated, younger and male respondents. Specifically, those to whom the event seemed most personally relevant (Catholics) were more apt to have heard of the event, to have attempted to verify the report, to have talked to others about it, and to have others tell them about it, than were those with other religious affiliations.

Levy (1969) reported the news diffusion of the assassination of six political figures in the United States during the 1960's. The events were the assassination of President Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and George Lincoln Rockwell. Based on the data obtained from the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, polarized group
Analysis was used for the study on a nationwide sample of 1,200 adults.

It was found that mass media were the most important first source of information and nearly 70% of the respondents reported hearing of each assassination from mass media sources.

On the basis of various other findings, Levy concluded that it was apparent that the population did not uniformly gain access to information about the six political assassinations in the country in the 1960s. Not only did the level of information differ greatly for various subgroups in the population, but both the level and the source through which information was first transmitted differed, depending on the person assassinated. Further, it was evident that subgroups that were defined by specific categories obtained from the simultaneous use of several important predictor variables differ greatly in the extent to which they are informed and the sources through which they gained the information. It also appeared that the source that was most important for a particular group differed among the subgroups.

Further, there was evidence for a relationship between the extent to which a group had heard about a political assassination and the channel through which it obtained information. The most highly informed subgroups appeared among the lowest groups for television as a source and among the highest for radio and newspaper as a source.
Steinfatt, Gantz, Seibold and Miller (1973) reported the study of news diffusion of the shooting of Senator George Corley Wallace. The sample consisted of 144 persons in Ann Arbor, around the University of Michigan, and they were interviewed in one to six hours after the event, which took place at 3 p.m. EST on May 15, 1972. The first news reports of the event were on the air at 3:15 p.m.

Demographically, 92% of the respondents were white and the remaining 8% were black. Fortuitously, half of the sample were males and half were females. University students comprised 46%, while 41% were employed people and 13% were housewives, retirees and persons unemployed.

It was found that 79% of the sample had heard of the event at the time they were called and 19% had not heard. The remaining had heard something about Wallace that seemed unusual to them, but they were not aware of the specific event. The most obvious features of the data were the increase of percentage which occurred about 5 p.m., when most of the workers and students in the sample were returning home for the day and the high level of awareness of the shooting in the early interviews—71%. A negative diffusion trend—the drop from 88% to 85% in the half-hour before and after 5:30 p.m.—was noted in the early evening hours.

Regarding the first source of information, it was found that of the 144 persons who were aware of the event, 70% heard from interpersonal sources and 30% from mass media.
Specifically, in the case of interpersonal communication, 24% heard from strangers, 24% from co-workers, 13% friends, 6% from known people by telephone and 3% from relatives.

That is, approximately, one quarter of those in the sample of 114 persons who were aware of the Wallace shooting heard the news via face-to-face communication with a person they had not seen before; or 64% of interpersonal communication came from strangers.

In the case of mass media source, 21% heard from television and nine percent from radio. None learned of the event from the newspaper.

It was found that 46% of the sample stayed tuned to radio or television if they were listening, to get further information on the event; or turned to a media source if they were not listening. Another 19% did nothing, one percent actually turned their radio or television set off, and 55% told someone, called someone, or otherwise engaged in some form of interpersonal communication concerning the shooting. The overlap was due to the multiple action (media and interpersonal) taken by 21% of the sample.

There was no apparent difference between persons hearing via mass media or via interpersonal sources in seeking out other persons to discuss the event, or in being sought out for information about the event. About one-half of the respondents hearing each way actually sought out at least one other person to tell of the event. Similarly, there were no major differences in the number or the kind
of sources that those respondents hearing via mass media or interpersonal sources sought out for more information.

About one out of every five persons interviewed was unaware of the shooting. The demographic characteristics and political preference for those unaware were not substantially different from the sample as a whole. The only unusual characteristics of the unaware group were (a) that 75% of those unaware of the event were women and (b) that no person, who put himself in the category of a radical or anarchist (there were seventeen in the sample) was unaware of the event when interviewed.

Again, after three months of the event, the investigators (Steinfatt, Gantz, Seibold, and Miller, 1973) conducted a second survey of the news diffusion of the Wallace shooting. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant change between rate of mass media and interpersonal first sources reported by persons in similar samples obtained three months apart. More specifically, it was predicted that for the second sample there would be a significant increase in reports of media as the initial source of information of the event and a significant decrease in the number of persons reporting initial source as interpersonal communication. In order that the sample might closely approximate the earlier one, the investigators canvassed the same residential area, carefully avoiding the blocks sampled in the first survey, and for the sake of comparison, classified subjects on the same demographic basis previously employed. The sample consisted of 164 persons and they were inter-
viewed on the same day of the week and at the same time as in the first study.

With regard to the initial source of information, of those who replied who they had first heard of the shooting three months earlier, numbering 158 respondents, 57% cited the mass media as their first source (with 28% citing television, 25% citing radio, and four percent, newspapers). In the case of interpersonal communication, 43% mentioned interpersonal communication as their first source (20% citing co-workers, 10% friends, eight percent strangers, four percent relatives, and one percent phone conversations).

It was found that as anticipated, the percentage of persons citing media-first-source increased significantly—to 57% from 30%. Correspondingly, those citing interpersonal sources as first source of information decreased—from 43% to 70%.

If the dissociation effect was at work in the second sample, the investigators concluded that they expected at least two particular indicators to be pronounced in the second survey. First, the number of persons indicating strangers as first sources of information should decrease for persons knowledge of the shooting. This result was obtained; while 24% of those in the first sample who knew of the event reported learning from strangers, only eight percent in the second sample reported strangers as an initial source of information. It was possible that such persons in the second sample were not associating source and message. That possibility seemed more reasonable when
comparison was made for sources of first information by occupation, the second indicator.

The investigators (Steinfatt, Gantz, Seibold and Miller, 1973) also suggested that the percentage of persons in each group reporting hearing via media increased significantly between samples since persons in those groups initially hearing from other persons might have forgotten that source (stranger, co-worker, friend, etc.) over time and might confuse having seen or heard the event on the media later that afternoon or evening as the initial source of information (particularly if the individual usually relied on mass media for his information).

As anticipated, the overall rate of media awareness for second sample of workers and students in particular (persons likely to have been in school or at work when Wallace was shot) increased sharply from a combined 24% mass media-first-source rate in the first sample to 44% in the second sample, while interpersonal first source dropped from 64% to 39% for persons of those two groups across samples.

It was also found that 12% of the student respondents in the first sample heard via mass media while 49% of the students in the second survey reported media-first-awareness. This was a significant increase in the number of media knowers, an increase coupled with a corresponding decrease in the percentage of students reporting interpersonal first source. Similarly, there was a significant increase in the number of media awareness replies within the employed non-student
group between the two samples and a concomitant drop in the percentage of interpersonal first sources reported in the second sample.

On the basis of those findings, the investigators (Steinfatt, Gantz, Seibold and Miller, 1973) also concluded that the significant differences between rate of media and interpersonal first awareness of the same event reported by persons in similar samples and within the same occupational groups obtained three months apart suggested that a separation of message and source occurred over time. Persons interviewed in the second sample remembered the event, but frequently those who reported hearing it via mass media exhibited some uncertainty in their responses.

The tendency to separate original source from message might be attributable to the higher credibility of the media, repeated airing of the event, and a general tendency to both seek and receive information about news events from the media. That previous diffusion research had often been undertaken substantially after the occurrence of the event might account for the largely undetected interpersonal flow of information.

Further, it seemed likely that the greater the amount of time between the occurrence of a newsworthy event and the interview about the event, the greater the impact of the dissociation effect on the results of the study.
Summary of Review of Literature

The 15 investigations of news diffusion reviewed in this chapter showed that in general the patterns of news diffusion in cases of events of equal value and importance were very similar, and it illustrated the fact that the central point of news diffusion was the importance of the event.

The patterns followed regularity and many of the hypotheses could be proved on the basis of the findings of those investigations, taking into account, very cautiously, the variables involved. It was also found that, generally, when the news value of the event changed, there was a rapid change in the pattern of news diffusion.

The studies showed that, in general, for an event of "extraordinary significance," the role of interpersonal communication as the first source of information was the most important in news diffusion. And as the news value of the event decreased, the importance of interpersonal sources also decreased.

It was also found that when interpersonal communication increased, the role of newspaper as first source of information decreased, and as the role of newspaper increased, the role of interpersonal communication in news diffusion also decreased.

As the news value of the event increased, it was found, television became the most important first source followed by radio, among the formal media.

The time of the occurrence of the event, the availability of the
means of communication, the interest of the people in the event, and the routines of daily life of the people were the factors found to be influencing the patterns of news diffusion.

The South Dakota State University study of the news diffusion of Vice President Agnew's resignation by this author could be compared, to a great extent, with the Miller study (1945) at Kent State University about the news diffusion of President Roosevelt's death, considering that (1) the populations of both the studies were college students; (2) the time of occurrence of both the events were in the afternoon of a working day; and (3) both the events were of great importance in terms of their news value. But, it should be taken into consideration that television had not become a general public medium at the time of the Miller study in 1945.

The South Dakota State University study could also be compared with the Hill and Bonjean (1964) study of the news diffusion of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Texas, to some extent, considering (1) the news value of the event; and (2) the time of its occurrence.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The first news of the resignation of Vice President Agnew on October 10, 1973, was released at about 1:30 p.m. (CST). At about the same time, the news was broadcast.

Population

The population of this study consisted of the student body at South Dakota State University, which had an enrollment of 6,217 students during fall semester, 1973. It was almost an all-white population, except for a handful of black and foreign students. Demographically, it was, therefore assumed, considering Midwestern particularities, that the students belonged to generally similar socio-economic categories and age groupings.

Sample

A five percent sample was taken for the study. Samples were selected from the official list of students, arranged in alphabetical order, as provided by the Administration Office. Every 20th name in the list was chosen for the sample. The starting point was No. 2, which was decided by drawing lots.

Interview

Interviews of subjects were conducted by telephone at their places of residence. Student volunteers from the Journalism Department conducted the interviews from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on
the same day from the Journalism Department under the auspices of "Communications Research Division of the University."

Interview Conditions

If a telephone number listed in the list was wrong, the next one was taken as the sample. Each subject, when not available in the first or second attempt to interview, was called for a third time. If the subject was not available for the third time, the number was given up, and the subject was not replaced. Because of financial limitations, calls were made only to students residing on the campus and/or in the Brookings area, where there was no additional cost for calls. In the case of calls outside the Brookings area, which came under long distance calls, the next local number in the list was used.

Net Sample

A five percent sample from 6,217 students involves 310 subjects. Because of the above-mentioned conditions, a total of 226 students were actually contacted. Of those, 224 had heard the news, and comprised the net sample.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire, which served as the basis for this study, mainly consisted of six closed-end questions. The sample of the questionnaire is shown in the Appendix.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

Of the gross sample of 226 chosen, 224 knew of the Agnew resignation and they formed the net sample for the study. That is, 99.1% of the gross sample had heard the news.

Comparison of Population and Sample

In the population of 6,217 students, 59.5% were male and 40.5% were female. In the net sample of 224 students, 51.3% were male and 48.7% were female. Thus, the representation of males is 8.2% lower in the sample, while in the case of females, it is 8.2% higher.

First Source of Information

As shown in Table 1, it was found that the most important first source of information was interpersonal, accounting for 58.7% of the sample. It was also found that interpersonal source was the first source of information for more females than males.

The interpersonal source was either a friend, classmate, roommate, teacher, or relative. There were no strangers as interpersonal source.

Television was the second important first source of information, accounting for 25.1% of the sample.

Radio was the third important source of information, accounting for 14.8% of the sample.
### TABLE 1
FIRST SOURCE OF INFORMATION BY SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(57)</td>
<td>(74)</td>
<td>(131)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(144)</td>
<td>(109)</td>
<td>(223)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square = 7.42; df = 3; p = .059
Newspapers were the least important source of first information, accounting for 1.3% of the sample.

The newspaper source also included the Associated Press wire service at the Journalism Department.

**Time of Hearing the News**

As shown in Table 2, in five hours after the announcement of the news, 93.2% of the sample, who could recall the time of first hearing, had heard it.

In the first hour, 8.7% heard the news, in the second hour, another 40.2%, in the third hour, another 23.7%, in the fourth hour, another 12.8%, in the fifth hour, another 7.8%, and in the sixth hour and afterwards, the remaining 6.8%.

Thus, the rate of diffusion was most rapid in the second hour after the announcement of the news, accounting for 40.2% of the sample. It was also found that more females heard the news in this peak hour than males.

**Location of Hearing the News**

As shown in Table 3, 59.6% of the sample, who could recall the place of hearing the news, heard it at their respective places of residence or at the residence of a friend.

For 28.3%, the location was the campus, either in class or elsewhere.

For 8.5%, the location was their respective places of work, either on campus or off campus.
TABLE 2

TIME FOR HEARING THE NEWS BY SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 p.m.</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 p.m.</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>(53)</td>
<td>(88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4 p.m.</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 5 p.m.</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6 p.m.</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m. Onward</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(112)</td>
<td>(107)</td>
<td>(219)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square = 9.82; df = 5; p = .08
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home/Dorm</td>
<td>61.4% (70)</td>
<td>57.8% (63)</td>
<td>59.6% (133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>21.9% (25)</td>
<td>34.9% (38)</td>
<td>28.3% (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Work</td>
<td>9.6% (11)</td>
<td>7.3% (8)</td>
<td>8.5% (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Car</td>
<td>7.0% (8)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.6% (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square = 11.42; df = 3; p = .009
For 3.6%, the source was a car radio. All of these respondents were males.

**Spreading the News by Telling Someone Else**

As shown in Table 4, 59.2% of the sample told someone else the news and thus activated word-of-mouth communication. It was also found that more females than males spread the news by word-of-mouth communication.

**Source of Further Information**

As shown in Table 5, 64.1% of the sample sought further information on the event, after hearing it from the first source of information. More females sought further information than males.

Television was the most important source of further information, accounting for 60.8%. More males sought further information from television than females.

Interpersonal source was the second important source of further information, accounting for 20.3%. More females sought further information from interpersonal sources than males.

Radio was the third important source of further information, accounting for 20.3%. More females sought further information from radio than males.

Newspapers were the least important source of further information, accounting for only 3.5%. More males sought further information from newspapers than females.
### TABLE 4

SPREADING THE NEWS BY RESPONDENTS BY SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Told</td>
<td>48.2% (55)</td>
<td>70.6% (77)</td>
<td>59.2% (132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Told</td>
<td>51.8% (59)</td>
<td>29.4% (32)</td>
<td>40.8% (91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0% (114)</td>
<td>100.0% (109)</td>
<td>100.0% (223)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square = 10.66; df = 1; p = .001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>(87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>(29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square = 9.28; df = 3; p = .025
Females and Interpersonal Communication

As shown in Tables 1, 4, and 5, in general, more females engaged in interpersonal communication than males. It was found that more females had interpersonal source as the first source than males; more females spread the news by telling someone else; and more females sought further information from interpersonal sources.

Peak Hour Activities

As shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8, interpersonal communication—hearing the news first from someone, telling someone else about it after hearing the news, and seeking further information from someone—was the maximum during the peak hour, which was the second hour after the announcement of the news.

It was the same with both radio and television. The maximum use of radio and television as the first source of information and for further information was during the peak hour.
## TABLE 6

**TIME OF HEARING THE NEWS BY TIME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1 to 2 p.m.</th>
<th>2 to 3 p.m.</th>
<th>3 to 4 p.m.</th>
<th>4 to 5 p.m.</th>
<th>5 to 6 p.m.</th>
<th>6 p.m. Onward</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>15.8% (3)</td>
<td>15.9% (14)</td>
<td>15.4% (8)</td>
<td>10.7% (3)</td>
<td>17.6% (3)</td>
<td>13.3% (2)</td>
<td>15.1% (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>31.6% (6)</td>
<td>25.0% (22)</td>
<td>21.2% (11)</td>
<td>14.3% (4)</td>
<td>23.5% (4)</td>
<td>53.3% (8)</td>
<td>25.1% (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>7.1% (2)</td>
<td>5.9% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>1.4% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>52.6% (10)</td>
<td>59.1% (52)</td>
<td>63.5% (33)</td>
<td>67.9% (19)</td>
<td>52.9% (9)</td>
<td>33.3% (5)</td>
<td>58.4% (128)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|          | 100.0% (19) | 100.0% (88) | 100.0% (52) | 100.0% (28) | 100.0% (17) | 100.0% (15) | 100.0% (219) |

*Chi-square = 21.42; df = 15; p = .123*
## Table 7

**Spreading of the News by Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 to 2 p.m.</th>
<th>2 to 3 p.m.</th>
<th>3 to 4 p.m.</th>
<th>4 to 5 p.m.</th>
<th>5 to 6 p.m.</th>
<th>6 p.m. Onward</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Told</strong></td>
<td>78.9% (15)</td>
<td>58.0% (38)</td>
<td>73.1% (13)</td>
<td>46.4% (7)</td>
<td>41.2% (6)</td>
<td>59.4% (130)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not Told</strong></td>
<td>21.1% (4)</td>
<td>42.0% (14)</td>
<td>26.9% (15)</td>
<td>53.6% (10)</td>
<td>58.8% (9)</td>
<td>40.6% (89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  | 100.0% (19) | 100.0% (88) | 100.0% (52) | 100.0% (28) | 100.0% (17) | 100.0% (15) | 100.0% (219) |

Chi-square = 13.75; df = 5; p = .017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1 to 2 p.m.</th>
<th>2 to 3 p.m.</th>
<th>3 to 4 p.m.</th>
<th>4 to 5 p.m.</th>
<th>5 to 6 p.m.</th>
<th>6 p.m. Onward</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>33.3% (4)</td>
<td>13.6% (8)</td>
<td>20.0% (7)</td>
<td>11.8% (2)</td>
<td>9.1% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>15.7% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>50.0% (6)</td>
<td>57.6% (34)</td>
<td>65.7% (23)</td>
<td>58.8% (10)</td>
<td>45.5% (5)</td>
<td>100.0% (6)</td>
<td>60.0% (84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>8.3% (1)</td>
<td>3.4% (2)</td>
<td>2.9% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>9.1% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.6% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>8.3% (1)</td>
<td>25.4% (15)</td>
<td>11.4% (4)</td>
<td>29.4% (5)</td>
<td>36.4% (4)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>20.7% (29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|               | 100.0% (12) | 100.0% (59) | 100.0% (35) | 100.0% (17) | 100.0% (11) | 100.0% (6)   | 100.0% (140) |

Chi-square = 15.52; df = 15; p = .414
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings of this study and comparing them with the findings of 15 other news diffusion studies reviewed in this thesis, the author had come to the following summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary

The South Dakota State University study of the news diffusion of Vice President Agnew's resignation showed that the process of news diffusion followed the regularity of patterns suggested by Hill and Bonjean (1964).

It was found that the patterns of news diffusion found in the Miller study of President Roosevelt's death (1945), and the Hill and Bonjean study of President Kennedy's assassination (1964), and the South Dakota State University study of Vice President Agnew's resignation by this author had, in general, similar characteristics, as the events were of "extraordinary significance."

Thus, when the event had "extraordinary significance," interpersonal source became the most important first source of information, followed by television and radio, in order. Newspapers became the least important first source.

An interesting conclusion of the South Dakota State University study was that as interpersonal communication became important due
to the "extraordinary significance" of the event, the role of females in interpersonal communication also became dominant. As it was found, more females had interpersonal source as the first source of information; more females told the news to someone else after hearing it from the first source, and thus activated the word-of-mouth communication channels; and more females sought further information from interpersonal sources.

Conclusions

Basically, news diffusion studies had been found valid only if the news "breaks out" all of a sudden, without any forewarning. For example, a news diffusion study of the first moon landing did not mean much, as everyone was expecting the event and was ready to receive the news from broadcast media.

Important factors found to be influencing the patterns of news diffusion were (1) the importance of the event (2) its uniqueness, (3) the time of the occurrence of the event, (4) the availability of or accessibility to the means of communication, (5) the individual's personal relevance to the event, (6) the proximity of the event, (7) the routines of the daily life of the people, (8) the individual's age, (9) the degree of impact of the event on the individual's institutional affiliations and leanings, and above all, (10) the total social structure of the community.

It was also found that each medium had to play its own role in the news diffusion of any event, depending on the situation.
Interpersonal communication existed side by side with the formal media of communication. So, the influence of mass media as well as interpersonal communication should neither be underestimated nor overestimated in news diffusion, as the process was mostly situational and there were a large number of variables which influenced the patterns.

Recommendations

The pattern of the greater role of females in interpersonal communication in the news diffusion of events of "extraordinary importance," and the factors involved in it, may need further investigations.

The patterns of interpersonal communication may further be investigated to assess the roles of two-step flow and opinion leaders in the process of news diffusion. So far, news diffusion studies did not throw much light on the two-step flow theory of communication, nor on the concept of the opinion leader. That was mainly because news diffusion investigations were mostly not designed to study the two-step flow and opinion leader theories. On the other hand, those studies were aimed at measuring the spontaneous flow of news and information in the event of a sudden "break out" of news, rather than assessing the flow of influence.
APPENDIX

Questionnaire
Hello. My name is _______. I'm working with the Communications Research Division at the University on a survey of how people first found out about Vice President Agnew's resignation. I'd like to ask you a few questions, if I may. First....

1. Before I called, did you know that the Vice President had resigned?
   ___yes
   ___no (IF NO, thank respondent and terminate interview)

2. How did you first find out about Mr. Agnew's resignation?
   (i.e., from a friend, relative, neighbor, radio, TV newspaper, etc.)

3. Do you recall roughly what time of day it was when you first heard the announcement?

4. Where were you when you first heard about the resignation?
   (i.e., at work, at home, etc.)

5. After you heard the announcement, did you tell anyone else?
   ___yes
   ___no

6. Also, after you first heard about Mr. Agnew's resignation, did you try to get further information about the announcement?
   ___yes
   ___no

   IF YES, ask:

   6. a. How did you try to find out more?
      (i.e., from a friend, radio, TV, a relative, etc.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Respondent's sex:
   ___male
   ___female

Time interview completed:_______________________.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Miller, Delbert C. A research note on mass communication. *American Sociological Review*, 1945, 10, 691-694.