

FOR RELEASE: THURSDAY, A.M., FEBRUARY 8, 1990

AVIANCA AIRLINES CRASH TOPS
TIMES MIRROR NEWS INTEREST INDEX;
EASTERN EUROPE FLAGGING,
RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN NEWS INTEREST EMERGE

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- The crash of an Avianca Airlines jetliner near New York's Kennedy Airport was the most closely followed news story in January, according to the latest Times Mirror New Interest Index, followed by the Charles Stuart murder case in Boston, the arrest of Washington Mayor Marion Barry, and the acquittal of defendants in California's McMartin Day Care child abuse trial.

The January index found that while the political changes taking place in eastern Europe are considered the most important news events of the month, the most avid news consumers are currently paying less attention to these stories than in previous months.

The index also found that, while race rarely makes a difference in determining interest in news stories, non-whites were significantly more interested in January's Stuart, Barry and McMartin stories than were whites. And the story of Nelson Mandela's impending release from a South African prison and the legalization of the African National Congress was followed three times as closely by non-white Americans as by whites.

Compared with other stories measured by Times Mirror since 1986, the public found none of the January stories particularly riveting. While the Avianca Airlines plane crash attracted the greatest public attention during the month, the story was followed closely by only 33 percent of respondents, placing it 33rd on the list of 100 news events measured since 1986.

Grouped just behind the Avianca crash were Boston's Charles Stuart murder-suicide case (which 29 percent of respondents said they were following "very closely"), the arrest of Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry on drug charges (28%), and the acquittal of the owners of the McMartin day care center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children (27%).

Twenty-six percent of respondents said they were following very closely the political changes in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany in January, down slightly from 29 percent in December.

The most serious news consumers, including devotees of the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour and National Public Radio, paid considerably less attention to eastern European news in January than in previous months. Only 39 percent of these news enthusiasts now say they are following events in eastern Europe very closely, down from 58 percent a month ago.

About four in ten non-whites surveyed in January were following very closely the Stuart, Barry and McMartin stories, while less than a third of white respondents were giving these stories close attention.

News from South Africa of Nelson Mandela's impending release came too late to be included in all interviews for this report, but among those surveyed 26 percent of non-whites were following these developments closely, compared with only nine percent of whites.

These were four of only eleven stories measured by Times Mirror since 1986 for which news interest was affected by race. Whites were much more interested in the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the Supreme Court decision on flag-burning, while blacks and other minorities were more interested in such stories as the letter bombings of Federal judges, the elections of black political leaders in New York and Virginia, and the racial violence in Virginia Beach.

Generational differences in news interest continued to manifest themselves in January. The Super Bowl and the Stuart case attracted the greatest attention of adults under age 30 in January, and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's proposal to cut Social Security taxes was followed closely by 33 percent of adults over 50 (compared with only 10 percent of the younger adults).

In the general population, the Super Bowl was closely followed by 22 percent of respondents, the Chinese students dispute between President Bush and Congress by 16 percent, unrest in Soviet Azerbaijan by 13 percent, and the legalization of black opposition groups in South Africa by 11 percent.

All international stories were followed much more closely by men, college-educated people, and adults over 30.

Times Mirror's index also found that:

-- 47 percent knew that the Social Security system is currently taking in more money than it needs;

-- 50 percent believe Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is under greater political threat today than a year ago;

-- 40 percent of respondents could correctly identify Marion Barry as the mayor of Washington, D. C., and 56 percent could identify Nelson Mandela as the imprisoned black leader in South Africa;

-- 60 percent of the public watched all or part of football's Super Bowl, and 40 percent watched President Bush's State of the Union address;

These results are based on telephone interviews conducted for Times Mirror by The Gallup Organization, under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates, among 1,245 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period February 1-4, 1990. The margin of error due to sampling is ± 3 percent.

Times Mirror is the Los Angeles-based media company which publishes the Los Angeles Times, Newsday and New York Newsday, the Baltimore Sun newspapers, The Hartford Courant, National Journal and Broadcasting magazine, among other newspapers and magazines. Times Mirror is also engaged in broadcast and cable television, book publishing, and specialized information and training businesses.

The Times Mirror News Interest Index is produced by the Times Mirror Center For The People & The Press, in Washington, D. C.

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Times Mirror News Interest Index
February 1990

Public Interest and
Awareness of the News

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HIGHLIGHTS AND ANALYSIS

In January, three in ten Americans very closely followed news stories about the crash of the Avianca Airlines plane near Kennedy airport, the Charles Stuart case in Boston, the arrest of Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and the acquittal in the McMartin day care center sexual abuse trial. However, eight of the ten major news stories tracked this month fell in the bottom half of the public interest rankings for the 90 stories tracked by Times Mirror since 1986.

The unfolding story of the political changes in Eastern and Central Europe continues to attract only moderate public interest, even though the significance of the changes is recognized by many Americans. About one in four (26%) people report following this story very closely in January, similar to the attentiveness this story attracted in the last two months, after interest peaked in November with the dramatic opening of the Berlin Wall. However, the European political story was cited (on an unaided basis) as the key news story of the month by 28 percent of Americans, receiving more votes than any other story.

Interestingly, however, attentiveness to the developments in Eastern and Central Europe is flagging among the group of serious news consumers that our analysis indicates is most sophisticated in its consumption of the news. Last month almost six in ten (58%) serious news consumers were still attentive to the political changes in Europe, whereas this month only about four in ten (39%) are as attentive. Half (47%) of the serious news consumers identified the European story as the key story last month, despite the fact that everyone else was focused on the invasion of Panama. But this month, only 35 percent of the serious news consumers name the political changes in Eastern and Central Europe as most important.

Two important international news stories from this month's Times Mirror News Interest Index failed to capture the attention of Americans. Fewer than one in eight people followed either the legalization of black opposition groups in South Africa or the ethnic conflict in Soviet Azerbaijan.

The top story in the February Times Mirror News Interest Index, which tracks stories in the news over the past month, is the Avianca Airlines crash on Long Island. One third of Americans (33%), including almost half (46%) of those living in the eastern part of the country, followed this story very closely. This is much less interest than was registered last August for the crash of a United Airlines DC-10 in Sioux City, Iowa. That last airline disaster engaged over half (53%) of all Americans in the story.

The relatively weak impact of the crash story, despite its top-rank status this month, is apparent in the fact that almost no one (1%) volunteered, when asked on an unaided basis, that the crash was the most important news event that happened in the nation or the world in January. In fact, almost one in four Americans (22%) could not name any story as the key news event of the month, double the proportion recorded in our January and December surveys.

The Charles Stuart suicide in Boston was also at the top of the News Interest Index this month, with 29 percent of Americans following Stuart's suicide and the allegations that he had actually murdered his wife and tried to blame the murder on a black man. Women followed this story more closely than men (34% for women vs. 23% for men).

The Barry drug arrest and the McMartin acquittal rank next in public attentiveness this month, with 28 and 27 percent of adults, respectively, following each story very closely. The McMartin case engaged women to a greater extent than men, with a third (32%) of women following the story very closely.

About one in five (22%) Americans very closely followed the Super Bowl in January and six in ten (60%) watched all or part of it on television (only 40% watched the President's State of the Union address). The level of interest in the Super Bowl is comparable to the 23 percent level of interest recorded for baseball's World Series last November, but it is significantly lower than the 27 percent level of interest recorded last month for the National Football League playoffs. Men (27%) and young people (27%) were particularly interested in the Super Bowl. In fact, the Super Bowl and the Stuart case (26%) tied each other for engaging the attention of young adults in January.

Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut Social Security taxes was very closely followed by only 18 percent of Americans, although a third (33%) of Americans age 50 and older were attentive to the story. This level of interest is similar to interest last October in the repeal of the catastrophic health insurance plan and House approval of a cut in the capital gains tax.

A comparable level of interest was registered for the dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in the U.S. after their visas expire (16%). However, this dispute is the second most frequently mentioned key news event of the month, with 13 percent citing it on an unaided basis.

Few Americans followed the ethnic conflict in Soviet Azerbaijan (13%) and the legalization of black opposition groups in South Africa (11% of the 413 people who were interviewed after the announcement from Pretoria).

In a pattern that has characterized international news stories in all previous Times Mirror News Interest Index analyses, certain subgroups of the population followed the political changes in Europe, the dispute over the Chinese students, and the conflict in Soviet Azerbaijan more closely (too few respondents were asked about the changes in South Africa to permit this kind of subgroup analysis). Men, people who have attended college and people age 30 or older were much more interested in these international stories.

In the February Times Mirror News Interest Index there is an atypical racial pattern to the level of interest in news stories. Non-whites were more attentive than whites to four of the ten stories covered this month, whereas whites and non-whites usually exhibit the same level of interest in news stories. Only 11 of the 63 stories tracked since May of last year showed a racial difference in news interest. In two cases (the Supreme Court decision about flag burning and the opening of the Berlin Wall), whites were significantly more interested than non-whites. In the remaining nine cases, four of which are stories tracked this month, non-whites were more interested than whites.

In January, about four in ten non-whites were very closely following the stories about the Charles Stuart case in Boston (44%), Mayor Barry's arrest in Washington (41%), and the McMartin acquittal in California (36%). Fewer than three in ten whites paid as much attention to these three stories. The Barry

and Stuart stories included important elements of racial tension, which tend to characterize the news events that show a racial pattern in public interest (for example, others of these from past Times Mirror News Interest Indexes are the letter bombings of Federal judges, the elections in New York City and Virginia, and the racial violence in Virginia Beach).

This month, non-whites were also more interested in the developments in South Africa (26% of non-whites followed them closely, compared to just 9% among whites). However, since that story erupted in the midst of interviewing for the February index, there are too few respondents who were asked to rate their attention to South Africa to enable a reliable test of the significance of the racial difference in interest.

The lukewarm interest levels registered for January's news stories belie the extent to which Americans are informed about current news concepts and personalities. For example, despite its apparent lack of interest in the new developments in South Africa, the American public knows the identity of Nelson Mandela, one of the key opposition leaders there. Over half (56%) correctly describe who Mandela is.

The other public figure asked about in this month's Times Mirror News Interest Index, Marion Barry, also received a relatively high level of public recognition. Four in ten (40%) correctly identify Barry as the Mayor of Washington, D.C. In a familiar pattern of differences in awareness of public figures among subgroups of the population, men, college graduates and people age 30 and older are best informed about the identities of Mandela and Barry.

While the drama of the fighting between the Azerbaijanis and Armenians may not have captured the public's interest in the U.S., the importance of the implications of that conflict, and others, for Mikhail Gorbachev has reached most Americans. Half (50%) of the public believes there are now more threats to Gorbachev's political position in the Kremlin than one year ago and 27 percent think there has not been much change in his political position.

About half of the public (47%) is also aware that the Social Security system is taking in more money now than it is paying out, even though fewer than one in five have been very attentive to Senator Moynihan's recent proposal regarding Social Security taxes.

The press receives better than average ratings for its coverage of the political changes in Eastern and Central Europe and the crash of the Colombian airliner. About one third of the public following each of these stories very closely gives the press an "excellent" rating (34% for coverage of Europe and 31% for coverage of the crash). The press coverage ratings for the story in Eastern and Central Europe have been stable since early December.

The public does not like press coverage of either the Charles Stuart case or the McMartin day care center case, with no more than one in six giving an excellent rating. Four in ten (39%) of those who followed the Stuart case most closely rate its coverage as only fair or poor. A third (32%) of those who followed the McMartin story most closely give a comparably low rating to its coverage.

On average, only about one fifth to one quarter of the public gives an excellent rating for press coverage of a major news story. This month, coverage of Mayor Barry's arrest gets average ratings (21% excellent).

About one in ten (11%) Americans think the press devoted too much coverage to the Stuart case, similar to the proportion (12%) who think this about Super Bowl coverage.

This month the Times Mirror News Interest Index continues its examination of serious news consumers begun in last month's analysis. Serious news consumers are those who form the regular audience of either the McNeil-Lehrer television news show, the radio news shows of National Public Radio (Morning Edition or All Things Considered), or are regular readers of such magazines as The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, or Harper's. Most also read a newspaper every day and watch TV news programs regularly.

By this definition, serious news consumers represent 12 percent of the people surveyed this month. Not surprisingly, they are disproportionately college-trained.

Last month, serious news consumers were two to three times more likely than other Americans to closely follow news events. This month, the nature of the major news stories creates much less differentiation between serious news consumers and others. The most sophisticated consumers were more engaged than others in most stories this month (the Super Bowl and the airline crash are the two exceptions, and too few respondents are available to analyze reliably the South Africa story). However, only the Moynihan proposal, the dispute over the Chinese students and the Azerbaijan conflict came close to the 2-to-1 ratio of interest that seemed the norm last month for comparisons of serious news consumers and others.

<u>Stories Covered By News Organizations</u>	<u>SERIOUS NEWS CONSUMERS</u>	<u>ALL OTHERS</u>
The civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan	22	12
The political changes taking place in Eastern and Central Europe	39	24
The crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York	37	32
The arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges	35	27
The dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America	27	14
The Super Bowl	18	22
The legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela	20	10
Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes	32	16
The suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man	38	28
The acquittal of the owners of the McMartin day care center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children	36	26

Serious news consumers and others also made similar judgments concerning the significance of news events this month. Thirty-five percent of the top group of consumers thought the changes in Eastern and Central Europe was the key story of the month, compared with 27 percent of consumers in the remaining groups combined. The dispute about the Chinese students ranks second for both serious news consumers and others, with 13 percent of both groups citing it as the most significant event of the month.

Serious news consumers are distinctive this month for having watched the Super Bowl and the State of the Union address with equal frequency (52% and 55%, respectively). Among less sophisticated consumers of the news, the Super Bowl surpassed the President's speech by a 62 percent to 38 percent margin.

Not surprisingly, serious news consumers are better informed about people in the news. More than half (56%) correctly identify Marion Barry (compared with 38% among all other people) and an overwhelming 82 percent correctly identify Nelson Mandela (vs. 52% correct among other consumers). However, serious news consumers do not surpass other consumers in either their knowledge about the current status of the Social Security system (51% of serious consumers and 47% of others know that the system is now taking in more money than it needs) or their knowledge about the new threats facing Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin (55% of serious consumers and 50% of others believe these threats have increased in the past year).

The press gets better grades from people in the most sophisticated group of news consumers, with a third rating press performance as "excellent" for the story they followed most closely last month. Only 22 percent of other consumers give an equally positive assessment of the press. However, serious news consumers are more likely than others to be critical of the coverage of the Stuart murder and suicide. Twice as many serious consumers, compared with other consumers, think there was too much coverage of this story (20% vs. 10%).

% FOLLOWING EACH NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"

	<u>Civil Unrest And Ethnic Violence In Soviet Azerbaijan</u>	<u>Political Changes Taking Place In Eastern And Central Europe</u>	<u>Colombian Airliner Crash</u>	<u>Arrest Washington's Mayor Barry</u>	<u>Chinese Students</u>
Total	13	26	33	28	16
<u>Sex</u>					
Male	16	29	32	30	17
Female	11	23	34	27	15
<u>Race</u>					
White	14	27	33	26	16
Non-white	10	20	31	41	16
<u>Age</u>					
Under 30	8	20	18	21	10
30-49	12	27	30	27	11
50+	17	30	47	34	25
<u>Education</u>					
College graduate	16	35	34	36	17
Other college graduate	14	29	29	26	17
High school graduate	14	25	33	25	16
Less than high school graduate	7	16	37	27	14
<u>Region</u>					
East	13	30	46	29	14
Midwest	12	24	30	26	16
South	13	24	28	32	16
West	15	27	27	23	20
<u>Party ID</u>					
Republican	15	28	32	25	16
Democrat	10	26	37	33	15
Independent	14	26	27	26	17

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

CONTINUED...

% FOLLOWING EACH NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"

	<u>*Super Bowl</u>	<u>**South Africa</u>	<u>Social Security Taxes</u>	<u>Charles Stuart Case</u>	<u>Acquittal Of The Owners Of The McMartin Day Care Center</u>
Total	22	11	18	29	27
<u>Sex</u>					
Male	27	15	18	23	22
Female	17	8	17	34	32
<u>Race</u>					
White	22	9	18	27	26
Non-white	22	26	20	44	36
<u>Age</u>					
Under 30	27	11	4	26	21
30-49	22	11	13	27	26
50+	18	13	33	33	32
<u>Education</u>					
College graduate	20	15	20	30	24
Other college	22	16	17	30	28
High school graduate	24	4	17	27	27
Less than high school graduate	18	19	16	30	31
<u>Region</u>					
East	12	17	20	34	21
Midwest	22	20	14	26	26
South	26	9	20	30	29
West	30	5	16	25	33
<u>Party ID</u>					
Republican	24	4	12	29	27
Democrat	20	15	23	31	29
Independent	20	14	18	25	25

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

*** Interviews were conducted Thursday and Friday (February 1-2, 1990) among 832 respondents.**

****Interviews were conducted Saturday and Sunday (February 3-4, 1990) among 413 respondents.**

PRESS COVERAGE RATINGS OF NEWS STORIES

STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY

	<u>Political Changes in Eastern and Central Europe</u>	<u>Colombian Airliner Crash</u>	<u>Arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry</u>	<u>Charles Stuart Case</u>	<u>McMartin Day Care Center</u>
Excellent	34	31	21	16	12
Good	55	53	51	44	50
Only Fair	8	12	20	34	25
Poor	1	2	3	5	7
Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
	(218)	(176)	(152)	(169)	(146)

PRESS PERFORMANCE

	<u>May 1989</u>	<u>July 1989</u>	<u>August 1989</u>	<u>September 1989</u>	<u>October 1989</u>	<u>November 1989</u>	<u>December 1989</u>
Excellent	19%	26%	25%	19%	32%	41%	22%
Good	43	42	45	50	45	41	45
Only Fair	24	21	21	22	18	13	25
Poor	10	10	8	7	3	3	6
Don't Know	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

	<u>Jan 1990</u>	<u>Feb 1990</u>
Excellent	33	23
Good	48	50
Only Fair	14	19
Poor	3	5
Don't Know	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Question: In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.7); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted by The Gallup Organization under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among 1,245 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of February 1-4, 1990. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TIMES MIRROR NEWS INTEREST INDEX
 -FEBRUARY 1990 SURVEY-
 February 1-4, 1990
 n = 1,245

INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE RESPONSE CATEGORIES AND ACCEPT RESPONSES THAT FIT IN THESE CATEGORIES

Q.1 What do you think is the most important news event that happened in the nation or in the world last month - in January? (DO NOT READ)

International Stories

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| a. | The civil unrest and ethnic violence in <u>Soviet Azerbaijan</u> | 3 |
| b. | Demands in <u>Lithuania and other Baltic states</u> for independence from the Soviet Union | 2 |
| c. | The political changes taking place in <u>Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany</u> also mentions of Bulgaria, Romania, Poland and Eastern and Central Europe | 28 |
| d. | The dispute between the President and Congress over allowing <u>Chinese students</u> to remain in America | 13 |
| e. | Panama, the legal case against former Dictator <u>Manuel Noriega</u> | 7 |

Domestic stories

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| f. | The arrest of Washington's <u>Mayor Barry</u> on drug use charges | 1 |
| g. | The <u>Super Bowl</u> | 1 |
| h. | Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut <u>social security taxes</u> | 1 |
| i. | The <u>suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart</u> who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man (The Charles Stuart case) | * |
| j. | The <u>bankruptcy of Robert Campeau who owns Bloomingdales, Jordan Marsh and other major department stores</u> | 0 |
| k. | The acquittal of the owners of the <u>McMartin day care center</u> in California who were charged with sexually abusing children | 2 |
| l. | OTHER SPECIFY | 16 |
| m. | The President's <u>State of the Union</u> address | 2 |
| n. | The <u>airliner crash</u> near Kennedy airport on Long Island | 1 |
| o. | The legalization of banned black opposition groups in <u>South Africa</u> and the promise to free <u>Nelson Mandela</u> | 1 |
| | Can't say | <u>22</u> |

100

Q.2 Do you happen to know who Marion Barry is?

46 Yes -----> (IF "YES" ASK:) Who is he? (DO NOT READ)

+QNo
54S1
.)QDon't Know
100

40 Mayor of Washington DC
+QIncorrect answer
6S1
.)QDon't know
46

Q.3 Do you happen to know who Nelson Mandela is?

68 Yes -----> (IF "YES" ASK:) Who is he? (DO NOT READ)

+QNo
32S1
*)
.)QDon't know
100

56 Imprisoned South African black
revolutionary leader
+QIncorrect answer
12S1
.)QDon't know
68

Q.4 Did you watch all or part of the Super Bowl on TV?

60 Yes
40 No
0 Don't know
100

ASK EVERYONE:

Q.5 Did you happen to watch President Bush's State of the Union address on Wednesday night?

40 Yes
60 No
0 Don't know
100

0.6 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (READ AND ROTATE LIST)

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<u>DK</u>
a. The civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan (AS ER BA JON)	13	30	24	33	0 = 100
b. The political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany	26	35	19	20	* = 100
c. The crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York	33	39	18	10	0 = 100
d. The arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges	28	40	19	13	0 = 100
e. The dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America	16	30	28	26	0 = 100
*f. The Super Bowl	22	22	19	37	0 = 100
** The legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela	11	31	29	28	1 = 100
g. Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes	18	23	25	34	* = 100
h. The suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man	29	32	21	18	0 = 100
i. The acquittal of the owners of the McMartin day care center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children	27	35	24	14	* = 100

* Interviews were conducted Thursday and Friday (February 1-2, 1990) among 832 respondents.

** Interviews were conducted Saturday and Sunday (February 3-4, 1990) among 413 respondents.

0.7 Which one of the stories I just mentioned, have you followed most closely? (DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.)

	<u>Story Followed Most Closely</u>
a. The civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan	4
b. The political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany	16
c. The crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York	15
d. The arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges	12
e. The dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America	2
*f. The Super Bowl	6
** The legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela	2
g. Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes	4
h. The suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man	14
i. The acquittal of the owners of the McMartin day care center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children	12
CAN'T SAY	<u>13</u>
	100

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0.8 Of all the stories mentioned, which of them, if any, received too much coverage? (DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)

	<u>Received Too Much Coverage</u>
a. The civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan	2
b. The political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany	2
c. The crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York	5
d. The arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges	9
e. The dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America	1
*f. The Super Bowl	12
** The legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela	1
g. Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes	1
h. The suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man	11
i. The acquittal of the owners of the McMartin day care center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children	7
j. None	30
CAN'T SAY	22

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IF RESPONDENT SAID '0' CAN'T SAY IN Q.7, SKIP TO Q.10

Q.9 In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.7); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY						
		Political Changes in Eastern and Central Europe	Colombian Airliner Crash	Arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry	Charles Stuart Case	McMartin Day Care Center
23	Excellent	34	31	21	16	12
50	Good	55	53	51	44	50
19	Only Fair	8	12	20	34	25
5	Poor	1	2	3	5	7
<u>3</u>	Don't know	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>100</u>		<u>100</u> (218)	<u>100</u> (176)	<u>100</u> (152)	<u>100</u> (169)	<u>100</u> (146)

ON ANOTHER SUBJECT....

Q.10 What is your impression about the ability of the social security system to meet its payments in the near future. Right now, is social security taking in less money than it is paying out or is it taking in more money than it is paying out or is it taking in about as much money as it is paying out?

- 21 Taking in less money than it needs
- 47 Taking in more money than it needs
- 20 Taking in about as much as it needs

12
100 Don't know

Q.11 Compared to a year ago would you say there are more threats to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's political position in the Kremlin, fewer threats or hasn't there been much change in that regard?

- 50 More threats
- 12 Less threats
- 27 About same

11
100 Don't know

TIMES MIRROR DATABASE
PUBLIC ATTENTIVENESS TO MAJOR NEWS STORIES
(1986 - 1990)

	<u>Percent Very Closely</u>
The explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger (July 86)	80
The destruction caused by the San Francisco earthquake (Nov 89)	73
The little girl in Texas who was rescued after falling into a well (Oct 87)	69
The invasion of Panama (Jan 90)	60
The destruction caused by Hurricane Hugo (Oct 89)	60
The U.S. air strikes against Libya (July 86)	58
The crash of a United Airlines DC-10 in Sioux City, Iowa (Aug 89)	53
The Alaska Oil Spill (May 89)	52
Supreme Court decision of flag burning (July 89)	51
The opening of the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany (Nov 89)	50
The flight of the space shuttle (Oct 88)	50
The murder of Marine Lt. Col. Higgins in Lebanon, and negotiations to free the other hostages in the mideast (Aug 89)	49
The drought and its effects on American farmers (Aug 88)	49
The TWA hostage crisis that took place last summer in Beirut, Lebanon (July 86)	48
The political upheaval in China (July 89)	47
The Supreme Court decision on abortion (July 89)	47
The nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Soviet Union (July 86)	46
News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Oct 88)	43
The hot weather this summer and the greenhouse effect (Aug 88)	42
The downing of an Iranian passenger plane by a U.S. Navy ship (Aug 88)	42
The Bush administration's plan to deal with this country's drug problem (Sept 89)	40
The stock market crash (Oct 87)	40
News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Aug 88)	39
Drug use and efforts to combat it (Jan 90)	38
The U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Sept 87)	38
The U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Oct 87)	37
The stories about Dan Quayle, the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate (Aug 88)	37
The sentencing of Oliver North (July 89)	37

	Percent <u>Very Closely</u>
Attempts to change the abortion laws (Dec 89)	35
The hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in the Mediterranean (July 86)	35
The explosion and fire on the U.S. Battleship Iowa (May 89)	35
The war between the Colombian government and the major drug traffickers (Sept 89)	34
THE CRASH OF THE COLOMBIAN AIRLINER NEAR KENNEDY AIRPORT IN NEW YORK (FEB 90)	33
The Congressional hearings about the Iran- Contra affair (Sept 87)	33
The guilty verdict in the trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Oct 89)	33
The world series (Oct 88)	31
The flight of East German refugees to West Germany (Oct 89)	31
The Oliver North trial (May 89)	31
The Banishment of Pete Rose from baseball for life (Sept 89)	30
The Democratic convention (Aug 88)	30
THE SUICIDE IN BOSTON OF CHARLES STUART WHO MURDERED HIS PREGNANT WIFE AND BLAMED IT ON A BLACK MAN (FEB 90)	29
The political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Jan 90)	29
The political changes in East Germany and the flight of refugees to West Germany (Nov 89)	29
The attack and sexual assault on a female jogger in Central Park, New York, by a group of youths (May 89)	29
The failed coup attempt against Panamanian strongman Noriega (Oct 89)	29
THE ARREST OF WASHINGTON'S MAYOR BARRY ON DRUG USE CHARGES (FEB 90)	28
The revolution in Romania (Jan 90)	28
The political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Dec 89)	28
The problems at nuclear reactor plants (Oct 88)	28
The end of Gary Hart's candidacy and the Donna Rice allegations (Sept 87)	28
THE ACQUITTAL OF THE OWNERS OF THE MCMARTIN DAY CARE CENTER IN CALIFORNIA WHO WERE CHARGED WITH SEXUALLY ABUSING CHILDREN (FEB 90)	27
The NFL playoffs (Jan 90)	27
The Republican convention (Aug 88)	27
THE POLITICAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HUNGARY AND EAST GERMANY (FEB 90)	26
Passage in Congress of a bill to bail out ailing savings and loan institutions (Aug 89)	26
The Supreme Court's hearing of arguments in a Missouri abortion case (May 89)	25
The World Series (Nov 89)	23
THE SUPER BOWL (FEB 90)	22
The letter bombings of federal judges (Jan 90)	22

	Percent Very Closely
The discoveries made by the spacecraft Voyager 2 (Sept 89)	22
The trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Sept 89)	22
The April hijacking of a Kuwaiti airplane by Shiite Moslems (May 88)	22
The cease fire in the war between Iran and Iraq (Aug 88)	22
News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (May 88)	22
The charges that Pete Rose has bet on baseball games (July 89)	22
The scandal involving HUD (Aug 89)	21
The Gorbachev/Bush summit (Dec 89)	20
The attempts by the U.S. government to depose General Noriega in Panama (May 88)	20
The post-season baseball playoffs (Oct 89)	20
The coup attempt against the Filipino government (Dec 89)	19
The attempts in Congress to repeal the new catastrophic health insurance plan (Oct 89)	19
The incidents of racial violence in New York City and Virginia Beach (Sept 89)	19
Discussions of a U.S. Soviet arms agreement (Sept 87)	19
SENATOR MOYNIHAN'S PROPOSAL TO CUT SOCIAL SECURITY TAXES (FEB 90)	18
The stock market crash (May 88)	18
The conflict in the Middle East between Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories (May 88)	18
The nomination of Robert Bork to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court (Sept 87)	17
THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS OVER ALLOWING CHINESE STUDENTS TO REMAIN IN AMERICA (FEB 90)	16
The Education Summit held by Bush and the nation's Governors (Oct 89)	15
The ethics committee's investigation of Speaker of the House Jim Wright (May 89)	15
News about the Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination (Oct 87)	15
Conflict of interest allegations about Attorney General Ed Meese (May 88)	15
The scandal involving HUD (July 89)	15
The renewed fighting between government and the rebels in El Salvador (Dec 89)	14
House approval of a cut in the capital gains tax (Oct 89)	14
The spy scandal involving a U.S. Diplomat in Vienna (Aug 89)	14
Coverage of the Democratic and Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Sept 87)	14
The pending divorce between Mike Tyson and Robin Givens (Oct 88)	14
THE CIVIL UNREST AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN SOVIET AZERBAIJAN (FEB 90)	13
The resumption of fighting in Nicaragua between the Contras and government forces (Nov 89)	13

	Percent <u>Very Closely</u>
The elections in Virginia, New Jersey, New York City and other localities (Nov 89)	13
News about the Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Oct 88)	13
Solidarity's role in governing Poland (July 89)	12
THE LEGALIZATION OF BANNED BLACK OPPOSITION GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE PROMISE TO FREE NELSON MANDELA	11
The Japanese purchase of Rockefeller center in New York City (Dec 89)	10
The trial of Hotel owner Leona Helmsley for tax evasion (Sept 89)	9
Stories about the 20th anniversary of the Woodstock Music Festival (Aug 89)	9
The trip of high ranking officials to China (Jan 90)	6
The scandal involving the Japanese Prime Minister and other high ranking officials (May 89)	6
The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute (Oct 89)	6