

Quiz Show

"How TV media reflected American society in 1950's and today?"

クイズ・ショウ

《50年代と現代：テレビ・メディアはアメリカ社会をどう捉えたか？》

Mihoko Takenaka

竹中三保子

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Watching television is an ordinary thing in our life now and we watch it more unconsciously rather than consciously. In the 1950s, that is to say, during the age of Quiz Shows, there were many serious and trustworthy TV programs. They were perceived as telling people the facts and the truth. Viewers also believed what TV said.

From this point of view, Quiz Show is not only an usual recreational TV program but also an entertainment which aimed at raising an audience rating. Quiz shows were the most extraordinary phenomena in the history of television. Neither before nor since has any contrivance of the tube so absorbed the fascinated contemplation of the public.

However the latest big case which was reported through television was the O. J. Simpson trial. The three biggest TV networks in America, NBC, CBS, and ABC, spent eight hours a day on the coverage of this news. This incident also affected American society as the quiz show scandal did in 1950s.

What I want to show in this paper is how TV media reflected on American society in 1950s and compare it to some recent cases.

Television gives us much information today, and still many people believe what tele-

vision tell us. We learn so many things from it, but it also gives us bad information; for example, firing guns, killing people, and other criminal scenes. These action create serious problems to their society. Network must judge whether the information is right or wrong.

It's time to think about television's influence on American society seriously.

Plot Summary

This story is about the climate of the country when television was just beginning to dominate the landscape.

An idealistic young lawyer working for a Congressional subcommittee in the late 1950s discovers that TV quiz shows are being fixed. His investigation focuses on two contestants on the show NBC's "21": Charles Van Doren, a college instructor and son of a famous poet, Mark Van Doren, is blithely ushered into a world of big money and instant fame when he agrees to rehearse the answers to questions he will be asked on "21." Vand Doren's win pulls down the reigning champion, Herbert Stempel who is a brash working-class Jew from Queens, from his long-standing perch as a quirky but comfortable Brooklyn nobody who had captured the country's imagination with his apparently bottomless well of knowledge.

But the neurotic Stempel had also been cheating at the request of "21"'s producers and sponsor. When Stempel realizes he has been ousted in favor of the more handsome, boyish, camerafriendly Van Doren, he raises a fuss and draws the attention of a federal attorney, Richard N. Goodwin.

Goodwin looks into the matter and discovers the pattern of corruption. But in defer-

ence to Van Doren, a fellow Harvard graduate he likes, Goodwin decides to go after the TV industry itself rather than individual cheaters. But it soon becomes apparent that a scapegoat is inevitable — the devil's pact between television and politics has already taken hold over America, and those who control electronic image — making wield greater power than those whom they tempt or dupe.

PART ONE

History of television

After the World War II, the primary site of exhibition for spectator amusements in America was transferred from the public space of the movie theater to the private space of the home. Americans bought television sets more quickly than they had bought other home entertainment equipment. Between 1948 and 1955, television was installed in nearly two-thirds of nation's homes, and the basic mechanisms of the network oligopoly were set in motion. By 1960, almost 90 percent of American households had at least one receiver, with the average person watching approximately five hours of television each day (Cobbett S. Steinberg, *TV Facts*, 1980).

The arrival of television in their homes changed their life and its style. Routine events such as television viewing are part of the often invisible history of everyday life, a history that was not recorded by the people who lived it at the time. Before television appeared, magazines, advertisements, newspapers, radios, and films were domestic entertainments. So appearance of television became a new family recreation between late 1940s and 1950s.

The first great triumph was called "The \$64,000 Question," the creation of Lou Cowan,

who, years earlier, had devised and produced "The Quiz Kids." Presumably he took the concept of a long-expired radio show, called "The 64 Dollar Question," and multiplied by a thousand. This simple act of arithmetic imagination was to sweep the airwaves. In the mid-1950s sixty-four thousand dollars was a great deal of money; the reward for knowledge was not in the chance fortune of a lottery, but through the hitherto secluded brilliance of fellow citizens.

In the movie, the quiz show had engaged the eagerly watchful interest of the population for several years, whose contestants had become national heroes, living examples of American genius. Many American people were effected by this quiz show in 1950s.

Background on NBC's "TWENTY-ONE"

Conceived and created by producer Can Enright, the film was designed around two contestants, competing against each other in dual isolation booths. The object was to get 21 points by correctly answering questions valued in difficulty from one to eleven points. The general category was stated by the emcee, and the contestant chose the number of points he wished to attempt: if he answered a 10 point question and then an eleven point question correctly, he would have the necessary 21 points. Closed away in the booths, neither contestant could hear the questions and answers of the other.

In actuality (but altered for dramatic purposes), reigning champion Herbie Stempel first met Charles Van Doren on November 28, 1956, and after three weeks of tie games, Van Doren ousted him. During the long run of Charles Van Doren, the show was moved from Wednesday nights to Monday nights

opposite "I Love Lucy" which was another very popular TV show. Although it never toppled "Lucy," by March, it had a very respectable 34.7 Trendex rating, and was the first NBC effort to show any sort of promise against the popular redhead.

On March 11, 1957, a bright female attorney named Vivienne Nearing defeated Van Doren, the revered quiz wiz. NBC bought all the assets of Barry Enright Productions just two months later, which include other programs besides "Twenty-One," for \$2 million.

In 1959, a grand jury investigation of quiz show fraud was completed in New York City, but its findings were sealed by Judge Mitchell Schweitzer. That puzzled Richard Goodwin, who began his own investigation for the Congressional Subcommittee on Legislative Oversight. When the hearings convened on October 6, 1959, Herbie Stempel was its first witness. Van Doren was ordered by NBC to send a telegram to the subcommittee requesting that they clear the cloud of suspicion around him.

They also told him that his "Today Show" contract would be suspended if he attempted to testify in Washington, D.C. Charles Van Doren disappeared for one week, at which time he battled with his conscience and then returned to tell the truth to his parents and his attorney. He was the first witness to testify when the hearings reconvened in early November.

PART TWO

The Americans are affected by television

1 American life with Television between 1940s and 1960s

Television, invented and developed before

World War II, appeared on the market in the late 1940s. By 1950 some 3 million americans owned sets. By 1960 the number had risen to 50 million. More homes had television sets than had running water or indoor toilets.

Between 1940 and 1960, they had more leisure time than before. Shorter workweeks and paid vacations gave most Americans more leisure time than they had even dreamed of a generation before. Between 1940 and 1960, the average workweek dropped from 44 to 40 hours. In some of the skilled trades it was down to 35 hours (Rise of the American Nation, 1982, p.747).

At home the major source of entertainment was the television set. More than any other single development, television began to weaken regional differences and to shape a uniform culture for the entire country.

With jobs available and money to spend, Americans went on a buying spree. Washing machines, dishwashers, toasters, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, freezers, radios, and — newest of all — television sets poured from the factories into america's home.

The 1960s was a tumultuous decade in the United States. Violent street demonstrations relating to the civil rights movement, inner-city turmoil, student activism and antiwar protests shook the country. The rate of violent crime soared. Major political assassinations occurred. Americans saw brutal images of the world on their television sets, including the Vietnam War (called "The Living Room War" by Michael Arlen), the suppression of antiwar demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 and the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. And Robert F. Kennedy. In June 1968, President Lyndon B.

Johnson, in response to concerns about domestic violence and the recent assassinations, convened the National Commission on the causes and Prevention of Violence. While looking at all sources of violence, the commission, through a media task force, devoted much attention to the mass media, particularly television.

2 How were the Americans affected by television

a Affects on children

Education

We may say that "Television is a teacher of children." Today, many children watch television and their daily conversation is based on TV programs which they watched the night before.

One day, I asked my friend, "How did you learn how to eat spaghetti?" She said, "Maybe from television." This example makes it clear how strongly we are affected by television.

By 1960, children were spending more time with television than they were with radio, comic books, baby-sitters or even playmates. As television became a staple of the American home, concern grew over what effect the medium might have on children.

As television technology grew more sophisticated, a new teaching tool entered the classroom — educational television. Broadcast by the new network NET (National Educational Television), these televised classes had mixed success. In 1950s, television was regarded as giving education and dreams to children, and it was also offering us much new information everyday. This is a big difference between television and movies.

Television Violence

The media task force was concerned not

only with the quantity of violence on entertainment television, but also with its quality. In other words, how was the violence portrayed? Who killed whom? Which weapons were used? Where did the violence take place? Was the violence justified? Were the aggressors rewarded or punished? Were the consequences of the violence fully shown?

The researchers found the content of television to be "extremely violent." Fighting, shooting and murder were common, as were themes of crime. Violence constituted an important part of programs in more than half of the hours monitored. The researchers argued that television could contribute to violent and delinquent behavior in some cases. This might result, for example, in the case of a child who confuses the rules of the fantasy world, as seen on television, with the rules of reality or an already aggressive child whose aggression is increased by identifying with a successful "bad" character on television. But the researcher cautioned that television was, at most, a contributing factor in causing violent and delinquent behaviors, or any behaviors for that matter.

For example, they noted: "Delinquency is a complex behavior growing usually out of a number of roots, the chief one usually being some great lack in the child life — often a broken home or a feeling of rejection by parents or peer groups. Television is, at best, a contributing cause."

Before the average American child leaves elementary school, researchers estimate that he or she will have witnessed more than 8,000 murders on television. Since the 1960's, nearly 3,000 studies have found a connection between television violence and real violence. Among them is a study by David Phillipps, a

scientist at the University of California in San Diego, who suspected a link between highly publicized violence and copycat violence.

Studying the aftermath of heavily publicized heavyweight prizefights, Phillipps found that daily U.S. murder rates increased for several days after the fights. He goes on to say: "It also seems to be the case that the kind of person killed just after the prizefight is similar to the person beaten in the prizefight."

Another example, Ian a three years old loved "Street Fighter II," a kind of hard action movie, then he became very violent. He kicked and beat his family right after he watched the violence scene. He wanted to be a man in the movie who knocked down bad guys one after another.

On the other hand, he became very friendly and genial when he watched "Sesame Street." Usually he was a very nice and lovely boy, but once he watched action scenes, he turned to be bad.

It will be clear from these examples that the impact of those violence scenes stays on people's mind more than regular scenes.

b Affects of commercials

Giving TV commercials to them also influenced people's consumption pattern a lot. Many women ran to the store to buy new color lipstick or eye shadow or rouge after they watch REVLON cosmetics commercials. The company enjoyed unprecedented growth, while sales of Geritol, which was a sponsor of "21," soared beyond all expectations, projections, and common sense. As for the networks, their earnings depended on ratings, and the ratings were never better. They

didn't buy more than was necessary before appearance of commercials.

Televising commercial advertising effect of those commercials was successful. There was one of advertisements of kid's toys which tells viewers plainly, "Why don't you get such a wonderful toy for your kid! If you are someone's parents, you should . . .," like this. And many parents believed this message and they decided to "buy." However, it was unendurable for the lower class of black people who were just barely able to buy television sets, because they were only able to see what they wanted.

Television brought uniformity to the society, and changed not only consumption patterns but also the way of thinking. The people were the same commercials, laughed at the same jokes, became excited by the same suspense drama, and listened to the same songs.

c Affects of "21" quiz show

Scene 1

People were running up from a subway station. Taxi drivers went into a bar. Some people happen to pass by a house and watching "21" from outside of the street through the window. All the Americans were in a hurry to watch the show.

During the broadcast of this quiz show, all America slowed down to watch it. It was almost impossible to find a cab in Manhattan, because the drivers went home or to bars to watch the show. Theater owners lamented the disastrous decline in their night attendance. Viewers wanted to see how much money a challenger won, and they were always sur-

prised when they could answer unbelievably difficult questions.

Scene 2

A woman and a sponsor of "21" were watching Herb Stempel answering questions on TV.

Woman: That's a face for radio.

Sponsor: Stempel gives me a headache.

Of moderate height, his features bearing a dark, Semitic stamp, illuminated by eyes of flickering intensity, ceaselessly loquacious, Herb Stempel seemed to have been designed as Van Doren's antipode. He had come from a working-class background, a family in the anonymous lower reaches of the social structure.

Scene 3

Stemple: My producer didn't just give me the answers, but told me how I should behave. If the question had four parts, for example, I was to hesitate on part three, pretend to be puzzled, ask if we could return to it after I had given the answer to the fourth part. Jack Barry who is on-air quizmaster would agree and, after his correct response, would say, "How, Herbie, let's try that third one again." I was supposed to pause, appear as if I was straining, laboring to recall, and then look up toward the camera with the right answer.

It was all done to increase suspense. The contestants were put into an isolation booth, supposedly to prevent coaching from the producers or the audience. Sometimes they shut off the air conditioning in the

booth so that I would sweat while pretending to concentrate. We all had a role to play. I was the poor boy from Brooklyn. I had to call him Mr. Barry. Everyone else called him Jack. I was supposed to wear the same old suit every week, and a shirt with a frayed collar. Once I wore a new suit. Producer Dan Enright got mad. "You're not doing your homework, Herbie," he complained.

This scene shows us the beginning of the entertainment. Quiz show "21" cheated all the American viewers who trusted it.

Today, the examples of how television still "cheats" on its audiences, cited by the television, by other commentators, are depressingly familiar: guests are rehearsed to punch up storylines before appearances on programs. Prime time docudramas with invented conversations and composite characters; tabloid TV shows featuring reenactments of crime cases still pending with actors standing in for Michael Jackson and O. J. Simpson, among others. Even the quality news programs of the old line networks may bend standards to enhance "entertainment values."

Scene 4

(At Goodwin's home.) He and his wife were having supper, which they took out from a store, while the show was on the air.

In 1950s, it was proved that how enthusiastic Americans were about watching television. "TV dinner," was a good example, which was a simple frozen course dinner. One needed to

warm it up. And "TV tray" or "TV table" which was a folding table for one person, was invented, so that it made watching television and eating dinner possible at the same time. Most of American middle class homes had a dining room and living room and television was set at the latter. In the movie, we can see that most families were watching television in their living rooms. It was said that neglect of meals among American originated from this practice.

Scene 5

(Charles Van Doren became a champion, and the following is the conversation after the show.)

Charles: I'm gonna take the stairs.

Producer Dan Enright: How did you know, he would go for it?

Another producer: Oh, you knew.

Charles: (Charles speaks to himself and running down stairs — he was making excuse about cheating in the show. He thought he did something good for education.)

Charles Van Doren was doing more for education on the show than he could accomplish at any college. He was making learning respectable, more than that, something heroic. But he had been feeling guilty. During broadcasting this show, children regarded TV as a "miracle." Robert Redford who directed this movie said. Now, it's "life" — part of the symbolic air that all of us, children and adults, reflexively breathe.

Scene 6

At Charles Van Doren's father, Mark Van Doren's birthday party.

Charles's mother: Because we don't have a television.

Mark V.: Why do we need a television?

Aunt 1: How much money is that again?

Aunt 2: They don't have a television.

Aunt 1: You haven't seen the show?

:

:

Woman: Professor, now open your present.

Mark V.: Wow! What have we here?

(He opened a big package from Charles and it was a television.)

Oh, no! Oh, my god! I guess, I'm surrounded.

Thank you.

Charles: I thought you might like it.

Some old people didn't like to have a television in their home, because they thought it was harmful. They liked to read books, newspapers, and magazines.

PART THREE

Television Today

How many people don't watch television? How many people don't own the television sets? Most people get news and other information from television these days. They tend to form their opinion of everyday life from television.

A lot of children spend much time in front of the "box", using the remote control to change channels quickly. They can't wait to watch the next scene. They don't like to

watch the commercials either. This has made short temper people. A count reveals that average children have watched 18,000 murder scenes on television by 16 years old, and 350,000 commercials by 18 years old.

The reason why people watch television are, according to a poll, 60% for entertainment, 20% for news, and 20% for education. And this tendency is the same in France, England, and America.

1 Violence chip

In early 1900s, "violence chip" designed to provide parents with a way to lock out television programs was introduced. The technical standards for such a system were discussed at a 1992 meetings of the Electronic Industries Association, which represents most TV set manufacturers, only to be shot down by broadcasters wary of any controls that might limit audiences or advertising revenue.

In 1994, the same industry group agreed to begin including the device (which can easily be reprogrammed for other ratings such as "N" for nudity or, as some wags have had it, "P" for politics) in high-end televisions, while it seems increasingly likely that the networks and cable systems will adopt some voluntary or compulsory system in the near future. Cable television and other companies have tended to support the Clinton-endorsed v-chip, reasoning that parents would feel more comfortable taking premium services if they can control access to them.

2 O. J. Simpson trial dominated TV air time

Today, we are able to watch wars, international incidents, and other world news just by sitting in front of television. We get information about how many people died or who com-

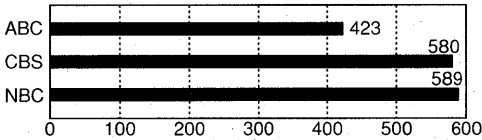
mit a crime and so on.

When the O. J. Simpson - police car chase was on the air, 94% of the Americans watched it on television. After that, they continued to watch the O. J. Simpson trial and it kept a very high audience rating. His trial dominated TV air time. American three biggest networks spent 1,592 minutes every each day for it.

Network news stories with the most air time

Of 1,592 minutes, how much time each network spent covering the Simpson story

NBC 589
CBS 580
ABC 423



Source : October 18th, 1996, USA TODAY

The reason his trial riveted the American audiences was because O. J. Simpson was a very popular American football player, married and divorced a white woman and allegedly, killed her. He was a black but had established the same high social standing as the white. That means he had been admitted into the white society. He had accomplished the American dream and had become an American hero.

3 Generation X and TV media

Today, most young people such as Generation X, watch TV in different ways. How do they watch television and what kind of information do they get?

Generation X is far more sophisticated about media than Boomers will ever be. This truth will be difficult for Boomer marketers

to internalize, as Boomers have prided themselves, since they were children, on being "hip to media."

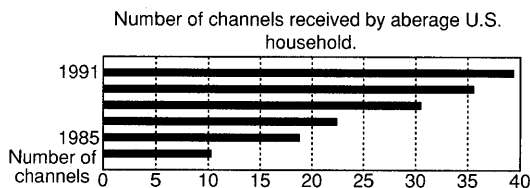
The first Generation Xers were born in 1961, and the general American family owned a color television at that time. They caught on quickly, partly because they spent a lot of time with electronic devices as children. By 1983, the number of channels received by the average household was ten or eleven. Two years later, that number had doubled. Today the average household can receive over thirty-five channels, and the number is still growing.

Now, Xers are called "media connoisseurs," who can and do browse the electronic landscape, selecting what interests them most. Contrary to popular opinion, MTV's (Music Television) quick-cut, fast fade format is attractive to them not because they have short attention spans but because one can see a whole segment within the confines of a network or cable commercial break. They were among the first to realize the true value of the remote control.

How did Generation X get so smart about media? It started, of course, when they were children. They learned to handle television like a team of lawyers handle a hostile witness. They would take from the media what they needed and they found entertaining, but they would never accept information from the media at face value.

Number of channels received by average U.S. household.

1983	10.3
1985	18.8
1987	22.4
1989	30.5
1991	35.6
1993	39.4



Source : Mc Cann-Erickson Research, A.C. Nielsen

If Boomers view television from a passive state of mind, Xers have a more organic relationship with the media. And they just wanted to view what they wished when they wished. They discovered time shifting through VCRs, that is, taping a show to view later.

Conclusion

There were distinctions among news, documentaries, and movie programs in the age of the "21" quiz show. People recognized that news was trustworthy enough, documentaries were telling them the truth but they were made by the television images, and movies were dramatized history.

But now, those distinctions are vague, because entertainment goes into every TV program. The television news combines entertainments, and even the weather forecast on television has become a show these days. It has spread into our society.

The quiz show "21" scandal was a beginning of it all an entertainment. It conquered other TV programs and made big money. This style still goes on today. We cannot excite people's mind without entertainment.

As a matter of course, the quality of TV news has changed a lot. Many politicians use the power of media to sell themselves to people. Apart from the result, the media do their part admirably.

In every sense, television has been in-

fluencing people and their way of life since the age of "Quiz Show."

At first, I thought American people lost their innocence with the "21" quiz show scandals. But as a consequence of studying about TV influences, I found that it was not so. The American innocence of belief was strong enough to survive this and grave challenges to come; the innocence that was to quicken the public movements and private rebellions of the sixties until it the futilities of Vietnam. However innocence is a strength, it supports the animating will to believe which nourishes protest against deception and injustice, gives courage to the oppressed and discontended. The hopeless do not revolt. The cynical do not match. Only when what they call "innocence" is also a reality, are people able to become strong or courageous enough to assault the ramparts of established order.

They were nearing such a time. The assault on television deception was only a trivial, early fissure in the foundation of complacency and apathy which seemed to have hardened its hold on American life. Even as Van Doren testified, far to the south small group of black college student were meeting secretly to voice indignation at their exclusion from "white only" lunch counters in drugstores. While on the other side of the capital a young Massachusetts senator was sketching out a theme for presidential candidacy based on an intuitive belief that his fellow citizens were dissatisfied, that they expected to "get America moving again." This quiz show scandal was a great leap forward for America.

The American people say public television programming is more informative, educational, stimulating, imaginative, important and serious than other broadcast and cable prog-

ramming, according to a 1996 Roper Starch Worldwide Inc. report released in late July by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Television is with us and will continue to exert its influence in ways that are difficult to predict at the present time. The proliferation of cable TV, the increasing interest in satellite systems, the infolding of futuristic technology, virtual reality, and a host of other developments will probably force us to give even more attention to TV than we have to this point in its history.

Appendix

Charles Van Doren's speech:

Charles Van Doren's memorable speech to Congress. He undoubtedly as he publicly endured the disgrace of his dishonesty:

"I would give almost anything I have to reverse the course of my life in the last year. The past doesn't change for anyone. But at least I can learn from the past. I've learned a lot about life. I've learned a lot about myself and about the responsibilities any man has to his fellow men. I've learned a lot about hood and evil – they're not always what they appear to be. I was involved, deeply involved, in a deception. I have deceived my friends, and I had millions of them. In a sense, I was like the child who refuses to admit a fact in the hope that it will go away. Of course, it did not go away. I was scared, scared to death. I had no solid position, no basis to stand on for myself. There was one way out, and that was simply to tell the truth. It may sound trite to you, but I found myself again after a number of years. I've been

acting a role for 10 to 15 years, maybe all my life, of thinking I've done more, accomplished more, than I have. I've had all the breaks. I've stood on the shoulders of life, and I've never gotten down into the dirt to build, to erect a foundation of my own. I've flown too high on borrowed wings. Everything came too easily. That is why I am here today."

I thought his speech was very beautiful, so I wanted to put his words here. It also excited the American audience.

After credits for Quiz Show:

- Charles Van Doren went to work for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Today he writes books and lives in the family home in Cornwall, Connecticut. He never taught again.
- Richard Goodwin became a speechwriter for the 1960 Kennedy campaign and then a member of the White House staff. After the assassination of Robert Kennedy, he retired from politics to become a writer.
- Herbert Stempel went to work for the New York City Transit Department. He still lives in Queens.
- After years in exile, Dan Enright (a producer of "21") and Jack Barry (a quiz master of "21") returned to television with "The Joker's Wild". It made them millionaires.

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{担当教員から} 私のゼミはこの年、アメリカ文化を研究する手段として、アメリカ映画を取り上げた。代表的なシナリオを原文で読み、みんなで作品を鑑賞した後、各自が作品を選んで論文に仕上げるのである。といっても、本格的な映画論を期待するのではなく、あくまでアメリカ文化研究が目的だ。さらに研究を通じて英語に慣れさせるというねらいもある。だから私は「卒論は英語でも日本語でもよい」といいながら、例年英語で書く学生が現れることをひそかに期待する。この年は竹中三保子さんがただ一人、英文で提出してくれた。その労苦は日本語に数倍するが、竹中さんはインターネットもフルに活用して資料を集め、制作課程で大きく成長した。幸い就職も一部上場会社関係だったが、「大学時代こつこつ勉強したことが役立って、国際的な仕事を楽しくやらせてもらっています」という便りを最近貰っている。

(国際学部・宮本倫好)