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Our country, The United States of America, employs a peculiar sort of governing system: democracy. Simply by definition, democracy's goal as a system of rule for the people by the people implies that the greatest number of people possible should be involved. Although the media's mission of supplying pertinent information to the masses ~~follows~~ follows democratic ideals in definition, the media's impact upon American society, especially in the area of presidential elections, has done little to increase participation in political process and by doing so, has created a new sort of identity for the president himself.

To begin, the basic assumption of using the media to relay "news" to the people is not a bad one: television has brought widespread "penetration," "geographic distribution," and a "feeling of direct contact" to the people of America (Source A). ~~Expanded~~ spanning the distance between two oceans, our country is too large for direct, personal contact between legislators and citizens, and television has ~~enabled~~ ^{allowed} thousands of people the opportunity to be informed with ~~possible~~ national events.

II₂

Between 1960 and 1980, the number of homes watching presidential debates skyrocketed from 28.1 million in 1960 to 45.8 million in 1980 (source D). Basically, television has ~~all~~ brought our nation together in that more people than ever before can be a part of the political process if they so desire. While this "early promise" (source A) of television does easily align itself with democratic ideals, another important ideal, that of the people's free choice whether or whether not to participate, has shown television's less "promise"-ing aspects.

Television initially spurred many Americans to pay attention. Anyone with a ~~TV~~ TV could, in a way, be on the floor in the U.S. Capitol from his or her seat in the comfort of the living room back at home in Tennessee. Unfortunately, the media's portrayal of ^{political} events quickly became less than appealing as "even those aiming low [easy to understand content] these days are failing, more often than not, to get good ratings" (source F). Networks who try to be too journalistic shoot over the

heads of many viewers, those who search for a "least common denominator" (E) become boring to others, and those who try a middle ground remain simply mediocre. Americans' quick disinterest is apparent in ~~decreasing~~ presidential debate ratings. After only ~~three~~ nationally aired debates ratings began to fall from 80.6 million viewers in 1980 to 65.1 million viewers in 1984. This trend continued through the most recent data, that of the 1996 election, where only 46.1 million viewers ~~paid attention~~ ~~attended~~ ~~for~~ over an increased number of networks watched the debates (source D). ~~It is a~~

In a more general sense, Rodrick Hart and many others put it best when they commented, "Years of hyperfamiliarity [have] finally bred contempt for politics itself" (source B). Rather than increasing public interest in national events, the media has actually pushed people from it making Americans more and more likely to take a complacent role in their governance.

Out of this new, less involved view

of national politics has come a new sort of leader - the one who is genuinely concerned with his image within society. For example, President Lyndon B. Johnson, one of the first presidents of televised White House affairs, was "a great believer in public opinion polls" (source E).

Throughout history, this has been far from the case. Thomas Jefferson, one of our nation's most revered former presidents, faced much scrutiny for his decision to implement the Embargo Act during his second term. A president that prided himself on his lack of ceremony and close relationship with the people, Jefferson nonetheless left the Embargo in effect for several years greatly hurting his reputation. Regardless of his actions concerning trade with Britain and France, Thomas Jefferson is still loved by the American people. Modern presidents, however, are more concerned with their "image" (source C) within society. More often

man not, presidents face "a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals" (source c) in elections today. This shift in the identity of our nation's leader, far from a positive one, is almost solely the result of the media's influence upon society.

An ideal, as a nation ~~claiming~~ ^{heralding} itself as an example of democracy for the rest of the world, the United States must follow the definition of democracy, that is allowing the greatest possible involvement, in order to improve as a nation. Though the media has brought the opportunity of involvement to many American households, it has sent many more away and has actually created a sort of public apathy for the political process. At the same time that citizens stray away, presidents have become more concerned with the now limited opinions surrounding their office. This inverse relationship of concern is far from fulfilling our

forefathers hopes and even farther
from granting me media the
title of a positive influence upon
society.

5.

Television has allowed events and people to be more accessible, even if the audience is ~~in~~ hundreds of miles away. This has not necessarily had a positive impact. Since the 1960's, ~~the~~ American presidential elections and events surrounding the elections have been broadcasted on television. Although this allows for more of an audience to be politically active, as a result, images have become almost as important as ~~action~~ ~~the~~ a person's ~~actions~~ actions. Through television, an authority figure has the power to manipulate public opinion ~~or~~ or change the complete truth to something more suited to their viewpoint. Television is dangerous.

It is historically evident that during a presidential campaign, a candidate will discuss a subject that relates to the audience around him. A candidate will not go into great detail about retirement funding if he is speaking to an audience between the ages of 18 and 30. Instead, he will discuss a topic that his audience has an interest in. In this way, he can gain support from many ages and groups. ~~For example~~ when ~~Bill Clinton~~ Bill Clinton discussed his ~~concerns~~ Through television, this method could lead to concerns about ~~the~~ topics other than politics. When

discussing his underwear in a political campaign to an MTV audience, ~~the~~ Bill Clinton was focusing on his image, not the issues at hand. The members of the MTV audience that could relate to him and voted for him were not voting ~~intelligently~~ completely about the issues Clinton dealt with, but his image. ~~There are experiments conducted, or groups of people~~ During the election of 1960, those who listened to presidential debates over the radio felt that ~~president~~ John F. Kennedy did not do as well as those who watched the debates on television felt he did. This evidence shows the "distorting effects of television" (source C) in its emphasis on image. By ~~using~~ using television as a key in presidential campaigning, a certain percentage of voters are basing their votes on image and personality instead of political issues at hand.

Television can also be used as a form of manipulation. Audiences may not be getting the full story or coverage on an event or issue. This ~~lack~~ lack of information or change in information can alter their opinion. Ted Koppel wrote in 2001 that a presidential debate was a "joke," but "because

we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, Nightline made the whole thing look pretty good" (Source F). In this scenario, Nightline changed the debate for ~~the~~ its audiences, who in turn may have changed their minds for or against one candidate or the other. Through the power of editing, companies can cut and alter footage to sway their audience one direction or another.

One person can also have a profound affect on public opinion. If a movie star is seen wearing a ~~brand~~ new blue shirt, millions of fans go out and buy the same or a similar shirt because they admire and trust the star. This scenario can also apply to news and politics. If an influential person were to declare that he or she disagreed with one of the candidates, some of their fans might ~~change~~ use ~~his/her~~ their opinion when voting. ~~The~~ During the Vietnam War, a ~~well~~ well known and trusted news anchor, Walter Cronkite declared that he did not completely agree with the president's actions overseas. "So if Walter Cronkite thought that the war was hopeless, the American people would think so too" (Source E). ~~The~~

F,

Presidential elections have evolved greatly from the time of John Quincy Adams and Abe Lincoln. While these presidents had to travel around and physically speak to people around the country, modern-day presidents like Ronald Reagan and George Bush have the option of sitting in one room and having their message broadcasted across the country. This change has influenced presidential elections in a positive way, but it has also made the presidents themselves very vulnerable to the individual wielding the camera.

The popular phrase: "what you see is what you get" is rarely true in media. Media program editors and producers can edit broadcasts to fit their personal preference, taking away from the truth. Source F says concerning a presidential debate: "Because we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, Nightline made the whole thing look pretty good." This is the perfect example of media editing. This option was a good thing in this particular case, but it could also be very detrimental to a candidate's campaign if the editing was done to make them look bad. With a growing influence of media, presidential candidates are at the mercy of those who film them. If supporters film them, they will probably look good, but if opponents film them, it could ruin their chances of winning the

presidency.

Despite this vulnerability, elections have been positively influenced because of the door television has opened to a more informed public. With television, people from every state and town in the United States can watch the various candidates with their own eyes. In 1984 alone, 65.1 million people watched the presidential debate. (Source D). 65.1 million people is a staggering number. If television wasn't around, that number would be hugely decreased and therefore electors would be voting on less information. Television allows people to get a variety of factors that will contribute eventually turn into their vote; their decision of who will next lead the United States.

"Because of television's sense of intimacy, the American people feel they know their Presidents as persons..." (Source B). If you genuinely know a person, you are able to make better, more accurate judgements of them. If you know them as a person, not by their career, you are better prepared to decide to trust and support them, or get them replaced if you don't feel they are right for the job. Television has supplied this intimacy in regards to presidents. By broadcasting events like "nominating conventions, important Congressional hearings... and other debates..." (Source A) the American electorate has been able to make more

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educated decisions about their presidents. Presidents, in turn, have to make a better impression on the people.

In 1968, president Lyndon Johnson spoke inaccurately of our progress in the Vietnam war. Walter Cronkite, a TV newsman got the correct story and reported it to the nation (Source E). In this case, TV acted as a check; when the president didn't tell the truth, someone else got it correct on television. This will make for a better president in general, because candidates will know that they should tell the whole truth all the time.

As the American public grows more used to the media, presidents will have to make increasingly better impressions on the people, and they will have to be better people in order to gain the trust and support of their nation.

BB,

In a technology based society like America, media such as television and radio are our most valuable means of communication. The invention of TV changed the face of the world, and is a source of not only entertainment but news. Millions of Americans get their news from the television screen each night, and it is also a main source ~~of~~ for political news and debating. The use of television in presidential elections should be a positive way of campaigning when used correctly because it allows America to know each candidate and allows American citizens to feel more involved in their nation's government.

Almost every home in America contains a TV. It is a major part of our lives, a part that has proven to shape the way Americans live (Campbell). ~~By~~ ~~every~~ News cameras allow use to first hand experience breaking news, and allows Americans to feel involved and ~~united~~ united. For example,

When the World Trade Centers were attacked America was glued to its TV. By watching and listening, Americans from coast to coast felt involved in the tragedy. The same goes for politics; TV allows citizens to be involved and have a sense of "direct contact." (Campbell) Americans should feel as if they know their leaders, after all, they are the ones who each day make decisions that effect our futures. Personally as an American citizen, I like feeling as if I really know my president, not just as a formal relationship but rather more as a friend. TV is the way for Americans to reach that sense of comfort with their candidate. (Hart) TV involves an intimacy that cannot be matched by radio.

~~TV~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ Radio has been replaced by TV over the years, because it gives us another view on our presidential ~~candidates~~ candidates. Although radio is a great way to listen to

debates, it does not let us see the way the candidates carry themselves. Image is important to Americans, and they more than likely don't want a president who has bad manners and does not carry himself well. If someone is going to be the image of the free world, that image needs to be one that represents America well. (Menand) Televised debates draw millions of viewers per election, because Americans want to be involved ~~about~~ visually with the candidates. (Chart)

Although TV in elections is helpful to the voters, it is only affective when used correctly. For example, during the Vietnam war, Americans felt dis-connected from the troops. Walter Cronkite traveled to Vietnam to uncover the real story, and when CBS aired his report America was stunned. Their opinions on the war changed, and Johnson knew he would have to end it. (Ranney). Americans do not deserve to be lied to by their leaders, and if it

wasn't for TV who knows how long our soldiers would have stayed in Vietnam. This is also an example of TV's power; broadcasting companies should always be truthful, and not try to sway the public's opinion towards one candidate or another. Ted Koppel recalls a debate when he felt the wrong image was conveyed, "Because we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, Nightline made the whole thing look pretty good. That's the ultimate irony," (Koppel).

Especially during election times, broadcasters should always try to display the true image of each candidate.

Overall, the tool of television has changed the face of American politics as we know it. It helps bring Americans into the action ~~and~~ in Washington, and allows a citizen to be able to know the personality of the presidential candidates.

Although TV is a great tool to use

during elections, Americans must also be mindful and careful not to be persuaded by certain news stations. They should also use other sources of communication to learn about each candidate before reaching their final decision. If TV is used in a positive and helpful manner, it will bring back the involved government that our nation ~~is based~~ was based on.

G1

Today, television has the opportunity to portray someone as something they are not. By the way you hold yourself and how you speak can have an impact on those watching. Due to television, presidential elections have become more popular than ever. Some people may state that television has had a positive impact, but I disagree because television has shaped a person to be shown how an audience would like to see him.

In Sorel C. Menand believes that Kennedy's victory was due to his image. Most of the viewers thought that Kennedy had crushed Nixon on national broadcast, but through the radio it came out as a tie. Why is that? Menand stated that due to Kennedy's appearance, by portraying a cleaner look, he

was the best candidate. Because Kennedy had a fresher image than Nixon. He won the debate, not because he said something better, but because of how he looked.

There is no significance in knowing what type of underwear that the President wears. Source B has found a way to mock the Presidential elections through humiliating the candidates. A Presidential candidate who reveals the type of underwear they have on should not be taken seriously. So why is it that Clinton felt it necessary to disclose to the public that he wears briefs, not boxers? By humiliating himself he feels closer to the public, which will help boost his image.

Television is not all it is cut out to be. Source F clearly states that a ninety-minute highlight

segment was cut down to three or four minutes of the best part of the debate. But not allowing the audience to view the screenshots and only see the best parts the viewers are not getting the full truth of the different candidates. This process can not help either candidate because they all look their best.

The sources have shown that image, becoming known to the public as a person, & cutting segments short can help candidates become elected for offices. Although it does not hurt the candidates it portrays a false image. It is better to get the truth than nothing at all.

H H,

What is the true gauge of the influence media has over the public? In this time period, we see the effects media has on us on a daily basis; trying to look like movie stars, determining how successful we are by our t.v. ~~manipulation~~ hero's point of view, and living the life of reality t.v. more than our own. However, the particular media branch, television, has an impact on the political world as well. Presidents are seen more, "as persons," (source b) and we are much more involved in their personal lives. ~~Television has a~~ Television has a leaves an impression with it's viewer and people often judge presidents based on their appearance, or talk thereof, on the television. I believe that radio is influential, that t.v. can be muddling and the particular information disclosed on t.v. is misleading, I believe that t.v. has a negative impact on Presidential elections.

First of all, radio was ~~and~~ developed many decades before t.v., and is known to be a very influential media segment. Unlike t.v., radio provides the public with information without the ability to edit footage in a way that is misleading to the eyes. While audio information can also be misleading, the affects of visuality are proven to be very high. Radio also allows Presidential candidates to ~~appear~~ keep the

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political appearance. When t.v. comes into play, teen stations, such as MTV, take the opportunity to find out information about the individuals that will be appealing to their ~~spectra~~ audience segment. As good marketers, t.v. stations will make their shows directed at a particular group that is why the former asked president Clinton were, "briefs [or] boxers" (source B). MTV was not meaning to be demeaning of president Clinton, however all the other listeners unintentionally came across information which needless to say, probably was offensive. By doing this Clinton unintentionally opened the doors to many serious issues he allowed himself to be judged by the, "celebrity system," (source B) and similarly allowed himself to be used as an example of why many t.v. viewers are, "acutely cynical" (source B). For instances like this alone, many people become dis-satisfied for the way presidential candidates are portrayed on t.v. For these reasons, ~~radio~~ radio is a much better medium in the world of politics.

Secondly, t.v. can be misleading. When listening to a ~~radio~~ radio, one is bases their opinion solely on the content of the information ~~that~~ ^{you} receive. However, when watching television, one is much more likely to be influenced by looks, pose and non-verbal displays

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in the Kennedy / Nixon debates, radio listeners, "scored it a draw," (Source C) while t.v. viewers believed, "Kennedy had crushed Nixon," (Source C). As it so happens, ^{it was} ~~Nixon~~ ^{that} believed Kennedy's wins were because of his, "Image," (Source C) it is shown how misleading the television is because of the visuals. whereas this might help with programs, in a presidential election, it is much more important for the content of the speech to be qualified than the candidate's image. Because so many people have discovered the t.v. to be a bad medium for politics, the millions of viewers of the debates dropped by 6 million from 1992 to 1996

X,

Though some might argue that television has made a wider audience interested in the American presidential elections, the addition of television to politics has ultimately been detrimental.

Early presidential candidates had to rely on their opinions, as well as propaganda, to get themselves elected. Voters were, for the most part, focused on the issues at hand. With the birth of televised debates, image soon became part of the equation. Not only did they think about what they were going to say, but also their body language and dress, making the speeches even more calculated than before. The pre-planned aspect of today's debates often leads to fidgeting around questions to get in all of their talking points, subtracting from the genuinity of the speakers.

Also, as Americans are bombarded with daily images of politicians, they begin to see them as celebrities, not as the people who could someday control the country. There is an example of this in the infamous "boxers or briefs" question to Bill Clinton, which clearly shows a departure from issues that actually matter, such as taxes or foreign affairs. The new celebrity status of politicians also makes them fair game for tabloid

feeder, again seen during Bill Clinton's terms as president. When it was reported that the president had had an affair, the country was in an uproar, forgetting all about real politics. There is substantial evidence suggesting that Clinton was not the first president to have an extramarital affair while in office, but the presence of television made it impossible to hide from the public.

By the 1990's the sensational nature of televised debates had worn off, as seen by the dramatic decrease in viewers in debates in 1996. This evidence suggests that while television may have initially made people more interested in politics, the effect is wearing off.

Another negative repercussion of television in politics is the amount of power it gives the media. Thanks to editors, only a few minutes might be shown of a debate lasting over an ~~hour~~ hour, so the network can make one candidate look like a hero, and the other a fool, if they so choose. When one considers this, it is evident that t.v. has done nothing to bring straightforwardness and honesty back into politics. There have even been times when the media's portrayal of certain events have

influenced the presidential administration, as in the case of Walter Cronkite declaring the Vietnam war hopeless. It is a frightening prospect to think about how much pull news anchors have in the ultimate fate of our country.

Television will continue to be a part of presidential elections in America, no matter what we think about its role. We can only hope that there will be a return to the issues, and that the beauty-payment aspects of presidential debates will somehow be minimized.