How Has The Invention And Use Of Television Affect Essay, Research Paper

Before the invention of television, Americans relied on newspapers and the radio to spread newsand other important information. Once the use of the television began, it spread like wildfirenation-wide. Information was made available almost immediately after the incident occurred. People could now see things rather than just listen to them. In effect, people s views changeddramatically over the next few decades, especially their views on political issues. Most peoplebelieved that what they were seeing and hearing about on television was the only way things couldpossibly be. Because the images that they were seeing were real, many people assumed the ideaswere correct. Many people did not understand how they could see and hear something on TV.that wasn t the truth or the correct opinion. Because of the immense amount of political materialthat was shown, people came to believe things that they wouldn t have ordinarily believedregarding political issues. The first event in television history happened in 1817, when a Swedish chemist namedJ ns Jakob Berzelius discovered the element selenium. It was later discovered by the Irishtelegraph operator, Joseph May, that selenium had a property called photoconductivity. In otherwords, the amount of electrical current that selenium could carry depended on the amount of lightthat struck it. This led to American inventor George R. Carey s first television system. This firstset was very complicated and required a numerous amount of wires. In 1884 Paul Nipkowinvented the scanning disk, which further advanced the television set, but did not perfect it by far. This was a round, flat disk with holes arranged in a spiral shape on is surface. Because the picturewas not clear, more improvements were made in the 20th century. In 1911, A. A. CampbellSwinton wrote a description of the first purely electronic system. By 1945, television was in themass market. It began to appear in households all across America. Today, television is everywhere. This obviously has not always been the case. In 1948there were fewer than one hundred thousand television sets in the United States. But one yearlater, Americans owned one million televisions. By 1954, there were more than forty milliontelevision sets in the U.S. and by 1960, there were 150 million Americans who owned a TV. It isnot surprising then, that today over 90 million people watch television every day. There isapproximately one and a half television sets for every household in the U.S. (Perkinson 9). With all these televisions, it is not surprising that the average American watches abouttwelve hundred hours of TV a year (Perkinson 9). And with such large numbers of peoplewatching so much television, is should be obvious that television greatly affects the views ofAmericans. Among other things, television has had a tremendous impact on American politics. Because America is a democracy, the way the people view politics and political candidates is whatshapes the country. Since the 1940s, television has become a window to the world, with influencein nearly every aspect of life. Everyday, millions of opinions are changed solely because oftelevision. Because of the role of television, many American views are what they are today. Perhaps the best known example of television affecting politics is the first televisedpresidential debates. In September of 1960, the first nationally televised presidential debate wasbetween John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Many people s stance on the presidential electionwas altered by the mere appearance of the two candidates. Kennedy was a young, handsome man who looked prepared and confident. On the otherhand, Nixon was not prepared for the conditions under which the televising would occur and wasmade to look sinister by the shadows and the colors of his clothing. He perspired under the hot

lights and the appearance he gave off was not one of a confident and well-prepared president. Itis believed that Kennedy won this close election because of his television victory. This is not the only instance in which the presidency has been affected by television. Ineven more recent times, many people also believe that the defeat of George Bush by Bill Clintonwas partially brought about by Bush s unsuccessful televised debates with Clinton and Clinton swell-liked appearance (Croteau and Hoynes 13). Although many people do not realize it, the physical image of a politician plays a veryimportant role in that politician s election to an office. It is sometimes hard for a person todistinguish between approval of a candidate s ideas and their appearance. This difficulty stemsfrom people s unintentional desire to be represented by attractiveness. This attractiveness is also what causes the views of others to be passed on throughtelevision. Because television allows you to see things, people are sometimes steered towardsthings solely based on the appearance of those things. With ideas being passed so freely amongpeople through television, it is sometimes hard to believe that any ideas are an individual s ownbeliefs, rather than those of a television program. Television also has the power to inflate the impressiveness of a topic. More people nowsaw and heard what was only witnessed before by a few. So many people were united for the firsttime; having the thrill of being involved in something and sharing it with the entire nation. Thisbrought a sense of accomplishment and belongingness upon those involved. People now wantedto be involved in what was going on, and they had a way to do it. Politics was now available tomore people than ever before (Croteau and Hoynes 2). But this reflection of news and information is not always an exact mirror of truth. This mirror is sometimes slanted, and does not always reflect all of the information. Because of this,people s views and decisions are sometimes based on incomplete information. Not only does alack of information contribute to biased decisions, but biased views can also be formed whenjournalists present their ideas as if they were truth (Croteau and Hoynes 30-33). Another mode of molding people s views regarding politics is through the use of politicalcommercials. These commercials, littered with catchy slogans and songs, have been instrumentalin affecting the votes of many Americans during past elections (Classics). These commercialsprovided reasons why a particular candidate should be voted for, as well as reasons why theiropponent should not be voted for. They helped to highlight and emphasize a candidate s mainpoints and opinions on important issues. These spots, or advertising messages less than fiveminutes in length, are still common today and are just as influential now as they were then. (Classics). Television has also changed the way news was regarded. News suddenly was receivedmuch quicker with the use of television. People knew what was happening when it washappening, rather than after the fact. The current results to presidential polls could now reach thepublic quicker, as well as information that would help the candidate express their views faster,more effectively, and to a larger audience. The invention and use of television made people more informed on some political issues,causing views to change and ideas to be born. Although people s views were changed for thebetter by the creation of a more informed public, they were also changed for the worse because opinions were not based solely on facts at all times. Appearance and other factors sometimesseeped in. The invention and use of television did not positively or negatively affect Americanpolitics, it merely altered the American political system. Our system of politics is run much differently today than it was before the invention of television.