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Chapter 3

The Second Survey: Television Quiz Shows and *Coronation Street*

As a first attempt to operationalise the project thesis, *The Dales* study had been successful. A useful technique of eliciting evidence about audience gratifications had been devised and tried in the field. Cluster analysis of the resulting data had produced a meaningful pattern of gratification types. Cluster scoring had facilitated an examination of relationships between the degree to which people seek particular satisfactions from broadcast fare and the social positions they occupy. In addition, within inevitable limitations of sample size and composition, the *Dales* survey had provided a portrait of the outlook of one body of media fans, the relative completeness of which is rare in the literature of mass communication studies.

When planning a second survey, it was decided, therefore, to follow essentially the same approach, although it was also appreciated that the 18-month life of the first stage of the project^[1] would necessitate a concentration of effort on those tasks that were most germane to its central objectives. In the time available, for example, analyses of data from future programme studies could not be so comprehensive as the *Dales* report had been. Moreover, the investigators wished to overcome certain limitations of the *Dales* study and to effect improvements in their array of instruments and techniques. In fact four particular developments influenced the design of the second survey.

1. Since the ultimate objective of the project is to relate social background to the gratifications derived from television viewing in general, it was recognised that some movement from a single programme study towards the investigation of an entire medium should be initiated. As a first step in this direction the second survey had two programme foci.
2. Despite its relative success, the format of the *Dales* inventory of gratification items had imposed certain limitations on the range of available statistical manipulations. In the second survey the format of the inventory was itself a focus of study, and two new (and different) types of check-lists were administered to the fans of the two chosen bodies of TV content.
3. More considered attention was paid to the range and types of social indicator variables to be deployed in the second survey.

4. The *Dales* study had relied upon rather primitive methods of tabulation and analysis, which were both time-consuming and unsuited to any large-scale investigation that might eventually be undertaken. Consequently, certain more sophisticated techniques of data processing were canvassed, and in the end, helped by the facilities of university computers at both Leeds and Southampton, and advised by a specialist methodologist, the project's procedures of analysis were radically revised. Although the application of complex techniques to data from a small sample seemed incongruous at times, this helped to introduce the research team to some of the processing problems they would have to face in carrying out the more definitive investigation proposed for the project's second stage.

In choosing programmes for investigation in the second survey, it was decided that one should parallel the first study and that the other should open up a new range of gratifications. As a long-running television serial with a large family audience, *Coronation Street* satisfied the first criterion. In selecting a second focus, it was decided to see whether the original approach could be applied to a group of programmes, and television quizzes, a distinctive and popular category of content, was thought suitable for this purpose. Being non-fictional, such a programme type might direct attention to some gratifications not yet explored by the project; moreover, the findings of an exceptionally interesting early uses and gratifications study, which had centred on a small sample of listeners to an American radio quiz programme, were available for comparison.^[2]

Procedures

1. A series of tape-recorded group discussions with male and female fans of *Coronation Street* and TV quiz programme, respectively, was held in the summer of 1969, and a questionnaire was compiled in the light of analysis of the material thus obtained.

2. In the first half of November, 1969, this questionnaire was administered by interview to a quota sample (controlling for sex, age, housing type and social grade) of 100 Leeds residents, who had nominated as their favourite programmes (responding to a preferred list of designated programmes) either *Coronation Street*, *University Challenge*, *TV Brain of Britain*, or *Ask The Family*. The sample members were initially distributed as follows:

| | Coronation Street | Quizzes |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Chose both as favourite | 39 | 39 |
| Chose one only as favourite | 19 | 42 |
| | 58 | 81 |

Thus the respondents were eligible to answer questions about either or both the chosen foci of investigation.

3. The questionnaire included the following items:

- a. Questions about quiz and Coronation Street viewing habits, including data about the social context of viewing.
- b. Questions about the realism of Coronation Street.
- c. A self-completion inventory of 43 'statements which people have made about Coronation Street', to be rated by respondents on a five-point scale of agreement/disagreement.
- d. Three self-completion inventories (totally 42 items in all) about quiz programmes, distinguishing between anticipated gratifications,^[3] experienced satisfactions,^[4] and image descriptions.^[5]
- e. A composite item, trying out a technique of requiring respondents 1) to rank individual quiz programmes for their provision of several different designated satisfactions, and 2) to rank the satisfactions themselves in their order of importance to the respondent.
- f. Questions about general media use.
- g. A number of social indicator variables, which were planned to cover the following areas of experience:
 - 1) Customary demographic particulars – e.g., sex, age, occupation, housing type, and school-leaving age.
 - 2) Inter-generational occupational mobility (derived from an item about father's occupation).
 - 3) Subjective social status.
 - 4) Subjective reactions to work (in terms of strain experienced at work and fatigue experienced after work).
 - 5) Family experience – e.g. size of present household, size of and position in family of origin, and accessibility of extended family members.
 - 6) Geographical mobility (including items about place of birth, length of stay at current address and frequency of changes of address in the past ten years).
 - 7) Attachment to the locality.
 - 8) Social interaction – e.g. number of close friends, range of acquaintances in the vicinity, and an index of acts of sociability.^[6]
 - 9) Attitudes to education.^[7]
 - 10) Scores on a general measure of social and political conservatism.

Results of the Coronation Street Study

1. Despite a large overlapping population of 39 respondents who participated in both studies, the *Coronation Street* sub-sample (N = 58) included more manual workers than did the quiz sub-sample – as Table III.1 shows.

TABLE III.1: Social Composition of the Coronation Street and Quiz Sub-samples

| | Coronation Street fans | Quiz fans |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| | % | % |
| Non-manual | 36 | 54 |
| Skilled manual | 24 | 22 |
| Semi- and unskilled manual | 40 | 13 |
| | 100 | 100 |

N = 58

This probably accounts for the fact that more 'heavy' viewers were found in the *Coronation Street* sub-sample (72%) than in the quiz sub-sample (63%) and that Coronation Street fans read fewer newspapers than did the quiz fans.

2. Most members of the *Coronation Street* sub-sample seemed to be fairly attached to the programme. A large majority watched each episode regularly, and as many as 52 (90%) had followed the serial for five years or more. But unlike much *Dales* listening (typically a solitary activity), *Coronation Street* was commonly viewed in the company of other members of the household, only 16 respondents (22%) saying that they 'usually' watched it alone. Nevertheless, when asked, 'Would you rather watch *Coronation Street* on your own, with someone, or does it make no difference?', as many as 36 (62%) opted for the last response, suggesting that the social context of viewing was irrelevant to their enjoyment of the programme. It may be that audience relations with broadcast fiction are formed more often on a solitary than on a shared basis. (Evidence from the quiz study suggests, however, that any such tendency cannot be generalised to all categories of broadcast output. Probably some programme materials lend themselves more readily than others to an intensified appreciation in social settings.)

3. The readiness of the fans of a fictional serial staunchly to defend it as 'true-to-life', which was highly characteristic of the *Dales* sample, was encountered again in the answers of the *Coronation Street* viewers to a series of questions about the programme's realism (requiring ratings on five different dimensions). The results are set out for the sample as a whole and by occupational grade in Table III.2.

TABLE III.2: Fans' Perceptions of the Realism of Coronation Street

| | | Non-manual | Manual | Total* |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------|--------|
| About how many episodes usually seem | All or most | 12 | 23 | 35 |

| | | | | |
|--|--------------|----|----|----|
| really true-to-life? | Some or none | 9 | 13 | 22 |
| How many of the characters seem really true-to-life? | All or most | 13 | 24 | 37 |
| | Some or none | 8 | 12 | 20 |
| How many episodes give a true picture of working class life? | All or most | 16 | 27 | 43 |
| | Some or none | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| How many episodes give an accurate idea of what life in the North is like? | All or most | 5 | 23 | 28 |
| | Some or none | 16 | 15 | 29 |
| How many characters do you think are a bit old-fashioned? | All or most | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| | Some or none | 19 | 29 | 48 |

* One respondent did not answer these questions.

It can be seen that *Coronation Street* was regarded as realistic by large majorities on four of the five dimensions of assessment. The only exception was due to the inability of non-manual viewers to accept the programme's picture of 'what life in the North is like', probably because its working-class setting does not reflect their mode of Northern life. Since most critics regard *Coronation Street* as an exercise in nostalgia, portraying an order and now disappearing style of working-class existence, it is interesting to find that such a small proportion of these fans (only 16%) was prepared to admit that 'all or most' of the characters were even 'a bit old-fashioned'. This result is especially noteworthy since the manual respondents to the survey had been drawn in equal numbers from suburban estates and central city areas. In these circumstances, the fact that 74% of respondents thought that all or most of the episodes gave 'a true picture of working-class life' is equally impressive. Except for the dimension of fidelity to life in the North, the occupational differences displayed in the table are not great. The working-class fans were more likely to rate *Coronation Street* as realistic in general story line and character portrayal; the different occupational groups were equally convinced of the authenticity of the programme's picture of working-class life; but there was somewhat more sensitivity among the manual fans to the appearance of old-fashioned characters in the programme.

In a different approach to the study of viewers' impressions of a programme's realism, the respondents were asked whether they agreed 'that *Coronation Street* would be more like

everyday life, if the pace was a little slower and not so much was happening all the time'. Despite the affirmative basis of the wording of the question, a majority (32 of the 56 respondents who answered it) denied that greater realism would be achieved by slowing down the pace of the programme. And of the 24 individuals who agreed that *Coronation Street* was larger than life in this sense, only a minority (9) said they would like it better if it was slowed down. Thus, although some fans of such a programme recognise that it does depart from reality, at least in the sense of abstracting for attention some of its more interesting and exciting elements, most of these viewers prefer it to be constructed in this way, while (more remarkably) the majority is unwilling to admit even that such a minimal sacrifice of realism has been perpetrated.

4. An opportunity to tap certain other attitudes to *Coronation Street* arose fortuitously from the fact that, in an episode just screened before the survey was launched, most of the residents of *Coronation Street* had been involved in a serious coach accident, as a consequence of which some had been hospitalised and seemed at the time even to be in danger of losing their lives. After briefly reminding the sample members of this situation, the interviewers simply asked, 'How do you feel about this?'

Three main themes emerged prominently from the responses to this invitation to comment on such a dramatic incident. One was the theme of 'such things do happen'. The spirit of many remarks in this vein was that, since such a startling and upsetting event could happen in real life, its occurrence in *Coronation Street* was acceptable. It was as if a prior perception of the programme as one that aimed for realism had helped to cushion what might otherwise have been received as a blow. Here are some examples of these answers:

Well, I mean it can happen to anyone. I've just lost my father and it doesn't seem possible, but it happens just like that, and it makes it more true doesn't it? I think it's more or less something that could happen. People collect together in a neighbourhood and go on a bus trip and not all come out alive.

Well, it does happen in real life and I don't think you should gloss over it.

Well, it's just one of those things. It could happen any time on any bus outing. It happened to me like that, a bus crash.

As a matter of fact quite interested. It is most human. I was involved in an accident and found this quite real. It takes away the veil from people; you see them as they really are.

In fact a similar theme had emerged from *Dales* group discussions when the fans were asked to talk about various shocking events that had happened in certain past episodes of that serial.

A second distinctive response centred on speculation about the intentions of the programme's producers. Perhaps in thus asserting his supposed knowledge-ability about

how TV stories are presented and developed, the viewer is helped to feel that he is not merely an object of entertainment but a self-conscious observer as well. Here are some examples of such comments:

My reaction when I heard there was going to be an accident was they were going to get rid of some of the characters by killing them off I thought somebody's going to be written out of it.

I think it is a loophole for getting someone out of the programme.

I feel, who are they trying to get rid of in the programme? I will miss certain characters if they go.

And a third theme seemed to dichotomise those fans in whom a shocking episode provoked an assertion of 'adult discount'^[8], a stress on the story's 'make-believe' qualities, from those who unhesitatingly expressed sorrow at the prospect of being cut off from characters who had become valued members of their own circles of social intimates. These opposed reactions are illustrated by the following two sets of extracts:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Adult discount | Knowing it's only entertainment, I'm not bothered particularly |
| | I know it's fiction, so it doesn't trouble me. |
| | It doesn't go to my heart because I know it's fiction, but it's a good idea if they want to drop someone. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Para-social companion-ship threat | I'm sorry. I like all of them. Minnie's just like Auntie; you feel you know them. You know you feel as if they had been in a real accident and you'd like to do something for them. |
| | Shattered. I'm very upset. I hope they'll be all right. |
| | My wife was very upset. So was I. You feel you know the characters |
| | I think it's shocking. They didn't expect to have an accident, going on a trip. You know it's a shock. You feel sorry for them, and that's all you can say, love. |

5. Unfortunately, it transpired that the inventory of gratification statements about *Coronation Street* had been ill-designed. Its closely positioned sequence of 43 statements about the programme, with five reply columns on the right-hand side of the page, had obviously encouraged an unthinking response, the consequences of which were fully evident once a cluster analysis was carried out. The main determinant of the allocation of items to a large first cluster proved to be their physical proximity to each other – including, for example, items 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 37 and 38. Since this was undoubtedly evidence of the workings of a response set, it was a) decided to abandon the *Coronation Street* analysis at this point, and b) resolved to avoid the use of such a format in subsequent investigations.

Results of the Quiz Study

In shifting the object of investigation from a single programme to a programme type, it was important to delineate the boundaries of the chosen content category and in terms that would make sense to the viewers themselves. Consequently, the participants in the group discussions were invited to say at the outset what they thought quiz programmes were and to give examples. At this point a distinction was invariably drawn between two kinds of programmes, one that was more like a parlour game, the other relying on more genuine tests of knowledge. In the former there were easy questions, big prizes, gimmicks and a prominent element of chance (e.g. *Double Your Money*, *Take Your Pick* and *The Wheel of Fortune*). In the latter more emphasis was put on the ability of contestants to answer really difficult questions, and it was decided that this category should be the basis of the gratification study. At the time of the survey only three such 'quizzes' were on the air – *Ask The Family*, *TV Brain of Britain* and *University Challenge* and the sample included 81 people who had mentioned one or more of them as their 'favourites' when presented with a list of ten TV programmes. But to be eligible for the quiz inventory a person had to have seen at least two editions of one or more of the three quiz programmes during the four weeks preceding the interview. This filter reduced the size of the quiz sub-sample to 73 respondents.

The interviewers' approach to this sub-sample was confined almost exclusively to the gratifications front. Unlike the more wide-ranging approach to the *Dales* and *Coronation Street* fans, no evaluative or open-ended questions, eliciting other expressions of attitude to quizzes, were asked. With a large battery of social indicator items to get through, plus the possibility of having to complete the *Coronation Street* inventory, the interview was bound to be a long one for many respondents. It has already been said that the 42 quiz items were split into three inventories, one set of statements referring to the gratifications anticipated from quizzes, one referring to the satisfactions experienced while actually watching quiz programmes, and a third containing a set of image-type descriptions of quiz programmes (each item requiring a response to a four-point scale). It was hoped that these distinctions would indicate clearly what was expected of the respondent and help to maintain his motivation by offsetting boredom and fatigue. Copies of the forms are provided in the Appendix, where the distributions of response to each scale are also set out. In general these format arrangements seemed to work successfully. It is true that some difficulty had been experienced in systematically preserving the three-fold distinction between item types when drafting the statements for inclusion in the inventories. But this part of the interview went smoothly; there were no signs of response set in the results; and the inter-correlations of item endorsements ranged meaningfully across the inventory boundaries.

The main results of the quiz study fall into two parts, corresponding to the two-stage computer analysis of viewers' responses to the checklists that was conducted. First, the respondents' endorsements of the 42 scales were punched onto paper tape, and a 42 x

42 matrix of product moment correlations was computed, after which the items were rearranged into subsets by the same technique of cluster analysis that had been followed in the *Dales* survey. Second, scores were assigned to respondents to express their orientations to each of the clusters that had emerged from the previous analysis, and relationships between such scores and 21 social indicator variables were examined by means of the AID (automatic interaction detector) program.

1. The gratifications associated with television quiz programmes

Three decades ago Herta Herzog pointed out that, like many other popular broadcast forms, quiz programmes ‘have a multiple appeal: different aspects of them appeal to different people’. She also noted that ‘mere armchair speculation cannot possibly surmise the multiplicity of such appeals’. But in order to transcend armchair speculation she had to rely on interpretation of qualitative data gathered through intensive interviews with only 11 listeners to one radio quiz programme – although she also admitted that before one could speak of the ‘results’ of such a study a) more cases would be needed and b) questions suited to a systematic statistical analysis would have to be devised.^[9] Perhaps the findings reported here more nearly merit the designation of ‘results’, since they stem from a cluster analysis of the responses of 73 quiz fans to 42 statements about such programmes. Table III.3 provides an overview of the outcome of that analysis.

TABLE III.3: Results of Cluster Analysis, Television Quiz Programmes

| | | Coefficients of | |
|-----------|--|-----------------|-------------|
| | | Homogeneity | Reliability |
| Cluster 1 | Self-Rating Appeal | .24 | .69 |
| | I can compare myself with the experts. | | |
| | I like to imagine that I am on the programme and doing well. | | |
| | I feel pleased that the side I favour has actually won. | | |
| | I imagine that I was on the programme and doing well. | | |
| | I am reminded of when I was in school. | | |
| | I laugh at the contestants’ mistakes. | | |
| | Hard to follow. | | |
| Cluster 2 | Basis for Social Interaction | .31 | .79 |
| | I look forward to talking about it with others. | | |

I like competing with other people watching with me

I like working together with the family on the answers.

I hope the children will get a lot out of it.

The children get a lot out of it.

It brings the family together sharing the same interest.

It is a topic of conversation afterwards.

Not really for people like myself.

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Cluster 3 | Excitement Appeal | .34 | .78 |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-----|

I like the excitement of a close finish.

I like to forget my worries for a while.

I like trying to guess the winner.

Having got the answer right I feel really good.

I completely forget my worries.

I get involved in the competition.

Exciting.

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-----|-----|
| Cluster 4 | Educational Appeal | .30 | .68 |
|-----------|--------------------|-----|-----|

I find I know more than I thought.

I feel I have improved myself.

I feel respect for the people on the programme.

I think over some of the questions afterwards.

Educational.

Cluster 5

It is nice to see the experts taken down a peg.

It is amusing to see the mistakes some of the contestants make.

Cluster 6

I like to learn something as well as to be entertained.

I like finding out new things.

Cluster 7

I like trying to guess the answers.

I hope to find that I know some of the answers.

Cluster 8

I find out the gaps in what I know.

I learn something new.

A waste of time.

Cluster 9

Entertaining.

Something for all the family.

Cluster 10

I like the sound of voices in the home.

I like seeing really intelligent contestants showing how much they know.

In fact the material in the table forms a strikingly clear pattern. Four relatively large clusters emerged first from the analysis and were followed by a string of six, small, mainly

two-item clusters. Each of the former seems to represent a distinct appeal of television quizzes, reaching in most cases quite adequate levels of homogeneity and reliability.

^[10] The six later clusters add little to the results, however, partly because most of their meanings have been covered already by the larger clusters, and partly because two-item groupings are necessarily low in reliability.

According to this analysis, then, four main kinds of gratifications are involved in the viewing of quiz programmes. One stems from a self-rating appeal, whereby watching a quiz enables the viewer to find out something about himself. Inspection of the individual items in Cluster 1 suggests that it embraces several related elements. There is the possibility of assessing one's ability by comparing one's own responses to the questions with the performance of other contestants. There is the possibility of testing one's judgement by guessing which group of competitors will turn out to be the winners. There is the theme of projection, whereby the viewer can imagine how he would fare if he were on the programme itself. And there is the possibility of being reminded of what one was like as a school-child. In the last context it is interesting to note that Herta Herzog also detected a self-rating appeal of quiz programmes and speculated that one of its ingredients was the attraction of 'being taken back to one's own school days'.^[11]

The meaning of Cluster 2 seems equally definite. A second major appeal of quiz programmes (in contrast perhaps to *The Dales* and *Coronation Street* serials) is their provision of a basis for social interaction with other people. Each item in the cluster (with only one exception) bears this interpretation. A quiz programme offers shared family interest; there is the possibility of observing 'what children get out of it'; the whole family can work together on the answers; alternatively, viewers can compete with each other in trying to answer the questions; and the occasion can form a topic of conversation afterwards. Clearly quiz programmes are well-adapted to serving a 'coin of exchange' function.

A third main appeal of TV quizzes arises from the excitement they can engender. Many of the items in Cluster 3 convey this emphasis. Quiz programmes apparently offer the excitement of competition itself, guessing who might win and seeing how one's forecast turns out, and the prospect of a close finish. Herta Herzog seemed to have this gratification in mind when referring to the so-called 'sporting appeal' of Professor Quiz.

^[12] Perhaps what is distinctive about the composition of Cluster 3 in this study is its injection of an 'escapist' note in the associated group of items ('I like to forget my worries for a while' and 'I completely forget my worries'). It is as if the various tensions of a quiz programme facilitate its 'escapist' function and help the viewer to shed his everyday cares for a while.

Finally, Cluster 4 picks out an educational appeal of quiz programmes. Here too several ingredients are involved. It is not just that quizzes can help to stimulate thought ('I think over some of the questions afterwards'). In addition, two of the items sound a note of 'self-improvement' ('I feel I have improved myself' and 'I find I know more than I thought'),

in terms which suggest that people who feel insecure in their educational status may use quizzes to reassure themselves about their own knowledgeability. And this suggests yet another way of interpreting Cluster 4 – as expressive of the function of quiz programmes in projecting and reinforcing educational values.

Compared with these coherent and distinct groupings the rest of the cluster analysis has yielded a long tail of fragmented results. At best this could be said to point to only two additional appeals of quiz programmes: the prospect of viewer self-aggrandisement at the expense of the mistakes that the contestants occasionally make (Cluster 5) and the hint of a companionship theme (Cluster 10).

2. Gratification patterns and social background

Having confirmed the multiplicity of the gratifications sought from quiz viewing, the next question to be tackled concerned their differential social origins. What kinds of people are most attracted to each of the main appeals of quiz programmes? In addition to trying to answer this question it was thought advisable to look for a technique of data processing that could be adapted to the project's long-term needs. It was decided in the end to try out the AID (automatic interaction detector) computer program for these purposes.

In essence the AID program searches among a group of independent variables for a best set of predictors of a criterion variable. It does so by effecting a series of dichotomous splits on the independent variables. That is, the program first selects that independent variable which, when dichotomised, becomes the best predictor of the criterion variable. Each half of that predictor then separately receives the same treatment in turn, which, when divided, accounts for most of the remaining variance in the dependent variable. The procedure is iterative, terminating when it has either exhausted the supply of independent variables or produced a grouping with an N which is too small for further division.

Altogether AID produces several different forms of tabulation. They include a) a correlation matrix, showing the interrelationships of all the variables in the analysis, b) mean dependent variable scores for each dichotomised independent variable, and c) correlation ratios which express the relationship of each of the remaining independent variables to the dependent variable after the influence of the best predictor has been taken into account. But the program's central feature is its search for best predictors, the outcome of which can be visualised most appropriately as a branching tree. This is the form in which the AID analysis of the quiz data has been presented below.

The choice of AID as a technique of data processing had some implications for the preparation of both the dependent and the independent variables in the analysis. The former were to consist of a series of scores, to be assigned to each respondent to reflect his endorsement of the various items in each of the quiz clusters. Raw cluster scores were initially calculated by applying four multipliers to each gratification scale – e.g. very often 3x, quite often 2x, now and then 1x, and never 0x. To conform to an AID requirement, however, the distributions of these scores had to be converted onto ten-

point scales, chiefly by collapsing adjacent scale points through inspection. Although the AID analysis was actually run on all the ten quiz cluster scores, only the results for those clusters that have been interpreted substantively (1-4) are presented below. In addition, each respondent was assigned a total gratification score by summing individual cluster scores and converting the resulting distribution into a ten-point scale. The AID analysis of those total gratifications scores also appears below.

Finally, since there was a maximum number of independent variables with which the AID program could cope, it was necessary to choose a limited set of background particulars for inclusion in the analysis. The 21 that were selected are listed in Table III.4. In each case the data were converted into short ordinal scales (ranging from two to five classes) in order to meet another AID requirement.

TABLE III.4: Independent Variables Included in the AID Analysis of Quiz Gratification Cluster Scores

Housing type (pre-war terrace, inner city; post-war council, outer city; owner-occupied)

Age

Sex

Occupational grade

Number of acts of sociability

Number of close friends

Size of present household

Size of accessible extended family

Number of acquaintances in the vicinity

Feelings of attachment to the neighbourhood

Length of residence at present address

Place of birth

Size of family of origin

Position in family of origin

Feelings about childhood

School-leaving age

Score on general measure of social conservatism

Subjective social status

Estimated feelings of strain at work

Estimated feelings of fatigue after work

Inter-generational occupational mobility

Cluster 1- Self-Rating

The accompanying figure shows how the AID procedures operate. When the self-rating appeal of quiz programmes was analysed, the mean cluster score for the entire sample of 73 respondents was 1.7, and that dichotomised social indicator variable (out of the 21 in the analysis) which provided the best prediction of the cluster score was the type of housing occupied by the respondent. This produced one high-scoring terminal group, consisting of 36 respondents, living in council houses or urban terraces, who had registered a mean cluster score of 2.4. On that side of the tree the deployment of other variables did not noticeably improve the prediction. Meanwhile, a further split among the owner-occupiers, in terms of the size of their nearby extended families, yielded another high-scoring terminal group, consisting of viewers with large extended families who had registered a mean cluster score of 2.1. Again no other variable on this side of the tree managed to produce a better predictor. Although the relevance of size of extended family to the self-rating gratification is difficult to discern, the analysis as a whole clearly suggests that working-class fans of quizzes were more concerned to use such programmes to 'learn about themselves' than were their middle-class counterparts.

Cluster 2 – Basis for Social Interaction

The AID figure for this cluster shows that it has mainly singled out social contact variables as the best predictors of respondents' scores. When an initial split was effected by the number of claimed acquaintances in the area, a terminal group of 17 individuals was produced, who had registered a mean cluster score of 4.2 (compared with a sample average of 2.7). On that side of the tree, no other variable helped to improve the prediction. On the other side, the remaining respondents were further split by variables at two different stages, involving size of extended family, age and place of birth. In the end, this yielded a terminal group of middle-aged viewers, having access to the members of a large extended family, with a very high mean cluster score of 4.9. The analysis as a whole suggests that a use of quiz material to serve a 'coin of exchange' function is directly related to the number of opportunities for interaction that are available in the individual's social environment.

Cluster 3 – Excitement

Although the patterns shown in the tree for this cluster are rather elaborate, and some of the splits are difficult to follow, the main terminal groups do seem to add up to a comprehensible result. The highest-scoring group (mean cluster score of 5.8 compared with a sample average of 4.1) consists of working-class viewers who had measured low on an index of acts of sociability and were late-born children of large families. Bearing in mind that this cluster could be expressing an 'escapist' fantasy, it may be that low sociability is a symptom of the presence of some of those problems from which the working-class viewer was seeking relief. The sex variable figures prominently in the pattern on the other side of the tree, certain women having proved exceptionally resistant to the excitement appeal of quizzes (mean cluster score of 2.7).

Cluster 4 – Educational Appeal

Some meaningful predictors also seem to emerge from the AID analysis of the educational qualifications associated with quizzes. The role of place of birth in the initial split is hard to understand. But it is interesting to find that school-leaving age helps to form a high-scoring terminal group among the Leeds-born respondents, the viewers who had completed full-time education at the age of 14 or 15 having registered a mean cluster score of 4.8 compared with a sample average of 3.9. This underlines the suggestion made earlier that people who feel insecure in their own educational standing may be exceptionally susceptible to the educational appeal of quiz programmes. On the other side of the tree, age locates another high-scoring terminal group, 50-59 year-olds (among viewers who were born outside Leeds) having registered a mean cluster score of 4.9. This is consistent with the tendency for an interest in more serious media materials to increase with age until the time for retirement is approached, after which a decline sets in.

Total Gratifications

The outstanding feature of the figure for this analysis is the relevance of social status to the amount of satisfaction that a fan seems to get out of quiz viewing. The best first predictor is occupational grade, manual workers having registered a mean score of 4.6, compared with sample average of 4.1. Moreover, occupational mobility serves as the next best predictor when this variable is split again, the immobile working-class respondents having formed a terminal group with an average of 5.2. On the other side of the tree the number of claimed acquaintances seemed to determine how much satisfaction the non-manual respondents got out of following quizzes. The mixed composition of the terminal group here, consisting both of individuals with very few acquaintances and of respondents with very many acquaintances, may conceivably reflect the joint operation of a substitute companionship function and a social interaction function. But the determinant role of class variables in the analysis suggests that quiz viewing may help certain manual workers to compensate in various ways for the deprivations and insecurities that arise from their lower social status.

An Assessment of the AID Approach

The results of the AID analysis of the quiz data were regarded as a qualified success, encouraging in certain aspects but also highlighting certain difficulties that must eventually be mastered. It was most encouraging to find that as different criterion variables provided a focus of investigation, quite different sets of independent variables were singled out as best predictors by the program. This suggests that the discriminatory power of AID could be quite acute when applied to data derived from a large-scale survey. The apparent relevance of several of the terminal groups to the substantive meanings that had previously been assigned to the individual clusters was also impressive.

On the other hand, the meaning of certain splits remained obscure, and the cutting points of certain dichotomies helped to form some curiously heterogeneous groups. But the investigators considered that these problems are soluble for three main reasons. First, it should be appreciated that since the quiz sample was small, the AID program was often obliged to work with absurdly tiny sub-groups. This source of difficulty should certainly be overcome by the size of the sample that has been proposed for the project's second-stage survey. (N = 2300). Second, the incidence of odd cutting points on the independent variables should be considerably reduced by ensuring that as far as possible only valid items are used for collecting social background information. Third (and most important), it is now clear that success in the use of AID critically depends on the exercise of care and thought in the selection of independent variables for inclusion in the analysis. It could not be claimed that the social indicator variables deployed in the quiz study had been chosen primarily for their hypothesised or established relevance to the quiz gratifications under investigation. In fact the list of these variables had to be compiled before the results of the cluster analysis were known, and some were included because of their expected relevance to Coronation Street gratifications. But before AID is run in any major survey, all the potential independent variables will be sifted according to the terms of certain explicit criteria. Thus an attempt will be made to define the envisaged role of each such variable in the analysis with some precision in advance.

[1] Later extended to 24 months.

[2] Herzog, Herta, 'Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study', in Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Radio and the Printed Page, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1940.

[3] 'When I think about watching a quiz [the statement] applies very much, quite a lot, a little, not at all.'

[4] 'When watching quizzes [the experience] has happened very often, quite often, only now and then, never.'

[5] '[the description] applies very well, fairly well, slightly, not at all.'

[6] The index of acts of sociability was adapted from an instrument described in Belson, William A, The Impact of Television, Crosby, Lockwood & Son, Ltd., London, 1967.

[7] Adapted from a scale in Trenaman, Joseph, Attitudes to Opportunities for Further Education, D. Litt Thesis, 1957.

[8] Cf. Dysinger, W. S. and Rucknick, C. A. The Emotional Responses of Children to the Motion Picture Situation, Macmillan, New York, 1933.

[9] Herzog, Herta, 'Professor Quiz: A Gratification Study', op. cit., pp. 64-5.

[10] Aubrey McKennell proposes a threshold of approximately .30 for homogeneity and suggests that 'we ought to be seriously concerned when the reliability of our measuring instruments sink below a level of, say, .6 to .7.' Coefficients of homogeneity and reliability have been calculated according to formulae proposed by him in 'Attitude measured: Use of Coefficient Alpha with Cluster or Factor Analysis', Sociology, Vol. IV, 1970, pp. 227-45.

[11] Op. cit., p. 85.

[12] Ibid, pp. 87-90.

