

# SECTION ONE: REALISING THE REAL

## TELEVISION IN PORTUGUESE DAILY LIFE

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### Introduction

The importance of television in daily life is one of most thoroughly analysed subjects in Anglo-Saxon media studies, having become a permanent feature of research there.<sup>1</sup> Quantitative and qualitative studies, either sociological or anthropological, not only served to unearth the reality of this mass media in the lives of citizens, they also contributed to the definitive insertion of audience response in the new television studies discipline.<sup>2</sup> No other mass media has raised as many theoretical reflections nor as many empirical studies on emission-reception as television has done.

In Portugal, television studies still aren't considered worthy of university status.<sup>3</sup> Television itself is more analysed in its practical dimension than in its theoretical one. The main reason for this situation resides in the mistrust and disdain that Portuguese elites have reserved for television. It also explains the low number of academic studies on television. Understandably, the principal audience studies concern children, because they are the most vulnerable group to outside messages (for instance, the AACS study of violence in television, 1993, Pinto, 2000 and 2002,

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<sup>1</sup> For a theoretical overview and bibliography see Pinto, 2000: introduction, chapters. I & III. See also Allen and Hill, 2005, Part Six, especially Seiter, 2005; Morley, 1992; Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Bird, 2003; Ferin, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Television studies is a recent discipline but well established in Anglo-Saxon academia. See Brunsdon, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> The programme of the 4th Congress of the SOPCOM, Aveiro, October 2005, includes several papers about television (one is about reception). However, Film Studies and Journalism have three and four modules each, but Television Studies aren't mentioned. See <http://www2.ca.ua.pt/4SOPCOM/programa.htm>.

Pereira, 1999). Finally it is understandable that there is a divide between academic and commercial studies.<sup>4</sup>

In this article, only empirical data on television in the daily lives of the Portuguese, in their sociability and their socialising, will be presented. We take socialising to be the primary degree or fundamental form of sociability, those “obscure moments” of “unexceptional life” in “that potent kingdom of shadows” which “make up the frame of our everyday” (Maffesoli, 1999). Sociality is thus a sociological concept emerging from the *Lebenswelt*, the ‘world of life’ of Husserl (Ferrater, 1990: 1924-5). We position ourselves alongside the individual with his/her television as a participant in this, their daily life. We are on the side of the receiver as a social being. With sociability, we are already in the domain of social interactions more associated with structures but we limit ourselves to those which are informal and spontaneous, freely entered into, between individuals and collective (to use the terminology of Costa *et. al.*, who specify “the family, social and physical spaces, like the local district or the village, or professional spaces, like the factory or the office” or even the school (1990: 198-200)). These “networks of communicability and of influence produce collective socialisations, generate and facilitate the formation and sharing of values, representations, types of behaviour” (*ibidem*), realities which in this work we have sought to observe in two domains: that of the family and that of social class.

As to the family, it is in this unit that “we share the key elements and resources that condition our existence”, that “structure the basic organising principles of our working systems” and which “generate a good part of the strategies and orientations of life” (*idem*: 195). From the social relationships around the television within the family, in the home and in places of study and of work and leisure, we have sought to find the integrated and daily use of this medium, through a perspective which enriches class analysis.

According to Manuel Pinto, television has a triple condition in contemporary daily life: as a regular practice, as a structuring or modelling tool of daily life and as a purveyor of content itself modelled from daily life (2000: 58). We might add that television is not only “normal” daily life, or customary; it is also an interrupter of daily life, when it delivers moments or events of external social, political or artistic reality that are perceived as important by individuals. Between the two spectator conditions – customary or eventful – there exists a broad spectrum of attention/inattention towards the media, in its degree of intrusion or the way it is used in an individual’s life.

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<sup>4</sup> Television networks and parties interested in publicity often commission market research companies to do reception studies. They are valuable studies and contain information interesting for academic studies. Unfortunately, they are not publicly available because they belong to the customer, who uses them for commercial and scheduling strategies (See IPSOS, 2004).

This article does not refer to great communal moments covered by television (catastrophes, ceremonies, celebrations, competitions, etc.) because it focuses on Portuguese “normal” daily life – *the intersection between life’s flux and television’s flux*. However, it is important to stress that television moments that interrupt daily life are equally as important as the fundamental events of an individual’s life to the structuring of life’s flux. They can sometimes overlap too (Torres, 2006).

With the purpose of deepening our knowledge of the spectator as a social being, audiometric data, focus groups and inquiries were used (Table 1). One of the studies focused exclusively on children and teenagers, but no analysis is offered of these specific age groups; instead there is analysis of the social and family life. Other studies were also used in order to overcome financial and personal limitations.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1. Convenience inquiries and focus groups mentioned in the paper.**

Convenience Inquiries			Focus Groups		
Date	Applied Inquiries	Name	Date	Type	Name
Apr. 2002	1329	Inquiry A	2001	8 viewers	Group A
May-Jun 2003	327 children	Inquiry B	2002	4 blind persons	Group B
Mar. 2005	1060	Inquiry C			

Data analysis is particularly important to find answers to the following questions: how do television and the television set integrate in the home? How do individuals socialize with television? What importance does it have in their daily life, and subsequently, how does it constitute a fundamental element in their identity? What is the individual’s autonomy in respect of television? Is it possible to identify to what degree television’s factic function overlaps with the message’s communicative functions? Some conclusions will be drawn from the data collected. It is known that the situation of Portuguese viewers is quite similar to those in other countries, but it is nevertheless important to study specificities.

<sup>5</sup> All inquiries and Focus Groups were a team effort. The author thanks all collaborators, namely, José Rafael Nascimento – Inquiries A and C; nursery, primary and secondary school teachers from Portalegre, Lisbon and Almada – Inquiry B; Carlos Liz and Cristina Carvalho, Focus Group A; José Gonçalves, Leonor Santos, Luzia Esteves e Luís Esteves - Focus Group B.

### Television's presence in the home

Television is the most common media in daily life. Practically all Portuguese homes (99.4%) have at least one set (INE, 2004).<sup>6</sup> Watching television is “the most common communicational practice in daily life” (99.3%), way above family and friends’ gatherings (93.8%) and it is the activity most commonly considered to be interesting by 62.7% of the Portuguese population (Cardoso *et al.*, 2005: 200 and 225).

Television's relevance in daily life is also confirmed by the statistical data that refers to the “invasion” by sets of all parts of the house. The average number of sets in homes is 2.5 (Inquiry A and IPSOS, 2004: 26). The Marktest Audiometric test indicates that 73% of homes have two or more sets. Only 13.1% have one set in homes with three or more persons; more than half (54.9%) have a number of sets that matches the number of persons.

**Table 2. Number of People and TV sets in homes.**

TV Sets \ No. of People									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
1	2.9	2.1	0.2	0.1					5.3
2	6.5	6.3	2.6	0.6	0.2				16.2
3	4.7	11.7	7.3	3.6	0.3	0.1			27.7
4	2.5	11.2	7.3	3.3	1.2	0.1			25.6
5	1.8	4.6	5.8	2.5	1.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	16.5
6	0.3	1.8	2.3	0.5	0.5		0.4		5.8
7 or +	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.4			3.0
<b>Total</b>	18.8	38.3	26.1	11.3	4.0	0.9	0.6	0.1	100.1

*Source: Inquiry A*

In 2002 Inquiry A revealed the same television set diversity in the home. Only 18.8% of the subjects said they had only one set at home (Table 2). Homes with a number of sets equal or superior to persons are highlighted in blue: 33.1%, i.e. a third of all homes. This inquiry did not find any homes without television.

Homes with children tend to have more sets: Inquiry B, conducted in Greater Lisbon and Portalegre in 2004, revealed strong television ownership: 99.7% of all homes have television with 96.2% having between 2 and 7 sets. The average number of sets is 2.87. Only 7.6% of students from schools in Évora have only one set, but 92.4% have two or more (47.1% two or three, and almost half of them more than three, 45.3%) (Teixeira *et al.*, 2004). Inquiry B

<sup>6</sup> The same percentages appear in Markdata's 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Base Study. The author acknowledges and thanks the company for making its data available.

reveals that there is a high number of homes – more than a third – in which the number of sets is equal or superior to the number of habitants: 37.1% have at least one set per person (Table 3; highlighted in blue). In homes with two persons (6.6% of the sample), the number of sets is equal or superior to two in 85.7% of all homes; and it is even more than half (51.1%), homes with three persons (29.6% of the sample) with sets equal or superior to the number of persons living there.

**Table 3. Number of People and TV sets in homes.**

TV Sets \ N. of People	0	1	2	3	4	5	6 or 7	Total
2	-	0.9	3.1	1.9	0.6	-	-	6.5
3	-	3.5	11	8.2	4.1	2.2	0.6	29.6
4	0.3	3.5	11	10.7	9.4	3.8	1.3	40.0
5	-	1.9	2.8	6.3	2.5	1.3	0.3	15.1
6	-	1.3	1.3	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.3	5.0
7 or +	-	-	2.1	1.2	-	0.3	-	3.6
<b>Total</b>	0.3	11.1	31.3	29.2	17.5	7.9	2.5	99.8

*Source: Inquiry B*

This overwhelming presence of sets in homes indicates that the viewing experience can be either familial or individual or even in negotiated situations between one or more members of the family. It also shows that the viewing experience moves through the parts of the house according to what time it is: for instance, kitchen in the morning, bedrooms in the afternoon, supper time again in the kitchen or living room, in the evening in the living room and at night in bedrooms again.

The kitchen is a place of domestic work and family gatherings (meals) and it is a place where 51.5% have a set. The inquiry does not reveal differences between homes in provincial Portalegre and Greater Lisbon, except in respect of father's job, as we shall see.

Most children and teenagers have their own set in the bedroom – their autonomous space at home: 60.6%. A sample applied to an Évora school, of individuals between 10 to 18 years of age, shows that 65% have a set in their bedroom (Teixeira *et al.*, 2004). Inquiry C points to fewer TV sets in children's bedrooms, but confirms their presence in other parts of the house, with half of the inquired indicating their presence in the bedroom (53.6% in parents' rooms and 45.8% in children's rooms) and almost a fifth with sets in the study and other places (16.4% and 17.6% respectively).

The living room is still television's undisputed place in the home (95.9%), but its presence is also strong in other communal places like the kitchen (45.3%), or in other more individualised places, like bedrooms and workplaces. The number of persons at home is crucial to the existence of more sets. These are fewer even in places where its presence could be justified due to the smaller size of the home. This difference shows that television has 'invaded' bedrooms and other parts to allow for individual use. This statistical data is sufficient to verify that the TV set is part of the home's furniture and that, metaphorically, television is part of the individual's inner life and his/her relation to the outside world.

### Daily contact with television

One of the most common indicators as to the importance of television in daily life is the quantification of contact in terms of time. We must read contact as being in the presence of the set and not as being in direct connection and *paying primary* attention to the content. Primary attention is just one of the ways of being in contact with television because there are ways of *secondary attention* or *inattention*. Contact time can be measured in relation to two groupings: all Continental Portuguese of four years of age or older or only those that have had contact with television. The year 2004 reveals some important differences: the average contact of each individual, viewer or otherwise, is 3h43 per day while the average of the viewers is 4h19. The difference is 45 minutes. This paper uses the data relative to the whole of the population, but it is important to underline the fact that the individuals that are actually viewers contact with television for an important part of the day. Because they spend more time at home, older viewers have their set on for about 5.5 hours daily.

Table 4 reaffirms television's presence in Portuguese daily life according to demographics, sex and age. All those questioned reported a figure superior to 2h30 and, in senior citizens it approaches 5h00. Independent of the way individuals and communities use the media, this figure stresses the inclusion of television in daily routine, in the sense that *the media is part of the individual's time*. We could argue that this ample temporal contact contributes to the *devaluation* of television's content and not, as is sometimes argued, to its *valuation*.

**Table 4. Daily contact with TV**

	Total TV	RTP1	RTP2	SIC	TVI	Cable, etc
Total	3h34'	52'	9'	1h02'	1h01'	27'
AB Class	2h59'	43'	11'	38'	39'	46'

C1 Class	3h19'	46'	9'	52'	58'	33'
C2 Class	3h23'	45'	8'	1h05'	1h02'	21'
D Class	4h22'	1h13'	9'	1h25'	1h19'	15'
Male	3h16'	51'	9'	53'	49'	33'
Female	3h50'	54'	9'	1h11'	1h14'	21'
Age 4-14	3h05'	24'	11'	1h02'	55'	30'
Age 15-24	2h52'	28'	6'	1h01'	49'	26'
Age 25-34	2h47'	32'	7'	52'	46'	27'
Age 35-44	3h10'	38'	9'	56'	53'	32'
Age 45-54	3h35'	55'	9'	59'	1h02'	29'
Age 55-64	4h43'	1h24'	12'	1h22'	1h16'	27'
Age 65-74	4h54'	1h34'	10'	1h15'	1h31'	22'
Age +75	4h30'	1h51'	11'	57'	1h18'	10'

Source: *Mediamonitor. Time per individual (atv %), Continental Portugal, 4 or + years old, 2004.*

There is an important difference between male and female viewers, since women view half an hour more TV than men, a consequence of more time spent at home. The most striking differences between groups are in demographics. Contact time confirms that television tends to be more used by older people, by children and persons with fewer resources (Class D). The more resources someone has the less likely they are to spend a lot of time with television. The group that has less contact with television is the one between 15 and 34 years old – less than three hours – which gradually increases to five hours. Class and age differences demonstrate quite different socialisation and home presence. On average, a 65-74 year-old individual spends two more hours with the set on than an individual between 25-34 years. And someone from Class D spends one and a half hours more with the set on than an individual from Class AB (Abercrombie, 1996: 147). The younger age group tends to prefer SIC and TVI (private networks) instead of RTP1 (state-owned). The percentage of younger people that spend more time with the alternative cable or satellite channels is larger than that of old people, even if in absolute terms it is quite similar.

This data about the time spent watching television must be balanced with a reference to *absence* of contact with the media. In fact, each day 17.3% of the population doesn't have contact with television. The *reach*, i.e. the percentage of individuals that watched TV for at least one second on the day, was 82.7% on average in 2004. About 23% of Portuguese individuals between 15 and 34 years of age do not have contact with television at home, and the same is true of 20.3% of persons who belong to Class D. Indeed in Class D, 14.7% do not watch TV at all. It can be argued that this statistic signals the fact that despite its

overwhelming presence TV is not considered an obligation by all individuals. On certain occasions (for instance, absence from home), other alternative activities are preferred.

### **Television in the matrix of daily life**

The way individuals and social groupings such as the family and friends use television is diverse. Television inscribes itself in both working and leisure times, it steals time and gives leisure time, it educates and dis-educates, it is company at the same time that it isolates: the possibilities are never-ending. This subsection will concentrate on showing how TV's inscription in the home is processed *independently from the content*; instead it is seen as routine, as mere time-filler, as a strategy of relating to other persons at home, as a "physical" connection to the world, as company.

Firstly we must establish the difference between the set's presence at home and television. The set is always present. From this perspective, television is the working set. Half of Inquiry A respondents (43%) turn the set on upon arrival at home, against 29.6% that state they do not (Table 5). This habit is more frequent amongst women (46.6%) than men (38.7%) and decreases with qualifications: in the upper echelon it is 61.1%, in the intermediate echelon 43.7% and in the third echelon it is 37.2%, almost half that of the first.

Television is not only used as a connection to the exterior, it is also used as company, or as a background against isolation or silence. Half of those questioned in Inquiry A (46.7%) stated that they usually have the set on, even when not watching, with 30.7% saying that they don't have the set on without watching it.<sup>7</sup> The answer to this question confirms the variation of the previous one in respect of sex and qualifications: the number of inquired with lower qualifications that keep the set on is higher (55.0%) than those with secondary (48.5%) and higher education (42.0%). Women tend more to keep the set on without watching (51.2%) than men (41.4%). These figures confirm the stereotype that television is used as a companion to domestic chores, but in spite of the difference between men and women, the number of men that keep the set on is superior to those who don't (31.9%). A man living alone (AR<sup>8</sup>, in Focus Group A) put the two questions, turning the TV on and fighting isolation, together:

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<sup>7</sup> Inquiry B indicates that young people are divided: 48.4% state that they usually have the set on without watching, against 51.5% that say otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> Initials are used in the Focus Groups.



the first thing I do when I get home is to press the TV button on and even when not watching, which happens sometimes, I've got stuff there, I've got work to do and I have the set at home. I have this little study, I'm working and *the television is talking*. Sometimes I stop what I'm doing because television's got my attention.

The difference between men and women that never want to or cannot watch TV without doing other things at the same time reveals the different roles taken by each sex in household chores: 7.3% of men and 18.8% of women, more than triple (INE, 2000: F.I.5). In total, 86.6% of 6 and plus year-old Portuguese said that they didn't do any other activity whilst watching TV. Another study revealed that the majority of Internet users "do not use the internet at the same time they watch television or listen to radio" (Cardoso *et al*, 2005: 214). INE's 1999 survey states that only 13.2% of individuals don't dedicate all their attention to TV, but share it with other activities.

**Table 5. Activities with TV. Totals (%)**

	No	Neither	Yes
Turn the TV when I arrive home	29.6	27.4	43.0
TV on even when not watching	30.7	22.6	46.7
TV is company	17.2	25.2	57.6
I've talked to the TV	52.9	24.9	22.1
Talk with others about TV	6.1	19.2	74.6
Usually use the VCR	26.6	-	73.4
I tape it, but often don't watch	47.1	31.5	21.4
Like to see soccer alone	62.2	24.7	13.1

*Source: Inquiry A*

TV's company function is quite important: 70.2% of the inquired in Inquiry A said that they feel more accompanied with the TV on when they are alone, against 29.8% that bear solitude with the set off. Television's presence is more important for those who have fewer educational qualifications: 71.0% in the lower level, 59.3% in the intermediate level and 51.6% in the upper level. The youngest are the ones that use television more as company when they are alone: 64.2% in age group 14-20, against 53.4% in age group 21-40 and about 60% over 60 years of age. Again, women are the ones that use television oftener to fight solitude: 63.7%. But half of all men (50.3%) do the same (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Activities according to age, qualifications and sex.**

	Age			Qualifications			Sex	
	14-20	21-40	41-60	<9th g	9-12g.	>12g.	M	F
Turn the TV when I get home	43.0	41.6	44.9	61.1	43.7	37.2	38.7	46.6
TV on even when not watching	47.4	47.2	45.8	55.0	48.5	42.0	41.4	51.2
TV is company	64.2	53.4	60.0	71.0	59.3	51.6	50.3	63.7
I've talked to the TV	18.0	22.3	22.7	32.8	20.4	21.8	19.6	24.3
Talk with others about TV	79.4	71.8	75.5	77.9	74.8	73.6	71.3	77.5
Usually use the VCR	80.0	72.9	65.1	67.6	75.5	71.2	74.7	72.3
I tape it, but often don't watch	17.1	17.2	36.1	25.0	19.7	23.5	21.0	21.8
Like to see soccer alone	11.3	11.8	15.4	21.4	12.7	11.5	16.4	10.3

*Source: Inquiry A*

The individual's interaction with the media is taken to its maximum level by about one third or 34.6% of the inquired; these are the ones that acknowledge that they have talked to persons appearing on the screen as if they are in their company. Two-thirds (65.4%) state that this doesn't usually happen. Once again, persons with fewer qualifications are the ones who accept that they have done it: 32.8% against 20.4% of persons in the intermediate level and 21.8% in the upper level. This tendency increases significantly with age: among the youngest the percentage is 18%, in the intermediate group it's around 22% and it nearly doubles (40.7%) in the older group. Although it happens more to women (24.3%) than men (19.6%), the difference is not significant.

According to the INE Inquiry, it is mainly around mealtimes that the Portuguese (49.9%) share more television with another activity, but it also happens when doing household chores or preparing meals (20.3% in total; 33.4% of women and only 6.3% of men), while reading, knitting or other leisure activities (12.9%) and while studying or working (7.1%).

The period of the day when people are less likely to do something at the same time that they are watching television is the evening (93.6%), followed by morning (64.5%). Between lunchtime and supper the figures vary between 13.1% and 35.1%. We can establish a connection between the hour of consumption and the type of use: in the morning – referential or informative; in the afternoon the “factic” or contact function prevails; at night, when television is watched with more attention, after daily exertions, entertainment will be the preference of most viewers.

Television's usage varies between days of the week and weekends. When questioned about their activities at weekends spent away from home (the

majority, 61.5%, stated that this rarely or never happens), 14.3% of Portuguese older than 5 said they see less television, against 2.6% that said the opposite. The most important alternative on weekends away is social interaction, bonding with family and friends (25.5%). Several studies indicate that children watch more television at weekends.

### **Television as chat factory**

One of the most important functions of television is to provide a basis for daily chat. The fact that individuals can talk with each other about words and images shared whilst they were apart (each one in his/her own home) strengthens social bonds, which can exceed the pleasure of conversation itself. When it is shared at the same time at home, television allows the sharing of a leisure activity that it is not physically draining and, at the same time, doesn't impose interpersonal strains: "some times we both watch", stated viewer MEC (Focus Group A). "The kid goes to bed and me and my husband sometimes sit up together for a hour without a subject to talk about." In this way, television caters for topics of conversation, or it even replaces them, because after work tiredness does not allow for much: "At the end of the day it is the only thing I can talk about."

Conversation about television strengthens family bonds: "Sometimes I even give my opinion, I say to my mother, 'look, don't forget that something will be on later.' (...) And we also comment on aired shows." The same thing happens with friends' and family get-togethers and, according to participant CJ, "we discuss this or that problem that someone might have, an illness perhaps, we don't restrict our conversations to television, we also talk about the political and economical situation of the country."

To AR, television is one of many unscripted themes that sustain café conversations with far-away relatives:

I can talk about something from where I come from, my home town, you see, it rained a lot and no one harvested anything, and there was a big forest fire, and something else. These are conversation topics. As I can also talk about television, so, everything is relative. I'm not like this: I'm going to meet a friend and only talk about television. No. If it's appropriate I talk about television in the café with my friends. Sometimes I even say: 'how can you watch that, man?' And it's because they're watching.

Between friends and co-workers, television is used as a negative theme: not only because of specific contents (MTE: "With *Big Brother* it's the same thing. People talk. Some because they don't like it"), but also because television degrades "mentalities", according to the same respondent:

The theme that I nowadays relate more to... it's always a topic of conversation between co-workers and friends, either in their houses or ours is always the degradation of our mentalities. Lately, because of television. (...). I suppose, people are sleeping and only care about football and soap operas. They don't watch anything else. It seems that they don't have a life of their own.

The participant GB mentioned indirectly the contradiction between needing television for social conversation and the poverty of the topics discussed: television "allows us to talk with our friends. It is a source of conversation topics, but these topics are degrading and don't enrich our life."

In the same Focus Group, the respondent AR states that we talk "about what we watch, what usually we *all* watch", but this doesn't imply that the programmes have to be shared by all to become conversation matter: "of course we talk about programmes some didn't watch sometimes, we even watched the same programme, but..." This spectator was extremely clear on the necessity of having read newspapers or watched TV to be able to have conversations. TV appears as a social obligation: "And who reads the newspapers completely? Many things (...) are mentioned, but I don't *hear* all the news, man. Then, if we don't have conversation topics, many things pass us by."<sup>9</sup>

What really matters is not what is talked about, but the capacity to *talk*, as MTE states: "Sometimes I'm in the kitchen and he [her husband] says to me: 'Look, Vale e Azevedo and something, *bla bla bla*... Alright. Alright, I don't understand, I don't get it, but everything is fine. OK." This is talking just for the sake of it, sociality (and sociability) in itself, with no more content than to be with each other: "sociability in its pure form has no ulterior end, no content and no result outside itself" (Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Sociability*, cited in Riesman: 126).

AR reinforced the notion that the desire to socialize leads to compromises due to peer pressure:

I'd rather watch a soap than football. (...) This is rare. It is rare, but you see, it is rare for a man, and that's what I am, preferring watching soaps to football. (...) I don't hate it but when I'm watching football with my friends, I'm not going to say 'Hey man, I don't want to watch football'. Look, we are there talking. It is one of those things. And this is what basically happens everyday.

In daily life, television is a tool, a sociability tool that caters for conversation topics that individuals need and feel obligated to search for, because without it they would be isolated. It is no surprise, then, that the number of those that claim

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<sup>9</sup> This person stresses hearing the news, which emphasises television's *auricular* aspect, as we will see below.

to talk about television (74.6%) is twelve times larger than those who don't (6.1%), as can be seen in Table 5. Table 6 confirms that this social action is generalized between men and women, age and qualification groups.

### **An extreme case of sociability: blind people and television**

Exploring an extreme case of the presence of television in the social life of the Portuguese, the opinion of a group that does not derive full benefit from the media was investigated, that of blind people. Without an image, television becomes an incomplete version of radio in its communicability. As blind people have total use of radio, the hypothetical benefit of their contact with television has to do mainly with a need for socialization, for integration in the social life of places where blind people gather. The interest of this group of people was also to ascertain to what extent television "survives" without image, to what degree the soundtrack is enough for its cognitive apprehension, specifically in some of the genres that populate this media.

The Focus Group that we found with four blind people was of great interest for their replies to both our questions. Blind people make sure that they are in tune with the media output of the country. Their lack of vision leads to a search for points of contact as frequently as possible, as they demonstrate when they talk to other people on public transport. Moreover, blindness sharpens curiosity and the search for media contents, and one of the goals is to search for subject matter to increase sociability, an action that is more demanding for blind people than for the sighted: "a blind person when, for example, he goes alone from here to Porto (...) and encounters decent people that he wants to talk with, a blind person has to study which kind of person is next to him, what does she like, what is her job "(LE); "Once I hooked up with a ticket checker, we talked all the way from Beira Alta to near Abrantes "(JG).

This group of blind people at the time engaged in regular cultural activity, talked about its contact with periodicals, Internet, radio and television. Different media were discussed without distinction. Blind people use both verbs - to watch and to listen - to define their televising experience: "blind people are not the only ones that watch... that are listening "(MLE); "when we say ' I am watching television ' we mean listening to" (LS); "Normally I watch the soap operas" (JG); "the Brazilian soap operas, I do adore that, my God!"(LS).

During the conversation, they asserted their opinions on cinema, on television, reality shows *Big Brother* and *Acorrentados*, José Hermano Saraiva (History) programmes, Herman José (humour/chat show), João Baião, Fátima Lopes (populist mix of chat shows and entertainment), *Travessa do Cotovelo*, *Noites Marcianas*, *A Noite da Má-Língua* (gossip chat shows), the Eurovision Song Contest, *Praça da Alegria* (entertainment), television drama, game-shows

such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* and *Febre do Dinheiro*, the series *Querido Professor*, *O Conde de Abranhos*, *Alves Dos Reis*, *O Bairro da Fonte*, *Residencial Tejo*, *Jardins Proibidos*, *Laços de Família*, RTP, SIC and TVI newscasts ("I tape the SIC one and I listen to the other", from RTP; JG), networks such as RTP, SIC, TVI, SIC *Notícias* (24 hour news), SIC Gold (oldies), History Channel, Discovery Channel, erotic channels, etc. "We watch television through the prism... of everything, of all programmes. *We can argue about everything*" (LS).

The type of scheduling that is more difficult to access for blind people is cinema; this genre is not televisual *par excellence*, because image is usually prioritised over sound: "there are many endings of films that we do not know how they end" (JG). Films or foreign programmes in general sometimes have the disadvantage of being dubbed! (LS). But blind people also lamented not having access to written information, like subtitles and telesales, which they hope to be able to get one day in spoken transcription: "We could read these subtitles through the computer" (JG).

One of the blind persons mentioned that radio allows those who can see more concomitant activities than TV: "There are so many people that travel; there are so many people that at night are writing. OK, doing some kind of work and that are not watching television" (MLE). However, in some cases, they prefer radio to television, like the transmissions of the visit of the Pope John Paul II to Portugal: "in that situation radio describes better" (MLE); "They take longer" (JG).

The access of blind people to television is due to its power of verbal communication, to which blind people add their imagination and sensorial experience and intuition: "we do not see it, but we feel it":

Seeing and feeling are the same thing ... when I'm watching something on television, I'm not seeing it, but I'm feeling it. So, from whatever they are saying and from what I infer, through sound and what they are saying, I know what they are doing. (...) Sometimes the problem is what they don't say (...), we infer what they don't say (LS).

"But some times we don't infer it at all", added JG. Television's auralty resembles radio: "we watch television like we listen to the radio" (JG).

The necessity to watch some programmes is determined by sociability, in that blind people do not distinguish themselves from other spectators:

ECT: But in your life and work do you listen to people talking about *Big Brother*?

LS: I do. Even in cars.

MLE: Unfortunately.

JG: *Big Brother*...

ECT: Do you talk about it as well?

JG: I don't

LS: I don't, because I don't follow *Big Brother*. Only on Tuesday's nights do I check to see who's expelled.

JG: Sometimes I have a look at it, just to have an opinion...

MLE: On Tuesday nights I do watch it.

LS: I also like to know who's expelled, and that's it.

(...)

ECT: But, do you watch it or not?

MLE: We watch on Tuesday's nights...

LS: Only on Tuesdays. I watch it, because I like to know who's leaving. (...) I need to watch it in order to have an opinion, it either sucks or it doesn't, we have to listen to something, to be able to know if it's good or bad.

ECT: That's right. Then you talk to other people.

LS: We talk to you and everybody else, like everyone, don't we? At least to be acquainted with it.

To LS, someone who doesn't talk about *Big Brother* "is not up to date" and: "*isn't here*", that is, isn't present, *doesn't have a social existence in the present*. Media cater for a triangle in people's relations by enabling them to talk about common themes without compromising their private lives. JG was very clear, and this is valid for everyone, blind or otherwise:

JG: Usually, to have nothing to say, to talk to someone and not say anything, there has to be something to talk about, from the outside.

LS: There have to be encouragements.

JG: For someone to talk and not say anything, we talk about football, because we don't want to talk about our life. You know, people try to hide that?

ECT: Right.

JG: And because neither me nor the other person wants to talk about our lives, hey man, let's talk about the weather; let's talk about football, or...

MLE: ... trips...

JG: ... *Big Brother* is current.

JG: That only happens when people travel.

LS: Of course. We talk about books, but sometimes we have to fall back on television. On the good and the bad of television.

LE: Yes. When a blind person goes alone to Porto...

LS: Has to fall back on television.

*To fall back on television*, that is, to need it for social colloquy: once again, we are outside the content. The social necessity of television is as much or more important than the gratification that we can get from some of its contents.

## Two ways of people's gaining control over the media

If individuals socialize out of preference or obligation, they appeal at the same time to the available processes of autonomisation or, at least, seek the illusion of autonomy. Let us now look at some data regarding the use of zapping, VCRs and DVDs.

We may start with VCRs and DVDs,<sup>10</sup> devices that are used for offline watching of TV programmes or for watching bought or rented films. A first indicator of the individualization of television's use is the presence in the home of these complementary appliances to television. In Inquiry A, 80.4% of the inquired affirmed their use of the VCR; of those, three quarters used it habitually (73.4%)<sup>11</sup>. In Inquiry B, a DVD player was present in half of the houses of the inquired (50.3%) and the number of those who had a VCR is similar (86.5%) and it is also near the value of those that asserted they were regular users of the VCR (69.8%). This device seems to be more used as a player than as a recorder: 63.8% of children and the young affirmed that they usually don't tape programmes. In the inquiry 21.4% of total respondents admitted to taping programmes and not watching them later. It can be argued that the DVD player constitutes merely an update of the commonest function of VCRs.

Video does not allow us, therefore, to resolve the problem of the pressure of daily life in the sense of allocating time to see programmes previously recorded nor does it downgrade the importance of the programmes of the day, as was mentioned in Focus Group A:

GB: Sometimes I tape (...) And then a week goes by and I haven't watched the film.

AR: I have recorded stuff that later I don't watch. (...) because I don't have time. You see ... the next day when I arrive home there are some programmes on that I like... and so I keep watching them.

The use of the VCR allows us to establish a relation with a type of television programming: for the great majority of the respondents to the Inquiry, the device serves to record films (73.5%). Only a few use it to record series or soap operas

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<sup>10</sup> When Inquiries A and B and Focus Group A were conducted, DVD players were not common, and this is the reason why the conversation focused on VCRs as VHS players. The use and ownership of DVD players was included in Inquiry C. For the purpose of this study, we shall see that the technological difference between the two is irrelevant: one records and plays, the other just plays.

<sup>11</sup> The questions in Inquiry A had five possible answers: I totally disagree, I disagree a lot, I don't disagree or agree, I agree a lot, I totally agree. In this article, we grouped the first and the last two, without spreading the middle answer to the other two. In the question, if they usually used the VCR, the only possible answers were yes and no.



(28.0%), sport (23.7%) or news (13.5%). It means that for most people the VCR is used to record what is not specifically made for television (cinema) and they don't use it for television-made programmes. This reinforces the generalized idea that television-made programmes do not deserve to be seen later or more often.

This is not the case when the recorder/player gives the individual an autonomy that sets free the spectator from several constraints. In Focus Group A, the participants related some situations where the video aided them as autonomous spectators:

AG: Usually, most of the things I don't watch live. I have it recorded; I have three or four tapes that are always recording, stuff on top of other things. In this way it is very easy when something is on that I don't like... when I'm home and there's something I don't like, I reach for a tape with some programme and that's it.

MM: I do that a lot.

AR: Rarely.

MTE: I only use the VCR as a player, because I really like watching films. (...) I would never be up until 3 a.m. just to watch some film.

The successive switching between channels through the remote, zapping, is another strategy that gives spectators a sensation of autonomy, rejecting a supposed imposition of programmes on the part of one or more networks. It must be stressed that this autonomy exists in respect of channel choice; it does not exist towards television itself: through zapping, the individual remains connected to the media.

Zapping or jumping through channels is one of the most banal of a spectator's experiences. It is part of the nature of the spectator and nobody could say it with as much naturalness as this mother speaking on behalf of her two-year-old son: "If he is looking for the remote, it is because he doesn't like it" (IPSOS, 2004: 18). Zapping gives freedom of choice and a relaxed form of using the television set, often carelessly interrupting the consumption of the contents. Therefore, zapping can thwart sociability at home, because, as it isn't negotiated through dialogue, it represents the individual choices of whoever withholds the remote. CJ, in Focus Group A, stated this idea with a defining, only apparently tautological sentence: "the person who watches television is the one who watches."

Audiometric studies, although they don't quantify switching between channels, register spectator's loyalty to transmissions, measuring "the permanence of the audience to the event comparing the average audience with

the total audience of the event. This indicator gives the percentage of the watched time relatively to the total duration of the event."<sup>12</sup>

The loyalty of spectators to diverse programmes that we selected for analysis varies between 16.2% in *Discovery Hour* and 49.7% in *Malucos do Riso* (popular humour). Loyalty to films is surprisingly low. The cinema registers an allegiance that does not exceed 32.8% (Mediamonitor data). This indicator can relate to the inattention of spectator towards long programmes, with loss of interest in films themselves but mainly with delayed schedules and the long commercial breaks that interrupt the enjoyment of films. This low level of allegiance reveals how the cinema, although it is significantly different to other forms of televisual flow - mainly because it is not a televisual product – acquires a different ontology when transposed to this media due to the different form of consumption. This can be also explained by the habits of young Portuguese: the cinema is the second activity exterior to the home preferred by the young Portuguese (74.3%),<sup>13</sup> beaten only by visits to Shopping Centres (83.7%). A participant in the Focus Group A, AIR, affirmed: "Films I watch in the cinema. It is rare to watch films on television."

The index of loyalty to television programmes discloses how much spectators zap through the programming, preferring fragments to the whole programmes<sup>14</sup>. This carelessness to specific content does not mean, however, a studied carelessness; another hypothesis being that zapping is explained by the desire to know everything and to be able to speak of everything that goes on. It means the spectator would like to add to his/her "We" substance of social conversation. This point of view has to be complemented with the natural curiosity of the "I" for the programming of the moment. But there is a verifiable syndrome of "what is on now?" in the use of live TV. Media's "liveness" being one of its main attributes, it motivates the drifting through the channels just to assure ourselves that nothing interesting or important is going on. For the same reason, as we saw, many people record programmes and do not watch them.

### **How television is used, how television is watched**

The Inquiries in this article are enough to make us suspicious of the extreme value attributed to the presence of television in daily life - not in absolute terms, but because daily life is much richer and includes exposure to other media. This

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<sup>12</sup> Mediamonitor, Concepts.

<sup>13</sup> Media Planning Group, *Geração K*, in <<http://www.mpg.pt/Documents/Public/Document/Numero26-Marco2005.pdf>>

<sup>14</sup> John Ellis defends the idea that the televisual flux organizes itself into five-minute fragments to deal with viewer's inattention (1992).

multiplicity of media linkings in daily life is underlined by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998: 68-76, 166-170).

The Inquiries and focus groups reveal contact with radio, the computer and the Internet and reading as alternatives or complements to television at home. Televisual choices tend to fragmentation, through DVD or VCR, options through satellite dish, cable and Internet channels (options not studied here but which Cardoso *et al.*, 2005, develops fully). In Inquiry B, the fragmentation of concrete televisual choices was established for the younger age groups.<sup>15</sup>

However, it is not excessive to insist that the presence of television in daily life is ample and varied, for the time spent is not only dedicated to watching/listening to television but also to the variety of situations that occur in daily life: at home (in one's room, in other rooms or divisions of the house; alone or with other people), in the place of study or work, on public transport, in public places, like cafés, bars or restaurants.

The way television is used has to do with the reason for its use: primarily for entertainment: nine out of ten Portuguese (90.4% of non-users of Internet and 84.8% of users) consider that television "is essentially a form of relaxation and entertainment" (Cardoso *et al.*, 2005: 218).

### **Watching TV in group situations**

One aspect to take into account in spectators' experience is relations (or otherwise) with other people while television is being watched. Let us start with restaurants and bars. Contact with television in restaurants and bars can be fortuitous or it can be on purpose, for instance, when football games of personal or group interest are transmitted. Table 5 shows that 62.2% of the questioned do not like to watch them alone. Also, in Inquiry B, 64.9% of children and the young said they liked to watch sport accompanied. The necessity to socialize during sports transmissions, specifically soccer, is verified in the dynamics of SporTV (a paid-for sports channel)'s audience.<sup>16</sup> Some telephone inquiries carried out by Marktest in 2003-4 have indicated that about 60% of the audience of "great games" or "derbies" of soccer transmitted by SporTV is found outside the home - in houses of friends and businesses. A very significant percentage of the channel's subscribers - about 1/3 - are businesses, cafes and restaurants. The programming of the channel "is seen at home or in cafés", but "soccer modifies the public completely": in a study of the second half of 1999 made by Deloitte &

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<sup>15</sup> This theme has been dealt with in another article. The fragmentation theme was developed in Torres, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> These statistics result from interviews made by the author with the Marketing directors of the channel in 2000 and 2005 and a SporTV audience study done by Marktest.

Touche, the owners of commercial houses said that the programmes with greater audiences were the national championship of soccer, the top league (79%), and other soccer championships (8%), with other sports and programmes with audiences of less than 4%.

According to the Marketing Director in 2000, "what is live is watched in groups". The same applies to sports other than soccer, if there is an "affinity" between people. We watch in-group what "we have a motive to discuss, to have an opinion on". That is, with this live-shared experience the individual is expecting debate and interaction with others.

This group viewing of television, which reconstructs everywhere small crowds emulating the ones that attend the games, can congregate many people in food and drink businesses: but 7% of the proprietors in the cited study said that on average SporTV's transmissions were seen in places by 10 people or less; 12% reported audiences between 10 and 25 people; more than half (59%) reported gatherings of 25 to 50 people. More than a fifth or 22% percent of businesses assembled still more people, from 50 to 100 people (15%) and more than 100 people (7%). In this last case, we can see small multitudes gathered at a distance via television.

This type of situation places us, however, in a departure from daily life, in routine breaks. They are not, in general, great occasions, but they are occasions that break what a participant in Focus Group A defined as "the day to day [...] very cold": "we arrive home, and it is the daily life of kitchen and television". With soccer, it is also television that allows us break up this iciness, even if "sometimes" friends have to be invited to see soccer in our home, as participant MEC said.

### **Watching TV routinely**

Daily life is routine, and so is watching television. The habit makes the spectator: 53.2% of Portuguese that watch television each day say that they know the day and time of their favourite programmes and 21.8% always watch the same channels/programmes "because of habit" (INE, 2000).

The second and fourth reasons for choosing what is watched – zapping (30.7%) and random choice (23.9% "choosing at the time when they start seeing the images, without knowing what programme is on") - reveals how informal the viewer's relation with television content is: the relation with the media (watching television) is more important than with the programmes (watching specific contents) for about half of viewers' contacts with the media. Other reasons for choosing a programme are channel self-promotion (25.2%), the help of a magazine or newspaper (18.4%) and choice control by another family member (11.5%).

Television is above all a hobby. It occupies the time of people gathered at home and has become the cement that fills the silences between talk. It is precisely because of this that television stops the conversation flow when what is intended is to motivate conversation, like when there are home visits: according to respondent MEC in Focus Group A, “if I have many friends in my place I automatically turn the TV off, before they arrive, because otherwise everyone will start watching it and do nothing”. *To Do* is the right verb here, because conversation is the social action that occurs in friends’ gatherings. As seen before, in Focus Group A the respondent AR showed how someone that lives alone uses television. In the case of homes with more persons, the use of television is more complex: its uses are so diverse and dispersed and this can generate either consensus or conflict. Television inserts itself in each person’s or each group’s strategy to assert themselves.

Television is used to accommodate the company that people feel the need to give to each other: in Focus Group A, the participant CJ said: “When I got home, my wife was already in the living room [with the TV on]. I ended up giving, shall I say, a bit of company to her.” If the programme is of interest to all the family, television facilitates togetherness. MM respondent said: “I was planning to follow the soap opera, but it was almost ending so we stayed in the living room when we [the couple] were with our daughter watching a bit of TVI.” The increasing number of sets at home allows for an independence of choice, but it also allows for going around the house keeping the TV company, like participant MTE who claimed: “Or for instance, I’m preparing the supper and I’m alone in the kitchen, I turn the kitchen TV on. I’m taking care of the kid in the bedroom and I turn her TV on.”

Television also creates conflicts: BS’s husband lets her watch *Big Brother*, despite not caring for it, and this “created some conflicts”. He lets her because women’s role has evolved: “You know, nowadays even husbands can’t prevent us doing some things”. If the program is football, then it’s different: on these occasions, MEC said, “I usually do the ironing; I play with my daughter in her bedroom. I even turn her TV on, because I even like cartoons. And he [the husband] stays in the living room”. BS also lets her husband dominate the living room space, turning the bedroom into her viewing-room: “when this happens I put on a film and I watch it. But I go to the bedroom. (...) I haven’t got the nerve to send the husband to the bedroom for me to watch the film”.

The family hierarchy is even stronger in the relations between parents and children: the “generation gap” is also reinforced by the use of TV at home, as will be discussed below. For now, let us stay with television in the family at supertime.

## Television at suppertime

Suppertime remains the moment in daily life at which family members get together, however people's autonomy and the deregulation of work times exerts an opposite pressure. According to Inquiry B, in 4/5 of homes with children and teenagers questioned (80.6%) the TV set is on at suppertime, creating a common bond of conversation in the ritualized gathering of the family.

The inscription of television at suppertime creates two types of conflicts: between being on/off and between the choice of channel. Participant GB in Focus Group A harks back to a golden age without television at supper time:

In the old days, I remember that in my parents' place, we all used to sit down at the table, and mealtime was used by everyone (...) to talk about our daily life (...) to talk about everything. Not nowadays. When the family is gathered, when it is, the television is always on and then we cannot listen to anything, no one can talk because everyone wants to hear the news or has to watch the soap operas. So, children can't talk.

But she adds: "We talk about everything and we discuss everything except what we should be discussing. We only talk about television issues." There is ambivalence in this opinion, because television is said not to allow conversation or it is said to allow only conversation about its themes. Participant MM reinforces this negative view, commenting that television has withdrawn the possibility of a "social space", but AR disagrees because "when people have something to do, they'll do it": "television penetrates the home, but only to the point we allow it to."

MTE, for whom television's presence is compensated for by inattention to its contents, has this strategy:

We put our stuff in the living room, on the table. And the television is not turned off. (...) don't tell me that we have to be in family, we have to be. And mealtime is sacred, but I'm also capable of being with the TV on and talking with my kids. 'So, how was school?' 'Look mother, this guy stole my mobile'. We know, these kinds of things. (...) He talks about school. He talks with me. (...) I have the TV on, but it doesn't interest me. I'm not eating and at the same time watching it.

But respondent MEC prefers the radical solution: "At suppertime I don't even admit that the TV is on, in order to boost conviviality". And she does this, despite "enjoying watching television at home". Questioned about if they watch what they want at suppertime, more than half the children and teenagers in Inquiry B said no (54.9%). But, if this family moment can be used to confirm the status that each one has in the family, there is a corresponding loosening up of

authority over the remote by parents. Asked about who chooses television programmes to watch when they are with the family, children and teenagers put themselves first: 79.1%, even more than the father (71.2%), the mother (69%) or other persons (41.3%).

### **Children's autonomy and family life**

The studies point up the great autonomy enjoyed by the young. In Inquiry B, 92.5% of the children and teenagers in the sample said that they watch TV when they want. A study conducted in Évora on pupils from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (11-15 year-olds) indicated that the use of television is completely free for two thirds: 69.5% don't have any rules on what programmes to watch and 74.5% don't have any rules on when to watch TV (Teixeira *et al*, 2004). These figures correspond to television's presence in the bedroom, which was mentioned above. A small University Inquiry done for 28 children at a Lisbon private school, 7 and 8 year-olds, showed that "77% of the children occupy 90% of their free time watching television without any restriction from their parents". Almost half of the children (42%) have a set in the bedroom. 19% of them can watch television at any time.<sup>17</sup>

The picture isn't any different in a study with 701 persons interviewed (300 parents and 401 children): "in some cases", children "watch television until very late, watching some night shows, like soap operas". A 10-12 year-old child said that at the weekend he asked to stay up later to watch television, "until 2 A.M." (Ipsos, 2004: 27-28). The same inquiry confirms that children have autonomy in their choice of channels. 61% of parents with children from 2 to 5 years stated that kids choose alone the programmes. From 6 to 12 years, 84% choose alone, according to the parents. The situation recorded in which choice is made by other people is only 33% or a third of the sample (*idem*: 30-32).

Adult worries about programme choices are focused on children around 2-3 years old. After they are 5, children have a tendency to watch what their parents or older siblings watch. Does this happen because of permissiveness or does television experience belong to the growing up process and family sociability? "With her 15 year old sister and with her 12 year old brother she watches cartoons and music channels in the afternoon; films and soap operas, she watches them with us", says a father/mother of a 2-year-old child. A parent of a 5-year-old child states: "She always watches things that I watch in the evening" (*idem*: 34). Sibling sociability implies learning tastes from the older age group:

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<sup>17</sup> SANTOS, Rogério, "Crianças e Fãs de Desenhos Animados – da Inocência à Violência", <<http://industrias-culturais.blogspot.com/>>, 01.04.2005.

“Music (...) I watch it with my sister”, says a 10-12 years old child, and this because the older ones choose what is watched: “I have a younger brother but he isn’t in charge, I’m the boss”, says another of the same age. Choice is a source of conflicts between siblings.

“Until 8-9 years old the televisual experience is essentially social: children like to watch television with someone, sharing and commenting on what they see.” (*idem*: 36). After that, “they have more liberty to watch television alone” (*idem*: 37), but it doesn’t mean “they stop watching programmes with the family”. Children state that they go to their bedroom or to the computer if they don’t like their parents’ choices: “when my parents want to watch films it’s they that choose, if I like them I stay there watching, if not I’ll go to my room to watch TV” (10-12 years old)<sup>18</sup>; “I usually play computer games, my parents watch the news, I only listen if there’s something that interests me.” (13-14 years old); “In the living room there’s always someone bothering me. I watch until late and in the evening I watch in my bedroom” (13-14 years old).

This study clearly shows that watching alone or accompanied relates to the type of programmes on. For instance, 41% of children between 2-5 years old watch cartoons alone and 30% accompanied, whereas only 1% watch soap operas alone and 54% accompanied, 8% watch series alone and 43% accompanied (*idem*: 39). That is, parental choices are passed on to children from the very beginning, integrating them in the same cultural and social environment, in the same “class” or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1979). From 6 years old onwards, interests widen, increasing the autonomy of choice and the contact with exterior realities.

The same study indicates that children search programming not only for entertainment, but also for information and life knowledge that will help them to get along. For instance, an 8-9 year-old child states that the reason for liking TVI’s *Morangos com Açúcar* (a teenage soap opera) is “because it has young people and has interesting stuff, right now they are having problems with drugs”. A kid of 6-7 says: “The soap *Morangos com Açúcar* shows how to date” (*idem*: 49-50). Other series allow the discovery of right and wrong, like *Um Cãozinho Chamado Eddie* (a kids’ detective show): “he was transformed into a dog because he did many pranks and now he can only do good things” (p.51). Identification also functions as a draw to the soap *Morangos com Açúcar*: “It has everyday scenes, it shows youth, it is real life, there’s a character there that speaks the same slang as we do”, says a 13-14 year-old teenager (*idem*: 63)

There are programmes that still belong to the historical “family entertainment” genre. 6-7 year-old children say: “In the evening I like to watch

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<sup>18</sup> Watching films (on TV), to watch television: once more there is the distinction made for films on TV.



*Os Malucos do Riso* with my parents, it's a sketch programme": "I watch *Um Contra Todos* (game show) with my parents"; "I watch *Preço Certo em Euros* (*The Price is Right*) with my granny" (*idem*: 52, 56). A mother of a child aged 7-10 says: "they enjoy so much stuff with animals, but they don't watch these alone, they're on more at the weekends when we are as a family" (*idem*: 111). In this way, families avail themselves of television's wide possibilities for sociability.

It is confirmed that sociability varies with scheduling. It can almost be imposed. In children from 6 to 14, only 23% watch the news because they are interested; the remaining 77% watch because "other people are watching". The same study reveals other evidence that either watching alone or together relates a lot to how shows are programmed. The above-mentioned Évora Inquiry allows for the mapping of the tripartite relationship parents-TV-kids. At home, only 2.5% never watches television with their parents. The vast majority watches frequently (39.6%) or at mealtime (37.1%). But a fifth of those questioned only occasionally watch television with their parents (20.4%), with the possibility that this group is the one that does not usually watch television at suppertime, thus reducing the possibility of sharing the media with the parents.

All this data drives to the conclusion that children and teenagers have liberty of choice, denied to previous generations, but now tacitly accepted by their parents. It is not however without some problems. If they are watching together, the father or the mother has the authority to deny children access to certain programmes. Participant BS said in Focus Group A that her husband didn't allow their children to watch *O Bar da TV* (a reality show): "he said to the boy: 'change it, change the channel. I don't want to have that here.'" Parental authority was exerted, but it is curious that the son has the remote. The participant GB revealed that her 12 year-old son's "favourite channel" is SIC Radical (cable only and geared towards young people). Although it only transmits "over the top", "violent" and "pornographic" programmes, "it's the only one he wants to watch" and there wasn't any prohibition, except that she forced him to go to bed around 22h00-22h30. MTE revealed the same strategy of "putting her daughter to bed" to keep her from watching reality shows.

"Next generation" autonomy can contribute to the widespread and subjective idea that there is a crisis in the family, but people seem to be divided on this subject. The question was "Is family an institution in crisis and at risk of disappearing?" 56.4% of those answering Inquiry C (Table 7) didn't agree or only agreed a little and 43.6% partly or wholly agreed. The answers show some indecision in the sample, because the central options – partly agreeing and disagreeing – comprise almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of those questioned (71.3%). The same applies when people were asked if they agreed that nowadays in families kids have the same power as parents: 75.2% didn't have decided opinions, neither for nor

against. But almost two-thirds of the respondents (61.5%) disagreed with this statement. This indecision might indicate that people are aware of a changing pattern in the relations between generations, at the same time that they see this as a new way of living family life.

**Table 7. Family crisis and children's power (%)**

Agree (%)	Don't Agree	Disagree a Little	Partly Agree	Wholly Agree
The family is an institution that is in danger	18.6	37.8	33.5	10.1
Nowadays, kids have the same power as parents	16.6	44.9	30.3	8.2

*Source: Inquiry C*

In this way, most Portuguese seem to be groping towards a subjective concept that “watching television is above all an activity carried out in the family” (77.9% of non-users of the Internet and 67.5% of users) and that “television makes the family come together and discuss the same themes and programmes” (76.5% and 70.8%) (Cardoso *et al.*, 2005: 218). Other data, gathered in diverse studies, suggests that the opposite is also true: television is also used as a pretext for self-affirmation and to reify or contest authority at home. The set, as it spreads at home, allows all solutions. But the novelty is autonomy of choice, permitting conflict avoidance. “Each one wants to see a different thing”, said CJ in Focus Group A. “And so there needs to be one [set] per person, or almost.” MM agreed: “There are several sets. And the product isn't as expensive as it used to be years ago.”

### **The importance of television and alternative media**

Table 8 allows us to confirm that television remains an important media for the Portuguese: 82.8% even think its importance is rising. The highest value is attributed to cable (90.8%), an area probably responsible for the latter view. Even so, it is important to notice that almost a fifth (17.2%) think that television is losing importance. Internet is perceived almost unanimously (90.8%) as the media that is growing more important. Although radio is listened to on average more than two hours per day by a majority (61.1%), it is losing importance.

Opinions are similar according to variables like age, income and qualifications. Persons with fewer qualifications give more importance to radio than those who have been to university and the majority of those in the groups with less income think that sports newspapers are increasing their relevance.

**Table 8. Media that are gaining and losing relevance (%)**

Media	Gaining	Losing
Radio	38.9	61.1
Television	82.8	17.2
Cable	90.8	9.2
Internet	95.7	4.3
Daily newspapers	54.7	45.3
Political affairs newspapers	33.0	67.0
Economy newspapers	46.7	53.3
Scandal Sheets	52.3	47.7
Sports newspapers	48.6	51.4

*Source: Inquiry C*

It can be argued that, for those questioned, we live in a time of change, in which television, even though it is the most widely used media at home, is losing some importance in comparison with other media, mimicking the situation when television dwarfed radio. There is still significant use but it is more diversified due to other media. These media, old and new, are also inside the home. The importance of television in daily life must be evaluated not only with information specific to it but also in relation to other media and home appliances and the uses given to them by individuals (Torres, 2003).

This fragmentation should not diminish the impact of what we call “television” and it is not limited to the set: everything is based around TV, the VCR, cable, satellite dishes and even a small part of PC and Internet use, since 14.2% of cybernauts regularly check TV network sites to watch the news (Cardoso *et al.*, 208).

**Table 9. Homes with... (%)**

TV	99.4
VCR	86.5
PC	77.0
Cable	66.6
DVD	50.3
Internet	48.3
Satellite Dish	24.2

*Source: Inquiry B*

The results of Inquiry B in Table 9 are superior to those of the national average. According to the INE, 41.3% of homes have a computer and 26% Internet access (INE, 2004). The difficulties in establishing correct statistical data for Internet access were studied by Cardoso *et al.* (2005, mainly in chaps. 3 and 4). In the CIES Inquiry from 2003, Internet use according to age groups showed some significant differences from 5.1%, in individuals of 50 or more years, to 64.5% in individuals between 15-19 (Cardoso *et al.*: 140). More than half of children and teenagers in Inquiry B used a computer at home on the previous day (58.6%); a third (29.4%) used one at school, and of these (46.7%) don't have one at home; in this way, only a handful of individuals (12.4%) did not have access to a computer on the previous day. Of those who have a computer at home, three-quarters of them (75.7%) do not feel the need to use one at school. Game consoles were an option for 22.5% of those questioned (according to the National INE Inquiry from 2004, 13.9% of homes have a games console). But the computer, the Internet and consoles do not substitute television, they tend to join it: to the children and teenagers of Inquiry B television still commands most of their media time: 92.4% stated that they watch TV frequently while 92% said that they watched it on the previous day.

The CIES Inquiry, however, reveals Internet's importance in the domain of sociability, which is a *direct sociability*, adding free and online interactivity to the *indirect* sociability of television. The most important interactive activities that the Portuguese have online are: participating in chats and newsgroups (39.8%), talking to friends when one is feeling down (23.5%), arranging dates and activities with friends (23.3%). The variety of activities allowed by the Internet and effectively used by the Portuguese is in itself a powerful alternative to television. Internet use does not change significantly daily activities – except in the reduced number of hours dedicated to television, which is confirmed by 19.2%, a fifth of cybernauts. Internet users dedicate 135.3 minutes per day to watching television; however non-users spend 175.7 minutes per day in this activity. The fact that the majority of users tend not to “use the Internet at the same time they watch television or listen to the radio” contributes to this difference (Cardoso *et al.*: 165, 203-4, 220 and 214).

Radio is another leisure alternative in the home and outside it. All studies indicate that this media reaches 4/5 of the population; the national average per listener is 92 minutes. In Inquiry B, 81% of all children and teenagers mentioned listening to it on the previous day. And, competing with and complementing these media, people read books (37.5% in Inquiry B), chat, talk on the phone – or go out (half of those questioned in Inquiry B).

### Television and other media's influence

To what extent do media substitute co-present socialising? And to what extent do television and media influence fundamental choices? Effect theories, of uses and gratifications, of agenda-setting, of long-term influence (cultivation analysis), all of these propose means of measuring, but this is complex and polemical. We tried with an Inquiry to establish a degree of influence as perceived by the individuals themselves.

In Inquiry C we ask respondents to express their ideas on what influences them the most in general elections. This process had the advantage of being very close to a real situation, which had taken place two weeks before. In Table 10 we organized the answers according to four possibilities, organized from the most influential to the least.

**Table 10. Factors that influenced vote in 2005 General Election (%)**

	Not at all, Some	Significantly, a lot	Average
Previous government's performance	13.1	86.9	86.6
Country's financial situation	10.9	89.1	
People's financial situation	16.1	83.9	
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Family talks	33.6	66.4	60.7
Friends and co-workers talks	42.3	57.7	
Public opinion	42.1	57.9	
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Party manifestos	51.5	48.5	53.5
Sympathy towards party leaders	13.7	86.3	
Candidates lists	61.3	38.7	
Television debates	25.6	74.4	
Political broadcasts on TV	63.6	36.4	
Street posters	78.6	21.5	
Speeches by party leaders	30.9	69.1	
<hr/>			
Newscasts	35.2	64.8	48.8
Newspaper	37.7	62.3	
Radio	64.6	35.5	
Internet	67.5	32.6	

*Source: Inquiry C*

We can verify that the most important factor for Portuguese voters is the quality of the previous government's policies, particularly in respect of the economy. Media as such (mediators, intermediaries) have a relative influence, if we take into account that debates, political broadcasts and posters correspond to media use by political parties and their leaders.

Sociability factors – conversations with family and friends and public opinion – are more influential for those questioned than the media or direct actions by the political parties. The people's sympathy towards the leader appears to be most influential in political communication. Since these conversations and public opinion – as it is understood by those questioned – result in part from the impressions and information given by the media, it can be argued that their influence is greater than the one declared. But it is important to notice that for those questioned the media's influence is not more important than conversations.

Those questioned assessed equally television news' influence (64.8%) and family conversations (66.4%), but this may be an adjustment to the fact that the news is watched at home with the family, usually at suppertime. As the social experience of radio isn't as intense as that of television, its declared influence is half that of the latter. But newspaper reading, being an individual affair, does influence as much as television, probably because of the strong bond between writing and the reader.

### **Television and class**

Because television's presence in Portuguese life is so widespread, not only as a form of sociability but also as purveyor of ideological matter, it has an important role in the inscription of class in individuals, defined as grouping "structured by the same mentality, a community of ideas, symbols, values, which also implies a class consciousness, cultural works, ideologies" (Gurvitch, cited in Cazeneuve, 1976, 204). The studies used in this work allow us to verify how much the elements of sociability's "reign of shadows" interweave silently in the construction of a web in which the individuals can be caught. This web starts at home and is buttressed by economic conditions. Before ideology is transmitted by family and environment, it is material considerations themselves which determine the individual's choices.

To confirm whether sociability presents different results according to available social-demographic data, we may start by checking the answers against residential area in Inquiry B. We can verify that media presence at home is almost the same in Portalegre (a rural and interior area) as in Greater Lisbon, except for DVD ownership (41.4% in Portalegre and 56.2% in metropolitan

Lisbon) and for what does not depend on individual choice, cable TV: 46.6% in Portalegre and 80% in Greater Lisbon. Homes in Portalegre, many of them in rural districts, compensate for the lack of available cable with satellite TV, which is present in 33.8% of all Portalegre homes, against 17.6% in Greater Lisbon. The absence of cable, and therefore of easy fast access to Internet, also explains its greater presence in Lisbon (54.2%) than in Portalegre (39.5%).

Age and educational level also account for some differences. The older the younger members of the family are, the greater the presence of cable, PC, Internet and DVD players in homes, which obviously relates to the greater pressure to own these media. Listening to the radio and use of a PC on the previous day also increases with age, but the use of consoles and TV decreases. Children until the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade are the ones who watch more TV in the mornings. However, children from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> Grades are the ones who watch more TV in the afternoon and in the evening. All of them watch television in the evenings, but the youngest watch more after supper (85.2%) than the 10<sup>th</sup> Graders or older (80.3%), who have more autonomy to pursue other activities.

As can be confirmed in Table 11, social status coincides with differences in the presence of cable and DVD in the home, but mostly in differences in computer ownership and Internet access. These factors join with others to explain different sociabilities according to social status. In the upper level there is a greater incidence of reading, listening to the radio and PC use at home (this is compensated for in the lower levels by the use of the PC at school).

**Table 11. Media ownership and use according to class (%)**

Class	Kitchen	Video	Cable	PC	Internet	DVD	Reading	Radio	PC at home	PC at school
High	42.4	93.2	83.3	95.0	75.6	66.7	50.0	84.7	73.3	15.3
Middle	67.0	87.0	62.0	87.0	59.2	53.5	25.5	85.4	69.4	25.5
Lower	50.4	82.4	64.5	64.0	30.9	41.8	40.0	74.2	48.8	37.1

*Source: Inquiry B*

In respect of the presence of television in the home, we found significant differences according to income: its presence tends to increase with higher incomes. The presence of a set in the kitchen is more common in homes with average incomes (Table 12; compare with Table 11). Here we find another element that relates the individual's television autonomy directly with social position. In families with an income of less than a thousand euros per month television has to be consumed together in  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more of cases, while in families with higher incomes, in half or more of them it is possible for the individuals to autonomise their television consumption in the bedroom.

Although they have fewer sets, people with lower incomes spend more time watching television: as we saw above, people with fewer qualifications are the ones that as soon as they arrive home turn the set on without really watching it. These are also the people that are more likely to attempt interactivity with television, talking to the broadcast.

Table 4 shows that television is more important to people with less income: class D watches television 50% more than class AB. Time spent watching television is a good indicator on its own of someone's class, but there is also a need to follow what people choose to watch. Table 4 allows us to see which networks are chosen. Class D watches SIC and TVI for 2h44m per day whereas class AB only for 77 minutes, i.e., less than half of the time. This group more often chooses alternative media (cable, satellite and VCR) for longer (46m) than the Portuguese network most viewed in this group (RTP1, with 43m). The time spent watching these media is triple that of individuals in class D.

**Table 12. TVs at home according to income, qualifications and home size**

	Living Room	Kitchen	Parent's room	Children's room	Study room	Other room
Total	95.9	45.3	53.6	45.8	16.4	17.6
<500€	91.8	28.1	35.1	23.2	9.1	10.7
<1000€	91.9	41.9	39.9	31.4	13.5	12.8
<2500€	94.7	52.3	47.3	45.6	14.6	11.5
<5000€	98.8	42.2	65.3	49.4	15.8	20.7
>5000€	98.0	42.8	64.9	53.5	25.0	30.1
Primary	90.7	36.3	39.3	27.8	7.6	14.1
Secondary	95.6	50.0	54.2	47.4	11.8	14.0
Univ	96.5	47.4	56.3	53.6	19.3	19.6
Univ Degree	96.9	42.9	53.9	42.4	20.2	19.4
1-2 persons	93.9	29.8	33.8	22.4	14.6	16.1
3-5 persons	97.0	50.2	60.6	54.1	16.4	16.9
6-9 persons	92.8	67.2	70.6	66.7	17.2	29.8

*Source: Inquiry C*

Inquiry B also shows that social class explains children's favourite network, as can be seen in Table 13: the choice of SIC and TVI increases when we go down in social status and exposure to RTP2 diminishes. The differences between classes are also significant in networks only available through cable or satellite like SIC Radical, Disney Channel, SporTV and MTV.



**Table 13. First choice networks (%)**

Class	RTP1	RTP2	SIC	TVI	SICR	Disney	SporTV	MTV
High	0	14.5	20.0	9.1	7.3	7.3	7.3	21.8
Middle	4.2	5.4	34.7	17.9	3.2	3.2	1.1	14.7
Lower	1.7	3.4	36.4	20.3	4.2	1.7	5.1	13.6

*Source: Inquiry B*

Clearly, the preference for cable and satellite is directly connected with the possession of those media, as Table 14 demonstrates. There is a huge difference in the preferences expressed by those with and without cable. Even the favourite channel, SIC, loses about a third of the preferences of children and teenagers with cable in relation to those that don't have it. In the case of the state-owned channels (RTP1 and RTP2) the decrease is less than a quarter. However, teenagers with cable put MTV above TVI, making it the second favourite. For this table, we've only chosen three channels included in the package offered by TV Cabo Portugal: MTV, SporTV and SIC Radical.

**Table 14. Favourite Networks according to access/ownership of cable and satellite**

	RTP1	RTP2	SIC	TVI	MTV	SPORTV	SICR
Without Cable	34.4	32.4	81.2	65.0	6.0	1.0	3.0
With Cable	6.7	6.2	56.2	38.2	46.6	16.2	18.3
Without Satellite Dish	16.7	14.5	65.6	43.8	43.8	9.3	12.7
With Satellite Dish	11.1	16.4	59.1	54.9	54.9	17.9	7.0

*Source: Inquiry B*

The differences in the preferred channels amongst those who do and don't have satellite reveal a pattern different from cable. In fact, access to a satellite dish does not affect young people's preference for national networks; in fact the opposite occurs in two cases (RTP2 and TVI). We can dispute the importance of the dish at home, because it may be there due to a decision by the builder or a condominium and not to a personal or family decision, like cable. This fact can help to distinguish access to more television choices consonant with a social predilection for them. If we check the ownership of cable and satellite with the respondents' father's occupation, we can verify that there is no difference

between three professional groups and the ownership of a satellite dish. The group of non-skilled workers, unemployed and retired has 20.5% ownership of a satellite dish and for the group of senior professionals and technicians and intellectuals the percentage is 31.6%. The main differences come out in access to cable ( $\chi^2 = 0,013$ ): in the highest group the number is 83.3%, in the intermediate group (services, agriculture and civil servants) 62% have access and in the group with fewer qualifications the percentage is 64.5% (Table 15).

We can conclude that preferences for specific channels are not only dependent upon access to alternatives, but also on social and educational level and the environment.

**Table 15. Cable and satellite dish access according to father's occupation (%)**

	Cable	Satellite Dish
Group 1	83.3	31.6
Group 2	62.0	28.9
Group 3	64.5	20.5

*Source: Inquiry 15*

However, social segmentation doesn't entirely explain the choices made when watching television, neither does it explain attitudes and behaviour towards the presence of TV in the home: the three groups are practically identical to one another in all questions of Inquiry B, except in their appreciation of the possible learning of general knowledge through television, which decreases in the lower group. There is even total congruence of opinion, like in the consideration that we learn behaviour from television ( $\chi^2 = 0.96$ ).

In 1996, Abercrombie, based on a study made in the 1980s, called attention to the singularity of television respecting its universal appeal: "Programmes do not appeal to particular social groups. For almost any programme the make-up of the audience is the same. Television is truly a mass medium." (153). But, and in spite of the resistance of generalist networks, we can hardly maintain such a categorical statement nowadays. Viewers are differentiated by age, which is evident from Inquiry B, but also by their social and economic classification, as audiometric studies reveal ever more clearly.

**Table 16. Spectator's affinity with TV programmes**

	Tele-jornal	Jornal da Noite	Hora Discovery	Malucos do Riso	Morangos com Açúcar	Mistura Fina	Sunday Matinee I
Network	RTP1	SIC	RTP2	SIC	TVI	TVI	TVI
Broadcasts	79	54	54	39	62	51	11
AB Class	90.0	65.9	172.9	51.9	63.9	60.2	70.6
C1 Class	81.1	85.7	86.5	76.4	100.5	90.6	100.3
C2 Class	85.3	93.9	90.7	100.1	110.0	114.4	112.7
D Class	141.2	142.6	75.9	153.2	111.4	117.9	104.1
4-14 years	48.3	72.7	108.7	82.6	159.1	92.3	90.6
15-24 years	41.0	82.1	73.6	72.2	104.0	83.9	104.3
25-34 years	57.4	84.5	74.7	80.0	59.3	92.8	98.0
35-44 years	65.3	91.7	121.9	92.9	81.6	75.3	95.3
45-54 years	106.2	113.0	124.1	100.0	80.6	116.3	113.9
55-64 years	162.2	142.9	113.1	155.4	83.0	115.4	105.3
>65 years	210.6	117.6	93.1	124.1	135.0	191.1	94.5
Male	96.2	86.7	103.1	86.4	79.4	77.7	93.8
Female	103.5	112.4	97.2	112.6	119.2	120.7	99.2

Source: *Mediamonitor. Data Jan.-Mar.2005.*

We chose some programmes to test the differences between socio-economical groups and they are quite demonstrable (Table 16). As an indicator we've used affinity, which allows us to measure the distance between a target group and a programme: the variable is calculated from the percentage of the group that watches compared to the percentage of the whole viewing population; when it is 100%, the audience in the target group is equal to what occurs in the totality sampled<sup>19</sup>.

We can further confirm that younger ones watch news programmes amid family, more for *Jornal da Noite* (evening news, SIC) and less for *Telejornal* (evening news, RTP1), but that there are some notable differences between the age groups. However the RTP1 programme is more balanced in respect of socio-demographic class.

The documentary on RTP2 creates differences between 75.9% of affinity in class C1 and 172.9% in class AB, more than double. In the humour show on SIC (*Malucos do Riso*) and in TVI soap operas we find "class preferences" which are the precise opposite of those of *Hora Discovery*: in the cases of *Malucos do Riso*, *Morangos com Açúcar* and *Mistura Fina* (another soap opera) affinity increases the lower the socio-demographic class, to a half or less. In respect of

<sup>19</sup> <<http://www.mediamonitor.e-telereport.com/web/master.asp>>

age groups, and except for newscasts, affinity is like a U curve, higher in children, going down in 35-44 years group and growing again. This indicator confirms that the soap *Morangos com Açúcar* is particularly attractive to younger viewers, from 4 to 14, with 159.1% adherence. There are also important differences between men and women, with the latter being the most faithful viewers of all the programmes selected except *Hora Discovery*. The main difference is registered in the affinity with soap operas. However, it must be stressed that soaps are not an exclusively feminine genre.

We tried to highlight in sample B the group dispossessed of media, those who only have basic media. We found 22 persons (6.7% of the sample) that do not have cable, DVD, computer or Internet. If we compare the programme preferences with gender against the sample, we can verify that there are significant differences between them: the dispossessed have a greater preference for cartoons, soap operas, *Preço Certo em Euros*, *Big Brother*, *Malucos do Riso*, *Super Pai* (series) and *Saber Amar* (soap opera) and sports other than football, films, documentaries, newscasts, foreign drama, music and *Pop Idol*.

We can conclude therefore that, although there are major differences according to social class, there are also choices and points of contact, which allow for similar family patterns and the cross-breeding of sociabilities in public spaces. This similarity tends to fade when there is more choice both within and beyond television.

### Some Conclusions

Television is the most pervasive media in Portuguese daily life. Even before reviewing daily contact, its presence is confirmed by the sheer abundance of sets in the home. Family members think that the ability of different people to watch different programmes at the same time is important to them. People's relation with television is complex and many-sided; aware and unaware, accepting and resistant, this relation compels us to uncover its ambivalence, television's social function both outside and inside the home and as a source of information, entertainment and learning. Like radio, it is integrated at home both as a source of content and a background environment, its presence is so banal that it loses some of its importance, again like radio, whose functions it has largely usurped.

These differentiated uses allow the exploration of the simultaneity of media's influence over individuals and the benefit that they derive from it, independent of content. Television is a powerful and permanent factory of sociability, as can be seen in the case of blind people. Keeping the factory going is both a pleasure and an obligation: we need to watch it to be able to socialize.

Socialization made through television or under the shadow of its scheduling evolves with the fragmentation of daily media experience, growing everyday

due to the increasing presence of computers, Internet, consoles, printed media and the persistence of radio in the home. The new media diminish the importance of television but don't substitute it altogether, notably in respect of the moments of socialization in families or in groups outside the family.

Through the multiplication of sets, through zapping and through taping, individuals aspire to dominate the media and reinforce their autonomy, except in the above-mentioned moments of interaction or of group experience, moments in which television serves to establish a triangular relationship of sharing. In this way, the act of watching television can be considered a confirmatory act of family integration at the same time that it is an act of defining the autonomy of each member of the group. Autonomy is especially relevant for the children and teenager age-groups, and this is confirmed by their great liberty of choice, which is authorized by adults. It can be concluded that the conditions of television's consumption are becoming increasingly relaxed for both younger and other people. The inclusion of television in the home has modified itself as a strategy of survival for the "banalised" and "democratic" family, but it doesn't make it a "family substitute", as Dufour (2004) argues.

Television's inscription within a wider sociability entails a generalised acceptance of its content. Contrary to many opinions expressed by academics and politicians, the majority seems to accept its contents as harmless, not at all dangerous, even for children of six or more years of age. In this domain there is a huge difference between published opinion and family social practices. For the moment, elites have lost this war against television.

The data presented also points to an understanding of the presence and consumption of television at home as cause and consequence of the individual's socio-demographic identification with his or her peers. If age and sex explain some behaviour trends and choices, integration in a socio-cultural group or class seems to be determinant in one's relations with the media and the way it is used. Content and alternative media diversity allows for a class-based classification according to the viewer's uses of television which was not possible before. The idea that everybody watched the same programmes independent of their class position, which still survives from the time of generalist networks, is steadily losing ground.

We concluded that social constraints are still the most powerful external factors that guide people in their television choices. This social influence is in part conscious, and in part unconscious, mainly in respect of programme selection. That is, someone chooses a programme because it was made for this person according to age and sex, above all, to fit their class status, but also because the viewer knows or intuits that people like him or her watch the programme as a group identifier. The individual's individuation in the case of television is directly related to social position.

Television provides contexts for differentiation and identification, allowing someone to relate to a social group and, consequently, to build a social self. As was discussed above, the fragmentation of channels and programmes deepens the possibility of group differentiation and identification. At the same time, this fragmentation damages television's role as wide-gauge social cement (there is a scarcity of programmes which share a vision outside their target group), except in the case of planned or unexpected events, the broadcasting of which unite large national, international and global audiences. The above characterisation of people as viewers allows us to check how far the over-valuation of people as "audiences" in the ordinary sense, as people gathered together and simultaneously consuming the same television experience, is of interest to the industry. The insistence on (and the existence of) daily audiometric analysis contributes indirectly to the over-valuation of people's exposure to television in detriment to other media. In no other media are these audiometric studies revealed daily. This fact accounts for television's audiometric studies – quantitative or qualitative, in academic and in marketing domains – obtaining a much greater degree of importance for television than for other media in Portuguese daily life. Doubtless television is still the most important media in Portuguese daily life, but there is a life outside the screen.

*[English translation from the Portuguese by Paulo Renato Oliveira]*

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