

## TASK 4

## DOCUMENTED EXPOSITORY ESSAY

## The Power of the Screen

When television was first introduced, writers and social scientists thought that this new invention would better life. **For example, psychologist Joel Gold predicted that it would make family bonds much stronger (as cited in Guwern, 2008, p. 103).** Pictures which advertised television in the 1950s invariably showed a happy family gathered together in the living room, sharing the TV viewing experience. Who could have guessed that a quarter of a century later mother would be in the kitchen watching a daytime drama, dad would be in the living room watching a ball game, and the children would be watching cartons in the bedroom? Nobody could have foreseen the sad picture, which prevail almost all homes all over the world today. Unfortunately, TV has taken over family life and thus has two negative effects on family relationships.

To begin with, TV has certainly influenced the activities of family members, especially limiting family outings. As families today schedule their lives around the television only, when there is a special occasion, which requires every family member to attend, there is always someone in the family who does not want to go. They generally utter the same complaint, "I'll miss my program". Afraid of missing even one episode of their favorite program, they sacrifice the valuable time they would otherwise spend together with their family. **According to Gisso, 80% of the people investigated in Paris reported to have at least 2 TV shows per week that they feel heartedly attached to (2000, para. 1).** This is clear evidence of TV being an obstacle to possible family outings. Another reason why TV is favored over family outings is that it provides a variety of entertainment programs, which in return make family members house-bound. When people have the opportunity to spend time with TV series, talk shows or entertaining shows, they do not feel the need to go out. For example, technology made it possible today to watch a live concert comfortably at home or watch a very recent movie supported with surround systems. Because all this entertainment is free of charge, TV also greatly contributes to the family budget. Why would people go out and spend huge amounts of money for activities they can access at home?

Perhaps more important than the lack of family outings is the destruction of family time together at home. TV leaves little time for the traditions that used to be formed during long evenings together. The time devoted to traditional games, songs, and hobbies – all traditional activities – in the years before TV is now dominated by "the tube". On New Year's Eve, for example, most families used to enjoy themselves playing bingo; however, they now spend their time in front of the screen watching colorful TV shows. In addition to the loss of traditions, TV has decreased quality time spent together. When all the family members are at home, they do not bother to communicate with each other, because they are mostly busy watching their favorite shows even when they are eating meals. Thus, they miss the opportunity to spend time talking, arguing, or discussing. It is unfortunate that people now know more about the TV characters than they know about their husbands, wives or children. Another example to the decrease in quality time is that modern day mothers use television as a babysitter. They leave their small children spend countless hours in front of the TV, passively ingesting whatever flashes before their eyes, instead of playing with them. **Wall (2007, p. 98) claims this irresponsible act of mothers unfortunately takes away from these children the quality time spent with the family.**



All in all, TV has robbed the valuable time families spend outside and at home. Families unfortunately live a dismal and mechanized life, which is predetermined by TV guides. However, leading such a life certainly has a negative influence on family life. As social scientist Thuente (2001) asserts, **"the quality of life is diminished as family ties grow weaker, as children's lives grow more and more separate from their parents, as the opportunities for living and sharing within a family are eliminated"** (p. 10). Indeed, if the family does not accumulate shared experiences, it is not likely to survive. Consequently, if parents and children alike do not change their priorities, television will continue to exert its influence on family life as babysitter, pacifier, teacher, role-model, and supplier of morals, thus supplant the place of the family in the society.

#### References

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