

## **Media Use by Adolescents with Migration Background in Switzerland**

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### **Background of Project**

The impact of the modern media and new communication technologies (ICT) on socialisation of children and youths is unquestioned. In the western media-saturated society children and adolescents with an immigrant background are often confronted with different – and sometimes even contradictory – cultural orientations and norms and have to oscillate between them. In Switzerland, a country with an average of 20% of the population from other countries, the media use of children and young people with immigrant background has not been fully investigated so far. Especially we don't know much about differences in media use between the generations (parents vs. children).

### **Research questions**

The research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (NRP 52: Childhood, Youth and Intergenerational Relationships) was investigating the relationship between culture-specific characteristics (besides other socio-demographic influences) and the function and role the media and ICT play in identity-formation processes for children and adolescents living in a multicultural setting. Our study is especially exploring the following questions:

- What role do mass media and ICT (access, usage, functions, favourite programmes etc.) play in the live of Swiss youth in comparison to young people with an immigrant background?
- To what extent is media use determined by characteristics of cultural background (country of origin, religion) in comparison to socio-demographics (gender, education or social background of family)?
- What role do media and ICT play in the formation of identity for the intergenerational setting of immigrant life?

### **Methods used**

The project approaches the issue “media, migration and youth” from an **interdisciplinary perspective** and is divided into two closely linked studies consisting of:

- a) A **quantitative study** (Prof. Heinz Bonfadelli and Priska Bucher, University of Zurich) analyzing media use of both old and new media, cultural identity and attitudes toward other cultures among immigrant youths by comparing them with a similar sample of indigenous youths (whose father and mother were both born and raised in Switzerland). 88 classes with a high rate (>25%) of children with immigrant background were visited during summer 2004 in the greater region of Zurich. The sample of 1486 students is composed of 49% female and 51% male students and is also well balanced regarding age (12-16 years). About a third of the students are indigenous Swiss, two thirds are students with immigrant background.
- b) A **qualitative study** (Prof. Heinz Moser, the School of Education, Zurich) was based on different strategies of ethnographic fieldwork and close interviews with members of 8 Turkish/Kurdish families. The methodological approach is based on cultural studies, ethnography and visual methods. Specially, in-depth-interviewing offered insights into the relation between media and cultural identity thereby differentiating the results obtained with the quantitative investigation. This fieldwork is illuminating the function that media and ICT play in processes of identity-formation in an inter-generational setting.

## **Main results**

**Media access at home:** Except TV and Satellite TV, the ownership of media in Swiss families is higher than in families with immigrant background. At the same time it can be stated, that children's own possession of new media is higher among the immigrants. This means that parents with immigrant background offer their children access to ICT, but without using it themselves. Ownership of print media (books, subscription of newspaper and magazines) is lower among families and children with immigrant background.

## **Media use**

- a) Swiss adolescents are listening to **radio** more frequently and for more hours per week than their colleagues with immigrant background; but young people with immigrant background spend more hours **watching TV** whereas the frequency of watching TV does not differ from the TV habits of their Swiss colleagues.

- b) The segment of those that is not using **internet** at all is higher among the immigrants but on average, young people with immigrant background spend more time online than their Swiss colleagues. Immigrant families don't have as much computers; but in the rooms of migrant children we found more computers than in the rooms of their Swiss colleagues.
- c) Whereas there are no differences between Swiss youth and others concerning the use of magazines and newspaper, students with immigrant background are reading books less frequently and less hours per week than Swiss pupils.

**Media content and preferences:** Aside the consumption of TV programmes with a Swiss or migrant cultural background, migrants as well as Swiss youths are involved in the globalized sphere of international programmes and media products targeted to young people.

## **Conclusions**

- Against the widely held belief, that young people with migrant background are living in a kind of “parallel society” or “media ghetto” our study shows that **migrant youths are not a homogeneous group** but are characterized by a diversity of different personalities, social backgrounds and manifold media usage patterns.
- Migrant youths often are **not full belonging to both cultures:** Swiss culture and the culture of origin. The deepest roots they develop is the place where they were living and in the relationships to a broad social network of relatives, friends and peers. Young people are trying to balance and to bridge over these divergent world views by integrating these diverse experiences into a new kind of hybrid identity.
- Young people with migration background and their parents have **high aspirations regarding education and future occupation.** These efforts are in contrast to the still existing educational disadvantages of children with another country of origin respectively another mother tongue. Despite these handicaps, the majority of young people with migrant background is satisfied.

**Prof. Dr. Heinz Bonfadelli,**

born 1949, is full professor at the Institute for Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland since 1994.

He studied social psychology, sociology and mass communications at the University of Zurich and got his Ph.D. in 1980 with a thesis in the field of socialization to mass communication by children and adolescents.

Later, he spent a postdoctoral year at Stanford University in California and finished his habilitation research 1993 on the topic of the increasing knowledge gap hypothesis.

Research Activities: uses and effects of mass media, the knowledge gap and digital divide; mass media and youth, reading behaviour of children and adolescents, media and migration.