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Media use of Young People with Migrational Background

Studies concerned with the knowledge-gap-hypothesis have frequently shown differences with respect to the access to and the use of media as well as with respect to media content depending on educational and class background. But there are hardly any empirical studies focussing the question in how far the cultural background is also a decisive factor for exposure to new media in addition to education and class. Given that currently 20 percent of the Swiss population are foreigners this is astonishing in particular as the integrative potential of media is consistently discussed controversially in public.

In the context of the Swiss project „Media usage in a multicultural environment“ the importance of media in everyday-life of 1468 students at the age of 12 to 16 was analysed by means of a standardized paper and pencil survey (focussing on whole school classes). As the proportion of families with migrational background is especially high in the Zürich area it was made sure that communities and schools of this area were represented in the sample. Overall 66% of the interviewed students are from families where at least one parent is a citizen of a foreign country: 24% of former Yugoslavia, 12% of Italy, 9% of Turkey. The survey took place in summer 2004 and all students of a total of 88 school classes were interviewed. The quantitative part of the study was conducted by Heinz Bonfadelli of Zürich University, the qualitative part by Heinz Moser of the Pädagogische Hochschule (i.e. a teacher training college), who conducted a detailed analysis of the media usage of children und young adults in 8 Turkish families. In addition to differences in access and use of traditional mass-media (television, radio, books, newspaper) the crucial question was, whether there are social and cultural tendencies of exclusion concerning new media (computer and internet).

Besides issues of access to media and media usage the data allows conclusions referring to the integrative potential of media with respect to young people with migrational background.