

# “We Represent a Potential, not a Problem”

## *Young People’s Media Use in Diaspora*

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### **Abstract**

Media plays a crucial role in democratic and political participation. Media is also important in construction of identity and for the feeling of belonging. In this article we concentrate on the media habits of young minority people in Norway. These groups have a cross-cultural competence, a double identity, and an interest in news both from their heritage nation and from Norway. They are frequent users of online newspapers, and they are highly skilled in ICT. Further, their interests in news are combined with a critical awareness of how different minority groups are presented. Altogether, these circumstances represent a new situation for media producers and for journalism in general. In a multicultural community, journalists ought to be aware of the diversity of their audience and be willing to include minorities in news productions. Most importantly, a balanced presentation of minorities in media is a prerequisite for inclusion.

**Keywords:** media habits, online and printed news, young minority population, diaspora, journalism

### **Introduction**

Digital media enable those who have left their homeland for different reasons to remain informed, rapidly and effectively, on the news pictures in areas where they have family and friends. With this in mind it is important to find out whether young people with a minority background are interested in news from other parts of the world, particularly their family’s heritage nation, and whether they discuss this subject with young people with another cultural background. How a possible globalization tendency affects young people’s use of media, and how this tendency might affect the development of journalism and the role of journalists is scarcely investigated. In this article we will present results from a project that hopefully provides some information on this research field.

The media habits of young people with a minority background is examined in a qualitative study of school pupils, students, and journalists, all with a minority background, in Oslo. In searching for a suitable theoretical framework, theories on media and theories on diaspora identity are integrated. The present study rests upon an important claim, also raised by the media researcher Sonia Livingstone: The media help to develop our identity, our self-awareness of who we are and where we belong. It is therefore important that both media and research circles are aware of the role they play in the construc-

tion of identity, particularly in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Livingstone 2002). If this claim is to be considered true, what will a study on the media habits of the before mentioned minority groups tell us? And how will this insight affect agents within Norwegian media production?

### **Minorities and Their Media Use**

At the beginning of 2006, there were 386,700 people with an immigrant background living in Norway. This corresponds to 8.3 percent of the country's population. Of these, there were 6.1 percent with a non-western background. Twenty three percent of the almost ½ million inhabitants of Oslo, the capital, had an immigrant background. (Source: Norway Statistics<sup>1</sup>.) Those with a Pakistani immigrant background make up the largest single group, 27,700 individuals. Sweden makes up the next largest group with 23,500 individuals, and the third place – just in front of Denmark – is taken by Iraq with 20,000 immigrants. The pupils in the Oslo schools represent more than 125 language groups. As per 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005 there were about 50,000 pupils in the primary schools (1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> form), of which just over 18,000 had a minority background. In other words, these made up 36 percent of the total number of pupils. (Source: Oslo municipality, Education Department.) Although, internationally speaking, Oslo is a small capital, a relatively large percentage of its population has a minority background. This means that we are seeing new types of pupils and students in our educational system, representing a diversity of different types of intelligence, different identities, languages cultures, and media competence (Sandvik et al 2005).

Norway is one of the most newspaper-reading countries: On average ethnic Norwegians daily read two newspapers. Inhabitants with both parents born in non-western countries in average read 1,5 newspapers daily, a high number compared to other countries (Forbruker og Media 2005). 85 percent of all the inhabitants in Norway read newspapers daily. Non-western immigrants aged 12-19 years seldom read newspapers: 56 percent against 79 percent of ethnic Norwegians, and 79 percent of western immigrants. Generally, compared to ethnic Norwegians, non-western immigrants more seldomly read subscription newspapers (ibid). These tendencies are confirmed by a qualitative study carried out in 2003 on the newspaper-reading habits of 24 school pupils from three different places in Norway: The families of the ethnic Norwegian pupils subscribed to a newspaper, while none of the multicultural families subscribed to a newspaper. A couple of times a week, their parents bought one of the two Norwegian non-subscription newspapers, *Verdens Gang* or *Dagbladet*, which were then read by these children. On the contrary, the multicultural pupils were more active than their ethnic Norwegian counterparts in reading online newspapers *both* from Norway and from the country with which their family was connected (Fogt 2003).

The research was concerned with the general newspaper-reading habits of children and young people in Norway, but also showed how rewarding it is to listen to pupils with different cultural backgrounds discussing their media habits, such as how often they read newspapers. It is a matter of seeing the pupils' different resources in the encounter between local and global perspectives, and it is a matter of seeing the assets of multicultural children and young people *also* being interested in what is happening in parts of the world where they have families and friends. Further, it is a matter of seeing the benefits of having a double sense of belonging – belonging to Norway and belonging to something or someone outside Norway.

The fact that almost every fourth Oslo citizen belongs to a minority group, is an important reason why newspapers, particularly in the capital, are interested in recruiting readers among those with this background. This is also the reason why the Oslo branch of The Norwegian Union of Journalists, which collaborates with the institution “Newspapers in Education” decided to carry out their minority project: “Journalists in schools”. The aim of the project is to increase an interest in the journalist profession among minority young people, while simultaneously increasing the young people’s awareness of newspaper-reading/use of media. Seven journalists with multicultural backgrounds are involved in the project and have visited primary schools in Oslo. These seven journalists are of particular interest for our present research project, because, with their minority background and their contacts with the young members of the public, they possess a unique expertise that should be made use of by both media and the community in general.

## Theoretical Framework

The media in the multi-ethnic community can be characterized as a separate research field in the science of media and communication (Camauër and Nohrstedt 2006), and we hope to contribute to this field of research. In one of her books on young people and their media use in a modern society, the Danish media researcher Kirsten Drotner starts out by saying that the interest in young people and media follows two main paths: the broad highway of pessimism and the narrower path of optimism (Drotner, 1999: 21). Drotner further refers to the tradition of *cultural studies* where media are defined as “social, cultural, and psychological resources” (ibid: 27, our translation), and based on these reflections, we chose an “optimistic research path” (ibid: 25, our translation), which leads us to focus on the individual. In the interviews, both the school pupils and the students, and to some extent the journalists as well, say that precisely on account of their minority background they represent a potential, not a problem, in the Norwegian community. They belong both to Norway and to another country; they can understand both Norwegian and the language spoken at home by the family. Identity is a focal point, a recurrent theme in the interviews in our material, and the interviewee’s double affinity is thoroughly displayed. Consequently, we have included both theory on the media and the term diaspora (see section “Explanation of terms” below) as a framework for the research project. The theory on the media and the diaspora concept is multidisciplinary (building both on media theory and migration theory), and we consider it therefore suitable for the label “cultural studies”. Having chosen these perspectives, we hope to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the research field, which is still in its infancy.

Internationally, there has been research on the media in the multi-ethnic community for some time, see for example the anthology *Media & Global Change* (Hemer & Tufte 2005). In Norway, the subject has not become interesting until recently, probably because people with a non-western background did not start considering Norway as a place to live until far later compared with other European and Nordic countries. Norwegian research projects in the field of the media and the multi-ethnic community have concentrated on the media’s stigmatising presentation of “the others” through choice of topic, in particular criminality, and how “the others” and their actions linguistically are presented (Eide 2002, Lindstad and Fjeldstad 1997, 2005, Smistrup and Bjørnsen 2003 – a Danish-Norwegian study, Svendsen 2000 – a Danish-Norwegian-Swedish study).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, attention has concentrated on – and still concentrates on – the *content* of the media. As regards the *use* of the media by the minority population, research in Norway has concentrated on the minority young people’s use of ICT, and the media to which the young people have access via ICT (Hestflått 2002, Tor Endestad et al. 2004, Torgersen 2004, Moshuus and Smette 2005, Sandvik 2004, Godø 2006).

So far, there have been few Norwegian studies where *both* media users *and* media producers with minority background have been interviewed on factors connected with minorities and the media, but several research projects are now in progress. For example, Gunn Bjørnsen is studying multi-culturalism and culture comprehension in journalism. The subject matter here is primarily the relationship between ethnicity and professional identity among journalists (Bjørnsen 2006). Trine-Lise Island has recently terminated an empirical study of minority students’ way into exposed professions, more precisely journalist and teacher. They are not negatively concerned about the great amount of exposure these professions imply, rather they have chosen them because of their intrinsic value and their own interests in them (Island 2007).

### *Outline of the Terminology*

In the present study, we use the concept ‘diaspora’ in equivalence with its use in migration literature. We thus give the concept a more positive meaning than the traditional use of the word, which stems from circumstances when the population of a country has been *forced* to leave their homeland and has spread to other countries, for example the Jews’ exodus (Cohen 1995). A common feature of diasporic communities is that they live in a different place from their heritage nation (Cohen 1997). Cohen describes different characteristics of diaspora such as an idealisation of the homeland, a collective memory and myth of the homeland, as well as a problematic relationship to the host country (ibid: 180). However, Cohen also points out that diaspora may mean a particularly creative and enriching existence in a tolerant host country. As an example he mentions the Armenians and Irish in the USA, and the Africans who have been in diaspora and produced spirituals, jazz, blues, rock, calypso, samba and reggae (ibid: 187). As we are interested in following an optimistic research path in the present research project, we take special notice of this meaning of diaspora.

At the beginning of the project we used the term “homeland” to describe the country from which the informant or his/her family originated. However, many of the interviewees said they experienced Norway just as much as their homeland as the country from which their family originally came, and we therefore decided it was more correct to start using “heritage nation” when reporting from the project. For further details on the term “homeland” in relation to diaspora we refer to Roza Tsagarousianou’s discussion (Tsagarousianou 2004).

Unless otherwise specified, we use the term identity in the meaning described by Stuart Hall in “The Question of Cultural Identity” (Hall 1992). Here Hall describes *cultural identities* as “those aspects of our identities which arise from our ‘belonging’ to distinctive ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and, above all, national cultures” (ibid: 274).<sup>3</sup>

We have chosen to use the expression “with a minority background” or in a shorter version “minority pupils”, “minority students” etc. The Norwegian school authorities uses the term “minoritetsspråklig”, which denotes persons with language(s) that belongs to a minority language group, and the term is used about all the pupils with par-

ents born abroad, regardless of the pupils' individual linguistic skills. However, many pupils have Norwegian as their main language, though they may be multilingual. We regard these circumstances as a resource in contrast to the term "minoritetspråklig", which may indicate that they are not particularly fluent in Norwegian.<sup>4</sup>

### *Putting Down Roots in Another Country*

The metaphor "to put down roots" may be characterised as a cliché, but the Danish researcher Randi Marselis (2003), with reference to Liiza Malkki, still has an important point when she objects that the root metaphor implies that one can only belong to one place – one root cannot belong to several trees. A common characteristic of the young people in our material is that they experience belonging to several places in the world, they feel that they are bound both to Norway and to their heritage nation. The question therefore arises whether the metaphor "to put down roots" is past its "use by date". (See otherwise Marselis' discussion on the root metaphor.)

Where Randi Marselis uses the terms 'splitting' and 'roots', the Norwegian researcher Kristin Hestflått (2002) uses the terms 'breaching' and 'binding'. Hestflått bases her research on minority young peoples' identity work in their encounter with ICT, on the premise that cultural affiliation affects the way we perceive and assimilate new technology and new media. She uses a binding hypothesis that assumes that ICT can help to reinforce immigrant young people's binding to groups and networks belonging either to their own or to their parents' "original culture" (Hestflått 2002: 4). The Internet enables young people to establish contact points more easily with others with a similar cultural background in Norway, with another homeland, or with friends and relations living in a completely different country. Inside the families, the young people may obtain status as ICT resource persons. Hestflått's binding hypothesis provides a concise description of what both students and journalists with minority background have expressed in the interviews in our research project. Many of these used precisely the expression "resource person" about themselves, and said that it was important for them to maintain their social network with their family and their friends, even though they were scattered over large parts of the world.

Kristin Hestflått's breaching hypothesis states that ICT may help minority young people break off and liberate themselves from their own or their parents' "original culture" by using the Internet, computer games and mobile phones to establish different role models and network from their parents. In this way, ICT may play a role in a generation conflict and a liberation process (Ibid: 5). Helene Toverud Godø, also Norwegian, uses Kristin Hestflått's binding and breaching hypotheses as a background for her analysis of minority young peoples' use of chat on the Internet (Godø, 2006). One of the main points in her analysis has been to find out how the Internet can contribute to strengthen or weaken the bonds to own and parents' original homeland and culture. Godø has found no signs that the Internet helps to break off from the young peoples' or the parents' "original culture". They do not turn away from their "original culture" as a consequence of use of the Internet in itself, though use of the Internet may contribute to their liberation from cultural and normative guidelines that have roots in their "original culture". Godø points out that the Internet is an information and communication medium, and that it is therefore natural that the Internet is more likely to *bind* people to each other than to break bonds.

Both the metaphor *splitting* used by Randi Marselis and the breaching hypotheses of Kristin Hestflått have negative connotations. Before a breach there has been a conflict

that the parties have not succeeded in solving, while the splitting metaphor emphasizes the individual's feeling of homelessness – a painful situation. Marselis uses the term splitting when she refers to the “diaspora identity's ambivalent relationship” (Marselis 2003: 13). Marselis has researched diasporic young people in Danish TV documentaries, and she shows that the media – in this case particularly the TV medium – has an effect on the maintenance of a diaspora identity by its use of metaphors such as *splitting* and *roots* when describing minority young people. At the same time, she points out that a person may have diaspora identity and simultaneously feel attachment to the country in which he or she lives (ibid: 14).<sup>5</sup> While referring to the sociologist Avtar Brah, Marselis points at the possibility of having “multiple homes”, which is very likely to challenge the dominating discourse on the national, which assumes that the individual should bind his or her loyalty to one single place. The analysis mentioned above by Helen Toverud Godø on the use of chat on the Internet points in the same direction: The Internet can help to unite people who live in exile, and may reduce the feeling of loss as a result of being so far from the rest of the family. At the same time, the Internet can help to bind young people to the life lived in Norway, and it can function as a tool for establishing and maintaining social networks here. Through the Internet, minority young people can both strengthen their diaspora identity and their attachment to Norway.

To sum up: One of the objectives of our research project is to find out whether there is a relationship between minority young peoples' choice of news media and their perception of where they belong. Further, we ask whether the influence from family, friends, school/education and possible jobs effect these young peoples' choice of news media. At the same time, we want to find out whether minority and ethnic Norwegian young people exchange point of views regarding their use of news media.

## **Methodological Considerations**

Our most important method of research is the qualitative *interview*. The project is based on face-to-face interviews with school pupils, teacher students/preschool teacher students and journalists with minority background. As supplementary data, data collected among journalist students are included. As researchers from two different educational programmes (Sandvik from teacher training and Fogt from professional journalism) we represent a multidisciplinary perspective by the single fact that we are two researchers that will perceive and respond to different aspects of the interview situation and the interviewee's answers. We draw mainly on discourse analysis of interview data (Marttala 1995, Kvale 1997), and we have applied a strategic selection of informants (Johannessen and Tufte 2002, Patton 2002, Gentikow 2005), starting out from lists of students with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses available for teachers. From these lists we have selected names that apparently signalled a connection to lands of origin outside Norway. In order to be sure that the names actually represent a student with a minority background, the names have been discussed with colleagues teaching the particular class to which the student belongs.

The minority students in the first form of teacher and preschool teacher training will have much contact with children and young people in their future work. However, several of the students already have this contact because they are working as for example substitute teachers, translators, sports leaders and kindergarten assistants parallel to their studies. They do not express themselves solely on the basis of their own media experience, but they also have some impression of the media use in general by children and

young people with a minority background. The same can be said of the seven journalists: Because they are engaged in the project “Journalists in schools” (also called The Minority Project of The Oslo branch of The Norwegian Union of Journalists), they probably have a broader frame of reference than colleagues with a minority background who have not had the same contact with school pupils.

Of the 13 students who were interviewed, there were six women and seven men. They were aged 20-39 years, and their countries of origin were as follows: India, Pakistan, Iran, Morocco, Macedonia, Poland, Montenegro, Iran, Hong Kong and Vietnam. Six of the students were born in Norway.

The seven journalists with a minority background make up a relatively large proportion of the total number of minority journalists in Oslo. An assessment by the Oslo branch of the Norwegian Union of Journalists in 2004 shows that there were 17 editorial colleagues in Oslo with a non-western background. This number has probably increased during the last three years, but Norwegian journalist training in general is still finding it difficult to recruit sufficient editorial colleagues to reflect the population’s ethnic composition. The journalists are aged 29 to 45 years and have Pakistan, India, Chile, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia as their countries of origin, and they are four men and three women, two of them born in Norway. With the exception of one single student with permission to reside in Norway, both students and journalists have Norwegian citizenship.

The eight minority pupils from a central school in Oslo are selected because they are participating in another study with which we are presently involved.<sup>6</sup> We consider this selection valuable as we have already established a positive relationship with them, both individually and as a group, and hence there are reasons to believe that they will provide information easily and without shyness.

In order to have some basis for comparison of the students with a minority background, data collected in the autumn of 2005 among students in the first form in the Faculty of Journalism at Oslo University College are integrated in the present study. 33 students answered a questionnaire, and only one of them had a non-western background. The reason why this study is included is that this group of students represent a future professional group whose attitudes and media habits are relevant since they will possess influential positions in the future media landscape. Besides, this study gives additional information on the media habits of another student group: ethnic Norwegian journalist students.

To sum up, the qualitative interviews consist of the following components:

- Interviews with children/young people with a minority background at different stages of schooling and with different ethnic backgrounds. These children were also asked about their parents’ media habits.
- Interviews with students with a minority background attending preschool teacher and teacher training at Oslo University College.
- Interviews with journalists with a minority background who have taken part in the project “Journalists in schools” under the auspices of The Oslo branch of The Norwegian Union of Journalists and Newspapers in Education (The Norwegian Media Businesses’ Association – MBL).

As a supplement to the interview data, data from a questionnaire among ethnic Norwegian journalist students in the first form serve the function of background to which careful comparisons can be made.

As mentioned above we have applied a strategic selection of informants. This kind of selection may imply a limitation and a weakness: The patterns discovered among the selected school pupils and students may not be sufficiently representative of others than these single individuals. However, a representative selection of informants is beyond our ambitions, intentions and research profile. We have intentionally selected students from our own professions, and we have invited them to participate in a qualitative interview with an interview guide as a point of departure. Consequently, these “limitations” may be turned to the opposite: By providing a relaxed situation with students from our “own” profession, we believe that we are able to create conditions for openness and dialogue (Rhedding-Jones 2005). No doubt, the fact that we could say we were teachers in journalism and in teacher training education, made it easy for us to establish contact and make interview appointments with the selected students. On the contrary, there are no signals that the students found it difficult to respond negatively to our invitation to be interviewed.

A semi-structured procedure enables us to go deeper into those questions the interviewee shows a more profound reflection towards, and thus we are equipped with information about a range of topics. For example, some students are more concerned about perspectives regarding immigrants in Norwegian media; others are more eager to tell about their experience with foreign news media. As long as the informants here answered all the main questions, we allowed them to specify some. In the school class we were doing research, observation as a method is additionally applied. The young pupils were observed while working in front of computers, both in formal and non-formal settings. The none-formal, or off-task settings, provided information about their media preference, and this kind of information was introduced and commented upon in the interview situation.

## Results

### *Use of Foreign News Media*

The students with minority background were asked about their use of foreign newspapers and magazines (online and/or paper editions) as well as their use of foreign radio and TV.

Among foreign news media, these students prefer TV programmes, and they watch western TV channels and channels from their heritage nation approximately to the same amount. They mention western channels like Discovery, Animal Planet, National Geographic, CNN, BBC, MTV, Swedish and German channels, while the non-western channels they mention differ according to their heritage nation, for example Iranian, Moroccan, Arabic, Bosnian, and Serbian channels.

If we compare these answers with the answers from the journalist students, this group also says that TV is their main preference among the foreign media. Except from one student with a minority background, the journalist students however, watch *western* TV channels. Of the foreign news media, radio programmes are the least popular in the minority student group, and very little time is spent on this activity. If they ever listen to the radio, they do so for background music.

The reading of foreign newspapers or magazines, either online or paper, is rather frequent than listening to the radio, and some of these newspapers/magazines are published in the family’s heritage nation. A couple of students were more concerned about their heritage nation, and one student was every day visiting ten Iran web sites to gain



news, among them *Jame Jam*, *Gooya*, *Hamshahri*, *Hambastegi*, *Iran*, *Irane Emrooz*, *Hamvatan* and *Isna*. “I’m reading in order to be updated about what happens in my home country”, the student says.

Another student is every day reading Chinese online newspapers, and a third one is visiting Pakistani web sites with several newspapers in Urdu. *Aktbare Jahan* is the favourite.

Also some of the journalist students read foreign newspapers or magazines online or in paper version, but in contrast to the minority students they only read *western* publications, which of course is due to their language skills.

The information on the use of foreign media obtained through the interviews with minority students was in good agreement with the impressions gained by journalist with minority background through experience with their job and visits to classes at secondary schools where there was a large majority of minority pupils. Foreign TV is most popular, but the pupils are also interested in obtaining news online about their countries of origin. One of the journalists says:

My impression is that pupils with a minority background are interested in reading online news from their homeland. They want news from their homeland. They assimilate media habits via their parents. And they are concerned about subjects of interests in the Pakistani community in this country and in Pakistan.

Another journalist says:

Anyway, they have a double relationship and keep up with information from here and from their home countries because they are competenced in Internet and watch TV channels from their home countries. For example, during the Iraqi war, I can imagine they read Norwegian online newspapers, and when they went home, they were watching TV from their home countries.

When asked about whether the media habits of the minority young people are more global than the media habits of ethnic young Norwegians, one of the journalists answers:

Yes, I think that might be true for most of them. I can see it in my own family. I have a brother in Singapore, a wife with family in Pakistan, her family has relatives in USA and England. My brother in Singapore is very well informed about what happens in Norway.

What do the minority pupils tell about their use of foreign media? The eight minority pupils in the seventh form confirm the information given from the other informants. They watch foreign television, and they are influenced by their parents’ media habits: They watch news, film, drama, and music programmes from their heritage nation, but they are much less interested in news than their parents. Not all of them watch foreign TV on a daily basis, in spite of their parents’ more frequent use, now two or three times in a week. Only one pupil watches television from her heritage nation daily, and she is watching together with her family. The same pupil reports that she has no friends with whom she plays outside school. Some of the pupils report that they and their parents also watch television from western channels, mainly CNN and BBC.

The eight minority pupils do not read online newspapers or magazines, and with one exception they report the same on behalf of their parents. One mother with Japanese background reads Japanese sites both for reading news and for reading about films and popular culture. None of the minority pupils listen to foreign radio programmes, and

only one reports that her mother listens to radio from her heritage nation, more specifically on music programmes, the same mother that selects Japanese sites and films stuff.

### *Use of Norwegian News Media*

All the students with a minority background say that they read Norwegian newspapers or magazines, and most of them also read the news online. Their favourite on the Internet is the non-subscription newspaper VG, Norway's largest newspaper, which at the moment experiences a decrease in the sale of the paper edition, while the number of readers of the online edition is increasing. About the paper edition, one of the students says: "I read VG if another student in my class has bought it. I read it if I find something interesting there when I'm at my hairdresser's or my doctor's". Another student reads the paper edition of both VG, *Dagbladet* and *Aftenposten*. He says:

I read several newspapers, I like reading newspapers. I buy VG almost every day, and supply with the Internet when I need to be immediately updated on news. I read many different subjects in VG and in *Dagbladet*, in *Aftenposten* I read the sports. My parents subscribe to *Aftenposten*.

Several of the students with a minority background say that they visit the online edition of VG every day, but they do not buy it themselves, and they check out the online edition several times daily. Some of them even have it as their opening site on the Internet. From the students' responses we have the impression that they perceive the online edition of VG as the fastest news media. While the students check out the online newspapers many times daily, their reading of the paper versions is more occasional and unsystematic. The same impression is given about their reading of foreign newspapers.

All the interviewed students watch Norwegian TV channels. The channels belonging to NRK, the Norwegian State Broadcasting company, are least popular, while the Norwegian commercial channels with their entertainment programmes are much more interesting. This agrees with the results of other studies of minority young people (Leeuw and Rydin, 2005: 6). "I watch everything from reality till news, I enjoy myself when watching TV, and I like to watch TV when I'm reading", a student says, while another says that he watches NRK1 and 2 to be informed with news, otherwise "there are only boring programs".

The students listen to Norwegian radio channels: not to hear news broadcasts, but primarily to hear music. The commercial radio channels provide them with the music they like: several say that the radio is switched on to give background music while they are doing something else. One of the other interviewed journalists says that the minority young people do not have any relationship to radio, and continues: 'I have never listened to the radio. They listen maybe to the radio in their cars, but do not use it as a news channels like the Norwegians do.'

Considering the student's time spent on Norwegian news media, TV is the great winner, particularly compared with printed media. One of the journalists pointed out that reading printed newspapers and magazines are demanding, and she continues:

I think of the friends of my two younger sisters. They are 'bright kids' but they mostly watch TV. [...] As long as they live at home, they probably read more newspapers than when they move. [...] My impression is that radio is very little used. The newspaper demands most from them, after that comes radio, while TV is the least demanding.

At first glance, it may seem surprising that students with a minority background follow Norwegian media to such a high extent, and particularly that they spend so much time on Norwegian TV (from 3 to 30 hours a week.) But as one of the students emphasizes: “I am a Norwegian citizen, and I speak Norwegian. It is completely natural for me to follow what is happening here.” Since 12 of the 13 students are Norwegian citizens, perhaps it is more surprising that so many of them are interested in *also* following the media picture in the country or the part of the world that the family originally came from. Based on the interviews, it could be that this double interest is primarily caused by two factors:

- The student speaks *both* Norwegian and the language spoken at home by their family, so that there are no problems in alternating between Norwegian and for example Arabic websites.
- The parents follow their homeland’s TV channels via satellite TV, and consequently this becomes a natural element in the everyday life of the family, even though the young people in the family also watch Norwegian TV channels.

The students were asked about their opinion of the media coverage in Norway of cases related to immigrants, and they were invited to mention examples from Norwegian newspapers that contribute to a positive perception of immigrants and examples of the opposite. The justification of their choice of examples is interesting. Many of them say that there are so few examples that it is difficult to find either positive or negative ones, whilst others point at televised debate programs as positive because in these programmes immigrants are included, and hence standpoints from “ordinary people that have lived here for a long time” are made available. However, other students mention that in these programmes the same immigrants are invited and given the opportunity to speak, independent of the subject at issue:

If they invite immigrants, very often it is people without higher education and people that lack knowledge about Islam. Shabana Rehman is not skilled in Islam, and Imams cannot speak Norwegian. They could have invited people ... that, if they cannot Norwegian, they can speak English. More highly educated people can speak English. [Shabana Rehman is a Pakistani-Norwegian artist and writer.]

The students are concerned about the Norwegian media: whilst focussing the negative and especially on criminality, a wrong impression of immigrants is given. The students provide the following reflections:

- If somebody who has knocked somebody down, has a foreign origin, the media tells it, in spite of being a Norwegian citizen and have been living here his whole life. They don’t tell this if he’s a Norwegian. I remember having thought: Hey, this was condescending. It hits the whole immigration population when people condemn like this.
- If it is something negative, and immigrants are involved, it will be emphasized. If an immigrant represents Norway and he gets a gold in the World Championship, his immigrant background won’t be given a single word.
- If five Norwegians have committed a crime, it will be less focussed on compared to one foreigner that has done something wrong.
- A couple of days ago, there was an article about an increasing amount of immigrants that exploited the social security system. I know of many Norwegians that do exactly the same, but it won’t be written about.

The students have many suggestions on how the media can cover cases that involve immigrants. In the following quotations “they” refer to journalists:

- Firstly: Today, none of the Norwegian channels have foreign news readers. This could help to watch people with another background. Secondly: Journalists must focus the actions and the news instead of providing details about people’s origin.
- They can write about the reasons why foreigners don’t get a job. Second and third generation immigrants are as Norwegian as many others of my friends. They should write more about religion, so that people will learn more about alternative religions and ways of living. The school magazines can write more about interesting foreigners and display the rich variety of habits we actually possess [...]. Many of us have grown up together with foreigners and don’t think of the fact that we speak to a ‘foreign’ girl or boy.
- They have to learn to give nuances, to be serious, to not think sensationally. Either they are pro integration and immigration, or they are very negative. They move too quickly to the left or to the right. There should be more balance in their coverage.

What do the minority pupils tell us about their use of Norwegian news media? The 11 years old pupils do not read newspapers, unless there are some “good pictures”. Boys have a tendency to answer that they read the sports.

The school pupils are not regular readers of Norwegian newspapers. Just on an occasional basis, some of them read the sports news, cinema ads, weather reports, and the cartoons. They read or glance at the newspapers if they are provided by their parents, and if there are some “good pictures” that trigger them.

The school pupils do not read news on the web, but some of them occasionally visit the online version of *Aftenposten* or *VG* in order to read about football or when they have project-related homework. These activities are not guided by parents.

Norwegian television channels are watched daily both by the school pupils and their parents. Only one of the school pupils does not watch Norwegian television, but he does not watch television at all. This boy reports that his father mainly watches CNN, and that he himself likes to play football and stay with friends more than be at home and watch television or read any kind of newspaper.

Reports and media articles show that children and young people with a minority background have a high degree of digital expertise (Vestby and Hernwall, 2005).<sup>7</sup> They are not only “technically skilled” but they also distinguish themselves by mastering many of the components of digital text production (Sandvik 2004). Quite another tendency is that the pupils often visit chat rooms at *msn*, many times weekly. They have their own chat groups where they add friends from school. Further, their media habits can be characterised by playing a variety of computer games, and they visit a range of commercial web sites with games and other activities.

Children with a minority background are at home with digital media. They read and write with pleasure and skills, they produce multimedia texts and show a substantial insight into several of the digital fields – digital teaching resources, websites for children and young people, chat channels and learning platforms – but they are not much interested in news, online newspapers or newspapers in general.

### *News Media as a Subject for Discussion*

All the students interviewed say that they have friends with another background than their own. One student says for example that she has friends from Somalia, Morocco, Eritrea, Iceland, Finland, Iraq, Iran, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Yugoslavia and Norway. Another has friends from Pakistan, Turkey, Hong Kong, Gambia, Ivory Coast, USA, Chile, Philippines, Iran, Somalia and Norway. Several of the students emphasize that nearly all of their friends are Norwegian citizens. In comparison, 20 of the 33 journalist students say that they have friends with a multicultural background from non-western countries.

Most of the students experience that friends with an ethnic Norwegian background do *not* have different media habits than they have themselves. Some of the students explain this as follows:

- It is because I was the only girl with an immigrant background in the class at my primary school, so it has something to do with adapting. My best friend is Norwegian. We do a lot of things in the same way.
- VG and Dagbladet are popular with everyone.<sup>8</sup>
- This is individual, but they have more or less the same media habits as I have.
- This is very different. [...] I have friends that almost only watch their own channels, and I have other friends that don't do it at all. With own channels, I mean channels from the heritage nation.
- Sometimes we talk about religion, about football, the subjects, we work in groups at school, but we very seldom touch on media habits.

The journalists with a minority background also experience that, on the whole, there are many *similarities* in media habits between minority and ethnic Norwegian young people.

- Young people generally have widespread media habits. What's "in" in the group you're part of? This doesn't concern ethnicity, but maybe music interests. If you play football, you're interested in football independently of ethnic background.
- Their media habits are mostly similar to the media habits of Norwegian young people. [...] If they were first generation immigrants, their choices wouldn't have been that similar.

For example, this similar pattern has been seen in Sweden for a long time (Weilbull and Wadbring, 1999). The *differences* in media habits appeared indirectly when we asked whether they recommended specific foreign media or programmes to their ethnic Norwegian friends. In addition to minority students following Norwegian news media, it also appeared that they keep in touch with foreign programmes and online newspapers that their Norwegian friends are quite unable to follow because they do not understand the language. Here are some answers by the students:

- No, but I may well recommend Albanian TV programmes to other friends.
- No. We talk about some programmes, and it would have been fun if they had been interested in some Moroccan programmes, but I have not recommended anything special to them.
- No, but I may well recommend Iranian programmes to Iranian friends.

- No, they don't understand Persian.

The programmes, channels or titles that the students sometimes recommended to ethnic Norwegian friends were all in English, for example programmes on the Discovery channel or women's magazines. The students who recommended women's magazines talked about them as "gossip magazines" and read them because of their entertainment value. On this point there is a difference between female and male students, but otherwise there are no clear differences in the answers from women and men.

How will the media habits of young people in Norway with a minority background develop in the future? On this question the minority journalists generally answer that the media habits will be more and more similar to the media habits of ethnic Norwegian young people:

- Everything will be more and more similar. The groups will approximate in several aspects: boy- and girl friends, life style, clothes, mainstream etc. They will still miss stuff on minorities – they will learn to know more. The media will catch this because they will think it's a market – to write about things that are happening for example in the Pakistani environment. They will not just bring conflict stuff. Here, there is money to make.
- All the popular (Norwegian) programmes will influence the young people independent of background. Indian and Arabic for example will be a supplement. The youth culture concerns everybody. They will watch the same series.

## Discussion

In this study all of the students with a minority background follow Norwegian media, and most of them also follow one or more foreign media, representing their family's heritage nation. If we assume that the media contribute to developing our identity, our self-awareness of who we are and where we belong, the media habits of these students show that they obviously have a doubly national sense of belonging. The fact that large numbers of the newspaper readers do not only have a Norwegian national identity is a relatively new phenomenon for Norwegian media, and a great challenge.

The Danish researcher Connie Carøe Christensen characterizes watching TV news from the original homeland as a *transnational practice* (Christensen, 2003). Transfer of money to the family in the homeland is also a transnational practice. According to Christensen, the concept transnationalism includes a social context dominated by forms of practice that extend over two or several national contexts. At the same time, transnational practice is an expression of what separates the ethnic minority from the majority population in most communities. In our study we are particularly interested in how school pupils and students obtain news, and we have shown that they frequently watch television and read online newspapers from their heritage nation. If we follow Christensen's reasoning, these students are carrying out a transnational practice. At the same time, they follow the Norwegian news picture closely, though many of them think that there is too much material about Norwegians and Norway, and too little material related to foreigners and foreign countries.

Altogether, there is so little material. For example, compared with many foreign channels Norwegian TV-channels have little material. CNN starts on a global

basis, Norwegian news starts by saying that Vålerenga (a football team) won a gold medal today. Norwegian media do not use immigrant politics as a starting point. (Student)

In our opinion, Norwegian media lacks a transnational content considering that many persons in the country have a connection with two or perhaps several countries. Unless Norwegian news media introduces this perspective, minority young people may gradually stop using them and replace them with the transnational media which is based on a more diasporic and global perspective. In the meantime we can conclude that the informants in our material use Norwegian media.

Some of them, including the journalists with a minority background, keep a critical eye on the media in their countries of origin. One of the informants gave the following characteristic of the media in his country of origin: “The journalists are a microphone stand for the authorities in power, they know nothing about freedom of expression, they do not understand ‘democracy’. Some years ago, the researchers Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy interviewed Turkish focus groups living in England, on their TV habits (Robins and Aksoy, 2005). One of their findings was that the viewers were constantly comparing the two national cultures and thus also their media. They thus also became more reflective and critical of TV from Turkey. It could therefore perhaps be said that transnational television undermines the diasporic perception of identification and belonging, while at the same time enabling the development of transnational culture. “Transnational experience is surely about developing – and putting a positive value on – this capacity to travel the distance from the one to the other within oneself” (ibid: 57).

Many of the young people in our material say that they are not satisfied with the way Norwegian media present ethnic minorities – they do not recognize themselves in the way the media reflect reality, for example when they are constantly focussing on criminality and ethnic minorities. According to several informants, the media do not manage to convey the fact that the Norwegian minority population consists of many completely different groups, with differing cultural backgrounds, and with many resources in their luggage that the Norwegian community does not know how to appreciate:

It is easy to focus on negative matters. The media should alter their starting point, look from another angle and for example write about traditions and celebrations. NRK (the Norwegian state broadcasting company) covered for example Id. Norwegian media should show that we too are quite normal. (Student)

The students express a feeling of identity both as regards Norway – “After all, I am a Norwegian citizen” – but also in relation to their homeland. They are interested in acquiring knowledge and attend education/take exams<sup>9</sup>, in brief they want “to succeed”. “A passion for technical and other knowledge from all possible sources” is an important success factor for successful diaspora, particularly as regards the financial aspect (Kotkin 1992: 5). If the media seldom describes young successful people with a minority background the media users – regardless of ethnic background – will easily get the impression that minorities, particularly young people, do not have any role models.

Some years ago, Stuart Hall asked how globalization processes would affect national identities (Hall 1992: 291), whether this might lead to a dissolution of national identities, with a cultural homogenization as effect (ibid: 300). Instead of a cultural homogenization, it could be said that globalization or the global market leads to a cultural navigation between different localities. Thomas Tufte has interviewed 13 minority young people in Nørrebro in Copenhagen about their use of chat, the Internet and mobile

phones. One of Tufte's findings was that young people navigate between different cultural universes and feel they belong to these. Tufte says the young people "produce localities"

- in relation to their immediate neighbourhood
- in relation to the nation in which they live
- in relation to the diasporas some of them belong to
- in relation to a range of other communities where they feel they belong to.

(Tufte 2003: 194)

The same can be said about the informants in our study: They are interested in their immediate surroundings, interested in Norway, interested in the minority to which they belong, and interested in their class at school or college, or in their place of work. They feel loyalty to all the groups that they "navigate" between. Randi Marselis mentions that the term 'hybrid identity' is often connected with questions of cultural loyalty. "Having hybrid identities may on the one hand be regarded as distancing oneself from the traditions of the heritage nation, and on the other hand as a condition for becoming 'completely Danish'" (Marselis, 2003: 13). A couple of the informants in our study indicated that they gradually felt themselves so Norwegian that they were no longer interested in continuously following the events in their heritage nation. On the other hand, these informants also said that Norwegian media focus too much on Norway, Norwegians, and events in Norway, and has too little material about countries outside Norway. This applied to all types of media, including online media, and was an argument for keeping in touch with foreign online newspapers and watching foreign TV, both western and non-western. In other words, the students thought that the media should have both a Norwegian and a more global content.

Our objective in bringing in theories concerned with diaspora identity and hybrid/hybrid identity in connection with use of media is to indicate the connection between the globalization that occurs within the media, both on the contents and on collaboration/owner aspects, and the development of identity, particularly in a young public with loyalty to several cultures. 'Journalism, power and democracy' was an important item in the Norwegian study of power and democracy (1998–2003). In a contribution on the power of journalism in the global age, Tore Slaata brings up the question of how we should assess the way the Norwegian media react to increasing population mobility over international frontiers and the development of Norway to a multicultural society." Slaata writes:

The media demonstrate a special form of servility and admiration of the national, Norwegian and the achievements of the Norwegian Norseman. This continuous reminder of the nation creates a narrowed cultural and political climate for political debate, which may make it easier for racial attitudes to become part of our everyday politics. Journalism in Norway in 2001 still makes it difficult to see and understand the significance of the fact that towns and urban districts are in the process of becoming multicultural communities (Slaata, 2001: 162, our translation).

The students in our data consider that journalism in Norway still focuses too little on providing qualitatively 'good' coverage of conditions connected with minority groups. "The skin of Norwegian journalism is a bit too white" writes a journalist student with an ethnic Norwegian background. This is a challenge both for journalist training and for the editorial staff in media companies.



Another great challenge, particularly in the coverage of minority/majority problems, lies in the introduction of a solution-orientated attitude in journalism rather than only thinking negatively and of problems. To refer into Kirsten Drotner's two main paths that we based this article on (Drotner 1999, 2001) (the broad highway of pessimism and the narrower path of optimism): Will the fact that minority young people are influenced by the cultures of both their heritage nation and their new country be a problem when they are developing their identity? If we are to judge by the media coverage of culture conflicts between children and parents in minority families, the answer is "yes". However, the media selects material on the basis of news criteria concerned with importance, sensation, relevance and conflict, and it is therefore no news in itself that the majority of families with a minority background only experience completely "normal" parent-child conflicts, especially when the children are breaking out in the transition between children to adults. The fact that young people, like those in our material, consider it to be a resource having backgrounds from two or more cultures does not receive much focus from the media. Elisabeth Eide and Anne Hege Simonsen (2004: 25) point out that "when members of the minorities are only presented as 'problem children' in the media, this may easily lead to people with a minority background developing a picture of themselves that harmonizes with the 'prevailing view'. It is even more important that those working in the media to reflect on the consequences of the content and form of presentation in the media. Eide and Simonsen point out that culture differences potentially exist in this world, and these can create new forms of opinion and new identification strategies. They support postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's idea that there must be a sort of *third room*, which is neither the land of birth nor the new country where the wanderer settles.

If the media still usually keeps the 'two room model' (*we here and they over there*), there is a risk that many voices from the *third room* remain silent while dominant people in the two strictly separated rooms become the 'natural' representatives, in line with the traditional order in the world (ibid: 17, our translation).

At the same time, Eide and Simonsen point out that the *third room* is no 'velvet cushion idyl', but an open forum where frontiers are crossed and where there is "cross-fertilization, criticism, resistance and mutual discussions" (Ibid: 25). We interpret *the third room* as a place where, by virtue of their individuality, young people with a minority background represent a strength, not a problem, see Drotner (1999, 2000). The media habits of young minority people are an expression of how they are continuously balancing between two separate cultures (Weibull and Wadbring, 1999). The media have a great responsibility in bringing forward the voices of the large number of young people who succeed in this balancing act.

As Robin Cohen points out: "Globalization and diasporization are separate phenomena with no necessary causal connections, but they 'go together' extraordinarily well" (Cohen 1997: 175). We see examples of this too rarely in the Norwegian media landscape.

To sum up: In this study we have evidence to say that Norwegian news media also has users with a double national identity. This is a relatively new phenomenon for Norwegian media, and a great challenge. The informants in our study manage to balance between two separate cultures, two separate languages, and two separate identities. The remaining question is whether editors, journalists and their educational program are prepared to meet this new situation.

## Notes

1. Norway Statistic considers both those with a western and those with a non-western background as immigrants. For example, Nordic citizens are also amongst those with an immigrant background. At the beginning of 2006, a total of 285,300 people had an immigrant background from a non-western country.
2. See for example also Swedish studies (Camaeür 2003, Brune, 2004, 2006, Hultén 2006), a Finnish study (Pietikäinen 2004), Danish studies (Hussain, Yilmaz and O'Connor Lund 1997, Christiansen and Sell 2000, Lund, Nielsen and Vestergaard, 2002). See also Haavisto, Finland: Ethnic Minorities in the Whirlpool of Mainstream Media (2006).
3. Here we refer to Marjan Nadim's discussion on identity, based inter alia on Stuart Hall's theory.
4. Here we would like to thank Ida Marie Andersen, adviser at Oslo University College for clarifying terms.
5. Eva Bakøy (2006) has interviewed migrant women in order to discuss whether their use of homelands' TV broadcasts prevents integration in the new land of residence. Further, Eiri Elvestad (2007) has interviewed young Norwegian-Vietnamese adults about their use of "homeland media".
6. Sandvik is involved in the project *Læring med IKT i skole og bibliotek – elevs teknologimestring* (Learning in School and at the Library: Multifunctional learning resources and interaction, learning, and teaching approaches). This is a project under the research program 'Knowledge, education and learning (KUL) during the period 2003-2007. See <http://home.hib.no/mediesenter/kul/>
7. It might be relevant to mention that pupils in the study often "chat" on *MSN* up to four times a week. They have their own chat groups where they "introduce" friends from school. One of the pupils gave a detailed and non-problematic description of how he logs in to *MSN*, reads messages and answers them, demonstrating this as he went along on his computer. The pupils' media habits can also be characterized by the fact that they often play computer games and use commercial websites with both games and other activities.
8. VG and Dagbladet are Norway's two non-subscription newspapers.
9. More than one in three of non-western descendants aged between 19 and 24 years are taking part in higher education. A larger number of non-western immigrants than ethnic Norwegian young people now start higher education or upper secondary school at once (Støren 2005).

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The project *Young People's Relationship to Digital Journalism – An Indirect Multicultural Influence?* a subsidiary project under *Editorial changes in digital media (DIGRE)* at Oslo University College (Faculty of Journalism). DIGRE (see [http://www.hio.no/enheter/avdeling\\_for\\_journalistikk\\_bibliotek\\_og\\_informasjonsfag/digre](http://www.hio.no/enheter/avdeling_for_journalistikk_bibliotek_og_informasjonsfag/digre)) represents a journalistic approach to an extensive Norwegian research project *Communication, ICT and Media (KIM)* started at the initiative of The Research Council of Norway.