

# Health and Well-Being in Adolescence

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Part two  
Media



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Edited by Maria Kaczmarek

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Reviewed by Marek Krajewski

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Maria Kaczmarek

## Why adolescence?

### Preface

The term *adolescence* appeared into English in the fifteenth century as a derivative of a Latin word *adolescere*, which means to grow up or to grow into maturity [Muuss 1990]. The Random House Dictionary defines adolescence as "...the process or condition of growing up; the growing age of human beings; growing to manhood or womanhood; a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood...". In the above meaning, adolescence is a transitional period, often defined as the period in life that serves as the bridge between childhood and adulthood.

In the classical world, Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) initiated philosophical discussions of adolescence. They stated that lifespan is a process and it involves various stages. Aristotle proposed stages of life that might be included in contemporary models of youth development. He distinguished three successive, 7-year stages of life i.e. infancy, boyhood, and young manhood, prior to the person's attainment of full adult maturity, and described puberty as a distinct stage of life: "When twice seven years old in the most of cases the male begins to engender the seed, and at the same time hairs appear on the pubes. At the same time in the female the breast swell and the so called catamenia [e.g. menstrual discharges] commence to flow ... in the majority of cases catamenia are noticed by the time the breasts have grown to the height of two finger breadths" [Tanner 1981: 7].

However, in most of the time that elapsed between these initial philosophical discussions of adolescence and the present, this stage of life has not been distinguished in the human life history. Developmental changes occurring at the second decade of life were narrowly equated with puberty and reproductive maturity. A person usually moved from the status of child directly to the status of adult through socially recognized rites of passage, a cross-cultural phenomenon currently practiced in many native societies.

A concept of adolescence has developed since the late 18th century in its biological, psychological and social implications. Since that time and through the 19th century, biologists and physicians undertook more formal study of adolescent phenomena. Most research in the area concentrated on aspects of physical growth and sexual maturation during puberty, in particular the onset of menarche in females and seminal emission in males [Tanner 1981].

In the 1890s, psychologists began investigating the development, adjustment and behaviours of young people between the onset of puberty and marriage. All of these endeavours ultimately led to the first complete definition of adolescence. It was given by an American psychologist, Granville Stanley Hall (1844–1924) in his two-volume work entitled *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* published in 1904 [Hall 1904]. Works of Hall and his followers provided adolescence as a formal concept and gave impetus and direction to the development of psychology, education, and adolescent culture.

As the changes in biological, psychological, and social development have become uncoupled, the study of adolescence has shifted. The history of the study has had two overlapping phases and is now on the emergence of a third one [Tanner 1999; Steinberg and Lerner 2004; Bogin 2005]. The first phase, which began in the early 20th century and lasted about 70 years, was characterized by descriptive study that purportedly related to all facets of adolescent development. The second phase, which began in the latter half of the 20th century and continues today, has examined stages of life cycle prior to adulthood in the course of human evolution and developmental plasticity. Such approach allowed pushing forward our understanding of changes in the adaptation of contemporary populations and promoting positive development of young people. We are now seeing the emergence of a third phase, in which the field of adolescent development becomes a noticeably interdisciplinary (a holistic) approach with a call to create a comprehensive view on adolescent stage of life. Researchers in various fields (human auxology, sociology, psychology, neurosciences and many others) are using the term adolescence to apply to the particular stage of life when distinct physical and psycho-social changes occur, thereby making it a formal biological, psychological, and even legal category.

Summarizing, the concept of adolescence is associated with an evolutionary process of human development which commences with puberty and lasts five to eight years, involving a rapid growth of height and weight (pubertal growth spurt), almost complete eruption of permanent teeth, development of secondary sex characteristics with the ultimate maturation of sexuality. Alongside with physical changes goes cognitive and intellectual, emotional and "...socio-sexual maturation, intensification of interest and practice in adult social, economic, and sexual activities" [Bogin 2005:55]. Thus, a capital is created for young people to enter their adult lives with.

A person in adolescence is called *adolescent* or *youth*. The terms *adolescents*, *young people* and *youth* are used interchangeably in relation to people aged 10–24 years. The UN and WHO use the term adolescents for people aged 10–19 years [UN 2008, WHO 2008]. The term young people, refers to those aged 10–24 years, and youth for those aged 15–24 years [UN 2008].

Current interest in the period of adolescence has been stimulated by recent social and demographic changes. Due to overall improvements of living conditions, improved nutrition, better hygiene, advances in control of diseases and other environmental modifications, the probability of dying during the first few years of life has substantially decreased. This resulted in the explosion of population growth.

In 2009, there were 1.2 billion adolescents aged 10–19 in the world, representing 18% of the world population. Of them, 88% live in the developing and 12% in industrialized countries, the latter reflecting the sharp ageing of Europe and Japan. Around 50% of the world's adolescents live in urban areas. Migration trends from rural to urban areas will continue to intensify in the coming decades and by 2050 this proportion will rise to almost 70%, with the strongest increase occurring in developing countries. There is also a gap in gender parity, in favour of adolescent boys, in all regions of the world, the greatest in Asia and smallest in Africa.

Population of young people, aged 10–19 years, is now the largest in history, having more than doubled since 1950. This rising trend will continue in absolute terms until around 2030 [UNFPA 2006; UN 2009].

Over past 100 years, children have been growing and developing faster, becoming taller and maturing earlier, reaching physical and reproductive maturity at earlier ages, and achieving larger adult sizes than perhaps ever before in human history [Danker-Hopfe 1986; Bielicki and Szklarska 1999; Cole 2000; Olszewska and Łaska-Mierzejewska 2008; Wolański 2008].

Secular trends in the world are clearly linked to the changes related to environmental improvements, specifically changes in nutrition and health practices.

The acceleration in physical and reproductive maturity however, has been mismatched with social maturity. The time interval between attaining puberty and taking on adult roles (such as marriage and employment) has stretched out over past decades, from a 2 to 4-year to an 8 to 15-year period, lengthening the transition from childhood to adulthood. Modern societal shifts in marital and reproductive patterns have expanded the gap between sexual maturation and marriage and between marriage and childbearing [Gluckman and Hanson 2006].

The widening age gap between biological maturity and psychosocial transition into adulthood is one of the possible explanations of a growing vulnerability for risk-taking behaviours such as dangerous driving, unplanned episodes of casual sex, and frequent turn-over of sexual partners, unsafe premarital sex with adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, and experimentation with alcohol, smoking cigarettes, drug abuse, poor dietary habits and physical inactivity [Lear 1995; Heaven 1996:76; DiClemente et al. 2009].

Chassin and Hussong [2009] highlighted some key characteristics of adolescence that enable us to understand the liability of young people to risky behaviours: increased sensitivity to immediate rewards, a focus on peers and social rewards, immature inhibitory and self-regulatory processes, increased risk taking and sensation seeking, and difficulty in mood regulation.

Adolescent emotional disturbances may lead to anxiety, depression, and dysfunctional relationships [Moore and Rosenthal 1992; Garber 2006]. Recent findings have shown that psychotic disorders rise steeply in early adolescence, and this is especially true for girls [Swarr and Richard 1996].

Young people may also run a high-risk of excessive impact of media on their decision making [Steinberg 2004, 2007; DiClemente et al. 2009].

Problems with control of behaviour and emotion may result in serious health problems, with some of them eventually leading to premature death. Young people

may be killed or seriously injured in road accidents, commit suicides, experience bullying, and teen on teen violence, suffer from chronic diseases and disability, experience exclusion, marginalization, and loneliness. An alarming global health statistics indicate that approximately three-fourths of deaths occurring each year among persons aged 10–24 years are related to preventable causes such as motor-vehicle crashes, homicide, suicide, and other injuries (e.g., drowning, poisoning, and burns) [WHO 2008].

Unlike infants and children whose morbidity and mortality are mostly caused by infectious diseases, adolescents are featured by other conditions. These include diabetes, asthma, mental disorder, sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, venereal diseases, herpes viruses/cancer diseases, epilepsy, and cancer [WHO 2008]. It is estimated that currently at least 12% of adolescents live with one chronic condition [Sawyer et al.2007; WHO 2008]. Recent studies have also shown the occurrence of chronic diseases in adolescence and their persistence into adulthood [Varraso et al. 2005]. It is estimated that approximately 70% of premature deaths among adults are caused by health-risk behaviours that begin during adolescence [WHO 2008]. These facts contradict the belief that adolescence is a period of life without a heavy “burden of disease” as compared to infancy and childhood. The health paradox of adolescence is that a peak in lifetime physical health is paradoxically accompanied by high mortality and morbidity. Indeed, adolescent physical maturation pushes an individual into peaks in physical growth, improvements in strength, speed, reaction time, and other capacities associated with lifespan and fitness [Tanner 1962; Metcalf and Monaghan 2003; Malina et al. 2004; Bogin 2005; Wolański 2006]. However, its effects on health and wellbeing are profound and paradoxical as described above.

Although young people are generally viewed as a uniform group, they seem to respond to health-risk behaviours in diverse ways [King et al. 2009]. Therefore, significant variance in terms of the age of onset of substance use, the speed with which they escalate the behaviour, and their degree of persistence with certain patterns of use and abuse is observed [Chassin and Hussong 2009]. Some evidence indicates that young people who begin to smoke at an earlier age are more likely than later starters to attempt suicide and engage in high-risk sexual behaviours [Chassin and Hussong 2009].

As in the case of infants and children whose leading causes of morbidity can be prevented by immunization and the use of antibiotics (the communicable childhood diseases), or by improved sanitation (diarrheal diseases and gastroenteritis), some adolescent comorbidities (alcohol consumption and depression, uncontrolled sexual activity and STDs) should be modifiable [van der Veen 2001; Murray et al. 2005]. That is why, recent research is more directed toward adolescence taken as a time of opportunity to the adolescent positive health and development. To regard adolescence as a “gateway to health” is a relatively new notion. The approach known as positive youth development (PYD) is a comprehensive framework outlining the positive attributes young people need in order to become successfully contributing adults. PYD is both a philosophy and an approach to policies and programmes that involve and engage young people as equal partners. The un-

derlying philosophy of youth development is holistic, preventative and positive, focusing on the development of assets and competencies in all young people [Hawkins and Weis 1985].

Specific health and development needs and challenges that hinder adolescents' well-being expose needs for strategies and special interventions aiming in improving adolescents' health across the globe and "...to foster a new generation of productive adults who can help their communities progress" have been recognized [WHO 2008]. According to the WHO declaration "Young people are our human capital for the future. Healthy people are not only more economically productive; they also make fewer demands on the health and welfare system. It will be the current generation of young people who will create the necessary economic activity to support the growing older population in so many European countries. International agencies and Member States increasingly view this commitment to child and adolescent health as an investment, not as a cost. Such an investment now will bring economic and social dividends to every country, as well as to the European Region as a whole", and "Health is clearly an economic good with benefits not just to the individual, but to the wider community" [from the document for the WHO Regional Committee [www.euro.who.int](http://www.euro.who.int)]. The above quoted statements taken from WHO documents highlight the importance of adolescent health and welfare issues in both scientific research and global and regional health policy.

The issues of adolescent health and well being are also an essential part of the European public health policy. They gained even more drive with the European Commission's *White Paper on Youth* of 2002. The document has become a new framework for European cooperation in the area of adolescent health. This cooperation has resulted in the development of new financial and legal instruments to support scientific research on adolescent health and well-being and health programmes. In many countries, including Poland, health of adolescents has been one of the most neglected and marginalised areas of the public health policy in recent years.

The adolescent stage of life and its health and quality of life issues have been subject of extensive study in the project entitled "At the doorstep to adulthood: adolescent health and quality of life in a variety of socio-economic backgrounds" ADOPOLNOR. The project was implemented in the years 2008–2011 at the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland, in cooperation with the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medical Sciences, Poznań, Poland, and Universitetet i Agder, Kristiansand, Norway. The research work was supported by the Research Funds 2008–2011 and co-financed by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism under the *Academic Research* priority sector.

The aim of the study was to draw a comprehensive profile of physical growth and general health, and the quality of life of adolescents, aged 10–18 in the Wielkopolska region in relation to the socio-economic status of their families and their own health-related behaviour.

The two volume book contains issues related to adolescents' physical health and well-being (volume one) and the quality of life shaped by media (volume two).

This volume begins with a carefully reasoned analysis of the role the media are playing in the lives of contemporary Polish adolescents, and adolescents' path to success. The next chapter discusses the question of adolescents' communication with others focusing on the quality of intergenerational relations.

Using the qualitative tradition of discourse and social science, the next chapter provides a picture of Polish adolescents reading their favourite magazines and the possible implications which media consumption may have for their quality of life.

The next chapter presents a report on the results of a Norwegian-Polish comparative study into the ways in which the competence in English affects young people's quality of life in terms of new media experience.

In the epilogue of this volume, an analytical reflection essay upon how the changing media environment interacts with personal and institutional forces of social change, sums up the issue of media and the quality of life of adolescents.

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## Media consumption by adolescents in Poland

**Abstract:** What is the role of the media in the lives of contemporary Polish adolescents? Is it one of a window, mirror or a guide? The following text presents the results of a complex research project on media consumption among teenagers in Poland. In the study, both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. The main purpose of the research was to identify the opportunities brought by the new media, their impact on adolescents' face-to-face interactions as well as their self-reports about the role of the media in their school and pastime activities. The topics were investigated by means of separate surveys; we also looked on the previous research in the area.

**Key words:** media research, adolescents, quality of life, media quantitative and qualitative research, multitasking.

### Introduction: media and quality of life

The omnipresence of the media in the contemporary life raises questions about their actual roles. In the 1970's, Marshall MacLuhan saw the media as one of the main factors that turned the world into a "global village". At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the media can be seen as a mirror, merely reflecting the contemporary society, or as a guide which shapes the society (e.g. by influencing human behaviour and communication). The key role of the media has often been considered in terms of the common notion of "information society". Yet, bearing in mind, for instance, the permanent exposure to an enormous number of media news, coupled with limited competencies of media audiences, the media can also be considered as creating "disinformation society" [see Golka 2008]. Undoubtedly, currently media are perceived as an extremely crucial factor of everyday life, giving to its participants access to a variety of resources, including works of art and popular culture, social networks, but also resources for studying or for professional purposes.

As commonly presumed, adolescents usually tend to be heavy users of various types of new media. They use all available kinds of media at home. On top of that,

the vast majority of them also own a relatively sophisticated mobile telephone and use it regularly for instant messaging, taking pictures, listening to music – so that, in terms of patterns of use, it is much more than just a telephone. A number of authors underline that media not only facilitate our everyday interactions, but also offer a number of new opportunities [see Filipiak et al. 2009].

In 2009, more than 52% of Poles used the Internet for their daily activities [see: Wądołowska 2010]. One of the main findings of the current study is that traditional face-to-face interactions are gradually being replaced by online communication. One of the main reasons is that the latter form of communication is becoming even more efficient than previous technologies (such as telephoning). Additionally, it seems to be preferred by some specific groups of users. For example, as revealed in our research, it is much more common among younger users (a vast majority of them under 24) to communicate via the Internet daily.

The media profoundly affect the quality of life of their users. Access to various types of media (notably the Internet), has been used as an indicator of the development of civilization in particular regions and countries. The term *quality of life* is more and more often used to describe a variety of problems and the ways in which they are solved. There are numerous contexts in which the notion of “the quality of life” is applied (e.g. material wellbeing, health, political stability and security, family life, community life, climate and geography, job security, political freedom, gender equality education, GDP growth and income inequality) [see: Borgatta & Montgomery, 2000]. Thus, the classification of countries based on the above listed indices does yield an explicit and fully reliable evaluation of the nations. For example, in 2005, the top place in the ranking published by *The Economist* was held by Ireland, the country whose economy was significantly disturbed just a couple of years later, in 2008. Undoubtedly, estimating the conditions of citizens’ everyday life by means of various criteria (not only economic ones) has become a regular practice in both scientific and non-scientific discourses, and media access is perceived as one of the indicators of economic development of a particular region or country. The position of Poland in the rankings related to new technologies will be referred to in the following parts of the text. In our research we focused on media, commonly perceived by people as a quality of life indicator. Because all of our data were respondents’ declared answers, we analyzed a declared level of the perceived quality of everyday life.

## ADOPOLNOR study on media access and use

The present study is a part of the ADOPOLNOR international project [see [www.adopolnor.pl](http://www.adopolnor.pl), [www.adopolnor.eu](http://www.adopolnor.eu)]. It investigates the relation between the quality of life and the everyday usage of media, mainly new on-line media.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The fieldwork was conducted in the summer and autumn of 2009 in 6 secondary schools in Poznań and the Wielkopolska region, which is located in central-western Poland. Respondents

were asked to fill four different types of questionnaires and answer various types of questions about participants' media access, media use and their media consumption habits. The Results part of the present paper reports on three autonomous components of the research project (media access, media multitasking, the patterns of press consumption) which were conducted separately and with the use of different questionnaires the discussion of which follows below. In each part of the fieldwork the questionnaires were anonymous; the respondents were asked to report on their routine daily media practices. Most of the data obtained from the surveys on media access and media use were analyzed by means of the SPSS software for quantitative statistical analysis, and the Atlas.ti software for the qualitative analysis. It ought to be stipulated, however, that the results obtained are declarative and cannot be extrapolated to the whole Poland or Wielkopolska region.

As has been mentioned, we were mainly interested in the role that media played in adolescents' everyday lives – their social contacts with peers, studying habits, perception of the world, and other aspects of peer interactions. To investigate these phenomena adequately, we distinguished between four kinds of media (television, Internet, press magazines and cell phones), examined common patterns of use and sought to establish their possible impact on adolescents. For each kind of media, a separate questionnaire form was designed, and a total number of questionnaires for further analysis was 1005. Even though the findings are based on self-report data, they are similar to those obtained in other studies in the area [see Filipiak et al. 2010].

## Results

### Media access and use: television, computer, the Internet and mobile phones

Television does not seem as important as it was in 1990's, but apparently it is still the most available media equipment, present in the households of more than 99% of respondents. In about 50% of adolescents' homes there is more than one TV set. At the same time, it is difficult to define the patterns of media use as many informants claimed to watch television regularly on the Internet (e.g. they watch their favourite TV series such as *Dr House*, or *Prison Break* prior the regular public television emission of the series). Some of the respondents also declared watching regularly their favourite television sports programs (as declared by boys, for example *Top Gear*) or style of life channels (as declared by girls, for example TVN Style). Television viewing practices are further analyzed in the section on multitasking below.

The computer, Internet and mobile telephone are the most popular media among adolescents nowadays. Young people, regardless to their place of residence, sex or any declared plans for the future, use these available tools and the opportunities brought by Information and Communications Technology. The computer is a

permanent part of adolescents' everyday lives. Similarly to television, it is also widely available in more than 98% of the households where adolescents live. About 69% of respondents claimed to have their own computer at home. Again, we noticed that in their daily practices, the respondents take advantage of the opportunities rendered by the new media. The two main declared reasons for using the computer was entertainment (c. 85% of respondents) and seeking information (c. 70% of respondents). Also, both the computer and the Internet are used for school assignments; however, what should be underlined, the informants tend to use it at home, rather than at school.

To compare these results with those based on a nationally representative sample, an average number of hours spent using the computer was around 11.5 hours per week in 2008 in Poland, while in 2010 it was around 15 hours per week [Feliksiak 2010]. Almost 55% of Poles declared to use the computer no less than once a week (compared with c. 35% in 2002). In the same study, the computer was claimed to be used mainly to work or study (c. 69%), while c. 94% respondents also declared to use it for other purposes. Almost 70% of computer users use it every day. In Poland, a computer is available in c. 66% of households, while c. 59% of Poles declare to have access to the Internet at home [Feliksiak 2010: 3] – the younger, richer and better educated they are, the higher their position in this ranking is. Internet use is also strictly connected with users' age – c. 93% of respondents aged 18–24 tend to be Internet users, and this rate is lower for 25–34-years-olds (c. 80%), for 35–44-year-olds it is c. 68%, 45% for 45–54-years-olds, c. 23%, for 55–64-years-olds, while among people older than 65 only c. 6% claim to use the Internet [Feliksiak 2010: 4]. Regular use of the Internet is also connected with the level of education – c. 88% of Poles with higher education, c. 64% with secondary education, c. 34% with lower education declare to be Internet users. Similarly, in urban areas, c. 56% are Internet users, while only c. 38% of Poles living in rural areas claim so. In this project, respondents declared to use Internet quite often – but only in c. 14% cases more than 20 hours a week, while the average for all of respondents was around 11 hours a week. Boys are more likely to be 'heavy-users' than girls, as almost c. 20% of them spent more than 20 hours a week on-line (compared to only c. 8% of girls).

In our research, we also tried to establish, how adolescents evaluate the Internet – not only in terms of their likes and dislikes, but also in terms of the main functions. The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 show how demographic data and declared level of access to new mobile media tools correspond to the respondents' evaluation of the Internet (statements 1 to 5, prepared on the basis of CBOS reports). As previously mentioned, a minor disproportion connected with sex was identified in the informants choice of statement 1. ('I use the Internet for the entertainment during my leisure time')  $V$  Cramer's=0.169, and of statement 2. ('I use the Internet for searching for the information used for school purposes')  $V$  Cramer's=0.11. There was also a small dependence between age of respondents and the choice of Answer 3 ('I use the Internet to establish contacts with peers and other people')  $V$  Cramer's=0.192. Respondents that tend to be heavy-users also more often declare to use the Internet for entertainment ( $V$  Cramer's=0.212). Again, a declared use of social networking websites in the past week shows a small

Table 1. Declarations on the Internet use (statements 1 to 5) vs. demographic data<sup>1</sup>

	1. 'I use the Internet for the entertainment during my leisure time'	2. 'I use the Internet for searching for the information, used for school purposes'	3. 'I use the Internet to establish contacts with peers and other people'	4. 'I dislike the Internet, I use it rather seldom'	5. 'I do not use the Internet at all'
Total (%)	57.3	41.4	30.5	1.6	0.3
Sex (%):					
Female	46.2	48.7	35.9	2.6	0.0
Male	63.5	37.4	27.6	1.0	0.5
Age (%)					
Up to 15-years-olds	61.3	35.5	51.6	0.0	0.0
16-years-olds	54.0	43.2	24.9	2.3	0.0
17-years-olds and more	64.5	39.5	38.2	0.0	1.3
Having a computer on one's own (%):					
Yes	57.7	40.6	29.4	1.0	0.0
No	53.1	50.0	40.6	3.1	3.1
Declared number of hours spent using a computer last week (%):					
0 hours	62.5	25.0	25.0	12.5	12.5
1–2 hours	50.0	50.0	42.9	7.1	0.0
3–5 hours	41.7	52.8	33.3	2.8	0.0
5–10 hours	55.2	41.8	28.4	0.0	0.0
10–20 hours	64.4	37.8	27.8	0.0	0.0
Above 20 hours	71.4	30.4	28.6	0.0	0.0
Having a mobile telephone (%):					
Less than 1 year	71.4	14.3	14.3	14.3	0.0
1–2 years	87.5	25.0	18.8	6.3	0.0
2–5 years	51.9	50.4	27.1	0.8	0.0
Above 5 years	58.6	37.0	35.8	0.6	0.6
Usage of social networking websites last week(%):					
Yes	57.4	42.6	33.3	0.8	0.0
No	55.9	39.7	20.6	4.4	1.5

dependence ( $V$  Cramer's=0.114) on using the Internet 'to establish contacts with peers and other people' (Opinion 3 in Table 2). As the data above show, the use of the Internet in our sample fosters a gradual replacement of traditional social and leisure activities with the ones based on the new mobile media. Even if this is only

<sup>1</sup> Answers are given in per cents, they do not sum to 100 because respondents could choose up to 3 answers.

Table 2. Declared opinion on the Internet versus socio-demographic data – test statistics and correlation indicator

	Statistics	Opinion on the Internet:		
		1. 'I use the Internet for the entertainment during my leisure time'	2. 'I use the Internet for searching for the information, used for school purposes'	3. 'I use the Internet to establish contacts with peers and other people'
Sex	$\chi^2$	9.17	3.89	2.41
	Df	1	1	1
	p-value	0.002	0.049	0.120
	$\phi/V$ Cramer	0.169	0.110	-
Age	$\chi^2$	2.75	0.84	11.76
	df	2	2	2
	p-value	0.253	0.657	0.003
	$\phi/V$ Cramer	-	-	0.192
Having a computer of one's own	$\chi^2$	0.25	1,06	1.72
	df	1	1	1
	p-value	0.620	0.304	0.190
	$\phi/V$ Cramer	-	-	-
A declared number of hours spent using a computer in the last week	$\chi^2$	14.46	8.89	2.96
	df	5	5	5
	p-value	0.013	0.114	0.706
	$\phi/V$ Cramer	0.212	-	-
Owning a mobile telephone	$\chi^2$	8.26	9.57	4.76
	df	3	3	3
	p-value	0,041	0,023	0.191
	$\phi/V$ Cramer	0.161	0.174	-
A declared usage of social networking website in the last week	$\chi^2$	0,05	0.18	4.09
	df	1	1	1
	p-value	0.819	0.671	0.043

a weakly premised pattern, it seems to be gaining ground especially if we bear in mind that an average respondent in this research was 16 years old: their future social activities and contacts are likely to be based on electronic media.

One of a relatively new, and fast growing applications of the Internet tools is the social-networking websites (for example, 'Facebook' and a popular local instant networking website Nasza Klasa nk.pl ('Our class')), Having used it in the past week was declared by about 75% respondents in our research. A small difference in

sex rate (79% of girls vs. 72% of boys) was noticed here. According to another study on the use of the Internet [Wądołowska 2010], a typical application of the Internet does not consist merely in sending e-mails or surfing websites. Poles were found very active bloggers; they run their private web-sites, log on social networking websites and use the Internet as part of their daily routines. Participating in social networking websites is one the fastest growing ways of using the Internet nowadays. As pointed out by Wądołowska, almost 62% of all Internet users in Poland declare to run a personal profile at one of the available social networking websites, while for respondents aged 18–24 years old, the score is 79%. 85% of Poles declare that they use their profiles to establish social contacts with peers, friends and groups of friends, but they also declare to use it ‘just for fun’ (78%), or ‘searching for old mates’ (73%) (women declare this use much more often than men – 82% of women, compared with 64% of men).

Moreover, we examined how the new mobile media affect adolescents’ social life, especially their relationships with peers. Because their social relations become more and more ICT-oriented, the respondents were also asked if they had ever made friends with anybody online, without meeting the person face-to-face. About 29% of girls declared they did, and about 60% of boys claimed they met somebody ‘known previously only on the Internet’ (the average score for both sexes was 42%). A similar question posed in a representative survey shows a lower level of such meetings (28% for Internet users in Feliksiak’s [2010] survey, cf. Feliksiak 2010: 10).

According to 2010 data, the number of mobile phones in Poland is estimated at 44 million in 2010 (cf. data available from CIA World Factbook), and the number of telephones is greater than that of citizens. In the current study, we sought to estimate the popularity of the mobile telephone and its main applications. Although computer software can be used for online voice-conversations, 39% of Poles in 2010 declare using the computer for that purpose, while 66% use instant messaging [Feliksiak 2010: 8]. Teenagers often use mobile telephones for entertainment: listening to music, being in touch with friends, sending them pictures (for example ‘I wish you were here’ or ‘you must see it’ style). However, the mobile phone is more often used for sending text messages (almost 85%), than for talking (74%). Importantly, as almost all of our respondents declared to own a mobile telephone, it seems to be hardly imaginable to live actively without it. More than a half of respondents, despite their young age, has had a telephone for more than 5 years. They also claimed to own a relatively sophisticated model with a camera, mp3 and radio player, and to use it regularly for a variety of purposes (for example, recording films that can be posted on the Internet or sent to other mobile phone users). As presented in Tables 1 and 2, the respondents who have owned a mobile telephone for more than 5 years, tend to use the Internet for everyday leisure activities ( $V$  Cramer’s=0.161); they also use the Internet to gain and establish social contacts with peers, which again indicates adolescents’ substantial reliance on ICT in their communication.

## Printed magazines

The consumption of the print media is a peripheral area of the current research, as it is the new media that adolescents apparently find the most appealing. Therefore, the study discussed below is a small-scale analysis of print media consumption among adolescents. The main idea behind the present investigation of adolescents' magazines consumption was to demonstrate how even this least popular form of media practices may affect one of the numerous facets of adolescent selfhood (i.e. gender). The aim of this part of the project was to identify consumption patterns among teenagers as well as to elicit a group of interviewees for the subsequent stage of the investigation (cf. "Media discourse consumption and quality of life – Polish adolescents reading their favorite magazines" by Ewa Glapka, this volume). The results obtained should not hence be considered as representative of teenage media users, but as offering a limited account of their media practices.

The study consisted in a written questionnaire conducted in April 2009, in a high school in Gostyń, a small town in Wielkopolska, among 60 first- and second-grade students (34 girls and 26 boys). The questions the respondents answered regarded, among others, their favorite mass media, preferences and habits concerning media use. Other questions in the questionnaires concerned some additional social information which could be relevant both to their media practices and the quality of their life. The respondents were asked, among others, about their plans and dreams for the future, perception of peers and their general reflections about being an adolescent.

The purpose of the next stage of the investigation was to examine the relations between adolescents' media practices and their gender identities. Questions in the written survey were instrumental in the identification of the adolescents who regularly read magazines that could potentially affect their recipients' sense of masculinity and femininity.

In the questionnaire, the adolescents were asked to give their reasons for using specific media (Fig. 1, 2).

Apparently, print media were outranked by the Internet in terms of all reasons for which adolescents use the media. The Internet is a more important source of both entertainment and information. Similar patterns were revealed in the study by Fatyga [2005] and her colleagues. In their investigation, 77% respondents claimed to look for information on the Internet, 63% in print media and books, 60% on television [Fatyga et al. 2005: 131]. This pattern also complies with our own findings that the informants are keen Internet users.

At this stage of the study, there were no major gender-dependent patterns of media use. Differences between the male and female informants appeared when they enumerated the titles of the magazines and papers which they read. In this sense, the current survey is not consistent with the findings by Ejsmont and Kosmalska [2005: 175] that, as far as the choice of specific titles is concerned, gender becomes a readership-differentiating factor among people older than 20. The list of titles read by boys confirms that they are information-oriented media con-

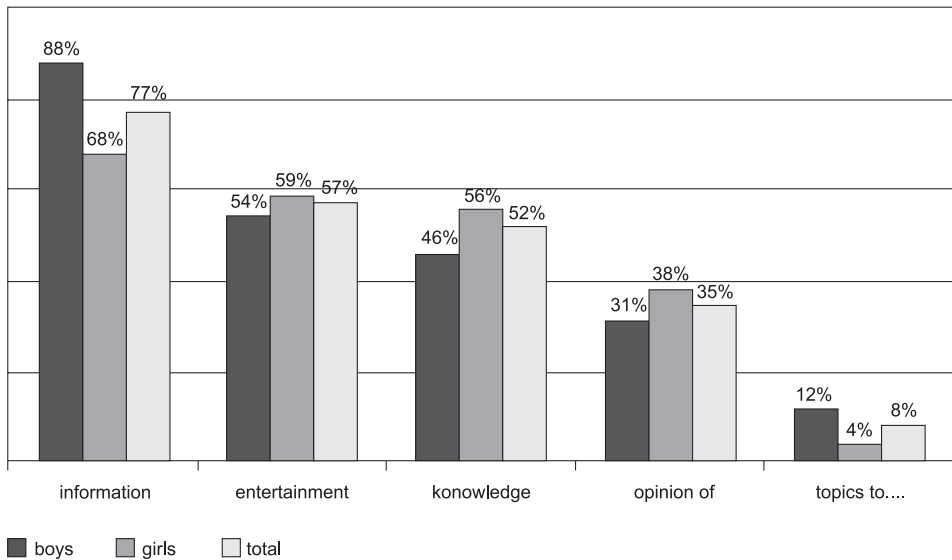


Fig. 1. Declared purposes of using print media

sumers. The papers and magazines most frequently pointed to provide their readers with news, gossip, specialist (computer) knowledge and TV information.

Apart from the most popular *Cogito*, girls' favorite titles are predominantly women's and teenage magazines.

A cross-analysis of Fig. 1 and 3 reveals an interesting indication. Namely, relatively many female respondents claimed that they turn to reading magazines for in-

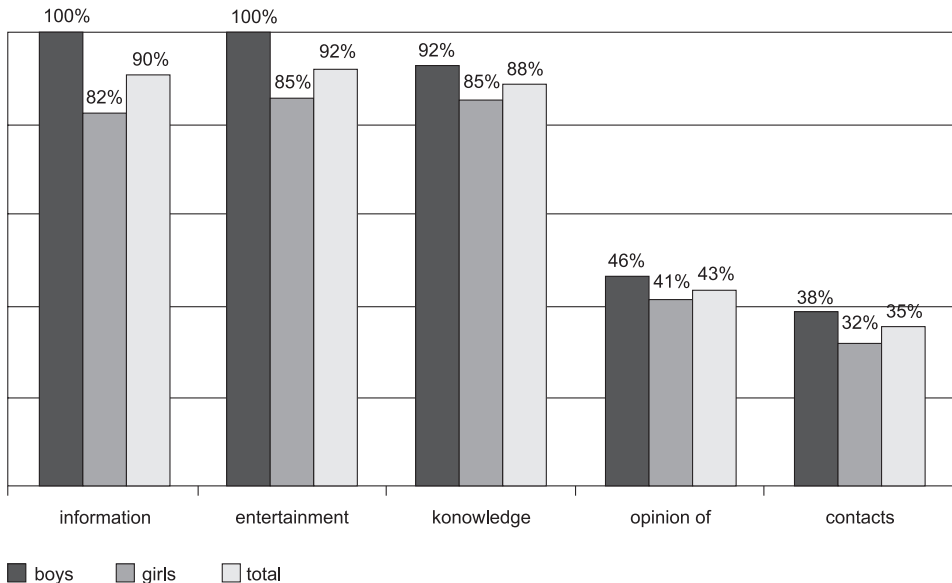


Fig. 2. Declared purposes of using the Internet

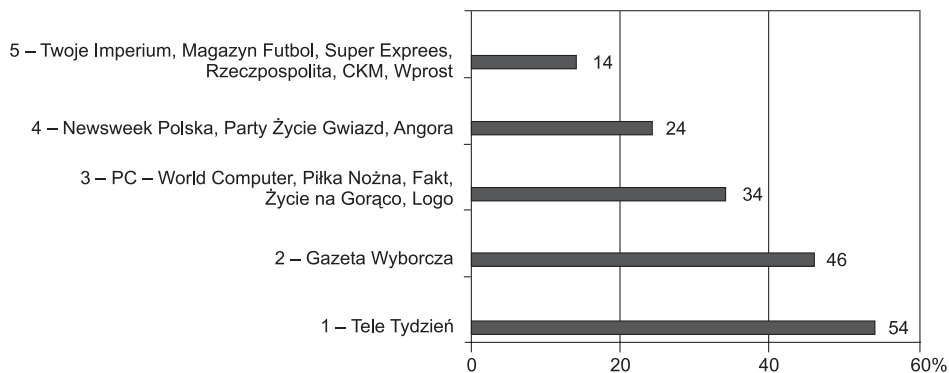


Fig. 3. The popularity of the print media (boys) (in percentage)

formation, knowledge and opinion of others. This means that they consider the magazines which they read as credible. As can be seen in the diagram above, the magazines which the girls read address them as members of a specific gender group. This media genre has its well-established role of providing their recipients with both light reading and some information which is believed to be interesting to women. As such, the magazines have their culturally accepted, socially constructive function of creating and consolidating gender identities of their target readers [cf. Smith 1990; Talbot 1995]. The fact that such magazines are still read despite the relatively waning popularity of print media means that girls find this type of gender-and-media practice appealing. At the same time, whether such glossies have actual identity consolidating effects cannot be taken for granted and requires the investigation of media reception (which was made in the in-depth interviews with selected respondents, cf. Glapka, this volume).

In general, as media consumers, the teenagers, appeared predominantly information- and knowledge-seekers. Boys most probably buy computer magazines to get some know-how they find expedient in operating computer, i.e. maximizing the pleasures and benefits from thereof. Likewise, girls turn to *Cogito* for the

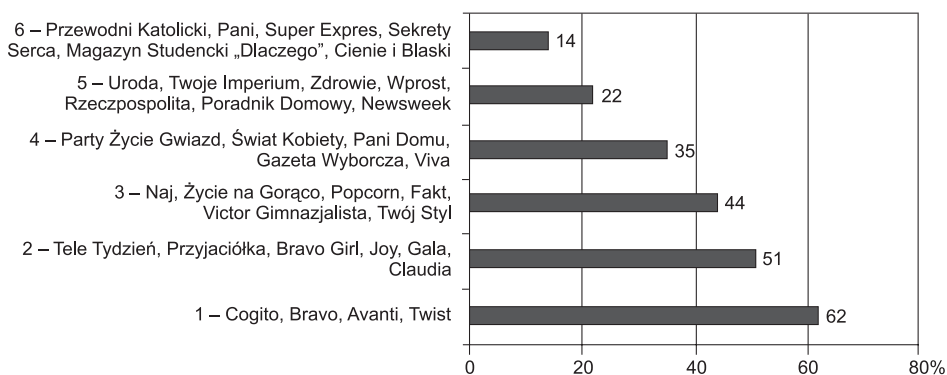


Fig. 4. The popularity of the print media (girls) (in percentage)

knowledge they will use at school as well for information about majors (and professions) they will need to choose once they graduate from high school.

Another finding concerns the type of readership represented by the informants' parents. This type of information was not pursued in the questionnaire; yet, many respondents included in the lists of their favorite titles the press read by their parents.

In reference to gender, the reader profile of the informants' mothers brings an important indication. Namely, women's magazines enumerated above represent the so-called 'second shelf'. They are more conservative than top-profile magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Elle*; they include many articles concerning women's house chores and their family life. Clearly, the magazines are addressed to middle-aged, home-oriented women, rather than single, young, liberated individuals. In this sense, the type of women's magazines read in the teenagers' homes may be indicative of their mothers' relative (gender) conservatism and, hence, may reveal the type of gender relations established in the families. In the future, this may affect the quality of both their personal and professional life.

On the whole, both habitual ways of media use and notions of femininity and masculinity which girls and boys develop during their media practices are relevant to the quality of their life. The abilities of using the media are regarded here not only in terms of the types of the media they are fond of. Another important indication is the choice of titles. It reveals a lot about teenagers' competence of taking advantage of the availability of information on the contemporary media market. Informants in the current study treat the media primarily as the source of information rather than entertainment. Moreover, the respondents were found not particularly interested in the opinions of others, which can be diagnostic of their independent beliefs and standpoints. Due to the shape of the media market, the media bear a stronger influence on the gender identity of girls who, unlike boys, are offered a variety of girls' magazines. The media-reproduced gender imagery which both male and female informants in their mothers' magazines propagate traditional notions of gender. Emphatically, what adolescents actually make of the magazines cannot be speculated. Hence, the investigation presented here was followed by interviews with some of the respondents.

Table 3. Reader profile referred to sex

Parents' favorite titles read by informants	Boys	Girls
Women's magazines	Życie na Gorąco, Przyjaciółka, Twoje Imperium, Naj, Pani Domu	Życie na Gorąco, Przyjaciółka, Twoje Imperium, Naj, Pani Domu, Tina, Claudia, Party, Gala, Viva
Papers	Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita	Gazeta Wyborcza, Rzeczpospolita, Dziennik
Tabloids	Fakt	Fakt, Superexpress
Political magazines	Newsweek, Wprost, Polityka	—
TV guides	TeleTydzień, Świat Seriali	TeleTydzień, Świat Seriali

## Media use style: multitasking

Following mainstream research in the use of media and its relation to the well-being [Carrier et al. 2009, The Nielsen Company 2009, Foehr 2006, Roberts et al. 2005], the ADOPOLNOR inquiry into media use included an investigation of media multitasking as a characteristic trait of adolescent media practice. The frequency with which young people use media simultaneously differentiates them so significantly from the generation of their parents and grandparents that media multitasking has been identified by some researchers as the shibboleth feature of adolescent lifestyle [Rosen 2007, Foehr 2006]. The growing importance of the concurrent media use can be related to the technological development which yields ever more versatile and portable media that are most readily and naturally adopted by young people [Livingstone – Bovill 1999:10]. The majority of studies investigating the sociological and cognitive implications of the above trend have been conducted in the United States, which makes the ADOPOLNOR preliminary study of media multitasking among adolescents quite original in the Central-European context. One of the most comprehensive (U.S. based) studies so far, encompassing the nationally representative sample of 2032 8–18-year-olds, was Kaiser Family Foundation study [Foehr 2006] which, served as a model for the ADOPOLNOR questionnaire. The main findings concerning media consumption among American adolescents confirmed the prevalence of media multitasking, as well as the fairly unbalanced distribution of the phenomenon. A significant proportion of the respondents (about 1/5) denied excessive media multitasking. The factors which predicted heavy media multitasking were, in the first place, the opportunity for media multitasking (e.g. having computer in the same room as the TV), being a “sensation-seeker”, living in a “TV-oriented household” and, finally, being a female. As to the most significant pairings (or media clusters) described in KKF study, TV was found to be multitasked least frequently as a primary medium and multitasked most commonly as a secondary medium, i.e. the one that is used along with another primary activity, for example surfing the Web. The above finding confirmed the well-established position of TV as the most important medium for young people, which continues to outweigh the significance of new media in young people’s lives. The computer, on the other hand, which offers many natural breaks in the course of use (e.g. during loading) thus allowing for convenient activity-shifting, was found to be most conducive to media multitasking [Foehr 2006].

Some of the above-mentioned analytical categories such as primary and secondary media, or the inclusion of non-media activities (e.g. eating or reading for pleasure) in the analysis informed the design of the ADOPOLNOR study. Finally, the definition of multitasking as the practice of “engaging in more than one media activity at a time” [Foehr 2006: 1] was also adopted in the ADOPOLNOR study.

The ADOPOLNOR data was collected by means of on-site questionnaire which probed the frequencies of self-reported behaviours concerning concurrent media use. Altogether, 247 questionnaires investigating, among other things, the phenomenon of multitasking among Polish adolescents (aged 16–18) were collected (127 in Poznań and 120 in Piła). 123 female respondents and 124 male respon-

dents took part in the survey administered at secondary schools, during regular school time, under the supervision of the researcher. The part of the questionnaire devoted to multitasking contained questions asking for declarations whether a given primary medium (e.g. TV) was multitasked with other listed secondary media and non-media activities.

In general, the ADOPOLNOR study revealed similar trends in media multitasking to those identified in some American studies [e.g. Carrier at al. 2009, Foehr 2006]. The majority of Polish adolescents, like their American counterparts, reported using more than one kind of media at a time. However, at the same time, a considerable number of respondents denied using two or more media simultaneously (cf. about 20% in Foehr’s study of American adolescents). The following chart represents the declarations of media multitasking in general (see Fig. 5).

As illustrated by Fig. 5, the most commonly multitasked primary media turned to be audio media, followed by computer activities such as surfing the Web and instant messaging/e-mailing. The fourth medium most likely to be multitasked is TV, however, in line with the American findings, TV was mainly paired with non-media activities i.e. eating, doing homework and chores. The computer, on the other hand, due to its interactivity and multimediality was found to cluster together such media activities as listening to the radio, viewing videos and chatting together, which made the use of computer one of the most heavily multitasked activities. This trend is likely to define future media use as traditional media such as TV and the press find their way to the Internet. According to the Gemius [2009] survey of media consumption among Polish Internet users 28% of 15–24 year-olds watch TV on the Internet and 43% listens to the radio online, and the numbers are growing (reading the press on the Internet is more popular among older Internet users) [Araszkiwicz 2009]. The following table presents the most salient activity pairings revealed in the ADOPOLNOR study (Table 4).

The use of the mp3 player, which usually does not require any particular cognitive engagement, and is, next to the mobile phone, the most widespread portable

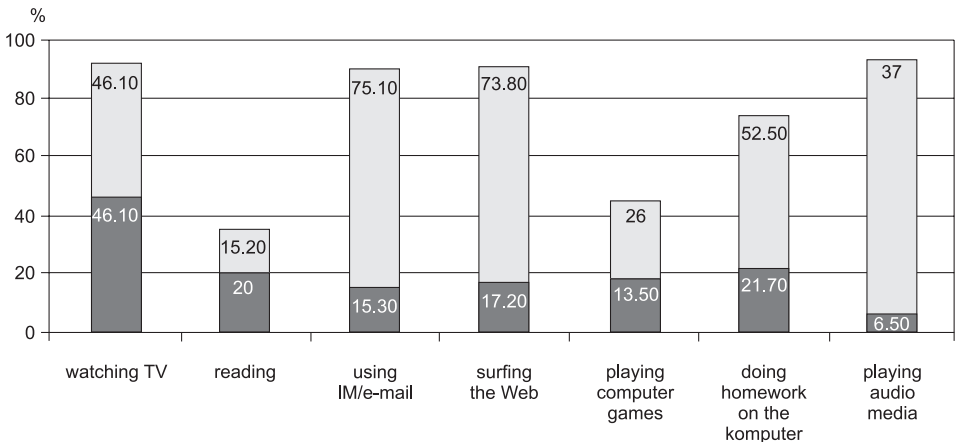


Fig. 5. Declarations of media multitasking with selected primary media (in percentage)

Table 4. Most salient media and non-media activity pairings (the degree of shading represents the gradient of popularity of a given cluster with the darkest colour denoting the strongest ones)

secondary	primary				
	TV	reading for pleasure	IM/e-mails	surfing the Web	computer games
TV		9.7%	33.9%		90.6%
Mobile	38.4%	4.9%	34.3%	21.6%	8.6%
Music	28.2%	26.9%	82.9%	87.8%	32.7%
homework on the computer	20.4%	2.0%	46.9%	40.4%	6.9%
IM/e-mail	18.8%	1.6%		80.0%	23.7%
surfing the Web	38.0%	3.3%	72.7%		18.4%
computer games	16.3%	0.8%	25.7%	21.6%	
Eating	88.6%	32.2%	55.5%	67.8%	31.8%
Chores	44.5%	1.2%	20.4%	10.2%	6.1%
Reading	17.6%		N/I	9.8%	0.8%

medium, is a common and convenient background for both media and non-media activities resulting in the highest percentage of the reported concurrent use. Conversely, reading for pleasure, as a relatively cognitively demanding activity, is not as frequently multitasked as other activities. No activity scored more than 32.2% for pairing with reading. When multitasked, reading is most likely combined with either non-media (eating 32.2%) or less involving activities (listening music 26.9%). By comparison, after the category ‘nothing’ American youngsters would most frequently combine reading with doing homework and eating i.e. non-media activities as well, which seems to point to the (rather obvious) fact that the more cognitively demanding an activity, the less likely it is to be multitasked, especially with another demanding activity. The above observations seem to corroborate the “Cognitive Load” theory put forward by Fishbein and colleagues [Jeong and Fishbein, 2007; Jordan et al., 2005 as quoted in Carrier 2009], whereby the kinds of tasks that are likely to be multitasked are determined by the cognitive burden they carry. This implies that the total cognitive load of multitasking i.e. the sum of particular activities has to be adjusted to human processing capacity. As transpires from the cross-generational research into multitasking, young people tend to engage significantly more frequently with multiple media, which can be interpreted as a proof of evolutionary adjustment to media saturated environments [Foehr 2006]. Nevertheless, in line with “Cognitive Load” limitations, young people’s evaluation of relative difficulty pertinent to particular activity clustering corresponds to those reported by older generations [Carrier et al. 2009].

Activities such as instant messaging (IM), e-mailing, browsing the Web or gaming scored much higher for multitasking, mainly due to the platform on which they are used i.e. the computer, a device specifically designed for multiple use of numerous multimedia applications. This points to the opportunity as one of the strongest determinants of media multitasking [Foehr 2006]. After audio media [mp3 play-

ers, CDs, radio and music videos], which accompany most of the other media, it can be stated that IM, e-mail and browsing the Web are performed simultaneously, or to be more accurate, interchangeably.<sup>2</sup>

Doing homework on the computer was most likely to be clustered with watching TV. Parallel to other computer-based activities, after TV followed instant messaging (49.8%), surfing the Web (41.6%) and slightly more often – eating (44.5%). It would be interesting to see if the reported use of the Internet is homework-related or rather functions as a distraction or relief from the intellectual burden of the homework. As transpires from the participants' statements about the validity of having media rules in the household, TV and the Internet function in teenagers' awareness as a source of rather lowbrow entertainment quite often contrasted with the sense of duty or usefulness ascribed to other activities such as studying or doing sports. The computer does not seem to serve as an educational tool for teenagers, and its excessive use is perceived by the teenagers themselves as detrimental not only to academic achievement but also to health (eyesight, quality of sleep).

Considering the salience of media in young people's lives and the already established trends of media amalgamation, the outstanding ability to multitask seems to turn into the defining characteristic of contemporary media use [Carrier et al. 2009]. Assuming that effective media use is one of the indices of the quality of life, it can be concluded on the basis of the ADOPOLNOR study that Polish adolescents demonstrate similar behavioural trends as those revealed by the American studies to the extent that is determined by the availability of various media in their immediate environment. It is still debatable whether multitasking enhances or diminishes the cognitive performance [Rosen 2008, Ophir et al. 2009, Foerde 2006 ], yet the differences revealed in the studies comparing older and younger generations in this respect [e.g. Carrier et al. 2009] seem to suggest that there might be a change in progress triggered by contemporary media saturated environment.

## Conclusion

The current debate on modern media has increasingly involved talking about media users (i.e. society at large) and the on-going social processes. The most recent statistics about Internet users in Poland point to a relatively high penetration of ICT in the country: almost 59% of the population are internet users (compared to

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<sup>2</sup> The exact mechanism of multitasking has yet to be understood, however, according to neurological literature the activities that seem to be processed at the same time, are in fact processed consecutively [Wallis 2006, Wood & Grafman 2003 as quoted in Foehr 2006] Nevertheless, media saturated environments promote the development of those parts of the brain which are responsible for rapid shifts of attention, the ability that will become more and more desirable from the evolutionary point of view. The question remains, however, whether the development of the multitasking ability happens at the expense of those parts of the brain which are responsible for attention span or the ability to concentrate for a longer period of time [Foehr 2006: 26].

an estimated 29% in 2007), 8.5% have a personal profile on Facebook, the world's most popular social networking website (cf. Internetworldstats). This, however, contrasts with other European countries, for example Iceland, where the scores are 98% and 62% respectively. Surprisingly, in terms of the percentage of Internet users in the population, Poland is listed as 19th in the world (CIA World Factbook). This is very optimistic, considering that Internet use is an indicator of the quality of life, and it like looks a good prospect for the future. Admittedly, though, there are a number of socio-economic factors (e.g. age, urban/rural place of residence) that hinder the individual's chances to benefit from the opportunities offered by the dynamic development of ICT in Poland.

Media are a means to support and practice individual as well as social activities. On the one hand, they provide an environment for an individual to pursue their own interests (for example, those developed during school activities). On the other hand, they also give an opportunity to establish and maintain social relationships and cultivate social life, both in the real and virtual worlds, which permeate and support each other.

In the ADOPOLNOR study young people identified the major functions of the media in their lives. Various media were used to (1) gain information, (2) get access to entertainment and (3) relate to other people. Our findings suggest that it is impossible to separate these functions and there is no reason to do so (this is similar to problems with separating different kinds of media). In fact, it seems that an attempt to keep them apart is imposed by the institutional (and thus modular) thinking of adults, which is exactly an approach which gives rise to one of the major questions for the well-being of the young: are they not too socially isolated (and perhaps excluded) as they spend hours and days on their own, in front of the computer screen? Understanding the amalgamation of the media world and the real world makes it possible to look more optimistically at the problem of the social integration of adolescents. What is much more relevant in the context of adolescent media use (and media use in general) is the notion of immediacy and the blurring of the direct/indirect distinction. Both getting information and getting in touch are urgent needs and media make it possible for these needs to be satisfied. This is but one example of how media enhance the quality of life.

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Jakub Isański

## Social mobility in adolescents. Media impact on adolescents' path to success

**Abstract:** Undoubtedly, contemporary adolescents constitute the most active and mobile social category. The period in life when young people acquire formal education and undertake their initial attempts at the labour market entails first confrontations of their expectations and plans with reality. Social research aimed at this particular group, thus, does not only describe the contemporary society, but it also allows for making predictions about the future. Adolescents have significant possibilities of making first steps in the world of global spatial mobility. They can participate in various international school exchange programmes, governmental and municipal scholarship initiatives, EU scholarships supporting most active students and they can take up first summer jobs, some of which involve going abroad.

**Key words:** adolescents, sociological concepts of mobility, social mobility, social position

### Introduction

Social mobility has been within the core interests of sociology since the very beginning of the discipline. One of the first definitions of mobility dates back to the second decade of the 20th century, and was formulated by an emigrant from Russia, Pitirim Sorokin: "The concept of social mobility can be understood as a shift of an individual, social object or social value (...) from one social position to another"<sup>1</sup> [Sorokin 2009: 131]. Within the definition, Sorokin distinguished further two basic types of social mobility, i.e. horizontal mobility and vertical mobility. He specified them in the following way: "horizontal mobility or change of position can be understood as a shift of an individual or social object from one social group to another, located at the same level" [Sorokin 2009: 131], whereas vertical mobility consists in "an individual (or social object) passing from one social layer to another" [Sorokin 2009: 131]. In the former case, when used with a reference to members of society, the term "mobility" can denote religious conversion or shift

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<sup>1</sup> Translation mine (JI).

between two social positions of comparable prestige. More interesting, however, is the latter term which refers to a shift on the social ladder, be it either upward (promotion) or downward (degradation). Vertical mobility is accompanied with the change in the social status of an individual with respect to at least three dimensions: financial means, power and prestige associated with a given social position. Analysed together, the three parameters constitute so-called “socio-economic status” which allows for comparing the change in the situation of an individual against the backdrop of the society.

Furthermore, Sorokin proposed the differentiation between “intensity and size (prevalence) of vertical mobility” [Sorokin 2009: 134]. The former refers to “the vertical social distance” that is the gap (the number of layers or social classes) which is trespassed by an individual in the process of social advancement, while the latter denotes “the number of people who have changed their social positions vertically in a specified time unit” [Sorokin 2009: 134]. The author stresses the possibility of applying the above categories in research on social mobility investigating the possibilities for changing one’s social position that are available to the members of society. When analysing these phenomena on a social scale, Sorokin describes two societal models representing extreme variants of mobility defined above. On the one hand, there are societies marked by “the kind of stratification that is totally self-contained, rigid, impenetrable or motionless” [Sorokin 2009: 135], on the other hand, there are those which are “open, plastic, penetrable or mobile” [Sorokin 2009: 135] i.e. characterised by very intensive and wide-ranging mobility, which is typical of “democratic societies” [cf. Sorokin 2009: 135]. In this case the social position of an individual is not determined by their birth or religion; conversely, “all positions are opened for everyone, who is capable of filling them” [Sorokin 2009: 135]. Obviously, the latter situation is more functional for the whole society because social mobility operates as a “safety-valve” which stabilises the overall structure of society. By the same token, it is more functional for each individual as well, providing them with the chance to realise their plans and ambitions. Undoubtedly, the term “mobility” and its types distinguished by Sorokin allow for an apt and fairly comprehensive description of processes taking place in contemporary society. Both widespread successful social advancements and common shifts in similar-status job positions are one of the most significant elements shaping the overall structure of society.

In passing, one of the side effects of social mobility is worth commenting upon, namely that of social disintegration [cf. Angell as quoted in Turowski 1993: 133]. The processes of disintegration and their negative effects (pathologies, criminality) are known to be much more salient in the environments marked by an increased spatial mobility (e.g. in big cities). This can be attributed to at least three causes: (1) the normative disintegration i.e. the emergence of various alternative normative systems and the resulting difficulties in the adaptation to new, binding social norms; (2) the incapacity to enforce the social norm/the regulating function of the society or local community; (3) the increase in the heterogeneity and complexity of the group [cf. Turowski 1993: 133–134]. What follows from the above is that by making social structure more dynamic, social mobility leads to a situation

whereby all members of society (not only those who advance) deal with new challenges whose, not necessarily positive, outcome is difficult to predict.

According to Sorokin, social mobility, be it advancement or degradation, can affect both whole social groups (e.g. the social advancement of Polish peasants after WWII) and individuals (as in the case of American “from rags to riches” scenario). The degradation of an individual can be illustrated with Sorokin’s metaphor of “the passenger falling overboard” [Sorokin 2009: 132], while that of the whole social group resembles “the sinking of the ship with all the crew on board”. This imagery suggests that the possibilities of social advancement are not always entirely within the scope of an individual, and that, notwithstanding the common problem of unequal distribution of information, individual strategies must be modified in line with the changes on the labour market.

As expounded by other sociologists investigating social mobility Malcom Hamilton and Maria Hirsowicz [1995], “industrial societies are characterised by high level of mobility in comparison to traditional societies. It is, as generally assumed, a feature of industrial societies because these are the ones that undergo constant and often vehement economic changes requiring professional, geographic and social mobility so that the existing talents and aptitudes are maximally exploited” [Hamilton and Hirsowicz 1995: 176]. From the studies cited by the authors it follows that “the upward mobility was more frequent than the downward one” [Hamilton and Hirsowicz 1995: 180] and that “the short-distance mobility is greater than the long-distance one” [Hamilton and Hirsowicz 1995: 179]. This implies that the social distance covered by most individuals during their lifespan is insignificant and does not correspond to the popular notion of “from rags to riches” career path. The authors also discuss “the association index” defined as the “proportion of the real mobility to the expected one, if class membership had no influence on the latter” [Hamilton and Hirsowicz 1995: 182]. The association index can be applied to a situation whereby the availability of various social positions depends on individual aptitudes rather than on class membership and the ensuing privileges and facilitations. Furthermore, referring to the results of the UK-based studies on social mobility, the authors conclude that “the higher the level of the social ladder we look at, the greater inaccessibility can be observed” [Hamilton and Hirsowicz 1995: 184]. This conclusion can be considered valid also in the Polish context, especially due to the widespread social conviction that the paths of advancement to many privileged social positions (e.g. those of doctors and lawyers) lack transparency.

As already pointed out, social mobility is an extremely timely topic which allows for capturing the complexity of social structure with respect to affordances (possibilities) available to socially aspiring individuals. Furthermore, by observing the above defined mobility it is possible to probe into social dynamics involving changes in social positions of particular social groups (classes) and the processes whereby certain individual resources gain or lose importance, often as a function of global political changes.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, some other circumstances conducive to individual social advancement can be distinguished such as: social position of parents, place of residence (city or country), access to new information technolo-

gies (mostly quite superficially understood as the access to the Internet) or sex. The empirical research on social capital adds to the above list resources connected with social environment and those characterising the place of residence. These are for instance “the affiliation with voluntary associations and frequenting their gatherings, participation in public meetings, rallies etc., volunteering for the community, organizing parties for friends and visiting such parties, voting in elections and finally – general trust” [Sztompka 2007: 245].

At present, education and skills (as well as their constantly changing relative value dependent on 1) the ‘topicality’ of these skills and knowledge and on 2) the number of people acquiring them) are, clearly, much more significant for the social advancement than they used to be. The marketing degree boom witnessed in the 1990’s in Poland illustrates the consequences of the situation whereby too many people decide to follow a similar career path. In the 1990s’, the number of marketing specialists in Poland very rapidly surpassed the demands of the market, which significantly reduced the value of such qualification.

An analogous situation repeated after Polish accession to the EU in 2004, when over 2 million people were estimated to have emigrated for work to different Western European countries. The mass emigration caused an acute shortage of blue-collar workers whose condition on the labour market significantly improved as a result. Another consequence of the demographic trend presented above were various governmental initiatives aimed at encouraging young people to undertake technical studies and gaining the qualifications of e.g. a plumber or a nurse. The above examples illustrate not only the relative value and functionality of various skills gained during education process but also the consequences of the situation whereby there are too many people aspiring to the same positions on the labour market.

All of the above-mentioned phenomena can be situated in the orbit of social mobility. It is worth stressing, however, that their consequences are not necessarily positive or functional either for society as a whole or for particular individuals.

Moreover, the examples presented above demonstrate that the social situation and opportunities for advancement are affected by one’s resources and his or her chances to utilise them in course of an individual “career”. The concept of “social capital” indicating the significance of the resources in the hands of an individual [cf. Coleman 1988] is of importance here. Social capital can be defined as “the resources contained in social networks and utilised by people in their actions” (Nan Lin as quoted in Sztompka 2007: 244). The resources are connected with the social networks of contacts (acquaintances) to which an individual subscribes freely, and to which an individual has a self-regulated access. For this reason networks can be used to increase the chances of one’s social mobility. Gaining access to information is one of the advantages of the participation in such information exchange networks. Another important aspect, apart from the availability of networks of various degrees of familiarity, are the competences in utilising these contacts. A higher number of contacts between individuals favours the development of “trust”, which can be considered as yet another resource available to an individual. More importantly, trust can be converted into other kinds of resources [cf. Sztompka 2007: 243] and, as

Sztompka points out, it is “the resource that can be used not only by given individuals, but also by the whole communities or even societies” [Sztompka 2007: 243].

The importance of trust was also highlighted by Robert Putnam, another sociologist interested in social capital. Putnam considered trust to be “the basic constituent of social capital” [as quoted in Sztompka 2007: 244], others being “norms and social networks which can increase the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” [Sztompka 2007: 244]. The significance of social networks for the processes of adaptation to new environments was observed already at the beginning of the 20th c. by Florian Znaniecki, who investigated the environments of Polish immigrants to the USA [Znaniecki 1918, cf. Massey et al. 2009: 43]. In the context of adaptation, Znaniecki underlined the significance of access to knowledge, support and other resources underpinning the mobility of individuals.

With respect to the significance of the resources for individual social advancement in Poland, another two aspects should be commented upon: the possibility of the conversion of various resources which have appeared in Poland in the last twenty years and individual strategies of adaptation to the changing situation [cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 173]. In addition to the availability of resources, Ziółkowski points out the importance of values defining acceptable means of advancement: “capitals should be treated as means to the realization of specific interests and values constituting subjective goals of individuals and groups” [Ziółkowski 2000: 173]. Bourdieu, on the other hand, considered social prestige to be one of the most important goals of individual strategies [cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 173]. Ziółkowski distinguishes the following types of capitals: material capital (i.e. material goods possessed by an individual), social capital (the network of social contacts, in-group loyalty and solidarity, compliance and subordination), as well as political capital and cultural capital (knowledge, competences and taste) [cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 174–176]. Evidently, for the past few years, Polish society has been functioning in the situation of significant ambiguity<sup>2</sup> as far as social norms and values are concerned, which particularly strongly affects adolescents participating in the empirical studies. According to Ziółkowski, one of the elements of cultural capital which has recently gained considerable momentum is higher education and the widespread conviction among parents that it is their duty to make sure that their children get the chance to complete the degree which is considered to be “the basic investment in their futures” [cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 182–183].

Interestingly, “higher education is the priority in the case of daughters in particular, as it is considered to be the prerequisite for their success on the labour market.

<sup>2</sup> For example the all-nation studies conducted by CBOS in the summer of 2010 regarding the social evaluations of the consequences of 1989 political transformation report the following answers to the question: “What kind of people and what social groups have gained and what kind of people and what social groups have lost in the aftermath of 1989 political transformation?; those who benefited “swindlers, hustlers and bribers” – 78% of positive answers; “brave, resourceful and entrepreneurial people” – 75% of positive answers; “intelligentsia and freelancers” – 65% of positive answers; “rightful, hard-working people” – 18% – of positive answers; “ordinary, common people” – 11% of positive answers. The above results illustrate an ambiguous evaluation of the consequences of transformation both as far its costs and gains are concerned [cf. Felisiak 2010].

Sons, on the other hand, are assumed to be able to get by even if not that well educated" [Ziółkowski 2000: 182]. Ensuring children's higher education very often involves additional expenditures on extra classes and activities developing children's interests. These, in turn, are believed to be an asset in tough competition for admission to favoured and elitist colleges. Finally, "the conversion of capitals" i.e. the possibility to swap between the kinds of capitals should be mentioned as it significantly stimulates investment in one's resources [cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 192–198]. Knowledge (cultural capital) is, therefore, treated as a factor facilitating future financial success (material capital cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 194–195). Equivalently, the impact of social networks (both private and intergenerational ones), even if difficult to predict, is increasingly treated as a future functional resource [cf. Ziółkowski 2000: 192–193]. To recapitulate, it ought to be noticed that "the growing importance of social and cultural capitals consist in the fact that they can be effectively converted into material capital and, thus, lead to the ultimate goal i.e. advancing (or at least defending) one's social position by dint of financial success" [Ziółkowski 2000: 196].

From the sociological point of view, the most interesting are the situations whereby individuals deliberately attempt to design their paths of social advancement (social mobility) drawing on information about resources facilitating this process. Notably, by observing such individuals it is possible to probe into individual strategies as well as into the current situation and conditions which are, in general understanding, relevant to the processes of social advancement.

Having presented the concept of social mobility, I will now proceed with a more detailed discussion of the factors conducive to the notion of mobility discussed above. The following factors are often cited as instrumental in the process of social advancement: education, change of the place of residence and work, health, the command of foreign languages, and broadly understood "digital literacies" which open the whole spectrum of possibilities offered by ICTs (Informational Communication Technologies). It is a historical precedence that in the contemporary world an individual has a direct influence on most of the above-mentioned factors. In other words, depending on the current social processes, members of society can freely shape their lives through either social advancement or the avoidance of social degradation.

Spatial mobility is another, widely accepted factor conducive to social mobility, especially, in the context of international migrations. The mass emigration of Poles to the West after Poland accessed the EU in 2004 was so demographically significant that it can be counted among global migration processes. Massey at al. characterise the migration/foreign departures in the following way: "for young men (...) and women migration has become the rite of passage, and those who do not decide to improve their status through international activity are considered to be lazy, not entrepreneurial and undesirable" [Massey et al. 2009: 47]. International migrations and, in particular, work prospects associated with them (e.g. seasonal or summer jobs which are relatively well-paid and do not require high qualifications) pose a very good opportunity for young people to gain first professional and worldly experience.

In line with the research agenda of ADOPOLNOR project, in the remaining part of the paper I will present the issue of adolescent social mobility focusing on the

significance of education and media in this context. The results of the questionnaires conducted in selected schools of Wielkopolska region will be compared with the results of publicly available studies representative of the whole territory of Poland. The study was conducted in autumn 2009 and spring 2010. A total of 599 respondents aged 15–18 completed the survey. The results were compared with nationwide surveys carried out by CBOS. The respondents were asked about their future career plans and the related education paths, interests, hobbies and pastimes. The respondents also were asked to evaluate subjectively the chances of getting their dream job, and to assess their current financial situation. In the process of the analysis and interpretation of test results, the data from national surveys carried out by CBOS and the “Social Diagnosis 2009” was also taken into account. In the context of the research conducted within the entire ADOPOLNOR project, an attempt was undertaken here to capture how important media are for the young with regard to their future. The significance of media in this respect could be related to the opportunities they provide for establishing contacts and developing interests related to the future dream job.

## Results

In the light of information presented above, the empirical results obtained for the group of adolescents (aged 15–18) seem particularly interesting. It appears that in the age group investigated the plans for future occupation and social position are already very well-specified. Adolescents are interested in qualifying for well-paid careers of “doctor”, “engineer” or “IT specialist” (cf. Fig. 1) and expect to achieve accordingly high social positions. What is more, the majority of young people are

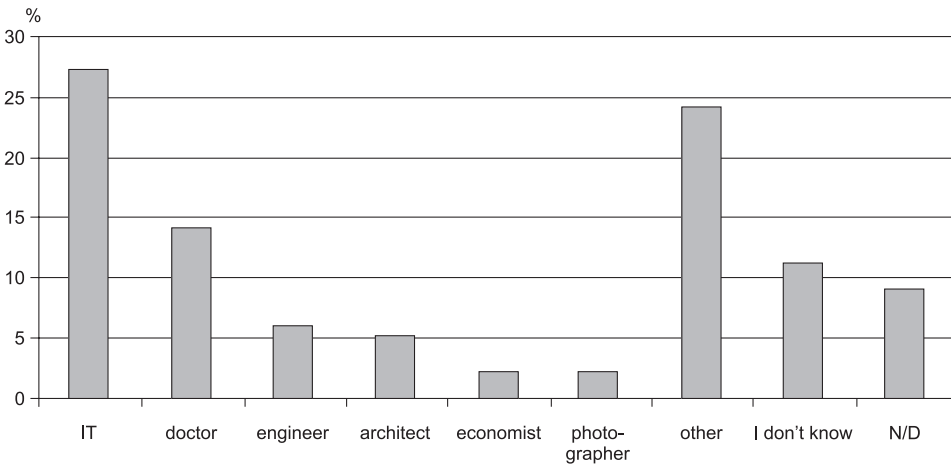


Fig. 1. Preferred future profession

Table 1. The evaluations of chances for learning a desired profession against socio-demographic variables. Data in percentages (% of indications)

	High	Medium	Low
Total	53.5	44.1	2.4
Sex:			
Female	54.9	43.1	2.0
Male	53.0	44.3	2.7
Age:			
up to 15	44.8	55.2	0.0
16	56.8	40.5	2.7
17 and older	49.3	47.9	2.7
Owning a computer for private use:			
Yes	54.9	42.4	2.7
No	42.9	57.1	0.0
The number of hours spent in front of the computer screen in the last week:			
0 hours	28.6	71.4	0.0
1–2 hours	56.5	39.1	4.3
3–5 hours	40.6	53.1	6.3
5–10 hours	53.6	44.6	1.8
10–20 hours	58.3	41.7	0.0
over 20 hours	63.0	35.2	1.9
Owning a mobile phone:			
For a year	42.9	57.1	0.0
For 1–2 years	42.9	42.9	14.3
For 2–5 years	52.1	45.5	2.5
For more than 5 years	57.3	41.3	1.4
Using a social networking site in the last week.:			
Yes	54.1	43.7	2.3
No	53.2	43.5	3.2

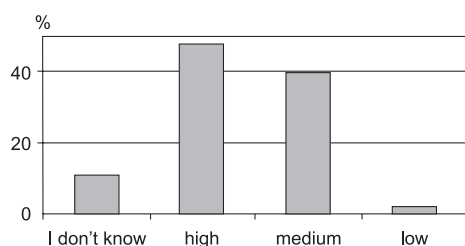


Fig. 2. The evaluation of chances for getting a “dream job”

convinced that they will be able to gain the qualifications for their “dream jobs” in future (cf. Fig. 2).

As can be seen, only one fifth of the respondents admit that they do not know what kind of social position they expect to hold in future, while almost 40% see their future in the context of “high social position”, and not many more than 40% in the context of “medium social position” (cf. Table 1).

As can be further concluded from the data obtained, new information technologies play a very important role in young people's lives, especially in communication and education. Nevertheless, adolescents spend a large amount of their free time away from these technologies. Apparently, the respondents enjoy engaging with various "outdoor activities" such as "cycling" or "playing football". "(M)eeting friends" and "reading books" were also frequently mentioned in this context (cf. Table 2).

Another very interesting fact which appeared in the data were respondents' predictions as to their future social position. Having three alternatives to choose from, they most frequently opted for 'high' (39%) and 'medium' (41.5%). It ought to be stressed as well that over 80% of respondents have fairly clear views in this respect, and only 18% do not know what social position they will occupy in future. This high optimism is, as I have already mentioned, connected to future profes-

Table 2. The evaluation of chances for learning a desired profession against socio-demographic variables – test statistics and correlation coefficients

Variable	Statistics	The evaluation of the chances
Sex	$\chi^2$	0.22
	df	2
	p-value	0.898
	$\phi/V$	–
Age	$\chi^2$	3.38
	df	4
	p-value	0.496
	$\phi/V$	–
Owning a computer for private use	$\chi^2$	2.69
	df	2
	p-value	0.261
	$\phi/V$	–
The number of hours spent in front of the computer screen in the last week	$\chi^2$	14.267
	df	10
	p-value	0.161
	$\phi/V$	–
Owning a mobile phone	$\chi^2$	10.23
	df	6
	p-value	0.115
	$\phi/V$	–
Using a social networking site in the last week:	$\chi^2$	0.19
	df	2
	p-value	0.908
	$\phi/V$	–

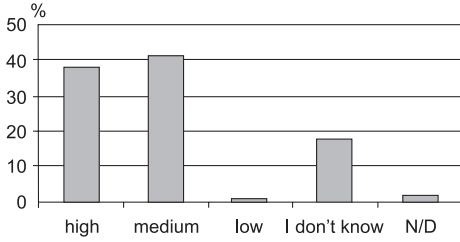


Fig. 3. The expected future social position

sional goals, summer jobs and the free-time interests of adolescents. It should be pointed out as well that the high social position was more often selected by female informants than by male informants, and those who own a computer (weak correlation,  $V$  Cramer's=0.179, see Table 4). The same was true for those who have owned a mobile for longer than 5 years ( $V$

Cramer's=0.218), as well as those who used a social networking site in the last week ( $V$  Cramer's=0.153). Undoubtedly, these high levels of optimism will be subject to verification in the future. However, it can already be stated that a significant number of adolescents aiming for prestigious and well-paid professions would, despite their young age, engage with various activities aimed at realising these goals.

As discussed at the beginning, social mobility is a phenomenon that very accurately reflects the current condition of a given society and offers an insight into its potential for change and development. The individuals who are planning their future try to choose the career path (of individual advancement) which offers the greatest potential for advancing their social position. Consequently, the focal issues of the present empirical study have been: the access and use of new information technologies and the future professional plans of young people.

Of all the age groups, late adolescents exhibit the strongest interest in the opportunities offered by new technologies. More importantly, rather than restrict their engagement with new technologies to passive usage, young people actively participate in the creation of the digital world. Notably, almost every adolescent in

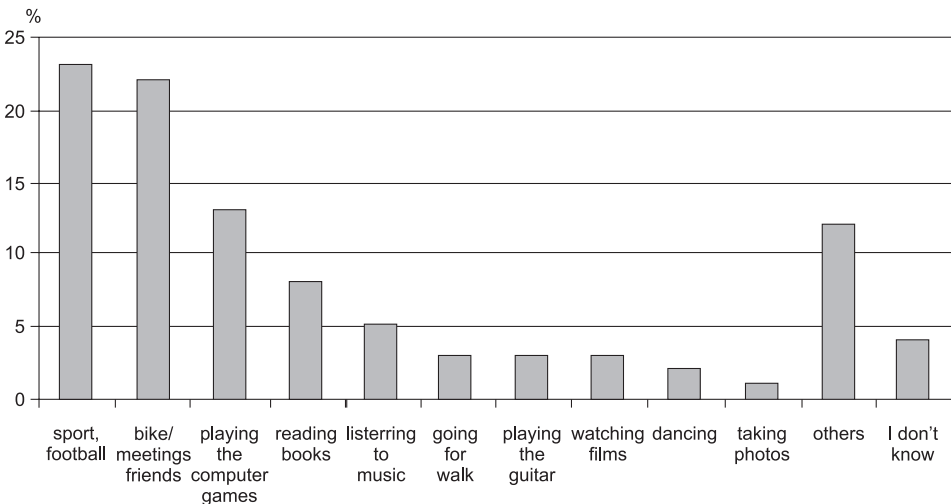


Fig. 4. Preferred ways of spending free time

Wielkopolska has owned a mobile phone (in more than 50% of cases for even more than 5 years) as well as a computer (often even for one's private use). According to previous studies, a similar tendency holds for the whole country (with the exception of the eastern Poland where the ownership of mobiles and computers is slightly lower). Assuming that the widespread usage of these devices implies access to the opportunities offered by new information technologies, the results obtained should be regarded as fairly optimistic.

Online tools such as Internet communicators, social networking sites and various other websites offer the possibility not only to be "creative" and broadcast one's output but, more importantly, to communicate with peers. Interestingly, the

Table 3. The evaluation of future social position against socio-demographic variables. Data in percentages (% of indications)

	High	Medium	Low	I don't know
Total	39.0	41.5	1.3	18.2
Sex:				
Female	40.2	38.5	0.0	21.4
Male	38.5	43.0	2.0	16.5
Age:				
up to 15				
16	32.3	51.6	0.0	16.1
17 and older	41.2	38.4	1.9	18.5
up to 15	36.0	45.3	0.0	18.7
Owning a computer for private use:				
Yes	41.0	38.9	1.1	19.1
No	21.9	65.6	3.1	9.4
The number of hours spent in front of the computer screen in the last week:				
0 hours	37.5	25.0	0.0	37.5
1-2 hours	32.1	50.0	0.0	17.9
3-5 hours	32.4	45.1	1.4	21.1
5-10 hours	36.9	41.5	1.5	20.0
10-20 hours	48.9	36.7	1.1	13.3
over 20 hours	37.5	42.9	1.8	17.9
Owning a mobile phone:				
For a year	28.6	57.1	0.0	14.3
For 1-2 years	18.8	50.0	0.0	31.3
For 2-5 years	32.3	42.3	2.3	23.1
For more than 5 years	47.5	38.9	0.6	13.0
Using a social networking site in the last week.:				
yes	41.5	38.2	0.8	19.5
no	29.4	52.9	2.9	14.7

Table 4. The evaluation of future social position against socio-demographic variables – test statistics and correlation coefficients

Variable	Statistics	Evaluation of future social position
Sex	$\chi^2$	3.72
	df	3
	p- value	0.294
	$\phi/V$	-
Age	$\chi^2$	4.43
	df	6
	p- value	0.619
	$\phi/V$	-
Owning a computer for private use	$\chi^2$	10.10
	df	3
	p- value	0.018
	$\phi/V$	0.179
The number of hours spent in front of the computer screen in the last week	$\chi^2$	9.16
	df	15
	p- value	0.869
	$\phi/V$	-
Owning a mobile phone	$\chi^2$	14.97
	df	9
	p- value	0.092
	$\phi/V$	0.218
Using a social networking site in the last week:	$\chi^2$	7.34
	df	3
	p- value	0.062
	$\phi/V$	0.153

results indicate that online communication tools are a much more “natural” choice in interactions with peers than with parents or family. The age difference seems to be of importance here in the sense that the Internet and new technologies are much more “natural” means of communication with peers rather than with older generations. Adolescents frequently and willingly communicate by posts, blogs or through regularly updated specialised personal webpages. These uses are perfectly informed. More than 50% of adolescents admit to use online communication tools on daily basis; the tools are now to a great extent favoured over face-to-face interactions in daily communication practices. A good few hours per day spent in front of the computer screen in the company of real friends and virtual friends (i.e. those never met in the „real” world) is the time that could be used for social interaction just several years ago.

The findings concerning adolescents' expectations about their future social position were also very compelling. Access to new information technologies and the related competences are commonly cited as the factors influencing social mobility. The respondents are fairly optimistic about their futures. Not only do they envisage their future social position as "high" or "medium" but they are also quite convinced that they will actually achieve it. The majority has already specified their goals concerning future social position and occupation, opting for such professions as IT specialist, engineer or doctor. It can be concluded, therefore, that the adolescents participating the study are very much self-aware and ready to undergo training aimed at obtaining the desired qualifications and the corresponding social positions with their due earnings and prestige.

Interestingly, despite the regular Internet use many respondents claim to spend a lot of time outdoors. The most popular activities include "playing football", "meeting friends" and many other pastimes requiring face-to-face interaction. This can be validated by the studies demonstrating that 40% of their respondents have already had summer jobs often related to particular interests or future professional plans. The prevalence of employment among young people is interesting also in the face of recent changes in social attitudes towards adolescent employment. With reference to 16-year-olds and older, CBOS<sup>3</sup> studies show a growing social acceptance of adolescent employment in Poland. In the recent years there has been also a significant increase in the acceptance of young people's activity in this field at even earlier stage in their lives. For instance, according to representative nation-wide studies in 2009, 89% of respondents agreed that "students aged 16–19 should have a summer job experience", which corresponds to 25% in the case of 13–15-year-olds [cf. Wciórka 2009, cf. Cybulska 2008]. It is worth mentioning that the percentage of adolescents taking up summer jobs has been rising in Poland since the beginning of the 1990s. From 24% of 16–19-year-olds taking up summer jobs in 1997, the number increased to 30% in 2009 (41% in 2008). For the younger age category (13–15), the figures were as follows: 9% in 1997, 21% in 2008 followed by a fall to 8% in 2009 (the Polish Labour Code allows for the employment of people over 16) [cf. Wciórka 2009: 9]. It turns out, thus, that although adolescent summer employment is prevalent in Poland, it is subject to significant fluctuations related to the situation on the labour market and seasonal labour force migrations, especially in summer.

When it comes to the use of new technologies, the majority of studies demonstrate that adolescents are the most active age group in this respect [cf. e.g. Isański 2010]. Therefore, the questions about the actual impact of new technologies on young people's lives and their chances for future social advancement are definitely among the most fascinating ones of those addressed by contemporary sociology.

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<sup>3</sup> Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej [Public Opinion Research Center].

## Conclusion

Concluding, the present study conducted on a relatively small and non-representative sample of 15- to 18-year-olds shows that the vast majority of them do not only have precise plans concerning their future but they are also already engaged with well-thought activities oriented at realising those plans (e.g. undertaking an adequate education path, gaining initial work-experience and developing their interests). Importantly, ICTs are central to the realization of young people's goals. In the hands of adolescents, ICTs function as tools that are employed for various purposes. It should be pointed out that it is not only the access to ICTs which determines and facilitates the future success. Notably, the ability to use them for social contacts, if only through a popular social networking site, is treated as 'an investment for the future' (the importance of contacts with peers was corroborated by high scores for 'meeting with friends' as a preferred way of spending free time). In my opinion, the results presented here point to a significant potential for a social advancement of adolescents. In the same vein, the most significant values for adolescents (data not cited in the present paper) are 'family' (chosen by 79% of respondents as one of the most important life values) and friendship (70%). It can be concluded, therefore, that new media and the opportunities they create for contacts with others are not glamourised by adolescents, but rather, they perceive them as instrumental in their efforts to achieve certain predetermined goals.

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Agnieszka Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak

## Intergenerational communication and media in Poland: A perspective of adolescent media consumers

**Abstract:** One aspect of the social well-being of adolescents, and, for that matter, the well-being all age groups, is the quality of their communication with others. This investigation of media impact on the perception of intergenerational relations has considered media recipients' life experience and their ability to manage media messages. In this study of media content reception by adolescents, video clips with intergenerational encounters selected from a popular TV film series were used as vignettes. Adolescent participants were then interviewed by a peer interviewer, and their responses were analysed for the presence of interdiscursive elements to trace the interpretation of media content. In response to media representations of intergenerational contacts young people treat the older generation as out-group, though they are very often empathetic. The meaning making process was found to largely rely on relating the public to the private, in which the young respondents revealed a considerable amount of social knowledge. It is suggested here that the mechanism of referring media messages to recipient's own experience adds credibility to the former and thus makes for a greater media impact, which can however be controlled by the young people's media literacy skills.

**Key words:** media reception, intergenerational communication, age stereotypes, media literacy

### Introduction

Like other papers in this volume, this one has been inspired by the debate expressing concern for the influence of media on the life of young people, in particular the social aspects of their life. The on-going public debate is premised on the juxtaposition of two types of reality, real world-based and media-based (virtual), and it amplifies the risk of adolescents' social exclusion and isolation resulting from their dedication (and intensive exposure) to the media-generated virtual world in abstraction from the real world. However, in the debate, the conviction that media

cause damage to social relationships exists side by side with the hope that they may do some good to social life ‘when used appropriately’.<sup>1</sup>

The project described here has been an attempt to probe young people’s reception of media content by looking at the relationships between media discourses and the private discourses of the participants, with the ultimate aim to assess the impact of mediated information onto young people’s lives. It will anticipate, yet leave unanswered, the follow-up question of whether young media consumers will use media discourses for their subsequent real life interactions and whether they will treat media messages as credible and educational reflections of real life.

The aspect of social life considered here is that of intergenerational communication, which is often addressed in public debate (as well as in recent social research) as highly relevant, especially in the context of the technologisation of communication, often accused of widening the gap between generations. Ultimately, it goes without saying that caring for intergenerational communication contributes to maintaining relationships, and the good quality of our relationships is crucially important to our well-being.

Intergenerational communication is often seen as problematic by members of all generations, and they sometimes find discussing the topic an appropriate occasion for venting their frustration. Therefore, accounts of relatively unsuccessful communication are as a rule burdened with evaluative and more or less emotional expressions.<sup>2</sup> As Williams and Nussbaum [2001] put it, intergenerational communication “has rich potential for misunderstanding and miscommunication” [Williams and Nussbaum 2001: ix].

It is interesting and important to find out how people manage interpersonal contact (and conflict) at different times of their lives. In view of the dynamic development of modern media, intergenerational communication is likely to be affected by media *communiqués*.

<sup>1</sup> See also Thurlow and Bell’s [2009] article exposing how media and institutions lament young people’s use of language via new communication technologies, and how they fail to acknowledge its creativity, articulateness and social efficacy.

<sup>2</sup> Even in an academic paper on the language-based barriers to intergenerational communication [Grybosiowa 2007] a few comments have been found on intergenerational communication expressing an ironic stance (towards the young): examples of young people’s blunders “constitute a good collection of anecdotes amusing participants of linguistics conferences” (*P. stanowią stały zbiór anegdot rozweslających uczestników konferencji językoznawczych*). Additionally, throughout the article, the author refers to the speaking/writing style of the younger generation in terms of deficit, by means of terms such as *lack of understanding, shock, lack of communication, lack of response (niezrozumienie, nieobycie, zdziwienie, brak porozumienia, brak reakcji)*. Grybosiowa divides her population into people born BEFORE or AFTER 1980 and attributes the ‘condensed code’ (inspired by Bernstein’s ‘restricted code’) to the younger generation.

## Media content, media consumption and media effects across generations

Media content and consumption patterns have lately been scrutinised for explanations of their impact: the question has been not only how they directly influence the lives of their immediate consumers but also how they indirectly affect – through shaping social attitudes – the life of society at large. One aspect of this relation between the media and society is that media make *age* relevant in their representation of society and this affects audiences, depending on the type and intensity of their media exposure. Research shows that media do influence their recipients in the way that affects attitudes to both the young and the old and thus also the well-being of all generations [cf. Nussbaum 2007].

The quality of contact between young and older people is associated with inter-group relations and attitudes [cf. Harwood 2000; Abrams and Giles 1999], and these relations and attitudes are in turn influenced by media representations of age groups. For one thing, media content includes stereotyped outlooks on people categorised by age. This view of age groups does not necessarily agree with their own perceptions of themselves or even the auto-stereotypes. For example, a media report on the portrayal of older adults in Polish media [*Wizerunek Osób Starszych w Mediach* 2007] concludes that the elderly are presented as financially troubled and dependent on others, which actually is not what they consider themselves to be. However inadequate the media representations might be, people do rely on information provided by the media for shaping their worldviews, especially when personal experience is not sufficient.

Secondly, there are significant age differences in media use. U.S. researchers report on research results claiming an increase of TV viewing over the lifespan [Williams and Nussbaum 2008: 236]. However, the increase is not steady: while young children show a strong liking for television, as teenagers they tend to prefer electronic audio (music) and video (games, films) media. The dedication to television viewing further decreases in midlife to become high again for older adults (in their 60s and 70s) [Robinson et al. 2004]. The tendency has been accounted for by a number of factors including those related to amounts of leisure time, health or social integration (see Harwood 2007: 180f. for a review of explanations). There are also age differences in the preferred type of TV content: most generally a preference for informative programs over entertainment programs increases with viewer's age.<sup>3</sup> Similar patterns refer to readership of books and the press (which increases with age).<sup>4</sup> Finally, the use of new media has been investigated in the context of the rapid expansion of the computer and other electronic (especially portable) media devices. Again, there are distinctive age patterns, whose explana-

<sup>3</sup> The preferences for type of TV content are in fact related to income and gender more than to age [see Burnett 1991, Riggs 1998].

<sup>4</sup> Some research indicates that reading among adolescents, particularly book-reading, has been on the decrease [cf. *Raport o książce*. 2009]. Whether and how this is causally related on the young people's exposure to visual media such as television is to be verified empirically.

tions are complex. The new media play a major role as a forum for expressing personal (age) identity as well as for communicating with others. In particular, there is growing evidence that the Internet is a rich communication medium that older people use to reach out to their peers and, importantly, to members of other age groups, notably their grandchildren [e.g. Harwood 2004].

The patterns relating age and amount of TV viewing in Poland are similar in that people over age 60 top the scores for TV exposure of more than 3 hours per day [*Diagnoza Społeczna 2009*: 237]. On the other hand, over half of them do not use any of the new communications technologies (computer, internet, mobile phone) [*Diagnoza Społeczna 2009*: 291].

Polish analysts have observed that the very small number of internet users over 60 years of age (4.1% of all users over 16) does not only bring about the risk of digital exclusion for them but this situation also, and very importantly, hinders intergenerational communication [*Diagnoza Społeczna 2009*: 290]. Indeed, U.S. studies reveal that new ICT channels are fundamentally important for communication between grandparents and grandchildren [Harwood 2000; Holladay and Seipke 2007]. Yet, it is not just a problem of being ready (or not) to use new channels of communication, but also that of sharing (or not) the world which relies on the use of new (digital) media for information exchange and basic social networking. If members of generations do not meet in these respects, their communication may be threatened.

## Intergenerational communication and media

Intergenerational relations may be viewed as involving out-group or in-group contacts, depending on whether they are conceived of in terms of solidarity or conflict. Media discourse marks the way participants conceive of these relations. For example, social groups defined according to age are commonly given catchy labels (e.g. *boomers* and *busters*, Williams and Nussbaum 2001: 238; in Poland, *pokolenie JP2* [generation John Paul II]). The labels represent the cultural constructions of generational groups and they impose the perception of homogeneous identities on actually multifarious and dynamic groups of individuals. Nevertheless, they may either raise feelings of belonging or amplify hostility. Intergroup hostility is also reflected (and perhaps fuelled) by the offensive labels for age groups, e.g. *P. gówniarze*, *młode gnojki*, *stare pierdziele*, *tetryki*.

Similarly, media may present differences between generations as salient and problematic. Metaphors signifying conflict have occupied public discourses (and perhaps also public imagination) of intergenerational relations: intergenerational encounters have at best been divided by the *generation gap* or bluntly labelled as *age wars* (cf. the title of popular Polish 1960's TV series: "Wojna domowa" [domestic warfare]). Press accounts of demographic statistics are often dramatically phrased. For example, as part of the current media debate in Poland on the uncertain future of the pension system, a Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* [27.11.2009] wrote how the

growing numbers of pensioners pressurize the budget, and soon the young generations will be overburdened and threatened. In this article on Polish higher education system (entitled “Zanim przyjdzie tsunami” [Before tsunami comes], where tsunami refers to a demographic change), the old are presented as the holders of political power who may and will take decisions to secure their own status and jeopardize the employment of new generations of graduates [GW 27.11.2009: 27]. The author of another article (“Kto zastąpi starych” [Who will replace the old?]) is worried about the future of politics, because the average age of politicians is between 50 and 60, and young ones may not be ready (or able) to take over. The discussion is strewn with words of conflict (such as *blokowanie awansu* [blocking promotion]). Still another popular publication discusses age-based conflicts in the corporate setting, and its title (“Młode wilki i stare lisy” [Young wolves and old foxes]) categorises opposing sides by means of emotionally-charged metaphors [GW 28.11.2008: 14]. Clearly, the prospect of intergenerational *tension* and ultimately a *schism* is thus made very real in these media texts. It is hard to disagree with Williams and Nussbaum [2001: 243], who claim that “(...) the media has creatively generated generational stereotypes and fueled a mediated intergenerational conflict, which centers around competition for social, authoritative, and allocative resources”.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the broad interest in intergenerational communication grows out of genuine concern for communicative success in the private sphere (the home) as well as the public domain (such as the workplace). In both contexts communication has the value of a social resource which allows for the development of social identity, social relationships and social activity [cf. Haslett and Bowen 1989]. It contributes to the general integrity of society. Moreover, given the unequal distribution of power in society (specifically, the relatively smaller social and economic power of the young) and the growing preoccupation of institutions with fostering communication skills, societies are awaiting academic expertise on the mechanisms of communication between age groups and generational groups as well as suggestions on how to improve it.

In fact, the strive for improvement in the area of intergenerational communication is supported by the social phenomenon of generational solidarity [cf. Hammarström 2005] and, in particular, the emotional and affectional dimension of solidarity in the family context (cf. *attachment theory* by British psychologist John Bowlby). The quality of contact and communication between generations is related to the well-being of both the young(er) and the old(er) – not just on a personal level but also at the level of inter-group contact. Research has shown that “some tensions are diffused by ties of cross-generational empathy, especially

<sup>5</sup> Some researchers have expressed concern for the misrepresentation of young people’s communication with adults. They assert that it is in fact adults who “dictate the institutional structures and ideological frameworks for so much of adolescent life” [Williams and Thurlow 2005: 14]. Therefore, adolescent-adult communication is burdened with a power imbalance which adolescents may be trying to redress [cf. Drury 2005]. Some, though not many, studies take the perspective of young people and investigate their communication awareness [e.g. Thurlow 2003]. The current study also subjectifies adolescents in that it attempts to probe their perceptions of media texts.

within families” [Williams and Nussbaum 2001: 241]. This suggests that much positive contact with intimate older people (e.g. grandparents) may result in improved relations with non-intimate older people (strangers).

Relations between generations are defined in interaction [Coupland 1991: 101], i.e. through direct communication, but also indirectly, for instance through the media. The direct contact usually concerns intimate interlocutors (close family members and friends), while the mediated contact most often refers to non-intimates.

The general idea that media consumption has an effect on media consumers needs to be specified with reference to the age of the consumers. This paper is particularly focused on the media effect on adolescents, assuming that they are very intensive and frequent media users. Harwood [2004: 187] refers to the *cultivation theory* [Gerbner and Gross 1976] as asserting that the impact of media (primarily television) depends on the consumers’ experience outside the media and, in particular, whether it is consonant with the media picture of reality. In the context of younger people’s perceptions of media portrayals of older people and of the relationships between them, much depends on the viewers’ interpersonal contacts with the older people in real world. “Television and print-media portrayals of older people and intergenerational relationships can invariably affect how we think about aging, and subsequently how we communicate these beliefs interpersonally both to ourselves and others” (Williams and Nussbaum 2001: 43). Referring to the more specific context of intergenerational communication, Williams and Nussbaum further assert: “If individuals of different ages consume and are portrayed differently, there is a very good possibility that different generations are translating their differing experience with the media into perceptions and behavior that affect intergenerational communication” [Williams and Nussbaum 2001: 256]. Addressing an even narrower context of the family, researchers have shown that one’s relationships with their grandparents is likely to have an impact on their attitudes about ageing. Harwood et al. [2005] demonstrated how young people’s perceptions of their grandparents as old (or not) will (or will not) be generalised to feed attitudes towards older people.

The present work aims to demonstrate whether and how media representations are found to be related to media users’ personal experience and relevant to their general worldview. The type of media and genre focused on here (TV film series) are commonly understood to present fictitious characters and events rather than real people and situations. However, in a long string of episodes a succession of events is shown that gets the viewer emotionally involved, and film makers use strategies that keep up the tension and raise expectations. In fact, on the one hand, the viewer is confident in the fabricated (or even manipulated) nature of the content, yet, on the other, in the process of constantly relating it to his/her own (real) experience, they are led (or even manipulated) into blurring the fiction/reality difference. Significantly, the genre is to be distinguished from other genres (and other media) which include authentic accounts of real events and narratives of real people (e.g. readers’ letters in the press, listeners’ comments in phone-in radio programs).

## Age stereotypes and media

Media project societal expectations, stereotypes, and respect norms. Understandably, in the context of intergenerational encounters many (if not most) of them are age-related. Thus age stereotypes transpire in the media in that media portray the representatives of different generations and exploit social stereotypes about similarity and/or difference between them.

U.S.-based research suggests that the media portrayals of older people bring about more negative attitudes of younger people towards older adults and misrepresent the population of older people as smaller than it actually is [Harwood 2007: 191]. As mentioned above (note 4), the stereotyped media portrayal of adolescents is also found to be questionable.

The stereotypes, however inadequate, are exploited in media production and activated in media reception, and thus perpetuated and further disseminated. Importantly, *stereotype activation theory* proposes that when stereotypes are made cognitively accessible in certain situations, they influence attitudes and behaviours even when people do not regard the content of the stereotypes as true [Steele and Aronson 1995]. Age stereotypes and norms of respect have been shown to be related to reported communication behaviours between young and older adults [McCann et al. 2005]. Specifically, the “norms of respect appear to be firmly rooted early in a person’s life (i.e. young adulthood and probably much earlier), and do not simply and suddenly emerge in mid-life (...)” [McCann et al. 2005: 304].

In Poland, young adults’ stereotypes of older people are complex and ambivalent. In a study by Trempała & Zając-Lamparska [2007] the declared attitudes towards the elderly were found neutral rather than negative, with the young adults showing more positive attitudes than the older respondents. Trempała and Zając-Lamparska agree with the claim by other researchers that this trend among younger adults results from societies’ growing disapproval of ageism. In another study, Zając-Lamparska [2008] exposed the ambivalence of attitudes of young adults towards the elderly, with positive attitudes prevailing. However, the attitudes tended to be consonant with negative stereotypes and prejudice against the elderly when they referred to non-familiar older people rather than those personally known.

Stereotypically, intergenerational communication is viewed as troubled. Also, the common stereotypical view of adolescent communicative behaviour is negative, drawing a picture of inadequacy and inappropriateness. This view works to the detriment of communicators of all ages. Therefore, it is important to examine the mechanisms of how it is perpetuated through the media and ultimately to challenge it.

## The study

Media have been blamed for misrepresenting age-groups and foregrounding generational conflict. Discourse analysts would demonstrate this by pointing to discursive means used to attain this effect (cf. examples given above). Moreover, the relationship between these media projections and human behaviour is partially accessible, and may be probed, via examining discursive patterns.

In this paper, the discourse of intergenerational communication in teenagers' favourite TV programmes has been juxtaposed with viewers' discourse produced in response to media intergenerational encounters. In line with Fairclough's thinking [1995], it is assumed here that along with the ways of talking we acquire the ways of viewing social reality. In other words, normative discourse will affect our behaviour, discursive and practical.

## Aims and hypotheses

In the present study teenagers were asked to comment on media projections of intergenerational communication. More specifically, they were exposed to excerpts of TV programs that portrayed intergenerational encounters and were asked to respond to them. The aim was to discover how the media recipients would link media messages to their own experience and their knowledge of the world, and how this link would be discursively constructed and mediated. In other words, the point was to see if media recipients would make sense of the media representations by referring to their personal knowledge and to get an insight into how this process relies on the media's and individual's discursive practices.

The research questions and working hypotheses that have guided the research may be thus presented in a tabulated way:

Table 1. Research questions and working hypotheses

Research questions	Working hypotheses
How do young people relate to the actions and roles of people involved in intergenerational encounters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– by referring to their general knowledge of the world</li> <li>– by referring directly to their own experience</li> <li>– by referring to their immediate social contacts such as family members, particularly parents</li> </ul>
How do they perceive the media representations in relation to social and/or psychological reality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– by referring to them as reflecting reality</li> <li>– by referring to them as stereotypical depictions of reality</li> <li>– by referring to them as media projections distinct from reality</li> </ul>
How do they respond discursively to these media representations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– by replicating media discourse</li> <li>– by critically assessing media discourse</li> </ul>
How do the participants position themselves towards media images (MI) of intergenerational encounters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– by legitimising MI as models of social behaviour</li> <li>– by reflecting on them using their social knowledge and personal experience</li> <li>– by rejecting them</li> </ul>

## Method and procedure

First, two samples of 60 informants each were probed for exposure to popular TV series. They confirmed the popularity of one, pre-selected TV series in a questionnaire about their peers' TV watching preferences. The series was then scrutinised for whether it explicitly or implicitly marked age as a relevant social variable and how it represented intergenerational communication. Next, communicative encounters between characters of different generations were excerpted from the episodes to serve as interview vignettes. In semi-structured interviews with adolescent participants (four females and four males aged 17 to 18) a young interviewer discussed with them issues presented in the vignettes. It is important to point out that the interviewer did not summon the participants to discuss age-related issues. Rather, he asked them, in a very general way, to comment on the situations represented in the excerpts.

The vignettes were video excerpts representing encounters between characters of two generations, young (20+) and middle-aged (40–50). These characters were family members (father and children) or colleagues. Below are transcripts of exchanges from the video clips, translated from the Polish originals. Two of them feature conflict talk, while the third one is an example of collaboration around common interests. The last excerpt, showing two middle aged characters, elaborates on the picture of the older generation projected in the TV show.

**Vignette 1** is a conversation between a father and a son at a breakfast table, the third parties referred to are young family members or friends.

- Son Dad, what are you doing?  
 Dad Nothing.  
 Son Ulka is already gone?  
 Dad Already? She's long since gone.  
 Son Yes, but when I came back home yesterday, she was asleep, and now she's not here. I wanted to talk to her.  
 Dad What about?  
 Son Eh, nothing much.  
 Dad And couldn't you talk to me?  
 Son What's the use of telling you that Kinga has broken up with Robson? I mean in fact I don't know what it was all about, so perhaps I will go and find out?  
 Dad Oh, yes, go, go, instantly, go now!  
 Son Yes, I knew that it was no use talking to you!  
 (...)  
 Dad And after all you are to stay with your little sister. Cause I need to go out.  
 Son Ah, that is why you advise me against going.  
 Dad No, not at all. But since you are staying at home, you can help, can't you?  
 Son Alright, I can. If I have to.

The situation presents a communicative conflict between the interlocutors. At the start the son does not intend to share with his father, yet he is encouraged to and ultimately regrets doing so. In the end he feels manoeuvred into giving up his plans to go out and instead staying at home to babysit his little sister.

The characters in **Vignette 2** are a son and a father who are colleagues at work. The father is an eminent fashion designer, who stopped working on an urgent project to protest the pressure exerted on him by the boss because of the upcoming deadline. Instead, he went to a company café to have a drink.

- Son Dad, what are you doing here?  
 Dad I am drinking.  
 Son Stop fooling around. There is really no time for that.  
 Dad Time is a relative concept, my son.  
 Son Pull yourself together! Let's go back to work, shall we?  
 Dad *She* has sent you!  
 Son Do you want to know who sent me? My filial instinct.  
 Dad *What* sent you?  
 Son Blood ties. Cause I cannot stand how my father is making a fool of himself.  
 Dad You are forgetting yourself, you little shit!  
 Son Dad, please, stop pretending. (...) You are not like that. You are a really cool guy, everyone at the company respects you, you are the best! Without your help everything will fall apart. Everyone knows that, you too. Dad, please, help us!

This is another conflict situation, actually one verging on a crisis, in which the son pleads the father to help a emergency at work by expressing his trust and appealing to the father's sense of obligation. It represents a reversal of a stereotypical role arrangement in that it is the son who feels responsible for the work to be done while the father is rebellious and stubborn.

**Vignette 3** presents the next context, in which neighbours of two generations meet in front of the older man's house, while he proudly shows the younger man a vintage motorcycle that he has just restored.

- J. Maciek, look!!  
 M. No, what a cutie! Wow!  
 J. Isn't it? And how much work I had to do over it. And the worst was that no one was to know about it.  
 M. I knew.  
 J. Yes, but you did not give me away.  
 M. How could I?  
 J. The kids would home-arrest me if they had known.  
 M. The kids will now be afraid that you will pick up chicks by showing them this beauty.  
 J. I already have, and without this.  
 M. Then there are two of us.  
 J. Really?  
 M. Yes, yesterday.  
 J. A new one?  
 M. No, old one, I mean young but not new.  
 J. And such are the best. I was just telling Jasiiek (my son) that in these matters one should not hurry. Haste makes waste.  
 M. Exactly. I spent many months to obtain this but now I am sure what I've got.  
 J. Yes, so do I. That is I hope so.

The exchange is an example of sharing interests and emotions over two kinds of beauty: the motorcycle and the woman. The men share both their admiration for the motorcycle and their pride on how they succeeded in forming romantic relationships.

**Vignette 4** features two middle-aged characters, a man and a woman, who meet in front of a company building as the woman leaves work. The man stands by his vintage motorcycle which he brought to present to the woman and to offer her a ride. Indeed she is intrigued by the vehicle. They drive away together. This last excerpt does not present an intergenerational exchange, but was used in the study as a trigger to complement the portrait of the older characters and proved very resonant. It played a powerful role in activating age stereotypes.

## Results

In the interviews using the vignettes, the participants were asked to comment on the content presented to them. The aim of the study was to reveal young people's responses to the age marked media representations. In particular, it was hypothesized that they would find their private, real-life experience relevant to the interpretations of fictional events from the TV show. Indeed, the participants proved able to reflect on the situations included in the vignettes, irrespective of whether they were familiar with the TV film series the excerpts came from. The following patterns have been observed in how they responded.

### Personal lens

One of the intuitive expectations about media reception is that media messages become recontextualised into the user's personal knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The relocation of media meanings and media discursive practices onto the personal cognitive space marks the media consumer's attempt to make sense of them in relation to other things already meaningful. In the very process of transmission between contexts, the original message, as intended by the media author, gets transformed, subject to the interplay with other meanings and discourses. This process will not only be controlled by the consumer, who may be more or less media literate, but will as well be regulated by the ideologies dominant in a given environment (which include, for example, stereotypes) [cf. Hall 1977].

In the present study participants related the representations of intergenerational contacts to their personal experience, typically by referring to their own contacts with family members, in particular their parents.<sup>7</sup> They have sometimes described this process very explicitly:

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<sup>6</sup> Recontextualisation is originally a sociological concept [Bernstein 1990], and has been used in linguistics to refer to the process of meanings (of texts) and discursive practices moving from one social context to another [cf. also Sarangi 1998].

(1)  
jeżeli miałabym patrzeć przez pryzmat swojej rodziny to dla mnie jest to sytuacja nie do pomyślenia (ONA 17)<sup>8</sup>  
(if I were to view this through a personal lens of my own family, that would be an unthinkable situation for me]

(2)  
ja raczej nie rozmawiam z moim ojcem w taki sposób i na takie tematy (TK 18)  
(I rather don't talk to my father in this way and about such topics]

The following comment suggests that the participant actually judged the reality of a media situation by reference to what is likely in their own family: if they themselves would not do something, no wonder the character would not either.

(3)  
Ja bym z moimi rodzicami nie rozmawiała o takich rzeczach. Dlatego wydaje mi się prawdopodobne że on się najpierw pyta o siostrę a dopiero potem mówi jak już nie ma szansy porozmawiać z siostrą. (KA 18)  
[I would not talk to my parents about such matters. Therefore it seems pretty realistic to me that he first asks about his sister and only then he talks when there is no chance to talk to his sister]

## Referring to world knowledge and social expertise

In another typical response pattern, participants related to the vignette content by referring to their knowledge of the world, specifically to the social roles they think are ascribed to people (in real world). In the following comment the speaker generalises the situation presented in the film (where the protagonist is a single father who looks after his three children) to the gender roles current in real world, and he further projects his knowledge about the characteristics of people who play these roles:

(4)  
samotny ojciec musi też przejąć rolę matki i musi się stać bardziej kobiecy i bardziej uczuciowy (TK 18)  
(a single father must also take on the role of the mother, he must be more feminine and more emotional]

In another example, the participant diagnoses the social relations presented in Vignette 2, in which he thinks the typical roles are reversed, with the son behaving like a father:

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, commentators of the US media market have found younger consumers' much less concerned about privacy than older ones [cf. *Media Consumption Habits Across Generations*]. If this is a more universal pattern, it may also explain our young participants' readiness to reveal what might be considered intimate information for interpreting media messages.

<sup>8</sup> The participant's symbol and age are given following each transcript fragment.

(5)

ojcowsko-synowska relacja jest trochę tutaj wypaczona, chociaż może to jest kwestia tego do czego ja przywykłam że... w momencie kiedy syn mówi ty jesteś spoko gość na luzie w zasadzie przejmuje rolę ojca w tej rozmowie (ONA 17)

[the father-son relation is a bit distorted here, though perhaps it's a matter of what I am used to that when the son says you're a cool guy he practically takes over the role of the father in this conversation]

Another aspect of the generalized knowledge of the world that the respondents found relevant are social stereotypes. This participant claims that something is 'typical', presumably by generalising his own experience:

(6)

To jest takie typowe, idzie dziecko do rodzica zwrócić na cokolwiek uwagę to rodzic nie pomyśli 'hm, a może on ma rację', tylko pierwsze co będzie 'ty, gówniarzu, nie zapominaj się!' (...) to jest taka sytuacja, powiedziałbym, często bardzo życiowa, przynajmniej tak zauważam z własnego doświadczenia (AM 18)

[This is very typical, a child goes to a parent to make some kind of remark, and the parent will not think 'hm, perhaps he is right' but will first go 'hey, you little shit, don't you forget yourself!' (...) this is, I'd say, a very realistic situation, at least this is what I notice on the basis on my own experience]

Media portrayal of members of the older generation seemed powerful in activating age stereotypes. Apparently, a part of the stereotype of middle-aged people is the notion of them commonly going through some sort of a personal crisis. Some young participants confidently used the label of "midlife crisis" and were even able to contextualize it: 'acting wild' was presented as a remedy for problems caused by sensing the passing of youth. Many found the notion relevant to their personal experience by referring, again, to family members, as in the following examples:

(7)

na przykład mój ojciec który już skończył jakiś czas temu pięćdziesiątkę też ma jakieś wizje że nagle jedzie na narty albo leci na Mauritius żeby żeby tak odreagować i się wyszaleć razem ze swoimi kolegami albo gdzieś jadą na harleyu dookoła kraju (AM 17)

[for example my father, who is over fifty, also has these visions that all of a sudden he goes skiing or flies over to Mauritius to together with his male-friends, in order to chill out or have fun, or they make a Harley cruise around the country]

(8)

tutaj może na przykładzie mojego ojca (...) widzę u niego że na przykład zaczął sobie kupować i-poda, znaczy zaczął po prostu takie gadżeciarstwo stosować, i-poda, tutaj jakiś tablet apple, zaczął się uczyć programów graficznych (...) wygląda tak samo, ubiera się tak samo tylko bardziej tak po cichu realizuje tutaj swoje [pasje] (TK 18)

[I can use the example of my father (...) I can see that he started buying [gadgets such as] an i-pod, he became fond of gadgets, an Apple tablet, he started to learn graphic [computer] programs (...) he looks the same, he dresses the same, only rather more quietly he realizes his [passions]]

(9)

czasem się słyszy że jakiś dziadek w wieku lat 60 przykładowo rzuca swoją żonę, znajduje kochankę i jedzie z nią na Karaiby, to na przykład koleżanki dziadek tak zrobił (AM 17)

[One sometimes hears that some grandpa aged 60 for example dumps his wife, finds a lover and goes off with her to the Caribbean, for instance my friend's granddad did such a thing]

In this context the discourse of the local 'agelore' has been called upon, which is an interesting example of an interdiscursive construction, presumably used to draw on the authority of social astuteness:

(10)

można powiedzieć taki kryzys wieku średniego, głowa siwieje, dupa szaleje, jak to się mówi (X 17)

[You may say this is a case of a midlife crisis, 'your hair goes gray, your ass goes wild', as they say]

The young people's reception of the passionate behaviour of the middle-aged seemed rather restrained. Nevertheless, more than one participant found the situation presented in Vignette 4 rather uplifting and appreciated the 'young' behaviour of the older characters:

(11)

nie wiem, może to był jakiś przejaw jakiegoś kryzysu wieku średniego ale nie wiem no w sumie takie podnoszące na duchu to było, że to nie jest tak że takie miłości się zdarzają tylko w młodości (TK 18)

[I don't know maybe this was a manifestation of some kind of midlife crisis but is all in all this is rather heartening that it is not that such loves happen only in youth]

## Rejection of behavioural and linguistic inappropriateness

One aspect of the portrayal of the older generation that was categorically rejected by the participants was older people's use of (fake) "young people's slang". Many of the participants used negative labels about such behaviour, for example: *artificially* (P. sztucznie), *weird* (P. dziwnie), *ridiculous* (P. śmiesznie), *forced* (P. na siłę), *rather embarrassing* (P. dosyć żenujące), *unnatural* (P. nienaturalne) or *exaggerated* (P. przerysowane).

(12)

W ogóle nienaturalne jest to że ten facet tam nie wiem, czterdzieści parę lat zakładam, używa takiego slangu młodzieżowego (AA 17)

[In general it is unnatural that this guy, I don't know, forty plus I assume, uses this kind of teenage slang]

The speaker in (12) further delineates a double standard for language use by adolescents and adults:

(13)

‘wyrzywać laski’ brzmi wulgarnie w ustach dorosłego mężczyzny (...) w powiedzeniach młodzieżowych nie jest to niczym złym bo tak się mówi, mówi się wiele wyrazów, które dla ludzi dorosłych są obraźliwe (AA 17)

[‘picking up chicks’ sounds vulgar when said by a grown-up man (...) in teenage talk this is not anything bad ‘cause it this is how they talk, they use many words which are offensive to adults]

Also others found this behaviour objectionable or plain pathetic:

(14)

na pewno można usłyszeć starsze osoby które chcą używać jakiegoś slangu młodzieżowego ale jest to zdecydowanie przerysowane jak dla mnie, gdyby to była dwójka rówieśników to byłoby to jeszcze zrozumiałe (AM 17)

[surely you can hear older persons who want to use some kind of young people’s slang but this is definitely exaggerated for me, if it were a couple of peers then it would be understandable]

(15)

(...) kiedy ktoś naprawdę przesadza i na przykład używa słów które zupełnie jakby nie należą do kanonu młodzieżowego a wydaje mu się że należą, na przykład byłem na spływie kajakowym i pięćdziesięcioletni facet płynął pod prąd i ciągle krzyczał, że jest fresh i że jest jazzowa, to myślałem, że się zesram ze śmiechu (TK 18)

[(...) when somebody really exaggerates and uses words that utterly do not belong to the canon of the young but it seems to him that they do, for instance I went on a canoeing trip and this fifty-year-old guy went against the current and kept shouting out that it’s fresh and it’s jazzy... I thought it would make me shit with laughter]

Importantly, the critical attitude refers to both the world of fiction and real life behaviour:

(16)

To wychodzi równie sztucznie jak w rzeczywistości. (KA 18)

[This looks just as artificial as [it would] in real life]

One participant brusquely rejects age inappropriate behaviour by suggesting that it is due to people’s delusions about themselves:

(17)

człowiek się czuje trochę nieswojo jak patrzy na osobę czterdziesto–pięćdziesięcioletnią która której wydaje się że wieczna osiemnastka to nie jest tylko metafora (ONA 17)

[one feels a bit uneasy when looking at a forty-fifty-year-old person who seems to think that the ‘always-eighteen’ is not just a metaphor]

## In-group and out-group: Distance-building and/or establishing common ground

Media representations of intergenerational exchanges project conflict as well as solidarity. In this study the situations of conflict were instantly interpreted by the

participants as involving two contrasting groups. Often they aligned with one of the groups marked by the use of personal pronouns: they applied the *us – them* distinction [cf. van Leeuwen 2008].

(18)

(...) z drugiej strony trochę niezręcznie jest powiedzieć takiej pełnej entuzjazmu osobie która jednak próbuje z nami nawiązać kontakt powiedzieć wprost starszy człowieku zachowujesz się głupio i mnie tak niezręcznie jest na ciebie patrzeć, więc staramy się ładnie uśmiechać i podtrzymywać tą rozmowę by jakoś zadowolić rozmówcę (śmiech) (ONA 17)

[...] on the other hand it is awkward to say to such an enthusiastic person who wants to establish contact with us, to say flatly 'old man, you act stupid and I feel uneasy looking at you', so we try to smile nicely and maintain the conversation to somehow satisfy the interlocutor (laughter)]

By contrast, Vignette 3, where two characters of disparate ages share interests and emotions, draws a picture of generational affinity. It was treated with skepticism by most participants. The one in (17) below judged the exchange as “highly improbable” exactly because of the age difference, the one in (18) rejected the representation altogether:

(19)

Jest zbyt duża różnica wieku między bohaterami żeby mogli rozmawiać w taki sposób [o kobietach], to jest dziwne. (KA 18)

[There is too much of an age difference between the characters for them to talk in his way [about women], this is weird.]

(20)

sytuacja jest tak sztuczna i tak nieprawdziwa! (...) przedstawienie tego tutaj w tej scenie z osobą w takim wieku, jest to moim zdaniem za bezpośrednie, ja się z czymś takim nie spotkałem żeby z osobą tak młodszą być tak bezpośrednim (AM 17)

[The situation is so artificial and untrue! (...) presenting this here with a person at that age, to me this is too direct, I have never come across such a thing, to be so direct with a person so much younger]

## Media literacy

In discussing the potential impact of the media on recipients' beliefs and attitudes one should take into consideration the notion of *media literacy*, i.e. possessing an understanding of how media are created and how their messages may affect users. Potter [2008] defines it as “a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. (...) Active use means that we are aware of the messages and are consciously interacting with them” [Potter 2008: 19]. Media literacy is multidimensional in that consumers do not only acquire information from the media but also need, and are prepared, to analyse and evaluate it from the emotional, aesthetic and moral point of view.

Most participants demonstrated a pronounced awareness of the fact that the media representations of real life are premeditated and schematic (and thus 'artificial'), yet this is what they have to be:

(21)

Wydaje mi się że wszystkie seriale bazują na schematach, na stereotypach. (KA 18)  
[It seems to me that all TV film series are based on schemas, on stereotypes.]

(22)

Te dialogi są przede wszystkim ułożone, sztuczne. (...) Ale wydaje mi się że to jest konieczne w serialu żeby w ogóle go rozumieć bo gdyby naprawdę próbowali odwzorować życie takie jakim jest to nikt by nie zrozumiał w ogóle nic z tego. (KA 18)  
[First of all these dialogues are set, artificial. (...) But this seems necessary in TV film series to understand it at all 'cause if they tried to reflect life as it really is, no one would understand anything at all.]

She further acknowledges media impact on viewers by suggesting that authors of film series intentionally create situations that might be judged as improbable in the hope of providing audiences with models of behaviour:

(23)

Może twórcy serialu mają nadzieję że przekonają ludzi że powinni szczerze ze sobą rozmawiać i tworzyć takie kontakty. Ale to jest mało prawdopodobne. (KA 18)  
[Maybe the authors of this film series hope to convince people that they should talk frankly and establish contacts like this.]

In another example, the speaker shows an awareness of how media representations have authors who in turn have certain intentions:

(24)

Ciekawe jest to, że wykorzystują (...) taki motyw związany z zakochaniem, właśnie jazda na motorze to miało być romantyczne.  
[It is interesting that they use this motif associated with being in love, this motorcycle ride, it was supposed to be romantic.]

By contrast, the participant in (25) views the main function of television as entertainment rather than education:

(25)

nie wydaje mi się aby celem serialu była rola dydaktyczna, dla społeczeństwa, tylko raczej to co wzbudza wiele emocji, to co się fajnie ogląda (...) tym bardziej w telewizji, telewizji komercyjnej (AM 17)  
[I don't think that the aim of a TV film series is [playing] the didactic role, for society, but rather something that gives rise to a lot of emotions, something that is fun to watch (...) especially on television, commercial television]

In general, the respondents seemed to have an understanding of how media portray (and perhaps regulate) social relationships. (26) is an example of a response in

which “mass culture” is pointed at as projecting a picture of youth in relation to the older people:

(26)

Właśnie tak jest w tej kulturze masowej że młodość jest pokazywana jako taki czas gdzie wszystko chcemy zrobić szybko i od razu, bez patrzenia może na konsekwencje a właśnie ci starsi ludzie, mentorzy może jacyś nas tonują, mówią żeby poczekać, zobaczyć bo to może przynieść takie a nie inne skutki w przyszłości (X 18)

[It is true about mass culture that youth is shown as a period when we want to do everything fast and instantly, perhaps without thinking of the consequences, and those older people, maybe our mentors, tone us down, say that we should wait and see because this may bring a certain of outcome in the future]

Notably, the speaker uses the first person plural reference thus identifying himself with the young generation and the rather detached phrase of “those older people” to juxtapose the old(er) with the young.

## Summary and conclusions

The young participants of this study supported the process of making sense of the media portrayals of intergenerational contacts by referring to their personal experience and world knowledge (social roles, stereotypes). In their interdiscursive responses they directly related fictitious situations to real ones. On this basis the participants aligned with the presented images or rejected them as unrealistic. They demonstrated heterogeneous orientations towards the media images, which however most of them viewed as stereotyped and exaggerated. In their attitudes, participants treated the older generation as out-group (“the other”), towards which they showed empathy but also distance and reservation, which is in line with the ambivalence of attitudes of young adults towards the elderly described in recent Polish studies.

Media recipients tend to give credit to media representations particularly when they lack personal experience and knowledge to verify them [cf. Harwood’s [2007] review of cultivation theory]. It is easy to assume young audiences’ limited experience. However, the current study has demonstrated that the young participants possessed relatively rich personal experience, which they were eager to share. Nevertheless, the participants’ reception of media messages seemed emotionally detached: they did not show great emotional involvement, neither did they seem to treat the media images and situations as real (rather than fictitious).

However, the current analysis has also shown how media recipients employ their media competences (i.e. media literacy): the participants were rather critical about media projections and were able to point out how these projections were products of the media, distinct from reality. In other words, the link between media representations and (personal) reality was marked, but its nature seemed to be understood as conventional and genre/channel-specific.

In conclusion, as the current study suggests, young media consumers readily relate media content to their life experience, whose expanse is not to be underestimated. Secondly, it is important to take into account young people's considerable experience with the media as 'native users'. As a matter of fact, by assuming limited experience of young media recipients we may miss their surprisingly far reaching expertise on the workings of social life as well as overlook their media literacy skills. It seems that by late adolescence people attain the level of media literacy that allows them to treat media as a source of entertainment rather than instruction. Possibly, with the role of media thus understood, direct contact between members of different generations will exert more influence on intergenerational relations than mediated interaction.

This study has not dealt with a representative sample of young media consumers and therefore is not making quantitative claims. Instead, it is hoped to have demonstrated the mechanism of media content interpretation. Having explored this in the context of intergenerational contact I suggest that, for the sake of the young generation, it is worth increasing adolescents' media literacy rather than limiting their media exposure or monitoring the media content they consume.

The quality of life is crucially dependent on an individual's creative and satisfactory functioning in social relationships. I hope that this insight into the discourse of and about intergenerational communication will contribute to understanding the dynamic processes of mediating intergroup contact, for the benefit of all concerned.

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Ewa Glapka

## Media discourse consumption and quality of life: Polish adolescents reading their favorite magazines

**Abstract:** The present study examines relations between the representation of gender in two popular magazines and the notions of masculinity and femininity which are developed by their adolescent readers. The tradition of Polish media studies has been dominated by quantitative research methods. The social implications of media use have been based on a purely semiotic approach to text analysis. The current investigation represents the qualitative tradition of discourse and social studies and assumes a critical research perspective. It is a second step of research, following a pilot study conducted among 60 high-school students to identify general patterns of media consumption among teenagers. The examination of media discourse is followed by the analysis of interviews with their actual recipients. Their media practices and gender identities are considered important for the quality of their life.

**Key words:** Critical Discourse Analysis, gender identity, media discourse, media reception

### Previous studies on teen magazines in Poland

Research on teen media in Poland has predominantly drawn on the methodology of *content analysis* [e.g. Kołodziej 2000, Ejsmont and Kosmalska 2005]. In this quantitative mode of analysis text is scrutinized for potential continuities between key words and their semantic fields so as to identify the actual (contextualized) meaning of the words. The meanings are considered as marked for specific values, e.g. cognitive, esthetic and moral prioritized by a specific medium [Puzynina 1992: 40–43]. The earliest studies of teenage media market that has taken shape from 1989 onwards bring critical accounts of the ways in which teen magazines represent the world and of the social implications this may have for young media users. To illustrate, Śliwińska [1992] argues that the social reality constructed in teen magazines resembles an Arcadian world, totally disconnected from the actual reality – uprooted from the ‘here and now’ and its most down-to-earth troubles such

as illnesses, school, work. In this reality, time proceeds in tune with fashion rather than traditional feasts and social events. The only form of social relations is the one between a man and a woman; all adversities the young cope with are those related to unreciprocated love. In his analysis, Kajtoch [1998] proposes that the exposition to the most popular teen magazines may turn their recipients into hedonistically oriented consumers of mass culture who treat autotelic values (such as humanity, knowledge and art) instrumentally.

Furthermore, within this vein of criticism against teen media in Poland, both social and media researchers as well as journalists have recurrently made a distinction between the scapegoated 'new', foreign-owned, magazines and the more conservative, Polish titles, such as *Cogito* or *Jestem* [cf. Stomma 1995, Gutowska 1995, Krzysztofek 1993, Mazurkiewicz 1998, Nowakowska 1997, Adamski 1999]. The former have been reproached especially by the analysts who espouse a conservative, traditionally Catholic point of view [e.g. Adamski and Pióro 1999]. Due to the general, pronounced criticism concerning their corruptive influence on the Polish youth, the 'new' magazines have toned down their originally provocative content [Gola 2008: 80–81].

The impact of teen magazines on the youth has rarely been presented as positive. Contrary to the predominant outcry concerning the negative moral and language standards in teen magazines, Lizurej [2002: 83] points to some advantages that adolescents get from being exposed to the media. For instance, Lizurej claims that the psychologically oriented articles (such as personality quizzes) enforce some reflexivity upon young readers, other texts promote health awareness among teens, for example by reminding of regular gynecologist check-ups. The current investigation also makes a point of observing the media's ever increasing participation in the informal education of the young. The infotainment the media offer can be regarded as an important form of secondary socialization, its effect on teenagers by far exceeding that of school-based knowledge. According to Melosik [2002], the contemporary Polish adolescents treat formal education as necessary evil, irrelevant to their lives, and they look for more authentic models outside school, in popular culture [cf. also Fatyga et al. 2005].

Research conducted by Ejsmont and Kosmalska [2005] brings a detailed account of the values and models found in the most popular media consumed by Polish youngsters (magazines and TV). Ejsmont and Kosmalska conducted surveys among 1043 students in randomly chosen vocational, junior high and high schools, between October 2001 and May 2003. The 19 most popular titles elicited from the questionnaires were examined for key words and their semantic fields. The mosaic of disparate values constructed by the language of the magazines reveals a pronounced emphasis on values concerning sensuality, health, customs and fashion. The youth culture presented in the discourse of the magazines, Ejsmont and Kosmalska conclude, is constructed as inherently postmodern [Ejsmont and Kosmalska 2005: 212].

The festive attitude to life inscribed in postmodernity – its joyfulness, defiance of authority and tradition – is supposed to attract adolescent consumers. Of course, appeals made by media producers to their target readership are based both

on their own notions of the group and on the analyses of media market. Therefore, the researchers underscore:

Analiza przekazów masowych nie może być kompletna bez poznania, do kogo rozważane przekazy dotarły oraz jak zostały odebrane. Poznanie zbiorowości odbiorców jest istotnym przedmiotem badań, ponieważ na tej podstawie można ustalić wielkość i skład publiczności poszczególnych środków przekazu, określić czynniki różnicujące preferencje i nawyki odbiorców oraz wykryć najważniejsze korelacje między statusem społecznym czytelnika a typowymi dla niego sposobami korzystania z mediów [Ejsmont and Kosmalska 2005: 138].

[The analysis of mass media messages is incomplete unless the actual addressees and their reception of the messages are identified. The identification of the groups of addressees is a vital object of study because it allows determining the size and type of the media audiences as well as the factors shaping the recipients' preferences and habits; moreover, it allows the recognition of the co-relations between the readers' social status and their media consumption practices.]<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Ejsmont and Kosmalska did not conduct any interviews with their informants. This undermines the diagnostic value of their investigation. The youth's relation(s) to the postmodern values fostered in the teen-targeted magazines should be contextualized. First of all, it needs to be considered that young people represent a heterogeneous social group. Age is the only social variable which all of them have in common. Apart from that, they are unlike in terms of their gender identities, material status, place of living and interests (to name just the most obvious differences). Because such disparities may affect media consumption in various ways, the youth cannot be approached as a socially homogeneous group of informants.

At the same time, some factors affecting media consumption may be shared by many Polish adolescents, such as relatively conservative Catholic attitudes in Polish society. For example, the postmodern values which Ejsmont and Kosmalska identified in the media are not non-problematically related with the Catholic tradition. Also, the postmodern youth culture reproduced in the media discourse draws centrally on consumer practices. In this sense, media practices need to be investigated in relation to teenagers' material status and the availability of commodities which the media present as 'must-haves'.

Another vital concept that has not been directly addressed in the studies on Polish teen magazines is 'the fallacy of meaningfulness', i.e. researchers' groundless assumption that all media practices bear some significance for media consumers [Hermes 1995]. Due to this unfounded presupposition, many analysts disregard the fact that in their consumption of popular culture people do not make any in-depth interpretations of media texts. This pertains particularly to the media genres such as glossy magazines, which are habitually handled at a relatively low level of emotional engagement and cognitive involvement. This phenomenon has been indirectly pointed to by Gola [2008: 70] who distinguishes between 'spectatorship' and 'readership' (Polish: 'ogłądactwo' and 'czytelnictwo') and considers that the latter gradu-

<sup>1</sup> All translations are mine [EG].

ally gives way to the former. Young media recipients are more likely to look at media texts ('ogłądać') rather than read them, especially in the way researchers approach media discourse, i.e. carefully, thoughtfully and critically.

As much as I agree with this observation, I propose to replace the notion of 'spectatorship' with one of 'browsing-ship' ('przeoglądactwo'). The latter implies that adolescents' consumption of media texts in magazines resembles their use of media texts on the Internet and television. As such, it is marked by less attention to detail, shorter attention span, less durable effects on the reader. This was confirmed in the current study. In the preliminary written survey (cf. "Media consumption by adolescents in Poland", this volume), informants' media consumption was found to predominantly take the form of browsing rather than careful reading. The majority of their favorite magazines belong to the 'pastime' press; respondents claimed that they usually leaf the magazines through during everyday routines such as watching television, waiting at a bus stop. In this sense, it could have been expected that the fallacy of meaningfulness would be relevant to the context of the current study. Yet, adolescence is a formative period, a time of enhanced self-reflexivity when a young person looks for points of reference, anything to identify with. In turn, teenagers' approach to popular culture might be found less distanced and superficial than that of adults.

Attention to media content is but one aspect of media reception that cannot be taken for granted in the investigation of media consumption by teenagers. Another one is whether they accept or reject the content in their practices of self. In the vast majority of research, teen media have been approached as reflective of the contemporary Polish youth. This equals a presumption that young people passively internalize media messages and act accordingly. Such a research standpoint is contended here. Informants were expected to present more variegated patterns of discourse consumption. This issue is addressed by Steele [1999] in her *Adolescents' Media Practice Model* in which adolescents' reactions to media content are conceptualized as a range of highly individual practices. The model draws on the idea that young people bring into their media practices their identities – who they are and who they want to be. Adolescents (like adults) approach the media with different expectations and goals which influence the receptive processes. Sense of one's self affects the selection, exposure to and interpretation of the media. In their everyday media practices, teenagers construct their identities along two chief lines of *application* – that of *appropriation/incorporation* and that of *resistance* [Steele1999]. Simply put, they either assimilate media texts or use the media to articulate their oppositional opinions.

## Theoretical and methodological background

In the present study media consumption is investigated on the basis of the ways in which adolescents consume the media discourses of gender. Gender is understood as a set of socio-culturally established practices, relations, beliefs, and norms,

rather than as a fixed set of biological features [cf. *gender enculturation theory*, Bem 1993]. Magazines read by teenagers are approached as 'social texts' [cf. Smith 1990]. Consumption of these can be also a practice of gender in case media texts communicate gender-relevant messages.

Youth is seen here also as a social practice, unlike in the traditional quantitative teen studies where age has been understood and employed as a social variable. Here, youth is construed as a highly individual experience of self, the media and teens themselves being the chief agents of the processes in which the self is experienced and defined. Moreover, according to Spigel [1993: 259], youth has traditionally been dealt with as a "cultural construct, a pleasing image that adults need in order to sustain their identities (...) the difference against which adults define themselves". By examining the reception of media by a group of young people, the current study allowed teenagers to speak for themselves. To this end, the analysis of *Twist* and *Logo* was followed by interviews with those participants who claimed to read the two respective magazines regularly (three 17-year-old girls and three 17-year-old boys). In this way, this investigation does not contribute to the tradition of reducing the social and psychological complexity of adolescence to statistics and analysts' speculations based on quantitative data.

Adolescents have been traditionally thought of as media-savvy, by far more competent in media use than the generation of their parents and teachers. For example, Fatyga and her colleagues [2005] conclude that Polish teenagers are competent and independent consumers of the media, especially the new media. At the same time, their media competence is underappreciated by adults, who rely on more traditional forms of media consumption [Fatyga et al. 2005: 141]. However, the current investigation problematizes this popular view of teenage media consumers. Namely, a distinction is made between *media-as-object* and *media-as-text* [Silverstone 1994], i.e. between the media conceived of either as technological devices transferring media texts or as the symbolic meanings hidden in media texts. This distinction implies another one – between teens' ingenuity in utilizing new types of ever more technologically advanced devices and their reception of media content. Simply put, the fact that one is able to surf the Internet easily, does not necessarily mean that he or she is able to construct a critical relationship to what he or she is said by the medium.

The latter type of media competence, I propose, strongly affects the quality of life of media users. The textual practices of media consumption consist in the acquisition of information which teenagers use in their education, for example in the completion of home assignments. Apart from that, the media present adolescents with various social texts which mediate the social and psychological experience of adolescence. These can be thought of as the narratives and images of adolescence, gender as well as family, school and public life. The ways in which adolescent media consumers read and interpret such media texts may affect their outlooks and social aspirations, and hence the quality of their lives.

Therefore, the discourse of the media is crucial in the investigation of the social effects on media recipients. Discourse is meant here as "a group of statements that provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about –

a particular topic at a particular historical moment (...)” [Hall 1992: 291]. Discourses determine people’s perception, imagination and ways of thinking as well as modes of actions that are taken upon them: “in the process of acquiring the ways of talking which are normatively associated with a subject position, one necessarily acquires also its ways of seeing, or ideological norms” [Fairclough 1995: 39]. In the long run, this leads to the appearance of commonality and rationality, which in turn makes the actual power underpinnings covert, removed from people’s consciousness. The current undertaking examines in detail traditional discourses of gender – that of *dominant femininity* [Coates 1997] and that of *hegemonic masculinity* [Connell 1987]. The main question pursued is whether a regular exposure to the gender discourses reproduced in the media shapes the ways in which adolescent girls and boys define as well as experience femininity and masculinity.

## Media discourse of femininity – *Twist*

The selection of magazines consisted in the review of the preliminary survey on adolescents’ media consumption (cf. “Media consumption by adolescents in Poland”). *Twist* was one of the magazines which a group of female informants enumerated as their favorite one. It is a monthly magazine addressed to 14–18-year-old girls. In the study, several issues of the magazine [*Twist* 2009/07, *Twist* 2009/08, *Twist* 2009/09, *Twist* 2009/10, *Twist* 2009/11 and *Twist* 2010/01] were analyzed from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA). In other words, the mechanisms of gender identity construction in *Twist* were demystified [Lazar 2002] – explicit content (e.g. information about fashion and celebrities) was scrutinized for the notions of gender which are indirectly communicated to their adolescent recipients. In the examination of the magazines, instead of focusing on the intricacies of individual texts, I took a more holistic view of the magazine, which I believe is more closely connected to the teenagers’ actual experience of media reception.

Like most women’s and teenage girls’ magazines [cf. Winship 1987, Evans et al. 1991], *Twist* draws extensively on the discourse of dominant femininity. In other words, by emphasizing physical beautification and heterosexual romance, the magazine socializes its readers into traditional womanhood. In the magazine girls are presented in specific social configurations. In terms of van Leeuwen’s [2008] *theory of the representation of social actors in discourse*, the dominant mode of representation is *differentiation*, which consists in the creation of a marked difference between ‘us’ and ‘others’ [van Leeuwen 2008: 40]. Girls are constructed by means of *relational identification* [van Leeuwen 2008: 42], i.e. in relation to significant others (family, friends and peers). The representation of girls rarely takes the form of *functionalization* [van Leeuwen 2008: 42], which means that girls are very infrequently represented as individuals who perform specific social roles. The only regular social role of girls presented in the magazine is one of a student. Still, even in the contexts related to school life girls are presented as involved in (usually troubled) personal relations with their peers, rather than as individuals pursuing their

educational goals. Likewise, adult women are not represented in their workplace; their actions stem from their maternal roles. Girls are constructed as slowly taking on the same role. For instance, in readers' letters they assume the positions of concerned observers who feel obliged to resolve family problems. In this way, I propose, the social role of mother is forcibly naturalized in teenaged readers.

A great amount of discourse concerns heterosexual relations with boys. Boys are often *collectivized* [van Leeuwen 2008: 37], i.e. presented by means of plural nouns, as a group, rather than individuals:

*chłopacy [boys], kolesie [buddies], faceci [blokes]* [Twist 2009/11]

Nominalization is also a means of *categorization* [van Leeuwen 2008: 40]. Depending on attractiveness, they are referred to as, for instance:

*niezłe ciacha [nice hunks], supergostki [great lookers], najgorsze kaszaloty [the worst eyesores]* [Twist 2010/01]

In another article, holiday seducers are classified as

*macho-ratownik [macho-lifeguard], namiętny tubylec [passionate local], pies spuszczonej ze smyczy [a dog sent off the leash]* [Twist 2009/8]

Due to this predominant mode of representation, the world of girls is constructed mainly as a highly polarized heterosexual market. These constructions as well as the amount of space taken up by boys in the local discourse are premised on and reproduce the presupposition of the overriding importance of the other sex in the life of an adolescent girl. Like in many other teen magazines, the main information provided is that “[i]f girls’ happiness requires finding romance and love, girls should learn to be informed consumers of boys” [Firminger 2006: 305]. For instance, in some texts boys are objectified:

*Jeśli w twojej bazie skończyli się faceci, skorzystaj z zasobów kolegów. [If there are no more guys on your list, see what your mates have in store.]* [Twist 2009/09]

*Poszukaj takiego, w którym niewiele trzeba będzie zmieniać. [Look for a guy whom you won't need to change too much.]* [Twist 2009/09]

Other articles in *Twist* construct boys as girls’ prey:

*Potrzebny ci haczyk. [You need a bait.]* [Twist 2009/7]

*Koleś się splotoszy. [It will scare the buddy away.]* [Twist 2009/7]

*Zaproś gościa na swój teren. [Get the buddy on your own ground.]* [Twist 2009/7]

As can be seen, boys are not only linguistically collectivized but also de-agentialized; girls’ heterosexual relations are constructed as a site where they manifest their resourcefulness and confidence. Readers are encouraged to ‘consume’ boys by taking the initiative, looking for a boyfriend as well as breaking up their relationships or making them work etc.:

*Zaintryguj go. [Intrigue him.]* [Twist 2009/07]

*Sama zaproponuj spotkanie [Propose a date yourself]* [Twist 2009/07]

*Zobacz, co można zrobić, żeby było wam jeszcze przyjemniej. [Check what you can do to make it even more pleasant for both of you.]* [Twist 2009/07]

*Jak podtrzymać miłość. [How to keep love alive.]* [Twist 2009/08]

*Trudno taki związek utrzymać. [Such a relationship is hard to maintain.] [Twist 2009/08]*

Apparently, girls' relationships with the other sex are constructed by means of the discourse of Girl Power. A girl in her relations with boys is presented as the feminine version of a 'macho' man – superficial and harshly judgmental of boys' looks, domineering, sometimes provocative. At the same time, the discourse of Girl Power revolves around dominant femininity, which it was originally supposed to subvert:

*Niezły sposób, żeby znaleźć faceta? Poszukać go przez net. (...) ...może być tak, że trafisz na księcia. [A good way of finding a guy? Find him on the Internet (...)] Maybe that's how you will find your Prince Charming.] [Twist 07/2009]*

Basically, the majority of decisions and actions taken by girls represent their efforts to find a 'Prince Charming'. The implicit message readers hence obtain is that being in a relationship is necessary to fully enjoy one's femininity.

The underlying contradiction between the discourse of conservative femininity and the one of Girl Power means that in teen magazines "girls walk the fine line of taking advantage of males' interest in sex and appearance, without crossing over into being a slut" [Firminger 2007: 305]. For example, in one article in *Twist*, on the one hand, summer holiday is said to be the best time to pick up a guy. Thus, a girl should not restrain herself in her efforts to do it:

*Jeśli chcesz poderwać faceta, zrób to w wakacje! [If you want to pick up a guy, do it during summer holiday!] [Twist 08/2009]*

*Nie próbuj się ograniczać i cenzurować. [Don't try to limit or censure yourself.] [Twist 08/2009]*

*Tylko jak masz być grzeczna, gdy wokół tyle pokus? [How are you supposed to be a good girl if temptations are all over?] [Twist 08/2009]*

Yet, in the same text the reader is reminded to make sure that her reputation is not threatened:

*(...) jesteś pewna, że gość nie zalicza dziewczyn seryjnie, nie słyszałaś plotek na temat jego wakacyjnych podbojów i nie widziałaś go z inną laską zanim się poznaliście, chłopak pokazuje się z tobą oficjalnie. (...) Turystka jest łatwym łupem. (...) you're sure the guy does not score girls, you haven't heard any rumors about his summer love conquests and you hadn't seen him with another gal before you met, the boy makes no secret about going out with you. (...) A tourist is an easy prey.] [Twist 08/2009].*

Apart from monitoring their conduct on the heterosexual market, adolescent girls are reminded to control their looks. Styling and beauty care are the second major form of girls' self-regulating practices propagated in the discourse of *Twist*. Girls are inundated with information about current trends in fashion and make-up. Hence, their gender practices are linked to the aspects of femininity which are easy to manipulate and change, accordingly to the context, mood, fashion etc. By equating girls' beauty with changing fashion and make-up trends, the magazine reminds the reader that her look needs to be constantly monitored, improved and attuned to what is 'in' in a given season. Arguably, the fact that most tips concerning girls' beauty pertain to make-up and clothes means that the discourse of the magazine predetermines its recipients to think of their bodies not in terms of their physical health and fitness but a commodified appearance.

Attention to appearance is externally motivated, i.e. it is constructed as another set of actions taken within the heterosexual market on which girls compete for attention and approval:

*Odstaw się jak na wybieg! [Dress like a catwalk model!] [Twist 2010/0]*

*Tak ubrana będziesz gwiazdą i pod sceną, i na parkiecie. [Dressed like that, you will be a star under the stage and on the dance floor.] [Twist 2009/10]*

*Wygrasz na bank. [You will be the winner – that’s guaranteed.] [Twist 2010/07]*

*Postaw na miniciuchy, a nikt cię nie przegapi. [Invest in mini outfits – you will get noticed.] [Twist 2009/07]*

The general message of girls’ magazines about the grooming practices is that “the road to happiness is attracting males for successful heterosexual life by way of physical beautification” [Evans et al. 1991: 110]. In *Twist* the discourse of commodified teenage body hybridizes with the discourse of conservative femininity. In turn, readers are reminded that their grooming practices are supposed to help them in finding a boyfriend and winning the attention and admiration of others. At the same time, it is consistently emphasized that a girl needs to keep a moderate appearance and control one’s looks so that she is not perceived as vulgar or provocative:

*Żeby nie wyglądać tandetnie i wulgarnie, usta pozostaw naturalne [Keep your lips natural unless you want to look tacky and vulgar.] [Twist 2009/08]*

*Wprowadź dyscyplinę [Impose discipline.] [Twist 2010/01]*

*Rozświetlacz nakładaj oszczędnie, żeby nie wyglądać jak choinka. [Apply illuminating makeup base moderately to avoid looking flamboyant.] [Twist 2010/07]*

In this way, like in the texts about girls’ heterosexual relations, in the examples above the discourse of Girl Power hybridizes with the one of conservative, patriarchal femininity.

## Readers’ reception of *Twist*

The informants in the reception part of the study, Karolina, Krystyna and Martyna,<sup>2</sup> related to the discourse of *Twist* ambivalently – they identified with the discourse to some extent as well as rejected some aspects of it. For instance, the interviewees did not align themselves with the identity of ‘informed consumers of boys’ produced in *Twist* by the discourse of Girl Power:

R<sup>3</sup>: A Ty na przykład podrywasz chłopaków?

Karolina: Nie. Na pewno, nigdy, nie.

[R: And do you pick up boys?

Karolina: No. For sure not, never, no.]

<sup>2</sup> The names of all informants have been changed.

<sup>3</sup> R – Researcher [EG].

R: To właśnie on powinien zrobić pierwszy krok czy ona?

Krystyna: Myślę, że on (z rozbawieniem).

[R: So who should make the first move?

Krystyna: I think he should. (laughs)]

Martyna: Uważam, że na przykład, lepiej chyba czekać niż szukać. Bo nie można w życiu czegoś tak po prostu znaleźć... Nigdy nie czytam właśnie takich porad jak poderwać chłopaka, bo uważam, że nie można jeżeli, na przykład, ja się komuś podobam i ta osoba mi się podoba no to coś o tym świadczy i można tą osobę poznawać, można od tej osoby coś oczekiwać, ale nie można też od niej wymagać, że gdy ja jej się nie podobam, czegoś więcej. Bo to nie jest tak, że ten podryw taki jak można w ogóle kogoś podrywać? Dla mnie to jest troszkę śmieszne i krepujące.

[Martyna: I think it's better to wait [for love] than to look for it. Cause in life you can't find anything just like that. (...) I never read this kind of advice cause I think that you can't... like when someone likes me and I like him, it means something and you can get to know this person, you can expect something from the person but you can't demand, if the person likes me, anything more. Cause it's not like that kind of picking up... Really, how can you pick up someone? To me it's a bit funny and embarrassing.]

Two of the interviewees used in their talk the magazine's implicit category of a slut:

R: Dobrze. „Faceci to moja pasja”, czytałaś to w ogóle?

Karolina: No czytałam, czytałam. Tylko tak tytuł mi nie pasuje do tego troszeczkę. No nie wiem, mam koleżankę, która całe życie praktycznie spędziła z kolegami. I dla mnie już tak nie jest taką stuprocentową dziewczyną, bo tak stała się jakoś uzależniona od nich. Na przykład chodziła z nimi wszędzie, po jakichś tam melinach. No i to jest takie kiepskie.

[R: Okay. 'Guys are my passion', have you read that?

Karolina: I have, I have. I didn't like the title though. I don't know, I have a friend who has spent her whole life with blokes. To me she is not a 100-percent girl cause she has kind of got addicted to them. Like she would accompany them everywhere, in all kinds of haunts. And that is so tacky.]

Martyna: Ja ogólnie uważam, że dziewczyny mają większy problem z tym, bo na przykład na imprezach są chłopacy tacy, że po prostu chwala się tym z iloma dziewczynami tego nie zrobił i w ogóle. To jest takie aż obrzydliwe, ale po prostu chłopacy wtedy są uważani za bohaterów, za takich a dziewczyny, nawet gdyby się pochwaliła, że zrobiła to z dwudziestoma chłopakami, uznana by była na pewno za jakąś puszczalską.

[Martyna: Basically, I think that girls have a bigger problem with that cause, for instance, at parties there are boys who simply boast about it, like with how many girls he has done it and stuff. This is in fact disgusting but in such cases boys are considered as heroes, as some kind of... and girls, even if a girl would boast about doing it with twenty guys, she would be considered as some kind of slut.]

Clearly, the girls appeared selective and critical media consumers – in their responses to texts in the magazine they relied on their personal opinions and experiential knowledge as well as rejected the model of heterosexual relations proposed by the editors of *Twist*.

In her study among Canadian adolescents, Currie [2001] found that “girls are not attracted to the glossy, pictorial texts that have been the favoured texts of middle-aged researchers (...). The girls (...) want ‘people’s life stories’, answers to everyday problems, and ‘useful stuff to read’” [Currie 2001: 263]. The same pattern of reception was identified in the current study:

Krystyna: Lubię właśnie te takie problemy czytać młodzieżowe, interesuje mnie to. I też różne są listy od młodzieży, żeby się poradzić na przykład, i też potem inaczej patrzę na różne sprawy.

[Krystyna: I like reading about that sort of young people’s problems, I find it interesting. And there are interesting letters written by young people, like they seek advice, and then I also see various things in different ways.]

Martyna: No, zazwyczaj takie artykuły, które są oparte na jakichś historiach prawdziwych i takie z życia. To mnie tak chyba najbardziej ciekawi.

[Martyna: Well, most often the sort of articles that are based on true stories and the real ones. That’s I guess the most interesting to me.]

Some stories appealed to the participants as instructive about life:

R: I co z tą historią? Ty się z nią identyfikujesz jakoś?

Krystyna: (Stanowczo) Nie, nie nie, ale wiem, że jak przeczytałam tę historię to wiem, że tacy ludzie istnieją właśnie, i wiadomo co kogo może, każdego może spotkać taki los, że nie każdy ma dobrze, na przykład, w życiu.

[R: So what about the story? Do you identify with her in any way?

Krystyna: (Emphatically) No, no, no, but I know that once I have read the story I know that such people exist and then you know what can happen, it can happen to anybody, that not everyone gets lucky in life for instance.]

(about the same story)

R: No a Ty się jakoś z nią utożsamiasz?

Martyna: Nie, na pewno nie. Znaczący, czasami może jestem taka, że za wszelką cenę chcę dojść do swego celu, ale raczej z tą dziewczyną nie

[R: So do you identify with her?

Martyna: No, sure I don’t. I mean, maybe sometimes I am a bit like her, like I always want to accomplish my goal, but not particularly with the girl.]

The ways Martyna and Krystyna spoke about the story described in the text indicate that they find such narratives authentic (e.g. “I know that such people exist”). The relations of empathy which they established to the character depicted in the story means that such texts mediate their experience of adolescent, feminine identity by providing them with a point of reference and comparison. This was implied also in Karolina’s response:

R: Bo, jak myślisz, czemu (...) one tak opowiadają swoje historie?

Karolina: No właśnie na pewno każda ma jakiś tam swój cel. Może też żeby jakoś tam uświadomić ludziom, że można. Ktoś na przykład jakoś tam, dziewczyny które były w jej wieku i sięgają po te używki co ona sięgała też sobie uświadamiają, że można, że może też coś zmienić...

[R: So why do you think they (...) tell their stories here?

Karolina: Well, for sure everybody have their own kind of reason. Maybe to kind of make people realize that you can. Kind of someone, for instance girls her age who try

the stimulants she used to try herself, come to realize that you can, then maybe they will change something too...]

The way Karolina described the intentions of the authors of texts such as true-life stories and reader letters reveals that reading the narratives evokes in her a sense of community with other girls (the authors and their addressees). On the whole, the girls' consumption of *Twist* can be regarded as both a textual practice and a social practice of establishing one's sense of self in reference to the discursively mediated adolescent femininity. Importantly, the narratives were by far more appealing to the girls than articles on beauty and fashion. That the media do not determine the teenagers' sense of beauty of the young people was evident already in the questionnaires. In the survey, girls (and boys) emphatically rejected the ideal of a model-skinny body. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that the media have been increasingly critical of this ideal; in this sense, the informants' responses may indicate that they have been influenced by the latter trend in the media discourse. Either way, this shows that adolescents are capable of establishing their own, independent outlooks on what the media tell them about culture and society.

All three informants manifested their conservative attitudes to heterosexual relations by claiming that people should not start sex life too early (for instance, before they are 18). Their conservatism was visible in their textual practices of magazine reception. The girls did not relate to the magazines' sex advice as useful or appealing, e.g.

R: Ale nie rozmawiacie między sobą o tych sprawach?

Karolina: Tak, na pewno, ale nie cytujemy jakiejś tam gazety, że na przykład z tej gazety było to czy tamto. Tylko mówimy „gdzieś czytałam, że tak trzeba zrobić”, coś takiego. Też bardziej dla śmiechu trochę.

[R: So you [girls] don't talk about it at all?

Karolina: Sure we do but it's not like we quote some magazines, like from this magazine this or that. We just say 'I've read somewhere that this is how you should do this', something like that. More for laugh, a bit.]

Obviously enough, the relation which Karolina constructed to the article in the interview may not necessarily tell anything about her actual practices. What can be stated on the basis of all interviews is either that the informants were in fact much more conservative than the editors of teen magazines apparently think, or that they found it inappropriate to reveal their liberal attitudes to sex. Either way, this implies that the girls do not find the notion of sexuality constructed in the magazine as unproblematic and fully acceptable.

## Media discourse of masculinity – Logo

*Logo* is a monthly lifestyle and shopping magazine for men. The magazine features articles about new commodities on the market, cars, fashion, sport, electronics, and beverages. Its target reader is a man, aged 25–40, a city dweller, an affluent, in-

formed consumer of high-quality products, interested in sport and aware of his looks and health. Clearly, high-school students do not belong to the target readership of *Logo*. Still, for lack of magazines addressed to younger men, boys apparently turn to titles addressing adult men. Their choice of *Logo* is thus not so much an indication of their actual consumer practices but rather of their social identities and aspirations. Probably they identify themselves with the target consumer in the sense that the 'Logo man' represents how they imagine their lives in the future. (This was indirectly confirmed in the written questionnaires in which all three informants claimed that they wanted to get well-paid jobs.)

The discussion below outlines the results of a critical analysis of *Logo*. Masculinity constructed in the magazine is significantly determined by the commercial profile of the magazine. To entice readers to the consumption of products presented in *Logo*, its editors make use of the common media and market strategy of commodification. The emergent commercialized masculinity embraces various values, tastes and practices of late-modern consumer culture. Consumption (especially of fashion and cosmetics) is not a typical practice of conservative masculinity. Shopping and grooming used to be associated with dominant femininity. The traditional masculinity, *hegemonic masculinity* [Connell 1987], is a socio-cultural construct, men's normative tendency to compete for power and dominance, subordinate women etc. It has also been traditionally related with heterosexuality, aggressiveness and men's group sports. So as to create the male consumer group of media, commodities and fashion, the media and market specialists have used the discourse of a 'new man' (embodying anti-sexist, commercialized, self-reflexive masculinity expressed through consumption) [Genz and Brabon 2009: 137]. Based on the examination of several issues of *Logo* (*Logo* 7/2010, *Logo* 8/2010, *Logo* 9/2010, *Logo* 10/2010), the magazine can be considered as premised on both discourses of masculinity.

The commodification of masculinity has led to the femininization of the emergent masculine subject. In other words, the new (commodified) man resembles in many ways a stereotypical woman, who has been commodified by media discourse much earlier. In *Logo*, this is evident in texts on clothes and cosmetics, which bear a striking resemblance to texts found in women's magazines.

*Mężczyznom o takiej posturze zdecydowanie odradzamy noszenie modeli slim. Nie najlepiej będą również wyglądać w spodniach typu loose z szerokimi nogawkami na całej długości, ponieważ optycznie poszerzają figurę, dając efekt masywnego klocka. Polecamy natomiast najmodniejszy w tym sezonie model loose & narrow, bo świetnie zamaskują masywne uda. ['Slim' models are not recommendable for this body posture. Neither are loose, wide-legged jeans as they make you look broader and chunky. What we recommend is this season's top trendy loose & narrow model which will nicely mask massive thighs]. [Logo 10/2009]*

*Zastanawiałeś się kiedyś, dlaczego twoja twarz, zwłaszcza po gorącym lecie, wygląda jak tektura – jest szara i sucha? Odpowiedź jest prosta – bo jest zmęczona i odwodniona. Jak temu zapobiec? Oczywiście powinieneś więcej spać, a mniej pracować i przebywać w klimatyzowanych pomieszczeniach. Ale przede wszystkim zacznij od regularnego stosowania kremu nawilżającego. [Have you ever wondered why your skin, especially after hot summer, looks like cardboard – it is grey and dry? It's easy – your skin is tired and dehydrated. How to avoid it? Of course, you*

*should sleep more, work less and avoid air-conditioning. But most importantly, start from a regular application of a moisturizing cream.] [Logo 9/2009]*

Like in the case of the discourse of the female body, the one of the male body is also full of presuppositions about men's discontent with their body, imperatives concerning body practices. The male body is also fragmented and commodified.

Basically, masculinity constructed in *Logo* can be conceived of as a continuum with hegemonic and new masculinities constituting its opposite ends. In opposition to the articles about fashion and cosmetics, at the hegemonic polar end are situated articles about cars, sex and sport. The authors of the texts make use of the traditional repertoires of masculinity, such as the objectification of women, male gaze, men's solidarity, men's (aggressive) sports, competition, outdoor activities, the aspirations of material and social success, interest in vehicles. For example, sport is constructed as men-only activities, the site where the stamina, perseverance, bravery and fitness of a 'true man' are probed:

*Jeśli chcesz uchodzić za prawdziwego twardziela, powinieneś zająć się jakimś mniej popularnym, ale równie krwawym sportem. [If you want to be considered as a real tough guy, you should do some less popular, but equally bloodthirsty sport.] [Logo 10/2009]*

*Ochronie kaski nosi jednak niewielu. Ostatecznie hurling to test męskości. [Safety helmets are not popular though. In the end, hurling is a test of masculinity.] [Logo 10/2009]*

Additionally, the link between sport and hegemonic masculinity is constructed by means of narratives ("My first time") in which men are presented, for instance, cliff diving, mountain cycling, partaking in sniper ambush in the woods etc.

Another regular narrative in *Logo* are the biographic articles about men of success such as Enzo Ferrari, Calvin Klein or César Ritz. Their life achievements are part of the consumer culture (car industry, fashion, celebrity culture etc.). Hence, the implied reader of the texts, i.e. one who reads the texts as narratives of success, is a naturalized member of consumer culture. At the same time, the biographies reproduce hegemonic masculinity by the accounts of the men's accomplishment of a high material status (the culturally established storyline 'from rags to riches') and the accounts of competition and struggle:

*Klein to kolejny facet, który jest uosobieniem amerykańskiego snu. [Klein is another guy embodying the American dream.] [Logo 9/2009]*

*Młody Enzo (...) pracował w niewielkiej firmie, przerabiającej samochody wojskowe na cywilne (...) w 1929 r. założył własną stajnię wyścigową (...) okazał się twardym, skutecznym menadżerem. (...) Chciał konstruować, ścigać się, wygrywać. [Young Enzo (...) worked in a small car workshop (...) in 1929 he started his own racing stable (...) he appeared to be a tough, effective manager. (...) He wanted to construct, compete and win]. [Logo 7/2009]*

In *Logo*, the discourse of hegemonic masculinity is reproduced through its commitment to the traditional, patriarchal notion of femininity. For instance, some references to women embrace the retro-sexist undertones of 'new lad' discourse, hostile to and/or condescending to women and sexualizing them, like in a text on beer-bar crawling in Prague:

*Plan jest prosty: zwiedzamy miasto, nie przemęczamy się, pijamy piwo w różnych knajpkach. (...) Drewniane ławy niewygodne, ale przy fajnym piwie, w dobrym (choć z żonami towarzy-*

*stwie, z kelnerkami, które chętnie się nad nami nachylają, przeciskają obok, odsłaniają brzuszki (...) jest nam bardzo dobrze. [The plan is simple: we sightsee the city without getting tired, we drink beer in different pubs. (...) The wooden benches are uncomfortable but the beer tastes good, in a nice company (although with our wives), with waitresses eagerly bending down over us, shoving their way to us through the crowd and showing their bellies (...) we are having a really good time.] [Logo 9/2009]*

In articles offering advice on men's sex life, women are presented as trophies:

*W sytuacji, gdy już jesteś ze swoją nową zdobyczą w łóżku, a nie jest to dobra znajoma (...) przyda ci się baczna obserwacja. [In a situation when you are in bed with your new trophy, and she is not your old friend (...) you will need to watch her carefully.] [Logo 7/2009]*

*Jeśli akurat zmieniasz partnerkę, nie stosuj tych samych pieścizot. [If you have just changed your partner, change your way of caressing]. [Logo 8/2009]*

*Mapy ciała kobiet różnią się między sobą. Nie przenoś wiedzy nabytej w innym związku na obecny. [Women's body maps vary. Do not apply once acquired knowledge in your new relationship]. [Logo 10/2009]*

Articles about sex construct women as bodies which are conquered and abandoned. They emphasize the importance of sexual prowess defined in terms of a man's ability to give his sexual partner pleasure. In turn, sex life is presented as a sport discipline in which men prove their skills, learn new rules every time they enter a new relationship and are accompanied by *Logo* experts in the accruing of new sex experiences and sexual 'know-how'.

The accounts of men-women relationships concern only sex life; emotional aspects of heterosexual relationships are completely absent from the local discourse. The articles on sex are in fact the only ones in which women are foregrounded as social actors. The majority of texts include but few references to the opposite gender. If they do, the texts usually mention 'partners' (rarely 'wives' and 'girl-friends'). Clearly, the construction of masculinity in *Logo* is unlike the discourse of femininity in *Twist*. Relational identification is limited to the heterosexual contexts and to the contexts of men-only practices of gender such as sport, traveling and consumption of commodities (cars, beverages, electronic equipment). Relationships are thus constructed as material actions rather than emotional relations. The lack of accounts in which men are presented through functionalization, i.e. as performing specific social and professional roles, is most probably related with the lifestyle profile of the magazine.

## Readers' reception of *Logo*

Throughout the interviews, the participants, Miłosz, Dawid and Daniel, displayed ambivalent relations to the masculinities reproduced in *Logo*. For example, on the one hand, when the boys claimed their plans of starting a family, they saw their role in the family life primarily as the one of a breadwinner. On the other hand, they were in favor of fully democratic family roles and would not shun taking over childcare and quitting job (in contrast to the apparently conservative model of

their family life). This ambivalence can be explained in reference to their social location. Namely, the identity of men in small-town communities, especially the generation of the boys' fathers, has not accommodated many (if any) features of the new man.

Unlike the girls, whose responses were relatively unanimous, the relations which the boys established to the discourse of the magazine were more diversified. For example, the interviewees' identification with the new man was evident in their unashamed, yet minimal concern about their looks – the use of cosmetics and attention paid to outfit. In other moments, Daniel demonstrated the strongest commitment to commodification and consumption:

B: W swojej ankiecie wymieniałeś dużo marek. Interesujesz się aż do tego stopnia modą?

Daniel: Nie no, po prostu, znane marki to się często słyszy, więc tak mi się skojarzyły z modą.

R: A Calvina Kleina kojarzysz?

Daniel: No tak, szczególnie bokserki, jego bielizna jest najbardziej znana. Ostatnio się też jak otworzyła się Galeria Malta, tam też jest jego sklep.

R: Często przyjeżdżasz do Poznania na zakupy?

Daniel: No na zakupy właściwie chyba tylko tam. Szczególnie na sale, wyprzedaże. Lubię się tanio ubrać i w stosunkowo dobrych markach.

[R: In your questionnaire, you enumerated many brands. Are you interested in fashion?

Daniel: No, I just hear about the brands here and there, so I get these associations.

R: Do you know Calvin Klein?

Daniel: Sure, especially his boxers, his underwear is the most popular. Actually, one of his stores is at Malta, the mall which has recently been opened.

R: Do you often go shopping in Poznań?

Daniel: That's the only place where I shop, especially in sales' season. I like wearing reasonably good brands for reasonable money.]

Conversely, Miłosz expressed his critical detachment from consumer culture:

Miłosz: Ja z reguły wiem co chcę sobie kupić, ewentualnie w czym się widzę, co lubię nosić. A nie lubię jak mi ktoś narzuca, że mam ubrać to i to. Dlatego, moim zdaniem, moda niech sobie będzie toczyć się inną drogą, a i tak będę nosił to co mi się tak naprawdę podoba. No i te wszystkie gadżety, uważam, że bez tego też się można obejść.

[Miłosz: I usually know what I want to buy, I mean I know what I like wearing. But I don't like when somebody tells me what I should wear. So, I say, let fashion be the way it is, and I will wear what I personally like. And all those gadgets I find dispensable.]

Dawid did not affiliate with commodified masculinity, but was not as critical of it as Miłosz:

Dawid: To Ci sprawia jakąś przyjemność? Chodzenie po sklepach, przymierzanie ciuchów? Czy tak nie bardzo?

R: Znaczy, nie czerpię z tego jakiejś wielkiej przyjemności.

Dawid: Niektórzy to wręcz uwielbiają.

R: Po prostu idę, wiem, że chcę kupić spodnie, wchodzę do sklepu, patrzę – te spodnie mi się podobają, przymierzam, jak są dobre – biorę.

[R: Do you enjoy shopping? Going to different stores, trying things on?

Dawid: I mean, I don't get like really great pleasure from it.

R: Some people love it.

Dawid: I just go there, I know I wanna buy pants, I enter the store, I look, I like the pants, I try them on, if they fit me – I take them.]

The boys' responses were alike when they were asked about some explicit constructions of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, all three informants expressed their distance from the identity of a 'playboy' which was made available in the discourse of *Logo* in many texts and images, for instance in an ad for a deodorant:

R: A powiedz mi, co sądzisz o tej reklamie? Tutaj jest za modą taka reklama „Hollywood Playboy”.

Miłosz: To znaczy, uważam, że no dobrze, może sobie ładnie pachną, ale bez przesady. Ten obrazek to naprawdę, coś tak wymyślonego i tak głupiego, że...

R: A czemu głupiego?

Miłosz: No bo, moim zdaniem...Inaczej. Reklama ma, wiadomo, trafić do klienta potencjalnego.

R: No tak, czyli do przeciętnego faceta.

Miłosz: Ale do mnie to nie trafia. I, na przykład, niektóre rzeczy poddaję opinii publicznej, znaczy, że nie kupię sobie tej rzeczy, no bo może mnie ktoś powiązać z tą reklamą, a nie chciałbym być uważany za takiego kogoś tutaj.

R: Czyli właśnie kogo? Jakbyś mógł to określić.

Miłosz: No, że psikam się tym perfumem bo chcę żeby laski na mnie leciały. To nie, to odpada.

[R: So what do you make of the ad? “Hollywood Playboy”?

Miłosz: I mean, okay, maybe they smell nice, but give me a break. This picture here is really, it's so forced and stupid that...

R: Why?

Miłosz: Cause, well, I think that... Let's put it this way, an ad, obviously, has its potential customer.

R: Yeah, like an average guy

Miłosz: But it doesn't appeal to me at all. Like, sometimes I think about what other people think, in the sense that I won't buy a given thing because somebody may associate me with a given ad, and I wouldn't like to be perceived as someone like the guy here.

R: So like who? How would you describe him?

Miłosz: Well, I spray the perfume all over men and then chicks want me. Please, this is so not me.]

Daniel: Ta reklama kojarzy mi się z reklamą również innego dezodorantu – Axe. Że niby zapach ma przyciągać kobiety.

R: A tak faktycznie ma być? O to właśnie chodzi jak facet wybiera dezodorant?

Daniel: Ja wybieram taki jak mi się podoba, a czy się sugeruję czy on się spodoba komuś innemu? To raczej mnie mało interesuje.

R: To dlaczego te reklamy tak właśnie wyglądają, jak myślisz?

Daniel: Taki stereotyp faceta „macho”, coś takiego. Ale ja się z tym nie utożsamiam.

[Daniel: I associate the ad with an ad for another deodorant – Axe. Like, this fragrance is supposed to attract women.

R: Is that what men have in mind when they pick deodorants?

Daniel: I pick the ones which I like, I do not think about who will like it. It doesn't really bother me.

R: So why are such ads made?

Daniel: It's a stereotype of a man. A macho, something like that. But I do not identify myself with it.]

Still, at other moments of the interviews the boys' projected some affiliation with hegemonic masculinity. Their commitment to the more traditional masculinity was most explicit when they talked about women. Establishing their relations to some texts, the participants used the essentialist discourse of gender reproduced in *Logo*. For example, in reference to the account of beer-bar crawling in Prague (quoted in the analysis above), they readily employed the article's emphatic repertoire of masculine fraternity, protective of the practices such as drinking beverage and flirting with waitresses:

Miłosz: No, tylko dobra. Tu się wybrali do baru kumple, i chcieli sobie bary pozwiedzać...Chyba, że założenia, stwierdzili, że żony pójdą z nimi, no to dobra, ich pomysł, nie za ciekawy, ale dobra (rozbawiony). Niech sobie pojedą gdzieś indziej, bo ja im tego nie bronię. Ja bym tam wolał jechać bez żony. Jakoś taki klimat męski i w ogóle. No bo co? Mam iść do baru z żoną? Jakoś tak głupio. Lepiej do restauracji jak już, co? [Miłosz: Okay, a couple of mates went to a pub, wanted make a bar tour. Apparently they let their wives go with them, okay, it's their idea, not a good one [amused]. Let them go somewhere else, not that I would be against that. I'd rather go without my wife. The atmosphere is like, manly, and stuff like that. Cause like, am I supposed to go to a pub with my wife? For some reason it makes no sense to me. I can take her to a restaurant, if she really wants.]

Dawid: No, chodziło, moim zdaniem, o to, że dwaj panowie lepiej, znaczy lepiej, nie może tyle co lepiej, ile raczej taki stereotyp, takie utarte powiedzenie, że lepiej było jechać w dwóch, pić piwo.

R: No, a w czym te żony mogą przeszkadzać?

Dawid: No w takiej swobodzie, może, między nimi.

R: A co oni by mieli bez tych żon robić?

Dawid: No, że nie mogli o wszystkim pogadać, i tak dalej.

R: A o czym by pogadali bez żon?

Dawid: Nie mam pojęcia. Na pewno nie wszystkie tematy się porusza przy żonach.

R: Na przykład?

Dawid: No nie wiem, każdy człowiek ma tam jakieś swoje tajemnice. Szczególnie dwóch przyjaciół.

[Dawid: I guess the point is that it will be better for two men, I mean better, not better but, the stereotypes is that, like it is often said 'we should have gone alone, for beer'.

R: But how can their wives spoil the fun of drinking beer?

Dawid: I mean, they take some freedom away I guess

R: So what could they have done if the wives had not been there?

Dawid: Well, they were not able to talk freely and stuff like that.

R: Talk about what?

Dawid: I have no idea, there are some things you don't talk about with your wife.

R: Such as?

Dawid: Well, I don't know, everybody has their secrets. Especially two men who are best mates.]

Similarly to the female interviewees, the boys demonstrated a much more conservative attitude to sex than the authors of the articles in the magazines they read. Daniel and Miłosz claimed that they do not have sex relations with girls yet:

Miłosz: No, te ćwiczenia, które tu proponują, żeby przedłużyć stosunek, czy coś. No, myślę, że to jest po prostu taka ciekawość, nie wiem dla kogo, ale na pewno nie dla mnie.

R: No, a gdybyś ty miał takie problemy, właśnie jakieś intymne problemy czy dylematy, napisałbyś do „Logo”? Jak byś sobie z tym radził?

Miłosz: Dylematy? Jedyne dylemat, jaki mam to, na dzień dzisiejszy może to głupio zabrzmieć, czy ten stosunek po ślubie, czy przed ślubem.

[Miłosz: Well, all these exercises recommended here to prolong an intercourse or stuff like that. Well, I think it's just some kind of curiosity but I don't know for whom, not for me for sure.

R: Would you turn to the magazine if you had such problems or dilemmas?

Miłosz: Dilemmas? The only dilemma I have now is, maybe it will sound ridiculous, it's whether to have sex before or after getting married.]

R: Tutaj jeszcze jest artykuł „Seks i siłownia”. Jakie było Twoje skojarzenie jak zobaczyłeś ten tytuł?

Daniel: Ciężko powiedzieć. Bo od razu tutaj spojrzę, od razu przeczytam pytanie, i spojrzę na rysunek. O mięśniach Kegla już, wydaje mi się, że gdzieś wcześniej o tym czytałem, się z tym spotkałem, i mniej więcej już wiedziałem o co chodzi.

R: A co w ogóle sądzisz o tym artykule?

Daniel: No myślę, że szczególnie w tym przypadku trzeba mieć stałą partnerkę, żeby o takich rzeczach w ogóle myśleć, a ja raczej czegoś takiego nie mam.

[R: There is one more article here, “Sex-gym”. What was your first association when you saw the headline?

Daniel: Hard to say. Cause I'm like, I look at the page, I read the question, and see the picture. I guess I have already read something about Kegel muscles so I knew more or less what the article is about.

R: And what do you think of the article?

Daniel: Well, I think that especially in the case like that one you need to have a long-term partner, even to think about such things, and I don't have it yet.]

Conversely, Dawid openly talked about heterosexual relations with girls:

R: Imponują ci faceci, którzy przyciągają tyle lasek?

Dawid: Nie.

R: Nie chciałbyś być na jego miejscu?

Dawid: Znaczący, zależy pod jakim względem.

R: No to rozwiń to proszę.

Dawid: No, zależy co będzie działo się potem. [śmieje się].

R: Czyli to a propos tej Twojej trzeciej przyjemności typu seks, tak?

Dawid: Tak.

[R: Are you impressed by guys who attract a lot of girls?

Dawid: No.

R: Wouldn't you like to be in his shoes?

Dawid: It depends.

R: Could you elaborate on it a little bit?

Dawid: Well, it depends on what happens next. [laugh]

R: Which means we're coming back to the third pleasure of your life? Are we talking about sex?

Dawid: Yes.]

At the same time, Dawid apparently ascribed different standards to men and women:

Dawid: Na przykład, znam dziewczyny, które myślą tylko o tym, żeby iść z facetem do łóżka.

R: I co Ty o takich dziewczynach myślisz?

Dawid: No, nie szanuję ich za bardzo.

R: A jak facet tak ma, to co wtedy? Szanujesz go?

Dawid: Znaczący, moim zdaniem nie można tego porównywać, bo z facetami to jest nawet tak, że...Na przykład, idzie facet z kobietą swoją, i przechodzi fajna dziewczyna po drugiej stronie ulicy, to jest to nawet uzasadnione genetycznie, że on się odwróci i spojrzy. Ostatnio nawet mieliśmy o tym na WDŻ-cie.

[Dawid: Like I know girls who are interested only in getting laid.

R: What do you think about them?

Dawid: I don't really respect them.

R: And what about guys who are interested only in sex? Do you respect them?

Dawid: Well, I think we can't really compare that because men... Like there is a guy going down the street with his girlfriend and there is another girl walking on the other side of the street. Actually, it is something in men's genes that will make him turn around and take a look at her. Recently we've talked about it during our sex education classes.]

Dawid's account demonstrates how difficult it is to assess the relation between the media which teenagers use and their gender identities and social practices. Here Dawid relied on the gender discourse he has been exposed to at school.

Another regular positioning in the interviews was one related to the culturally established narrative of success and social advancement. Asked about the articles of particular liking, the boys talked about biographies of rich men and relayed their stories of social and material advancement:

R: A nie imponuje Ci taka droga?

Miłosz: To znaczący, dobrze. Sam fakt, że stworzył coś od zera, mi imponuje. Ale nie chciałbym stworzyć imperium mody, że tak powiem.

R: A co ci w ludziach imponuje?

Miłosz: Znaczący, na pewno go podziwiam, że coś takiego zdołał zrobić, więc to raz. Też chciałbym mieć coś takiego, swoją firmę tak rozwinąć. (...)

[R: Don't you find his success impressive?

Miłosz: I mean, ok. I'm impressed with the fact that he made something from scratch. But I don't dream about creating a fashion empire, so to say.

R: What kinds of people impress you?

Miłosz: Well, I definitely admire him for what he has managed to do, so that's one thing. I would like to have something similar, like develop my own company. (...)]

R: A czym Tobie ludzie imponują?

Dawid: No, mi na pewno imponują jacyś wybitni sportowcy. Tacy ludzie, tu był właśnie ten artykuł o Kalvinie Kleinie, który zaczynał od dwóch tysięcy dolarów i doszedł do fortuny. Właśnie tacy ludzie, którzy z niczego doszli do czegoś. Nie ukradli, a własnymi rękami. Kiedyś też był w „Logo” taki artykuł o Lamborghini. Gościu, który zaczął produkować traktory, i w krótkim czasie też dorobił się dosyć dużych pieniędzy, kupił sobie ferrari. To ferrari mu się zepsuło, został przyjacielem z tym Enzo Ferrari, on ma

chyba tak na imię, i chciał mu powiedzieć co tam powinien zmienić w tym samochodzie, żeby takie usterki nie następowały. A ten mu powiedział, że on się może zna na traktorach, ale nie na szybkich samochodach. No i ten, chcąc udowodnić temu drugiemu, zaczął produkować szybkie samochody.

[R: How do people impress you?

Dawid: Well, I am definitely impressed by talented sportsmen. People like, there was an article about Calvin Klein who started with two thousand dollars and made a great fortune. That sort of people, people who have accomplished something. They have not stolen anything, they have done everything with their own hands. In one 'Logo' there was an article about Lamborghini. The guy started producing tractors and he soon earned quite a lot of money and he bought a Ferrari, he became a friend with Enzo Ferrari, I guess that's his name, and wanted to tell him what he should change in the car to avoid some faults. But he told him that maybe he knows something about tractors, but nothing about fast cars. So to prove the other guy he started producing fast cars.]

R: Coś jeszcze Cię zastanowiło tutaj? Albo zaciekało?

Daniel: Chyba niekoniecznie. Chociaż też właśnie pierwszy artykuł, jest o jakiejś znanej marce, i to też mnie interesuje, jak ta osoba doszła do tej sławy.

[R: Was there anything more that you found interesting?

Daniel: Not really. But I guess the first article, about some kind of a popular brand, and I am also interested in the way that person came to fame.

Considering the boys' high professional and material aspirations which they claimed in the questionnaires and interviews, their interest in the narratives suggests how strongly the masculine identity is bound with status, accomplishments and (financial) independence. This notion is reinforced in them by the discourse of *Logo*.

## Conclusions

The magazines which are read by the group of teenagers interviewed in the study have their local discourses of gender. These two media discourses belong to a network of social and cultural discourses which shape people's definitions of femininity and masculinity – their social identities, practices and relations. In this sense, the teenagers' consumption of the magazines' gender discourses may be relevant to the quality of their lives, both in the period of their adolescence and in their adulthood. Of course, the consumption of magazines is only a part of teenagers' media practices; similar analyses of the consumption of other media are strongly recommended here as they would complete the picture of the influence which the media exert on young people. The discourses reproduced in *Twist* and *Logo* may affect the ways in which the adolescents see their place in society, formulate their personal and professional goals as well as establish their social relations. Still, the ways in which the magazines influence their teenage consumers are unlike.

First of all, in Poland, there are many teenage magazines for girls, but no similar titles addressing boys. Yet, some boys apparently also need to live their adolescent masculinity through the textual practices of (print) media consumption. If they start reading lifestyle magazines for adult men (like the interviewees in this study), they

become exposed to an aspirational masculine identity. This means that from the beginning of their self-reflexive practices of media consumption, boys and girls are positioned in different ways – girls are given the opportunity to identify with other girls, boys are presented with the images of men they may want to become in the future. In the interviews, this was particularly evident in the type of texts which the informants found the most appealing. Both girls and boys pointed to narratives revealing the lives of true characters and relaying their authentic experiences. In *Twist* these were readers' letters and real-life stories; in *Logo* – biographies of famous men and "My first time" narratives. Still, the narratives in *Twist* and *Logo* are embedded in their local discourses of gender; in turn, the apparently similar media practices of boys and girls may have different implications for their social identities.

The discourse of *Twist* constructs adolescent femininity as a relational identity. This may predispose readers to identify themselves predominantly in relation to somebody else. Many of the real-life narratives reproduce the femininity because the problems and events relayed in them mainly concern girls' personal relations. Real-life narratives in *Logo* reproduce the magazine's discourse of masculinity by presenting the commodified lifestyle of the brand-conscious, narcissistic, affluent 'Logo man' and biographies of men embodying his dreams and goals. This presents masculinity as experienced in actions and through status. Therefore, material and professional aspirations are much more reinforced by the media in boys. Of course, this does not amount to claiming that girls (for lack of similar media narratives addressing them) do not have material or professional ambitions. In fact, in the questionnaires these were alike among the male and female informants. Yet, the lesson young women (subliminally) learn from the media is that the aims of attaining a high professional and financial position are natural for men, but do not inherently belong to women's goals.

The fact that both boys and girls were interested in texts presenting the experience of individual people is another important indication concerning their media practices. Apparently, young people look for some 'truth' value in the magazines, even though they often avoided explicit positive identification with men and women represented in the magazines. This blurring of the textual and experiential realities of gender means that the consumption of print media, even if limited, affects to some extent the ways in which adolescents define their social identities. At the same time, this form of influence should not be overestimated considering how selective all six informants appeared, e.g. when they rejected the media content which contradicted their personal outlooks, tastes and values.

The media practices revealed in the interviews suggest that the fallacy of meaningfulness did not pertain to the current context. Obviously, this does not indicate that all young people are careful and dedicated media consumers. The participants were selected for the interviews because they were committed and regular consumers of the two magazines. In this sense, the present investigation does not account for general media reception patterns but for the ways in which adolescents consume the media they are particularly fond of. Also, the methodology applied in the study demonstrates a significant diagnostic potential of the qualitative, micro-scale research on adolescents' media practices. In the interviews, apart from pre-

senting their habitual patterns of media reception, all six informants talked a lot about their personal opinions and practices. This revealed a lot about the quality of their lives, perhaps more than if they had been asked about specific aspects of the quality.

Another important pattern of reception identified among both girls and boys was their pronounced conservatism. The interviewees espoused more conservative values than ones reproduced in the discourses of the magazines they are fond of reading. The girls rejected the identity of 'informed consumers of boys' and expressed their concern with the social consequences of a girl's promiscuity. Likewise, the same notion was indirectly expressed by one of the male informants who was more permissive in relation to men; the other two boys openly claimed they have not started sexual relationships. Also, all six informants were committed to the traditional model of family life, i.e. a heterosexual nuclear family.

This brings an important corrective to the previous, content-based studies on teenage magazines. As has been mentioned, the underlying assumption they make is that the youth represented in the magazines reflects the lived reality of their teenage readers. Contending this, I assumed that the young media consumers do not need to fully identify with the dominant discourses of the contemporary media. In claiming this, I proposed to consider the importance of the local context of media reception. For instance, here the informants' selective consumption of media discourse was explained as related to the conservative attitudes of Polish society. The analysis of interviews confirmed that it should not be presumed that the media shape adolescent recipients. Apparently, they partake in the media consumption as already formed individuals, capable of independent thinking.

The outlooks on life, values and aspirations the group of informants talked about in the interviews undermine the discourse of scapegoating the youth. Much of what is said about youngsters (for example in the media and in private conversations) is based on the stereotype that nowadays teenagers are corrupt, carefree, self-centered and consumption-oriented. For example, according to Giroux [1998], "[y]outh become an easy target for a public discourse in which the dual strategies of scapegoating and commodifying take on the proportions of a national policy and minor revolution in the media" [Giroux 1998: 34]. Likewise, Hartley [1998: 51] recognizes the phenomenon of 'juvenation', i.e. the media's stigmatizing accounts of teenagers as inherently problematic and troublesome. In this sense, this investigation brings a cautionary note for all research on adolescents' media consumption. Namely, in the studies of both new and print media, the productive site of media discourse cannot be examined at the cost of the receptive end of media consumption. Only by allowing young media recipients to voice their opinions about the media are researchers able to get a better picture of media consumption by young recipients. Of course, informants' self-reports could be considered as a limitation of this kind of studies. Yet, in comparison to text-based analyses, audience-oriented research provides a better grounded account of the possible implications which media consumption may have for the quality of adolescents' life.

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Magdalena Aniot

## New media and new literacies: mapping extracurricular English language competences of Polish and Norwegian adolescents

**Abstract:** The aim of the present paper is to report on the results of a Norwegian-Polish comparative study into the ways in which the competence in English affects young people's quality of life in terms of new media experience. In particular, the research project focused on the role of the English language in textual identity formation processes mediated through adolescents' daily use of the Internet. Drawing on respondents' self-reports, their free time online activities were investigated in order to map the English language competences and literacy practices of in- and out-of-school contexts. The comparison of the Norwegian and Polish contexts is particularly interesting considering the dramatically different role the English language plays not only in the educational system but also in the media landscape and, consequently, in communication practices of Norwegian and Polish societies. The data for this study was collected in upper-secondary schools in Poland and Norway by means of questionnaires and focus group interviews. Despite this fairly limited scope, the study definitely sheds some light on the ways in which the English language affects adolescent experience of the media and their position in the global culture.

**Key words:** new media, adolescents, well-being, English, education

### Introduction

As results from ethnographic studies representing a variety of contexts [Filiciak et al. 2010, Ito et al. 2010], new media experience can no longer be distilled from other activities, and it seems to transform more domains of social life than ever before. Notably this "remediation" [Bolter and Grusin 2000, as cited in Filiciak et al. 2010: 7] of various activities affects learning and literacy in an unprecedented way by promoting forms of knowledge construction until now restricted to out-of-school contexts. These prioritise peer-based learning and collective authority (in contrast to expert authority) as epitomised by the popularity of Wikipedia [Filiciak et al. 2010:

116]. The lack of institutional acknowledgement of such collaborative and participatory learning has led to a situation where “school is seen as no longer holding a monopoly on resourcing literacies that are deemed necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century” [Drotner et al. 2008: 14]. The Internet and mobile devices which “facilitate access to [...] complex, semiotic processes at different spatial and temporal locations [...] have been instrumental for a dispersion of sites for potential learning” [Drotner 2007, as cited in Drotner et al. 2008: 14]. The debate on extracurricular literacies has also been recently extended to the field of second or foreign language acquisition [Black 2009; Kuppens 2010; Drotner 2001]. Indeed, considering the role of English in global communication networks, inability to engage in advanced contemporary forms of collaborative communication which often involves multimodal forms of representation would result in quite a significant exclusion from global culture. While the new literacy framework is gaining ground in the pedagogical approaches to L1 literacy as it accommodates “the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” [New London Group, 1996], the same should apply to English curriculum. The fact that “a great deal of contemporary communicative and meaning-making practices move to online, globally networked contexts” [Black 2009: 689] makes the popular media and ICTs a necessary context for English language learning. At present, these new or digital literacies are mostly developed outside school context. This is due to the fact that in most countries technological and social progress surpasses the economic growth and leaves education systems unprepared for this new reality [Drotner 2008].

Considering the integration of media with young people’s lives and the growing importance of English as a means of communication and meaning-making, also at the local level, I decided to investigate the true roles of English in the media permeated lives of Polish and Norwegian adolescents. The comparison of the Norwegian and Polish contexts is particularly interesting due to the radically different status of the English language not only in the educational system but also in the media landscape and, consequently, in the communication practices of Norwegian and Polish societies. Drawing on respondents’ self-reports, I investigated their free time media activities in order to map English language competencies and literacy practices of in- and out-of-school contexts. The main objectives were to 1) draw conclusions on the mutual dynamics of the two contexts i.e. whether they complete, reinforce or subvert one another and 2) determine the role English plays in young people’s media practices and social life. In order to provide the necessary interpretative context for the empirical results, the report proper will be preceded with some background information on the presence of the English language in media and education systems of Poland and Norway.

## English in the media

The most significant difference between Norway and Poland when it comes to the presence of English in the popular media is the fact that in Norway all foreign (i.e. mostly American) TV productions are subtitled. In Poland, on the other hand, the

dominant form of TV program/film translation is voice-over. The amount of time young Norwegians spend watching TV (approximately 184 minutes daily according to NRK<sup>1</sup>) results in the massive exposure to English on a daily basis. Taking into account the data from media diaries filled by my respondents, these figures should be significantly augmented with the time young Norwegians spend watching online TV shows and movies in the original language version, mostly without subtitles. In fact, the common knowledge that the widespread, fluent command of English in Scandinavian countries can be related to television subtitling has gained fairly robust empirical evidence [Garza 1991; d'Ydewalle and Pavakanun 1995, 1997; Koolstra and Beentjes 2002; Vanderplank 1996]. The positive effects of subtitling on language learning have been found to be limited, though, to vocabulary and pronunciation acquisition (no evidence for morphology or syntax acquisition). Our Norwegian respondents, however, would explicitly stress the fact that, thanks to the TV and online shows, they are able to experience most up-to-date *uses* of the genuine English. The impact of subtitled programmes on the development of pragmatic or multimodal competence in foreign language seems to offer, therefore, a potentially viable area of research.

Polish television, on the other hand, does not provide viewers with such affordances. What is more, due to the fact that habit determines the preferences when it comes to AVT [Koolstra 2002: 339] Polish teenagers participating in the study admitted that they simply avoid watching foreign films or TV shows in the original version.

According to both Polish and Norwegian respondents, the second medium most commonly associated with English was the Internet. Here the affordances provided by the medium are of course approximate, although, as indicated by media statistics in Poland [Czapiński and Panek 2009] access to the Internet in itself is but one factor determining the use. More significantly, the full appreciation of ICT tend to be hindered by so called “soft barriers” i.e. competence and mentality [Batorski 2009: 287]. The details of the qualitative differences in the use of the Internet by Polish and Norwegian adolescents follow in the Results section of the present report. Nevertheless, it ought to be mentioned that Norwegian adolescents use both the computer and the Internet more widely than their Polish counterparts. 91% of young Norwegians (aged 16–24) declared using the computer and the Internet every day or almost every day. By comparison, in Poland this corresponds to 75% in the case of the computer and only 66% in the case of the Internet. Norwegians are also more skilled IT users. 52% of people aged from 16–24 declare being able to perform 5–6 out of 6 computer skills listed by Eurostat<sup>2</sup>, which compares to 33% in the corresponding Polish population. The greatest disparities were revealed in the tasks of peer-to-peer file sharing and creating a web page – the activities at which Polish respondents turned out to be significantly weaker. Interest-

<sup>1</sup> Norwegian Broadcasting Association

<sup>2</sup> 1) copying or moving a file or folder 2) using copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document 3) using basic arithmetic formulas in a spreadsheet 4) compressing files 5) connecting and installing new devices, e.g. a printer or a modem 6) writing a computer program using a specialised programming language.

ingly, 81% of Polish teenagers, as opposed to 39% of Norwegians, admitted to have acquired e-skills through educational institutions. Norwegians seem to rely much more on “learning by doing” (92%) and informal assistance (86%), which suggests that they are more willing to experiment with the new technologies and have more confidence in their digital skills than Polish teenagers [Eurostat 2009]. It can be concluded, therefore, that both broadband access and IT skills constitute some sort of barriers for the Polish teenagers when it comes to engaging in advanced contemporary forms of communications on the global scale.

## English at school

The status of English in the educational system is another important difference in Polish and Norwegian contexts when it comes to explaining its presence in young people’s lives. To start with, English has been a compulsory subject in Norway since 1935, which today results in its almost second language status. By contrast, in Poland English has never been compulsory and for political reasons entered the curriculum as late as in 1989. Although it is considered to be the most useful and desirable foreign language to learn [Eurobarometer 2006: 9], its official status is equal to other modern languages. Currently, in Norway children start learning English as an obligatory subject at the age of 6. In Poland, since 2008/09, compulsory foreign language (not necessarily English) teaching starts from the 1st grade at the age of 7 (until then foreign language had been introduced at the age of 10). English is chosen by 48.4% of students in primary school, but the numbers have been slightly falling in the recent years [Eurydice 2008]. As to the minimum number of hours devoted to foreign language teaching during the compulsory education the differences are presented in Table 1.

As a consequence, the basic skills outlined in the English curricula also reveal significant differences. In Norway, the basic skills students need to gain in English correspond to those for the mother tongue and include numeracy and IT skills. In Poland the aims concentrate on developing communicative competence for purely operational purposes such as understanding and composing oral and written texts as well as oral and written interactions. As the present study revealed, the prominence of English language and technological skills in Norwegian schools predisposes young people to experiment with the new media both in the native language and in

Table 1. Numbers of hours devoted to English teaching in Poland and Norway.

	Poland		Norway	
	Hours	Percentage of the total teaching time	Hours	Percentage of the total teaching time
Primary education	215	5%	323	6.7%
Lower Secondary education	242	9.6%	453 (227+227)	17.7%
Total	456		781	

Source: Eurydice 2008.

English. This openness and confidence allows them to benefit more substantially from the affordances provided by the omnipresent media and globalised communication networks. Although language learning policies in both countries have gained priority in line with the EU's Action Plan for Languages and the prevailing attitudes to English as an international language are very positive, the studies measuring the levels of proficiency across European countries show very significant differences [Eurobarometer 2001]. This situation points to the relevance of extracurricular sources of language acquisition shaped by media and personal networks of young people [Hasebrink 2007: 114] that is the area that this project set out to explore.

## The method

The growing importance of the extracurricular sources of competence in English [Berns et al. 2007; Black 2009; Grau 2009; Warschauer 1995] and literacy practices in ICT saturated environment of young people has necessitated the reconsideration of the English curricula in European schools. Rather than apply any default adjustments, however, it seems crucial to investigate country specific intersections of youth, media and English as they have been found to yield a variety of not easily commensurable proficiencies and attitudes [Berns et al. 2007: 114]. Consequently, the aim of the present study was to compare the uses of English “from below”<sup>3</sup> in Poland and Norway in the context of new media experience. Focusing on everyday experience of participating in linguistically diversified communicative networks necessitated the qualitative approach to the data. Questions such as *How do they learn? How do they make sense of themselves in globalised media networks? or How they feel about their competences?* defy any quantitative treatment due to the highly discursive nature of the phenomena under investigation. Epistemologically, the present study subscribes, therefore, to the postmodern tradition which conceptualises knowledge as socially and interactionally constructed. Since, as Gadamer put it, “we are conversational beings for whom language is a reality” [as quoted in Kvale 1996: 37], the negotiations of “varying social presentations of self” during the qualitative interview seem to be the only valid way of probing young people’s meaning-making practices in their mediated *Lebenswelt* [Kvale 2009 :29]. In line with the qualitative stance prevailing in many domains of social sciences, only after gaining insight into the “primary experience of the world” can more abstract theories be constructed [Kvale 2009: 12]. Consequently, the empirical part of the study consisted of two steps:

- 1) a survey on extracurricular exposure to English through popular media,
- 2) weekly media diaries followed by focus group interviews whereby young people were stimulated to reflect on their media and linguistic choices.

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<sup>3</sup> Preisler [1999] uses the category “English from below” to designate usually mediated, formal and informal uses of English between speakers of the same native language.

## Survey

In Poland 305 paper questionnaires were collected during regular school time in one of the upper secondary schools in the city of approximately 950 000<sup>4</sup> residents. In order to allow for the comparison of Norwegian and Polish results, the respondents in Norway were recruited from a demographically similar upper secondary school located in a city of about 80.000 residents, where 254 online questionnaires were administered. The questionnaire was modelled on the *Engelsk i Europa – 2002* study [Ibsen 2004] and translated into Norwegian and Polish.

## Media diaries and focus groups interviews

The focus group interviews were designed as a follow-up to the first batch of results obtained by means of the survey. While the aim of the survey was to explore adolescent media-linguistic landscape in general, the interviews focused on the Internet and online communication practices as these appeared the most salient in the survey data. By asking students to reflect on some of the answers and on the media diaries, which they were asked to keep during the week preceding the interview sessions, I managed to get an insight into the motivations and true meanings of various linguistic choices they made. Altogether 6 sessions per country were recorded, each involving 4 to 6 participants, equally represented for gender.

The analysis of the verbatim transcripts was performed in four steps. First, the major themes were recognised in each interview transcript, and, if possible, grouped into broader categories. Secondly, a comparative analysis of Polish and Norwegian interviews was conducted. Thirdly, the hermeneutic interpretation of the meanings was performed by taking into account the relevant theories and broader social context of the two investigated groups. And finally, a “counter reading” was performed, in search for counter evidence for presupposed categories.

The validation of the present analysis was conducted in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, the researcher’s interpretations were negotiated during the interview. Following Kvale’s suggestion to “allow the object to object” [Kvale 2009: 301] the participants were asked for immediate feedback on some of the researcher’s conclusions. Secondly, the parallel studies were used for comparison and as a methodological resource, when possible.

Considering the qualitative nature of the analysis, the obtained results hold for the type of academically oriented, fairly reflective students of esteemed upper secondary schools. The reader is advised, therefore, to treat those observations as examples of a possible approach to language and media, possibly worth promoting for the benefit of other, perhaps less active individuals. What can be generalised from the investigated cases are, therefore, some of the rules governing the dynamics of in- and out-of school competences when it comes to L2 learning.

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<sup>4</sup> Including agglomeration.

## Results

### Extracurricular exposure to English through popular media among Polish and Norwegian adolescents

The fact that school is no longer a unique and sometimes not even the most important source of competence in English has been acknowledged by researchers (e.g. Berns et al. 2007; Preisler 1999; Eurobarometer 2001) as well as the young people themselves. The following charts present the mean ratings of different sources of English learning from the most (1) to the least (8) important:

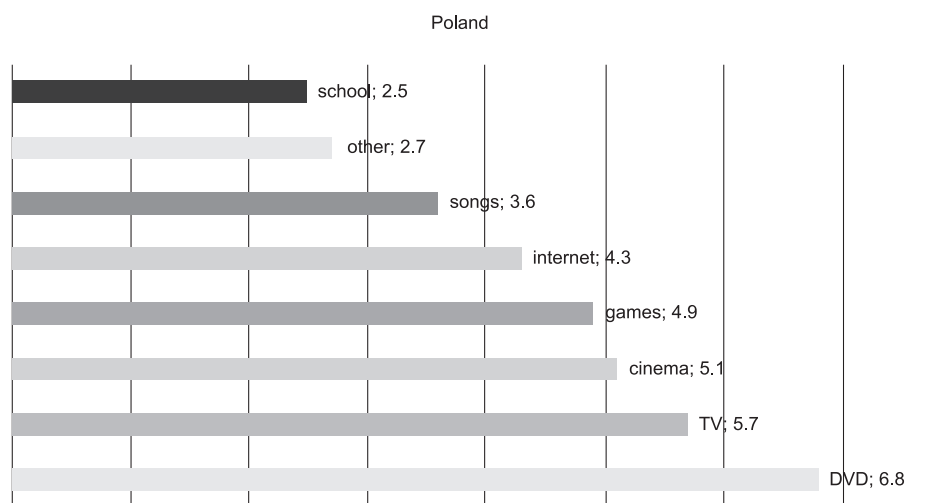


Fig. 1. Mean ratings of different sources of English learning from 1-most important to 8-least important according to Polish adolescents

Although in both countries it is the school that tops the ranking, on closer inspection the results do not seem that optimistic for the educational system in Poland. Number two category in Poland is *Other* which in 58% means private language classes and language courses. By comparison, only 1.6% of Norwegian students declared having English classes outside school. This high popularity of institutionalised out-of-school language learning grows from the prevalent dissatisfactions with the quality of English teaching at Polish schools. One of the notorious comments on that situation I came across would be: *“Everybody knows that it is impossible to learn a foreign language at school”*. The reasons provided by the pupils for such attitudes included, among other things, the lack of homogeneity in groups, the duplication of the curriculum in lower and upper secondary school, poor teacher training and motivation. All these factors, according to the respondents lead to the situation where on reaching a certain point in school education it is very difficult or even hardly possible to progress. These circumstances resemble the

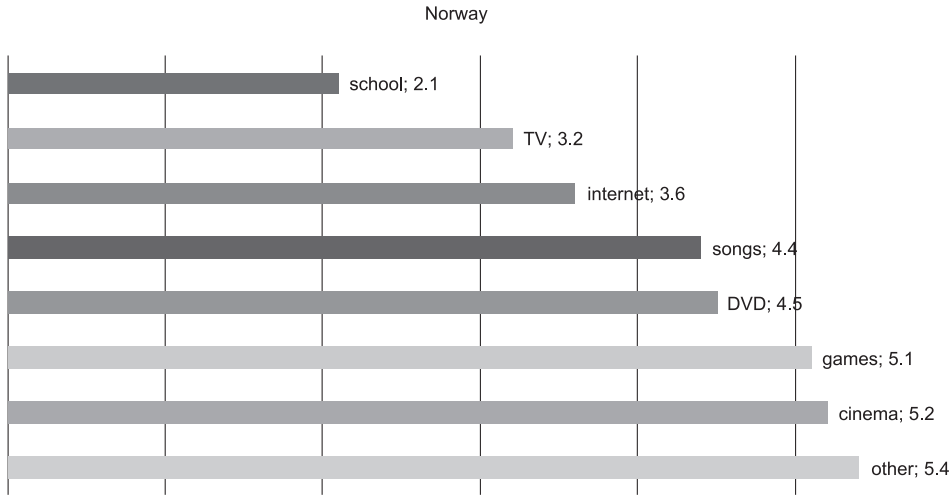


Fig. 2. Mean ratings of different sources of English learning from 1-most important to 8-least important according to Norwegian adolescents

“ceiling effect” recognised in Norway as well [Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2004: 17]. However, on the whole, the Norwegian students find their language instruction challenging, if lacking sufficient communicative practice.

The second important source of English according to Norwegians is TV, which is not surprising considering the (previously discussed) fact that foreign broadcast is subtitled. However, when talking about the reasons for choosing subtitles or original language version of an online or DVD film, the aesthetic or cultural aspects of the viewing experience gained more salience than the didactic ones. Norwegian teenagers seem to subscribe to the perception of dubbing as “cultural barbarism” common in subtitled countries [Hasebrink and Herzog 2002: 24–25, as cited in Berns et al. 2007: 32]. Given the choice, young Norwegians would resign from the subtitles as they find them distracting both in terms of automatic reading and the poor quality of translation (mostly in the case of downloaded subtitles). On the contrary, the minority of Polish teenagers that actually chooses to watch films or TV shows with subtitles or in original language version would do so due to purely didactic reasons.

Number three and four on the above scale were the same for Poles and Norwegians, although in reversed order. Both in the context of music and the Internet opportunities are distributed more equally than in the case of school or television broadcast. However, as will be shown, the breadth and depth of the Internet use or so called “web horizons” (Filiciak et al. 2010: 74) of Polish and Norwegian adolescents differ substantially as they are shaped, precisely, by English proficiency and IT skills.

The above observations can be illustrated with figures for the declared, average weekly exposure to English. Figure 3 shows the percentages of respondents who answered ‘yes’ to the question “*Did you use your English skills when X last week?*” (X being an example of a media related activity).

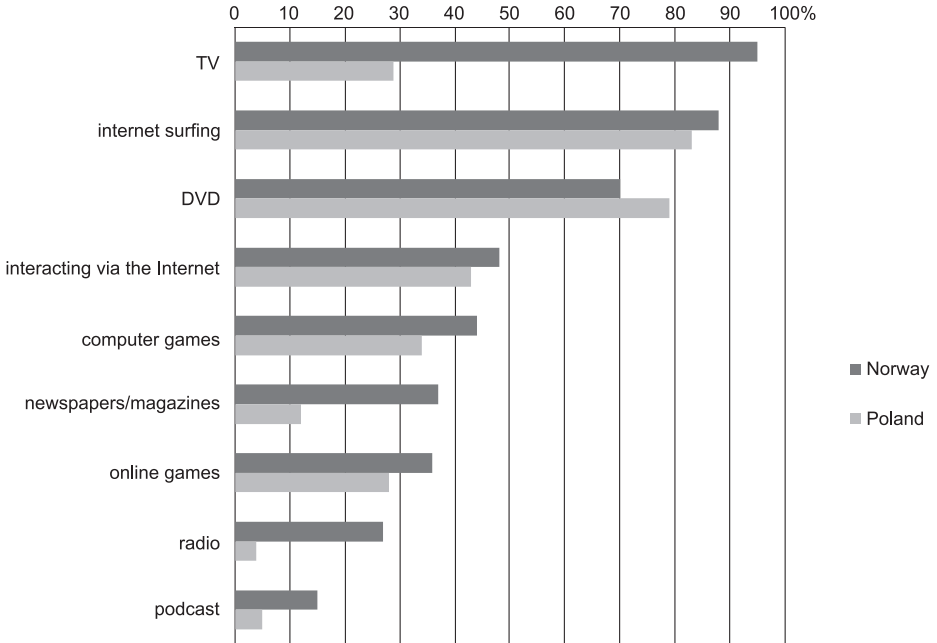


Fig. 3. Declared weekly exposure to English through popular media

The dominance of TV in Norway stems from the above-mentioned fact that all foreign productions and films are subtitled rather than dubbed and that, on average, young Norwegians spend 2–3 hours daily watching TV (NRK).

Further, place number two both in the case of Poles and Norwegians is the Internet and, more importantly, in this context the figures are very approximate. This result suggests that when opportunities are distributed more or less equally there seems to be a significant correlation in behaviour. This coupled with relatively high scores for online interaction makes the Internet the most important extracurricular source of contact with English for the majority of Polish teenagers. In the case of computer and online games the results are also quite convergent. This can be explained by the fact that in terms of language skills, games-related interaction is not particularly complicated, which means that Polish students can participate to the similar extent as Norwegians. The differences do show up, however, when it comes to more linguistically demanding activities such as processing stream or print media where Norwegians reported a significantly higher consumption.

### So what exactly happens online?

If we take a closer look on what students use their English skills for when online, we will discover that the activities adolescents mostly engage with are: browsing the web, watching videos, chatting, and networking, that is pursuits which are all

highly interactive and participatory. One of the defining characteristics of the above activities is that they require the mastery of various semiotic resources as users produce or reproduce individually or, most commonly, in collaboration various digital texts, notably Facebook profiles. It can be concluded, therefore, that these environments open a unique opportunity to use English in genuine, current forms of communication allowing young people to develop multimodal communicative and technological competence in English. Another trend revealed by the data is that the Norwegians reported using English more frequently than Poles for networking. A possible conclusion drawn here can be that the Norwegian students feel more confident about interaction in English and more competent in engaging in (inter)textual identity formation practices which take place on Facebook for instance.

It can be summarised, therefore, that for the Polish students the Internet offers a unique opportunity to develop new literacy skills in English. For Norwegian students the situation is more favourable, as they actually have the IT training incorporated in the curriculum of every subject, including English, which should draw our attention to the relation between in- and out-of-school competences.

Figures 4 and 5 presenting adolescents' self-evaluation of English language skills provide an interesting context for the discussion on in- and out-of-school impact.

Most significant differences between Poles and Norwegians were revealed in the case of reading and listening. This can be easily accounted for by the amount of exposure students have both in and outside school. Norwegian students read much more in English at school. It is a common practice in the school investigated to hold regular novel reading sessions and the textbooks used are based on long stretches of genuine literary texts. This is not the case in Poland where materials rarely require extensive reading and the classroom practices tend to be focused on grammar and communicative activities. High confidence in listening skills among Norwegian adolescents results from exposure to spoken English on a daily basis through TV and the Internet. Surprisingly enough, Polish students were found to be quite confident about their speaking skills. This seems to result from the fact that school practice is focused on developing oral communicative competence which gains relative prominence in the Polish concept of proficiency in English. The Internet does not seem to be a factor here, as the bulk of communication Polish students engage with online is conducted via IM or Facebook, that is in writing. Norwegians, in turn, feel slightly more confident with their "everyday English" as opposed to "school English" which points to the extracurricular sources of competence as this is exactly where this confidence comes from.

To conclude this part, school or formal instruction is clearly still the most effective source of competence in English for Polish and Norwegian adolescents. However, the Internet definitely merits more accurate analysis in terms of its potential for enhancing users' English language skills, in particular, 21st century communication skills involving multimodal, technological and information competence [Black 2009; Drotner 2007]. For this reason adolescent use of the Internet was the focal point of the focus group interviews, the discussion of which follows.

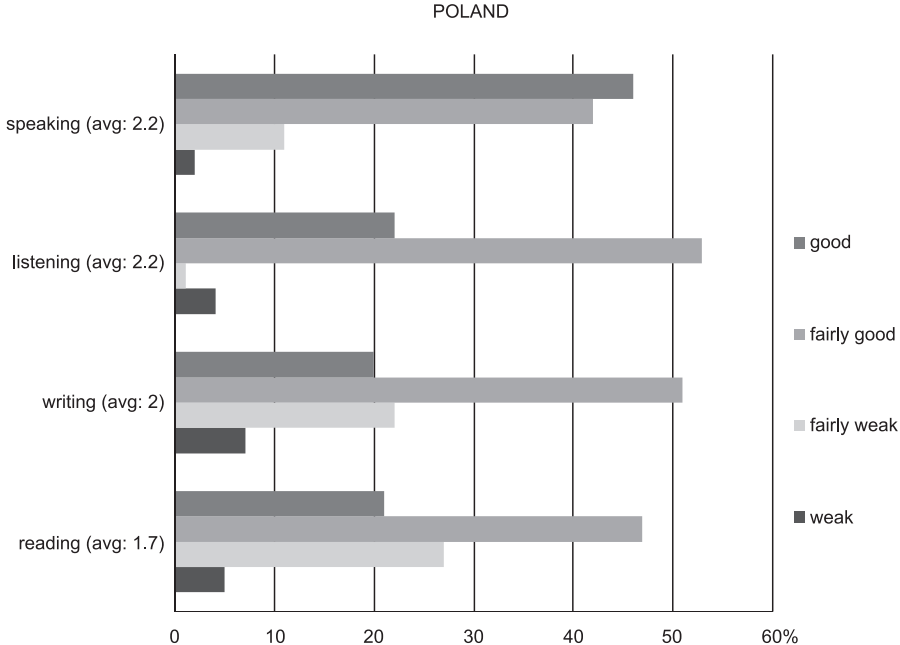


Fig. 4. Polish adolescents' self-evaluation of English language skills

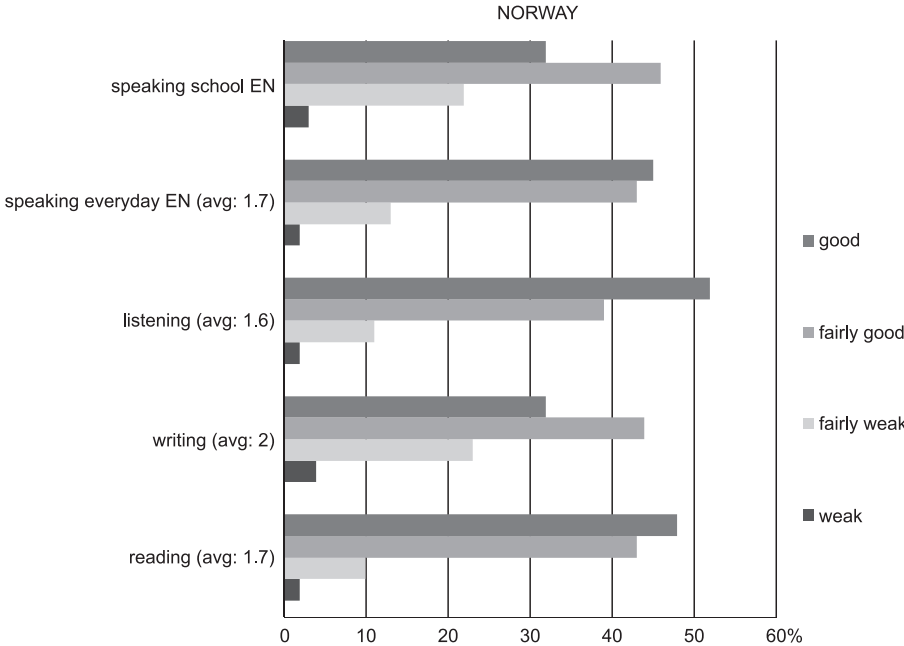


Fig. 5. Norwegian adolescents' self-evaluation of English language skills

## Online language games

The analysis of focus group interviews was conducted from a three-fold perspective validating the didactic and cultural dimensions of young people's extracurricular interaction with new media. First of all, I will discuss the online English communication from the point of view of foreign language acquisition (Learning "business" with pleasure). Secondly, the linguistic practices of the respondents will be approached from sociolinguistic perspective. In particular, I will describe what I consider to be novel functions of English as the alternative Bakhtinian "voice" for contemporary teenagers (Intertextuality and online code-switching as the techniques of self). Finally, since the differences in the Polish and Norwegian educational systems create a good comparative context, I will offer some conclusions on the relation between school practices and the facility with which young people can benefit from the new media affordances in terms of language learning and participation in global culture (Conclusion).

### Learning "business" with pleasure

Considering the importance of internal motivation and social participation in the learning process [Lave and Wenger 1995], the Internet seems to offer a very promising environment for incidental language acquisition. The surveys and interviews conducted revealed that the majority of online activities young people engage with is connected with entertainment and socialising. There is a growing body of research on how the Internet, which enables such literacy practices as fan fiction writing or online gaming, can offer rich and motivating contexts for foreign language and literacy acquisition [Ito 2010; Black 2009; Kuppens 2010; Warshauer 1995]. However, most of these practices are quite marked and belong to the niche "interest-driven genre of participation" [Ito 2007]. For this reason the above examples do not serve as a good argument for the didactic aspects of the Internet use in general. Although in the course of fieldwork I came across individuals who engaged with some very advanced literacy practices in English on the web, they were definitely in the minority. For the majority of young people I worked with the connection between their online and offline activities would consist in getting tips for everyday life, for example from blogs about fashion or music, or getting inspiration for their own creative work such as photographing or cooking. The culture of remix, interactivity and collectiveness in terms of literacy practices, which is said to define contemporary online networking [Lessig 2008] was, therefore, not so salient in the investigated population. What I would like to stress here, however, is that, as transpires from the present data, there are many other and more widespread uses of the Internet and ICTs which have the potential for developing users' L2 competences. More importantly the extent to which young people engage with those "beneficial" activities is related to their "foundational" skills, as well as demands posited by the environment in which they live as the comparison of the Polish and Norwegian contexts shows.

## Ad fontes

The starting point for the discussion on the ways in which the use of the Internet affects young people's skills in English are their reasons and motivation for getting online. As suggested above, both Norwegian and Polish students go online mostly for entertainment, i.e. socialising, listening to the music, watching videos, TV shows and movies, and developing their more or less common interests. The most popular websites in both groups were Facebook, YouTube and Gmail or Hotmail. These, being global tools of communication, promote the use of English, however, students reported to use them in both languages on a regular basis. Next, after social networking and communication tools, most popular sites were those devoted to young people's interests. Since these have mostly a global dimension (music, fashion, art, technology), young people are strongly motivated to access sites in English if they want to find the most updated and reliable information. Consequently, the main reason why young people choose to search for information in English is the lack of information in their native language or poor quality of what is available. One of the commonest examples cited by both Poles and Norwegians was Wikipedia, where the information in English is always much more abundant and comprehensive than in any other language. For Norwegian students searching in English is very often a default option as "*there are many more hits in English*" especially when it comes to videos, so they very often wouldn't bother to search in Norwegian. In contrast, for Polish students searching for texts in English would rather constitute an auxiliary strategy in situations where they cannot find satisfying information in Polish. Browsing through English sources does not seem as effortless as in the case of Norwegians, and Polish students often admitted that they "*need to deal with English*". This ability, however taxing, seems to give them the feeling of independence, often juxtaposed with their parents common experience of struggling due to lack of skills in English. Norwegian students, on the other hand, seem to take the competence in navigating across English online resources to the next level. Familiar with the web architecture, they are ready to exploit it for their own purposes, by e.g. titling their own videos or blog headings in English in order to make them more prominent on the web. In other words, when it comes to developing or sharing their interests, young people are well-motivated to reach for the source materials and avail themselves of global reach that English provides. Apart from purely leisurely activities, Norwegian students often look for news in English on international services such as BBC or CNN because "*every Norwegian newspaper has the same news*". Reaching for current news in English is not that common for Polish students who prefer to access this type of information in Polish. What is more, the fact that Polish students admitted often relying on machine translation, the quality of which generally takes away from the reading experience, suggests that their language skills are not sufficient for free exploration of source materials in English. However, the fact that foreign sources are central to their interests makes this struggle very rewarding and beneficial from the point of view of language acquisition. As one of the Norwegian students observed: "*I think people learn a lot of English on the Internet, the best in English are often those who are on the Internet a lot*". This

incentive to figure things out for themselves with the help of the original sources could be also easily and productively extended to school projects. In Norway, students are often required to collect information for English projects which motivates them to look for English sources, while in Poland this is still a rare practice. The Internet is often dismissed by many Polish teachers as an unreliable source of information which encourages students to commit plagiarism [Filiciak et al. 2010]. Perhaps admitting Internet sources into the classroom in an informed and critical way would pave the way to the integration of the in- and out-of-school practices and enhance students' skills in that respect.

Another trend that emerged in my surveys was that the most potent source of contact with English, especially for Norwegian adolescents, are TV shows and films watched online on daily basis. This, of course, is not the case for Polish students who, due to the language barrier, almost always rely on translations. While watching English language TV productions, young people have the unique and highly motivating opportunity to learn the socially appropriate uses of language, developing their pragmatic and multimodal competence in English. Pragmatic and multimodal competence is one of the strongest factors in "the affective filter" [Krashen 1988] of foreign language learner and his/her confidence as foreign language user. These competences supplement Norwegian students' "school English", which, otherwise, focuses on grammar and writing. Young people frequently denounced the lack of communicative practice which, as some students claimed, takes place exclusively outside the classroom. However, the main reason why Norwegian adolescents favour original language versions of TV shows and films is the fact, that they find the subtitles and poor translations extremely distracting and annoying. What is more, in their viewing experience they seem to care a lot about the cultural coherence of the reception: "*If the movie is in English it should be in English!*". Otherwise it would feel unnatural and garbled translation would take away from the experience. When asked about the reason for choosing a given AVT form, Polish students stressed the didactic aspects of the experience such as vocabulary or pronunciation acquisition. In the light of the above, the answers to the questions about the concept of proficiency in English were quite symptomatic. While Norwegian students mentioned aspects such as being able to understand the film without subtitles, to understand texts on the Internet and to communicate successfully with others, the Poles focused on the latter restricting the concept of competence to purely transactional skills.

Another very productive context afforded by the Internet which integrates IT and English skills are all the situations when students have to draw on their knowledge of English to solve some technical problems. Here both Norwegians and Poles had numerous examples to discuss, most common being online instructions to various devices such as cameras, mobiles or ipods. Some students admitted that they rely on tutorials or manuals for software and webbased applications for graphics and music processing. Other uses cited were very specialised like, for instance, the web application compatible with the training watch where the student could set herself the training programme and monitor her progress.

The increased mobility of young people draws their attention to tools such as GoogleEarth which, for instance, allow them to take a look at their American friend's street or house if they want to. "*I think it's important... I think that the Internet is pulling us closer*", one Norwegian student said. What is interesting in this statement is that the competence in the English language, which is a prerequisite to this kind of reflection, has become completely transparent for this boy, and probably for a significant proportion of young people living in the countries with advanced and developing economies.

Finally, the didactic affordances of the Internet consist in the unlimited possibilities of communication in English. More importantly, the Internet offers the possibility to develop, as Black [2009] puts it, "21st century communication skills" whereby young people have to employ various semiotic resources, notably images, to get the message across. The most vibrant environment for online communication is Facebook, a social networking website, which offers the possibilities of combining verbal with audiovisual modalities while constantly commenting on one another's pictures, statuses and posts. Most of the uses of English on Facebook, and on the Internet in general, is dictated by the practical needs, namely the fact that English is used as a lingua franca in situations where participants do not share any other language. This includes synchronous and asynchronous interaction with English speaking friends on Facebook, Skype or Hotmail, as well as posting commentaries on YouTube or while making transactions on E-bay or consulting studying abroad sites. Very often however, rather than out of need, English language is used out of preference both by Norwegians and Polish adolescents (to differing degrees and for different motivations). This leads up to the second premise signalled in the introduction to this section, according to which the English language is becoming an alternative mode of expression for young people, displacing the native language from some of the semantic domains of adolescent discourse.

### **Intertextuality and online code-switching as the techniques of self**

Intertextuality and linguistic code-switching were found to be the two most salient online discourse strategies employed by my respondents. The comparison of rules governing the switches between English and L1 revealed some systematic differences as to their discursive functions. The purely intentional use of English was the shibboleth feature of communication practices at Facebook or blogs, i.e. sites which foster a more reflexive and creative approach. Some young people use English for purely aesthetic or stylistic purposes, i.e. "*because it's cool*" or "*because it sounds better*". Since young people very often incorporate quotations from song lyrics or some fixed expressions the translations of which would sound awkward or unnatural, they would simply choose to mix English with their native language. These strategies and motivations held for both groups investigated. Differences did show however, when it came to more autonomous uses of English, as opposed to the above described phenomena which technically should be labelled as *lexical*

*insertion or tag switching* [Bullock and Toribio 2009: 9]. Classical code-switching, on the other hand, which can be defined as the “ability to alternate between language in an unchanged setting” can be motivated by various social and discursive factors. One of them is that “changing languages gives access to different roles or voices” [Heller 1988, as quoted in Gardner-Chloros 2009: 9]. The above observation seems to provide a convenient explanatory framework for the patterns observed in the Norwegian data. In line with the conclusions derived from the studies conducted among young Germans [Grau 2009; Erling 2007], apparently, for some Norwegian adolescents English has become an alternative means of expression often superior to Norwegian especially when it comes to more autonomous, creative or poetic output. Some of the Norwegian respondents admitted that they find the process of writing in English more interesting or more challenging than in Norwegian, or that English offers greater or more satisfying stylistic and semantic resources (“*English is more beautiful*”, “*it rhymes more with English*”). However, the above statements come from students who are particularly interested in writing as such. Students who are more practically oriented in their use of Facebook would naturally choose Norwegian for communicative purposes. A more widespread trend discovered was to label photos in English because e.g. “*words explain more in English*”. For the young people I talked to some adjectives like *beautiful*, for instance, seem to encompass a wider spectrum of meanings, and therefore, offer more powerful rhetorical devices than their Norwegian equivalents. Others claim that English has more words allowing them to express feelings more accurately. Interestingly, English seems to provide more adequate means of expressions only in some particular semantic areas, i.e. that of emotions or aesthetics. Apart from the reasons mentioned above, the respondents admit that talking about emotions in English “sounds softer”. English as a foreign language therefore offers a sort of detachment, a safety buffer, which allows young people to talk more freely about their feelings and emotions. This phenomenon has been recognised and theorised by research into bilingualism and emotions [Pavlenko 2002]. The fact that L2 emotional vocabulary has got weaker semantic representation and therefore is “less deeply encoded” is the reason for these anecdotal feelings of remoteness [Dewaele 2006: 119]. The above linguistic relations provide young people with more controlled or non-committal means of autocreation as they do not seem to take up full “responsibility” for the words in English, as the following extract illustrates:

Researcher: Ok, so when do you feel that it is better to say something in English?

In what situations does it happen usually?

Girl1: It's mostly when you express feelings I think...

Researcher: And you sometimes do that in English because...?

Girl1: I don't know... it really makes the feeling in some way, because when you are sad and you write jag är trist it's just...

Girl2: then everybody goes: why are you sad, oh my god, what happened!?

Girl1: yeah, but if you write it in English people wouldn't react the same way because... oh it's a song or something like that

Facebook and/or blogs provide a most natural environment for the negotiation of self as the author can count on immediate feedback through the mechanism of

commentaries or “i like” buttons. It ought to be stressed here that the dynamics of this dialogical self is not only catalysed by the choice of language but also by the choice of the semiotic code on a more general level. From the media diaries, where young people described in detail what they were doing on their Facebook profiles in the course of a week, it could be concluded that messages constructed as a part of autopresentation would resemble collages of various music, video or graphic files. The verbal element (usually quoted) is, therefore, but one of the variety of the modes employed, and the choice of language is a variable in its own right. The above relation of language and identity can be illustrated with the case of a student who, apart from her “regular” blog in Norwegian, writes a separate blog in English devoted to emotions and whose preferred language for conversation with her best friend is English. As she puts it: “*it’s really weird but I just prefer to speak English*”. However this kind of behaviour is probably an extreme example of a general tendency.

The functional regularity with which English and Norwegian are used online can be related to Jakobson’s language functions [Jakobson 1960]. Since the messages in English are usually meant to convey the condition of the sender they can be correlated with *the emotive function* in Jakobson’s terms. That is also often combined with the willingness to attract attention by quoting lyrics or describing emotional states which could be related to *the phatic function*. Finally, the instances of employing English for aesthetic or rhetorical purposes correspond to *the poetic function* in Jakobson’s taxonomy, while *the referential function* would belong to the Norwegian language. The above described analogy allows to interpret the interplay of the two languages as a functional entity whose components, i.e. Norwegian and English, complement each other providing Norwegian bilinguals with the greater expressive repertoire. In the case of Polish students, a similar trend can be observed, however, it seems to have reached (or stopped at) the stage of insert switching. The Polish respondents would also find it more natural to use some English expressions in their casual exchanges both online and in the face-to-face context. Unable to explain the reasons for interlarding their casual discourse with English expressions, they would compare this habit to the way they use some Polish words with a similar, mostly phatic function. This suggests the deep level of internalization of English phrases in their discourse strategies [Gumperz 1982], which makes it more natural to use expressions such as *sweet* or *hi 5* or *faceplam* in given communicative situations. On another note, students stressed the relevance of habit in those practices: “*it’s the culture*” as they said, or the fact that they switch because they don’t find satisfying Polish equivalents for some of the expressions. The latter phenomenon can be interpreted as *reversed crutching*, to paraphrase the concept used in the literature on code-switching with reference to learners’ falling back on L1 in case of gaps in their TL competence [Bullock and Toribio 2009: 9]. The attitudes to this “culture” also vary. Some students were quite critical about such “polluting” of the Polish language and perceived such practices as sloppiness or a mark of deficient competence in the mother tongue. Although English inserts are most common, other languages such as German, Russian or Spanish are also used in a similar way. The choice of code seem to reflect the culturally differing ex-

perience associated with a given expression and connected with the source language. Inserting English expressions as a form of reversed crutching is also true for Norwegians who would adapt both phonetics and orthography to the Norwegian system like in: “fresh”, “greit” or “kul”. It seems then that inserts can be related to various interactional (or emotive, in Jakobson’s terms) functions whereby young people convey their attitude in a foreign language. Other reasons for using English expressions in otherwise Polish or Norwegian sentences is brevity and efficiency of communication “*rather than saying ‘na marginesie’ [Pol. by the way] I would just say btw. and it sounds better*”. As I inferred from the interviews, the use of English carries symbolic value in that sometimes “*it is more cool to say it in English*” or “*it’s embarrassing to say such things in Polish*”. The access to the cultural potential of English language surely broadens young people’s repertoire in that respect and many of them eagerly avail themselves on these affordances to create even more complex images of themselves.

However, as opposed to Norwegians, it was very difficult for Polish students to name the domains in which code-switching happens most often or most naturally. When it does occur (although rarely) above the level of insert switching, it seems to have purely didactic dimensions. Polish adolescents admitted to speak English with other Poles, usually family members who are fluent in English, in order to “practice” or because their uncles or mothers want to “test” them.

In conclusion, it results from respondents’ self-reports that the occurrences of code-switching are common for both national groups; however, the functional dimension of the phenomenon is markedly different. The scale of these differences stems, on the one hand, from the fact that Norwegians are far more fluent in English thanks to the quality of their educational system and the immense exposure to English in popular media. On the other hand, the difference seems to have a more profound dimension which should be analysed from the perspective of the psychology of language rather than cultural studies bent on “identity engineering” as exemplified by some research into the roles of English as a European lingua franca [e.g. Berns et al. 2007; Grau 2009]. Berns et al. point to the link between the proficiency in English and the creation of supranational, global or European identities. The present investigation of Norwegian adolescents offers an interesting counterpoint to these conclusions. Even though the Norwegian students seem to have developed a competence in English which allows them to use it well beyond transactional purposes and to operate on the level of cultural meanings, this does not seem to make them any more favourably disposed towards the European project or more emotionally attached to the world outside Scandinavia. In fact, most of the students openly renounce any sort of solidarity with the EU or the idea of Norway’s accession.

## Life without English?!

Finally, considering the differing status and roles of English in young people’s lives in Poland and Norway, the ramifications of a “life without” English would certainly have different dimensions for the two groups. Both Poles and Norwegians stressed

that it is very difficult even to imagine not knowing English. However, while for Polish students that inconvenience has fairly practical ramifications such as difficulties when travelling or using the Web, for Norwegians that would be tantamount to exclusion and total “alienation”, and would make their lives “*sad, frustrating and very boring*”. Such reactions are parallel to those obtained in other studies on the exclusion of media from young people’s lives in general [Hagen 2003, as cited in Hagen 2010: 34], which points to the indissolubility of media, leisure and the English language (for Norwegians in particular): “*We would only have to watch Norwegian shows and that’s terrible*”. This difference in Polish and Norwegian attitudes points indeed to the position of English as a second language in Norway in terms of its status for the young (and adult) users. Not surprisingly, it is somewhat easier for young people in Poland to imagine life without English as they can observe this kind of life on a daily basis on the example of the previous generation. Students would tell stories of their parents struggling because of lack of knowledge of English in areas such as travelling or using the Internet. Not knowing English would obviously affect the quality of life of Polish adolescents, but not to such an extent as in Norway and that being due to the Norwegian media landscape in the first place. What is more, Polish students rather than “not being able to imagine the situation”, went on to provide rational solutions to this problem such as the use of German for instance, the more extensive use of translators, or stressing their intuitive competence in using various interfaces and devices. However, the English language seems to be gaining more and more salience in Poland, as observed by our respondents, who noticed its presence in advertising and Polish TV shows which leads to the exclusion of those who are not “in the know”. English in Poland then affords independence, but does not define the quality of life to such an extent as in Norway.

## Conclusion: Mapping competences: in- and out-of-school impact zones

The importance of informal contexts for developing communication and IT skills has been widely acknowledged by media literacy studies [Livingstone and Bovill 2001; Drotner 2001; Sørensen 2002]. This salience of extracurricular learning stems, on the one hand, from the financial difficulties in educational system [Drotner 2001], and, on the other hand, from the dominant pedagogical approaches which deny the highly participatory nature of young people’s culture [Filiciak et al. 2010]. This results in a situation whereby, for the majority of young people in Europe, the use of computers at home is still more relevant to the development of the literacy than the use of computers at school, as the spontaneous uses of information technologies are known to be far more advanced and diverse [Livingstone and Bovill 2001]. The above findings concerning IT skills are, of course, true about a selected, “privileged” group of young people, i.e. mainly middle-class boys [Sørensen 2010]. These *Power Users*, to use Sørensen’s label [2010],

have been found to develop various informal learning techniques leading to the acquisition of such competences as “online communication, establishing and using online networks, cooperating online, negotiating online, online management and using English as an online language” [Sørensen 2010: 57]. Sørensen goes on to stress the salience of the English language on a par with IT skills noting that “English becomes a functional language as a parallel to their native language used in the physical room” [Sørensen 2010: 57]. This seems to be in line with the present findings on the Internet being a unique environment for developing 21st century communication skills in English, and augmented further by the novel roles of the English language in online identity formation practices observed in the present study. It seems, therefore, that, currently, IT and “online English” skills, both defined as key competences for information society, are, more or less, limited to the informal contexts differentiated by socio-economic and cultural factors. The role of the school, however, should be, and increasingly is, crucial in bridging the socio-economic and gender gaps as visible from the comparison of the present Polish and Norwegian contexts. The Norwegian students were found to participate to a much greater extent in the global culture, not only thanks to more advanced language skills but also thanks to the needs dictated by the media landscape (e.g. subtitling) and the confidence in their skills encouraging them to experiment with the new media and online resources. Polish students, on the other hand, despite the comparable access to ICTs, differ in the width and breadth of their uses from the Norwegian counterparts. This, in turn, is related to the kinds of English language skills that young people acquire in school and out-of-school contexts that seem to vary with respect to content and purpose. While at school, the Norwegian students learn mostly writing and reading academic English, in their media saturated free time they would develop communicative skills both through watching TV series and using “online English” actively and passively. Polish students, on the other hand, practice communicative skills at school, mostly as a means of preparing for the final examinations in English as a foreign language. In their free time, they would rely on English to a much lesser extent, but still, the competence they have gives them the feeling of independence and almost unlimited possibilities of communication and access to online resources in English.

If, following Colley et al. [2003, as quoted in Gilje et al. 2010: 98], we were to delineate the “conceptual terrain” of English learning in the case of Polish and Norwegian adolescents, the relations between school and out-of-school impact zones would be characterised as complementary rather than overlapping. That is true especially for Norwegians where the sources for communicative and written competence in English are very clearly divided between formal and informal i.e. media-related contexts. Since most of the out-of-school learning that is taking place in the case of Polish teenagers is the so called online English which has not yet gained any currency in the school system, the free time media use can be treated as an optional, but empowering in cultural terms, extension of school-gained competence. However, it cannot be stressed more that the actual relation between formal and informal learning setting in the case of the English language, and in general, very much depends on a local policy adopted in a given

school or even by a particular teacher whose own initiative may encourage or discourage the integration of out-of-school skills and interests with school assignments [Filiciak et al. 2010]. It can be concluded, therefore, that the integration of IT skills in the English programme, as illustrated by the Norwegian case, predisposed students in terms of skills and attitudes [Livingstone and Bovill 2001] to engage with the individual and social learning practices in their free time use of media. This, given the nature of the mainstream, globalised youth culture, inevitably implicates the use of English as the global lingua franca.

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## Media cultures and social change

### Introduction

For young people growing up today, the media are an inevitable part of their environment. Asking Norwegian youngsters at the age of 12/13 what they considered to be “new media” at the turn of the century (2002), I discovered that this relative concept was defined in relation to their own life span. New media were the ones they could remember being introduced to, such as multimedia computers and cell phones. “Old media”, on the other hand, were the ones that had been part of their life for as long as they could remember, such as television, radio, cinema or even early generations of computers. Thus, to the users change is the normal state of affairs. And the function of the media in their own personal lives is what matters, rather than the degree of technological innovation.

In this article I will reflect upon how the changing media environment interacts with personal and institutional forces of social change. I will discuss some basic concepts from the Cultural Studies branch of media research, and relate my discussion to some of the empirical findings reported in this volume. For the sake of comparison I will also refer to my own research on young people and their lives with the media [Tønnessen 2000; 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2007].

The investigations referred to in this volume involve a generation growing up and becoming media users in a time of profound cultural change. A few years before they were born, we saw the end of the cold war and division of Europe, leading to cultural change particularly in the former Eastern European countries. At the same time the institutional context of modern mass media changed radically in Norway as a consequence of new media politics. The broadcasting monopoly which had lasted since 1933 came to an end in 1988. The winds of globalization and commercialization had blown through the country throughout the 1980ies, and led to the establishing of new, competing TV- and radio channels. So the object of our research is the first generation of young people growing up in a globalized media culture, with an expanding offer of media, including computers and Internet. These young people are the ‘natives’ of the digital revolution.

Not only is the media environment constantly changing, so are the young persons whom we observe and interrogate. They are in the middle of dynamic cognitive development, adding new experiences in their encounters with new media

products and processes. As we shall see, adolescents can be characterized as the avant garde of media development. This makes them a particularly interesting object of research, pointing out directions for the future. On the other hand research on young people can be compared to the challenges of aiming at a moving target. A central question is that of generation: The young people growing up with the media today may be seen as representatives of adolescents in general; a group in transition from childhood to adult life. Or they may be seen as representatives of the young generation at a specific point in history, developing media habits and patterns of understanding that will follow them through life.

## Media access and media use

Traditional media statistics are occupied with two dimensions of media activities: To what extent various social groups have access to the media in question, and to what extent they actually take the opportunity to use these media. The first question may be connected to economic resources, the second to competence. Both questions are in some ways related to interests: it takes a certain interest to obtain access to a medium. The drive to make use of the medium is more specific in terms of content and social functions. In the Norwegian context a research project (“Digital Childhood”) in 2004 stated that as many as 40% of Norwegian children were not active users of computers, even though they did have access to a computer at home. We may draw the conclusion that access does not necessarily lead to use. In addition to access, there has to be a good reason for using the new medium. For instance boys seemed to be much more interested in computers than girls when they were first introduced. The difference was particularly clear when it came to playing computer games. In the last five years or so, girls have become more eager users of computers, following the development of social network sites. Above I have used the somewhat imprecise term “interest”. Below I will discuss some driving factors behind such an interest, connected to changes in media technology, media applications and cultural context.

But let us first establish some statistical facts about media access and use in Norway as compared to the trends in Poland presented in this volume. In 2009 65% of Norwegians used a pc at home on an average day. This is slightly more than the Polish figures of 52% reported by Isański et al. in this volume. But if we concentrate on adolescents, the proportion of users amounts to around 80% (age 13–15: 83%; age 16–19: 77%; age 20–24: 83%). Teenagers and young adults are the most frequent users, and also the group spending most time in front of the computer screen [Medienorge 2010]. This age profile is a general pattern seen across countries. Both access to and use of new media peaks at this age group. Access and use also increases with higher income and higher education. In as far as new media contribute to the qualities of modern life, we may conclude that this quality is unevenly distributed. And apart from the age factor the uneven distribution tends to run parallel to other advantages in society. There is, however, one factor that may

counteract this pattern: The use of new media is unevenly distributed within certain groups. In Norway we find that the group with a low level of education is split between heavy users and non-users, while the distribution is more even in groups of higher education. This may indicate a potential for social mobility through informal learning with and from new media for some of the uneducated, leaving the non-users behind.

The major innovations brought by the computer are connected to communication through the Internet. Access to Internet has followed in the footsteps of access to computers, with some marked thresholds on the way. Today 93% of Norwegians have access to the Internet at home. For the age group 16–19 the figure is 100% [Medienorge 2010]. Again we see that the figures are higher in Norway than in Poland (Isański et al. in this volume). Yet the time spent on Internet seems to be comparable: approximately two hours per day on average for young people in Norway matches 15 hours per week in Poland (according to Isański et al. in this volume).

The use of Internet is a typical example of how access must be combined with user-interests in order to lead to frequent use. In Norway there was a marked increase in Internet-use around 2004, especially for young people. When broadband was introduced to the general public, the homes of young people (age 16–19) were the first ones to connect. By 2005 three out of four teenagers in Norway had access to broadband. This meant access without time limits, and also faster and more secure connections. This was the prerequisite for many of the activities young people engage in through the Internet today: watching television, downloading movies and music, uploading photos and video, etc. It was also the beginning of social media, the beginning of the web 2.0 with a turn towards more user-generated content, and thus the Internet became a true networking medium. Efficient Internet access also meant a turning point in the balance between the dominating mainstream media. Up till then television had been the dominant mainstream medium, both in terms of time spent and interest invested [Tønnessen 2007]. The time young people spent watching television had been steadily increasing, but from 2003 on this has turned to a slight decrease, matched with a corresponding increase in Internet use.

Summing up we may conclude that the media development through the last two decades is characterized by a major increase in media forms and opportunities for active use, where young people have acted as the 'avant garde' of a rapidly developing (digital) media culture.

## Meaning in interpretive communities

Above I have tried to establish how media use is dependent on the users' interests. I take as a starting point that young people use the media in ways that appear meaningful to them. In the following, I will focus on the media as means for making meaning. I propose to understand 'meaning' in a broad sense. Firstly, we can talk about meaning as a property of the texts conveyed through the media. This is at the centre of the reception studies in this volume, where Agnieszka Kiełkie-

wicz-Janowiak asks about young people's view of the elderly, and Ewa Glapka investigates the images of femininity and masculinity in magazines read by Polish youth. This kind of meaning is best investigated in terms of semiotics and discourse analysis in combination with qualitative interviews.

But the media also carry technological and social meaning. New technologies lead to new practices, as we can see in Magdalena Anioł's study of how the Internet in general and new social media in particular lead to new linguistic practices among young people. In addition we may consider the social meaning of using the media as a means for contact with others. Technological and social meaning both contribute to the context, which in the next instance provides a framework for interpreting texts. In the new media landscape the importance of context has accelerated, because the media are integrated in social practices and networking to a degree that we have never seen before. This "media saturation" (Livingstone and Bovill 2001) in modern society makes it less meaningful to measure time spent with individual media as separate activities. Social media on the Internet have come up as a central social arena for the young. Participating in this interaction influences all other domains of life to a degree that has not been seen before.

We need to take all these levels of meaning into consideration when evaluating how the media influence young people's quality of life. In order to integrate semiotic (content) meaning and social meaning, I have found the concept of "Interpretative communities" useful. It aims at combining the interpreting subject and the social and cultural framework for interpretation in an integrated understanding of the production of meaning. In the following I will discuss the concept of "interpretative communities" within the research context of Cultural Studies. I will then try to apply it to some of the research presented in this volume, in order to shed light on the social affiliations and practices that surround and anchor young people's lives with the media.

Central to the Cultural Studies branch of media research is Stuart Hall's model of encoding and decoding. It was first presented to a colloquium at the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester in 1973. The model places the mass media discourse in a social context where power is exercised in all phases of the communication circuit: production, circulation, use and reproduction. The power in question has institutional bearings, but the model also takes account of the interpreting subject situated in relation to this institutional context. It is people who encode and decode, or in other words: People produce and interpret meaning. The model hypothesizes three positions for interpretation: a preferred reading of the dominant code, an oppositional reading contradicting the dominant code, and an intermediate position of negotiated reading. Thus the model opens up to a more nuanced understanding of the effects of media communication than just stating whether the media message has an effect or not. Rather it distributes the power of making meaning between producers and recipients. Ewa Glapka's study presented in this volume of how young boys and girls react to the images of masculinity and femininity in Polish magazines is an eminent example of negotiated readings.

The encoding-decoding model has been used in a very general way for characterising all kinds of mediated communication. But it came into being in a discus-

sion of television, as we can see from the full title of Stuart Hall's paper: Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse. Television may be characterised as the most typical *mass* medium through media history. In my discussion of mass media and networking media below, I will return to the question of how this may affect our understanding of the model.

In an interview (from 1989) published in 1994, Stuart Hall was challenged to take a critical look at his own encoding – decoding model. Hall states that the three ideal types of reading are hypothetical-deductive positions, not sociological groups. From an empirical perspective, he suggests to look at the range of possible positions within a 'negotiated space': "The truth is, negotiated readings are probably what most of us do most of the time." [Hall in Cruz and Lewis 1994]. This reflection takes us back to the concept of interpretive communities, which Hall connects to the space of negotiation. Such a space may be filled out with a number of positions in relation to subcultures. According to Hall, audiences may be grouped according to how they share certain frameworks of understanding and interpretation. "It is not purely subjective reading. It is shared. It has institutional expression; it relates to the fact that you are part of that institution". [Hall in Cruz and Lewis 1994].

Taking this model as a framework for understanding how the media may contribute to the quality of life, avoids at least two fallacies. One would be to place all power in the institutional and political setting, the other to place all power in the hands (or eyes and ears) of the young audience. The space of negotiation provides two important perspectives to our discussion. Firstly it opens up the connection between politics and culture, connecting the concept of power to semiotic processes. Thus it identifies a circuit of semiosis: how meaning is produced and reproduced in actual use. Secondly it helps identify positions of reading, from which a (media) text can be understood and interpreted. This gives a view of the work of the media that takes into account the integration of media in social processes. Thus the media development can neither be taken as mere cause nor mere consequence of social and cultural change. Media communication is an integrated part of change, and may work in different ways for different social groups.

## From mass media to social networking

I would like here to reflect on how the concepts of encoding – decoding and interpretive communities has developed within my own work, which I characterize as a "generation study". My main research has followed the first generation in Norway to grow up with a multichannel TV system, computers and, eventually, the Internet, from the age of four to fifteen (1993–2004). The first stage explored small children's (age 4 and 6 in 1993 and 1995) reception of television in a context of transition from broadcast monopoly to a multichannel system [Tønnessen 2000]. The second stage (age 10/11 in 2000) broadened the perspective to a whole range of media, focussing on media preferences and the interplay between media

[Tønnessen 2002]. At this stage, at the turn of the millennium, I was surprised to find that only a minority of my informants mentioned digital media. Thus I made digital media the main focus in the third stage in 2002, and found radical change in the use of digital media. By the age of 12/13 practically all my informants were familiar with computers, Internet and mobile phones. This is an example of the social force by which a new medium breaks through at the point when the proportion of users makes it inevitable for social exchange in society. The fourth and last stage of research aimed at summing up the interplay between media and returning to in depth interviews about reception and meaning-making from the most popular media texts among 15-year olds in Norway in 2005 [Tønnessen 2007].

I will not go into detail reporting from these studies. My point is rather to reflect on how my perspectives changed through the course of the longitudinal project. I do not think this only has to do with my research becoming more informed. Rather, it seems reasonable to assume that the changing media landscape requires different ways of exploring and defining the interpretive community.

One point of change occurred when I included a broader range of media. It became evident to me that it would be fruitful to distinguish between the dominant mainstream media such as television and computers, and more specialised media with a supplementary function such as magazines, books and radio. The questions of how the children made meaning from the media had to be posed in different ways for the different groups of media. Mainstream media were used (or at least known) by all, providing a common basis for interpretation. Supplementary media were individually used, offering opportunities for developing a more specialized personal style. Establishing the role of mainstream media lead me to reflect on how each generation in a rapidly changing media landscape gather unique and historically rooted experiences with the use and interpretation of the media. Consequently young people today share basic media experiences with their peers rather than with their parents. One might describe this as a *generation habitus*. The concept of habitus is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu [1984] who connects the formation of habitus to primary socialization in the family. Thus, using it to describe patterns of understanding within a media generation challenges his understanding of how such structuring patterns come into being. Bourdieu's concept of habitus seems to work best to explain the position of people already established in a cultural field, i.e. adults, and also in domains of slow change. The rapid changes in media experiences call for a different understanding of how interpretive communities are constituted and developed.

The other unexpected turn in my work appeared when the new social media appeared among my informants from 2004. This was a new cultural turn in at least two ways. First of all I noticed that there was a strong connection between the virtual community established in cyberspace and the day to day community the youngsters belonged to. Their main purpose in participating in social media was not to meet strangers far away, but rather to find new ways to communicate with friends they also met face to face. This may come as no surprise after the success of Facebook, but at the time this integration of the global and the local was a new insight. It led to a fundamental reconsideration of perspectives on mass media. Mass

media are characterised by communication moving predominantly one way, from the few in power of production to the ‘masses’. This understanding has guided questions about media effects and the power of media producers. In contrast, the work of network media moves from many senders to many recipients. This moves the research questions from influence and dominance to social practices and meaning-making activities. In the context of our research mass communication and network communication exist side by side. When the conditions of communicating through the media are so fundamentally changed, it calls for revisiting our previously established models of understanding, such as the encoding – decoding model we have discussed in this article.

Qualities of life are personal, but at the same time culturally framed. Both dimensions are affected by changes in media use. In my work I have found change connected to introduction of new media as well as institutional changes in the lives of my young informants. New media may offer new opportunities to lift certain groups in society. As mentioned above, active users of the Internet may find ways of informal learning that were not previously open to them. The new media have changed our concepts of education and learning to an extent that the traditional separation between education and entertainment may not be as valid as it used to. This is in line with the questions asked in the conclusion to Isański et al. in this volume.

This finding connects to my second point of change. In my work I find that the institutional change of entering school works differently for boys and girls. The girls in my material tended to combine educational and popular media culture, e. g. by using their media experiences in school work and allowing educational values to influence their media activities including attitudes and interpretations. The boys in contrast seemed to uphold an opposition between school and leisure time activities. In the terms presented in this article we could say that the boys establish distinctly different interpretive communities for experiences through media and school. This finding may bear consequences for the social well being and quality of life for boys and girls in a society where girls seem to succeed in the educational system, whereas boys and men are still in the lead in working life.

## Conclusion: Interpretive communities revisited

Going back to Stuart Hall’s model of the circuit of media culture, we see that the four stages are far from distinct in the media world we live in today. Production, circulation, use and reproduction of meaning are all affected by the digital revolution. The means of production are more easily available to ordinary people, and there are channels of circulation set up for network communication. In what has been called Web 2.0, we are not to the same extent divided into producers, with the aim of getting across an encoded “preferred reading”, and users, or consumers, who can receive and negotiate this meaning. Rather we take up the role as *prosumers* of mediated meaning. Interpretation may still be understood as a process of negotiation within a framework constituted by an interpretive community. But the condi-

tions for connecting to such interpretative communities are changed in a society of increased social, geographical and virtual mobility. Use, reproduction and the role of producing media content is more blurred, and the experience of decoding media texts can now be combined with our experience of producing and circulating meaning through the media. These are global trends that we find in Poland as well as in Norway, blending with national traditions and institutional settings.

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