

To be Muslim and Swiss: Children of Muslim Immigrants and Multiple Belonging

Brigit Allenbach, Universität Freiburg/Schweiz

In 2012, about 440 000 Muslims were living in Switzerland, corresponding to 5.5 % of the total Swiss population. Most of them are migrants, who took up residence in Switzerland with their families since the late 1970s. They originate mainly from the Balkan Countries and Turkey. About 35% of the Muslims living in Switzerland have Swiss citizenship.

This paper is based on my ethnographic research in the Swiss National Research Programme NRP 58 about young Muslims in Switzerland. My aim is to give some insight into the everyday life of the sons and daughters of Muslim immigrants and into what it means for them to be both Muslim and Swiss. In general, school, professional qualification and a broad range of recreational activities have priority in the everyday life of these young people. To some of them, religion is important as well, and they live religion in many and varied ways.

There are many possible ways of orienting one's life as a young Muslim in Switzerland. The study challenges the culturalist approach that sets the West against Islam. The paper concludes that greater emphasis upon the multiple belonging of young Muslims in Switzerland helps to counter a widespread tendency to propose a hegemonic and dichotomist view in terms of «them and us». It will be argued, that citizenship education has to consider the multiple dimensions of belonging employed by Muslim children and youth.