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New Media Society 2007 9: 278

DOI: 10.1177/1461444807075013

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Digital citizenship among ethnic minority youths in the Netherlands and Flanders

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Abstract

This article deals with ICT availability among ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands and Flanders. The rapid spread of ICT applications has affected various aspects of digital citizenship. The study results suggest that the world of ethnic minority youths in the Netherlands and Flanders, as with other western countries, is being digitized gradually. This is an irreversible evolution with tangible effects in new trends in communication and consumption. Ethnic minority youths orient themselves to the country where they live (bridging between cultures) as well as to their parents' country of origin (bonding of social capital). This article examines whether differences in information and communication technology access and use can be explained by culture-specific characteristics such as ethnocultural position, religion and language proficiency, apart from the usual sociodemographic characteristics (age, sex and socio-economic status). Examining the online activities of ethnic minority

youths, it distinguishes between e-surfing, e-communicating, e-democratic citizens and e-cultural citizens.

Key words

bonding of social capital • bridging between cultures • digital divide • ethnic minorities • Flanders • ICT use • survey • the Netherlands

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY: BONDING OR BRIDGING?

Information and communication technology (ICT) develops at a rapid pace: user-friendliness is improving and hardware is becoming available at affordable prices. Computers, internet connections and mobile phones have spread rapidly and widely in the western world. The debate on the impact of ICT has produced two opposing camps: the utopian view holds that ultimately ICT will lead to a peaceful and prosperous society of world citizens, while the negative opinion argues that citizens could become 'slaves' to technology. The truth will have to be sought somewhere in between these two scenarios eventually, for technology and people have a reciprocal influence on each other (Steyaert and de Haan, 2001). Partly as a result of revolutionary developments in ICT a new concept has emerged recently regarding that of the information or network society. This concept alludes to the power shift away from existing hierarchic institutions in society to networks of people, companies and organizations (Van Dijk, 1999, 2003). As for every new medium, for ICT a recurring concern is the way in which it is going to be able to counteract, rather than maintain, social inequalities. In other words, ICT can be looked at in terms of its capacity to resolve cultural differences, but it can also be used to support the culture and identity of a specific (ethnic) cultural group.

The former function is based on the two-way communication between a specific group and society (e.g. native people and ethnic minorities), thanks to which relations between these groups can be established and maintained. Since not only ethnic minority youths but also their native counterparts take part in these discussions, a happy outcome of the debates can be the understanding of, and the respect for, each other's viewpoints; in this way these websites can bridge the gap between cultures. This process, during which individuals are prompted to look beyond their own group and widen their own horizon, is referred to as 'bridging social capital' by Robert Putnam (2000) and it is a prerequisite for social-cultural participation, since people need to acquire an understanding of, and to enter into relationships with, other groups in society for integration to be at all possible. Integration in society here is read as social-cultural participation, i.e. a process in which a

group grows closer to society thanks to social contact, adherence to comparable norms and values, the same language, etc. In short, ICT can play a not-insignificant role in the process of *rapprochement*.

The latter function of ICT bears on communication within a given cultural group: ICT can provide a group with information from its 'home country' in the group's own language, thus helping members of the group to establish and maintain relations within the group itself. Putnam (2000) calls this function 'bonding social capital'. The internet indeed offers multiple opportunities for multicultural initiatives, with the user deciding which debates they will follow or actively enter. Websites catering for ethnic minority surfers offer discussion groups and chatrooms and thus constitute a platform for making contact with kindred spirits, strengthening the participant's own identity and the group's homogeneity. Turkish and Moroccan websites often give pride of place to Islam and, thanks to a large measure of anonymity, norms, values and various social issues can be discussed freely and candidly.

This study ties in with research by Mehra et al. (2004), who describe the tremendous potential of the internet to achieve social equity and empowerment and improve the everyday life of minority and marginalized users, and with research by Bakardjieva (2001) on the use of the internet in everyday life. Jankowski's (2002) research is also a source of inspiration when it comes to components of community communication and digital community networks. Although community structure as such will be left untouched in this article, the parameters that are influential on ICT-ownership and use will be examined. More particularly when it comes to ethnic minority youngsters, the notions of 'identity' and 'identity construction' show clear kinship with the shaping of a 'virtual community'.

RESEARCH ON ICT AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND

At the end of the 1980s a survey among American families (Blosser, 1988) came across clear differences in media use among African American, Latino and white American youngsters. In general white Americans appeared to have easier access to media than African American and Latino children of the same age groups. More recent US figures from the mid-1990s showed that white American youngsters had a much higher chance to have access to and to be able to use a personal computer (PC) in the home than their African American and Latino counterparts. Ethnic origin combined with education of the parents correlated positively with the presence of a PC in the home (Robinson, 1998). Research by Novak and Hoffman (1998) showed that the link between ethnicity and media access remained, even after controlling for the household's income. Moreover, the data revealed that white children who did not have access to a PC or to the internet at home were given the chance to use ICT elsewhere much more often (at friends' houses, at the library or at school). In 1999 the Kaiser

Family Foundation took on the ambitious plan to map the media use of the numerically most important ethnic minority youngsters between the ages of two and 18. The study 'Kids and Media @ the New Millennium' headed by Donald F. Roberts (1999) included more than 3000 American youngsters. The conclusions of this large-scale research show great resemblances with previous, small-scale studies. The traditional media such as television, radio and the print media were present in comparable amounts in white and non-white US households. Only the ownership of, and access to, PCs within the family were determined by income and (albeit to a lesser extent) ethnic origin.

As opposed to the above mentioned US studies, a recent study in the UK (Livingstone and Bober, 2004) gives no more than two sentences to ethnic background, which does not appear to play a large role in determining internet access. According to this study, 75 percent of the children and young people from a white background and 72 percent from a non-white background use the internet on a computer at home, and 92 percent of white and 90 percent of non-white children use it at school. The authors add that of the 1333 respondents, the sample sizes of different minority groups were too small to produce reliable results. In the 'Himmelweit Revisited' study (Livingstone and Bovill, 2001),¹ which mapped the media ownership, access and use of some 10,000 children throughout 11 European countries and Israel, no attention was paid to ethnicity as a potential determinant of media access, ownership and use.

What about the attention to ethnic background when referring to ICT access and use in the geographical context under study here? Ethnicity issues have been very much in the foreground of public debate in the multicultural Netherlands and Flanders in recent years: the debate on freedom of expression in the Dutch media as a direct outcome of the murder of Theo van Gogh² is just one example of this growing attention. Hence, in view of the pluri-ethnic character of Dutch and Flemish society, it can be assumed that these issues will attract even greater attention in the next few years. A fine survey of research into immigrant groups and the media, with reference to the European Union, and the Netherlands and Flanders in particular, can be found in *Racism and Cultural Diversity in the Mass Media* (ter Wal, 2002). An inventory compiled by Brants et al. (1998) shows that relatively little research into the topic of media and ethnic minorities was carried out in the Netherlands until 1997. Many fields of study remained unexplored and, moreover, a good deal of the research undertaken turned out to be based on small-scale ad hoc samples, case studies and unpublished material, of which the scholarly quality often left much to be desired. A further striking feature of the research undertaken up until then was its largely quantitative nature. The Veldkamp market research project long remained the only large-scale study in the Netherlands which looked into the access to, and the use of, (new) media by immigrants

(Veldkamp Marktonderzoek, 1996, 1998, 1999), but the results do not go beyond the numerical description of ownership and use of media.

Since 1997 more studies have become available and they are also more varied, with regard to both the methods used and the types of media and ethnic groups studied. Yet we find that quantitative studies on the ownership and use of media types are concerned mainly with social-demographic features such as gender, age, schooling and income as possible determinants of media ownership and use, and that culture-specific features are being ignored (see van Dijk et al., 2000). The studies made from a cultural-anthropological angle are mainly qualitative and do look at culturally-specific features such as identity, integration and cultural participation, but then again they rarely examine the use of media. Finally, media studies which examine social-demographic as well as culture-specific features in relation with media use are scarce, confining themselves to specific media types and to particular groups of users.

Further, we would like to highlight some recent research in the Netherlands which concentrates on ethnic minorities and their use of ICT. In 2002 MCA Communicatie conducted street inquiries among some 600 ethnic minority youths to study the use that they made of computers and the internet. The results show that youths of Moroccan origin visited not only their 'own' websites, but that 59 percent of them mainly surfed on Dutch sites (MCA Communicatie, 2002).

The findings of Lilian Linders and Nicole Goossens (2004) confirm that Moroccan youths visit a range of websites, although girls show a greater preference for sites with predominantly Moroccan content. Clearly, in their internet use, ethnic minority youths shift from one culture to another: they are on a quest for their ethnocultural identity and at the same time seek to join in with Dutch society (De Waal, 2003). Linders and Goossens (2004) conducted a survey of quantitative and qualitative research in the Netherlands, studying the most frequently-visited websites for ethnic minority groups and collecting new empirical material by means of an online inquiry conducted on some 10 Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese sites and on a few general websites. Their findings show, among others, that the use of the internet and email contributes to bonding and bridging social capital and helps the social and political participation of ethnic minority youths. However, their study confines itself to native and Moroccan internet users in the Netherlands.

METHOD AND RESULTS

Ethnic minorities in the information society: a survey

This study's survey bears on a wider group, that is, Turkish and Moroccan youths in the Netherlands and Flanders. Among the 1.5 million non-western ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, the statistics showed 351,648 Turkish and 306,219 Moroccan migrants in 2004 (<http://www.cbs.nl>). In Flanders, Turks (21,328) and Moroccans (29,332) are the largest groups

among approximately 281,000 immigrants (<http://aps.vlaanderen.be>). Studying these wider groups broadens the understanding of bonding, bridging and social capital with respect to ICT use among ethnic minority youths. The following questions are addressed:

RQ1: What about ICT access and ICT ownership among Turkish and Moroccan youths in the Netherlands and in Flanders?

RQ2: How do Turkish and Moroccan youths in the Netherlands and Flanders use a number of ICT applications?

RQ3: Can we categorize users into a number of types with regard to their ICT use? Does the user's 'ethnocultural position' play a role as well, apart from conventional social-demographic features?

With regard to the situation in the Netherlands, a written questionnaire was completed in 2001 by 322 Turkish and Moroccan youths between the ages of 12 and 19. The questionnaire was a standardized one, with closed answers ('yes' or 'no'), and was completed in class. In 2002 the same procedure was followed for Flanders with 488 Turkish and Moroccan youngsters in the same age range.³ For the sake of comparison, a control group of 98 (the Netherlands) and 116 (Flanders) native youngsters answered the same questionnaire in the same school contexts (d'Haenens et al., 2004; Saeys and Devroe, 2005).

The survey uses two kinds of independent variables. First, four standard socio-demographic features were examined: gender, age, schooling and socio-economic status. The group under examination consisted of 50 percent male and 50 percent female; the age range was divided into three groups (12–14 years, 15–16 years and 17–19 years). The latter also applied to schooling (low, average, high). The socio-economic status variable was calculated by combining the highest schooling enjoyed by the father and

• Figure 1 Sample distribution according to origin (rounded percentages)

mother with the occupation of the two parents. This combination again produced three groups, a majority of youngsters with a foreign background coming from the lowest socio-economic group. In contrast, the control group of native youngsters was more heterogeneous, because their parents' educational and occupational levels were more varied (see Table 1).

Second, given the particular situation of ethnic minority youths (as it was inbetween two cultures), the school survey also focused on more culture-specific features, such as linguistic fluency, religious outlook and ethnocultural position. As the language commonly spoken at home can affect a youngster's media use and preferences, a number of language-related questions were asked, among which the most salient was in which language the respondents themselves were most fluent: Dutch; Turkish or Moroccan Arabic; or whether they were equally fluent in both. Since a number of the Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands and Flanders originate from the Rif and Atlas mountains, the Moroccan youths were asked whether they spoke a Berber language in addition to Moroccan Arabic.

As a criterion of religious attitude, the question asked was: 'Do you think you are very religious?' A general finding is that the more an individual is concerned with religious matters, the more they want to obtain information about religion. Moroccan youths prove to be significantly more religiously active than their Turkish peers. Consequently, they turn to the internet more often for religious information and their interest in religion becomes greater as they grow older.

Following Anja van Heelsum, we define 'ethnocultural position' as

the extent to which members of a given group look upon themselves primarily as members of a specific group and/or act as such (acquisition of position) and the extent to which (the bulk of) society considers them primarily as representatives of a specific group and/or treat them as such (allocation of position). (1997: 24)

Following van Heelsum (1997), the questionnaire listed 28 statements, on the basis of which a criterion for the respondents' ethnocultural position was designed. All the statements were (re)coded so that a high score matched a high degree of involvement with the country of origin, while a low or average score revealed low or average involvement with the country of origin (d'Haenens et al., 2002b).

For ethnocultural position, the Moroccan youths scored highest; when compared with youngsters with a Turkish background, they felt more strongly bound with their country of origin. Turkish youths scoring high on involvement with their country of origin sought to be informed better about events and developments in Turkey; this also applied to Moroccan youths in the Netherlands.

The culture-specific features of language, religion and ethnocultural position are interconnected. Religion, for example, plays a role in the

linguistic mastery of the young people concerned: the more religious Dutch Moroccans felt, the more their parents insisted on their children being able to read, speak and write Moroccan Arabic, among others, in order to be able to read the *Koran*. One's ethnocultural position also has a bearing on language mastery: the stronger the involvement with Morocco, the greater the importance that parents attached to their children knowing Moroccan Arabic.

The digital divide explored by successive stages in ICT access

Since existing societal relations are transformed by the increasingly rapid advance of digitization, a new dichotomy has arisen in society, that is, the digital divide between those who have access to information and those who do not. The emergence of the digital divide is linked, among others, to the way in which new technologies spread, the so-called diffusion of innovations. In accordance with the 'trickle-down' principle, the latest gadgets tend to be adopted first by the higher social classes, because new technologies are often associated with a stiff price. Moreover, there is a certain risk involved in early acceptance of novelties, as it takes some time before larger groups in society can afford them (Rogers, 1996). However, apart from financial considerations, more personal characteristics can widen the digital divide. There continues to be a gender gap, for example. Not all 'stragglers', though, are the victims of their position in society or of their personal characteristics and abilities. Among those who have no or little access to information, we need to distinguish between the 'information have-nots' and the 'information want-nots', i.e. between those citizens who lag behind because of situational factors, and those who choose not to use any of the new ICT applications (Steyaert and de Haan, 2001).

As a rule, research into the digital divide focuses on differences in the access to the internet resulting from social-demographic characteristics and

• Table 1 Distribution of youngsters by culture-specific features (linguistic fluency, religious outlook, ethnocultural position) (rounded percentages)

CULTURE-SPECIFIC FEATURES	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F
Linguistic fluency*** (N)	753	187	203	250	113	-	-
Better Dutch (%)	50	33	54	51	71	-	-
Better Moroccan Arabic or Turkish (%)	26	42	26	19	12	-	-
Both equally well (%)	24	25	20	30	17	-	-
Religious outlook*** (N)	841	177	201	259	115	65	24
Not very religious (%)	48	51	49	34	43	83	83
Very religious (%)	52	49	51	66	57	17	17
Ethnocultural position***(N)	584	129	161	194	100	-	-
Low/average (%)	53	59	65	43	44	-	-
High (%)	47	41	35	57	56	-	-

A Flemish Turks; B Dutch Turks; C Flemish Moroccans; D Dutch Moroccans; E Native Flemish; F Native Dutch

*** $p \leq .001$

less on differences in the quality of internet use. The question of how ICT is used, and for what purposes, receives too little attention. The digital divide becomes real mainly when 'stragglers' are affected adversely in their social life because of their digital backwardness, such that the digital divide turns into a social divide: for example, in the field of work and education, consumption, social intercourse and democratic participation. Van Dijk (2004) distinguishes between four successive kinds of access, which can be regarded as four cumulative and recursive hurdles (i.e. each one is a condition to be met before the next one is tackled, and the process starts from scratch at each new innovation) which need to be taken if one is to use ICT successfully:

- mental access – 'lack of elementary digital experience caused by lack of interest, computer anxiety, and unattractiveness of the new technology';
- material access – 'no possession of computers and network connections';
- skills access – 'lack of digital skills caused by insufficient user-friendliness and inadequate education or social support'; and
- usage access – 'lack of significant usage opportunities'.

As a result of the growing spread of ICT, the true digital divide shifts from differences in mental and material access to differences in skills and usage access. This shift indeed underlies the structure of this article: first, the differences in internet access and ownership by the stages mentioned by Van Dijk (2004) will be discussed briefly; second, Steyaert and De Haan's (2001) categories will be examined to look at the differences in internet use among Turkish and Moroccan youths in Dutch and Flemish society (with native youths in the two communities being used as a reference group).⁴

With regard to mental access, neither native young people nor youngsters with a foreign background can be said to be disinterested in ICT or to suffer from computer anxiety. The survey actually indicates that the bulk (55%) of all youngsters considered it (very) important that they should know how to work with a computer, and even more of them (60%) believed that people without computer know-how will lag behind. Although ethnic minority youths found working with a computer somewhat harder than their native peers, they believed that computers will play a larger role in their future occupation. About two-thirds of Turkish and Moroccan youths stated that their future job must be one in which they have to use computers, but only 48 percent of native Flemish youths and a mere 38 percent of native Dutch youths agreed with that statement. Also, ethnic minority youths more often had parents who stimulated their children to use a computer. Their parents appeared to allocate a higher status to the computer than native parents: about 75 percent of Turkish and Moroccan parents thought it (very) important that their children should be familiar with computer work, as opposed to 60 percent of native parents.

Concerning material access to and ownership of ICT, the survey shows that Moroccan youngsters in the Netherlands are lagging behind (see Table 2).

If we consider the room in which youngsters can resort to ICT, clearly there continues to be a digital divide as to physical access to ICT in the common rooms at the homes of ethnic minority youths in the Netherlands and Flanders. When compared with Moroccan and Turkish youths, native youths resort more often to a PC (whether online or not) in a common room.

In contrast, a striking finding is that ethnic minority youths have their own PCs in their bedrooms more often than native youths, and this goes for Turkish youths as well as Moroccans. Except for the Moroccan youths in the Netherlands, ethnic minority youths also have (cable) modems in their bedrooms more often. Perhaps this latter finding is explained by the fact that native young people have ICT facilities more often in a room used by all family members, which makes a PC in their own bedroom superfluous.

With regard to an individual's ownership of a PC in their own bedroom, sex and schooling appear to be the most influential contextual variables. Here also, language fluency and the newly-constructed variable of ethnocultural position turn out to play no significant role. Turkish boys in the Netherlands had a PC in their own rooms more often than Turkish girls. Similarly, religion had a certain impact, for those young people who claimed to be very religious had their own PC in their rooms more often than those who were less religious. Among Flemish Moroccan youths it is age that seemed to determine whether they had a PC (the older they were, the more often they had their own PC in their rooms), whereas for Dutch Moroccan youths the socio-economic status of the parents was the most powerful predictor (the higher the status, the more often they had a PC).

School plays a major part in the daily lives of both native and minority youths and it also has a big impact on their skills-related access. It is at school that young people acquire basic digital skills, learn how to work with a computer and how to surf on the internet. Even primary school children become familiar with ICT, mainly in subjects such as arithmetic, reading, language and social studies. The initial years of secondary school teach information skills and later on students are given the opportunity to take

• Table 2 Access to and ownership of PC and internet at home (rounded percentages)

AVAILABILITY AT HOME (%)	AVERAGE	A	B	C	D	E	F
PC***	81	74	80	81	56	87	94
In their own room (ownership)***	54	56	60	59	50	47	37
Elsewhere at home (access)***	57	42	53	57	57	67	81
Internet connection***	56	58	51	52	43	67	72
In their own room (ownership)***	37	42	38	40	32	33	26
Elsewhere at home (access)***	51	40	50	52	45	54	71

A Flemish Turks; B Dutch Turks; C Flemish Moroccans; D Dutch Moroccans; E Native Flemish;
F Native Dutch

***= $p \leq .001$

computer courses. For those youngsters who have no access at home to a computer and/or to the internet, school can play a remedial role and neutralize differences in access or ownership (see Table 3).

Nevertheless, the teaching of ICT skills in the Netherlands needs to be developed further (d'Haenens et al., 2002a). ICT infrastructure in Flemish schools lags behind that of schools in the Netherlands and ICT projects in the classroom are less advanced, but educational authorities are seeking to catch up by means of prestigious projects such as Digikids (www.digikids.be). The objective of Digikids is to narrow the digital divide and to stimulate students (mainly from primary and secondary schools), parents and teachers to use ICT.

Access and ownership do not necessarily imply that the computer is actually used, therefore usage access should be examined. We found that the availability of ICT facilities at home definitely stimulates use (working with a PC in minutes per day). If young people have access to a computer at home (no matter in which room it stands), they will use it 40 minutes a day on average. Moroccan youths score below the average (see Table 3).

On average, eight out of 10 young people regularly used the internet and the daily average of internet surfing was 31 minutes. Strikingly, the time that youngsters in the Netherlands spent on the internet was considerably shorter than for their contemporaries in Flanders. Emailing took 10 minutes a day on average, and here as well, Flemish youngsters scored higher than their Dutch contemporaries, although the difference may be accounted for by the fact that the data were collected during different periods.

Regression analyses reveal that, apart from the usual social-demographic features, the only culture-specific factor influencing ICT use was religion. Turkish youths in the Netherlands who were very religious used a PC more often than Turkish youngsters, who spent little time on religion.

We have noted already that young people from ethnic minority families mainly have access to ICT in their bedrooms. This also implies that ownership of a PC does not necessarily mean that ethnic minority youths

• Table 3 Computer and internet use (rounded percentages and minutes/day)

USE OF NEW MEDIA	USERS		MINUTES PER DAY						
	N	%	AVERAGE	A	B	C	D	E	F
Computer use:									
At school in class	826	82	29	34	33	27	26	23	29
At school after class	522	51	19	18	23	17	20	18	17
At home***	810	81	40	35	41	36	33	54	57
Internet	817	80	31	37	25	33	25	37	27
Email	591	58	10	15	9	10	6	12	7

A Flemish Turks; B Dutch Turks; C Flemish Moroccans; D Dutch Moroccans; E Native Flemish;

F Native Dutch

***= $p \leq .001$

have sole access to it, and this may explain why they surf the internet outside their homes more often than native youngsters, namely to avoid social control by family members. Ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands surf the internet more often at school and in a library. Their peers in Flanders go to an internet café more often, probably because schools in Flanders are equipped with PCs with an internet connection less commonly than Dutch schools. In other words, the use of computers and the internet at school, in the library and at internet cafes is remedial as far as ethnic minority youths are concerned. Moreover, internet cafes are pre-eminently places where native and ethnic minority groups can make contact with each other and among themselves. These contacts can be online as well as offline (Ferlander, 2003), making the internet café a meeting point for bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). The concept of bonding or bridging will be examined in the following section.

The digital divide explored by ICT use

The internet applications, as examined in the school survey, will serve now to ascertain whether the Turkish and Moroccan youths' internet use contributes to bonding or bridging social capital and to political involvement in the Netherlands and Flanders. The school survey indicates that chatting, surfing and emailing headed the list of the most popular internet applications, both among native and minority youths in the Netherlands and Flanders. These applications can be labelled as 'non-committal' and are explored in the following section, before we turn to more specific applications which flesh out the concept of digital citizenship itself.

On average, 63 percent of all respondents occasionally played games on the internet. There was a striking difference between the Netherlands and Flanders, in that all young people in Flanders (from whatever background, native Flemish included) play games on the internet more often than their Dutch contemporaries. There was also a clear difference between the sexes: in general, games on the internet were more popular with boys than with girls. Moroccan youths, in the Netherlands as well as in Flanders, were less inclined to turn to the internet for games if their level of schooling was higher; mainly it was younger Moroccans who played online games.

Surfing appeared to be a common pastime among native and Moroccan youngsters; in this respect, the young people from a Turkish background lagged behind. Generally speaking, ethnic minority youths with lower levels of schooling were less given to surfing, and Turkish and Moroccan boys in Flanders used the internet more often for surfing than girls.

Some 60 percent of young people occasionally downloaded files from the internet, with native youths doing this more often than minority youths. The material concerned was of a varied nature: software packages, games, mp3 files, etc. Again we found, both for native and minority youngsters, that boys

• Table 4 Noncommittal use of the internet among young people (rounded percentages)

E-SURFING YOUTHS (%)	AVERAGE	A	B	C	D	E	F
Games***	63	78	53	64	57	71	54
Surfing***	60	51	49	66	60	72	65
Retrieving/downloading files***	60	51	61	57	55	69	83
Information for hobby(ies)***	53	54	49	48	37	65	74

A Flemish Turks B Dutch Turks C Flemish Moroccans D Dutch Moroccans E Native Flemish F Native Dutch

***= $p \leq .001$

downloaded files more often than girls. Online retrieval of information mainly focused on study-related topics, although information on hobbies was also popular, more than art, culture or religion. Again, the difference between the sexes was conspicuous: the boys would look for information on their hobbies more often, whereas the girls tended to make a more functional use of the internet, e.g. to do their homework.

Unfortunately, the questions about games, surfing, downloading and retrieving information offer no clues as to what kind of games are played, what sites are visited and what files are downloaded. Therefore the data obtained from the school survey do not allow us to conclude whether or not non-committal internet use contributes to bridging or bonding. Further qualitative research into preferences could help to solve the issue.

In the following section we will deal with the less 'non-committal' aspects of digital citizenship which affect the social capital in citizens' lives and which underlies the user types cited by Jan Steyaert and Jos de Haan (2001). They distinguish five types of digital citizens:

- e-communicating;
- e-democratic;
- e-surfing;
- e-working; and
- e-consuming.

Given the young age group under scrutiny, the category of e-working citizens proved less relevant; also, the category of e-consuming citizens was less appropriate given the limited set of questions on the use of online products and services included in the survey. Thus, on basis of the survey data, the first three categories were borrowed and the category of 'e-cultural citizen' was added. As for e-surfing, the difference between bonding and bridging is much less relevant and less obvious. To make reliable statements about it would require more data about the preferences of minority youths for particular websites, specific games and downloads, online products and services. E-surfing is not dealt with in the following paragraphs, but it is included in the preceding paragraph regarding non-committal use of the internet (see also Table 4).

E-communicating citizens

The survey revealed emailing and chatting to be two out of the three most popular internet applications among young people, which characterizes youngsters as e-communicating citizens. If we examine the interactive use of the computer (among others contacts via email), we find that ethnic minority youngsters lag behind, although they do make more frequent use of chatrooms and news groups (Table 5).

Chatting was one of the most popular online pastimes for young people: on average; 84 percent of them connected to the internet for this particular purpose, and Table 5 shows that this applies to ethnic minority youths even more than to native young people. Few background characteristics had an impact on chatting. In Flanders, Moroccan girls seemed to chat more often than boys, which may be connected with the girls' focus on the social applications of ICT being stronger than boys, a consideration to which we will return in the discussion of email contact.

More than three-quarters of the Flemish and Dutch respondents used email (Table 5). However, we detected major differences between ethnic minority and native young people in the Netherlands. The number of ethnic minority email users was lower than that of native young people who used email. Again, the divide between minority and native youths was larger in the Netherlands than in Flanders, and again this may be partly due to the later period in which the survey was made in Flanders.

The ethnic minority youngsters using email were asked if their email contact involved relatives or friends in Turkey or Morocco (bonding), and this turned out to be the case for 37 percent of them on average. The majority of minority youngsters felt that contact with relatives or friends in Turkey or Morocco had (greatly) intensified, thanks to email. This was much less true of the Moroccans in the Netherlands, who appeared to resort less to email with relatives or friends in Morocco.

In this context gender also plays a role, since girls had more contact with Turkish or Moroccan people in Turkey or Morocco than boys. In addition,

• Table 5 Interactive internet use among young people (rounded percentages)

E-COMMUNICATION YOUTHS (%)	AVERAGE	A	B	C	D	E	F
Chatting	84	84	84	87	88	77	78
Emailing***	74	74	68	75	65	79	87
Contacts with native young people***	35	37	21	36	37	41	46
Contacts with minority youths in the Netherlands/Flanders***	43	55	36	56	52	20	12
Contacts with peers in Turkey/Morocco***	37	51	39	42	35	21	12
News groups*	14	22	12	14	16	8	6

A Flemish Turks B Dutch Turks C Flemish Moroccans D Dutch Moroccans E Native Flemish F Native Dutch

*= $p \leq .05$; ***= $p \leq .001$

the ethnocultural position of the young people was a determinant, for we found that 66 percent of Turkish youngsters in Flanders whose orientation towards Turkey was strong maintained email contact with people in Turkey, against only 35 percent of those with a weak orientation towards Turkey. We found a comparable situation with Moroccan youngsters in the Netherlands: if their knowledge of Arabic was better than Dutch, they also had more email contact with relatives or friends in Morocco.

Moroccan girls had more contact with Moroccan relatives and friends living in the Netherlands or Flanders (bonding). With Moroccan youngsters in the Netherlands, kinship with their country of origin determined whether they maintained contact with peers in the Netherlands: 64 percent of young people with strong sympathies for Morocco had contact with Moroccans in the Netherlands, as opposed to 41 percent of those whose links with Morocco were weaker. We found a similar tendency for Turkish youngsters in Flanders: a strong ethnocultural position corresponded with contact with Turkish people in Flanders. The online surveys conducted by Linders and Goossens (2004) confirm these results as far as Moroccan youths in the Netherlands are concerned: Moroccans, especially girls and daily internet users, find the internet a pre-eminent tool for maintaining and widening social contacts with like-minded people. In this way, the internet certainly contributes to bonding social capital.

The survey shows that about one-third (36%) of Moroccan youths in the Netherlands and Flanders also had contact with native Dutch and Flemish youths (bridging). Turkish youths in Flanders showed up as a similar percentage, but Turkish youths in the Netherlands had far less contact (21%) with Dutch young people on the internet. Linders and Goossens (2004) confirm the bridging effect of email and internet use among Moroccan youngsters.

In general, newsgroups did not appear to be popular. On average, a mere 14 percent of young people participated in newsgroups, with Turks in Flanders being overrepresented (22%) compared to the other youngsters in the survey. Other studies show, among others, that minority youths use the internet mainly in order to try and find like-minded peers (d'Haenens, 2003).

E-democratic citizens

Young people tend to be regarded as citizens whose future political commitment is not likely to amount to anything much, since their interest in news and politics is usually very limited and not many of them feel that they ought to go to the polls where voting is not compulsory (as is the case in Flanders). A study by Elchardus (1997) revealed that Flemish young adults' confidence in politicians is low indeed. Nevertheless, they do seem to give their full support to basic rules of democracy, such as freedom of political opinion. In spite of the low turnout for elections in the Netherlands, there

has been a rise in the number of citizens older than 18 who describe themselves as 'very or reasonably interested in politics' (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau [Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands], 1999, in Steyaert and de Haan, 2001: 41). We could say that the basis of democratic citizenship is available, but that in practice young people hardly make use of it.

How socially committed young people are can be concluded from the measure of interest that they show in news from the Dutch or Flemish society in which they live, or from the Turkish or Moroccan society from which they originate. Especially in Flanders, ethnic minority youths appear to use the internet to stay abreast of news from Flanders, Turkey or Morocco. This finding may be influenced by the later period of the survey in Flanders. Moroccan youngsters in particular proved to have a broad outlook, seeking online news from Turkey or Morocco (bonding) as well as from the Netherlands or Flanders (bridging).

The connection between ICT use and social and political commitment is also demonstrated by Linders and Goossens (2004): 39 percent of Moroccans and 47 percent of native respondents in the Netherlands claim that the internet and email involve them more closely with Dutch society, and 28 and 36 percent respectively state that thanks to new media, they feel more involved with Dutch politics. In this case, the effect of ICT on Moroccan internet users is one of bridging. As Linders and Goossens (2004) do not go into social and political involvement with the respondents' country of origin, we need to turn to our own survey.

Ethnic minority youths usually appear to be more interested and committed in the political sense than native youths (d'Haenens et al., 2004). About one-third of Turkish youths and half of the Moroccan youths in this survey were interested in Turkish or Moroccan political issues, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Dutch or Flemish politics. The extent to which minority youths wished to be informed about political issues in their countries of origin or in the Netherlands or Flanders depended on their sympathies with these countries, and this applied in particular to Moroccan youngsters: 59 percent of Flemish Moroccans and two-thirds of Dutch Moroccans who had strong ties with Morocco sought information on the political goings-on there. In short: the stronger their involvement with Morocco, the more they wanted to know about its politics.

E-cultural citizens

In this section we refer to culture both as a product of human creativity and a work of art as well as a process, a way of life (e.g. Jensen, 2002). Although generally speaking, young people have little interest in highbrow art forms, we have added the category of 'e-cultural citizen' to the typology developed by Steyaert and de Haan (2001). The reason is that music is a cultural

expression, and it is precisely music that plays a major role in young people's lives. The culture that youngsters are involved with can be characterized as mass culture or pop culture. By contrast, visiting museums, attending classical concerts, going to the theatre or reading literature are not really activities that one generally associates with young people and which could enhance their status with the peer group. Young people are less concerned with traditional culture than their elders (de Haan et al., 2003). However, if Dutch and Flemish youths are compared with their peers in other European countries, we find substantial differences as far as their artistic interests are concerned. Dutch youths prove to lag behind, whereas Flemish youths rank high with regard to classical concerts, pop concerts, museums and theatre (de Haan et al., 2003).

The survey asked youngsters if they liked receiving information about theatre and art and if they consulted the internet for information about art and culture; the same questions were asked with regard to (online) music. On average a mere 17 percent sought information on art and culture, with youths in Flanders proving to be more interested than their peers in the Netherlands. However, the interest shown by Turks and Moroccans living in Flanders or the Netherlands was much greater: 35 percent of Turkish youths and nearly 45 percent of Moroccans sought information on specific artistic or cultural events. Clearly, Moroccan youngsters in particular appeared to value cultural information from their country of origin. On average, 27 percent of young people turned to the internet for information on art and culture without any difference being made between Flanders and the Netherlands on the one hand, and the country of origin on the other. Ethnic minority youths had a higher score in seeking information on art and culture than native youngsters, and Dutch youths lagged behind their Flemish peers. In general, in looking for information on art and culture girls turned to the internet more often than boys. As far as Moroccan youths are concerned, the older they were, the more often they sought information on art and culture.

Fewer than half of the Turkish and Moroccan youths wanted information on Dutch or Flemish music; by contrast, they were very interested in Turkish or Moroccan music (81% and 77%, respectively). We can assume that this has consequences for listening to online music, i.e. that the internet and online music have a bonding effect on ethnic minority youths. Slightly more than three-quarters of youngsters listened to music online, and again we found that young people in Flanders were more active in this sense than youngsters in the Netherlands. The differences between Turkish, Moroccan and native youths were less manifest. With regard to music on the internet, the only significant differences were those of age and schooling. Moroccan youths in the Netherlands mainly listened to music when they were 15 or 16 years old. Among Turkish youths in the Netherlands, it is mainly those in schools preparing for higher technical training who surfed the internet to find music.

These specific cultural manifestations are complemented by the GO-panel with a more general cultural orientation (i.e. improving social quality in multicultural neighbourhoods, offering citizens a platform to interact with the local government; see www.go-panel.nl): 45 percent of Moroccans and 30 percent of native youngsters felt that the internet and email foster a greater appreciation of their own cultural background (bonding) (Linders and Goossens, 2004). The difference between the two percentages is a logical one, for cultural background is much less of an issue for native youngsters than for minority youths, who find themselves in between two cultures. Unsurprisingly, visits to wide-ranging websites can help a Moroccan youngster to shape their identity. About 20 percent of the Moroccans included in this panel said that the internet increased their appreciation of Dutch culture (especially if they surfed a combination of Moroccan and Dutch sites), and as many as 42 percent of the Dutch members of the panel stated that the internet and email helped them to understand other cultures (bridging).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

ICT is the gate to a new public space in which not only can citizens meet and air their opinions, but also where they can seek information. It is a place where, generally speaking, the young in particular can move freely, for they are taught the necessary skills and actually attach a lot of importance to acquiring them. This is true of native youths as well as of ethnic minority youths, so much so that there is hardly any gap in 'mental access' and 'skills access', as defined by Jan van Dijk (2004).

In contrast, as far as 'material access' is concerned, there are more differences between native and ethnic minority youths in the Netherlands and Flanders. At home, native youths have access to a computer more often than ethnic minority youths, irrespective of the room where the computer stands. If ethnic minority youths do have a computer at home, it is usually to be found in their bedroom rather than in a room used by all the family members. Yet ICT use by ethnic minority youths is more often a collective activity, since in ethnic minority families it is mainly the young people themselves, along with their brothers and sisters, who use the computer in the bedroom that they share with their siblings. Also, the data show that ethnic minority parents consider it more important than native parents that their children know how to work with a computer; native parents already consider digital skills to be self-evident in their children. Other areas of special attention, such as ICT and its status, function, or the use of the computer in rooms shared with others or in one's own room, need further qualitative research.

Although ethnic minority youths as well as native youths mainly use the computer at home, there are a larger number of ethnic minority youths who use ICT in public spaces as well, mainly in libraries, and in the Netherlands at school, or in Flanders at the internet cafe. This difference is due most

probably to the inhibition that ethnic minority youths feel if they want to use certain ICT applications at home. In other words, when ethnic minority youths resort to a public space to become immersed in the anonymous and at the same time intimate nature of the virtual ICT world, they do not do so to remedy any existing disadvantage of material access to ICT at home, but rather to escape from their watching brothers and sisters and to seek contact with the cultures to which they belong.

While differences in ownership of PC and ICT will gradually disappear, we did find very marked differences in ICT usage. Young people use ICT for a great variety of reasons. Thus the ICT usage of Moroccan and Turkish youths is more often well-targeted and aimed at information, for example, in actively participating in news groups, seeking information on religion, art and culture and keeping abreast of developments in their country of origin. Native youngsters look more often for entertainment, emailing and downloading files.

The image of ethnic minority youths emerging from this survey is that of inquiring, widely-searching and communicating citizens in the transnational virtual space. The stance of native youths is rather that of the ICT-consuming citizen, defined by entertainment and games. With regard to differences between the sexes, it is striking that girls come forward as e-communicating citizens, whereas boys are attracted mainly by the technical applications of ICT. Depending on the subject's religious outlook, ICT offers opportunities for an exchange of ideas with others, most of all with like-minded people.

Research has shown that ICT usage among ethnic minority youths can very well lead to bridging. The survey indicates that slightly more than one-third of ethnic minority youths keep in contact through the medium of email, with native youths as well. According to Linders and Goossens (2004) Moroccans, like native Dutch youngsters, state that they feel involved more closely with Dutch society and politics, thanks to email.

Still, ethnic minority youths predominantly turn to ICT for its potential of bonding social capital. Here email plays a major role: more than one-third of ethnic minority youths have email contact with relatives and friends in the country of origin, and most of them also with ethnic minority friends in the Netherlands or Flanders. Moroccan girls in particular have a great interest in such contact. Also, ethnic minority youths are more interested in politics than their native peers, although it is mainly Turkish or Moroccan political issues which have a great appeal for them. Moroccan youths in particular have a wide-ranging outlook and seek information about Morocco in addition to information about the Netherlands or Flanders. Culturally speaking, their interest is focused predominantly on Moroccan culture and music (bonding again), which may help them to shape their own identity vis-à-vis Dutch or Flemish and Moroccan culture.

The bonding and bridging effects of ICT mainly emerge with e-communicative citizens and in the social and cultural outlook of

e-democratic and e-cultural citizens. Finally, this study shows that the ethnocultural position of Moroccan and Turkish youths in the Netherlands and Flanders has little or no predictive force with regard to access to, and ownership of, ICT, although this cannot be taken to mean that the characteristic in question does not exercise any influence at all. For this reason we have embarked already upon a qualitative follow-up study designed to unravel and deepen the concept of 'ethnocultural position'. The study will make a link between in-depth interviews and a systematic content analysis of the topics dominating online discussion groups, increasing our understanding of the degree to which online activity aims at cross-ethnic segregation or, rather, furthers an exchange between ethnic groups.

Notes

- 1 Leen d'Haenens was responsible for the data collection in Flanders, as part of the Himmelweit Revisited project.
- 2 Filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered in Amsterdam on 2 November 2004 by Mohammed B., a 26-year-old, first-generation extremist Dutchman of Moroccan descent.
- 3 Given the rapid pace of ICT developments, the data on access and ownership obtained for the Netherlands in particular may be thought to be somewhat conservative.
- 4 In order not to swamp the reader with correlations and significances, we will only cite the statistically significant differences between ethnic minority and native youths on the one hand, and between groups of ethnic minority youths on the other.

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