Ethnic and Racial Studies
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/bers20

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Evidence from the Low countries
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Available online: 15 Nov 2011

To cite this article: Christine Ogan & Leen d'Haenens (2011): Do Turkish women in the diaspora build social capital? Evidence from the Low countries, Ethnic and Racial Studies, DOI:10.1080/01419870.2011.628034

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.628034

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Do Turkish women in the diaspora build social capital? Evidence from the Low countries

Christine Ogan and Leen d’Haenens

(First submission June 2010; First published November 2011)

Abstract

Ever since Putnam (2000) made social capital a concept that should be mourned for its decline in the USA, researchers and policy makers in some western countries have adopted it as a solution to what they believe to be the failed practices of multiculturalism. Instead of preserving their individual cultures and traditions, critics would have them build social capital by bridging to people and institutions in their new countries and adopt the ‘shared values’ of the host countries and become ‘integrated’. This study, based on a study conducted in the Netherlands in 2006, and supplemented with survey findings from Flanders at the same time, examines whether this perspective is accurate, focusing on women migrants who live in the Low Countries (Netherlands and Flanders in Belgium), of the networks they have built or not and the reasons for that, and of the role of media and the internet in that process.

Keywords: Social capital; Turkish women migrants; technology; the Netherlands; Flanders.

Robert Putnam is likely the best known researcher of the concept of social capital, as detailed in his book, Bowling Alone (2000). In his view, ‘social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’ (Putnam 2000, p. 19). Arneil (2006) contrasts his definition with that of Bourdieu (1986) and Gramsci (1971) who represent the European school. As Arneil articulates the difference, Bourdieu does not see social capital as a group of individuals who make decisions to connect with one another, but rather as a concept focused on the economic, cultural and social forces that ‘limit the range of possibilities
that certain individuals or groups have for creating networks or
drawing on the resources inherent in them’ (Arneil 2006, p. 201).
Where Putnam might look at the number of connections between
individuals to show the building of social capital, Bourdieu would
analyse the nature of those connections in historic context (Arneil
2006). In this study, we also examine the nature of the connections and
the power inequities between Turkish women minorities and the
majority populations in Flanders and the Netherlands.

This study of Turkish women migrants in Flanders and the
Netherlands and their struggles to build social capital in their new
homes is framed in the critique of that concept from Bourdieu’s
perspective and articulated by scholars who have recently interrogated
Putnam’s analysis and the new European policies about inculcating a
sense of ‘shared norms’ in the ethnic minority populations in their
midst.

Because this article addresses two marginalized groups – ethnic
minorities who are also women – and the policies governing their lives,
the difficulties they face in trying to build social capital fit more
appropriately with Bourdieu’s understanding of the concept than that
of Putnam. The participants in this study are Turkish migrants who
have lived in the Netherlands or Flanders an average of seven years.
We chose to include the Flemish part of Belgium as a comparison
because of the linguistic and cultural similarity to the Netherlands.

Putnam’s conception of bridging and bonding is flawed, according
to Arneil (2006), but she believes it is a good way to examine
community relationships. Putnam defines bonding social capital as
‘inward looking and tend(ing) to reinforce exclusive identities and
homogeneous groups’, while bridging ‘networks are outward looking
and encompass people across diverse social cleavages’ (Putnam 2000,
p. 22). The distinction is important to this study as ethnic minorities
are seen to bond more to each other in a culture than to bridge to the
larger society where they live. Our study supports Arneil’s (2006) view
of bridging as a mechanism by which those people who want to move
between different communities in their society can actually do so
rather than to fuse the diverse communities into one.

Whether or not the Turkish women in this study are able to build
social capital depends on many factors. Possession of the physical and
technological means and resources to do so constitutes one set of
considerations. Also of importance is the social and religious
environment in which the women live, as well as the government
policies that either enable or inhibit the building of social capital.
Following a discussion of these factors, we describe the methodology
for the study and the results. The research questions guiding the
inquiry are as follows:
1. Are more recent Turkish women migrants making use of Dutch mass media and Dutch language internet sites to build social capital through bridging? Are Turkish women migrants in Flanders acting similarly?

2. Are more recent Turkish women migrants in the Netherlands making use of Turkish mass media and Turkish language internet sites to build social capital through bonding? Are Turkish women in Flanders acting similarly?

3. What impact do religious attitudes have on the bridging and bonding of social capital among newer Turkish women migrants in the Netherlands and in Flanders?

Technology and mass media’s role in the production of social capital

In *Bowling Alone* Putnam (2000)\(^1\) cites the inverse relationship between the rise of television viewing and the decline of civic engagement. He considers the entertainment media a major factor in the decline of social trust, voting turnout and membership in groups. Several recent studies have refuted Putnam’s assertions about the relationship between the components of social capital. Kim (2007) analysed data from a telephone survey in South Korea, finding that interpersonal trust and informal socializing were positively related to civic participation and to entertainment use of the internet. Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) studied the use of Facebook for its building of social capital, finding that Facebook members were able to build social capital through both bridging and bonding and also to stay connected with members of a previously inhabited community on the social network site. Based on online interviews of residents of New Orleans who had been dispersed by Hurricane Katrina, Procopio and Procopio (2007) found that respondents both maintained social capital by keeping connections with family and friends online and built new social capital by activating weak ties in their social networks. Women in their study benefited more from the online communication than did men.

Two studies of migrant populations have also found social capital value in internet use. d’Haenens, Koeman and Saeys (2007) surveyed Moroccan and Turkish youth in Flanders and the Netherlands about information and communications technology (ICT) adoption and use, finding largely bonding activity to relatives and friends in their families’ countries of origin through email, but also bridging activity to the youth in the majority population. A similar study of educated immigrants in the USA by Chen and Thorson (2007) found that members of the Chinese ethnic community were involved in both bonding to other members of their ethnic community and bridging to groups in the wider society. Use of ethnic media for news and
entertainment were not significant predictors of civic participation or political knowledge.

More broadly speaking, key findings from European research on ethnic minorities as media users show time and again that television continues to be the most important medium for migrant groups, with Turkish immigrants being the television ‘champions’ (Bonnadelli, Bucher and Piga 2007). Television viewing tends to be predominantly entertainment oriented and a socializing, communal activity for ethnic minority groups rather than an individualistic one. Access to electronic media is high in homes of minority families, while ICT access remains significantly lower, despite a shrinking digital gap. Although first-generation minority groups prefer media in their own languages and from their countries of origin, there is a demand for news covering the minority groups’ everyday concerns on mainstream channels. Ethnic minorities, especially Turks, predominantly use minority media, especially television programmes, from their countries of origin (e.g. Ogan 2001). Nevertheless, most studies show that homeland and host country media are used complementarily (Peeters and d’Haenens 2005). The ‘ghetto-thesis’, stating that minority groups expose themselves only to minority media from their countries of origin, is an overly simplified perspective (e.g. Güntürk 1999; Hafez 2002). Among ethnic minorities, higher levels of majority media use are predicted by higher socioeconomic status, longer time spent in the host country and better language skills (e.g. Weiss and Trebbe 2001). The ‘direct integration thesis’, suggesting that a greater use of majority media by ethnic minorities has a positive influence on their level of integration, is confirmed in many studies (for an overview, see Bonfadelli, Bucher and Piga 2007).

**Dutch and Flemish policies promoting/discouraging social capital**

In the European policy context, social capital is used in the Coleman (1988, 1990) sense and defined as ‘those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems’ (European Commission 2007, p. 7). The Netherlands was found to be a social capital-rich country in terms of its level of social trust and associational membership indicators, according to a monitoring report by the European Commission (2007) on social cohesion, trust and participation. About 61 per cent of the Dutch respondents agreed with the statement ‘most people can be trusted’, while only about 29 per cent of Belgians responded positively to that statement (European Commission 2007, p. 14). An even larger percentage of the social capital-rich nations reported membership in at least one voluntary organization (European Commission 2007).
While social policies in the Netherlands provide assistance for those unable to work, in need of housing and other financial help, minimal bridging occurs between the majority and the ethnic minorities. Schools tend to be relatively segregated and there is considerable geographic separation in urban housing. Multiculturalism policies have been defined as a ‘drama’ and are substituted by a more integrationist approach, emphasizing assimilation (Vasta 2007). In her critical article about Dutch policy shifts related to ethnic minorities, Vasta (2007, p. 717) cites the definition of integration as outlined in the 1994 Dutch policy to be ‘a process leading to the full and equal participation of individuals and groups in society, for which mutual respect for identity is seen as a necessary condition’ (Entzinger 2003, p. 72). (Strong) multiculturalism is seen as a ‘set of integration policies that sees it as the active duty of the state to promote and protect minority cultures and sanctifies individuals’ undeniable rights to have social institutions accommodate their special requirements’ (Koopmans 2006, p. 23, cited by Vasta 2007, p. 732). Vasta describes assimilationist policy as one where the state coerces immigrants to adopt certain behaviours and sanctions non-compliance. We apply Vasta’s definition of these terms in our reference to policies directed toward ethnic minorities in Flanders and the Netherlands.

The increasingly critical Dutch perspective is reflected in the 2003 Eurobarometer: 67.5 per cent of the respondents favoured limits to a multicultural society and Belgium was about half a percentage point above the Dutch (Coenders, Lubbers and Scheepers 2003, p. 3). Comparison with a set of similar questions in Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 1997 and 2000 revealed that the Dutch resistance had grown, while the Belgian resistance had declined from 1997 levels (Coenders, Lubbers and Scheepers 2003).

Recently, the Dutch have become more concerned about a lack of shared values with the majority population in ethnic communities. The ritual murders of Pim Fortuyn, a flamboyant right-wing populist politician and scholar with anti-immigrant views, and Theo van Gogh, a controversial film producer who worked with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former member of parliament for the Liberal Party (VVD), on a film critical of Islam’s treatment of women (Submission), stirred up increased mutual resentment between the Dutch majority and the Muslim minority. In this climate of mistrust, the government enacted tougher immigration laws and new requirements for immigrants already living in the country. Immigrants under the age of fifty are now required to attend Dutch language classes and to pay for them; welfare payments may be cut for non-compliance. Previously, high dropout rates in language classes hindered their effectiveness. The Civic Integration Abroad Act, promulgated on 15 March 2006, sets an additional condition for obtaining a regular temporary residence
permit—people must have a basic knowledge of the Dutch language and society prior to arrival in the Netherlands. The Basic Integration Examination on Dutch values (i.e. knowledge of ‘Dutchness’) and knowledge of the Dutch language is administered in the country of residence. Although our research in the Netherlands was conducted when the policy was just taking effect, respondents in the survey had begun to feel the effects and were reacting negatively to the anticipated changes.

When Flemish attitudes towards immigrants were examined by Billiet (2006) in an over-time analysis of comparable survey data, the responses showed a somewhat stronger anti-immigrant pattern to that of the Dutch. In Flanders, where the issue of multiculturalism gradually came to be seen as independent from the issues of immigration and mobility – a shift that happened during the 1970s and 1980s – the debate has not yet been tackled in such a forthright fashion. The extreme right-wing stances taken by the racist political party *Vlaams Belang* have aroused more criticism of multiculturalism. Unlike the Netherlands, Belgium has adopted contradictory policies that sometimes take a crude assimilationist position and other times support ethnic diversity (Bousetta and Jacobs 2006).

**Methodology**

Interviews with Turkish migrants in Amsterdam and surrounding geographic areas were conducted between April and July 2006. Respondents were sought who had more recently arrived in the Netherlands (mean length of time = seven years). Since a random sample could not be drawn, respondents were recruited from places where migrants tend to be found – mosques, Dutch language schools and programmes, neighbourhood community centres, meetings of Turkish organizations and on the street in predominantly Turkish neighbourhoods. Respondents found in such locations may not be entirely representative as potential respondents who are less socially active will not be included, and those sorts of people may be less able to build social capital. Some other respondents were recruited through snowball sampling, thus adding individuals to the study who might not be socially engaged. However, at a time of increased tension among Turkish migrants, particularly in the aftermath of the new Dutch policies, cold-call recruiting was difficult. A total of fifty-three respondents answered 185 fixed-response questions and follow-up open-ended questions about their life circumstances; here, focus is made on the responses of the thirty-four women. The fixed-response questions included measures of their attitudes and behaviours related to the Dutch and Turkish people, media and internet use in Dutch and Turkish, and religious attitudes.
In Flanders at about the same time (February and May 2006), 341 Turkish respondents completed a survey including many of the same fixed-response questions. Respondents were drawn from Ghent, Antwerp and Genk, situated in the provinces with the largest Turkish populations, alongside those residing in the capital of Brussels. Respondents could choose to complete the survey in Flemish or in Turkish. In the comparative analysis that follows, results relating to social capital and focusing on the 178 women who completed the questionnaire are reported. The quotes collected in Flanders were derived from qualitative research conducted in Turkish and Moroccan families (d’Haenens, El Sghiar and Golaszewksi 2010).

Although bridging and bonding are difficult concepts to measure, we used several questions related to respondent connections with fellow Turks and members of the majority, as well as questions about attitudes toward the majority and feelings of belonging in the Netherlands or Belgium. These questions were supplemented with open-ended questions related to respondent interaction with Dutch or Flemish natives.

Results

Demographics: the Netherlands

The respondents in the Dutch study ranged in age from seventeen to forty-six. The educational attainment of respondents was relatively low: one in three had education not beyond five years of primary school. Another 24 or 45.3% per cent had completed middle school or high school or vocational school. Some respondents had completed university, obtained graduate degrees or had attended without graduating – 12 or 22.6% There were no significant gender differences associated with education.

Media use

In order to bridge to the Dutch majority population, knowledge of Dutch is essential. Many of the respondents reported current registration in Dutch-language classes (24 or 45.3%). Regarding Dutch media consumption, there was more variation: 41.5 per cent reported no viewing of Dutch public channels at all or only very little. Private Dutch channel viewing was even less popular with 49.1 per cent not watching at all or very little. No statistically significant gender differences were identified. Those watching Dutch television reported doing so to improve their Dutch language skills (57.7 per cent). One of our informants said that although she had three diplomas on her wall (from Dutch classes), they were of no use to her because she lacked practical experience. Another respondent said she lacked the confidence

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to use the Dutch she had learned in class. She said she understood what was said in Dutch but could not respond. Lacking any Dutch or Turkish friends who could help, the media proved to be just another obstacle for her rather than a bridge to the majority culture. But others who learned the language early on believed that their perspective of the Dutch had changed. One woman talked of how fearful she was of Dutch people, believing they hated Muslims; but once she had mastered Dutch, she lost her fear and better understood the attitudes and beliefs of the Dutch she encountered in everyday life.

About half of the respondents reported newspaper and magazine reading for improving language skills (very) frequently (50.9 per cent). However, they also reported higher frequency of reading Turkish papers (52.8 per cent) than Dutch ones (41.5 per cent). Online dailies in Dutch were read (very) frequently by 13.5 per cent, and online dailies in Turkish were read (very) frequently by 36.6 per cent of respondents. Free sheets and ad sheets containing limited news were more widely read than other Dutch news media, with 52.8 per cent reporting reading them (very) frequently. Only 13.2 per cent said they never read these papers. There was a similar reading pattern of these papers by men and women.

As to computer use, nine of the women reported no computer use. (Very) frequently using the computer for searching in Dutch was reported by 52.6 per cent of the men but only 32.4 per cent of the women, although more searching was reported in Turkish (68.4 per cent of the men and 32.4 per cent of the women). We believe this is a good measure for bridging social capital as it possibly means that respondents are looking for information located in Dutch-based organizations, businesses, and so on, although reading about Dutch society on- or offline could also be done in Turkish.

Attitudes related to social capital

Bridging and bonding questions were asked concerning the respondents’ view of their relationships with fellow Turks as well as the Dutch majority population (Table 1). The general pattern of responses was in the direction of more bonding. More than half of the respondents (completely/sometimes) agreed with the statements indicating bonding attitudes.

Bridging attitudes were expressed in the percentage of people who (completely) agreed with statements about the importance of having Dutch friends, seeing the Dutch point of view and identifying with both Dutch and Turkish communities (Table 2).

Women differed significantly from men in that many more felt they were on the side of the Dutch and more believed that the Dutch generally think positively about the Turks. However, more women said
that whenever they have a problem, they only discuss it with other
Turks. Also, more men than women believe it is important to have
Dutch friends. These gender differences may exist because more men
are in the workforce and therefore have daily contact with the Dutch,
while women, particularly those who are homemakers, see other
Turkish people most of the time. The gender differences indicate that
little bridging may exist for women.

Religious attitudes were similar for men and women. Most of the
respondents were Sunni Muslims (83.3 per cent), but 7.5 per cent said
they subscribed to no religion, another 7.5 per cent said they were
Alevis⁴ and one respondent said he was Christian.

We asked about the relative importance of various Islamic practices:
praying five times a day, going on the haj/pilgrimage, wearing the
headscarf, fasting during Ramazan,⁵ giving alms to the poor, and so
on. In general, all practices were deemed important, even for those who
were not particularly religious and for women who did not wear the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have status within one’s own community NS</td>
<td>94.3 NA</td>
<td>92.1 NA</td>
<td>93.5 NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Belgium men and women are too open in their interactions**</td>
<td>58.7 73.3</td>
<td>58.8 64.7</td>
<td>58.8 67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for Turks to have close ties</td>
<td>80.6 66.7</td>
<td>72 55.9</td>
<td>76.3 59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have Turkish friends</td>
<td>84.2 88.9</td>
<td>79.9 79.4</td>
<td>82.1* 82.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When people ask where I’m from, I say I’m Turkish</td>
<td>89.8 83.4</td>
<td>92.2 90.7</td>
<td>91.1 92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more comfortable when surrounded by Turks</td>
<td>55.6 44.4</td>
<td>59.3 57.9</td>
<td>57.1 52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When facing problems I can only turn to other Turks</td>
<td>41.8 11.2</td>
<td>33.8 45.5</td>
<td>37.8 33.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel denigrated when told I am just like the Belgians/Dutch**</td>
<td>13.8 11.1</td>
<td>15.6 18.7</td>
<td>14.8 16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel discriminated against at school/at work**</td>
<td>16.4 22.3</td>
<td>15.7 4.3</td>
<td>16.1* 12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a good thing that associations for the Turkish community exist</td>
<td>78.6 66.7</td>
<td>72.6 80.7</td>
<td>75.5 75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth should marry within the same faith</td>
<td>53.1 42.1</td>
<td>56.3 58.9</td>
<td>54.8 52.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates a likelihood of difference as a statistical relationship measured by $\chi^2$ was significant.

**Although this is not a real bonding measure, if a respondent was a recipient of discriminatory behaviour or observed behaviour inconsistent with cultural norms, then they may pull back to be with their ethnic community or increase bonding activity.
headscarf. However, the three practices with least support were wearing the headscarf (42.5 per cent of the men and 58.8 per cent of the women said it was (very) important), for Turkish youth to marry within their religion (58.9% of women and 42.1% of men) and to be tied to a religious sect or tarikat (17.7% of the women and 26.3% of men). It should be noted that religious sects are outlawed in Turkey. All of the other questions related to the importance of religious practices received strong support, with a low of 69.8 per cent saying it was (very) important to master all the teachings of Islam to a high of 90.6 per cent saying it was (very) important to have a relationship with God.

As the policies and attitudes toward immigrants and their families require greater adoption of Dutch values, the migrants have fewer ways to resist assimilation or to strengthen bonding. Religious practice is one of those ways and the headscarf is the most visible one. So a respondent may be saying that she has not adopted the practice but that it is her right and that of other Muslim women to do so. This interpretation is supported by Arneil’s view that building of social capital may be resisted by immigrants because of the pressures to assimilate.

Comparison with Flemish Turks

Demographics

The respondents (N = 341) ranged in age from twenty to fifty-seven. Slightly more women (52 per cent) than men (48 per cent) responded. Overall, this group was better educated than those in the Dutch study.

Table 2. Measures of bridging among Belgian and Dutch Turks: percentages of those who agree or fully agree with the statements (Dutch N = 53, Flemish N = 341, Dutch women n = 34, Flemish women n = 178)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have Belgian/Dutch friends</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When people ask me where I’m from I say I’m</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgian/Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When people ask me where I’m from I say I</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am both Turkish and Belgian/Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgians/Dutch think positively about Turks</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks think positively about Belgians/Dutch</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am accepted by Belgians/Dutch</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time I feel Belgian/Dutch</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates a likelihood of difference as statistical relationship measured by $\chi^2$ was significant.
In terms of media use, here too, little or no viewing of Flemish public (56.7 per cent) and private channels (49.3 per cent) was reported. But 25.5 per cent of the men did say they often or always watch public channels compared to only 14.2 per cent of the women ($\chi^2 = 14.7$, df = 4, $p = .006$).

Reading Flemish newspapers was reported (very) frequently by 38 per cent of both men and women for improving their Dutch language skills; however, the remaining 62 per cent said they never read a Flemish paper. The respondents reported higher reading of Turkish papers (35.8 per cent (very) frequently, 23.5 per cent from time to time). Online Flemish newspapers were read (very) frequently by a mere 2.1 per cent. Five per cent reported reading a Flemish newspaper online from time to time. Reading the Turkish press online was somewhat more popular as 16.4 per cent said they read these papers (very) frequently. The freely distributed newspapers were not widely read, with more than half (52 per cent) of men and women saying they never read these papers and only 21.8 per cent reading (very) frequently. Computer use was comparable among Turkish men (69 per cent) and women (63 per cent), much higher than the respondents in the Netherlands. However, in the area of search, 31.6 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women reported conducting online searches in Dutch (a measure of bridging), but somewhat higher percentages reported (very) frequently searching in Turkish (36.7 per cent of men and 25.5 per cent of women).

The Flemish sample was somewhat older and had spent more time in Flanders than the respondents in the Netherlands. The Flemish-Turks also were somewhat more educated than the Dutch-Turks. That might have led to greater media use, but not much difference was actually reported in viewing of public and private Dutch language channels. Because our samples may not have been representative, we compared our findings with those of the Netherlands Social and Cultural Planning Office (Huysmans and de Haan 2008) in its survey conducted in autumn 2004 and spring 2005 on about 4,000 ethnic minority respondents (of which 948 were of Turkish descent, age ranging from fifteen to sixty-four). The findings in that study support our results. The study showed that people of Turkish descent continue to watch significantly less mainstream Dutch television (public, commercial or local channels) than the Dutch majority. They also make less use of the home computer than members of the majority. These differences reflect the lower levels of minority-group computer ownership at home. After controlling for socioeconomic status (SES), ethnic minorities make considerably less use of the internet than the majority. Not surprisingly, this digital divide remains highest among the first generations (also after controlling for SES).
Social capital

Significant gender differences were found in Flanders for several statements (Tables 1 and 2), but there was no pattern of significance. A subset (n = 82) of the Flemish group was pulled out – people who had lived in Belgium less than ten years – and showed no significant gender differences. When asked about the importance of Turkish friends and taking problems only to other Turks, more women agreed with those statements than men – just like in the Dutch group. The migrant men in the Netherlands seemed to feel particularly distanced from the Dutch in their interactions, as evidenced by their feelings that the Dutch do not accept or think positively about them.

In the statements on several Islamic religious practices, the respondents were like the Dutch in that there was generally a very high importance placed on these. The three least supported practices were the need for religious sects (8.7 per cent overall), to fasting during Ramazan (45.9 per cent of the men and significantly less (39.2 per cent) of the women) and the need for youth to marry within the faith (54.8 per cent overall). The only other significant gender difference was for celebrating religious holidays, with women placing higher importance (88.3 per cent) compared to 80.1 per cent of the men.

The women in this study are at a particular disadvantage in building social capital: in the Netherlands, 58.8 per cent listed their profession as homemaker (compared to 6.2 per cent in Flanders, but 66 per cent were unemployed). Of those women who married into families that had long been settled in Europe, many experienced pressure from their mothers-in-law to stay at home and take care of their husbands and have children before they studied Dutch or explored their new community. Although they started language classes upon arrival (as required), they had to drop out when they became pregnant. Harika said:

I was alone for one or two years; all alone at home while my husband went to work. I couldn’t go outside my home. I was so afraid. When my husband came home, he’d take me out. When my child was born, I started to go out and at least do a little shopping. When you arrive here, you become half a person, you have to learn everything from scratch.

Another woman mentioned the impossibility of returning to classes with daycare costs being prohibitively high. Asise, a forty-two-year-old living in Genk, Belgium, who did not work outside the home, provided an example of her dependency on her husband to interact with Flemish acquaintances:
When I leave the house on my own, then I only go to other Turks, but if we [she and her husband] go together then we go to Flemings because when he is with me I can understand them. He translates for me then.

Those women who worked outside their home were in general better integrated into the majority community and spoke the language, had friends other than Turks, and so on. However, women and unemployed men with limited daily contact with the majority population did not hold stronger values that would relate to bonding (feel they could take problems only to Turks, etc.), so the assumption that working alongside Dutch or Flemish colleagues would help in bridging was not upheld and the strong gender differences described previously were not based on work contact in the case of the women. Women were often found gathering in groups – having meetings in a community centre or in a Turkish organization, forming friendships in language classes or at a Koran study session in a mosque. Although there were exceptions, these women were not isolated from other Turkish women and their behaviour offered clear examples of traditional bonding practices, keeping them on the margins of the majority society.

Discussion

The findings of this study do more to prompt further research than to provide definitive answers to our research questions. They are limited because of the small number of respondents in the Dutch research (where more qualitative data were collected), but also limited in the Flemish research because of the difficulty of drawing random samples. We have therefore provided more descriptive findings, but the qualitative research in the Netherlands and the corroboration by a national Dutch study allow us to be somewhat more confident about our conclusions. The research does begin to tell a story about social capital and the limits to building it, and to the use of media as a resource for these women in two countries. It supports Bourdieu’s perspective on social capital as being constrained by power inequities. The women in this study had the least ability and opportunity to build social capital through bridging. Geographically separated from the majority population and lacking education and skills that limit economic advancement, they are unable to build the networks necessary for increasing social capital, as Bourdieu has asserted. When women’s contact with the majority increased because of employment outside the home, their bridging behaviour increased, despite a lack of socialization with the majority population, thus
supporting Arneil’s view that assimilation of ethnic minorities is not necessary to build social capital through bridging.

If women do not bridge through their face-to-face contacts and are limited in their contacts through media sources, there is not much hope for the situation to change for them, regardless of the number of regulations created to increase their social capital. One set of questions asked the respondents in the Netherlands if the Turkish language programmes on television, the Turkish newspapers, the Turkish language websites and radio in Turkish were sufficient for them. Though there was little gender difference, most people saw print, radio and the internet in Turkish fulfilling their needs more than television, likely because they did not find sufficient content on television to assist them in building social capital. This creates an opening for Dutch language public television to create programmes with Turkish subtitles that would fulfil those needs in public affairs and entertainment. That might be a particularly good practice for the production of documentaries, as the Turkish women in the study tended to watch these more than news in Dutch. From examples provided at a conference in Hilversum (held yearly as the Diversity Show) on the use of public service television programming for diversity, it seems that these programmes are primarily aimed at youth. But such programmes fail to address the informational needs of adults, and especially those of women who remain relatively isolated in their communities.

The one Dutch language print source that more people read was free newspapers. Perhaps more door-to-door daily delivery would encourage reading of community and national news. That might work particularly well if summaries of the day’s news were included in simplified Dutch with a translation guide provided in Turkish for more difficult words. In Belgium, ad sheets also could introduce news at little cost and high value as a public service. The Flemish regional newspaper, Gazet van Antwerpen (circulating in Antwerp and surroundings), makes a considerable effort to insert full-page illustrations with text produced collaboratively between journalists and designers on important cross-cultural issues. These weekly inserts are intended to bring different generations of ethnic minority groups together to read within the family and link them to the community in which they live. Such strategies seem to be appropriate to encourage minorities with limited language skills to bridge to the larger society.

These are small suggestions. The larger issue is to provide the incentive for ethnic minorities to build social capital through bridging. Linking social capital seems to be the real key to changing this. It must be demonstrated that linking can connect ethnic minorities to resources that could ultimately translate into a better life and allow for full integration – in the two-way sense of the term. Each side tends
to view the other in stereotypes or generalizations. Only regular social contact can address that issue.

Notes
1. Putnam’s book was written in 2000, preceding the thrust to interactivity on the internet or Web 2.0.
2. The Belgian respondents came from French- as well as Dutch-speaking Belgium.
3. In Belgium immigration policies are determined by region, so Flanders’ immigration policies are different from those enacted in Wallonia.
4. The Alevi are Shia Muslims mostly unrelated to the Shiites in Iran. This group generally does not pray five times a day nor attend prayer services at the mosque. They claim to have been misunderstood and even persecuted in Turkey and this is why so many of them chose to work abroad when the opportunity arose. In Turkey they have been associated with free speech and pro-democracy movements. Many Kurdish people are Alevi. A summary of Alevi beliefs and history can be found at: http://www.uga.edu/islam/alevivanb.html
5. Turks refer to the religious period as Ramazan while other Muslims call it Ramadan.
6. Test of significance only used for understanding of the importance of difference. Because of the small sample size in the Dutch sample, no such tests were applied.
7. Fictitious names are chosen, for privacy-preservation purposes.

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CHRISTINE OGAN is Professor Emerita in the School of Journalism and the School of Informatics at Indiana University. 
ADDRESS: 4317 E. Morningside Drive, Bloomington, IN, 47405, USA. 
Email: ogan@indiana.edu

LEEN d’HAENENS is Professor in the Centre for Media Culture & Communication Technology, Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), and Lecturer in the Department of Communication Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen (the Netherlands). 
ADDRESS: Centre for Media Culture and Communication Technology, Catholic University of Leuven, Parkstraat 45, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. 
Email: leen.dhaenens@soc.kuleuven.be or l.dhaenens@maw.ru.nl