Networked identity: how immigrant youth employ online identity resources

Author version

Abstract

In recent years, practices of online social networking and their implications for migrant youth identity development have been heavily debated. The nature of access to resources for identification is changing, and by using a social network perspective, this research conceptualizes identity as a networked phenomenon in which resources are understood as specific kinds of social formations: identity networks. Social network interviews were conducted with Dutch-Moroccan inner-city teenagers, probing their online and offline identity practices as related to their actual social networks. Social network analysis was applied, assuming that structural properties of networks affect behaviour; they can limit or shape, but do not fully determine the actions that individuals can engage in. By combining numeric, discursive and visual data, we aim to understand how structural and compositional aspects of networks are related to the ways in which youth create opportunities for identity development. Four network types, with associated (online) identity practices, are presented.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal social networks contain vital resources for migrant youth's identity development; they form a significant support system in and through which these youth can build their identities. In recent years, practices of online social networking have taken on real flight and their implications for migrant youth identity development are heavily debated with respect to what the new possibilities enable, whether they are beneficial for youth, or to what extent youth employ them in their identity formation (Leurs, 2011, Wang, 2007, Elias & Lemish, 2009; Mehra, Merkel & Bishop, 2004; Durham, 2004; Mitra, 1997).

Social media can support access to valuable resources for personal growth and empowerment, which can function to develop and strengthen many aspects of young immigrants' evolving identity (Elias & Lemish, 2009). For instance, a study by Helland (2007) on religiously motivated online practices by people in diaspora, shows that internet users can take advantage of opportunities and positions they do not have in the offline world in their search for identification online. Exploring identity processes on the intersection of off- and online worlds has proven useful when illustrating the importance of social media to young people's everyday lives, identities and relationships (Awan & Gauntlett, 2013) as youth often build upon their offline identification resources when they explore new resources online.

Much remains to be understood, however, in terms of how exactly these online worlds, and the resources they provide, impact identification possibilities as related to offline ones. How do youth take advantage of new media to maintain or extend their support systems and options for identification? How does this kind of connectivity impact their potential to search out new contacts and identity resources on the one hand, and relate to their experience of stability and belongingness on the other? And what possibly divergent solutions youth explore, and how can we evaluate these in terms of their resilience?

We aim to understand how youth act to create opportunities for identity construction and how this is associated with structural and compositional aspects of their personal communities. We apply a Social Network Analysis (SNA) perspective, as this methodology is able to chart the specific structures of the networked relationships immigrant access and use to build their identities. In SNA, social structure is derived from regularities in the patterning of relationships (Hawe, Webster and Shiell, 2004). SNA assumes that structural properties, such as size, density, clustering and composition of networks affect behavior, although these structural characteristics limit or shape, but do not fully determine the actions that individuals can engage in (de la Rúa, 2007).

We draw on a concept of identity not as 'given' or 'single' but identity as a representation of the self, as reinforced by and the result of personal and group encounters with others over time, providing self-selected means for identification (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 204). Ryberg and Larsen (2008, p.104) speak of a tension between individualization and reliance on others as the 'very social fabric' of social networking. Identities then should be seen as the result of a step-by-step process in which histories of the encounters with multiple others and social worlds are represented and brought together (de Haan & Leander, 2011). Depending on the social settings

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through which people move, and their selective uptake of the provided resources, relatively stable-, or new ideas and values are provided.

Yet, in this paper our focus is not on identity 'as such', but rather on the problem of the changing nature of access to resources for identification in digital worlds. These resources, we argue, need to be understood not as isolated entities, but as specific kinds of social formations: identity networks. Identities are formed in specific networked constellations and we develop this argument by using a Social Network perspective to conceptualize identity as a networked phenomenon. This perspective is in line with Bourdieu's (1986) position that access to social relationships creates multiple forms of social capital. Moreover, our work extends other work showing that possibilities for identification depend on access to particular social relations (Lin, 1999, Burt, 2001, Ryabov, 2009, Wang, 2011).

New networked resources through technology

The increasing global fluidity of information, language, ideas and forms of capital is changing the ways in which resources for identity are distributed, and the practices through which identities and knowledge are constructed (Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 2005). The possibilities to gain access to (resources within) communities outside of one's 'immediate' face-to-face community are expanding rapidly. New information technologies allow the formation of 'bridging capital' (Putnam, 2000), next to the 'bonding capital' provided by the relations within one's own community. It allows the individual to form connections around specific interests and ambitions, irrespective of geographical distance or local bonds. Bridging capital holds important consequences for immigrant populations, who can more easily maintain transnational connections with their heritage country, or transcend spaces that are experienced as limiting in the settlement country. Through online practices, immigrant youth gain access to new networks that function as

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'bridges' to new learning resources and educational opportunities (Wang, 2011). These online connections might hold crucial possibilities to moderate educational disparities, in contrast to tightly bonded (familiar) online networks, which are argued to mainly *re*produce disadvantage (Wang, 2011).

Social network structures and identity practices

In a study of the motives and contexts of identity change by adolescents, McFarland and Pals (2005) ask how the structural properties of youth's networks are associated with identity stabilization or change. On the one hand, they show that dense (i.e. tightly connected) and homogeneous networks are relatively stable, implying that homogeneity leads to conformity: ". . . the more friends you have with the same identity, the more likely you are to adopt that identity as your own" (cf. Cohen, 1977; Kandel, 1978, McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). It is widely recognized that these homogeneous and tightly knit networks have both benefits and disadvantages. Within a network of cohesive friendships one can more easily capitalize on social benefits, but will also feel pressure to conform to the normative pressures defined by the wider group (McFarland et al., 2005).

Interestingly, McFarland and Pals (2005) also found that actors who are members of multiple groups experience more identity inconsistencies as well as more pressure for identity change; heterogeneous networks increase the possibility of exposure to new influences on identity.

However, networks that express multiple memberships are not just reported as putting an extra burden on identification processes. For instance, Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) explain how 'cosmopolitan' youth with a high level of resilience develop networks that, amongst other

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things, have social ties across networks as well as ties that 'unlock' new community networks (the so called 'unlocking ties'). They describe this as a resilience that facilitates the crossing of socio-cultural borders, the overcoming of institutional barriers and the active participation in multiple kinship, community and institutional settings, where supportive relations can be cultivated and exercised (p. 247). This participation in multiple settings implies a positive help-seeking orientation and is assumed to provide the basis for the development of positive immigrant identities. Moreover, the acceptance or tolerance of diversity in ones community can be seen as an aspect of flexibility and openness to change, pointing to the vitality of either individuals or whole communities (cf Flora & Flora., 1996).

A critical adoption of SNA and some methodological issues

A critique of traditional SNA has been that it ignores how youth also form and act on these networked structures (e.g. Pachucki, & Breiger. 2010) based, among other things, on how they perceive the qualities of their community as enabling or restricting. In these critiques it is argued that studies that directly relate network structures to outcome variables assume an overly deterministic view of the nature of network structures and how they function.

Furthermore, it has been argued that network structures do not lead to certain outcomes 'as such'. For instance, Lin (1999) calls on researchers to conceptualise for which outcomes, and under what conditions, a network of a certain structure might generate better returns. Such a perspective is supported in a study Ryabov (2009), who showed that migrant youth benefitted from membership in dense and ethnically homogeneous networks depending on specific circumstances, implying that in other circumstances heterogeneous networks are more beneficial.

This study combines structural and compositional network features with themes emerging from content analysis, extending the critiques of network analysis by Lin (1999), Ryabov (2009), and others, while emphasizing the (online) network strategies that youth deploy to meet their identification needs. Moreover, in this study, we do not conceive of the influence of separate network characteristics such as size and density. Rather, as other network studies have done, in particular those who have argued how these network characteristics can be understood as meaningful patterns (e.g. Litwin, 1995; Lubbers & Molina, 2007 and Hennig, 2007), we look at clusters of network characteristics. We combine this approach with analyses of what youth say about their networks, which allows us to examine how these youth take advantage of certain network qualities. For instance, not every youth accesses the identity capital embedded in their network or available in a wider network community in the same way, and we cannot assume certain networks characteristics to be beneficial for all migrant youth. However, we are assuming that it is possible youth employ different connective strategies, as related to different types of networks and identification needs.

Further, although this study focuses on how online connectivity expands the identification possibilities of youth, it does so explicitly while focusing also on how online-offline dynamics work together. Our claim is that the impact of technology on (active) connectivity can only be studied by taking into account connectivity in their offline communities by looking at the strategic use of technology to solve or continue addressing already existing identity needs.

Although the claim is often made that networks can be expanded through technology, they take form depending on different uses and understandings of technology, and depending on social contexts (Williams and Edge, 1996; Hine, 2000). Online practices are often clearly embedded in the values or systems of offline culture. Thus, when studying online connectivity, we need to

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consideration that 'cyberspace' is linked to people's (offline) communities and the purposes and norms for social contacts therein (Leander & McKim, 2002).

We focus on the (online) networking of Dutch-Moroccan youth, the second-largest minority group in the Netherlands, following those of Turkish background. Those of Moroccan descent make up some 2 per cent of the total Dutch population of 16.6 million (CBS, 2011a). [1] Many earlier studies on migrant youth and their identities have focussed on the 'at risk' side of migrant youth, including studies on Moroccan youth in the Netherlands, putting mental health problems, delinquency, radicalism and school failure on the research agenda, sometimes linking these issues to their problematic identification processes. This study joins a smaller strand of studies that opens up this discussion (compare Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010; Kivijärvi, 2014) looking at networked identification practices, pointing especially to new possibilities for identification in virtual worlds (compare Leurs, 2012). The research questions guiding our study are the following:

- How can the identification strategies of Moroccan-Dutch youth be described as related to the specific configurations of their online and offline social networks (e.g. in terms of size, structural characteristics such as density and composition, e.g. location and ethnic identity of their contacts)?

- Can we distinguish between different identification strategies as related to specific network configurations?

- How are possibilities for online connectivity employed in these (potentially different) identification processes?

METHOD

Sampling and procedure

A total of 24 ego-network interviews were conducted with students from Moroccan backgrounds in the Netherlands (24 cases, average age, 14). Dutch-Moroccans present the second largest immigrant population in the Netherlands (CBS, 2011) .

Participants for the Interviews were recruited from a representative sample of migrant youth in the Netherlands between 12 and 18 years that had participated in a large-scale survey on the use of new media (Hirzalla, De Haan & Unlusoy, 2011). From this larger sample a stratified sample of 24 youth was drawn from two participating inner-city schools (Rotterdam and Den Bosch). As all these students had completed their primary education in the Netherlands we did not consider place of birth, although a minority (30%) was not born in the Netherlands. Given that we were interested in online connectivity, the criteria for selection was that students had reported a minimal level of online media use on the earlier survey (10% was not considered for this sample). The youth and their parents were informed and were given the opportunity to withdraw from participation. None made use of this opportunity. Furthermore, we made sure that the sample was not biased in terms of educational level, age and gender as compared to the larger sample (we did end up with a slight gender bias towards more girls in the sample). The interviews took, on average 1,5 hour and the students received a voucher for their participation.

Instruments

The Ego Network Interview was a semi-structured interview mapping the individual contacts of one youth. The first part consisted of a procedure to generate names of important alters in the teens life. VennMaker software (Schönhuth, Gamper, Stark, & Kronenwett, 2009)

was used to insert the names and background information of alters mentioned in response to a name-generator question: 'Can you name a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 30 people that are important to you? For instance, people that you identify with, provide you with advice, that you feel at home with or with whom you engage in other identity practices'.

The background information collected for the alters included characteristics like age, gender, ethnicity, whether they were connected online with that person, and role-relation. From this information we could calculate network compositional data (like % of alters contacted online, % of same-ethnicity alters and % of family in the network). Besides, youth indicated which of their contacts knew each other in an Excel matrix that was generated with the alter list from VennMaker. This information was imported into NodeXl (software) to generate a visual representation of the network. The (clustered) position of alters, as related to each other and the respondent, were determined using the Harel-Koren Fast Multiscale algorithm, which is one of NodeXL's force-directed algorithms (alters/nodes naturally push away from each other, while edges (relations/ connecting lines) bring them closer together). This results in highly connected nodes migrating to the center, while less connected nodes are pushed to the outside. Force-directed algorithms are designed to make all the lines (a.k.a. 'edges') about the same length and to minimize line crossings, which can make for a more aesthetically pleasing and readable graph. The 'groups' function of NodeXL was then used to calculate clusters; which works by aggregating closely interconnected groups of nodes. Only when the network visualizations were generated, we progressed to the interview. We asked the students if the visualization resembled what they thought their network would look like (e.g. 'Do the groups--as represented by the sub clusters--represent separate groups to you also?'). Overall the representations were reported to be accurate, and small differences were discussed in the interviews.

The semi-structured questions related back to the network picture, probing the on- and offline identity practices that these teens engaged in with these alters or clusters of alters. The questions focused on identification processes within but also across communities, with a special focus on how technology afforded identification practices differently from offline possibilities. They focused on a) criteria for inclusion and expansion of networks (e.g. *'What does someone have to do to become part of your group?', ' With what kind of people do you feel at home?', 'Are there people in this network you met online?, 'Who are they, how/why did you make contact?'*), b) how they managed their presence in different sub-communities in the network (e.g. *'Do other people in your network know you do these things online?', 'How do you manage the different spaces and the different ways of being in those places?'*), while also bringing up the, for immigrants typical, transnational connectivity (e.g. *'How do you relate with those family members in your network still in Morocco?'*). c) Differences between online and offline connectivity practices and preferences were checked (e.g. *'Do you experience differences between making contact online or offline?'*). The voice files collected were all transcribed.

Analysis

The studies research questions were used to guide the analysis. Discursive data from the interviews were combined with numeric and visual data from network analysis in order to discover the ways in which immigrant youth employed online identity resources, and how their practices were associated with the structural and compositional aspect of their social networks.

Qualitative content analysis (NVivo) was combined with analysis of the structural (size, clusters, density) and compositional characteristics of the ego-networks (such as the percentage of connections that were family, same ethnic background, or the percentage of the network with which youth (also) connect online). The transcriptions were first read as a whole, with the

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research questions in mind. Then, text fragments were labelled, focussing on criteria for inclusion and expansion of networks, ways of managing presence in different sub-communities and the mentioned differences between online and offline connectivity practices and preferences. All text fragments under one label were then further examined to identify different connective strategies (different inclusion criteria, sub-community navigation styles, practices and preferences) within them. We distinguished between making new ties online, and 'taking' offline ties to online platforms. Specific attention was paid as to how and why youth decided to (or not) generate online contacts and how these choices were related to the characteristics of their identity network. In addition, each youth's dataset was (re)visualized in a NodeXl graph, in which the (clustered) position of alters around the ego was represented and compositional aspects of the networks were visualized. For instance, the proportion of alters connected to online was made visible by the assignment of different transparency values. Side by side comparison of all these visualizations made apparent different patterns, based on structural (e.g. clustering, the occurrence of 'pendants' in the network) and compositional characteristics.

Designing a typology: Since content analysis showed different patterns of connectivity and several different network types emerged from the social network analyses, typologies were developed in a process in which structural, compositional and graphical data were constantly combined and contrasted with the discursive data. A couple of cases, that did not create or match any emergent typology, were excluded. These excluded cases occurred when *combined* structural and compositional data did not place them clearly within a type, nor demonstrated additional significant variation in connective strategies that would make them into a distinct category of their own.

Analysis progressed with 16 cases to confirm the relations between the different data resources. In testing our typology, consistency checks were used that included data-display

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matrices, correlational analyses, exploration of negative evidence and testing findings for confirmability prior to settling on the typology. Our methodology was not designed to make representativity claims for the population of migrant youth studied, but had a more exploratory character with respect to the variation of networked types that might occur in this population.

RESULTS

Network-type 1: Fragmented networks - using opportunities to make bridges online

Some Dutch-Moroccan youth voiced specific identity needs during the interviews, which were not met offline or were constrained in some way. They indicated a lack of social resources in their offline communities. These youth clearly took advantage of the opportunities that online social networks afforded them for extending contacts with meaningful others, not necessarily of the same (ethnic) background as them. Their attitude towards online connectivity was generally very positive.

Excerpt 1: Exploring new identities

> *Student: 'I want to go into politics and that's different than what others focus on …' […] '…when I would come to school with stories about it, no one is into it.' 'Debating…that's something some people [online] are very good at, for example starting a discussion and they provoke very well' '… I watch them and see how they do it. 'She {the Dutch girl she met on the forum} has a clear opinion and she uses it when we're discussing things. We also talk very often over MSN…'.*

When help was not available offline (because parents or friends are unavailable or circumstances caused separation from other possible resources), these youth found it online. If identity needs were associated with their heritage culture, they showed an ambiguous relationship towards this heritage community, in particular as they were voiced through the expectations of the older generation. The resilience of these, virtually connected, youth seems to stem from their ability to

create new social spaces that may be strategically blocked off from the more traditional communities they are allied with, thereby separating themselves from particular, culturally informed, social practices. They search out new identities with similar minded others, from within or outside their ethnic communities.

In excerpt 2 below a Dutch-Moroccan girl relates how she uses the Dutch social network platform Hyves where she could behave and express identities in ways not allowed in (most of her) offline community.

Excerpt 2: Overcoming offline restrictions

> *Student: '[my mom and dad don't know] … with whom I talk. … they would not agree with that (laughs). …they have… we are in our religion … are very modest with …, I am allowed to talk to guys, but not a lot. Or hang out with them, outside …   you get to know people that you would not have approached. …because we… really do not normally do such things. … if that weren't there any longer … people would really have life changes. Internet plays a big role in our lives.'*

These youth found new connections mostly through (non ethnically specific) sites, like discussion-fora (Kijkdatnou), schoolwork-fora (Schoolonline), instant messenger programs (MSN) or social networking platforms (Hyves). If there were associated transitions they had to make between different social worlds, these did not seem overly problematic to them.

Figure 1: Typical example of a Type 1 Network
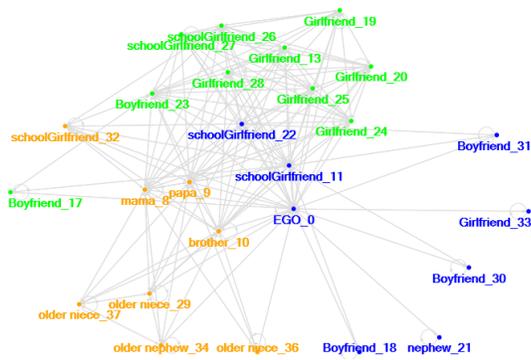
Typical for the associated networks of these youth is that they show 'pendants' (alters with singular connections, only to 'ego', clearly seen in de example network in figure 1) and consist of multiple clusters (more than the average of 2; see Table 1 for comparison with other network types), indicated in figure 1 with different colours. A Type 1 network is less generally dense than average (see Table 1 for comparison with the other network types), which is shown in figure 1 through the relatively low level of lines crossing. In terms of composition, type 1 networks feature a very high percentage of online connected alters (see Table 1 for comparison with other network types). This is visualized in figure 1 by making the *offline only* connections more see-through than the ones with which connection is also made online.

Network-type 2: **Large, ethnically homogeneous netwo**rks **- seeking support online within their 'own' community**

Some youth talked about the ways in which they were embedded in networks consisting exclusively of 'similar' others. In contrast to youth with a type 1 network, these youth are wholly oriented towards similar others and generally stresses the need to be understood and speak

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Moroccan amongst each other. Through their communities they consolidated their cultural identities (they could 'be themselves' in their most important circles) and found multiple resources to develop themselves, apparently without much friction between the different clusters in their network.

Excerpt 3: Finding resources within the 'in-group' (ease of understanding)

> *Interviewer: 'And with whom do you feel you belong?'*
> *Student: 'With people that are just like me, for instance like all of my friends. Most are of Moroccan descent, that I am acquainted with.'*
> *Interviewer: 'Why is it important to you that your friends all have the same cultural background?'*
> *Student: 'I feel most comfortable there, with people that are of the same descent as me, we understand each other more because of that.'…'…most of the time with my Moroccan friends I can just speak Moroccan.'*
> *Interviewer: 'And what does someone have to do to join your group of friends?'*
> *Student: '… if that person is just nice to us, […] everyone can join us, Turks, Dutch, anyone.'*
> *Interviewer: 'but you have no Turkish or Dutch friends?'*
> *Student: 'Ah maybe they do not want to join us. I don't know.[…] …because they understand each other better also. Because Turks cannot speak Turkish to Moroccans'*

In some of their answers these youth displayed a somewhat defensive attitude in their stance towards the 'outgroup'. Interestingly, these youth further explore and strengthen this identification strategy online, through their involvement in designated Dutch-Moroccan social network sites (like Marokko.nl and Chaima.nl), which are very popular with these youth. In this case, their online networking is relatively continuous with their offline networking.

Trough the experiences described in the stories of similar others on Marokko.nl, they reportedly learned about coping abilities and social competencies which might enhance subsequent performance.

Excerpt 4: Finding life advice from similar others online

> *Interviewer: '… so for instance what you learn on Marokko.nl… maybe you learn something from the stories you say you read there… can you use that in school? '*
> *Student: 'No, but I can use it, like, how I should do it later on, let's say. Those girls have experienced certain things and they are now I don't know how old… they tell their life when*

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they were 15 or 16 years old. There are also a couple of girls that had a lot of problems and
they ran away and other girls that are different.
Interviewer: 'Yes, and do you do something with that information?'
Student: 'then if I had a problem like that, then I would do it the way they did it.'

When these youth make new friends online, they do so almost exclusively on (Dutch-)Moroccan online social sites and through mutual friends (connecting on MSN). Their attitude towards unfamiliar others online is not very positive and their trust is low. The densely connected mono-ethnic community that they enjoy offline, is reproduced online.

Figure 2: Typical example of a Type 2 Network

The associated networks are relatively large networks (see Table 1 for comparison with the other network types), composed of 100% 'same-ethnicity' alters (compare in Table 1) and consisting of

2 fairly dense clusters, as can be seen in figure 2 by the large amount of cross-connections between the alters in each cluster.

Network-type 3: Dense, family centred networks - keeping in touch with transnational family online

Some of the youth talked about the ways they are embedded in family-centered networks. The socializing influence of the family seems to be stronger in these type 3 networks that in the homogeneous networks of type 2. They talked about building and strengthening their familial cultural identities and developing extended roles within that family, even through transnational ties with family abroad. They spend a lot of leisure time with extended family, like nieces and nephews or aunts and uncles, and/or they met up during the holidays with family in Morocco. Peers from the family are also an important part of the friends clusters of Dutch-Moroccan youth. Internet is used to keep in touch with cousins abroad who are in similar (diasporic) situations as them. Interestingly, they do not experience the language differences as a barrier, but on the contrary, seem to learn from them.

<u>Excerpt 5</u>: Finding support in transnational connections online

> *Interviewer: 'Are there people in this picture that have the same life experiences as you?' Student: 'Uhm, yes, my two cousins [one of them lives in Germany].'*
> *Interviewer: 'And what kind of similar experiences do you two have ?'*
> *Student: 'Well, just when we experience something fun or something sad, then most of the time they are also there.'*
> *[Later in the interview] Interviewer: 'When you come online, are there people that immediately click on you to talk?'*
> *Student: 'Yes, these and these [points out two cousins, one from Germany].'*
> *Interviewer: 'and what language do you speak to each other?'*
> *Student: 'On MSN? Well, I speak a bit of German, we mixed a bit, a bit of Moroccan, a bit of English a bit of German and Dutch.'*
> *Interviewer: 'Alright, but you do always understand each other?'*
> *Student: 'Yes, they also are quite good at speaking Dutch, and yes, I get taught German here in school so I manage.'*

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These youth maintain this family centered network with the help of online social networking affordances, using technology to maintain 'own identity' networks through which they find some extended cultural resources, but the way they are embedded in their community seems to deter them from forming any alternate contacts online. Unlike those with type 2 networks, they don't make any new friends online as they express it's not 'like them' to engage in such contacts, even if they were from a similar background. They prefer to stick with people they know (also) offline.

<u>Excerpt 6</u>: Making new friends online is 'not done'.

> *Interviewer: 'Have you ever made new friends on the internet?'*
> *Student: 'Uhm, no, I'm not ... someone who, uhm... goes on other sites and then quickly talks to other people .... Just people I know, I mostly talk to them.'*
> *Interviewer: 'If they try and add you?'*
> *Student: '... if I don't know them, I just say no. I have nothing to do with someone I don't know.'*

Figure 3: <u>Typical example of a Type 3 Network</u>
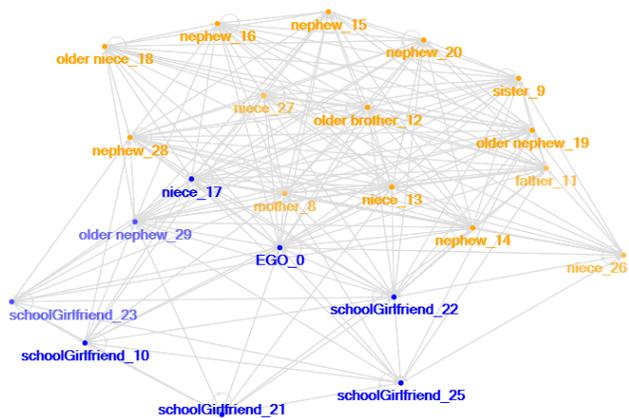
What is distinguishing in the composition of associated networks is a very high representation of family (see Table 1 for comparison with other network types). Their networks show a high density (compare in Table 1) and consist of 2 clusters. These networks display a low level of heterogeneity in their ethnic composition.

Network-type 4: Small, mainly offline networks, with restraints towards life online

Some youth talked about the ways in which they were embedded in relatively small ego-networks. The Internet did not seem to serve much of a social role for them. Even if they did make contacts online, these were not included in their network and were not considered important for their lives. They did not exploit possibilities for online identification, due the nature of their offline networks, their use of technology, and their attitude towards technology. Their lives were built more around offline activities such as sports. Their (offline) social contacts were not maintained online much either.

Excerpt 7: Orientation towards long-term connections

> Interviewer: 'And have you ever made new friends through the internet?'
> Student: 'Yes.'
> Interviewer: 'Are they also present in this picture of your social network?'
> Student: 'No'
> Interviewer: 'No? What kind of people are they?'
> Student: 'People, like, who are in my school… that I've seen a couple of times and then they add me, ...then we. talk and we find out that we uhm have the same hobby or something'
> Interviewer: 'And they are not good friends like the others?'
> Student: '… they are not as good friends as are on here'... with most of them [in the network] I have grown up from when I was little'

These youth seem to orient themselves towards offline, long terms contacts. Some of them make superficial online connections, but these do not have much meaning to them. This is also demonstrated in the following excerpt in which it is additionally illustrated that these youth generally have a more negative attitude towards using the internet for social means. They voiced several social barriers that prevented them from taking advantage of online social applications.

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Excerpt 8: Preference for offline contact

> *Student: 'Yeah, [on the internet] is more boring and if you really see someone it's just more lively*
> *(laughs). Yeah, then you can just tell a bit more. Typing is annoying..'*
> *Interviewer: 'How come?'*
> *Student: 'Because I cannot really type in Moroccan.' [Later in interview] 'When learning from*
> *people [offline] they explain it more clearly.'*

Youth with a type 4 network seem to experience more problems with expressing themselves online; for instance, not knowing how they should react properly to an unfamiliar person or not knowing how to type in Moroccan.

Figure 4: Typical example of a Type 3 Network
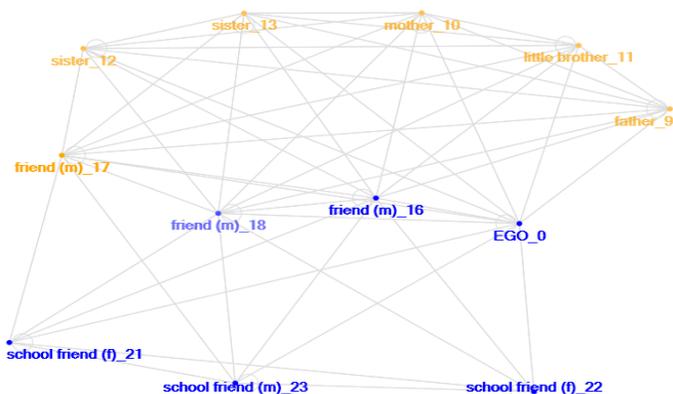
The associated networks were generally small (See Table 1 for comparison with other network types). These youth also have relatively few contacts with which they keep in touch online (compare in Table 1), and their networks consists of 2 clusters.

Table 1: Structure and Compositional data for the four network types:

	Type 1 (n=7)	Type 2 (n=3)	Type 3 (n=3)	Type 4 (n=3)	Average*
Network size	24	28	24	19	**23,25**
Density	0,50	0,66	0,76	0,63	**0,61**
Clusters	2,86	2,00	2,00	2,00	**2,29**
% Same Ethnicity	77%	100%	89%	74%	**81%**
% Family	41%	69%	75%	48%	**56%**
% Online	85%	50%	52%	45%	**65%**
Make new friends online? (yes/no)	Yes (100%)	Yes (100%)	No (0%)	Yes (67%)	**62%**

(*Averages were calculated with the initial sample of 24 cases interviewed. See Analysis for explanation.)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Our study shows youth differ in how they make use of the possibilities of online connectivity for identification, also based on how their offline connectivity is continued, interrupted or extended.

Overall, the networks of Dutch-Moroccan youth are fairly dense, are of reasonable size and show similarity in terms of clusters that are distinguished (a family cluster and a school cluster, overlapping mostly with neighborhood contacts). International contacts with extended family are often also included in the network of important people for migrant youth. Despite these communalities, striking differences resulted from our studies. Their networks show differences in structure and composition, representing different strategies for connectivity. These network qualities, we argue, permit (and at the same time are) the result of different strategies for identification. The distinguished networking patterns seem to be related to their general attitude towards technology, their tendency to seek for resources outside of their own community, but also to how they came to see the online world in functional relation to their offline worlds. For instance, for youth with a type 1 network, the online world was seen as leading to new resources that were lacking in their offline worlds, while particularly youth with a type 4 network show restraints towards the social possibilities of online spaces and they are mainly oriented towards their offline networks in their identity practices. Also, youth differed in the extent to which they developed separate online clusters, smaller networks, or sub-communities that were not connected with those offline, per se. Seeking out variety in communities online was only the case for part of these youth with type 1 networks, while others (especially with type 2 and 3 networks) reconstructed ethnically homogenous communities online. Also, youth differed in the extent to which they oriented themselves online to people and communities that were geographically removed from them. For instance, while for youth with a type 3 network, online connectivity was used to re-establish contact with family abroad, youth with type 1 and 2 networks attached more value to online contacts with peers, mostly located closer by.

In our discussion of the results, we would like to focus on the following issues and debates. First, we discuss how our study contributes to the debate on networked configurations

and the identification affordances these provide, especially given the variety of ways we have found youth make (or do not make) use of the potential for individualisation and diversification of networks. Second, we discuss how these results can contribute to the further development of the idea of 'networked identity', especially while considering online affordances. And lastly, we address the implications for practitioners who work with youth with an immigrant background in terms of the question we raised earlier in this paper asking what networks can be considered as leading to (or representative of) resilience. We will also include recommendations for future studies.

With respect to the first issue, our study implies that online connectivity partly complicates earlier associations between network qualities and possibilities for identification given the potential youth have to act on their networks and how technology supports this. Our methodology (namely one in which the study of characteristics of networks is combined with a discursive approach), makes possible a more nuanced and rich picture of the relationships between network structure, opportunities for connectivity, individual motives to connect, and how particular online platforms allow for membership of communities that can provide identification potential for youth in varied ways. Moreover, youth can build networks at different (more or less temporary or stable) geographical scales. As Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) argued, traversing networks, finding support beyond the boundaries of the present network, and developing multiple different subclusters can lead to particular forms of resilience. Such a network strategy was typical for the online behaviour of some of the migrant youth we studied. Networks with bridging qualities might be less consistent over time (Burt, 1980); they are on the fringe of multiple groups and experience fewer consistent social pressures. However, people with bridging networks show an ability to alter their ties, in line with particular identification needs

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they have (Burt, 1980). This seems to be exactly what the migrant youth in our study did when they used the online potential to search out new contacts or to shift and redraw community boundaries in order to fulfil their identity needs. Gee (2004) has termed those individuals successful at managing identity movements across social worlds 'shape-shifters', while Lankshear and Knobel (2003) describe new learners in an information-driven society as those whose 'knowledges' will come from their ability to cross multiple disciplines and forms of expertise.

Our study showed that many of these youth use online spaces to re-establish to a large degree their already ethnically homogenous networks. The advantages of homogenous networks have been documented extensively referring to consistency in its norms and demands (McFarland et al., 2005), ease of communication through increased trust and predictability (Byrne, 1971) which also function to creating feelings of stability, belongingness and the reinforcement of social identities (Hallinan, 1980). The results show that migrant youth use this identification strategy also while extending their offline networks to online ones, mostly maximizing homogeneity, but also looking for heterogeneity, related to what their offline contacts do or do not afford.

Identity networks then, continuing to our second issue, should be understood as particular formations of social relationships, which provide particular access to identity resources, and form particular identification strategies. The technological possibilities have enlarged the possible variation of such strategies as well as their association with particular networked configuration. Especially the particular dynamics between offline and online identification resources, and the variety of scales networks can reach, add new dimensions to this potential. In order to understand new forms of identification, as distributed online and offline, and distributed over local and

transnational resources, a network perspective on identity has proofed a useful tool to make visible the new variations technology allows.

We end our discussion with how our study can inform professionals who work with immigrant youth, and in general with the issue of what can be considered a beneficial identification strategy. For persons working to empower youth with an immigrant background, a critical view of the social networks of youth and of the social processes supporting the development of their networks and positive help-seeking orientations is necessary, including their online connections. This focus on their 'everyday life' participatory activities (see also Harris et al., 2010) will shed more light on how they try out forms of public identity. Similarly, a networked perspective might inform debates on how interethnic affiliation can be constrained by structural factors (see also Kivijärvi, 2014).

Our study suggests that there are multiple ways in which youth seek and find resilience, involving different networking and identification strategies. Some are based on bonding and others more on bridging ties. Some youth can benefit (at least in the short run) from stable and relatively homogenous networks in which they can develop their identity (e.g. neighbourhood relationships can provide important forms of social capital). However, others have to deal with identity-related needs that necessitate expansion and access to relevant (wider) cultural information, which implies breaking up 'older' social structures, and creating additional ones relatively removed from these older structures, which can be facilitated through their online connectivity. However, this strategy implies that these youth will constantly need to deal with incongruent expectations and values. Typically these youth will have to (learn to) tap into resources that are not always available through their immediate social circles in order to reach their aspirations. This does not necessarily mean that they break up with their traditional community or do not identify with that community; as our data have shown, teens may reach out

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and form more heterogeneous connections, but may still seek to maintain connections to their heritage community. Online connectivity complicates the bonding versus bridging contrast even further; in order to say how social network structures relate to strategies for social mobility or wellbeing, the issue of how online connectivity relates to offline connectivity is key.

Furthermore, in working out the issue of what 'good' networks are in situations of migration, practitioners should give consideration to the outcomes these youths are aiming for. For instance, when it comes to their academic achievement, studies of immigrant adolescents have shown that they are more likely than natives to benefit from membership in dense and ethnically homogeneous networks (Ryabov, 2009). The results of Ryabov's study also suggest that a so called selective or 'delayed assimilation pathway', which is associated with the extensive reliance on co-ethnic networks, works for (recent) migrants as a strategy for upward social mobility (Portes & Zhou 1993).

Future studies might make it possible to confirm and generalise some of these findings, in particular with respect to the representativity of the networks types, when they are tested on larger scale data. Through our approach, we hope to have shown both the usefulness of a social network approach to issues of identity and community formation, as well as how this approach can be extended to provide more nuanced findings doing justice to the complexities of the connectivity of the lives of youth in migration.

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