



Sociability networks of migrant youngsters: The case of Dutch Hindustanis

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Abstract

This article introduces the concept of sociability as an alternative to social capital theories in understanding the expansion of ethnic networks of Dutch Hindustani youngsters. The author argues that the concept of sociability, launched by Simmel and characterized by joy, relief and vivacity, captures these networks better than theories of social capital because they presume rationality and exchange. While sociability appears to be a useful alternative, it lacks specification of the preconditions and the relational glue. It is argued that for sociability relations to emerge, agency is required as well as a common ethnic content, including Indian Bollywood cinema culture. Finally, the author emphasizes that the increased bonding is by no means exclusive to Hindustani youngsters as their peers in other ethnic communities meet both preconditions that enable them to expand community networks. Therefore, the process addressed in this article has a much wider relevance.

Keywords

Bollywood, Hindustanis, networks, sociability, social capital, youngsters

This article deals with the expansion of ethnic networks of young Hindustani members in the Netherlands who locate and realign with newly discovered family members. These youngsters thus acts as brokers, bridging structural holes in strong family networks, incorporating other segments of national community networks, and linking them with transnational nodes, crucially sustained by social media. Not only do they expand ethnic

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networks, with their command of new social media, they also have a higher frequency of interaction.

Theoretically, I argue that the social capital theory approach to social cohesion fails to capture the expansion of these bonding networks because of its connotations of rationality and exchange. Moreover, most social network theories lack the focus on the content to comprehend the establishment of these relations. Alternatively, I introduce the concept of sociability (Simmel, 1949, translated and re-published after his death in 1918) to describe these networks that are characterized by joy, relief and vivacity, arguing that for sociability networks to emerge, a common ethnic content and agency is required.

The concept of sociability does hint at some properties of the relations. However, it is still silent about the content of the networks and the agency to make them emerge. Therefore, I specify the content of these relations for the Hindustanis at three analytically distinct levels of family, ethnic community and transnational relations. The agency of the youngsters is argued to depend on the individualization and the superior command vis-à-vis the elder generation of new social media.

The theoretical relevance of this article is threefold. First, it offers sociability as an alternative to current network theories and specifically, to the different concepts of social capital. Social capital concepts all imply gainful returns, while sociability refers to loose and joyful relations without elements of exchange. Thus, the article offers a different lens on social relations and a different type of bonding than suggested by social capital theories. Second, the article takes the concept of sociability a step further by specifying the preconditions for this type of network to expand, such as the required agency and the use of information and communication technology. Third, it discloses the content of the relations at three levels for Dutch Hindustanis youngsters, demonstrating the specific joy, leisure and vivacity at each level. Taken together the article highlights different forces constituting the internal cohesion of (ethnic) groups.

Although the bonds are cemented by the ethnic culture of the Hindustanis, this by no means implies that the process is specific to this ethnic group. Many other ethnic groups – like the Chinese, Japanese, Turks to mention a few – also utilize the heritage of a ‘home culture’ (Gowricharn, 2009) and successfully incorporate that in their daily life. Moreover, one can easily observe that among white youngsters the highly common content accounts for their expanded networks and a higher frequency of interaction. The case of the Hindustanis is special insofar as the content of the relations is concerned.

In the next section, I review social capital and social network theories to explain the expansion of family relations. Subsequently, I outline the methodology of this research. Next, the social structure and the ethnic content of the Hindustanis in the Netherlands are described. The section thereafter presents an analysis of the sociability networks, specifically the bonding mechanism and the way the youngsters connect at the three levels. In the concluding section, I interpret the findings theoretically and make suggestions for researching sociability networks.

Capital, network and sociability

The concept of social capital was designed to explain the reproduction of social inequality rather than change (Bourdieu, 1986), the help acquired in closed normative systems

(Coleman, 1988), or social and political stability (Putnam, 1993). In spite of these differences, the general implication of the concept of social capital is that networks have the potential to increase the welfare of individuals and communities, assuming reciprocity and rationality in relations (cf. Portes, 1998). Especially in the Bourdieusian conception of social capital, although conceived as generative and constantly to be built up, it is assumed that there is a gain involved, whether intended or unintended, and that relations or their properties can be converted. Definitions were narrowed down and tied to functional goals, in the search for different kinds of social return (Borjas, 1992; Cheong, 2006; Edwards et al., 2003; Gofen, 2007; León, 2005; Levanon, 2011; Modood, 2004). It has also been noted that the concept is rather vague and difficult to specify (Kadushin, 2012) and overlooks the cultural and symbolic elements in relationships (Furstenberg, 2005; Lewandowsky, 2007).

Other criticisms include the observation that the definition and use of social capital neglects issues of power, class inequality and social exclusion in a public discourse that aims at assimilation. As a result, class restrictions of networks, the political context and social exclusion tend to be overlooked (Bankston and Zhou, 2002; Cheong et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2003, 2007; Furstenberg, 2005; Lewandowsky, 2007; Modood, 2004). Regarding ethnic minorities, other limitations emerge. Most studies that have applied the social capital theory to communities use the concept loosely and describe either the emergence of integrated ethnic communities, some kind of integration or bonding of ethnic communities, or the lack of it (Cheong et al., 2007; Samad, 2013; Zhou, 2005; Zhou and Lin, 2005). In addition, the ethnic capital of families is assumed to be embedded in the community and often confined to lower classes. These families often miss crucial information and relevant cultural capital that could offer a more substantial connection with the host society. The operation of their ethnic networks depends on the neighbourhood context and is constrained by numerous factors, including the wider society that considers ethnicity a liability (Cheong, 2006; Edwards et al., 2003; Forrest and De Kearns, 2001; Kao, 2004). This is not to say that the formation of ethnic capital is useless. Studies in this field clarified that the mobilization of ethnic capital is conducive to achieving community goals (Shah et al., 2010; Zhou and Lin, 2005). But as with social capital, ethnic capital too suffers from the presupposition of an exchange in relations.

Would a broader perspective on network be of any help? Networks focus on the structure of relations, while social capital deals with their instrumental properties (Kadushin, 2012). Yet networks are considered a resource in their own right, and here, too, the assumption of rewards and gains determines the approach (see for example Flap and Völker, 2001).

The standard representation is that networks act as conduits through which content flows. The conduit and the content are unrelated. Authors from fields as diverse as cultural studies, social networks and labour market studies have pointed out that content is crucial for interactive networks to emerge (Biggart and Beamish, 2003; Brandtzæg et al., 2010; Lizardo, 2006). Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) specifically demonstrated that network analysis is only fruitful when taking into account the content and agency, specified as ideals, beliefs and values, and the actors that strive to realize them. In a similar vein, Lizardo (2006) argued that the content gives birth to networks. Or, in his words, cultural tastes shape networks. The content or the tastes might be extracted from the

concept of cultural capital since the 'culture' in cultural capital overlaps with the ethnic content present in the community. However, social and cultural capital as described by Bourdieu (1986) appeared to be entangled, an observation also made by other scholars (Lewandowsky, 2007; Modood, 2004; Shah et al., 2010). The troubling element in this concept of capital is that of the exchange relations it presupposes.

Because all the capital approaches (social, cultural, ethnic, family) hinge on the common presupposition of obtaining a gain, an exchange of services and a conversion of one form of capital to other forms, they do not cover the loose and often joyful interactions among the youngsters. Similarly, the network approach is unable to account for the expansion of ethnic relations as it does not specify their nature, nor does it address pre-conditions such as the content of the relations and the agency of the actors.

Much more appropriate to understanding the expanded family and ethnic relations of the youngsters is the concept of sociability, proposed by Simmel (1949). He described the concept as *geselligkeit* (coziness), an 'association for its own sake' that can 'occur only if the more serious purposes of the individual are kept out, so that it is an interaction not of complete but of symbolic and equal personalities' (Simmel, 1949: 254). Simmel (1949: 257) also stated: 'the principle of sociability may be formulated thus: everyone should guarantee to the other that maximum of sociable values (joy, relief, vivacity) which is consonant with the maximum of values he himself receives'. It is a free and playful form of interaction, and Simmel specifically used 'tact', 'talking', 'dance' and 'coquetry' to illustrate the concept.

Simmel's claim that sociability occurs between equals or that no gain is involved requires some reconsideration. In small groups, it is easy to encounter leaders and followers, narcissists or people who are bored and trying to kill time. All these elements generate some satisfaction for underlying wants, appeal to different skills and predispositions, and generate an informal inequality among the group members. It is precisely in these groups that young people build their reputation and self-esteem. This building of self-esteem and reputation can occur in schools, sports clubs, among students, peers in the neighbourhood, in street corner societies, in networks of friends and in circles of cousins. Although there is some inequality and gain in these groups, which deviates from Simmel's representation of sociability, the concept meets the joy, play and leisure criteria of the youngsters. It refers to a less compelling type of relation than social capital or social network.

The literature also discusses the concept of 'sociality'. 'Sociability' and 'sociality' are used side by side, which implies a difference but is often unspecified, and the two are used interchangeably. This usage also covers studies that refer to Internet-based 'sociability' (Brandtzæg et al., 2010; Castells et al., 2004; Ducheneaut et al., 2007; Nie, 2001; Rutter and Smith, 1999). Moreover, the use of both sociability and sociality – to refer to offline or online relations – differs from author to author (Brandtzæg et al., 2010; Castells et al., 2004; Fiske, 1992; Molnár, 2004; Nie, 2001; Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2003; Sutko and De Souza e Silva, 2010). In most of the online as well as the offline studies, sociability is used to denote a loose grouping of socializing individuals, a bonding without specifying a cause or mechanism. Major exceptions are Lewandowsky (2007), who tried to loosen the social capital approach by combining it with sociability in the Simmelian sense; Lehtonen and Mäenpää (1997), who used the concept of street

sociability; Costa (2001), who applied the concept of sociability to public festivals (like Carnival); Sutko and De Souza e Silva (2010), who came up with the notion of urban sociability; Rutter and Smith (1999), who have tried to specify the interaction on the Internet as a form of netiquete; and Ducheneaut et al. (2007), who examined whether online gaming interactions fit the conceptions of sociable environments. Although many of these concepts require sharper specification, they all share the Simmelian elements of sociability, particularly leisure and joy.

For sociability of youngsters to emerge, two preconditions are needed. The first is common cultural content that accounts for the causal relations, activities, interaction and bonding. Here I follow Lizardo (2006) in his claim that ethnic content selects and shapes networks, a position endorsed by an increasing number of scholars (see Pachucki and Breiger, 2010). Ethnic content covers racial similarity, religion, language, public festivals, community events and a common taste in music, dancing, food, humour and other factors that strengthen cultural identity. Other network properties as similarity (homophily), the relative granting of *a priori* trust and a relative closure are implied in the ethnic nature of the networks.

The second precondition, the agency of the youngsters, is determined by two aspects. The first is the previously mentioned individualization and the second is a command over new social media, which symbolizes a generational digital divide that affords the youngsters more autonomy (Brandtzæg et al., 2010; Castells et al., 2004; Hampton, 2004). However, one should note that the Internet is much more than a facilitator of online relations: it is also a 'place' where sociability in the Simmelian sense is extended since it enables the downloading of movies and songs, playing of games and information seeking (Elahi, 2014; Molnár, 2004; Nie, 2001). Hence, new social contacts originate on the Internet, giving rise to connected online communities (Brandtzæg et al., 2010; Elahi, 2014; Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2003). Hampton (2004) cautions that offline and online networks are highly overlapping in nature. As a result, the social relations of youngsters are reflected in their Internet networks, thus expanding ethnic sociability to the digital world.

The expansion of ethnic networks presupposes a status quo that is characterized by relative closure and fragmentation, in the absence of which no extension is possible. Burt (2000) argues that networks of small groups are characterized by two properties: closure and structural holes. Closure improves communication and facilitates approval that fosters trust in the networks. People circulate in strong networks and are relatively constrained. Holes in the social structure mean that people do not attend each other's activities since the holes function as a buffer. Individuals who straddle the holes connect isolated parts of the network structure, have more social capital and act as brokers. These conditions are true for holes in Internet networks as well, which are more easily bridged.

In sum, ethnic sociability generates a different kind of social cohesion. Its differs from the bonding engendered by social capital as it is not directed at some gain, it is looser in nature because of the leisurely character of the encounter, it is predominantly sociable because of its playfulness and joy, and has some degree of closure without being completely exclusive (as it may include friends, distant relatives and in-laws from different racial and ethnic backgrounds). Similar to the youngsters' offline sociability, Internet sociability refers to leisure activities rather than academic or professional use of the

digital means. It is devoid of exchange rationality, it includes elements of joy and playfulness, is less structured in time and less compelling in other ways.

Population and method

In the Netherlands, Hindustanis are descendants of British Indian indentured labourers who were shipped to Suriname, located on the northeast coast of South America, then a Dutch plantation colony. Two-thirds of the labourers settled in the colony and established an ethnic group, including ethnic institutions such as a vernacular, religions (about 70% being Hindus, the rest consisting of Muslims and Christians), ethnic political parties and a flourishing community life, including transnational relations with India (Choenni and Adhin, 2003). In the early 1970s, demographically the Hindustanis were the largest ethnic group of Suriname, without being renewed by new arrivals.

The name Hindustani was initially used by the Dutch colonial officials who referred to people from Hindustan, the area of recruitment of the labourers (De Klerk, 1953); the descendants adopted this label. In contrast, in the English-speaking Caribbean, the custom is to refer to Indo-Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian and Indo-Jamaican. In line with this custom, the Hindustanis could be labelled as Indo-Surinamese or Indo-Dutch. However, because Indo-Dutch is already in vogue to denote people from Indonesia and the participants in this study refer to themselves as 'Hindustanis', I conformed to the latter usage.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the majority of the first generation Dutch Hindustanis emigrated to the Netherlands. They reproduced their ethnic group culture to a large extent, although due to their minority position, assimilation and weakened bonds and institutions, their ethnicity became 'thin'. They also re-established connections with India that act as a 'source culture' (Gowricharn, 2009), and significantly contributed to their ethnic identity. The Dutch Hindustanis are a distinct ethnic community and have a rather strong tendency to align with India and Suriname, especially in daily issues such as language, religion, music, food, Bollywood, dress and community festivals. Due to their diaspora consciousness the Hindustanis were successful in their cultural reproduction. This desire to preserve their ethnic identity has been a relatively autonomous force rather than the outcome of some specific circumstances causing segmented assimilation (Choenni, 2014; Gowricharn, 2013; cf. Portes and Zhou, 1993).

Being a member of the community, I participated in public events and festivals many times and attended birth ceremonies, anniversaries, weddings and other gatherings, within as well as outside family circles, for more than two decades. During this participation I gradually realized that the younger members of families (aged 12–30 years) were developing a strong interest in the 'family' and Hindustani community and culture. The relations established during these meetings continued after the introduction of new family members and often acquired features of a friendship.

This type of research is known as opportunistic research. According to Riemer (1977: 469), in this format, researchers 'use familiar situations or events to their advantage. They *know* rather than *know about* their area of study. They are insiders' (emphasis in the original). Riemer pointed out that many sociologists use these familiar situations to

understand society and ongoing social processes, and deplored that this at-hand knowledge and expertise are often neglected. Riemer's distinction between *knowing about* and *knowing* overlaps within the emic and etic approaches in ethnography. While in the etic approach the researcher is an outsider with his or her own perspectives, in the emic approach the researcher is an insider using the frames of reference, the definitions and ambiguities of the research population (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015).

Riemer's views aligned with my own. Given my fascination with the resurgence of family ties, the idea to 'do' something with the observations kept returning. Eventually, I decided to document the phenomenon and write a paper on it. I started to collect data more systematically and verified my previous impressions and conclusions. From that moment on, the opportunistic research acquired strong exploratory features in which anthropological methods such as participation, informal interviewing and observation served as strategies to gather and check data.

In the last five years I attended meetings six to nine times a year. Although all generations of the Hindustani community were involved in the 'making and remaking of family and community', I concentrated on youngsters and their use of social media to get acquainted with newly discovered relatives. The long time span of investigation enabled me to observe shifts in trends within the community and to verify observations, record variations and check conclusions. This was not an easy job. Within a few years, a 12-year-old child would become a grown-up teenager, with a fast developing command over ICT and a youth-specific language that only his/her peers would understand. I did not make notes systematically. The selection of my data was helped by discussing recurrent phenomena such as the emerging preoccupation with cell phones, being constantly socially connected and the increasing focus on the Hindustani community with scholarly colleagues and key informants in the community. These repeated discussions were also convenient in countervailing memory lost.

Although the Hindustani community is internally differentiated, including a rapidly growing assimilated segment, this research focused on the dependent variable. That is to say, I focused on the parts of the population that displayed sociability, knowing that the other parts did not or engaged to a lesser degree. Participation and observation were carried out during family and community gatherings, all over the country. Sociability has been observed without exception in all cases.

Because of the long duration of participation and observation as well as having to keep pace with changing community lifestyles, I refrained from conducting a survey or using other formal methods. Those approaches would have captured a moment in the development of the community. My choice of this particular research methodology makes it unlikely that a reproduction of the research would yield the same results. The age cohort is growing up, the community is changing and the technology is developing. Recording data as in conventional research becomes pointless since its purpose is either to reproduce the research or to aid memory. Both functions become redundant: the first because of the fast changes in technology as well as in the community, and the second because of the long time span. In spite of my conviction that the research findings are reasonably solid, I have presented them to a few Dutch scholars for a check, and most of them are familiar with the Hindustani community (see Acknowledgements).

Social structure and content

Dutch Hindustanis, at present an estimated 175,000 people, constitute a small, ethnic community (Choenni, 2014). In the mid-1970s, in the wake of the independence of Suriname and in response to a fear of racial clashes, they migrated (together with other ethnic groups) in large numbers to the Netherlands. They were accommodated in special centres located throughout the country. Before the mass migration, the Hague was home to a major settlement of Hindustanis. Many migrant Hindustanis therefore moved to the Hague, to be near relatives. Family support, marriage, employment, education opportunities and community life were the major pull mechanisms (Choenni, 2014). Other concentrations of settlement were in the major Dutch cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht, while a small number of families remained in remote pockets. As a result, the network structure of the community consisted of strong and weak networks and many structural holes (Burt, 2000).

One consequence of this settlement pattern was spatial dispersion and the fragmentation of ethnic networks. Maintaining these networks became laborious. Many members of the second-generation Hindustanis became 'disconnected' from the extended family circle. They grew up in ethnic isolation and assimilated more easily in the absence of surrounding and supporting ethnic institutions. Their concept of family is less rigid than that of the first-generation Hindustani immigrants. As 17-year-old Kiran said, '“family” is blood relatives or those who are married with my family. The degree of affiliation does not matter.' Other youngsters disagreed and emphasized that the frequency of interactions does matter. For 22-year-old Mala, 'the more often you meet a distant relative, the more you feel family. Sometimes, you are not aware that they are family because they become friends.' Johan (age 19) pointed out that some his friends were closer than family members, but in due course became family-like and participated in family events, even though they belonged to different ethnic groups.

The variation in 'family' suggests some degree of differentiation in terms of identification, loyalties, moral obligations and trust (cf. Widmer, 2006). Attending rituals and feasts in the wider family circle is less obligatory and their omission has fewer consequences for the relationships. In a small community, the more the families are connected, the higher their share in the community. The youngsters that I observed and chatted with appeared to have a preference for community events be it weddings in other families, attending performances of Bollywood stars, or annual community festivals like Holi. There is a smooth transition from family activities to community events. When asked for features that were synonymous with the Hindustani community, they answered 'being Hindu', 'looking like Hindustanis' (referring to Indian people), 'celebrating Hindustani fiestas' (like Holi Phagwa and Diwali), 'speaking or [being] able to speak Hindustani', 'having Hindustani family names', 'food' (especially curry, pepper and lentil soup), 'music', 'manners' and 'family relations'. Most youngsters concurred with this description of the Hindustani community.

Scholars (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) have discussed that individualization has weakened inter- and intra-family interactions. With regard to Hindustanis, the trend of individualization is forced upon them by the host society, for example through the educational system and assimilation. Individualization is manifested in the decline of networks of the extended families as well as the individualization of the younger generation.

A related development is the reduced bonding capacity of Hinduism. In Suriname people were invited home to attend religious ceremonies or visited the temple weekly. In the Netherlands, this custom has faded away. Several factors account for this. Apart from the fragmentation of the community, owing to long distances and weakened networks, Hindustanis became more secular and restricted themselves to a few religious ceremonies. Moreover, those who practise Hinduism individually built a shrine in their homes, making a visit to the temple in public places redundant. Thus, the bonding impact of religion was restricted to the family instead of the community (Gowricharn, 2002).

This decline of previous ethnic cohesion is aggravated by the successful integration of Hindustanis into the Dutch society. As in Suriname, Hindustanis excelled in education, with many members acquiring a university degree or becoming doctors, lawyers or entrepreneurs. In the Netherlands, 18% of the Hindustani population has a university degree, on average almost one in every family (Gowricharn and Choenni, 2006). As social mobility is closely correlated to acculturation (Gans, 2007), a consequence of this trend is that gender and generational roles have changed greatly in favour of the girls. Consideration and communication within the family increased, leading to a kindness in family relations labelled 'emotional democracy' (Van Stokkom, 1997). The emergence of a middle class led the younger generation to move to affluent suburbs, which loosened the members' daily ties with co-ethnics (Schaaque et al., 2014). A related effect of integration is the increasing number of mixed couples (Van Tubergen and Maas, 2007). As a consequence of rising education, exogamy and relocation, the community became internally differentiated into highly assimilated and traditional segments.

The decrease in traditional bonding mechanisms such as religion and traditional gender roles, together with the dispersal and fragmentation of the ties within and between families, resulted in a decreased capacity to mobilize family members. Because of weakened family networks and the localized nature of Hindustani radio and television in the Netherlands, a need for new communication emerged. The Internet came to play a pivotal role. In 2010, the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics reported that 99% of the youngsters between 12 and 25 years of age had access to the Internet and that 9 out of 10 spent time on it daily (CBS, 2011). This rules out any digital divide among the youngsters, while they increase their agency because of their technological proficiency and individualization.

The levels

The bonding engendered by the youngsters consists analytically of three levels: first, horizontally reaching out to other family segments and bridging structural holes; second, the incorporation of family networks, including 'family-in-law' and 'friends of family', and thus 'moving into' the community; and third, connecting both family and community networks to nodes in the transnational field. At all these levels, the joy, leisure and vivacity suggested by the concept of sociability were manifested.

Connecting families

In my observation, Dutch Hindustani families can be classified in terms of their main activity. That yields an analytical distinction between families who prefer leisure, others who

love to dance, those who are intensely religious, those who are entrepreneurial, others who are preoccupied with financial concerns, who emphasize the Surinamese and even the Indian origins of the Hindustani culture, who commonly read books, or like to chat about and discuss issues. This differentiation impacts the connecting of families since the glue between them differs. For example, families that like dancing tend to constitute a strong network segment and are likely to have more mutual contact and go out together.

Structural holes in the family networks are filled by introducing newly discovered family peers to each other. That is easily done when the youngsters live in the same city, know about each other from previous meetings, or are introduced by family members who are already part of the network. Aided by cell phones, the youngsters stay almost constantly in contact, a permanent connectivity that reflects the modern form of urban sociability (Sutko and De Souza e Silva, 2010). The first meetings are motivated by the feeling of 'being family'; subsequent meetings are inspired by mutual judgements of members as 'nice', 'cozy' and 'cool'. The circle of family acquaintances is extended when the youngsters gather at weddings, funerals or other special occasions. In these cases, youngsters introduce their parents to other relatives and vice versa.

Spatial distances are bridged daily by the Internet, specifically by the use of Facebook and WhatsApp. Facebook and similar sites expand the size of the family network by introducing one family member to another, even though the two may not be in the same vicinity. Checking if people on Facebook with the same surname are family members is not uncommon. The youngsters use social media to share their pictures, to offer congratulatory messages on community and family holidays, birthdays, marriages and other events, and to send condolences. Some youngsters design special family websites based on the surnames and depict the family tree. In addition, ethnic websites are also a place for establishing contacts. These digital networks may transform into face-to-face relations (Elahi, 2014) and vice versa. Once acquainted during family gatherings, the relations are maintained via Facebook and similar social networking sites.

Age differences are hardly relevant to these youngsters. Neither are specific positions in the family hierarchy. For example, Hindustanis have a refined nomenclature for referring to uncles: elder brothers and nephews from the father's side are called *dadà*, younger brothers are addressed as *kakà*, while brothers and nephews from the mother's side are *mamà*. A similar nomenclature exists for aunts. For many reasons, these relatives may belong to the same peer groups, but this family hierarchy is of no effect. Similarly, gender is no determinant in the composition of these networks. Although there is some separation between males and females, this is most often bridged by common interests and preferences. In family networks, trust is granted as a kind of moral credit. Family peers are easily trusted, unless there is strong reason to believe otherwise. Small amounts of money are lent without reservation, expenses are taken care of when members are short of cash, and members cover for each other when it comes to parental control.

After new family contacts are established, it becomes customary to invite them home. Such visits happen especially on birthdays, religious ceremonies, funerals and other special occasions. The newly befriended youngsters often take their parents with them, thus uniting an older generation of family who may have known each other earlier but had lost touch. Sometimes in-laws are included in these contacts. The restoration of contact between older family members entails an increase in visits, especially during community

and public holidays in which younger family members are included. It is not uncommon for these newly (re)connected family members to go together on vacation, connect their relatives with the in-laws, offer all kinds of support and engage in moral obligations customary in the Hindustani community. With this bonding, new rounds of family contacts, interactions and support are heralded. Although family relations are intrinsically more stable and structured compared to the fluidity and playfulness implied by the concept of sociability, the relations among the youngsters differ from those among the elders as they are more playful and joyous, as described by Simmel.

Expanding community networks

Occasions to be introduced, meet and get acquainted with co-ethnics and new family members exist during community festivals like Holi and Diwali, celebrated publicly with processions in major Dutch cities. Holi in particular comes close to the idea of public sociability (Costa, 2001). Other community occasions involving wider families include beauty contests and performances of classical Indian dances. Youngsters typically participate in and attend such events, often accompanied by older people. New family members are also 'discovered' and acquainted with at such events.

Functions such as weddings or anniversaries are attended by family members from all over the country. Weddings and marriage anniversaries bind two (often relatively large) families, thus expanding contacts beyond the family networks. Since the Netherlands is geographically small, attending these gatherings does not involve much effort. For instance, for events such as the three-day Hindustani public festival *Milan* in the Hague (which is replicated on a smaller scale in other Dutch cities), Hindustanis from all over the country visit the city. Since it has the largest number of people of Indian descent on the European continent, most Hindustani visitors have relatives in the Hague. Young family members, together with 'friends of the family', and 'friends of friends of the family' meet to celebrate *Milan* together. In these networks, the family becomes immersed in the larger community networks.

What do these youngsters do when they meet? In short, they have fun. They make appointments to meet in certain locations, watch movies, go to the disco, attend a festival, gossip about the family and acquaintances, make new friends, or just 'chill' somewhere, which in Holland is synonymous with 'relax'. They talk about games, religion, dating, vacations, new friends, events, movies, and inform each other about interesting websites. School and private matters are seldom discussed. They attend religious ceremonies and birthdays, date, mate and help to relocate.

When they meet on the Internet, usually ethnic websites, they chat, play games, search for news, make appointments or discuss opportunities to go out. In a recent study, Elahi (2014) discussed this Internet sociability by highlighting how these youngsters visit ethnic websites to satisfy several needs, including seeking information on religion, Suriname and India, Bollywood and Indian fashion. The Internet not only offers the possibility to break through the confines of the family and ethnic networks, but also to delve into them. Thus the ethnic bond is re-established or renewed.

Of all the activities, dancing is by far the most popular among the youngsters. Dancing in the Hindustani community occurs on three occasions: in public community spaces, in

broader family gatherings such as weddings, and in relatively closed small family circles, such as on birthdays. The younger generation is especially eager to dance, although (depending on the type of family) elders also participate. These families spend a considerable amount of time, energy and financial resources, including attending dancing classes, to perform well on the dance floor. In the past decades, at most community gatherings, including weddings, dancing was the way to demonstrate skill, joy, modernity and prosperity. Dancing, thus, has become a norm within the Dutch Hindustani community. While these family events are also a place for the youngsters to flirt and scout for partners, members of all age groups enjoy dancing.

This dancing is highly intertwined with Bollywood culture. As observed, India serves as a source culture from which Dutch Hindustanis draw their share (Gowricharn, 2009). The most popular elements extracted from India are the music and the colourful (and rather expensive) clothes and jewellery. Indian songs are often alternated with music from the Caribbean like chutney or kaseko and Latin American genres like salsa and merengue. In spite of this variation, the dancing styles hardly change. The only visible distinction is between slow and hot music. Slow music is less popular among youngsters who prefer to dance wildly and passionately, as if their lives depended on it. The music is usually loud, suffocating every conversation and impeding other forms of social contact. Most often, women take the initiative to dance. While two women easily dance together, two men dancing together is an extremely rare sight among Hindustanis.

Transnational connections

The transnational connections of Dutch Hindustanis, in which both the 'family' value and the ethnic content merge, consist of two types of global contacts. The first is that with the country of origin, Suriname. As far as it concerns ethnic contact, this is restricted to family. The ethnic content is an extraction of Hindustani culture in Suriname, part of it being a heritage from India. Remittances and family obligations are a crucial part of this kind of bonding (Gowricharn, 2004). Other types of contacts with Suriname extend the ethnicity in the form of vacations, business transactions, health and political motives. The bulk of this contact is maintained by the first-generation immigrants to Holland, mainly via the Internet and cell phones. Some holidays, such as Christmas and New Year, also inspire Hindustanis (as well as other ethnic groups) to visit Suriname. A special and easy mode of tracking down family – in Suriname as well as in India – is provided by a database of indentured labourers who were shipped to Suriname from 1873 to 1916. This database is on the Internet and freely accessible (Ga hetna in het nationaal archief, n.d.). Consulting the database enables a continuation of the search for Indian roots, which results in many visits to Uttar Pradesh, the area of emigration of their forefathers (Hira, 2000), which is the second global connection.

Apart from the search for roots, other reasons to visit India include religion (pilgrimage), yoga training, health, tourism and, above all, Bollywood. This movie industry caters to the Indian diaspora all over the world through its films (families being central in most of these movies), and video clips of songs and dances (Kaur and Sinha, 2005; Mehta, 2005; Punathambekar, 2005). In the Netherlands, these activities have been institutionalized in Hindustani beauty contests, shops selling Indian dresses and related items,

Bollywood-like weddings, Indian dancing styles, fashion and Hindustani music bands. This institutionalization of ethnic culture is fostered by the broadcasting of the British/Indian Zee Television (Verstappen, 2005) and the music channel Zingtv. Consumption of this Bollywood culture has increased as a result of the opportunity to download movies and songs as well as to order clothes and jewellery on the Internet. Thus, in spite of the fragmentation and increasing assimilation, the ethnic content of Hindustanis has been retained to a significant degree. This cultural content is easily updated and modernized by the Internet (Gowricharn, 2009).

It is important to not misinterpret the role of Bollywood: this element of cultural content caters to Hindustanis all over the world. However, it is not an exclusively Indian phenomenon. Similar distribution of the home culture among diaspora communities also occurs elsewhere, such as with the Chinese (Yang, 2003). In spite of the preponderance of the host country's culture, the direction of acculturation is often towards this home culture, and certainly not as a reaction (Bhatia and Ram, 2009). Although the literature is inconclusive about the impact of transnational forces on the shaping and expansion of cultural bonding, an increasing number of studies support the proposition that Bollywood is a powerful transnational force shaping family, community and transnational networks (Gowricharn, 2009; Kaur and Sinha, 2005; Kim, 2013; Mehta, 2005; Punathambekar, 2005; cf. Guarnizo et al., 2003).

Conclusion

This article addressed the expansion of networks of Hindustani youngsters in the Netherlands. In this expansion, solidified by common ethnic cultural content, family and national as well as international community networks are augmented and internal social cohesion strengthened. The youngsters do not establish contacts for mutual gain nor do they continue with the contacts because they discover ex-post that they have a 'family with a benefit'. The analysis highlights that because of the leisure-type relations and their less compelling nature, the concept of sociability appears to be a more appropriate concept to describe the networks in circles of families, communities and transnational relations.

However, while the concept of sociability represents an alternative to social capital perspectives, it lacks specification of the preconditions accounting for these relations to emerge and the disclosure of the relational content. In this article I have specified the preconditions for the emergence of sociability relations as well as a differentiation of the content at the level of families, ethnic communities and transnational bonding.

The phenomenon described for Dutch Hindustanis contradicts the notion of symbolic ethnicity (Gans, 1979). Communities embedded in diaspora networks are fed by a source culture, and this culture countervails the assimilation process. As a result, the inexorability of assimilation is likely to be restricted since many ethnic minorities are embedded in diaspora networks and draw from a source culture. The movement addressed in this article also clarifies that neither individualization nor diversity cause a collapse of the community (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Putnam, 2000) since they foster agency and networks. Increased ethnic cohesion is better captured by the concept of ethnic sociability rather than by social capital and network theories.

Simmel's concept of sociability no doubt addresses a dimension of social reality that requires much more scholarly attention. That reality was conceptualized almost a century ago. Ever since, the social world has changed dramatically, and scholarly knowledge has advanced. It would be odd if the concept of sociability did not require adjustment. More importantly, sociability needs further exploration to understand its usefulness. Sociability in school, in the workplace, in sports, in leisure and within family circles as well as at the level of national and international communities presents interesting avenues of exploration. A further specification concerns difference in classes, gender, various ethnic groups and racially mixed families. While every domain will have its own specificities, the general idea – that people relate for reasons of fun and joy, strengthened by emotions and cultural content – will recur at every level distinguished in this article.

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Résumé

Cet article se penche sur la notion de sociabilité comme approche alternative aux théories du capital social pour comprendre l’expansion des réseaux ethniques chez les jeunes hommes hindoustanis aux Pays-Bas. Je défends l’idée selon laquelle la notion de sociabilité chez Simmel, qui se caractérise par la joie, le secours et la verve, permet de mieux appréhender ces réseaux que les théories du capital social, qui se fondent sur la rationalité et l’échange. Alors que la notion de sociabilité apparaît comme un terme utile de l’alternative, elle ne présente cependant pas les conditions préalables et le ciment relationnel nécessaires. Pour faire apparaître ces relations de sociabilité, il convient donc de faire appel à la capacité d’action de l’agent et aux contenus ethniques communs,

y compris la culture cinématographique de Bollywood. Finalement, je souligne que cet attachement accru n'est pas l'apanage des jeunes hommes hindoustanis et que leurs homologues appartenant à d'autres communautés ethniques remplissent les mêmes conditions préalables pour développer leurs réseaux communautaires. Le phénomène examiné dans cet article présente donc une portée plus large.

Mots-clés

Sociabilité, réseaux sociaux, capital social, jeunes hommes, communauté hindoustanie, Bollywood

Resumen

Este trabajo presenta el concepto de sociabilidad como una alternativa a las teorías del capital social en la comprensión de la expansión de las redes étnicas de jóvenes indostanos holandeses. Sostengo que el concepto de sociabilidad, planteado por Simmel y caracterizado por la alegría, alivio y vivacidad, capta estas redes mejor que las teorías del capital social, que suponen la racionalidad y el intercambio. Mientras que la sociabilidad parece ser una alternativa útil, carece de especificación de las condiciones previas y el adherencia relacional. Sostengo que para las relaciones de sociabilidad que emergen, se requiere la agencia, así como un contenido étnico común, incluyendo la cultura cine indio como Bollywood. Por último, hago hincapié en que el aumento de la vinculación no es exclusiva a los jóvenes indostanos, que sus compañeros de otras comunidades étnicas cumplen ambas condiciones que les permitan ampliar las redes comunitarias. Por lo tanto, el proceso abordado en este trabajo tiene una relevancia mucho más amplia.

Palabras clave

Sociabilidad, redes sociales, capital social, jóvenes, indostanos, Bollywood