Introduction:

If it is clear that using Internet has become something universal, the ways of using it remain different. Indeed, a study of the topic might reveal some slight differences between the way different ethnic groups use the Net. But if every nationality has its own way of using the Internet, one is considered a theft in a lot of countries: downloading music and movies for free, or in other words, practicing piracy. The laws roughly differ from country to country but most governments have sought to ban piracy from their boarders because of its negative impact on the entertainment economy. Thus, it is illegal to download for free almost all over the world. Nevertheless, not everyone reacts and feels the same way about piracy and illegality. Some people agree with the laws and respect them and some acknowledge their legitimacy but transgress them all the same. Others do not even feel concerned by them. Consequently, it is interesting to wonder whether cultural background and nationality have an impact on how people can feel about illegality in the Internet. Throughout the last years, a lot of studies have investigated the differences in the use that people from different nationalities make of the Internet. John B. Horrigan's survey on the use of Internet among different ethnicities for example, has shown that Hispanics were more likely to download music than Blacks and Whites (2004). However, none of these studies has explored the moral aspect of the topic. This is why attitudes towards piracy and moral concerns depending on nationalities and cultures will be the central topic of this paper. Thus, we will try to figure out if those two factors are somehow linked. Considering that a culture is the customs, ideas, and social behavior of a particular people or group and that they every culture is different, it would be justified to assume that those cultures actually play a role in the different ways of considering piracy on the Internet.

Method:

To answer this question, my group established a questionnaire asking about the ways to think about and react to piracy. A total of 25 persons were interviewed. All of them were high

school students between 19 and 24 years old. 10 were males and 15 were females. In order to obtain a larger range of nationalities, some participants were chosen from the International section of a university dorm. To obtain answers as honest as possible, the participants were guaranteed anonymity. Most of the questions were asking for the participants' personal opinions, except for the opening questions that asked for personal background in order to classify the participants according to their nationalities. Those questions allowed us to establish four main cultural groups: Blacks, Whites, Latinos and Asians. Some people from other nationalities were also interviewed but will not appear in the results as there were not enough to stand for a group of their own. Each group was represented by at least 4 persons. We chose not to ask for the participants' social or economic background, considering that it did not have an impact on the use of free downloading (that might not be true but we made that assumption in a matter of simplicity). The other questions were divided in two main topics: the frequency and way of practicing free downloading, and the attitude and feeling toward it. To provide the participants with a larger range of possibilities and allow them to choose answers as accurate as possible, most of the questions were open, with a lot of choices and nuances in the answers (for example totally agree, partially agree, neither agree or disagree, partially disagree and totally disagree were the five choices proposed for an open question). The purpose of this method was to get precise answers, really corresponding to what people felt. The field of the feelings is a difficult thing to evaluate, as feelings cannot be reported by simple and precise answers from a multiple choice questionnaire.

Results:

Once the data was collected, the results were classified according to the ethnic groups and the answers given. We did not differentiate males and females, though it is obvious that it can have an impact on the way of seeing piracy, but it was not what we were interested in. Nine people composed the Latinos group, five represented the Blacks, four represented the Asians and the White group had seven participants. As some results did not appear to be relevant or

not revealing of anything interesting, only the results that effectively address our topic will be presented here. Figure 1 gives the percentage of people stating that they download for free more than once a month in each group.

Figure 1: Percentage of people downloading for free more than once a month by ethnic groups.
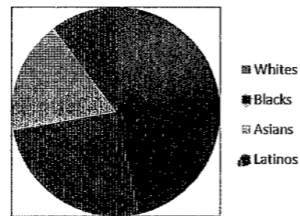
As we can see, Whites are leading with 45% of people downloading for free more than a month. Blacks follow with 25% of the participants, then Asians with 17% and Latinos end with 10%. We also obtained results showing that in the Latinos group, at least two people considered "sharing with friends" their main source of getting music or movies. They were the only ones to give this answer; all of the others chose "paying online" or "free downloading". To the question about the way of feeling towards piracy, only one person admitted feeling "a little bit ashamed sometimes". All other participants said that they did not feel ashamed about it at all. This person belonged to the Black group. One of the question was formulated as a statement to which the participants had to give their level of agreement. This statement was that piracy is a theft. The results to this question were quite divided. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants according to their answers and ethnic groups.

Table 1: Piracy is a theft, agree or disagree?

	Totally agree	Partially agree	Neither agree or disagree	Partially disagree	Totally disagree
Latinos	2	7	0	0	0
Whites	1	1	0	2	3
Blacks	1	1	0	3	0
Asians	2	2	0	0	0

We can see that all of the answers of the Latinos and the Asians are located in the "agree" side whereas it is almost the opposite for the Whites. The Blacks appear to be quite split on this issue as out of five participants, two are situated in the "agree" side and three chose the "disagree" area. Another question asked for the participants' opinion on the laws about piracy. Each person was asked about whether or not he deemed the laws justified. There were three choices tot his question that were "yes, completely", "not really" and "not at all". Table 2 shows the different answers that were given tot his question.

Table 2: Are the laws on piracy justified?

	Yes, completely	Not really	Not at all
Latinos	5	3	1
Whites	1	3	3
Blacks	3	1	1
Asians	2	2	0

Here we can observe that Latinos were also mostly situated in the "yes" side whereas the Whites were more apt to say "no". The Asians appeared totally divided while the Blacks were mostly in favor of the "yes" but also gave some "no". Eventually, the participants were asked which region of the world they think had the greatest rate of piracy. The possibilities were the United States, Mexico, India, China, the rest of Asia, Europe or Africa. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the answers.

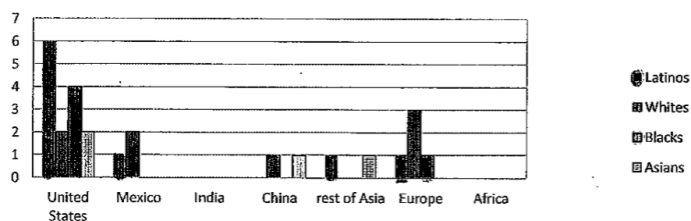**Figure 2:** In what region is piracy more common?

Figure 2 shows that none of the participants answered India nor Africa. The United States was

the most frequent answer with fourteen people having chosen it. Europe follows with five

answers. The rest of the participants are shared between Mexico, China and the rest of Asia.

Discussion:

Conducting a survey on a moral issue has not been something easy. Indeed, there are always

various nuances on each opinion and it can be tricky to try to classify people in categories that

might not exactly correspond to chat they feel. But eventually, the overall results of the

questionnaire were really useful to establish the distribution of the different opinions

according to ethnic groups and it appeared that, actually, cultural background really seems to

have an impact on the way people consider piracy. The survey showed that Latinos tended to

feel more morally concerned about breaking the laws than other ethnic groups. Whites

appeared to be less reluctant towards free downloading. When asked about it, the main reason

that the participants of this group gave was that they value more the benefits than the moral

issue. Various members of the Whites group mentioned that they "did not think about it" when

they were asked if they feel ashamed while downloading. This reason also accounts for the

fact that Whites tend to find the laws on piracy less justified than the other groups. It may be

argued that the modern western culture gives major importance to the notion of benefit and

that is why free downloading is not seen as morally wrong as in the other cultures. However,

some participants in the Whites group also confessed that they did recognize free

downloading as a theft but that they did not want to stop because it generated more economic

gains than moral concerns. In the Black and Asian groups, the participants appeared much

more divided than in the others. It seems that those ethnic groups have opinions more personal

than linked to the culture or that the culture does not hold strong biases in this particular issue

of piracy. What is interesting to notice is that, if at least one participant in each group

confessed feeling ashamed about downloading, all of them also recognized practicing it all the

same. Thus, cultures might influence some people to see piracy as more immoral than others,

but they do not seem to deter anyone from committing piracy. This can be compared to what

journalist Christian Christensen discusses in his article about the world-famous website Youtube (2010, p.512). Indeed, Christensen asserts that if the notion of copyright (the intellectual property) is acknowledged all over the world and is even the object of treaties, this does not prevent it from being scorned every day. It is indeed a very human characteristic to know about the legitimacy of something but not to respect it because it goes against personal interests and benefits. This is particularly true with downloading as studies show that the rates are rising at the very same time as the laws are strengthening. A study realized by Mary Madden and Lee Rainie in 2003 actually proved that 32% of Internet users have already downloaded music for free (some probably still do). Our study has thus shown that cultures and nationalities could influence people's feelings towards piracy. Nevertheless, as the Internet is unstoppably growing towards becoming the greatest media of our society, the tendency towards free downloading is becoming more and more universal. Indeed, whether people download or not seems to depend more on age ranges than nationalities. This growing practice is in fact becoming the main problem of the entertainment industry, and if laws are seen as the only solution, many people actually think that they are making things worse and that the governments are helpless in the face of the titanic phenomenon that the Internet has turned into.