HAL
open science

Ethnicity, Social Capital and the Internet

David Parker, Miri Song

To cite this version:

David Parker, Miri Song. Ethnicity, Social Capital and the Internet. Ethnicities, 2006, 6 (2), pp.178-202. 10.1177/1468796806063751 . hal-00571859

HAL Id: hal-00571859
https://hal.science/hal-00571859v1

Submitted on 1 Mar 2011

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Ethnicities

ARTICLE

Copyright © 2006 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi) 1468-7968
Vol 6(2): 178–202;063751
DOI:10.1177/1468796806063751
http://etn.sagepub.com

Ethnicity, social capital and the Internet

British Chinese websites

DAVID PARKER

University of Nottingham, UK

MIRI SONG

University of Kent at Canterbury, UK

ABSTRACT This article explores websites developed to express the interests and experiences of young Chinese people in Britain. Drawing on content analysis of site discussions and dialogues with site users, we argue these new communicative practices are best understood through a reworking of the social capital problematic. First, by recognizing the irreducibility of Internet-mediated connections to the calculative instrumentalism underlying many applications of social capital theory. Second, by providing a more differentiated account of social capital. The interactions we explore comprise a specifically 'second generation' form of social capital, cutting across the binary of bonding and bridging social capital. Third, judgement on the social capital consequences of Internet interactions must await a longer-term assessment of whether British Chinese institutions emerge to engage with the wider polity.

KEYWORDS racialization ● second generation ● social inclusion ● social network

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of social capital has become ubiquitous among sociologists, political theorists and government policymakers (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Halpern 2005; Putnam, 2000; Schuller et al., 2000). The key premise of social capital analysis is that social networks have value (Cohen and Prusak, 2001; Granovetter, 1973). Because of its productive

potential, social capital is often understood as 'the resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors' (Lin, 2001: 25). Besides this instrumentalist conception of social capital as a strategic resource for social action, the idea has taken hold for promising a solution to the wider problem of political disengagement in contemporary democracies.

The most well-known application of this civic virtue perspective on social capital is provided by Robert Putnam in his now famous book, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000). Putnam laments the increasingly individualistic nature of contemporary society and the decline of civic-mindedness, as measured through peoples' participation in voluntary organizations, labour unions and sports leagues. This decline in civic participation is worrying, because, according to Putnam, there is significant evidence that communities with a good 'stock' of these forms of social capital are more likely to benefit from better health, less crime, and economic growth, not to mention morale.

Despite its popularity, the social capital approach has been criticized for its indiscriminate application (Portes, 1998), for confusion over whether social capital is possessed by individuals, informal social networks, or the whole society (Bankston and Zhou, 2002), for embodying a moralistic concept of community (Amin, 2005) and for being 'cross cut with troubling presences and absences around gender and generation' (Edwards, 2004: 4–5). In this article, we argue for a more reflective application of social capital analysis to understanding the political participation of ethnic minorities. Although some recent studies have examined the implications of the Internet for existing social relations and the stock of social capital (Castells, 2000; Norris, 2004; Smith, 1999; Tranvik, 2004; Wellman et al, 2003), there has been relatively little analysis of how ethnic minorities are utilizing online social networks to foster collective action. Putnam's own work identifies the lack of a strong relationship between overall Internet usage and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000: 171) and highlights the potential for ever more self-referential online contact between those with narrowly defined shared concerns (Halpern, 2005: 307). More recently, the dangers of religious or ethnic exclusivity in online networking have been highlighted with Internet sites accused of inciting terrorism (Powell, 2005) and spreading rumours that spurred inter-ethnic disturbances in Birmingham in October 2005 (Miles, 2005).

Our research takes a less sensational case, recognizing the distinct barriers to participation faced by the descendants of post-war migrants to Britain from East Asia, and examining the scope for the Internet to act as a source of social capital for those without a history of active involvement in public affairs. We caution against recent studies that emphasize the individualizing tendencies of the Internet and the dissipation of collective identities into a 'networked individualism' (Wellman, 2001). Such research may overlook the potential for minorities to harness new technology,

deepen existing affiliations and generate new cultural formations. Our work explores the recent emergence of websites developed by British Chinese young people, for the most part British-born descendants of post-war migrants to Britain from East Asia. The British Chinese have recently been held up as exemplars of high educational achievement, accounted for by forms of 'capital' – economic, social and cultural – within the family and community (Modood, 2004, for example). Yet, as many of the discussions on the websites we explore illustrate, there is considerable frustration at the disparity between educational excellence and the lack of a British Chinese public profile. As research on Asian Americans has demonstrated (Zhou and Xiong, 2005), possession of educational capital does not automatically confer social inclusion and participation within the wider society. By examining possible links between social capital formation and online activity, we can trace the emergence of new forms of association and participation that may counter this social invisibility.

ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Just as feminists have begun to explore the gendered assumptions of social capital theory (Kovalainen, 2004), its presuppositions concerning ethnicity also require careful elaboration. Putnam's discussion of social capital (Putnam, 2000) implies an ambiguous disposition towards ethnicity – a conjoined admiration and fear of the social capital ethnic groups create.

Putnam distinguishes between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital tends to reinforce group boundaries and identities and is thus exclusive in nature. This type of capital is effective in encouraging, if not enforcing, reciprocity and solidarity among ingroup members. By comparison, bridging social capital is more inclusive, encompassing people across different social groups and backgrounds, thus encouraging the formation of broader identities and collectivities (Putnam, 2000: 22; Norris, 2004). For those like Putnam, who see bridging social capital as the most productive for social cohesion, generalized trust is a necessary condition for a healthy democracy. This form of trust is disinterested, universalistic and transcends the clannish particularistic ties assumed to bind strong networks in ethnic groups (see Fukuyama, 1995).

On this view, ethnic groups can be *too* cohesive if their social capital is excessively bonded and they associate mostly with people of their 'own kind'. They are likely to withdraw from civic participation, or engage exclusively in co-ethnic organizations and networks. For example, Uslaner and Conley's analysis (2003) of a *Los Angeles Times* survey of Chinese in California found that those who felt integrated in American society and who had friends of diverse backgrounds were likely to engage in civic

participation. Those Chinese who felt marginalized and who primarily associated with exclusively Chinese people were more likely to join in ethnic civic associations only, or even opt out of civic life completely. Yet the very terms of these findings highlight the potential circularity of the social capital approach: is social capital cause or effect of the civic dispositions associated with the term? (Roberts, 2004: 473). In addition, the idea of ethnicity as a social resource pre-dates the emergence of social capital analysis.

For years, sociological studies have examined the ways in which specific immigrant groups generate and benefit from ethnic ties that facilitate economic and social mobility (in the USA, see Light, 1972; Waldinger et al., 1990; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Zhou, 1992; in the UK, Ward and Jenkins, 1984). From this perspective, the inward-looking, exclusive nature of ethnic ties can be beneficial both for these groups and the wider society. Yet some of the recent literature on social capital and trust problematizes solidaristic ethnic ties for coming at the expense of the broader, bridging connections seen as fundamental to wider forms of civic participation.

The overly crude depiction of ethnic social networks as an example of 'particularized trust' implies that only inter-ethnic social connections count as civic engagement. The dominant theorization of trust within studies of social capital is unfairly dismissive of ethnic groups as potential contributors to the broader civic good precisely through the assertion of their ethnic identities. This weakness partly stems from a simplistic understanding of ethnic groups as 'by definition not internally diverse' (Uslaner and Conley, 2003: 355).

By contrast, our analysis of Internet sites formed to reflect the experiences of British-born Chinese people demonstrates the complexity of intra-ethnic differences along the dimensions of gender, sexuality and generation. These very differences have stimulated debate and interaction, as ethnicity is not a unitary category assumed without question by Internet users. In addition, far from preventing engagement with the wider society, these Internet forums have stimulated forms of political activity from a hitherto marginalized constituency.

Extended dialogues on the Internet offer material for analysing the varied compositional practices of categorization, identification and institution building that make up ethnicity (Brubaker, 2004). These practices do not neatly bound a clearly delineated group or express a pre-existing ethnic substance, but shape the formation of what counts as specifically ethnic. The analysis of these emergent communicative practices can no longer assume the automatic affinity between use of the Internet and fluid, multiple identities characteristic of early analysis of online life (Turkle, 1995). Like other second-generation migrant groups, British Chinese young people were forming complex identities before the emergence of online communication. Rather than generating hybrid identities from nowhere, the Internet

has enhanced the possibilities for 'expansive realization' (Miller and Slater, 2000: 10), offering new means for articulating what previously lacked the opportunity for public expression, in this case a latent British Chinese sensibility. Unregulated online discourse can lead to the reification of essentialist self-understandings, but may also allow for what Franklin terms a 'nascent postcolonial politics of representation' (Franklin, 2003: 467), challenging hegemonic constructions of difference in mainstream media. For British Chinese people, this politics of representation is an attempt to come to terms with living in a multicultural society, conscious of both ongoing experiences of discrimination, and the implications of China's growing global prominence for how they are perceived. Self-narratives and social networks reflecting these concerns, and shaping the formation of distinctive multilayered subjectivities, stem from the Internet sites we highlight below.

Until recently, the concept of social capital has not been an explicit presence in sociological debates about ethnicity in Britain (see Goulbourne and Solomos, 2003; Modood, 2004). However, the New Labour government's stress on social inclusion, active citizenship and community cohesion (Kearns, 2003) has given social capital a place in policy discourses concerning the future of ethnic minorities in Britain. Attention has focused on the social networks within minority communities and whether these help British-born generations to connect with valuable external resources (Strategy Unit, 2003). A British Cabinet Office report attributed barriers to social mobility faced by second-generation ethnic minorities in Britain to their lack of social capital (Performance and Innovation Unit, 2002). The research to date, however, has not examined their use of the Internet to form new social connections. In this article, we examine whether the networks facilitated by British Chinese websites are usefully understood as an emergent form of ethnic social capital.

METHODOLOGY

Our study draws on several years of following the evolution of the websites we discuss. Aside from three formal requests for help with our research posted on the site's message boards in 2001, 2003 and 2004, we have been non-participant observers rather than contributors. We have conducted face-to-face interviews with the site owners in the summer of 2004 and kept them informed about the nature of our research. We have posted short questionnaires and invitations to participants, asking them to explain what their use of British Chinese websites means to them, and we quote from the 30 responses we have received, as well as from a selection of discussion threads. As the sites are free to read without the need to register as a

member, we regard their content as in the public domain. We recognize ongoing debates about the application of principles of informed consent and anonymity to the analysis of material on the Internet (Hine, 2005). However, we agree with Marianne Franklin that due respect for those posting messages, often with carefully chosen pseudonyms, intersects with 'academic citation decorum' in quoting material exactly as it was submitted to the sites (Franklin, 2003: 488).

THE EMERGENCE OF CHINESE WEBSITES IN BRITAIN

The emerging body of literature concerning Internet use by diasporic transnational communities demonstrates the continuing significance of ethnic and racial identities for minority users of the Internet throughout the world (Adams and Ghose, 2003; Franklin, 2003; Georgiou, 2002; Hiller and Franz, 2004; Karim, 2003; Mitra, 2003; Parham, 2004). The Internet has become embedded in everyday communicative practices, expanding the repertoire of potential identity formations, and reshaping the ethnic habitus of users (Ester and Vinken, 2003; Panagakos, 2003). However, by focusing extensively on global diasporas, the work on 'translocal cyberpublics' brought together online (Ong, 2003) can overlook those forms of Internet activity still largely located within national boundaries.

Indeed, in the case of the Chinese in Britain, intra-national geographical dispersal has been the main constraint on collective action. While there are 'Chinatowns' in large metropolitan areas such as London and Manchester, these are primarily areas of commerce and do not constitute large and dense enclaves where many different kinds of Chinese people actually live, unlike in New York City's Chinatown. Many first-generation immigrants started out in waged work in Chinatowns around Britain, but once they became small business owners (of restaurants and takeaways), they dispersed throughout the country, resulting in the marked social isolation of Chinese people from one another (Parker, 1995; Song, 1999). Consequently, the British Chinese population has a high degree of geographical dispersal (Dorling and Thomas, 2004). As the editor of the British Born Chinese website put it, 'None of us has a BBC neighbour' (face-to-face interview with Steve Lau, September 2004) (BBC used in this context and later in this article stands for British-born Chinese).

The development of new media for the circulation of British Chinese public opinion is particularly timely, as what little media attention has been given to the Chinese in Britain has been negative and sensationalistic. The suffocation of 58 people in a lorry at Dover Docks in 2000 and the drowning of 23 workers extracting cockles from Morecambe Bay in 2004 have highlighted the vulnerability of undocumented Chinese migrants. In 2001 and

2003, Chinese people and food were implicated in the foot and mouth and SARS health scares. Since the turn of this century, Britain's 'silent minority' has made the headlines with unaccustomed frequency. Yet these isolated episodes of hyper-visibility have emphasized the lack of public awareness of a second-generation British-born Chinese population.

Partly to counter such representations, a number of websites have begun to articulate distinctively British Chinese viewpoints. Participation on the websites we explore engenders two potential sources of specifically 'second-generation' social capital. First, the creation of a new dialogic space in which deliberation, reflection and expressions of emotional support give public recognition to an emerging British Chinese identity. Second, the social networks, face-to-face meetings and occasional political mobilization stimulated by the sites. Although the potential social capital arising from Internet communication may appear less tangible than the ethnic ties that foster ethnic business success, it could be particularly important for securing Chinese people's well-being and inclusion in British society, as the British-educated try to establish a socioeconomic profile outside the catering industry (Song, 2003).

The self-declared purposes of the two sites we analyse resonate with some core components of social capital – information sharing, networking and participation in political debate. The British Born Chinese site was established in 1999 and aims to 'provide a forum in which British Born Chinese can share experiences, ideas and thoughts' (www.britishbornchinese.org.uk). One of its founders, Steve Lau, had set up a website called Chinatown Online as a portal for those interested in Chinese culture and Chinese food in Britain. The site attracted a considerable number of British-born Chinese users, many of whom used its discussion board to urge the creation of a site specifically geared to their experiences. As a result, www.britishbornchinese.org.uk was formed.

The site has grown into the main participatory Internet site for British Chinese people with 7,000 registered members, set against a total Chinese population in Britain of 247,000, of whom 38 percent are aged 16–34 (ONS, 2005). The site's discussion forum has become the main focus of interest and had hosted over 700,000 messages by the end of 2005.

The other main site expressing British Chinese sensibilities is called Dim Sum (www.dimsum.co.uk), established in 2000 by Sarah Yeh, a British-born Chinese designer, and Jack Tan. Although it also has a discussion forum, Dim Sum's primary role has been to provide online commentary on many of the key issues affecting Chinese and East Asian people in Britain. Dim Sum has always had a more explicit cultural-political agenda than the British Born Chinese site: 'Dim Sum hopes to be able to give voice to the views of ethnic minorities that have, until now, been silent or ignored' (www.dimsum.co.uk). The Dim Sum site grew out of frustration felt by the original co-editors at the lack of a Chinese public voice in Britain:

> Initially when we talked about it, we were really excited and also frustrated that until now Chinese voices in this country had been really quiet . . . We were sick of assimilation, of being quiet and invisible, and Chinese people fading into the background and not making a fuss . . . We want to make a fuss. (Face-to-face interview with Jack Tan, August 2000)

For both these websites, the previously latent collective identity of 'British Chinese' becomes a focus of contested elaboration in the site's discussion forums.

REFLEXIVE RACIALIZATION

> This board itself tells a story in every thread, about the lives of some of our community. If ever a magazine or review were to talk of British Chinese representation, this website would be a prime example. (Posted by 'watchdog', 26 November 2002, British Born Chinese website)

With 23 thematic forums on the British Born Chinese site's near real-time discussion board, registered members are able to exchange ideas about what it means to grow up as a person of Chinese origin in Britain. There is regular discussion of the characteristically British Chinese childhood of working in the family takeaway business (Song, 1999). For instance, a member posted on 'The Job Club' forum asking for hints on 'wording your takeaway job on your CV [resumé]'. A humorous reply re-interpreted the lessons learnt from nights spent behind the counter:

> Health and Safety Compliance Supervision (Mopping up at closing time) Stock Management and Turnover Logging (Aiyah! no more beansprouts!) Food Preparation Supervision (Where are the lids!?!? Where are the lids?!?!) (Posted by 'noodleboy', 5 July 2004, British Born Chinese website)

Experiences of dealing with racism in everyday life are a recurrent forum theme. In October 2004, a site member asked for advice on how to respond to 'being called Chinky' by a number of young men whilst on a university campus (posted by 'MBF', British Born Chinese website 18 October 2004). One user replied 'report them to anti-fascist student groups' (posted by 'agent 808', British Born Chinese website, 19 October 2004). Another suggested 'If there was a next time I would advise you to take a note of their registration number and then approach them to ask what their problem was [. . .] to talk to them and possibly shame them into realizing that someone would actually respond to their childish taunts' (posted by 'Winifred', British Born Chinese website, 19 October 2004).

Such interchanges are examples of *reflexive racialization*. We use this term to highlight the Internet's ability to act as an instantly accessible, interactive and archivable medium, hosting a self-authored commentary on a

wide array of issues encountered by racialized minorities in a multicultural context. These exchanges constitute not only a wide variety of intellectual debates about the position of Chinese people in Britain, but also an important source of emotional support for people who have shared many experiences in common.

Reflexive racialization stems from the interactive nature of the discussion boards encouraging extended observations on the affective dimensions of ethnicity. The material posted refers not just to lived experience, but the *felt* experience of growing up as Chinese in Britain. Everyday difficulties and dilemmas are discussed with a mixture of anger, humour, cynicism and sarcasm. The vicissitudes of British Chinese life are seen to full effect in the 'Name and shame ur stupid customers' thread that began in April 2005 and by December 2005 had attracted over 370 responses. This began as a humorous litany of the daily reckoning with inebriated, incoherent and impolite customers faced by many British Chinese young people in their working lives in the catering trade. It also provided a perspective on the racialized everyday encounters across the counter often mediated by young people taking orders. One site user, 'mei mei lai', has posted many examples of the treatment meted out by abusive customers, for example referring to an incident when she refused to serve a serial offender:

> they called me racist for not serving them . . . they refused to leave calling me a chinky, illegal immigrant a disgrace to the country I need my skin bleaching and I'm making too much money out of english people!!!! (Posted by 'mei mei lai', 7 April 2005)

One fellow site user responded to further messages:

> I only had to work in a chippy when I was about 15 (hated it, particularly hate stupid ignorant white chavs who think they can treat Chinese people like crap) so haven't had to experience the crap that a lot of you have ('mei mei lai', I'm surprised you haven't tried to emigrate yet!!! You have to put up with so much of what is wrong with England!) (Posted by 'Karaoke queen', 26 August 2005)

Website discussion forums are one of several novel communications tools eagerly taken up by British Chinese young people to express an otherwise latent collective identity. There are significant connections between these Internet discussion forums and other digital media. The websites have evolved to include more interactive features such as instant messaging, and many of the individual users of the British Born Chinese site have links to their own websites or weblogs at the foot of their messages.

Through self-expression via these media, the embodied social identity of 'British Chinese' is given a personal definition, whilst connecting to a collective experience, anxious to contest the stereotypical depictions of Chinese people afflicting the everyday experiences of those using the sites.

Countering Orientalist representations in mainstream media attracted the involvement of Lai Yan, who became a volunteer for the Dim Sum website:

> I was quite amazed there were groups who were willing to stand up against the press. I think that's the main thing, there are some stereotypes out there, and you think . . . you just get so angry when you read about them, and you think 'I wish somebody was there to try and speak up for us', and I think Dim Sum was one of the few groups that actually did. (Interview with Lai Yan, Dim Sum website volunteer)

A user who was asked about the significance of the British Born Chinese site replied: 'The site contributes to shared experience by encouraging exchanges that otherwise would not find a place to happen. It indicates not only the concerns, but also the presence of Chinese people in Britain' ('Andy', site user, email response).

This sense of presence has been extended to offline social gatherings organized through the British Born Chinese website. The main 'official gathering' is in London once a month, when over 100 British-born Chinese gather for a social meeting. The website is used to advertise these and similar meetings in many other cities throughout Britain. These get-togethers and everyday Internet exchanges have reshaped the lives of many site users.

> I never used to mingle with people of Chinese origin, and quite often felt there was a gap in my identity. But since joining the site, posting, and attending meetings, I have begun to resonate with experiences of others and have shared mine with an understanding I have never experienced before. ('Wai Yee', site user, response by email)

This respondent estimates she has made over 100 acquaintances and three-dozen close friends through her membership of the site. Such networking and socializing opportunities are not confined to Britain itself.

British-born Chinese people regularly travel to East Asia, particularly Hong Kong, where many have family, with some relocating there permanently. The British Born Chinese website is a crucial source of information about Hong Kong. A 'British Born Chinese in Hong Kong' group advertises its gatherings on the website. There is a monthly meeting attended by 50 people in Lan Kwai Fong, central Hong Kong. The organizer of these meetings describes the social networks developed as a result:

> Through the meetings, all types of groupings of friends have emerged. On a more formal basis, we've formed a British Born Chinese Hiking group. There was even a Tai Po group [Tai Po is a name of a town in Hong Kong] that existed for a while. We're even going to have our first wedding between two people who met because of the Internet and our Hong Kong gatherings. ('Chris', organizer, British Born Chinese in Hong Kong group, by email, 13 September 2004)

Knowledge of Hong Kong is a prized asset, recurrently sought on the website:

> Another thing we do is use the Internet for information gathering/sharing e.g. fielding questions on accommodation in Hong Kong, tailors that make custom suits, general information on Hong Kong, job vacancies, etc. It's a collective resource potentially tapping into all our members. Not all of it is hard fact. There's a fair deal of emotional support, or a support network for people having problems, who don't know what to do, and are not sure of their (cultural) identity. ('Chris', organizer, British Born Chinese in Hong Kong group, by email 13 September 2004)

These web-based dialogues lend themselves to analysis in terms of social capital theory. The reflective context for the testing out of identities stimulates the sharing of sometimes highly emotive experiences, both via the Internet and face-to-face in the regular meetings organized through the websites. The sharing of these experiences can be cathartic and the reciprocal emotional empathy offers a form of online social capital in nurturing sufficient trust to stimulate friendships, relationships and an enhanced collective identity.

These sites transcend individualistic conceptions of social capital as 'investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace' (Lin, 2001: 19). The websites would not have been established or sustained over 5 years without considerable time and financial commitment on the part of their unpaid editors and moderators. The editors of the British Born Chinese site were funding the monthly server hosting costs for several years before seeking voluntary contributions from site members in early 2005, and have retained the site's advertising-free, not-for-profit status.

PUBLIC ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

The wider significance of Internet sites like these lies in offering a potential counterweight to the long-standing marginalization of Britain's ethnic minorities from formal representative and policy-making institutions (Lieberman, 2005). Users express an overriding concern with the contribution of these sites to the public recognition of British Chinese social claims:

> Sites like this will contribute towards British Born Chinese asserting their presence in British society. Where has our voice been up till now? Sites like this are voices at the grassroots level. ('Pauline', by email, 7 July 2004)

Yet even those definitions of social capital recognizing it as a public good (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) fail to appreciate how ethnic identities expressed through struggles against subordination are a defining feature of

a multicultural democracy. Theorists of social capital concerned with political participation have espoused a limited conception of what constitutes civic engagement (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner and Conley, 2003). Their neo-Tocquevillean conception of a consensually associative society fails to do justice to oppositional forms of social action and, at times, implies ethnic forms of association are inimical to civic life. Yet it is precisely through mobilizations organized by ethnic websites that many of the British-born Chinese population have engaged in political action for the first time: 'The messages posted on the site are experiences that British-born Chinese may identify with, making them feel closer as a community through the sharing of experiences, it can also be a foundation where discussions taking place can lead to actions taken on behalf of the community' (Ly Lan, site user, email response).

On several occasions since their inception, the British Born Chinese and Dim Sum websites have tried to redress the political marginalization of Britain's Chinese population by mobilizing collective action. As the editor of the British Born Chinese site observed: 'Because the profile of the Chinese is so well-known as an invisible community', young Chinese people's assertion of their presence and views on various social and political issues within the public sphere have been both novel and empowering.

For instance, in 2001 the British Born Chinese site was instrumental in challenging what some of its members regarded as an offensive and racist characterization of the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in the *Guardian* newspaper. An article by Charlotte Raven stated, 'I have no doubt that if Crouching Tiger had been in English, the script would have seemed unforgivably banal. In Chinese, delivered inscrutably, it seemed to contain multitudes' (Raven, 2001). The British Born Chinese site editor explained how protests from users of Dim Sum and the British Born Chinese sites helped secure an apology for the use of the word 'inscrutable' (Mayes, 2001)

> There was the protest toward the *Guardian* newspaper about 'Crouching Tiger' – I don't know if you knew about that. It complained about 'wooden dialogue'. That was our starting point because we got a victory in there. We got an apology. The use of the word 'inscrutable'. Where did that come from? It wasn't accidental, and it was in the *Guardian* [a left/liberal broadsheet newspaper]! If it was in the *Daily Mail* [a right-wing tabloid newspaper], we wouldn't have taken any notice. And everyone was feeling, hey, it worked! If you say something, people listen. (Interview with Steve Lau, editor of British Born Chinese site, 29 September 2004)

Another campaign in which these Chinese websites mobilized collective action concerned an allegation, first carried in the *Times* and *Guardian* newspapers of 27 March 2001 – that recycled waste food from Chinese restaurants in Newcastle fed to pigs in the north-east of England was the

source of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in spring 2001 (Elliott and Webster, 2001; White and Watt, 2001). The *Daily Mirror* newspaper of 28 March 2001 (White and Disley, 2001) also alleged that illegal meat was being imported and sold in some takeaways and restaurants, leading to a major downturn in trade in these establishments.

In response, the Dim Sum website, together with an alliance of Chinese activists and business people, helped organize a demonstration of several thousand that marched through central London to the Ministry of Agriculture on 8 April 2001. The agriculture minister, Nick Brown, read out a statement exonerating the Chinese restaurant industry and lauding the contribution of Chinese people to British society. As a result of the demonstration, the hit rates for the Dim Sum site rose dramatically, and since then the mainstream media has turned to the site for commentary on issues affecting the British Chinese population:

> It had a really big impact on the site, and it had a really big impact on the Chinese community as well. After that a lot of people felt they could be politicized, and stand up and try and get the Chinese community included. I was perhaps a bit naive at the time, thinking this was the start of the revolution and of course it never materialized. It has helped, but it's a long-term process. (Interview with Sarah Yeh, editor of the Dim Sum website, June 2004)

Another campaign against the representation of Chinese themes, involved the British Born Chinese website joining in criticism of 'Trading Places', the British Library's 2002 exhibition on the East India Company's 400 years of trade. According to Steve Lau:

> It [the exhibition] completely glossed over the Opium Wars. We got a press release before it opened. And I inquired, 'Where do you mention the opium trade?' And they effectively refused to talk with us. What they did was send us a copy of the book that accompanied the exhibit, and this book blamed the opium trade on Chinese collaborators, and we were outraged by this, and said this was not fair. (Interview with Steve Lau, editor of British Born Chinese site, 29 September 2004)

Following intense debate about this exhibition on the discussion forums of the British Born Chinese site, the editor, in collaboration with others, set up a rebuttal site, 'thetruthabouttradingplaces.co.uk' to counter the content of the British Library's official site on the exhibit.

In addition to creating the counter-site, the British Born Chinese site organized a formal letter of complaint to be signed by 17 Chinese organizations – this number marking the 17 million Chinese who had died during the period of trade and the Opium Wars. An email campaign followed, in which members of the site were contacted, and urged to complain to the British Library. Established Chinese community leaders, such as Thomas Chan, a member of the Home Office Race Equality Advisory Panel, and Lord Michael Chan, also got involved in the critical response. Faced with

this concerted challenge, the British Library relented and added a section about the Opium Wars to their exhibit.

In April 2005, messages on the British Born Chinese site drew attention to the case of Mr Huang Chen, who was killed during an attack by a large group of local youths in his takeaway food shop in Wigan ('Chinese Takeaway Attack', British Born Chinese site, 29 April 2005). His partner, Eileen Jia, was later charged with affray as a result of her actions in trying to defend herself. A message linking to the Chinese campaigning group Min Quan's online petition calling on the Director of Public Prosecutions to drop all charges helped secure over 1,000 signatures (www.minquan.co.uk/takeaway-racism). In October 2005, the charges against Eileen Jia were dropped. Partly in response to this incident, the British Born Chinese site was also used to help develop an online bilingual booklet 'Dealing with Harassment in Takeaways and Restaurants'(DHTR, 2005), with users editing online drafts. Such uses of the Internet can be extremely valuable for marginalized minority groups, such as the British Chinese, by disseminating information about perceived injustices and facilitating counter-interventions in the public domain (Parker, 2003; Georgiou, 2002).

However, whilst the Internet has fostered a new sophistication in British-born Chinese political involvement, its form as a rapid-response medium may not in itself facilitate long-term institution-building. For instance, the editors of the Dim Sum and the British Born Chinese sites sat together on the Chinese Civil Rights Action Group (CCRAG), an umbrella group set up in the midst of the 2001 foot and mouth crisis to combat misrepresentations of the Chinese community. The CCRAG split after 1 year, precipitated by disagreement over how to commemorate the deaths of the 58 Chinese people discovered at Dover docks. While Dim Sum representatives and some other members of the committee proposed that a memorial be built in honour of those who died, Steve Lau, representing the British Born Chinese site, opposed the suggestion:

> Like it or not, a huge proportion of the community didn't want to have anything to do with the Dover 58, in terms of traditional Chinese concerns about bringing shame upon the community. They'd [the Dover 58] committed an illegal act, they'd been caught. Almost, they're not Chinese.

By contrast, the Dim Sum site offered forceful and incisive commentary about the plight of the 'Dover 58'. More recently, this site also posted supportive editorials about the tragic death of Chinese cockle pickers in Morecambe Bay in January 2004. For example, one article described the events as 'devastating not only for the victims and their families, but also for the Chinese community as a whole' (Dim Sum, 2004).

The Dim Sum website's commentaries continue to highlight the experiences of recent Chinese migrants, and the British Chinese organizations working on their behalf, most notably Min Quan, the London-based

Chinese campaigning group mentioned above. Dim Sum hosts the Min Quan website (www.minquan.co.uk). Dim Sum also publicized the unveiling of a memorial stone at Dover in June 2005 for the 58 Chinese migrants who died at Dover. However, partly because of the political tensions generated through these debates, the Dim Sum website has shifted emphasis somewhat away from civil rights activism towards the promotion of British Chinese arts and culture.

> We'd like to work to promote Chinese arts and culture and really give the Chinese community a positive image. Hopefully provide some strong role models and help the Chinese community to find their voice, and find their place in the British culture. (Interview with Sarah Yeh, Dim Sum site editor, June 2004)

TOWARDS BRITISH CHINESE CIVIL SOCIETY?

British Chinese websites like British Born Chinese and Dim Sum have already generated considerable online debate and several significant, but short-lived, political campaigns. However, their long-term consequences depend on whether they can develop as enduring social institutions in their own right, or encourage the growth of new forms of social mobilization. Developments of this kind would merit analysis in terms of social capital, for, as Bourdieu's definition implies, it is the resources 'linked to possession of a *durable* network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' that distinguish social capital as a collective good from privately appropriable financial capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 248, our emphasis).

Currently without paid staff, and run by volunteer administrators, moderators, and programmers these websites are subject to severe capacity constraints, 'It needs a paradigm shift. And that's linked with funding and status' (interview with Steve Lau, editor British Born Chinese site, 29 September 2004). Steve Lau would like the site to match the professional skills of many British-born Chinese with the needs of the community groups trying to meet the needs of the wider Chinese population:

> What we do is promote social cohesion. Sometimes BBCs get frustrated because there are no opportunities to be involved in the Chinese community. I'd really like to set up a volunteering bank. Hooking up BBCs with local Chinese associations, like for IT skills. The profile of the BBCs offers such a wealth of skills. I'm sure there would be people who would be willing to give up 2–3 hours a month. It's not that much. But that would take someone actually doing that job. But at this point we don't have any staff. We're all busy people. We have been looking at charitable status, under the umbrella of Chinatownonline. The BBC site on its own is unlikely to get charitable status. (Interview with Steve Lau, September 2004)

A fledgling example of how British Chinese online activity may have enduring offline consequences is the British Chinese Society (www.britishchinese.org.uk). Started by a member of the British Born Chinese site, the British Chinese Society site is less immediately interactive than the other sites featured in this article. The website promotes and reports on social events run by the British Chinese Society, a membership organization with a formal constitution and an explicit philanthropic dimension:

> The Society is for British born Chinese or British Chinese. We organize events, we offer a social forum, we try to promote Chinese culture where possible and we try to help the Chinese community through charitable causes. (Interview with Paul Ho, British Chinese Society, May 2004)

The Society's events have raised money for British Chinese voluntary organizations such as the Chinese Mental Health Association.

A further tangible illustration of a developing British Chinese civil society facilitated by new media is *Chinatown, the Magazine*. This bi-monthly English language print magazine distributes 10,000 copies each edition throughout Britain. *Chinatown* has utilized the Internet to raise its profile. In September 2004 the magazine organized the first ever awards to 'celebrate Chinese achievements in multicultural Britain', held at the Café Royal in London (see www.chinatownthemagazine.com and www.thepearlawards.org.uk). The organizers secured a letter of support from the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair:

> These groundbreaking awards highlight inspiring role models for the whole country to follow and show the valuable role of the Chinese community in enriching and sustaining contemporary British life. (Letter from Tony Blair, February 2004, Chinatown website)

The backing of these now annual awards by a newly created 'social enterprise organization', the Pearl Foundation, shows the engagement of British Chinese with different models of collective action and institution building. The older generation of Chinese businessmen engaged primarily in catering businesses have thus far constituted the main public face of Chinese people in Britain. By contrast, the British-born Chinese are beginning to express a distinctive and complex British-based sensibility, casting the institutions they create in the mould of British civil society.

Another crucial factor shaping the potential of British Chinese websites is their ability to broaden the scope of Chinese identity and experiences, and foster intra-ethnic bridging ties. An example is the launch of a site specifically for British Chinese lesbians. At first glance, this appears to confirm concerns that the Internet fragments populations into ever more segmented enclaves. Yet the response to www.bbclesbian.co.uk's launch announcement on the Dim Sum website discussion forum demonstrated the opening out of British Chinese identity to new formations. A member of a

US website, the Chinese Nationalist Alliance, simply posted the one-word message 'Disgusting' in response (posted by 'Kapai', Dim Sum discussion forum, 27 February 2004). This brought a vigorous defence from a number of Dim Sum site users, for example:

> Kapai, that is exactly why you aren't going to see much support for your nasty little racist homophobic website [. . .] What you have said here, just that one word, tells everyone all they need to know. You are an intolerant bigot. (Posted by 'GweiLo', 1 March 2004, Dim Sum website discussion forum)

The originator of the lesbian website replied:

> Just wanted to say cheers for your response to Kapai's deeply bigoted remark. It's good to know that there are people like you out there who are not willing to tolerate a post like that in a progressive, positive and empowering environment such as Dim Sum. (Posted by 'Lalamyc', 17 March 2004, Dim Sum website discussion forum)

For the editor of bbclesbian.co.uk, 'it did feel like a significant moment for people in the Chinese community to not back him and support my site', (email discussion with the editor of www.bbclesbian.co.uk, 23 November 2005). Both the range and depth of British Chinese identity formations is expanded through new interventions of this kind. The British Chinese lesbian site now has a discussion forum of its own, with 75 members, and, as the site editor notes, 'through the website women have finally been able to support each other and begin a dialogue. There have been so many comments of "I thought I was the only one", so generating that empowerment has been fantastic' (email discussion with the editor of www.bbclesbian.co.uk, 23 November 2005).

These exchanges demonstrate the emergence of bridging ties *within* the British Chinese population, illustrating the diversity and ongoing contestation among members of a putatively homogeneous ethnic group. The interventions by the British Born Chinese and Dim Sum sites on various social and political issues have highlighted pressing questions about who should represent 'the' Chinese community, requiring a reconsideration of Chinese people's representation and involvement in the public sphere.

Our study has some affinities with recent research highlighting new forms of political representation among Black and South Asian British communities (Shukra et al, 2004). Frustration with existing channels of participation has been countered by the emergence of a 'transitional public sphere' (Shukra et al., 2004: 33). This arena of national bodies, such as the National Assembly Against Racism, attempts to connect the mainstream public sphere of political parties and public sector institutions with an 'alternative public sphere' of grass-roots minority activism. Our work adds two elements to Shukra et al.'s analysis. First, we have highlighted the British Chinese population, which is routinely overlooked in discussions of ethnic minority politics. Second, we have explored the potential of the

Internet to engage previously unrepresented constituencies. The Internet has enabled second-generation British Chinese to forge their own social networks, independent of the mainstream. Whether these connections comprise social capital depends on how durable these emerging channels of expression prove, and whether the concept of social capital itself is given a more differentiated treatment.

SECOND-GENERATION SOCIAL CAPITAL

The notion of social capital captures something of the significance of these new forms of Internet association in connecting ethnic minorities to new sources of support, aligned with their emerging social identities. However, unless cautiously adopted and significantly refined, the concept of social capital may overlook the heterogeneity within the same generation of ethnic group.

Using the concept of social capital to understand these new social networks requires a recognition of a specifically 'second-generation' social capital. This may emerge from a group consciousness and network that generates dialogue, debate, and emotional support, as well as online and offline networks that facilitate social and political mobilization. In addition to forging personal and political links with other British-born Chinese, many of the second generation want to play a more active part in the wider British society. This is manifest in one aim of the British Born Chinese website – 'to encourage social cohesion and good race relations' (interview with Steve Lau, 29 September 2004). The ties and informational resources specific to this emerging generation reflect a negotiation of competing pressures towards assimilation and segregation.

In the terms offered by Putnam (2000), second-generation social capital is more than just a mixture of bonding and bridging elements. This bonding/bridging binary fails to capture how the optimal combinations of bonding and bridging social capital change over time (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 418) and are relative to the social location of the group in question. Thus, for the initial descendants of migrants, lacking a long tradition of political activity, the nurturing of bonding capital and particularized trust may be a necessary precursor for bridging activities, given the starting point of political marginalization. The importance of social spaces, both physical and discursive, within which the confidence of minority groups can be built and rhetorical capacities developed prior to involvement in the wider world has been stressed in both classical and contemporary accounts of ethnically diverse societies (Halpern, 2005: 262; Park and Miller 1921). Second-generation minorities occupy a distinct social location, having access to educational opportunities and facility in the English

language to a far greater extent than their parents. However, because many lack an intergenerational chain of inherited connections to powerful institutions, this places a premium on self-generated social networks as a means of accessing economic and political influence beyond full-time education. Given this disadvantage, what some thinkers dismiss as fragmented 'enclave deliberation' (Sunstein, 2001: 75) in websites like the ones we have explored may be a necessary proving ground for the cultivation of civic literacy and the participatory disposition rooted in everyday experiences required for involvement in public affairs (Dahlgren, 2005; Siapera, 2005).

Yet in time, 'for bonding social capital to deliver requires bridging social capital' (Pieterse, 2003: 46). Beyond this, to enact meaningful social change, these sites need to generate linking social capital (Woolcock, 1998). In contrast to the stress of bonding and bridging forms on lateral social connections, linking capital emphasizes the importance of accessing the powerful, connecting with those higher in the social hierarchy through 'insertion into larger and more complex social networks' (Woolcock, 1998: 175). For more robust civic participation, social institutions capable of speaking truth to the centres of power must also grow over time.

The specificity of 'second-generation social capital' lies in being a mixture of bonding, bridging and linking forms. The British Chinese websites discussed here share strategies for responding to racism and offer advice on being a 'British Chinese exile' in East Asia, as well as recognizing the internal diversity within the ethnic population, such as the British Chinese lesbian site mentioned above. Such examples point to the 'bridging' ties emerging within, as well as outside, of the British Chinese community. Bridging social capital need not be exclusively 'inter-ethnic' in nature.

Tentative steps have also been taken to connect these sites to sources of influence and power in the wider society, and thus generate linking social capital. For example, the British Born Chinese site plans to organize a mentoring scheme and a volunteer bank. The Dim Sum site has highlighted the plight of recent Chinese migrants, and offers British Chinese artists a forum for the discussion and promotion of their work. Both sites played a role in mobilizing participants from around the country to the April 2001 march of British Chinese people through central London. Both sites have begun to be used by organizations seeking to reach a British Chinese constituency, for example the Northern Ireland Police Service advertising vacancies on the British Born Chinese site.

These forms of social capital in time will enhance the ability of British-born Chinese to assert their public ethnicity and secure their participation and inclusion in the wider society. The nature and function of this social capital is subject to change and contestation, as distinct subgroups of the Chinese community assert their own views and agendas about what progress for Chinese people in Britain requires. The public face of the British Chinese has thus far been dominated by older businessmen in the

Chinese restaurant and takeaway food trade. The emerging second generation in Britain, which is characterized by high levels of education, concentration in professional sectors, but geographically dispersed residence, is using these online forums to develop new social networks and on occasions intervene in public debates.

CONCLUSION

> Some people may think that this is just a silly little community discussion board, but I think it is more than that. I think it is a place to learn, increase understanding of other people, widen social network, make friends, arrange meets with people of like mind. (Posted by 'Richard Chan', British Born Chinese site, 20 October 2005)

As this user's comment suggests, the Internet sites established by British Chinese people in the last few years have a significance beyond the words posted in their online discussion forums. New communicative practices, novel social gatherings, and unprecedented forms of public action have resulted from the ability to bridge the geographical dispersal of the Chinese population in Britain. Their wider importance lies in offering a forum for deliberation connecting a group who would otherwise find it difficult to engage with one another. The dialogic forms of communication encourage reflexive racialization, continuous debate about the terms of engagement between Chinese people in Britain and the wider society. In addition, ethnicity is interwoven with other significant social identities in the discussions – notably gender and sexuality. The messages evidence the ongoing formation of postcolonial subjectivities, struggling to counter Orientalist constructions of Chinese culture and personhood in both everyday life and popular culture. These nascent subjectivities cannot be reduced to a diasporic homeland-oriented consciousness; instead they are marked by the negotiation of affiliations to Britain, particular cities and neighbourhoods within it, as well as diverse family origins in East Asia.

The Internet can operate as a medium for civic engagement, often precisely because of, as well as in spite of, its informal atmosphere. Largely self-regulated forums such as the British Born Chinese and Dim Sum websites create contexts for trust-building and sharing the felt experiences of marginalization and discrimination. Episodes of injustice highlighted by the British Born Chinese and Dim Sum websites have emboldened some British Chinese people to initiate social action, as well as generating friendships and networks of support, both online and offline, to counter social isolation. However, episodic electronic petition signing, festival-time fundraising and annual award ceremonies are only the start of a much longer-term development of British Chinese civil society.

The notion of social capital is helpful in understanding this emerging British Chinese public expression through the Internet. The idea captures the networking, trust-building and collective ethos facilitated by the websites and their attendant interactions in the everyday lives of participants. Moreover, the sites offer resources to those who merely 'lurk' without posting messages; their impact goes beyond the benefits derived by the visible contributors. However, some of the central formulations of social capital analysis require substantial modification if they are to illuminate British Chinese uses of the Internet. The instrumentalist approaches (Lin, 2001, for example) underplay the expressive dynamics and intrinsic value of Internet-mediated dialogue. The civic republican framework of Putnam (2000) and Uslaner and Conley (2003) is too narrowly drawn to encompass group-based aspirations that contest rather than conform to the prevailing social framework. Associational activity should not be valued purely in terms of whether or not it works through existing institutional channels. The binary between bonding and bridging social capital fails to address the marginalized social location of groups like British Chinese young people, for whom the nurturing of strong intra-ethnic bonds and institutions may be a prerequisite for interventions over a wider political field.

The specific social location of the second generation makes any social capital they create and utilize a complex mixture of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. The interaction between ethnicity and other social relations, and attempts to engage in wider social institutions mark the experiences of the British Chinese second generation, but this has yet to be adequately reflected in the application of social capital theory to the understanding of ethnicity. Future research should explore how these forms of second-generation social capital may complement, as opposed to replace, the other social ties held by site users. No account of ethnic identity formation today can afford to ignore the social networks facilitated by digital media, but the extent and form of the social capital created require more sophisticated concepts and analysis.

References

Adams, P. and R. Ghose (2003) 'India.com: The Construction of a Space Between', *Progress in Human Geography* 27(4): 414–37.

Amin, A. (2005) 'Local Community on Trial', *Economy and Society* 34(4): 612–33.

Bankston, C. and M. Zhou (2002) 'Social Capital as Process: The Meanings and Problems of a Theoretical Metaphor', *Sociological Inquiry*, 72 (2): 285–317.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The Forms of Capital', in J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, pp. 241–58. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Brubaker, R. (2004) *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Castells, M. (2000) *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Cohen, D. and L. Prusak (2001) *In Good Company: How Social Capital Makes Organizations Work*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
Coleman, J. (1988) 'Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital', *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (supplement): S95–120.
Dahlgren, P. (2005) 'The Internet, Public Spheres and Political Communication', *Political Communication* 22(2): 147–62.
DHTR (2005) 'Dealing with Harassment in Takeaways and Restaurants', September [http://members.lycos.fr/isoliton/dhtr_booklet.doc].
Dim Sum (2004) 'A Tragedy Compounded', February [http://www.dimsum.co.uk].
Dorling, D. and B. Thomas (2004) *People and Places: A 2001 Census Atlas of the UK*. Bristol: Policy Press.
Edwards, R. (2004) 'Present and Absent in Troubling Ways: Families and Social Capital Debates', *Sociological Review* 52(1): 1–21.
Elliott, V. and P. Webster (2001) 'Smuggled Meat Blamed for Epidemic', *The Times* 27 March: 1.
Ester, P. and H. Vinken (2003) 'Debating Civil Society', *International Sociology* 18(4): 659–80.
Franklin, M. (2003) 'I Define My Own Identity: Pacific Articulations of "Race" and "Culture" on the Internet', *Ethnicities* 3(4): 465–90.
Fukuyama, F. (1995) *Trust*. New York: Free Press
Georgiou, M. (2002) 'Diasporic Communities Online: A Bottom Up Experience of Transnationalism', *Hommes et Migrations* 1240 (October): 10–18.
Goulbourne, H. and J. Solomos (2003) 'Families, Ethnicity and Social Capital', *Social Policy and Society* 2(4): 329–38.
Granovetter, M. (1973) 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360–80.
Halpern, D. (2005) *Social Capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Hiller, H. and T. Franz (2004) 'New Ties, Old Ties and Lost Ties: The Use of New Media in Diaspora', *New Media and Society* 6(6): 731–52.
Hine, C., ed. (2005) *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg.
Karim, K. (2003) *The Media of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.
Kearns, A. (2003) 'Social Capital, Regeneration and Urban Policy', in R. Imrie and M. Raco (eds) *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy*, pp. 36–60. Bristol: Policy Press.
Kovalainen, A. (2004) 'Rethinking the Revival of Social Capital and Trust in Social Theory: Possibilities for Feminist Analysis', in B. Marshall and A. Witz (eds) *Engendering the Social*, pp. 155–70. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Lieberman, R. (2005) 'Race, State and Policy: The Development of Employment Discrimination Policy in the USA and Britain', in G. Loury, T. Modood and S. Teles (eds) *Ethnicity, Social Mobilisation and Public Policy*, pp. 498–521. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Light, I. (1972) *Ethnic Enterprise in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Lin, N. (2001) *Social Capital*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mayes, I. (2001) 'Word Association', the *Guardian* 3 February [http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,432730,00.html].

Miles, A. (2005) 'Poverty, Race, Murder, Politics, Lozells', *The Times* 26 October 2005: 21 [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,1058–1843064,00.html].

Miller, D. and D. Slater (2000) *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*. Oxford: Berg.

Mitra, A. (2003) 'Marginal Voices in Cyberspace', *New Media and Society* 3(1): 29–48.

Modood, T. (2004) 'Capitals, Ethnic Identity and Educational Qualifications', *Cultural Trends* 13(2): 87–105.

Norris, P. (2004) 'The Bridging and Bonding Role of Online Communites', in P. Howard and S. Jones (eds) *Society Online*, pp. 31–41. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

ONS (2005) 'Office for National Statistics: Focus on Ethnicity' [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id-455].

Ong, A. (2003) 'Cyberpublics and Diaspora Politics Among Transnational Chinese', *Interventions* 5(1): 82–100.

Panagakos, A. (2003) 'Downloading New Identities: Ethnicity, Technology and Media in the Global Greek Village', *Identities* 10(2): 201–19.

Parham, A. (2004) 'Diaspora, Community and Communication: Internet Use in Transnational Haiti', *Global Networks* 4(2): 199–217.

Park, R. and H. Miller (1921) *Old World Traits Transplanted*. New York: Arno Press.

Parker, D. (1995) *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Parker, D. (2003) 'Is there a British Chinese Public Sphere?', in G. Rawnsley and M. Rawnsley (eds) *Political Communication in Greater China*, pp. 239–60. London: Routledge-Curzon.

Performance and Innovation Unit (2002) *Social Capital: A Discussion Paper*. London: Performance and Innovation Unit.

Pieterse, J. (2003) 'Social Capital and Migration: Beyond Ethnic Economies', *Ethnicities* 3(1): 29–58.

Portes, A. (1998) 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 1–24.

Powell, B. (2005) 'The Enemy Within', *Time* 166(18) [http://www.time.com/time/europe/magazine/printout/0,13155,1121976,00.html].

Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Raven, C. (2001) 'Crashing Bore, Wooden Drama', the *Guardian* 16 January [http://film.guardian.co.uk/features/featurepages/0,,422986,00.html].

Roberts, J. (2004) 'What's Social about Social Capital?', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6(4): 471–93.

Schuller, T., S. Baron and J. Field (2000) 'Social Capital: A Review and Critique' in S. Baron, J. Field and T. Schuller (eds) *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives*, pp. 1–38. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shukra, K., L. Back, A. Khan, M. Keith and J. Solomos (2004) 'Black Politics and the Web of Joined-up Governance: Compromise, Ethnic Minority Mobilization and the Transitional Public Sphere', *Social Movement Studies* 3(1): 31–50.

Siapera, E. (2005) 'Minority Activism on the Web: Between Deliberative Democracy and Multiculturalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(3): 499–519.

Smith, M.A. (1999) 'Invisible Crowds in Cyberspace', in M.A. Smith and P. Kollock (eds) *Communities in Cyberspace*, pp. 195–219. London: Routledge.
Song, M. (1999) *Helping Out: Children's Labor in Ethnic Businesses*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
Song, M. (2003) *Choosing Ethnic Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Song, M. (2004) 'When the Global Chain Does Not Lead to Satisfaction All Round: A Comment on the Morecambe Bay Tragedy', *Feminist Review* 77(1): 137–40.
Strategy Unit (2003) *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*. London: Strategy Unit.
Sunstein, C. (2001) *Republic.com*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Tranvik, T. (2004) 'Surfing for Online Connectedness', in S. Prakash and P. Selle (eds) *Investigating Social Capital*, pp. 281–303. New Delhi: Sage.
Turkle, S. (1995) *Life on the Screen*. New York: Simon & Shuster.
Uslaner, E. and R. Conley (2003) 'Civic Engagement and Particularized Trust: The Ties that Bind People to their Ethnic Communities', *American Politics Research* 31(4): 331–60.
Waldinger, R., H. Alrdich and R. Ward (1990) *Ethnic Entrepreneurs*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Ward, R. and R. Jenkins (1984) *Ethnic Communities in Business*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wellman, B. (2001) 'Physical Place and Cyber-place: The Rise of Networked Individualism', *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research* 25(2): 227–52.
Wellman, B., A. Quan-Haase, J. Boase, W. Chen, K. Hampton, I. Isla de Diaz and K. Miyata (2003) 'The Social Affordances of the Internet for Networked Individualism', *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* 8(3) [http://jcmc.Indiana.edu/vol8/issue3/wellman.html].
White, S. and J. Disley (2001) 'Foot and Mouth Crisis: Sweet and Sow Source', *Daily Mirror* 28 March: 1.
White, M. and N. Watt (2001) 'Smuggled Meat Blamed', the *Guardian* 27 March: 1 [http://www.guardian.co.uk/footandmouth/story/0,,463821,00.html]
Wilson, K. and A. Portes (1980) 'Immigrant Enclaves: An Analysis of Labor Market Experiences of Cubans in Miami', *American Journal of Sociology* 86(2): 295–319.
Woolcock, M. (1998) 'Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework', *Theory and Society* 27(2): 151–208.
Woolcock, M. and D. Narayan (2000) 'Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research and Policy', *The World Bank Research Observer* 15(2): 225–49.
Zhou, M. (1992) *Chinatown*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
Zhou, M. and Y. Xiong (2005) 'The Multifaceted American Experiences of the Children of Asian Immigrants: Lessons for Segmented Assimilation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(6): 1119–52.

Websites

The following websites were all operative as of 29 December 2005:

British Born Chinese [http://www.britishbornchinese.org.uk]
British Born Chinese Lesbian [http://www.bbclesbian.co.uk]

British Chinese Society [http://www.britishchinese.org.uk]
Chinatown, the Magazine [http://www.chinatownthemagazine.com]
Dim Sum [http://www.dimsum.co.uk]
Min Quan [http://www.minquan.co.uk]
The Pearl Awards [http://www.thepearlawards.org.uk]

DAVID PARKER is a Lecturer in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Nottingham. *Address*: School of Sociology and Social Policy, University Park, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, UK. [email: David.parker@nottingham.ac.uk]

MIRI SONG is Senior lecturer in Sociology in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research at the University of Kent at Canterbury. *Address*: School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent at Canterbury, Cornwallis Building, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury, CT2 7NF, UK. [email: a.m.song@kent.ac.uk].