Caribbean Families, Social Capital and Young People's Diasporic Identities

Tracey Reynolds

CARIBBEAN FAMILIES, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIASPORIC IDENTITIES

Tracey Reynolds

Foreword

The Ethnicity Strand - one of three strands[1] within the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group - comprises three distinct but closely integrated research projects. Separately and together these projects address a number of related issues about families and young people's diasporic identities; household and family rituals; and family care and provisions in a transnational world. These projects in turn are designed to integrate into the overall research programme of the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group through an exploration of the concept and utility of social capital as identified, measured and funnelled through (a) identities and values, (b) trust and reciprocity, and (c) caring for and about members of families and broader communities in Britain and selected communities abroad.

After all, Britain is today generally thought to be a multi-cultural society, displaying a rich variety of family forms, traditions, and close and continuing links with extensive kinship networks originating in, or extending to, a number of other European countries, South and East Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Such diversity has invariably been part (and parcel) of the social and cultural changes occurring in contemporary Britain, within a globalising world. With regard to families, it is urgently necessary to have a closer understanding of the kinds of cross-fertilizations that are taking place in the dynamics of everyday life within and across national boundaries.

The Ethnicity strand of the research programme reflects on these differing approaches to understanding family, ethnicity and social capital by examining family relationships across diverse minority ethnic families within the UK (ie, Caribbean, Indian and Italian families) and across nation-state boundaries. It will bring into focus the relationship between social capital, families, young people and the Diasporic identities, families and household rituals; and family care and provision in a transnational context. Each of these interconnecting themes are necessary in understanding how family and ethnicity creates shared identities and values; networks of trust and reciprocity; and caring for and about family, kinship and community members within local neighbourhoods/communities and across differing regions and nation states. This working paper is a review of concepts and available literature relevant to one of the three projects under our Ethnicity strand, namely, Caribbean Families, Social Capital and Young People's Diasporic Identities.

The general aim of the Ethnicity Strand of the Families & and Social Capital ESRC Research Group is critically to examine areas of family life significantly determined by kinds of social capital generated by ethnicity. This project itself:
- explores the extent to which ethnicity is perceived, utilised and reproduced as social capital or a resource in the processes of lived family life;
- explains how ethnic values and solidarity affect or condition family behaviour and structure/organisation in conditions where communities are adjusting to new situations;
- examines the kinds of changes that occur within families as a result of ethnic plurality or mixing in a multi-cultural society;
- explores how ethnicity as social capital is reproduced within the discrete domains of families and kinship relationships across national boundaries;
- integrates specific empirical and theoretical studies across the concerns of the research group as a whole;

---

[1] The other two are Intimacy, and Education & Employment.

- considers the theoretical implications for our understanding of social capital and social change;
- suggests some implications for social policy in Britain and Caribbean.

The project examines the use, production and maintenance of social capital in the context of migration through an in-depth analysis of the every-day experiences of Caribbean young people and their families in the UK and Caribbean. In the context of migration, and particularly with increasing transnational social relations, family traditions and values as aspects of collective ethnic identity may be activated as a social capital resource, as several observers have variously shown (see, for example, Portes and Zhou 1993, Foner 2001). This project empirically investigates the 'extent to which ethnicity is perceived, utilized and reproduced as social capital in the processes of lived family life' (Goulbourne and Solomos 2003: 336). It therefore critically questions the view that while some ethnic groups possess social capital, others may lack this resource; as well as exploring the problematic or ambivalent nature of social capital by taking into account its possible negative effects. Questions will also be raised about who benefits and who loses from the generation of social capital and the implications of possessing or lacking social capitals for individuals, families and groups. In exploring these issues, particular attention is paid to the gender and generational dimensions of family life with regard to social capital.

The project concentrates on how Caribbean young people utilise family relationships as a social capital resource in ethnic identity formation. This is expected to shed new light on two important facets of social capital: the ways in which trust and reciprocity operate among groups and generations; and the sense of self and ethnic identity that are expressed through family relationships, kin membership and participation. The project also explores how families reciprocate mutual obligation of care across the generations and state-borders and the way in which this re-affirms young people's ethnic identification. It analyzes traditions and practices of care and obligations; how families initiate and develop strategies for coping across national boundaries and prospects for the continuing use, reproduction or atrophy of past practices and traditions of care (Goulbourne and Solomos 2002). These aspects will be considered comparatively by looking at cultural and regional differences among Caribbeans as well as by taking into account practices and experiences of the other ethnic minority groups studied in the Ethnicity strand (Italians and South Asians) of the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group (see Mand forthcoming; Zontini, 2004).

Harry Goulbourne and John Solomos
Ethnicity Strand Leaders

Introduction

The aim of this working paper is to assess aspects of the literature concerning ethnicity and social capital, and to present some initial findings from a project investigating the ways in which Caribbean young people derive a sense of ethnic identity and to what extent they utilise family/ kinship network and relationships as important social and material resources of social capital. Social capital and ethnicity are therefore conceptual tools that are used to develop understanding of how Caribbean young people draw upon family and social networks to create relationships and ties of trust and reciprocity that are based on ethnic solidarity within their local communities and also across national borders. This builds on work by Goulbourne and Solomos (2003) that broadly outlines key aspects of the relationship between ethnicity and social capital in contemporary British society.

With this is mind, I begin the discussion by briefly recounting Goulbourne and Solomos's attempts to establish the inter-relationship between social capital and ethnicity, with particular reference to work by Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu. The second part of the paper is an exploratory discussion of views from Caribbean young people concerning the specific ways their family/kin relationships influence ethnic identity formation. Caribbean young people's participation in transnational family and kinship celebrations encourages them to be part of globally dispersed family networks. Their experiences highlight the significance of trans-atlantic family relationships and transnational communities as a central feature of Caribbean ethnic identity (Waters, 1999; Goulbourne, 2002).

Ethnicity and Social Capital

Ethnicity and social capital are both concepts that in recent times have attracted much public attention and have influenced public policy debates in contemporary Britain. Goulbourne and Solomos (2003), for instance, recognise that a common feature of ethnicity and social capital as concepts is that both are inherently complex and it is difficult to reach consensus in understanding them. Yet, in despite of their limitations, both concepts are typically used to provide generalised explanations of the rapid social changes occurring in contemporary society. Policy debates that focus attention on ethnic identity have addressed the changing nature of minority ethnic groups and communities in the UK, and the implications of this for the indigenous communities. Of primary interest have been the impact on UK society of migrant communities originating from other European states, and communities originating from the Caribbean, Africa and Southern Asia communities, as a result of Britain's colonial ties to these countries. Since the latter part of the 20th century, policy debates have also focussed on migrant communities, refugees and asylum seekers largely originating from Eastern Europe and Middle Eastern territories (Solomos and Bulmer, 1999; Joppke, 1999). Policy understanding of the key issues concerning these ethnic groups have been contested primarily because the conceptually distinctive categories of race, ethnicity and national identity have been conflated and collapsed into each other. The ethnic origin question in both the 1991 and 2001 Census is a clear example of the way in which differing aspects of race, ethnicity and nationhood are submerged and overlap with each other (Goulbourne, 2001). Similarly, in other official classification systems considering the question of Black people's ethnic origin, Africans and Caribbeans tend to be collapsed into one ethnic group. Yet, although they share the same racial characteristics and phenotype, each of these groups are culturally and ethnically distinctive. In fact, as Goulbourne and Solomos (2003) note, in terms of ethnic identity Caribbean people share more in common with (white) British ethnic groups despite being racially distinctive in terms of skin colour and phenotype

because 'through trajectories of [colonial] history [they] share significant aspects of ethnic identity – religion, language, customs and traditions' (2003: 4).

Contemporary understanding of ethnicity is presented as fixed and immutable (Barth, 1969) wherein social boundaries between indigenous and ethnic 'other' communities seem to be impenetrable and endure in multi-ethnic societies (Solomos and Back, 1996). Evidence suggests that individuals, of course, prefer to be bonded to each other according to shared socio-cultural factors such as shared histories, memories, language, customs, traditions and values. However, ethnic boundaries are a fluid construct and, as such, ethnic identity is a dynamic social process that is continually changing and evolving according to time, location and audience (Reynolds, 1999; Solomos and Goulbourne 2003).

Both social capital and ethnicity share an affinity with each other because both concepts focus on the collective and the social as opposed to the individual and autonomous. Similarly both concepts reinforce notions of 'collective rights, responsibilities or obligations' that can be 'mobilised towards collective social action' (Goulbourne and Solomos, 2003: 7). Like ethnicity, social capital is also a contested concept that is difficult to operationalise in research and policy settings (Molyneux, 2001). Three key theorists of social capital: Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu, have been central to the discussions. Whilst it is not within the scope of this paper to provide a theoretical overview of their work (see Edwards et al., 2003), it is necessary to briefly note aspects of such work that relate to ethnic identity.

To briefly summarise, Putnam defines social capital as 'features of social life - networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives' (Putnam, 1994: 2). Thus, community members' participation in community affairs, or 'civic engagement', is a key aspect of social capital because their participation leads to various forms of collective action. Social capital is differentiated according to its capacity for 'bridging' (relationships and networks of trust and reciprocity between different groups and communities; outward looking), or for 'bonding' (relationships and networks of trust and reciprocity that reinforce bonds and connections within groups; inward looking). Woolcock (1998) adds a third dimension to Putnam's work: 'linking' social capital. This examines social capital capacity for developing relationships and networks of trust and reciprocity that allow individuals to access and link across different formal and informal resources. Coleman, in contrast to Putnam, adopts a functionalist approach to social capital. He suggests that families and communities provide a social function that can be used as a resource by members to best represent their interests. Social capital is therefore embedded in family and community relations because it creates mutually beneficial relationships that are based on a normative expectation of mutual obligation and reciprocity for its members (Morrow, 2001; Winter, 2002). Another perspective, from Bourdieu, identifies social capital as a system of social relationships, networks and obligations and identities that provide access to group resources. Individuals in various social positions are agents who use their social networks and connections to sustain their place in the social system. Thus, social capital is 'the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships, that are directly useable in the short or long term' (Winter, 2002: 2). In order to sustain their social capital, individuals must have some degree of 'sociability', based on social competence and the ability to successfully interact with others. Of particular interest to Bourdieu is the way in which social capital interacts with both economic and cultural capital, and individuals utilize social capital in order to improve these other forms of capital (Skeggs, 1997; Reay, 2000).

5

Each of these theorists has a different approach to defining social capital but their work is similar in that they give limited attention to the relationship between ethnicity and social capital. Bourdieu's work at least attempts to acknowledge the inter-relationship between social capital and wider structural factors of race, class and gender divisions in society. Indeed, his ideas in this area have influenced others in questioning how underlying issues of race, class and gender influence individuals' social capital and the diverse ways they utilise this as a social resource in their everyday lives (see Reay, 1998). Both Putnam and Coleman's discussions of social capital have been described as 'ethnocentric' and 'gender blind' (Morrow, 1999; Innerarity, 2003). Those theorists and policymakers working in the area of race relations have challenged areas of their work for this reason. Putnam, for example, strongly implies in his work that the 'civic engagement' and participation that creates norms of trust and reciprocity between community members, operates solely within the confines of local neighbourhoods and geographical regions. Studies have challenged this assertion by demonstrating particular ways in which transnational communities create similar networks of trust and reciprocity across geographical neighbourhoods and nation states (Bryceson and Vuerola, 2002; Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2002). Similarly, Putnam's analysis of social capital within African-American communities in the U.S refers to Duneier's work (1992) study in identifing Black churches and the barbershop as two repositories of social capital for this ethnic group. Yet, his analysis does not go far enough towards explaining how the specific articulation of race and ethnicity within the U.S context - such as particular ways that racial segregation is embedded into the fabric of U.S society - influences 'civic participation' among Black community members and their relationship with other ethnic groups who may live within their community. Coleman's discussion of family and social capital utilizes a model of social capital to differentiate 'strong' and 'weak' social capital in family relationships. Markedly absent from the debate, however, is the importance of race, and the role of racism, in shaping and constraining the way in which minority ethnic families access and utilise social capital in family relationships (Campbell and McLean, 2002). The relative absence of ethnicity in Putnam and Coleman's work reflects a wider tendency within public policy discussions of social capital where ethnicity is given limited explicit attention. Equally, discussions within the race relations field do not explicitly refer to the concept of social capital in great depth. However, the key tenets of social capital are strongly implied within race policy debates. Similarly, public policy issues of race (and racism) and ethnic identity are implicated in social capital debates. Coleman's work is a case in point. As previously noted, Coleman does not explicitly refer to ethnicity or focus on minority ethnic families in his discussions. Yet, race theorists and policy-makers in the UK have adopted his arguments concerning 'strong' and 'weak' social capital to compare and contrast family inter-generational social mobility across diverse minority ethnic groups (see Dench, 1996; Berthoud, 1999b). As Goulbourne and Solomos suggest, 'a key assumption that informs much of the work in race relations analysis has been that some groups are better equipped than others to draw upon family, kinship and communal resources (2003: 8).

Much of the discussion that draws upon social capital to understand minority ethnic family relationships is based on racial stereotypes and inadvertently pathologises them (Zontini, 2004; Mand, forthcoming). Yet, it is important to document these claims because the viewpoints expressed inform much of the debate concerning minority ethnic families within the public arena. So, for example, Asian families are characterised as having 'strong' social capital but paradoxically this is viewed in both a positive and negative manner. Asian families' relatively high rate of extended family households and strong 'bonding' social networks create relationships, norms and family rituals that they can draw upon as a social resource. These strong social networks not only generate high levels

of mutual obligations and co-operation but also provide effective sanctions for individuals to adhere to group norms. Indeed, up until the recent events of 9/11 - where there was a policy shift in attitudes towards and perceptions of, Asian Muslim people - policymakers typically perceived Asian families as demonstrating a strong model of participation in UK, and as being economically successful and law-abiding as a result of their extended family and strong 'bonding' social networks. Yet, as is suggested, Asian groups over-emphasis and dependency on family networks and resources negatively impacts on family life because individual resources have to be stretched to accommodate members of their extended family networks (Shaw, 2002). In addition, obligations and expectation of reciprocity and caring place stress on individual family members to meet the growing demands of these networks (Phillipson and Ahmed, 2002; Mand, forthcoming).

In contrast to the Asian family, the Caribbean family is characterised as having 'weak' social capital and this is seen as having negative outcomes for individuals, family and community (Dench, 1996; Berrington, 1994; Berthoud, 1999a and 2001). It is suggested that Caribbean family relationships are highly individualised, as demonstrated by the high proportion of single-parent (usually female-headed) households. One outcome of individualism is weakened kinship and community ties and a fragmented family structure (Beck and Beck-Gersheim, 2002). Supporters of this viewpoint thus conclude that individualism within the Caribbean family has been detrimental to the Caribbean community as a whole. As evidence of this, they point to the limited participation of the Caribbean community in mainstream civic activities (eg, low voting in general elections) and wider social problems affecting both family and community. Berthoud's work (1999b and 2001), for instance, highlights how the prevalence of Caribbean lone-mother households limits inter-generational upward social mobility. Firstly, these households generally have less family income and greater incidences of poverty compared to two-parent and extended family households. Secondly, the daily expectation to fulfil both household economic and caring provision mean that these mothers have less time and resources to invest in their children's lives. The disproportionately low rates of educational attainment among Caribbean children are used as an example to support this claim. Other policymakers claim that inadequate kinship structures mean that family members are unable to provide the necessary social support to Caribbean lone-mothers, which leads to a 'dependency culture' of state reliance on state provision (Dench, 1996). In addition, Caribbean families are over-represented in economically deprived urban areas where, Putnam suggests, that there is 'a weakened fabric of social life' (Putnam, 1995: 28). Putnam's (1995) analysis of community relations among the Black urban poor in the U.S points to the fact that people who generally live in these communities have fewer connections to networks and resources that they can draw upon for personal benefit and so are less likely to engage in civic activities and community events. Furthermore, these areas have high rates of criminal activities and gang violence[2] and so provide a breeding ground for mistrust and suspicion. Consequently, in these communities 'the survival of the fittest' is the dominant ideology among their members, and group sanctions on individual behaviour are ineffective.

The idea that this link between family/community relationships and social capital could be somehow measured, or indeed that a 'weak/strong' social capital binary is useful in exploring the lives of minority ethnic families in the UK, has come under much criticism (Goulbourne, 2003; Zontini, 2004). In terms of Caribbean families, for instance, it is an oversimplification to suggest that they have 'weak' social capital and, as a result, less civic engagement and less reciprocal ties and obligations to

---

[2] A counter argument would be that poverty and deprivation is effective in generating and sustaining social capital among disadvantaged groups in society and act as important agent in civic participation. Also, criminal gangs can act as a very effective social capital resource in disadvantaged communities (see Stephenson, 2001).

family and kinship members. What is often overlooked by policy-makers and theorists who advocate a 'weak/strong' social capital approach to family and community relations, is that social capital as a resource is shaped and constrained by structural divisions in society such as ethnicity, 'race', gender and social class divisions. McLean's (2002) contextual study of social capital considers how these structural factors impact on way in which different ethnic groups develop, sustain and access social capital in diverse ways. McLean investigates the multiple spheres of influence within the local community - family and friends; neighbours; work and school; local voluntary organisations and local politics - to assess social capital. He starts his analysis from the point of view that strong good social capital involves i) strong local identity with mutual support and trust between local residents ii) trust in the power of local government services to meet residents needs; and iii) high levels of participation in a range of informal and formal networks. McLean's findings stress that different ethnic groups demonstrate varied levels of social capital in these different spheres and that this is underpinned by structural considerations. With regards to Caribbean people specifically, McLean's findings suggest that they display strong 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital at informal and interpersonal levels (family and friends). In terms of formal policy-orientated and cross-ethnic events, their social capital was limited and they had lower rates of 'civic engagement' concerning cross-ethnic issues within their local neighbourhood (eg, voting at local elections, attending local council meetings). However, Caribbean people showed strong 'bonding' social capital in ethnic specific community events (eg, Black supplementary/Saturday schools; Black church groups, Black welfare-based organisations) and they demonstrated high rates of 'civic engagement' in these areas.

These differing levels and forms of 'civic participation' among Caribbean people need to be understood within a wider context of racism; something that is given little attention in existing social capital debates. In the UK, Caribbean people have a marked history of social exclusion and marginalisation. Numerous studies have pointed to the way in which racism, 'othering' and 'ethnic isolation' have worked to shape and constrain the social capital of Caribbean people and other 'visible' minority ethnic groups within the public spheres of, for example, work, the education system, and local and national political organisations (Skellington and Morris, 1992; Solomos and Back, 1996). This provides some explanation of Caribbean people's limited 'civic engagement' at institutional and cross-ethnic levels. To counteract this excluded and marginal status in the public arena, the Caribbean community have responded by establishing their own institutions and agencies within their local neighbourhoods to meet their own needs. An indication of this is in the growth of Caribbean welfare community organisations (Reynolds, 2003), Saturday schools (Reay and Mirza, 1999; Goring, 2004), and Black churches (Alexander, 1996). Further, as Goulbourne (2001) suggests, Caribbean people's 'bonding' social capital is not exclusively confined to their local geographical area or nation state. Rather, they understand 'bonding' social capital within a transnational context. 'Linking' social capital allows individuals to access and link social resources transnationally and position their family activities within a transnational context. Examples of this include telebanking systems within the Caribbean community to assist individuals with overseas family remittance. I will be returning to this theme of family, transnationalism, social capital and ethnic identification later in this paper.

The prevalence of 'matriarchal' family structure and female-headed households across the Caribbean Diaspora mean Caribbean women have a key role in maintaining social capital (Innerarity, 2003). A number of Black and Caribbean feminist theorists in the UK, US and Caribbean have examined the burden this places on women in meeting the competing needs of family and community (Senior, 1991; Higginbotham and Romero, 1996; Barrow, 1996; Reynolds, 2001). A central tenet of their

arguments is that the responsibility for social capital can be viewed as double-edged sword for Caribbean women. On the one hand, social capital is perceived as an important and positive resource that generates and strengthens family and community ties. Furthermore, it can also be utilised as a survival strategy resource in the face of social exclusion or economic hardship. On the other hand, however, social capital also increases the burden for these women to meet the expectation and obligation of accessing, maintaining and reproducing social capital within family relationships (Reynolds, 2003 and forthcoming). As earlier noted, the norms of reciprocity and mutual obligation, family care and household and family rituals that are so central to family and social capital, stress the need for individual family members to meet this burden of family care. In most instances it ultimately falls on women to fulfil family, kinship and community caring with little regard for the emotional, physical and psychological cost to them.

Caribbean Family/Kinship Networks and Young People's Ethnic Identity Formation

This section explores some of the complexities that exist for Caribbean young people in terms of how they utilise family/kinship networks as a social resource in ethnic identity formation. It will first begin by assessing the relationship between family, ethnicity and transnationalism in order to explore ways in which Caribbean young people utilise family and social networks to re-affirm a transnational Caribbean ethnic identity. It will then consider how their lives in multi-ethnic Britain influence them to utilise 'bridging' social capital in familial (ie, mixed race relationships) and other social networks in order to create new models of ethnic identity that are underpinned by notions of 'cultural hybridity' and 'cultural syncretism' (Back, 1996). This explorative discussion is based on an initial analysis of the views of 15 Caribbean young people (between the ages of 16-30 years old) in the UK. These interviews are part of a total of 75 qualitative interviews with 25 Caribbean young people and up to 50 members of their family/social networks in the UK[3] and Caribbean (principally Barbados, Jamaica, and Guyana)[4]. This interview model enables generational shifts and patterns to emerge in relation to social capital and ethnicity. It also highlights the significance of trans-atlantic and cross-cultural family networks, rituals and celebrations in shaping ethnic identity.

Caribbean families have, throughout history, displayed a remarkable resilience and a key reason for this has been their ability to modify and re-configure themselves to suit their specific social and political context (James and Harris, 1993; Chamberlain, 1998; Goulbourne, 1999). Thus, whilst the Caribbean islands have different political histories and migration patterns to the UK[5], the Caribbean experience in the UK reflects the way in which migrants from this region who come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds have forged a collective identity based upon shared interests and common concerns. However, the recent event of 9/11 and the very public support of the Al Qaeda

---

[3] A non-purposive method of sampling (snowballing) was used to select sample across contrasting urban locations in the UK where there is a high pattern of Caribbean settlement, such as London (25 families), the Midlands (10 families), Manchester (10 families). The research sample also includes a small number of people from non-established areas such as Glasgow, Bedfordshire, Oxford and Bristol (5 families).

[4] These countries also present an interesting contrast in terms of ethnic composition of the population. While Barbados is more or less mono-ethnic, comprising people of African descent, both Jamaica and Guyana are ethnically mixed. For example, 51% of population of Guyana originate from Indian sub-continent, African descendants are the second largest group and there exist small but substantial proportion of Amerindians, Syrians and Madeirans. In Jamaica people come from backgrounds as ethnically diverse as Africa, Europe, and South East Asia, China..

[5] For example, many of the Jamaican migrants to the UK in the post war era primarily came from a rural, working class background. This contrasts to migrants from Guyana who predominately came from professional, educated, urban background.

network by some sections of Islamic youth in the UK suggest we are living in a globalised and transnational world where specific Diasporic ethnic identities are being constantly recreated and re-affirmed. Portes et al. (1999) refer to the study of transnationalism as 'pertaining to the creation of a transnational community linking immigrant groups in the advanced countries with their respective sending nations and hometowns' (p.217). For Caribbean people, the maintenance of family relationships is not constrained by national boundaries and instead operates within a transnational context. Goulbourne (2002: 162) notes that 'there is the tendency for Caribbean culture to be outward-looking in orientation…the general willingness to form unions with individuals outside the ethnic or national community gave, and continues to give rise to kinship patterns that transcend the boundaries of the nation state'. Thus, trans-atlantic family and kinship relationships are highly valued and represent a key aspect of a Caribbean identity (Olwig, 1996; Thomas-Hope, 1992; Chamberlain, 1998a). Collective and individual pride and empowerment are achieved through sustaining close family ties, strong solidarity and mutual support between family members living in different parts of the world. The following quotations from young people in the 'Caribbean families, social capital and young people's diasporic identities' study give us some indication of this:

> I don't get to see my aunt and cousins there [Jamaica] that much. We mostly keep in contact by phone or email. But my cousins in Canada I see them often. I would say my family is important to me. They give me my cultural identity. We live in different parts of the world but to me that's not important because we all identify with each other. We have a natural affinity, a connection that doesn't have to be explained. Just knowing that they're out there supporting me helps me to understand who I am. When we do meet up you wouldn't think that it's been ages since we last got together because we just pick up where we left off.
> [Keisha, age 24, interview February 2004]

> Our family is very close because we make the effort stay in touch. No matter what's going on I always make sure I go home [to Jamaica] for Christmas. Usually about five or six of my ten uncles and aunts go home. It's a family tradition that we meet up at my parents' house in Kingston and then travel down to my uncle in MoBay [Montego Bay] on Christmas Eve. Usually my uncle from Germany is there as well. Last Christmas my aunt from New Zealand came. Some of my Dad's aunties from the States were there, and three of his cousins and their kids, they all live in Canada. What we do when there is pretty much sit down and eat, drink and catch up with each other. Our family 'get togethers' are important. It keeps us emotionally close. I'm going to continue that with my children.
> [Michael, age 22, interview January 2004]

Ethnic identification continues to be expressed through individuals' transnational kinship networks (Goulbourne, 2002). Consequently, as the following quotations illustrate, young people's familial and cultural connections to their Caribbean country of origin often supersede their place of birth or residence understanding and defining their ethnic identity:

> I'm Indo-Guyanese British.
> TR: Why do you define yourself in this way?
> Mainly because of my grandparents, I lived with them when I was going to primary school and they've influenced me a lot. I closely identify with their culture because they 'forced' [laugh] all of these cultural things on me. Now I keep up with their traditions. I celebrate Ramadan and Eid. I make roti and curry. I have a Guyanese background and I don't want to

ignore that. I quite like it but I was born here and I was raised here so my background is also British but I feel more Indo-Guyanese than British because of my grandparents influence.
[Alyshia, age 18, interview September 2003]

My mum is Jamaican and my dad is Nigerian. I want to acknowledge both sides of my culture and heritage, and I want to acknowledge both sides of my family. I'm lucky because I've spent time with my grandparents and my uncle's family in Nigeria and I see my grandmother and cousins in Jamaica every other year, so I can appreciate both sides of my cultures. Having that experience makes me say "I'm Nigerian-Jamaican British" or if I'm ticking a box then I usually tick 'Black Other' and write in Nigerian-Jamaican British.
[Grace, age 20, interview January 2004]

The ready availability (and affordability) of air travel, telecommunication and other new electronic forms of communication such as email, the Internet and instant messenger service has further encouraged the development of trans-atlantic identities on a mass scale. Indeed the young people confirmed that they are increasingly using the Internet and other new and advanced telecommunications systems to establish frequent and regular contact with family and friends living in other parts of the world. This reinforces findings in a survey by Moneygram, published in The Voice, a black-based UK newspaper (6 April 2002). The survey revealed that over 70% of respondents had some contact with family members in the Caribbean and North America within the last 3 months. The main methods of contact are the phone, the Internet and email. Also within a 12-month period, 42% of the respondents had visited family or kinship members overseas and 36% of respondents had family/kinship members visit them in the UK.

Existing literature on youth and transnationalism identify the family as a considerable social and material resource in shaping trans-atlantic identities among minority ethnic young people in the UK (Gardner, 1995, Byron, 1999; Goulbourne, 1999; Fortier, 2000). Family rituals and celebrations provide a key opportunity for transnational links to develop between family members residing in various part of the world. Gardner and Ralph (2002) state that these transnational rituals 'make statements about membership, or at least ongoing claims to membership, in the community of origin ... and as such these statements have both a symbolic and practical significance' (p. 181). Caribbean young people's participation in family and kinship rituals and celebrations enable them to be part of globally dispersed family networks (Fog-Olwig, 2002). One research participant speaks of way that family reunions have encouraged her to establish and maintain her transnational family connections:

My mum's family held a family reunion in Texas in 2001 and I went with my mum and my sister. I was introduced to loads of these family that I didn't know existed. That was the first time I realised how big my mum's family was. Before that reunion I only knew about a few great aunts and cousins in Barbados but I had never met them before. Going to the reunion made me feel part of the bigger unit. Family came from all over, there were my cousins from Barbados and St. Vincent, loads of family that live in the US and there was the European side of family. I met 'Leila' there. She's a distant cousin who lives in Zurich. We hit it off straight away and we kept in contact with each other by emails. She comes over to visit a few times with her family and I've been over to Switzerland on a family visit. To think that this time 3 years ago I never knew she even existed and now we're so close each other.
[Jennifer, age 29, interview January 2004]

The function of these transnational networks is particularly important in a society where Caribbean young people often feel excluded and marginalised. As the following statement suggests, young people's participation in transnational rituals and networks contributes to providing them with a sense of belonging and collective membership:

> I know that I'm British because that's what it says on my passport but I don't feel accepted in England because I'm black and I know that black people are treated differently here. We're made to feel that we're tolerated but not completely accepted and we're not treated equally. I always tell my friends, who are black, "you lot go on like you're equal", I said, "but you're not". I have to try and drum it into their heads. I know that I'm not really Jamaican in the sense that I wasn't born out there but I still choose to identify culturally with them because my parents are Jamaican and everything done in a Jamaican style at home and so it's what I feel more comfortable associating myself with them.
> [Makeba, age 17, interview October 2003]

Caribbean young people continue to find ways to celebrate and valorise their Caribbean heritage and reinforce their Caribbean ethnic identity. For example, in October 2002 the Cultural Archives, based in south London, organised an exhibition by second and third generation Caribbean young people. This work used cultural signifiers to establish a visual documentation of the significance of the 'Caribbean Sunday dinner'; 'Caribbean front room' and the 'Caribbean Barber shop'. Of particular interest is the fact that these young people took aspects of their everyday lives to reaffirm a Caribbean ethnic identity:

> Every Saturday we have soup with the dumplings, every Sunday we have rice and peas and throughout the week we don't eat English food unless my mum doesn't cook, then maybe we'll go and have take-away. On Christmas Day we don't eat have turkey as the main meat but my mum also cooks lamb, fish, chicken and boiled ham. When I tell my English friends this they look at me like I'm mad and I just tell them "it's a Caribbean thing"
> [Makeba, age 17, interview October 2003]

Some young people go further and utilise their family as a social resource in re-affirming their connections to their family's country of origin (eg, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, etc) as opposed to the notion of a collective and homogenous Caribbean ethnic identity, and their attempts to do so reflect the cultural and ethnic divisions within this fragmented geographical region. So, for example, cultural events are organised and cultural goods exchanged that represent specific Caribbean countries of origin. This includes beauty competitions (eg, 'Ms Jamaica UK', 'Ms Guyana UK'); trade fairs (eg, Barbados Expo; Jamaica Expo) musical events (eg, dancehall shows – Jamaica; heritage and soca events - Barbados and Trinidad); food (eg, ackee and saltfish – Jamaica; roti - Trinidad and Guyana; pepperpot – Guyana). Inter-island rivalries first heard about from parents and other senior adult family members still influence young people's stereotypical views of people originating from other countries in the region (albeit in good natured manner!). For example, an article published in The Voice (10th March 2003) sparked intense debate amongst its readers after a second generation Jamaican who was born in Britain raised concerns about the high number of 'Jafake-ians' in the UK. He used this term to criticise those young people whose families originate from a Caribbean island other than Jamaica (sometimes referred to as 'smallies') but who disguise this fact by adopting Jamaican customs, language and practices in order to 'pass' as Jamaican. Interestingly

this person laid claim to authenticity despite being born in Britain, but Jamaicans by birth would also perceive him as 'fake' or 'outsider'. Whilst such debate could be viewed as trivial in nature, it does highlight two significant issues. Firstly, specific inter-island identities first promoted by migrant family members from the Caribbean region have influenced subsequent second and third generation youths in terms of their understanding of ethnic identity. Secondly, and contrary to popular belief, in terms of ethnic identity formation, Caribbean young people are not all attaching less importance to the Caribbean as has been suggested by some writers in the field (Hall, 1995).

In fact, complex patterns are emerging concerning ethnic identity formation by young people as they incorporate different elements of experiences that are framed around being, for example, Caribbean, Black, British, a Londoner, transnational. The following quotation clearly reveals this:

> I'll go to [Notting Hill] carnival and I'll have the Guyanese rag but on St. Patrick's Day I might wear a clover because I'm quarter Irish! When I go on holiday out of England I say, "I'm from England". But if it's like a one-one conversation with someone I've become friendly with than I'll say, "well my actual background is this" and I'll explain "I'm Indo-Guyanese, Irish, Scottish, French and Afro-Guyanese" or sometimes I just say "I'm European and West Indian" or sometimes just "Indian". I've had to report to the police before and because I'm aware there's a lot of racial bias and I can pass for "white" I just let them assume that I'm white, even though I don't feel white but I think they might treat me differently if they knew I was black. I also subconsciously alter the way I speak to people usually depending on what their ethnic origin is. Like say, if I'm in cab, driving with a white guy whose a bit cockney I'll probably emphasise my cockney part of speech. But when I'm with my Jamaican guys I'll probably emphasise my West Indian part of speech like 'wah gwan' . I've noticed talking to you you're from South London and so because of that connection I'm not pronouncing all my 'T''s and the South London speech keeps coming out. It's just something I do automatically. [Cho, age 22, interview October 2003]

It could be argued that Caribbean young people, (alongside young people of other minority ethnic groups) are carving out multiple ethnic identities that are not fixed into a specific location. Instead identities are fluid, temporal, flexible, and can change and modify according to time, location and audience (Reynolds, 1999). Thus, whilst Caribbean young people utilize the social capital present within family and kinship relationships to re-affirm a Caribbean ethnic identity, they are simultaneously engaged in developing processes, strategic social networks and models of cultural syncretism that allow them to create ethnic identification across ethnic/racial and national boundaries.

Non-ethnic based contacts are formed around common or shared experience (eg, relationships formed through work or leisure activities). Personal relationships, friendships and peer group membership therefore are not exclusively dependent on shared ethnic background (although this is still an important factor) and can be formed through other types of shared experiences

> I've mainly met my friends through school and my interests and my closest friends are all different races. My three closest friends are all different. My best-friend 'Alex' is like me: West Indian and from a single-parent background. Then there's 'Peter'. He's white, English and very middle-class. 'Espe', my other really good friend, is Filipino. I'm involved in the local asylum groups and I'm into ecology and environmental issues and I've got to make friends doing this. I went to Tobago to do voluntary work for six months working with the sea turtles

because my dad's got on organisation called [name] and they raise money here and send it back to the Caribbean for ecological issues, and I made some good friends through this my involvement in his organisation. I'm also part of the Peckham Stop the War coalition, I met my ex-girlfriend here because we have similar views about the war on Iraq and she's Mauritian.
[Damian, age 22, interview October 2003]

Cross-ethnic friendships, networks and kinship patterns (ie, mixed relationships) raise the issue of 'cultural synthesis' in ethnic identification. The significant impact of Caribbean culture (specifically Jamaican reggae and dancehall culture), and Black U.S culture (eg, rap music) on youth culture in the UK has led to claims that Caribbean youth are no longer on the 'margins' of society, but have integrated, and are now representative of dominant white society. Those who support this claim point to the way in which Black people are at the forefront of music, TV and advertising campaigns in the UK and the US. They remark that Caribbean youth have become style icons themselves (for example, UK based garage collective 'So Solid Crew' own a music production company and a fashion clothing line); they are regarded as the epitome of youth culture and considered leaders by their white and Asian peers (Alexander, 1996). Black, white and Asian young people today listen to black music and speak black slang (their own stylised and adapted form of Jamaican patois and regional slang). Consequently, there is growing synthesis between black, white and Asian youth in the way that they dress, talk, look and the food that they eat (Back, 1996; McLean, 2002).

Caribbean young people's ethnic identification is also influenced by their access to diverse social spheres, and the relationships and networks they build up within these spheres. These spheres of activity are formal (policy orientated, hierarchal structure - eg, college, workers forum within a local authority); semi-formal (hierarchy and normative code of behaviour established by group - eg, youth groups & community organisations); or informal (no established rules or hierarchy – eg, night-clubs, barbershops/hairdressers). Importantly, young people can mobilise these networks as personal benefit creating a system of mutual trust and obligation.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined some of the key issues and concerns of family, ethnicity and social capital. In doing so, it moves towards developing a conceptual framework in which to investigate the ways Caribbean young people utilise family/kinship network and relationships as important social and material resources in defining ethnic identity. Much of policy analysis addressing minority ethnic groups in the UK is based on racial stereotype and does little to understand how minority ethnic communities utilise their connections, networks and resources for collective and personal benefit. Cultural factors and structural constraints mean that different ethnic groups develop, sustain and access social capital in diverse ways. Putnam's theme of 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital, along with the 'linking' social capital expressed by Woolcock, are useful starting points in developing understanding of Caribbean young people's lives and their family and social networks. As the evidence presented suggests, Caribbean young people utilise 'bridging' social capital to establish cross-ethnic networks, relationships and alliances. They also use 'linking' and 'bonding' social capital developed through transnational family and kinship to reaffirm and develop a Caribbean cultural identity. Notions of 'cultural hybridity' and 'cultural syncretism' further create the potential for multiple ethnic identities. The accounts from Caribbean young people presented here raise a number of

important issues, which highlight the need for the relationship between ethnicity and social capital to be examined in far more nuanced ways than is currently the case..

References

Alexander, C. (1996) The Art of Being Black, Oxford: Claredon Press.
Back, L. (1996) New Ethnicities and Urban Culture, London: UCL Press.
Barrow, C. (1996) Family in the Caribbean: Themes and perspectives, London: James Currey.
Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) Individualisation, London: Sage.
Berrington, A. (1994) 'Marriage and family formation among white and ethnic minority populations in Britain', Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies, 17,3, 149-162.
Berthoud, R. (1998) 'Defining ethnic groups: origins or identity', Patterns of Prejudice, 32, 2, 53-63.
Berthoud, R. (1999a) Young Caribbean Men and the Labour Market, London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
Berthoud, R. (1999b) Teenage births to ethnic minority women, unpublished paper, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Essex.
Berthoud, R. (2001) 'Family formation in multi-cultural Britain: three patterns of diversity', paper presented at Changing family patterns in multi-cultural Britain one-day conference, ISER, April 3rd 2001.
Bryceson, D. and Vuorela, U. (eds) (2002) The Transnational Family, London: Berg.
Campbell, C. and McLean, C. (2002) 'Ethnic identities, social capital and health inequalities: factors shaping African-Caribbean participation in local community networks in the UK', Journal of Social Science and Medicine, 55, 643-657.
Byron, M. (1999) 'The Caribbean born population in 1990s Britain: who will return?', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 25, 2, 285-302.
Chamberlain, M. (ed.) (1998a) Caribbean Migration: Flobalised identity, London: Macmillan.
Chamberlain, M. (1998) 'Brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts: a lateral perspectives on Caribbean families in Britain', in Silva, E. and Smart, C. (eds) The New Family, London: Sage.
Coppin, A. (2001) 'Insights into the work and family lives of Afro-Caribbean men', Review of Black Political Economy, London: Russell Sage Foundation.
Dench, G. (1996) The Place of Men in Changing Family Cultures, London: Institute of Community Studies.
Duneier, M. (1992) Slim's Table: Race, respectability and masculinity, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Edwards, R., Franklin, J. and Holland, J. (2003) Families and social capital: exploring the issues, Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper Series, No. 1, London South Bank University.
Field, J. (2003) Social Capital, London: Routledge.
Fog-Olwig, K. (1996) 'The migration experience: Nevisian women at home and abroad' in Barrow, C. (ed.) Family in the Caribbean: Themes and perspectives, London: James Currey.
Fog-Olwig, K. (2002) 'A wedding in the family: home making in a global kin network, Global Networks: A journal of transnational affairs, 2, 3, 179-191.
Foner, N. (2001) (ed.) Islands in the City: West Indian migration to New York, Berkeley: University of California Press.
Fortier, A. (2000) Migrant Belongings: Memory, space and identity, Oxford: Berg.
Gardner, K. (1995) Global Migrants, Local Lives: Travel and transformation in Bagladesh, Oxford: Claredon Press.
Gardner, K. and Grillo, R. (2002) 'Transnational households and rituals: an overview', Global Networks: A journal of transnatoinal affairs, 2, 3, 179-191.

Goulbourne, H. (2001) (ed.) 'General introduction', Race and Ethnicity: Critical concepts in Sociology, London: Routledge.

Goulbourne, H. (2002) Caribbean Transnational Experience, London: Pluto Press.

Goulbourne, H. and Chamberlain, M. (2001) (eds) Caribbean Families in the Trans-atlantic World, London: Macmillan.

Goulbourne, H. and Solomos, J. (2003) 'Families, ethnicity and social capital', Social Policy and Society, 2, 4, 329-338.

Goring, B. (2004) Caribbean parents' perspectives on education in Britain, unpublished PhD thesis, London South Bank University.

Hall, S. (1995) 'Negotiating Caribbean identities', New Left Review, 209, Jan/Feb.

Higgenbotham, E. and Romero, M. (1996) Women and Work: Exploring race, ethnicity and class, California: Sage.

Innerarity, F. (2003) Gender Dimensions of Social Capital in the Caribbean, University of West Indies Press.

Iverson, R. and Faber, N. (1996) 'Transmission of family values', in Iverson, R. and Faber, N. (ed) Society, Work and Family; Research informing policy, California: Sage.

James, C. and Harris, W. (1993) Inside Babylon: The Caribbean diaspora in Britain, London: Verso.

Joppke, C. (1996) Immigration and the Nation State, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mand, K. (forthcoming) South Asian families and social capital: rituals and care and provision, Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper Series, London South Bank University.

Mirza, H. and Reay, D. (2000) 'Spaces and places of black education desire: rethinking black supplementary schools as a new social movement', Sociology, 34, 3, 477-499.

McLean, C (2002). Social capital, ethnicity and health: factors shaping African-Caribbean residents' participation in local community networks, http://www/lse.ac.uk/depts/gender.

Molyneux, M. (2001) 'Social Capital: a post transition concept? Questions of context and gender from a Latin American perspective', in Morrow, V. (ed.) An Appropriate Capital-isation?' Questioning social capital, Research in Progress Series, Issue 1. Gender Institute, London School of Economics.

Molyneux, M. (2002) 'Gender and silences of social capital: lessons from Latin America', Development and Change, 33,2, 167-188.

Morrow, V. (ed.) (1999) An Appropriate Capital-isation? Questioning social capital, Research in Progress Series, Issue 1, Gender Institute, London School of Economics.

Morrow, V. (ed.) (2001) 'Conceptualising social capital in relation to the well-being of children and young people: a critical review', Sociological Review, 47, 4, 744-765.

Phillips, M and Phillips, T. (1998) Windrush: The irresistible rise of mutli-cultural Britain, London: Harper Collins.

Phillipson, C. and Ahmed, N. (2002) 'Globalization and transnational migration: experiences of Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets', paper presented at Transnational families, gender and mutual aid seminar, Institute of Community Studies, 15 November.

Plaza, D. (2001) 'Ageing in Babylon', in Goulbourne, H. and Chamberlain, M. (eds) Caribbean Families in the Trans-atlantic World, London: Macmillan.

Portes, A. and Zhou, M. (1993) 'The new second generation: segmented assimilation and its variants among post-1965 immigrant youth', Annals of the American Academy of Political Science, 530, 74-98.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. and Landolt, P. (1999) 'The study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promise of emergent research field', Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies, 22, 2, 217-236.

Putnam, R (1994). 'Tuning in, turning out: the strange disappearance of social capital in America, American Political Science Association Online, http://www.apsanet.org/ps/dec95/putfig2.cfm.

Putnam, R. (1995) 'Bowling alone America's declining social capital', Journal of Democracy, 6,1, 65-78.

Reay, D. (1998) Class Work: Mothers' involvement in children's primary schooling: London: Taylor and Francis.

Reay, D. (2000) 'A useful extension of Bourdieu's conceptual framework? Emotional capital as a way of understanding mothers' involvement in their children's education', Sociological Review, 48, 4, 568-584.

Reynolds, T. (2001) 'Black mothering: paid work and identity', Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24, 4, 1046-1064.

Reynolds, T. (2003) 'Black to the community: Black community parenting in the UK', Journal of Community, Work and Family, 6, 1, 29-47.

Reynolds, T. (forthcoming) African-Caribbean Mothering, Family and Community in the UK, London: Tufnell Press.

Senior, O. (1991) Working Miracles: Women's lives in the English speaking Caribbean, London: James Currey.

Shaw, A. (2002) Kinship and Continuity: Pakistani families in Britain, Harwood Academic Press.

Skeggs, B. (1997) Formations of Class and Gender, London: Sage.

Skellington, R. and Morris, P. (1992) Race in Britain Today, London: Sage.

Solomos, J. and Back, L. (1996) Racism and Society, London: St. Martin's Press.

Solomos, J. and Bulmer, M. (1999) Racism, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stephenson, S. (2001) 'Street children in Moscow: using and creating social capital', Sociological Review, 36,4, 532-545.

Thomas-Hope, E. (1992) Explanation in Caribbean Migration, London: Macmillan.

Waters, M. (1999) Black Identities: West Indian immigrants, dreams and realities, Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Winter, I. (2002) Towards a theorised understanding of family and social capital, Working Paper 21, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Woolcock, M. (1998) 'Social capital and economic development: towards a theoretical synthesis and policy framework', Theory and Society, 27, 151-208.

Zontini, E. (2004) Italian families and social capital: rituals and the provision of care in British-Italian families, Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper Series, No. 6, London South Bank University.