

Identity, responsibility, then politics: The Uyghur Diaspora, Facebook and the construction of identity online

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Abstract

How are online and social media being used in transnational spaces? This paper presents empirical findings of an ongoing examination of the use of Facebook among the Uyghur diaspora. Described as a young 'diaspora under construction' (Dilnur, 2012, p.3), the authors demonstrate how online identities are negotiated and developed through social media use, and in turn how the expression of identity online is contributing to the youthful 'Uyghur diasporic identity'. Drawing upon a content analysis of Facebook groups and pages, the authors attend to the construction of Uyghur ethnic identity within Facebook Group sites and to the ways Uyghur political identity is currently being developed online providing insight into how Facebook is serving as a space for global, daily online interactions, much used by members of the Uyghur diaspora. The examination of discussions on Facebook sites indicates online Uyghur identity has a youthful, emergent character, actively being explored and produced through social media use.

Keywords: diaspora, Uyghur, Facebook, ethnic identity, political identity, content analysis

Introduction

The concept of diaspora is frequently used in relation to transnational migrants (Cohen 1997, Georgiou 2006a, Karim 2003). As Demmers describes, diasporas are “collectives of individuals who identify themselves, and are identified by others as part of an imagined community that has been dispersed (either forced or voluntary) from its original homeland to two or more host-countries and that is committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland” (2007, p.9). Demmers emphasises the importance of and identification with the experience of dispersal and, in turn, and as having a homeland orientation.

With the growth and development of the internet and other new communication technologies, we have seen a shift in the practices and places of diasporic identity formation (Co-Author and Author B, 2006; Kathrin & Hunger, 2008) with the internet providing a “complex symbolic environment” for diasporas (Bucy & Gregson, 2001, p.369). In particular, online and social media has increasingly played an important role in the development of a homeland orientation for diasporas and transnational migrants. The internet not only facilitates the imagination of the homeland, but also serves as a space to contest “national and transnational political ideologies and cultural expressions, or counter – expressions of identity” (Georgiou & Silverstone, 2007, p.34). Cohen (1997, p.26), for example, observes that online communication is a key location of diaspora identity production and a space to share information and perspectives:

...transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. Rather, in the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can to some degree be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination.

Moreover, online diasporic communities can lead to a rethinking and exploration of ethnic identities (Georgiou 2003), in some cases becoming a platform for political dissent and the emergence of a new diasporic political culture within the diaspora (Adeniyi 2007, Bernal 2006, Tekwani 2000).

This article explores Uyghur use of Facebook in constructing and developing Uyghur diasporic identity. We examine the ways in which members of the Uyghur diaspora, especially Uyghur activists and non-governmental organisations, have used the internet to connect one another, receive international financial and other support and to popularize their political and cultural causes through representations of Uyghur culture online (Gladney, 2003; Kanat, 2005). Throughout the paper we argue that these networked connections have played an important role in reinvigorating Uyghur identity among dispersed members (Kanat, 2005). Building upon the growing work on social network sites like Facebook use by individuals and communities (boyd and Ellison 2009; McKay 2010; Miller 2011, 2012), we analyse the ways in which different forms of identity and their expressions appear in interactions on a series of Facebook groups. We conclude by reflecting upon the extent to which the negotiation of identity and community on social network sites such as Facebook may be leading to more political forms of engagement, such as rights and recognition of the Uyghur in their homeland.

The Uyghur Diaspora

The Uyghur are an ethnic and religious nationality in China. Much less visible than the Tibetans who occupy a similar status, they are Sunni Muslims of Turkic origin living in the northwestern region of China, which is called Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), a homeland for over ten million Uyghur. The relationship between Uyghur and the Chinese state has been marked by tension and, at times, violence. In the post-Mao era, Uyghur have been treated as an "illegitimate nationality" which should be incorporated into "Chinese" and "Han" nationality (Yitzhak, 2007, p.119) through a forced assimilation policy. As a result of human rights abuses (WUC, 2004), Uyghur have called for self-determination, independence at large, which has been reflected on the increasing politicization of the Uyghur case both inside and outside China (Petersen, 2006).

Significant Uyghur transnational migration occurred throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Uyghur discontent with the political and social circumstances in China has resulted in a series of outward migrations: at first, towards neighbouring countries in central Asia, followed by a small number settling in Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the 1930s and early 1940s. During the Cold War era Turkey and the Soviet Union received significant Uyghur migration. Since the 1980s, the Deng Xiaoping-era Open Door Policy¹ resulted in further Uyghur migration. The exact number of Uyghurs living abroad is not clear due to the lack of official statistics, but according to Uyghur organizations abroad, it is estimated at over 1.5 million (Dilnur, 2012; Yitzhak, 2002, p. 286). There are presently significant Uyghur populations in Central Asian, Turkey, Western Europe, the United States and Australia.

The internet and a range of social network sites are now new spaces for negotiating diasporic identity, culture and ethnicity within transnational online communities. Although having a substantial population, Uyghurs abroad did not begin forming a network among diasporic members and communities until the advent of the internet communications in 1990s. Internet communication is playing a critical role in the construction of Uyghur diaspora which according to Uyghur scholar Dilnur (2012, p.4) is seen as a "young diaspora under construction". As scholars from a variety of disciplines (Yitzhak, 2003, 2007, 2012; Kanat, 2005; Chen, 2010; Clarke, 2010; Vergani & Zuev, 2011; Dilnur, 2012) have highlighted, the internet has been central in facilitating the very construction of the Uyghur diaspora and enabled the Uyghur diaspora to express "the unspeakable and hidden truth about the nation" (Simon, 2008, p.1177).

Methodology

This study examined use of Facebook by the Uyghur diaspora through a two-stage content analysis. In the first stage, the Uyghur use of Facebook was 'mapped', providing an overall view of the nature, composition and extent of the Uyghur diaspora's Facebook use (for this data see Author A *et al*, 2013). In the second stage, a detailed qualitative content analysis of selected Facebook sites was conducted, examining how Uyghur diasporic identity is being communicated and constructed online.

In order to generate a representative list of Facebook sites created by Uyghur diaspora, Facebook's search engine, and additional links mentioned on the Facebook sites were collected using a carefully considered list of keywordsⁱⁱ. Initially 639 Facebook sites were identified and later narrowed to include only the Facebook pages and groups created by Uyghur diaspora members formed the sampling frame for this research. This elimination process filtered out several pages, including for instance those created by international human rights organisations, or non-Uyghur groups. After this elimination, 99 pages and groups were identified as Facebook sites created by members of the Uyghur diaspora. The search was not restricted on Facebook sites at this point. Looking for other Uyghur links within each site provided an additional 18 pages and groups. The sampling frame of 117 Facebook sites (56 pages and 61 groups) was used for the mapping exercise (Author A *et al*, 2013). Since Facebook is prohibited in China, no sites created by Uyghur in China were available. Posts were almost exclusively written in Uyghur Arabic,

In the second stage of the content analysis, we conducted a qualitative analysis of selected Facebook Groups. Using a purposive sampling method (Reinard, 2008), Facebook Groups were selected according to their membership numbers and how active they are in terms of posts and discussion generated. Facebook Groups were selected because they are spaces where people come to communicate about shared interests and members have equal access to the site and permission to uploading posts. From the 61 Groups identified at the mapping stage, four Groups were selected for content analysis based on the following criteria:

1. Accessibility – the Groups must be 'public', rather than closed or private.
2. Universal or general purpose, rather than a Group established for specific purposes, such as political activism, religious teaching, sport or education.
3. Level of activity – sites that were frequently updated during the core research period (January – April 2013).

Three of the fourth Groups are based in the UK, Germany and Turkey, key sites for the Uyghur diaspora. The fourth group did not specify its location and, while there are indications from conversations as to the current positioning of members, the methodology used did not systematically focus upon founding members Group location. Detailed content analysis of the Groups were organized around themes that emerged in the process of analysis; many of these are also prominent in the diaspora literature (e.g. Bernal 2006; Klanat 2006). Themes included politics, hometown concerns, ethnicity religion, culture, history, education, popular culture and other forms of entertainment. Codes were subsequently developed based on these themes to include different aspects of Uyghur identity including political, ethnic, national, cultural, religious, and diasporic identity.

Identity Negotiation on Facebook

Throughout the world, Facebook has become an important forum of discussion and dissemination of information and opinions relating to a range of issues, from posting personal pictures of friends and family, the creation of a sense of belonging and community across a range of local and global scales (Ellison and boyd 2013, Mckay 2010, Miller 2011, 2012)ⁱⁱⁱ. Given the relatively recent recognition of the dispersed

Uyghur community as a diaspora, Facebook groups and spaces are key sites where tensions over the definition and meanings of being a Uyghur diaspora emerge.

Language and the maintenance of ethnic identity

Uyghur ethnic identity is strongly articulated among diaspora members participating in Uyghur Facebook groups. The development and maintenance of a coherent Uyghur ethnic identity is a central theme within Uyghur Facebook posts. In particular, individuals described the collective responsibility for protecting and maintaining Uyghur identity. As one member articulated:

When I left my homeland to abroad, my father stressed again and again that: “you will live abroad among people from different culture, you are no longer solely representing yourself as an individual, you will be representing as a Uyghur. So, give attention for how do you speak, act, and dress.” Since I live in abroad, I realized that when I explain who Uyghurs are to others, they take example from me as a Uyghur first and compare me with what I am saying about Uyghurs.

Uyghur identity is strongly defined in contradistinction to that of the Han Chinese population. The most visible form this distinction takes the promotion of Uyghur language and the refusal to use Han Chinese terminology. For example, Group members use words like “*Uyghurlar*” (Uyghur people), “*Qeindashlar*”^{iv} (bothers/sisters), “*Biz*” (we), “*Bizning*” (our), “*Dostlar*” (friends), and “*Qerindishim*”^v (my brother/sister) to refer to Uyghur ethnic people. By contrast, they use words like “*Zhongguoluqlar*” (the people of China), “*Henzular*” (the Han people), and “*Xitay*” (the Han people) to refer people of Han ethnicity. This allows Uyghurs linguistically differentiate themselves from the Han ethnicity. Moreover, instead of using the words China or Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) to call the place where they lived in China, Uyghurs use several other selective words to call that geographical place. For instance, “*Weten*” (motherland/ homeland), “*Wetinim*” (my motherland/ homeland), and “*Yurt*” (hometown) are used to refer XUAR in China (Witteborn 2011). The word “*East Turkistan*” is used once in an announcement for a protest. For example Group members who post announcements often use “*Bizning ulugh wetinimiz – Sherqiy Turkistan*” (Our great country – East Turkistan) to refer to XUAR.

Although a coherent sense of identity is articulated online, anxieties remain over the protection of and development of a distinct Uyghur identity, particularly an identity based on the Uyghur language over Mandarin. While the Uyghurs that live in XUAR have faced forced bilingual education, diaspora Uyghur face the challenge of passing the mother language to the new generations. Uyghurs, both in and out of XUAR, are increasingly realizing the importance of preserving their mother language and this is reflected in posts on Facebook, touching on the anxiety for losing the mother language, efforts that have been put on preserving Uyghur language both in and out of XUAR:

The longest distance in the world is neither the distance between two sides of the earth, nor the distance between two unfamiliar people standing face to face; instead, it is the distance between two Uyghur talking in Mandarin.

This is an expression of sorrow for Uyghurs who cannot speak their mother language. In another post, a video shows a foreigner teaching Uyghur language course. A comment for this post expressed anxiety for losing Uyghur language: *“The challenge we are facing now is losing our language while overseas, even more tragically Uyghur youth are ignoring this issue.”*

In another post this concern and the dilemmas faced while living in diaspora come in the shape of this question: *“[h]ow can we (Uyghurs living abroad) make sure that our children learn their mother language without feeling additional pressure on top of their current study?”*. Several members discussed this and suggested the important hindrances and reasons for teaching Uyghur children Uyghur language. The importance of creating Uyghur communities abroad was highlighted and suggestions were given for making an effort live close to each other as children learn their mother language faster when they are in Uyghur language environment. Others advocate the need for Uyghur language schools for children as more important. Several members though emphasized the important role of parents in passing the language to their children by speaking Uyghur at home.

As we have demonstrated in this section, ethnic identity formation among the Uyghur is often articulated in terms of cultural loss. As one group member responded to the previous post on Uyghur responsibility to protect and maintain their identity:

we who live abroad are representing Uyghurs, and as such others understand Uyghurs through looking at us. Therefore, we shall care about how we act not only for ourselves but also for being as a Uyghur.... However, some Uyghurs living abroad and have grown up in a non-Uyghur society may not be aware of this point. I was wondering do those Uyghurs care about their identity? What will be the result of our effort for preserving Uyghur identity?

Like other diaspora grappling with issues of identity and cultural loss, there is a particular concern about who can uphold and represent Uyghur identity. The anxiety over the ability of first generation migrants to transmit the symbols of culture and identity such as language, dress and demeanour is expressed in terms of the second-generation's lack of knowledge of the 'original' and 'authentic' Uyghur culture associated with the homeland and, more subtly, of the burdens that maintaining language and ethnic identity place on children who already must uphold the responsibility for representing Uyghur culture.

Facebook as Platform for Political Identity?

Although aspects of Uyghur *ethnic* and *cultural* identity are being negotiated on Facebook, the extent to which a cohesive *political* identity is being developed on Facebook is less clear. Facebook sites obviously serve an important purpose in providing a forum for discussion of political issues facing the Uyghur diaspora; garnering and solidifying support for Uyghur political causes, such as human rights freedoms within China; and sharing information and updates about conditions for Uyghur friends, families and associates within China and debate over political strategy in relation to Uyghur causes. While Facebook provides a forum for expression and facilitates the exchange and publicity of political information, the extent to which Facebook can facilitate the emergence of a strong and unified political

voice for the Uyghur diaspora interested in changing the political situation in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) remains unclear.

Within the four Groups analysed on Facebook, the most significant political posts concern political issues related to Uyghurs both in and outside the XUAR. Posts about the social situation of Uyghur in XUAR are frequently shared. Facebook has been used to garner and solidify support for Uyghur political causes such as human rights freedoms within China; sharing information and updates about conditions for Uyghur associates within China and debate over political strategy in relation to Uyghur causes. It also provides platform in which encouragement to political awareness is taking place, alongside fears and anxieties in relation to Chinese repression and intimidation being expressed.

One of the most important political issues discussed during the research period was the internal migration of Han Chinese into traditionally Uyghur areas. There are several postings expressing discontent with Han people that are depriving Uyghur farmers of their land; discussing the disadvantages that Uyghur children face as a result of the forced bilingual education; about students penalised for wearing traditional hat in a school; and about prohibition for Uyghur women entering public spaces like supermarkets wearing Islamic cloth, such as hijab^{vi}. These posts indicate that the Uyghur diaspora is paying attention to the political and social developments in XUAR. Most of these posts are simply sharing information without commenting and do not often receive responses or comments by other Group members. The following post is an example of the posts regarding social issues:

Have a look at this news! Graduates, try your best to past the exams! Otherwise, look at this amaze, look, 13,000 Han graduates will come to deliver help in XUAR! Although they are organized to come for practice here, they will be registered workers in bilingual education system. Hmm our poor children finish school as illiterates!"

One respondent to this post expressed discontent for the Han internal migration by describing a personal experience at a school, referring to these experiences as “helpers” or “*specialist cadres*” implying that they are unqualified in their career/subject. This comment received many “likes” by other Group members and resulted in further comments, such as this post questioning the new Han migration in to the XUAR and the pressure that this migration places on the resources (especially the water supply) in the region. In other words, these postings, which may be informative or primarily social in nature, may result in posts and comments that are more political and positioned.

Other posts of this social and political nature include sharing literature focused upon hope and freedom among the Uyghur. For example, the work of Nurmemet Yasin Orkishi, a young freelance writer, has been shared several times. Posts providing website links to his poem “*Wild pigeon*” are common. Translated into ten different languages (e.g. English, Mandarin, Italian, German) online, “*Wild pigeon*” is a strong portrayal of Uyghur people deeply unhappy with life under Beijing’s rule. After his poem became known, Nurmemet was detained by Chinese authorities and subsequently died. When the link to the poem was posted, comments included expressions of Uyghur sympathy and condolence, such as “[m]ay he rest in peace at

Heaven” and (using Nurmemet’s own words) “[f]inally, I can die freely”. This kind of confirmation of political solidarity can be seen in other posts and comments, including a post providing news about another 20 Uyghurs sentenced to life imprisonment.

In addition to internal migration, another discussion emerged around questions regarding the barriers to independent statehood. While consensus did not emerge, some discussions focused upon the decline in faith. As one group member noted, One is replied with this comment that has a religious resonance: “*we became homeless due to the reason that our faith has weaken; in history, we were strong when we had faith, we are weak now as we have followed after entertainment*”. Others blame fear of persecution by the Chinese authority as a major barrier to independence. For example, a member post provided a website link that leads to an article titled “*It is a bit early to set up the flag, brother*” . The article illustrates an argument around setting up the blue flag in a park where Uyghurs were to have a picnic. A member of Uyghur diaspora wanted to set up the flag earlier so that it makes it easy for people to find the place. Those opposing this indicated a caution on anything that might be perceived as political and suggested: “*Uyghurs will not want to take a photo with this flag on it, so let us do not set up the flag and do not make this social activity political*”. Another person indicated the divided opinion and uneasiness about the use of the flag in public display by suggesting to “*do not set up the flag earlier so that Uyghurs are not to be frightened to join the picnic. Set it up when everyone arrived, so that the ones who are afraid of the flag cannot escape*”. There was a strong reaction by other group members who noted: “*We have to have a clear goal towards the freedom of our motherland, the Uyghurs who are afraid of the flag can miss this picnic, and they are not welcome*”. This short comment not only shows that there is political awareness amongst the Uyghur diaspora but that is also fragmented.

This fragmented and contested identity becomes even more visible in Groups discussions about Uyghurs feelings about themselves as Uyghurs. Objections to self-criticism are particularly visible on Facebook. Self-criticism here refers to Uyghurs blaming themselves for their faults and is widely identified as a cultural trait by Uyghurs. One post on Facebook highlighted this situation “*Why do we often scold for our faults, why do not we start to be positive?*” Comments are clearly objecting to self-criticism. Some say “*The person who is blaming their own people either they concern about this people, or regret for being one of them.*” Others state that “*The faults are on individuals, they shall not be generalized for all Uyghurs; if Uyghurs have faults, we need to correct it, shall not leave them there*”. One member argues how self-criticism undermines self-esteem:

I praise Uyghurs not because I am Uyghur, but Uyghurs are really kind, gentle, sincere, hard working, and courageous. I do not like the Uyghur who blame and complain very often about faults among Uyghurs. In psychology, it is stated that if one always hears words about weakness and failure, he gets a habit to think about failure before he does anything. It is same for teacher and student. If teacher keeps saying negative words to the student, his/her words will be discouraging the student from making progress; but if the teacher encourages the student can do better. So, self – scolding can be psychological obstacle for being positive for Uyghurs.

This discussion is critical for their ability to identify and leverage themselves as a community and diaspora, online on sites like Facebook but also as a consequential organisation in the world.

Diaspora identity and Facebook politics?

Members of the Uyghur diaspora on Facebook express a strong awareness of social media technologies as a useful tool of identity exploration and construction. Facebook is a platform where Uyghur diaspora share information so that they can explore Uyghur identity and experiences. For the first generation members of the diaspora who grew up in the XUAR in a context where self-expression, particularly of a political nature, was constrained, the use of platforms such as Facebook is a novel way to connect to the homeland and discuss Uyghur identity in new ways. Among the second (or 1.5) generation who self-identify in Group discussions, the desire to explore and even redress the sense of cultural loss through learning and cultural preservation motivates their use of Facebook. In both cases, the narratives of Facebook as a space of exploration and dialogue are almost celebratory. For example, a Group administrator expressed the intention for creating that Group as follows:

Assalamu alaikum brothers and sisters, I created this Facebook Group to find answers for my questions. I have many questions in my mind. But when I was in our homeland I could not find answers either through my own thinking or through asking from others. Now I have a chance to live in a free world and ask my questions from the people who can think freely here. I also hope to share questions and answers with other Uyghurs as well. As we all may know, there are young Uyghurs like me who did not have freedom for their own thoughts, grew up within an education system in which we were not taught in our mother language, were not taught about our own history, and were not trained to think freely back in homeland. That is why I want to share the questions and answers on this Facebook Group.

As we have been suggesting, what the results of this new space of discussion means for ethnic and political identity remains uncertain. Some members motivations for posting and commenting is the belief that Facebook posts might provide support or hope for Uyghurs, as one member posted:

I share information on Facebook, because I hope the posts could have given any support, help, or hope for Uyghurs who have been dispersed or are dispersing and the brothers and sisters who are struggling in disappointment, particularly the Uyghur youth who are like me who is deeply feeling homeless abroad. As you can notice, I post about achievements of Uyghur individuals who concern about his/her people and some other readings that I found useful for reading.

Another member expresses the importance of sharing their diasporic experiences online:

I could not find a proper place where I can share my several years' experiences of living abroad until I found Facebook. I remember so many times I came across difficulties and did not know from where I could seek

help. Sharing my experiences may give help for some Uyghurs who is flustering abroad.

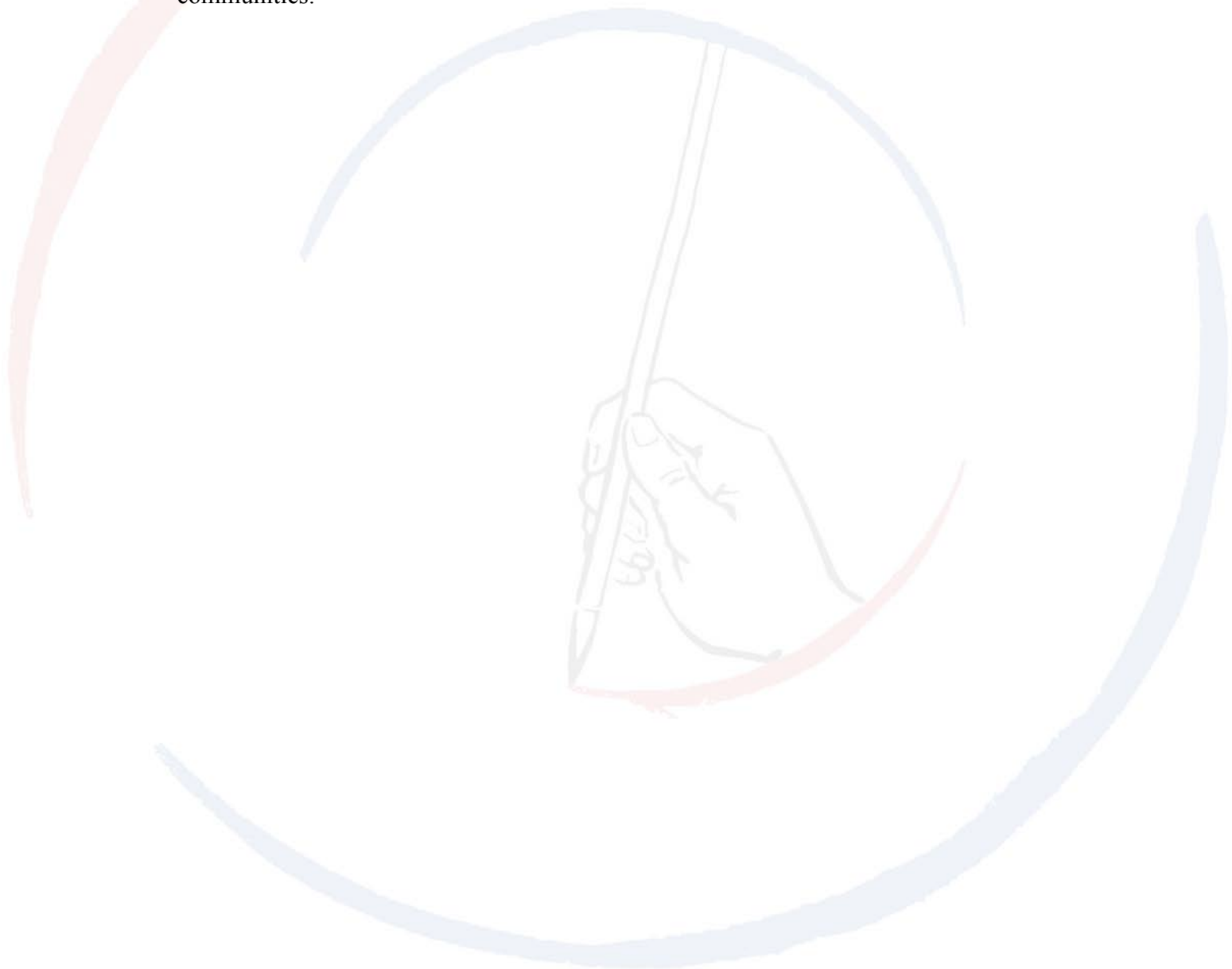
However, the potential for Facebook for mobilising the Uyghur in relation to political or activist causes is perhaps limited. Several members of Uyghur diaspora have succeeded in publishing an academic journal aimed at encouraging a more active engagement with Uyghur political issues. This group used Facebook to announce the publication. At the start, an announcement for the plan for publishing a journal and a website link for detailed information was provided in a post. Subsequently a calling for papers and articles from Uyghurs was announced. In another post, a call for providing photos about Uyghur life in diaspora was made as a way of attracting interest and building support for this group. Several members commented on this post and suggested Facebook users who may have interesting and relevant photos. After this, calls for subscription to the publication were posted several times and this call was duplicated among four Groups studied in this research. From this it can be seen that a strong effort was made in collecting subscription.

The words used in these posts eventually became more direct in their requests for a subscription. For example, the first two posts called for subscription as follows: “*If you would like to subscribe for this journal, you can do it through bank transaction*” and “*good news, you can subscribe online now*”. In the third post Uyghurs in diaspora were kindly invited to make subscription for the journal and a subsequent post outlined the challenges and difficulties of publishing the journal and the urgency of getting enough subscription for publishing, framing the subscription as a form of support. Several members (113) saw this post, but only two of them clicked “like” with one encouragement “*Uyghurlar, please support!*” Some posts were “seen”^{vii} over 170 times, but did not receive any comments or “likes”. While this may be an idiosyncratic example, it speaks to the limits of mobilisation in online forums like Facebook among the Uyghur.

Conclusion

The examination of discussions on Facebook sites indicates online Uyghur identity has a youthful, emergent character, actively being explored and produced through social media use. The findings are in line with existing literature about diaspora and media (Karim, 1998; Tsagarousianou, 2004) showing the reconstruction of identities takes place through everyday interactions, such as the daily posts on the Facebook walls in Uyghur context. In the light of these findings, the Uyghur diaspora Facebook walls stand out as one of the key areas where diaspora identities are shaped and articulated. Nonetheless, although political issues are raised and discussed online, it is not clear that Facebook communication encourages the development of forms of engagement that contribute to the strengthening of the political project of the Uyghur diaspora. While specific forms of identity construction and development are visible, the extent to which Facebook is facilitating the development of political consciousness within the diasporic community is uncertain. The evidence presented here suggests that while Facebook provides diaspora members with online community and a forum for expression and discussion of important issues, online communication does not necessarily translate into political activity or action. The extent to which Uyghurs are worried about surveillance by the Chinese state might be a serious limitation to Facebook as a political platform.

This paper thus contributes to the research on how diaspora communities - particularly young diasporas - use internet platforms to construct a shared imagination of their identities and homelands are a central analytical concern (Kathrin & Hunger, 2008). As Georgiou notes, "The internet has allowed most of these communities to discover and rediscover this shared imagination and commonality; it has taken even further the potentials for developing diasporic culture of mediated, transnational and partly free from state control communication" (Georgiou, 2002, p. 3). As we have underlined throughout the paper, it is important however to refrain from seeing the internet and online communication as 'producing' diasporic communities; rather this research emphasises the critical role of internet in enabling the transnational communication essential for the development and maintenance of diaspora communities.



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ⁱ The Open-Door Policy is a Chinese state policy seeking to boost economic development by encouraging foreign technology and investment (Yitzhak, 2007).

ⁱⁱ Keywords included search terms such as; *Uyghur, Uygur, Uighur, Uigur, Uighuir, Uiguir; East Turkistan/ Turkestan, Sheriy Turkistan / Turkestan* [East Turkistan in Uyghur language]; *Doğu Türkistan / Türkestan* [East Turkistan in Turkish language], *Xinjiang* [the name of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China]

ⁱⁱⁱ Ellison and boyd (2013) have recently (re-)defined social network sites in the web 2.0 era as “a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site.”

^{iv} Words used in Islam to call others Muslims.

^v See footnote 3

^{vi} Hijab is a veil that covers the head and body, which is particularly worn by Muslim females beyond the age of puberty as a symbol of modesty, privacy and morality.

^{vii} On Facebook, “seen” refers to the action that a Facebook user clicked the post and read it; at the same time the number of people clicking the post is recorded automatically.

