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GUANXI AND THE ORGANIZATION OF CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVALS IN ENGLAND

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This article explores how Chinese diaspora communities use *guanxi*, a unique Chinese interpretation of personal relationships, in the organization of Chinese New Year (CNY) festivals in England. A case-study approach that incorporated mixed qualitative methods was used to investigate the interactions and interrelationships between the ethnic Chinese communities involved in the organization of CNY festivals in five English cities. The article argues that Chinese diaspora communities use their *guanxi* to establish collaboration at CNY festivals. However, the process of organizing CNY festivals has also exposed divisions among Chinese communities. The article proposes that *guanxi* has important implications for the relationships among Chinese diaspora communities in the context of CNY festivals. Although it facilitates collaboration and promotes solidarity among Chinese communities, it may also intensify competition for power. Diaspora festivals in general are a neglected area of research and this article is the first to study the organization of Chinese New Year festivals in detail.

Key words: Diaspora community festivals; Chinese New Year (CNY); *Guanxi*

Introduction

Chinese New Year (CNY) celebrations in England began in London in 1960 (Newell, 1989). They were small and generally confined to people of Chinese origin. By the 1990s, however, CNY celebrations had become more public and open to communities beyond the ethnic Chinese. Typically, attendees watch cultural performances, such as martial arts, dragon and lion dances, and acrobatics, and taste Chinese food. In many cases, annual CNY festival celebrations have now become regarded by city marketing agencies as spectacles that have the potential to attract tourists to their cities (Birmingham City Council, 2012; Visit London, 2012). CNY celebrations, alongside other festivals, are also seen as a vehicle for promoting policy goals such as "community cohesion" or the development

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of business links with China. Although a few scholars (Benton & Gomez, 2001; Christiansen, 1998) have briefly mentioned CNY in their research on Chinese diaspora communities, limited attention has been given to CNY festivals held by these communities in England. Diaspora communities refer to the groups of people and their descendants who have left their homes and traveled across national boundaries to make new homes and workplaces (Brah, 1996).

In 2007, official statistics put the number of people who identified themselves as being of Chinese ethnicity living in England and Wales at 408,800 (Office for National Statistics, 2010). However, this figure disguises what is a complex picture as people of Chinese ethnicity in the UK include various groups, comprising those born in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and other countries, and also their descendants. They speak different languages, and have different religious beliefs and ideologies, as well as other contrasting social and cultural characteristics. Thus, ethnic Chinese groups in Britain may possess a relative "absence of community" in comparison with other ethnic minority groups in the UK (Benton & Gomez, 2011, p. 8). However, where there is a significant ethnic Chinese community living within an English city, they typically come together to produce a CNY festival, setting up committees to organize and produce local CNY festivals annually. Examples include the Chinese New Year Celebration Joint Committee in Sheffield, the Chinese Festivity Group in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and The Federation of Chinese Associations of Manchester (FCAM).

Chinese groups of Hong Kong origin and mainland China origin are the two largest ethnic Chinese communities in England. Most members of the former work in hospitality businesses and most of the latter are students and professionals studying and working temporarily though often for extended periods of several years (Dobbs, Green, & Zealey, 2006). The CNY festivals discussed in this article are co-organized mainly by these two groups. This is in contrast to CNY festivals organized by one group such as the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) whose organizers and audiences tend to originate only from mainland China.

The institutional dynamics of these community-based, usually nonprofit-making organizations, are rarely investigated and discussed. How do the CNY festivals reflect diversity among Chinese diaspora communities? How do the various "subgroups" work together in the context of CNY festivals? This article will seek to answer these questions. It discusses the interaction between Chinese subgroups during the organizing process of CNY festivals, with particular reference to the role of *guanxi*, a concept associated with group and interpersonal relationships discussed in more detail later in the article. *Guanxi* reflects a traditional Confucian culture and is a unique contemporary sociocultural phenomenon. As a result, the study will highlight an interactive process between Chinese people and groups in the context of CNY festivals, which will be relevant to scholars studying diaspora festivals and practitioners working in CNY festivals.

Literature Review

Festivals and Communities

Festivals, which conventionally have connections to religion and tradition (Pieper, 1999), take place all over the world in various forms. Contemporary festivals can be either the transformation of conventional events with a long history (such as Christmas) or new occasions created to respond to social, political, demographic, and economic realities (such as fairs and cultural programs) (Picard & Robinson, 2006). Whatever form they take, an important characteristic of festivals is their sense of community. Winthrop (1991) articulates that a festival is "a product of social life" and reflects "collective conceptions" (p. 247). Stoeltje (1992) states:

> Festivals are collective phenomena and serve purposes rooted in group life. . . . Because (a) festival brings the group together and communicates about the society itself and the role of the individual within it, every effort either to change or to constrain social life will be expressed in some specific relationship to (the) festival. (pp. 261–263)

Festivals can deliver a message about the shared values of a society, or convey the voices of the subgroups identified by such markers as social class, neighborhood, and ethnicity (Stoeltje, 1992).

Anthropologists usually investigate the influence of festivals on communities by examining different groups' participation in festivals. Some of them, such

as Turner (1995), suggest that festivals can relieve tensions between different groups and develop community unity when they join the same events and communicate with others. However, there are scholars, such as Magliocco (2006), who have found that festivals can be connected with more subtle, nuanced, and complex relationships with communities. Such research interprets festivals in connection with social, economic, and cultural changes that happen in times of social transformation when traditional social systems have been affected and society is divided by ideological conflicts.

Contemporary scholars of festival management studies such as Arcodia and Whitford (2007), Getz (2008), and Watt (1998) assess the functions of festivals by observing the collaboration (and/or conflicts) between stakeholders. The organization and production of festivals often require the collaboration of multiple stakeholders including individuals, organizations, or social groups. The different groups bearing their own interests make necessary compromises to set up a negotiated basis for collaboration (Watt, 1998). Arcodia and Whitford (2007) argue that the celebration of festivals increases the social capital of the "host" community through the cooperation of its different social groups. Larson (2002) suggests that the interactions between different social groups that participate in festivals may be characterized by conflict, competition, and power struggles, which may threaten the collaborative relationship between those groups. These anthropological and management perspectives on festivals are applicable in the context of CNY. However, it is necessary to reflect on the particular characteristics and issues associated with festivals organized and performed by ethnic minority diaspora communities and it is to the field of diaspora studies that this article now turns.

Diaspora Community Festivals

Despite the plethora of festival studies, it is rare to find systematic research into diaspora community festivals, in which anthropological and sociological perspectives have been employed more often than the management and organizational perspectives. Diaspora festivals are comparatively new forms of festivals, emerging contemporaneously with the mass international migration that occurred throughout the 20th century, particularly from the 1960s (Green & Scher, 2007). As Carnegie and Smith (2006) have argued, diaspora festivals are the "Festivals and events that have mobilised and recomposed, to varying extents, aspects of the culture of diasporic populations" (p. 255). Diaspora festivals have also been seen as a means of preserving customs in diaspora communities (Mayfield & Crompton, 1995; Spiropoulos, Gargalianos, & Sotiriadou, 2006).

In terms of the influences of diaspora festivals on communities, anthropologists have found that they serve to construct, represent, and enhance communities' ethnic identities, and create or reinforce group solidarity (Bankston & Henry, 2010; Becker, 2002; Carnegie & Smith, 2006; Labrador, 2002; Sinn & Wong, 2005; Spiropoulos, et al., 2006). However, some diaspora festivals express diaspora communities' longing for freedom, equality, or resistance, which reflects the contest between diaspora communities and "mainstream" societies (Ferris, 2010). According to these studies, diaspora festivals can have a positive influence, for example through promoting community unity while simultaneously creating or reflecting tensions between diaspora communities and "mainstream" society or with other ethnic minority communities.

Research into the influence of diaspora festivals on communities is usually focused on the diaspora communities whose place of origin was the former colonies of Western countries. The Caribbean carnivals, such as the Notting Hill Carnival in London (Alleyne-Dettmers, 1998; Ferris, 2010), the Caribana carnival in Toronto (Jackson, 1992) and the carnival in Brooklyn, New York (Scher, 1999), are among those that have attracted the most attention. Most of these studies have a similar theme that demonstrates the Caribbean diaspora communities' struggle for legitimacy and status within the social order in which they are subordinated, exposing the tensions between the subordinated diaspora groups and the dominant "host" community. Chinese diaspora communities' festivals tend to be neglected in diaspora festival studies. Thus, whether the existing findings on (diaspora) festivals apply to Chinese diaspora festivals is uncertain.

Chinese Diaspora Communities in Britain

Literature on diaspora communities is useful in the analysis of festivals and cultural events that are

organized by and associated with minority populations (Green & Scher, 2007; Long & Sun, 2006). As Brah (1996) and Clifford (1992) argue, people who leave their homes, travel across national boundaries, and make new home(s)/workplace(s) may be regarded as diasporas. According to Shuval (2000), the term diaspora is now used metaphorically, which "encompasses a motley array of groups such as political refugees, alien residents, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic and racial minorities, and overseas communities" (p. 41). The common feature of these diverse groups of people is their experiences of living through cultural differences (Hall, 1990). All diasporas live on cultural borderlands and share spatial experiences with "porous boundaries" (Ma, 2003, p. 22). Thus, diasporas construct their identities by means of negotiation, which reflects the cultural influences of home and host countries and also the differences between diaspora groups (Shi, 2005). According to Chan (1999), Chinese diasporas throughout the world share the consciousness of Chineseness that recognizes the heterogeneity and diversity within the global Chinese diaspora community: "Chineseness does not need a country, a kingdom, or a state; it is a condition and that condition is sustained by its place in a community anywhere" (p. 82). Furthermore, commentators such as Shi (2005) and Zweig, Fung, and Han (2008) insist that Chinese students and professionals in the US belong to the global Chinese diaspora because they engage in the community's activities, linking the home and host countries, and share the consciousness of Chineseness.

This observation is particularly important in the context of this research where some of the participants, Chinese students and scholars, are engaged in organizing and producing CNY festivals together with ethnic Chinese people with British citizenship, and share the common consciousness of Chineseness with them. These students and scholars should be regarded as a part of the Chinese diaspora in England.

It is widely recognized that overseas Chinese communities are segmented according to speech groups (related to their place of origin) and the corresponding division of associations in America and Southeast Asia before the middle of the 20th century (Lyman, 1974). One fundamental reason is that their languages are mutually unintelligible. Having investigated the organization of CNY festivals in England, we suggest that the present-day Chinese communities also have these speech group differences. However, compared to the elaborate division by regional languages, such as Hokkien, Teochiu, Hakka, Cantonese, and Hainanese (Lai, 2003), within the Chinese communities in America and Southeast Asia, the speech group differences within the present Chinese communities in England are fewer (Benton & Gomez, 2011).

The biggest Chinese language speech groups in England are Mandarin and Cantonese. The majority of their members are originally from mainland China and Hong Kong, respectively (Dobbs et al., 2006). There are smaller Chinese subgroups whose members are originally from South Asia, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Dobbs et al., 2006). The Chinese diaspora communities from these areas tend to speak other regional languages as well as their native languages (e.g., Hokkien and Cantonese). Few of them also speak Mandarin. Like most studies investigating overseas Chinese communities (Lew & Wong, 2004; Wang, 1994), this research also examined the segmentation of the speech community via Chinese associations: the membership of which was typically divided between people of mainland China origin and people of Hong Kong origin.

Guanxi *and Chinese Diaspora*

This section discusses the literature on the characteristics of *guanxi* compared to personal networking in other cultures, and the implications of this for Chinese diaspora communities. *Guanxi* is usually defined as a personal relationship in Chinese culture (King, 1991; Machailova & Worm, 2003). *Guanxi* is cultivated through comparatively long-term interactions and developed through the exchange of information, gifts, and economic favors based on mutual trust and assistance (Chen & Chen, 2009; Chua, Morris, & Ingram, 2009; Sum, 1999). Although personal networks occur in every society, the style and conventions vary in different cultural settings. Here it is argued that *guanxi* is a uniquely Chinese sociocultural phenomenon because it is linked to traditional Confucian social theory and, in mainland China, is also related to the contemporary socioeconomic system (Chua et al., 2009; Machailova & Worm, 2003).

Scholars, such as Chua et al. (2009), Luo (1997), and Fan (2002), have studied the differences between Chinese *guanxi* and Western personal networking. Following such studies, the authors of this article have summarized three major differences between the two concepts, which will be the theoretical basis for the analysis on how the "*guanxi*," and not "personal networking" between Chinese people has operated in the context of CNY organizational processes. First, *guanxi* is based on the collectivism of Confucian theory in Chinese culture, whereas personal networking is more related to the individualism that is characteristic of (most) Western societies (Fan, 2002; Luo, 1997). Thus, in Chinese culture, (extended) families are prioritized over individuals and the *guanxi* between (extended) family members is thought of as being more important than other individual and personal relationships (e.g., friendship) (Chua et al., 2009). This feature of *guanxi* determines that Chinese people need to perform obligations (such as mutual assistance) for their (extended) family members even though they may not be affectively close. Such obligations are arguably much scarcer in many Western societies. Second, the *guanxi* between Chinese people often reflects the blending of instrumental (e.g., economic dependence including personal loans and budget allocation) and affective relationships. Thus, in *guanxi*, economic dependence may serve to strengthen the affective relationships between two individuals. However, in contrast, Western cultures may seek to limit or avoid economic dependence in their personal networks (Chua et al., 2009; Machailova & Worm, 2003). Third, through the mediation of *guanxi*, the exchange of services, gifts, and resources happens in work places regularly in Chinese society and arguably more so than in other cultures (Chua et al., 2009; Machailova & Worm, 2003).

The comparative studies on "*guanxi*" and "personal networking" have not concluded that "*guanxi"* has one particular characteristic that "personal networking" does not have, and vice versa. However, the two concepts do differ at least in the extent of expectations of reciprocity. For example, *guanxi* and personal networking can both involve the blending of instrumental and affective relationships. However, for *guanxi*, this phenomenon is more in Chinese society. Among the existing comparative studies on *guanxi* and personal networking (Chua et al., 2009; Fan, 2002; Luo, 1997; Pearce & Robinson, 2000; Wong & Chan, 1999), most focus on "*guanxi*" possessed by or between business people in mainland China. The planned economy in mainland China determines that the connections between business people and officials in governments are important. In this context, the instrumental relationships (e.g., economic dependence) that *guanxi* reflects may be more obvious than in other national contexts. Therefore, research is needed on how Chinese people's *guanxi* works in other international contexts, such as, in this case, CNY festivals in England.

There are basically two types of *guanxi* in Chinese society: that which is preordained and that which is voluntarily constructed (King, 1991). The family relationship discussed above is the first type. It is related to a strong traditional notion of lineage, which emphasizes the loyalties and obligations of family and kinship in Chinese society (Haley, Tan, & Haley, 1998). The second type of *guanxi* is constructed voluntarily through social interaction, based on shared "attributes" such as locality (native place), kinship, surname, or schooling (Jacobs, 1979; King, 1991). The Chinese terminology for *guanxi* explicitly recognizes this commonality: the word *tong*, meaning "same" or "shared," is followed by a word describing the commonality, such as "native-place" (*tongxiang*), "education" (*tongxue* or *tongchuang*), or "place of work" (*tongshi*) (Jacobs, 1979, p. 243). Both the preordained and the voluntarily constructed *guanxi* pervade Chinese diaspora communities (Cheung, 2004; Lew & Wong, 2004). For example, the overseas lineage associations reflect the strong (extended) family relationships between their members. The traditional Chinese geographical and dialect associations are typically based on the shared attributes of native places and languages.

Guanxi plays a significant role in the collective actions of Chinese diaspora communities. Because of the connection of *guanxi* based on the same surname and place of origin, Chinese diaspora associations organize Chinese people's collective visits to their hometowns (Lew & Wong, 2004). Another example of the importance of *guanxi* is in Indonesia where the ethnic Chinese community has established strong *guanxi* networking in order to develop

the community's economic power (Cheung, 2004). *Guanxi* between the overseas Chinese organization members helps them to realize purposes such as chain emigration based on lineage and family relationships, and mutual support in host societies (Lyman, 1974) and also, controversially, in the development of industry monopolies (Benton & Gomez, 2011).

The literature on the *guanxi* of Chinese diaspora communities tends to focus on its positive influences. Chinese diasporas establish *guanxi* to promote the solidarity of the Chinese diaspora communities, and to protect and develop the interests of minority groups (Putnam, 1993). Contrarily, the literature on the *guanxi* of Chinese society in mainland China usually emphasizes the negative influences of *guanxi*. Backman (1999) describes how in traditional Chinese society, which lacks a strong legal and commercial system, *guanxi* has been credited with allowing early Chinese entrepreneurs to succeed and exclude others. Viewed in this light, *guanxi* can lead to nepotism, favoritism, corruption, group oppression, and limits on one's freedom of behavior (Lew & Wong, 2004). People use *guanxi* networks to obtain benefits and to satisfy personal demands (Zhai, 2009). *Guanxi* networks have divided Chinese society into various interlinked interest groups, which has seriously damaged social equality (Zhai, 2009). Thus, the existing literature on *guanxi* provides two extreme perspectives based on different contexts: overseas Chinese diaspora communities and Chinese society in mainland China. This research examines whether these arguments apply to Chinese diaspora communities' participation in CNY festivals in England, and also whether Chinese people need to develop and use different *guanxi* to organize and produce CNY festivals, and if so, what roles *guanxi* play on those occasions.

Fieldwork and Research Methods

The research employed a case-study approach involving qualitative methods and techniques. The CNY festival in Sheffield was chosen as the main case and those in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Manchester, Liverpool, and Nottingham were also examined. The four qualitative methods used for data gathering were participant observation, semistructured interviews, documentation analysis, and direct observation. Each method was employed to collect data for the topic from different perspectives.

Participant observation made an important contribution to data gathering. One of the research team members, a Chinese national citizen, worked as a volunteer member of the Sheffield CNY festival organizing committee between September 2008 and January 2009. "Participant observers can be insiders who observe and record some aspects of life around them, or they can be outsiders who participate in some aspects of life around them and record what they can" (Bernard, 2000, p. 321). In this study, as an "insider" of the Sheffield CNY festival organizing committee, the researcher observed and recorded how the Chinese communities cooperated and dealt with the difficulties and tensions that emerged during the organization process of CNY festivals. She also participated in the related social activities, which provided valuable insights into the lifestyles, social activities, and attitude to others of those organizing the CNY festival. When conducting participant observation, notes were made and, where possible, a research diary was written after 1-day activities.

Twenty-two semistructured interviews were conducted during which interviewees were encouraged to have open-ended discussions on the organizational process of CNY festivals and the interactions and relationships between Chinese groups. The interviewees were representatives of the organizations that participated in the CNY festivals in the case cities. Most of the interviews lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours. Twenty-six interview questions were developed. Table 1 shows the question list. In the table, the boldface before the questions show the themes and keywords that were defined to reflect each element of the broad issues on the festival organizational process and the interactions between Chinese groups, according to the research aim and literature review.

The CNY festivals in Sheffield, Nottingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne were also directly observed by one of the research team members as a nonparticipant. First, observations of staff training sessions, daily organizational work and meetings provided additional information on the overall context and environmental conditions of the CNY festivals and Chinese diaspora communities. Second, the researcher observed how

Table 1
Basic Interview Questions

Introductory questions

1. **Personal or/and association status for the CNY festivals.** Which position/responsibilities?
2. **Association history.** Introduce the association history.
3. **History of the local CNY festivals.** Introduce the history of the local CNY festivals.
4. **Motivation for participation.** Why did you/your association participate in CNY festivals?

Overall organization process

5. **Organization process.** How is the whole organization process?
6. **Difficulties in the organizing process.** What difficulties and how to solve the difficulties?
7. **Languages.** What working and out of work languages were used during the organization process?
8. **Meeting process and decision making.** How to make decisions?
9. **Finances.** Where to get financial support and how?
10. **CNY committee staff.** Who were they and which Chinese communities were they from?
11. **Publicity and promotion.** How to promote the events? Who was the target audience?
12. **Event venue.** Why to choose this venue?

Interactions between the Chinese subgroups

13. **Associations and subgroups.** Which associations and subgroups involved in the CNY festivals?
14. **Motivations for cooperation.** Why did you work together for the CNY festivals?
15. **Leadership**. Who? how did he/she come to take on this role?
16. **Responsibilities and task distribution.** How to divide the responsibilities and tasks? What were they?
17. **Program and performance.** How to design program and choose performance?
18. **Development of the working pattern.** Why to work in this way - with the other groups?
19. **Evaluation of the style of working.** Compared to individual CNY festivals, any difficulties, advantages, or disadvantages for this style of working?
20. **Performers**. Who were they? Why to choose them?
21. **Audiences.** Who was the audience?
22. **Languages.** Which languages did you use at the CNY festivals?
23. **Media.** Which media reported on the event? Who was the target audience?

Concluding questions

24. **Overall evaluation.** How to evaluate the CNY festival(s)?
25. **Expectation of the organization and production of the CNY festivals.** What changes, if any, would help to improve the organization and production of the CNY festivals?
26. **General comments.** CNY festivals' functions, influences, implications, etc.?

Chinese subgroups worked together on the days of CNY festivals at the event venues (e.g., how decisions made during the organizational process were carried out on the event days). In this way, data collected via direct observation could be compared with those collected via participant observation and other methods. During the direct observational activities, fieldwork notes were made and photographs were taken. After returning from the field, photographs were interpreted into written records that were saved along with the fieldwork notes in separate folders for each case.

A variety of documents were also used in this research. These included administrative documents, proposals for funding, emails, memoranda, minutes of meetings, contracts, budgets, photographs, videos, and national and local newspaper articles. All documents were summarized or described in words for future data analysis. Many documents were collected on site visits, during the periods of participant and direct observation, as well as in the interviews, especially in the case of archived organizational reports and statistical data. In this study, the three methods (participant observation, direct observation, and interviewing) usually yielded information relating only to the CNY festivals in 2008 and 2009. However, the documentary evidence compensates for the absence of historical information, which helped to understand how the relationships between Chinese subgroups were built up and developed in the context of CNY festivals.

There were several stages associated with data management, coding, and analysis. The first step was to convert the raw data into words. The interview recordings were transcribed, observations were written in fieldwork notes and research diaries, and

written documents and pictures were summarized or described in words. The second stage involved coding data into the external and internal context of CNY festivals and Chinese communities, and the interactions between Chinese communities in the context of CNY festivals (Table 2). The first column has a brief descriptive label stating the general categories and the individual codes. The second column states the codes. According to these codes, the word documents prepared previously were coded thematically. Figure 1 illustrates this process. In order to explain the interactions between the Hong Kong origin people in the Sheffield CNY festivals, the external and internal factors were identified. Then, a thorough thematic index was developed with clear headings and a hierarchical tree (Fig. 1).

Data triangulation, informant triangulation, method triangulation, and theoretical triangulation were used in this study. First, data collected from the interviews were compared with the direct and participant observation, and the various secondary data. Second, the views of the interviewees from the different subgroups were compared to achieve informant triangulation. Third, the findings of the participant observation were cross-checked with those from the semistructured interviews, direct

Table 2
The Code List for Data Analysis

External context (EC)	
History of Chinese communities in Britain	EC-CCHIST
Characteristics of Chinese communities in Britain	EC-CCCHAR
Demographics	EC-DEM
Subgroups' development	EC-SUBDELP
Inter-subgroup relations	EC-INTERSUB
Interactions between diasporas and host society	EC-DIAS-BRI
Interactions between diasporas and China	EC-DIAS-BHN
Britain–China connection	EC-GB-CN
Britain–Hong Kong connection	EC-GB-HK
Britain–Southeast Asia connection	EC-GB-SA
Internal context (IC)	
CNY festival history	IC-FHIST
CNY festival committee history	IC-FCHIST
Current organization structure	IC-ORGS
Current organization constitution	IC-ORGC
Development of the local Chinese community	IC-CCDELP
Interactions between diasporas and host society	IC-DIAS-BRI
Interactions between diasporas and China	IC-DIAS-CHN
Interactions between local city and China	IC-CICY-CHN
Change of CNY organization structure	IC-ORGS/CHANGE
Change of CNY organization constitution	IC-ORGC/CHANGE
Organization process (OP)	P
Leadership of CNY committees	OP-CNYLEAD
Work pattern	OP-WP
Financial management	OP-FM
Program design	OP-PD
Performers	OP-PERS
Local Chinese performers	OP-PERS/LOCAL CHN
Local non-Chinese performers	OP-PERS/LOCAL NON-CHN
Performers from China	OP-PERS/CN
Performers from Hong Kong	OP-PERS/HK
Languages	OP-LAN
Working languages	OP-LAN/WORK
Social languages	OP-LAN/CASUAL
Promoting CNY festivals	OP-PROMOTE
Publicizing CNY festivals	OP-PUBLICISE
CNY venues	OP-VENUE
Guests invited	OP-VIP
Local guests	OP-LOCALVIP
Guests from China	OP-CNHVIP

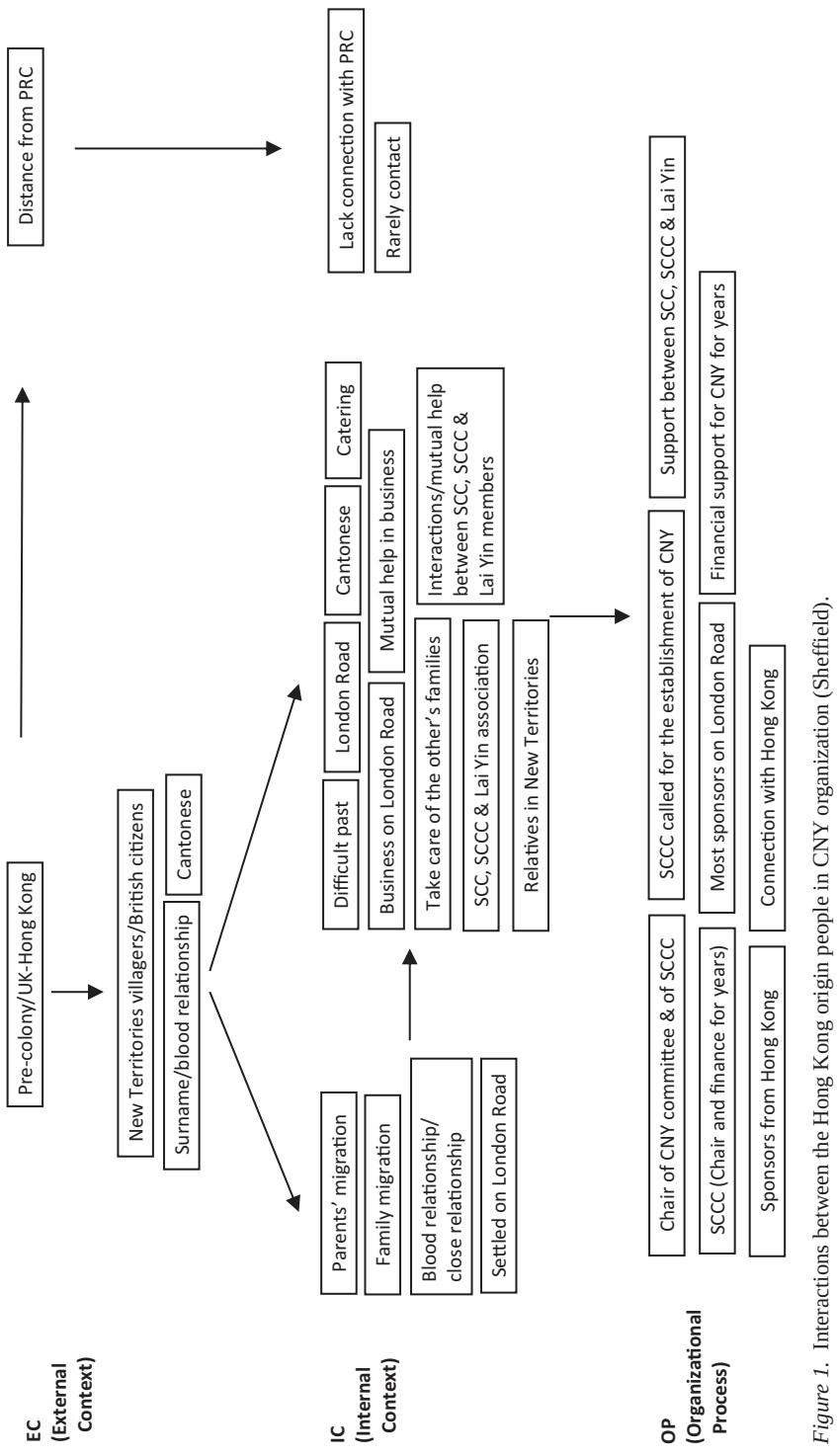

Figure 1. Interactions between the Hong Kong origin people in CNY organization (Sheffield).

observation, and documentation. Theoretical triangulation was achieved by comparing the existing theoretical perspectives, especially from (diaspora) festival studies and (Chinese) diaspora studies, through which the researchers defined and integrated the dissimilarities.

Research Results and Analysis

Using Guanxi *to Establish Joint CNY Committees*

This and the following sections discuss how Chinese people's *guanxi* "works" in the organizational processes of CNY festivals. The overall process of the establishment of CNY joint committees in different cities was found to be quite similar. At the beginning, a few Chinese people, who usually had good reputations and were well-known in their local Chinese communities, initiated the idea of collaborating to organize a CNY festival. These people were usually regarded as leaders in the local Chinese communities. They used their *guanxi* to call on the other leaders of local Chinese associations to join with them to produce a CNY festival. There were two situations for the establishment of CNY festival organizations; one was when the leaders of the local Chinese communities had *guanxi* directly with the leaders of certain Chinese associations; the other was when they did not have such close connections.

The first situation usually happened between the leaders of the Chinese associations whose origins were from the same place, either in Hong Kong or mainland China. The leaders of the Chinese associations who traced their origins to the New Territories in Hong Kong typically came to England reliant on the basis of family connections and also British colonial era citizenship rights after the Second World War. Most of them belonged to the chain migration of the second Chinese migration wave to Britain from 1948 (Benton & Gomez, 2001; Goulbourne, 1991). These New Territories Chinese migrants were found to possess preordained *guanxi*, based on blood relationships and voluntarily constructed *guanxi* based on the same locality in the New Territories (Benton & Gomez, 2001; Christiansen, 2003). The leaders of the Chinese associations in Sheffield were not widely found to have preordained *guanxi*, though some association leaders claimed their parents were from the same lineage or had the same surname. The chair of the Sheffield Chinese Community Centre, who has become the chair of the Sheffield Committee since 2003, stated:

> In 2003, for the first CNY celebration, I called the chairs of (the) different associations to ask them if they wanted to take part in CNY celebration. We've known each other well. So they came for the meeting. . . . (Interviewer: How did you know each other?) We or our parents were originally from the same villages . . . maybe not exactly the same . . . but very close. . . . In New Territories, every village has one surname. It's a big family. So after our parents moved to here, they still knew each other very well . . . and helped each other. For my generation, we also helped each other . . . CNY celebration is just one case.

The interviewee clearly suggested that preordained *guanxi* based on family relationships to a large extent involved obligations of mutual support. To cooperate to organize CNY festivals is an extension of the performance of such obligations. This indicates that the ideology of family relationships has a strong influence on the interactions between the leaders of the Hong Kong origin associations, which to some extent echoes the argument emphasizing the powerful influence of family relationships compared to other forms of *guanxi* (Chua et al., 2009; King, 1991).

The other type of *guanxi*, that is, that based on the same locality (native place), was more widely seen among the leaders of Chinese associations in Sheffield. The representative of the Lai Yin Association (Lai Ying) described their personal relationship with the chair as follows:

> We all run catering businesses here, although ours are on this side of the road. His is on the other side of the road. But we have known each other for a long time. . . . We were all from New Territories . . . we speak the same language. We invited him to attend our individual CNY celebration . . . and he came. So when he suggested do a common celebration, why not?

From the interview transcripts, the informants attributed their relationships to the same native place bound with the same native language (Cantonese or/and Hakka), and also with some other shared attributes, such as experience of migration and running a catering business. In their eyes, it accounted

for them being affectively close and helped maintain *guanxi*, which, similar to family relationships, determined that they had an obligation of mutual support (King, 1991). Despite such shared attributes, they also had long-term interactions that helped them maintain mutual *guanxi*. The leader of the Sheffield Chinese Church (SCC) described the interactions between them and the initiator of Sheffield CNY Joint Committee: "We (the SCCC and SCC associations) always support each other. When he asked us to take part in CNY celebrations, we didn't take it so special. We just came and support him." These New Territories Chinese migrants, therefore, had maintained their *guanxi* over a long period of time, either through association activities or personal interactions, before the establishment of the CNY organization committee. It is interesting, and perhaps surprising, that *guanxi* can also be found to operate even when organizations such as the CSSA—which receives funding from the Chinese government and/or companies—are present. The personal *guanxi* between the leaders of the CSSA-Nottingham and the manager of Expressing Travel, a travel agency specializing in the ethnic Chinese market, was claimed as an important motivator for their collaboration: "Other associations are usually run by the Hong Kong Chinese. We are both from mainland China. I used to be a member of CSSA. We have known each other for a couple of years. It is much easier to work with people you know more and trust more. . . . This is *guanxi*." This illustrates the key argument that *guanxi* based on shared ancestral origins and/or native places may be found among both Hong Kong origin and mainland China origin Chinese communities.

The second situation occurred when the leaders of Chinese communities did not have direct *guanxi* with the leaders of particular Chinese associations. This was exemplified where Hong Kong origin British–Chinese community leaders did not have *guanxi* with mainland China origin association leaders. The latter were invited to join CNY committees because their associations were thought to be useful for the festivals by being able to provide performances, volunteers, and, importantly, potential links to Chinese government representatives in the UK. In Sheffield, the Hong Kong origin chair of the Sheffield Committee sought the help of a go-between who had *guanxi* with the leaders of CSSA-Sheffield to make the connection. This go-between was one of his own staff members in the Sheffield Chinese Community Centre (SCCC) who used to be a member of CSSA-Sheffield and had personal *guanxi* with its leaders.

Similar examples were also found in the CNY committees of the other case study cities. In the case of the CNY Festival 2009 in Manchester's Chinatown, the chair of The Federation of Chinese Associations of Manchester (FCAM) did not have *guanxi* with the leader of the CSSA-Manchester and had to ask the chair of the Jin Long Academyto liaise as the latter used to be a member of the CSSA-Manchester. The chair of the Jin Long Academy commented that his association and the CSSA-Manchester had worked together on different social events before the Manchester CNY Festival 2009 had supported each other's activities. The leader of the CSSA-Manchester validated this statement: "I (and CSSA-Manchester) went there to help them because of Chen (the chair of Jin Long Academy), not because of (any) other (people). . . . We have a very good *guanxi* with Chen." In this situation, having *guanxi* with the initiators of the CNY joint committees was an important factor for them to consider as they deliberated on whether to join the committees.

From the above discussion it could be argued that within the CNY organizations, Chinese people of Hong Kong origin usually had *guanxi* with each other, based on the same native place and/or shared lineage or surname. People of mainland China origin also had their *guanxi* within their own subgroups, which was usually based on the same locality of mainland China. It was rare that *guanxi* existed between the Chinese people who were from the two subgroups. This influences the power relations between them, which will be discussed later in the article.

Using Guanxi *to Seek Advertising or Sponsorship From the Chinese Communities in England*

Apart from local governmental grants, advertising was an important source of income for the CNY festivals. According to internal financial reports and the program lists of the Sheffield CNY festivals 2004–2010, most sponsors were from the Chinese communities, particularly Chinese restaurants, companies, and organizations that had many Chinese

customers. Indeed, during this 6-year period, 44 were Chinese and only 6 were not.

Most of the sponsors for the Sheffield CNY festivals had supported the events for 2 or 3 years and had placed advertisements in the program in each of these years. Their parents, who shared the same surname or lineage, were previously villagers of the New Territories. They inhabited the London Road area after the Second World War and developed a community with close *guanxi* based on their shared New Territories origins. Even now, there are still interlaced extended family *guanxi* networks in the London Road area. As the chair of the Sheffield Committee said: "There are restaurants opened by brothers…or relatives on the street, maybe neighbours, maybe on this side or the other side of the street. If you can access one of them, you can access others." This is consistent with the findings of Meridien Pure (2006) that traditional Chinese immigrants, particularly those of Hong Kong origin Chinese, are concentrated around London Road—a "Sheffield Chinatown" that is becoming increasingly recognized locally as such. This is believed to be helpful in developing and maintaining *guanxi*, and very important in securing sponsorship for the CNY festivals in recent years. However, the close *guanxi* probably isolates other Chinese subgroups not located in London Road and the areas around it. Such a phenomenon is also a characteristic of other English cities such as Newcastle-upon-Tyne. However, in recent years, a growing number of sponsors of mainland China origin have supported the CNY celebrations there.

From the above discussion, it is argued that the Hong Kong origin Chinese, including the members of the CNY organizations, tended to have close *guanxi*. Close *guanxi* means "Network ties that are located in the most inner circle of an ego's *guanxi* net and are characterized by high levels of sentiment and obligation" (Chen & Chen, 2009, p. 38). However, because of the distant *guanxi* between its members and the mainland China origin association members, the mainland China origin Chinese tended to have nonclose *guanxi*. Nonclose *guanxi* refers to "Ties that are located at the periphery and carry relatively low levels of sentiment and obligations" (Chen & Chen, 2009, p. 38). The implications of this observation will be analyzed in the following two sections.

The Close Guanxi *Between the Chair and Other Committee Members of Hong Kong Origin*

The Chinese members of Hong Kong origin associations within the CNY organizations had exchanged favors over many years. The Sheffield CNY Committee is an example of this. It had four Chinese associations as members; three were of Hong Kong origin (SCCC, SCC, and Lai Yin) and one was of mainland China origin (CSSA-Sheffield). The chair of the committee had personal business connections with the current chair of the SCCC; the former had sold the services of one of his restaurants to the latter, who paid him rent. The chair described the reciprocal benefits of their relationship: "We support each other in business, but also on other occasions. She (the current chair of SCCC) helped me become the chair of SCCC. I also help her family business. She and her husband run a printing shop on the London Road. I've helped them a lot." The *guanxi* between the chair of the Sheffield Committee and the SCCC was the blending of economic and affective relationships. Such *guanxi* also commonly occurred between other leaders of Hong Kong origin associations. It has been suggested that such personal relationships closely bound with economic exchanges are less prevalent in other, non-Chinese cultures (Chua et al., 2009).

Because of such close *guanxi*, the chairs of the Sheffield Committee and the SCCC exchanged favors associated with the CNY festivals. The chair of the Sheffield Committee invited the chair of the SCCC to attend the China–Sheffield Business Network of the Sheffield CNY festival. In doing so, he shared his personal *guanxi* network with her. She, as the current chair of the SCCC, agreed that he used his status of being representative of the SCCC to conduct social activities and interactions with the wider community in Sheffield, even though he did not work in the SCCC at that time. This enabled him to build name recognition, which may be helpful for him to do business and achieve social mobility in the future. Moreover, when the chair of the Sheffield Committee was the leader of SCCC, he appointed or recruited staff members for the SCCC who later became his supporters on the committee. The chair also helped the SCCC's Centre Manager to obtain this position. He also provided suggestions when the Centre Manager met with difficulties in

her work, even after he had resigned from his position at the SCCC.

Aside from the close *guanxi* between the chair of the Sheffield Committee and the association leaders of Hong Kong origin, the association members of Hong Kong origin within the CNY organizations had exchanged favors before joining the Committee. For example, in terms of association activities, they attended each other's association events and promoted their respective services. In terms of private interactions, they supported each other's businesses, loaned money mutually, and even took care of their families' children when necessary. Therefore, the members of Hong Kong origin associations had a long history of exchanging favors and close *guanxi*. However, such close *guanxi* was rarely found to exist between the members of Hong Kong origin associations and those of mainland China origin.

Some interviewees believed that the close *guanxi* between the members of Hong Kong origin associations influenced the interactions between them within the Sheffield Committee. For example, the chair of the Sheffield Committee said:

> we usually support each other very well. I think it's necessary, because we need to be together to protect ourselves in this country. . . . But sometimes I think it is obligation. You have to support other people. If you don't, other people will know . . . such as his association members . . . then their families, relatives or friends. You know, it is a network . . . then bad words . . . maybe not bad, but not nice . . . will come to you and your families. Sometimes even your relatives in the hometown (New Territories in Hong Kong) heard the rumours. In Chinese culture, we say *huaishi chuan qianli* (bad news has wings)

This finding is similar to that found by Christiansen's (1998) investigation of the Chinese community in Birmingham, namely that Chinese diasporas have two behaviors to support each other: keeping "face" (respect) with each other and having *guanxi* with the members of different Chinese associations. As for the Sheffield CNY festivals, the chair of the Sheffield Committee held the highest power position. The SCCC controlled the finance and administration of the Sheffield CNY festivals. The close *guanxi* between the leaders or representatives of Hong Kong origin motivated them to support the chair and the SCCC and protect their power in the committee. Thus, since 2004, when the Sheffield Committee was established, the chair and the function of SCCC had never changed. In this way, they looked after the interests of the community of Hong Kong origin as a collective, which weakened the interests of the nonclose *guanxi* group, the community of mainland China origin. As Garapich (2008) suggests, if a group having greater power in a diaspora community is regarded as a bounded object, it is not only to legitimize and fix power relations within the diaspora community but also to deny the ability of others within the community to contest a given social structure and dominant discourse.

The Mainland China Origin Associations Develop Close Guanxi *With Newcomers*

The mainland China origin associations were usually nonclose *guanxi* associations because of the distant *guanxi* between its members and the Hong Kong origin association members. However, their members were found to develop close *guanxi* with newcomers such as the Confucius Institute, which joined the Sheffield Committee in 2009. The Institute was established to conduct Chinese language (Mandarin) teaching and also research into Chinese culture. It has strong connections with the Chinese government's education department and also with universities in both China and the UK. Among the academic staff working in the Sheffield branch of the Institute, around two thirds are scholars of mainland China origin and one third Western scholars. Many of the Chinese staff of the Confucius Institute and the members of the CSSA-Sheffield share places of origin and language, Mandarin, along with similar educational backgrounds and close connections with China, all of which are important in constructing *guanxi*.

The members of the CSSA-Sheffield and the Confucius Institute had maintained close *guanxi* in their personal lives. Some members of the two associations have traveled together on holiday within the UK. The close *guanxi* between the members of the CSSA and the Confucius Institute was found to have increased the former's influence on the committee. As the chair of the CSSA-Sheffield in 2009 commented:

> We used to be the only mainland China origin association (on the committee). They are all from the Chinese group of Hong Kong origin. We have a lot of differences. Now the Confucius Institute has entered. . . .You know, we're just like a family . . . (we) have a lot of connections. Most of us are friends. . . . Although some of them are not Chinese . . . some of them are Chinese of mainland China origin, we have a lot of similarities. We can communicate very well . . . (we) understand each other. We usually have (a) common understanding of the performances . . . we can communicate and reach the agreement. So when we talk to the committee, we have more influence.

Although the close *guanxi* between these association members of Mainland China origin was not found to have influenced the decisions made by the Hong Kong origin associations, they had increased their influence in the CNY committee. In the earlier years of Sheffield CNY festivals, the CSSA-Sheffield's role in the Sheffield Committee was almost solely to provide performances. However, since the Confucius Institute participated in the Sheffield Committee in 2009, the CSSA-Sheffield has cooperated with them and eventually taken over the key function of program design and stage management of the Sheffield CNY festivals.

It could be argued that the Hong Kong origin associations and individuals acted as an interest group. This not only helped them to maintain control of the CNY joint committee in terms of its leadership and finance, but also protected the interest of the community of Hong Kong origin as a collective thereby weakening the interest of the community of mainland China origin. Furthermore, the close *guanxi* between the association members of Hong Kong origin and between the mainland China origin members of the CSSA-Sheffield and the Confucius Institute, the nonclose *guanxi* between the individuals on the two sides, increased the segmentation of the Chinese communities in Sheffield. When they pursued the interests of their communities, the segmentation between them intensified the competition between the two sides and brought about tensions. For example, the individuals of Hong Kong origin shared and expanded their *guanxi* networks by using CNY festivals to conduct social activities, including organizing banquets and visiting stakeholders, which were thought helpful to accumulate their social resources. However, because these activities usually excluded the individuals of mainland China origin, they were criticized for threatening the nature of collaboration of CNY festivals. Meanwhile, the mainland China origin individuals and associations had gradually controlled the supply and management of performances and programs for CNY festivals, which decreased the involvement of Hong Kong origin associations and individuals in those aspects of CNY festivals.

In this sense, it may be argued that the involvement of CSSAs with their mainland China origin members in the CNY festivals probably weakened the traditional role of *guanxi* in the organizational processes of CNY festivals, in which the Hong Kong origin Chinese usually played the leading role. The CSSAs in different British cities are supervised and partially sponsored by the Chinese government. Their members look for sponsors who may not have initial *guanxi* with them. However, it has also been found that the members of CSSAs used the CNY festivals as opportunities to develop relationships with officials of the Chinese government at different levels. Similar to the business people who use *guanxi* with the government officials and gifts in mainland China (Chua et al., 2009; Machailova & Worm, 2003), the members of CSSA also develop such *guanxi* with strong utilitarian purposes (e.g., for obtaining good jobs). If the influence of the Chinese government on the CNY festivals of Chinese diaspora communities in England is increased in the future, the *guanxi* between the members of CSSA and the Chinese government officials will play a more significant role in CNY festivals. This may lead to increased tension between the Hong Kong origin British Chinese community and the mainland China-origin Chinese community.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to discuss the organizational processes of Chinese diaspora communities' festivals, and particularly the role of *guanxi.* The research focused on Chinese New Year (CNY) festivals and Chinese diaspora communities in English cities. Most scholars, such as Ma (2003) and Shi (2005), currently suggest that an important feature of diasporas is that they share experiences of living through cultural differences and share spatial experiences with "porous boundaries"

(Ma, 2003, p. 22). In this study, Chinese students and professionals in England were considered as belonging to the Chinese diaspora communities. They were engaged in organizing and producing CNY festivals together with ethnic Chinese people with British citizenship, and share a common consciousness of Chineseness with them. The largest Chinese communities in England comprise people of mainland China origin (Mandarin speaking) and Hong Kong origin (Cantonese speaking and usually British citizens).

Most research on *guanxi* focuses on the area of business (Chua et al., 2009; Fan, 2002). Uniquely, this study has found that *guanxi* played an important role in the organization of CNY festivals. First, Chinese community leaders used *guanxi* networks to seek the help of different association leaders for the purpose of establishing CNY committees. Second, Chinese diasporas used *guanxi* to access sponsors for CNY festivals. Thus, personal *guanxi* helped in the formation of partnerships of Chinese communities for the purpose of organizing CNY festivals. This demonstrates that personal *guanxi* served to enhance the solidarity of Chinese diaspora communities.

This research has also found that *guanxi* could intensify competition between the Chinese communities in the context of CNY festivals. Within the CNY joint committees, the Chinese diaspora of Hong Kong origin usually had close *guanxi* based on common attributes and past exchanges of favors. Because of this close and often long-established *guanxi*, the Chinese diaspora of Hong Kong origin formed united interest groups within CNY joint committees, which gave them more control. The Chinese diaspora of mainland China origin did not usually have close *guanxi* with the Chinese diaspora of Hong Kong origin. They tried to develop close *guanxi* with the individuals of non-Hong Kong origin, usually the new members of CNY committees, which helped them to increase their influence on the committees. The close and distant *guanxi* increased the division between the Hong Kong origin and mainland China origin communities, which intensified the competition between the two and arguably brought about tensions. This research has demonstrated, therefore, that in Chinese diasporas *guanxi* may involve both positive and negative implications for Chinese diaspora communities and their festivals. Practitioners and non-Chinese stakeholders involved with Chinese diaspora festivals need to understand the complexity of, and adapt to, the *guanxi* phenomenon if they are to engage effectively with the organizational processes of CNY festivals.

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