

Diversity, Trust and Social Capital: Examining Community Level Relationships

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Social Capital and Its Benefits

- “The features of social organization – such as networks, norms and trust – that increase a society’s productive potential” (Putnam, 2000)
 - Social capital is created as a by-product of other activities
 - Communities with high levels of social capital “look different” than those with low levels
- Demonstrated benefits of high social capital include better health and lifespan indicators, safer communities, increased civic mindedness and citizen cooperation, and better government and economic systems (Halpern, 2005; Kawachi, 1997; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; World Health Organization, 1998)
 - Benefits seen at the community and the individual level
 - Extend to those who do not actively participate in community activities
- Trust is both a “necessary predecessor” of social capital and a part of social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2000)

Ethnic Diversity and Social Capital

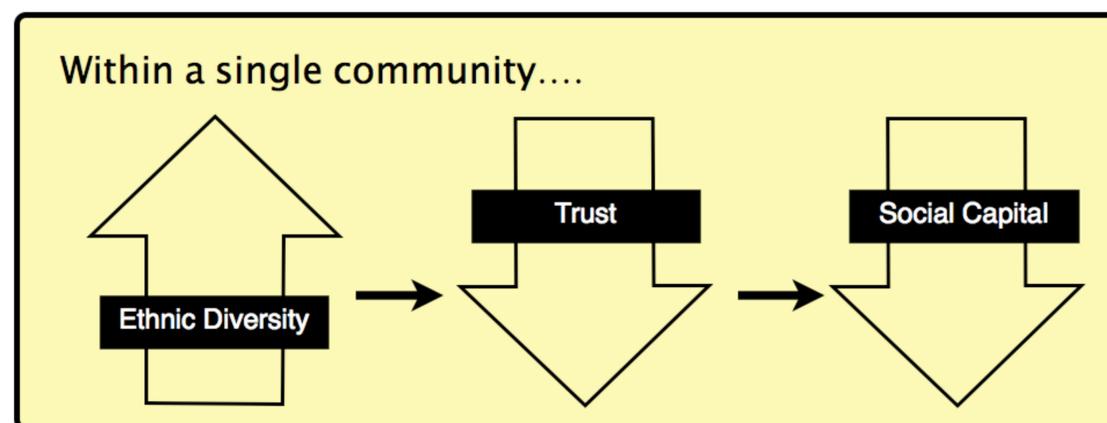
- Ethnic diversity is defined as the presence of more than one ethnic group in a single community
- American communities are projected to continue to become more ethnically diverse (US Census Bureau, 2009; Myers, 2007; Shuck, 2003)
- In the short term, ethnic diversity is seen as disrupting “social cohesion” in a community (Putnam, 2007)
- A negative relationship between ethnic diversity and social capital exists at the state level (Hero, 2003)
 - Little is known about this relationship at the community level
- “Constrict Theory” (Putnam, 2007) explains this relationship by saying that increased ethnic diversity leads to social isolation and lower overall trust (in both one’s own and other ethnic groups)
 - Ethnic diversity does not intensify in- and out-group division and competition (e.g. Conflict Theory)
 - Inconsistent with data that shows in-group trust lessens in the presence of diversity
 - Ethnic diversity leads to situations where people “withdraw from collective life”

Instrument, Methods and Analysis

- “2006 Social Capital Community Survey” administered by the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University
- Respondents randomly selected from 11 communities across the United States (n = 4,854); random digit dialing protocol used
 - Oversampling of Kansas communities to make up for geographic gap in Putnam’s 2007 research
 - Sizes range from 6,000 to 340,000 inhabitants
- Herfindahl Index of Ethnic Diversity used to assess the level of ethnic diversity within a community
 - Herfindahl Index takes into account the number of ethnic groups present and their proportions
 - Diversity scores derived from 2000 Census Data
- Ethnic in- and out-group trust measured separately
- Trust scores aggregated to create community-level variables
- Herfindahl Index Score for each community was correlated with the two corresponding trust scores

Hypothesis

Within a community, as levels of ethnic diversity increase, both in- and out-group trust will decrease. This decrease in trust will result in decreased social capital at the community level.



Results

- Both inner-group and inter-group trust were significantly related to ethnic diversity at the community level
 - Inner-group Trust – (members of one’s own ethnicity)
 - $r = .83, r^2 = .69, p < .05$
 - Inter-group Trust – (members of other ethnicities)
 - $r = .80, r^2 = .64, p < .05$
- Results uphold Putnam’s “Constrict Theory” (2007)
 - As ethnic diversity within a community increases, trust decreases
 - Similar decreases are seen in trust for members of one’s own ethnic group and members of one’s ethnic out-groups
- Multivariate Outlier: Junction City, KS
 - High levels of diversity and high levels of both inner- and inter-group trust
 - Junction City is home to Ft. Riley military base
 - Military provides structure for interaction and a common goal
 - Consistent with “Contact Theory” which states that certain conditions can increase trust between ethnic groups (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)

Call to Action

- Community psychology as a field values diversity. We understand the long term positive impact it can have on communities and the nation as a whole.
 - Need to reframe issues, not “bad race relations” but rather a problem of “isolation.” Reframing can lead to productive dialogue.
- High levels of ethnic diversity lead to situations where everyone feels more isolated
 - Communities should focus on “built environment” that encourages citizen interaction (e.g. neighborhood design, public spaces, etc.)
- Lesson from Junction City, KS
 - There is value in bringing people together for a common goal
 - Value in both the project (end goal) as well as in the ties that are formed through community interaction
 - Encourage community leaders to engage their citizens in projects both large and small
- Future research: relating levels of ethnicity and trust directly to social capital indicators

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