

# The downside of diversity

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



The Downside of Diversity” In these modern times, diversity is often thought of as a good thing. This is mainly derived from the negative past experiences with racial segregation, so it is naturally assumed that we now must promote multiculturalism in our communities. In “ The downside of diversity,” Michael Jonas argues for completely the opposite point of view. Studies carried out by Jonas shows that diversity is not all it is talked up to be. Although diversity is thought of as a positive thing for society, Putnam’s study proves that diversity produces lower civic health, a decline in social capital, and brings out the turtle in all of us.

Diversity produces lower civic health, which is a detriment to society. Robert Putnam, a Harvard political scientist, conducted in-depth interviews with 30,000 people across the United States (Jonas, 2007). What Putnam found was that neighbors in diverse communities trust each other roughly half as much as they do in communities that are made up of one predominant culture. This is due to the cultural differences that exist between members of diverse communities. Further research found that diversity makes us feel uncomfortable in social settings; however, diversity can thrive in the work environment. This is because a wider range of thoughts can strengthen a plan or objective because all the weaknesses are covered. Putnam’s research also supports that of some of his contemporaries, who argue that people in diverse communities do not contribute to common needs and goals of the community.

Diversity results in a decline in social capital, a term first coined by Putnam himself in some of his previous studies. Social capital refers to friendships, religious institutions, and community associations, which are more likely to

suffer when diversity is present in the community (Jonas, 2007). This is because people feel disenfranchised from the very societal groups that are set up to help them. Putnam claims that high social capital makes a community a better place to live, neighborhoods are safer, people are healthier, and more citizens vote (Jonas, 2007). Putnam's survey, which was conducted in a number of diverse communities across the United States, questioned many ethnic groups (black, white, Hispanic, and Asian) about how they felt about their neighbors, community, and local government. Putnam's results showed that most people did not engage politically or socially with members of other cultures (Jonas, 2007).

Finally, living in diverse communities brings out the turtle in all of us. What Putnam means when he is referring to turtle is that fact that people like to stick with their own kind and refrain from activities with other ethnic groups. Putnam's findings rejected the two theories on ethnic and racial diversity, which are contact theory and conflict theory. The contact theory states that time spent with other ethnic groups results in an increase in understanding and trust (Jonas, 2007). On the other hand, the conflict theory believes the opposite; time spent with other cultures only increases the barriers between different ethnic groups (Jonas, 2007). Putnam rejected these two theories by stating that ethnically diverse communities result in mistrust across different cultural groups and, on occasion, even members of the same ethnic group struggle to connect with one another.

The debate about the benefits of diversity typifies the meaning of the word; there are multiple theories out there on the subject of diversity. Some researchers subscribe to the view that ethnic diversity should be

encouraged, yet there are those, like Putnam, who claim that ethnic diversity results in lower civic health, a decrease social capital, and makes us go into our shells.

#### Reference

Jonas, M. (2007, August 5). The downside of diversity. Retrieved from The New York Times: [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/05/world/americas/05iht-diversity.1.6986248.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/05/world/americas/05iht-diversity.1.6986248.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)