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Is Diversity Bad for Societies?

By Leonard D. Chan

A recent award-winning article entitled *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century* by Harvard professor Robert D. Putnam has garnered much attention and controversy because of the possible interpretations of his work. This article is essentially a summary of some of Prof. Putnam's earlier studies with some new conjectures and conclusions.

Taken out of context, the article paints a dim view of immigration and diversity, as it correlates with negative effects on societies. However, the full text of the article gives more cause for optimism.

The article makes three basic points.

1. Modern societies are getting more diverse as a result of immigration. In the long run, increasing ethnic diversity can be good for societies and should be desirable.
2. In the short to medium term, immigration and ethnic diversity have adverse effects on societies. The studies show a correlation between increasing ethnic diversity and communities' diminishing social solidarity and social capital. People in ethnically diverse neighborhoods tend to 'hunker down,' becoming less involved with and less trusting of others in their communities.
3. In the medium to long term, successful diverse immigrant societies create new wider and more encompassing identities among the individuals that comprise it and in so doing negate the negative effects of increasing diversity. Such societies embrace their constituents' differences while simultaneously nurturing their shared commonalities.

Prof. Putnam's article makes reference to numerous studies. Since we do not have sufficient academic credentials, time, or resources, we cannot critique the validity of these sources or Prof. Putnam's interpretations of these cited studies. However, we'd be interested to hear from any of you that have read this article and have some knowledge of this academic field.

What follows here in our article are some further details to the three points that Prof. Putnam made in his piece. Please note that the following contains large portions of text taken out of context from the original article. My apologies to Prof. Putnam - I hope that he will not have a problem with the following summary of his work. If you wish to read the full text of the actual article, go to <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/scps/30/2>. All text taken from the article will be italicized.

The Prospects and Benefits of Immigration and Ethnic Diversity

The first piece of evidence is a chart of data provided by the United Nations on some select countries (Ireland, US, Germany, Sweden, France, UK) and their immigration trends. All of these countries show increases in immigration numbers.

Putnam makes the point that an increase in immigration does not necessarily mean an increase in diversity, but he does conclude without evidence that some increase in ethnic diversity should be expected with the inflows of these migrants.

Here are some of the benefits derived from immigration and diversity.

- *Creativity in general seems to be enhanced by immigration and diversity... Many (though not all) of the scores of studies of collective creativity in work groups (in business, education and so on) find that diversity fosters creativity.*
- *Immigration is generally associated with more rapid economic growth...the weight of the evidence suggests that the net effect of immigration is to increase national income. One recent study, for example, suggests that the income of native-born Americans rises more rapidly... if they are living in places with more immigrants than if they are living in places with fewer immigrants.*
- *In advanced countries with aging populations, immigration is important to help offset the impending fiscal effects of the retirement of the baby-boom generation... In my country, for example, young immigrant workers (documented and undocumented) contribute financially to our Social Security system, but will not draw benefits for several decades, if at all, thus mitigating the otherwise unsustainable imbalance in the medium term between outflow and inflow into our national coffers.*
- *...new research suggests that immigration from the global South to the richer North greatly enhances development in the South, partly because of remittances from immigrants to their families back home and partly because of the transfer of technology and new ideas through immigrant networks.*

Immigration and Diversity Foster Social Isolation

Prof. Putnam cites numerous studies that seem to show a correlation between increasing immigration and diversity, and increasing social isolation.

The new idea in Prof. Putnam's article is his theory that immigration and diversity is causing social isolation between all groups. He calls this "Constrict Theory." In previous theories by researchers in this field, they proposed that as either in-group (people you closely identify with) solidarity or out-group solidarity increased the other would decrease. Constrict Theory allows for the possibility that in-group and out-group solidarity can rise or fall at the same time.

Prof. Putnam's article continues with approximately 15 pages of explanation of the process and results of his own research, which he uses as evidence to show the correlation between increasing immigration and diversity, and increasing social isolation.

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Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions. You can contact us at - aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com

Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Sept. 29-30 10am-6pm	9th Annual Silicon Valley Moon Festival	Memorial Park Cupertino, CA
Oct. 6 2-3:30pm	Celebration of Filipino-American Heritage Month – Authors Oscar Penranda, Abe Ignacio, Jorge Emmanuel, Vangie Buell, Marie Yip, Marianne Villanueva, and Gemma Nemenzo	SM Main Library San Mateo, CA
Oct. 20 10am-4pm	3rd Annual Artistry Faire Fine Arts and Asian Crafts	Palo Alto Buddhist Temple Gym Palo Alto, CA
Nov. 3 11am-4pm	Sacramento Chinese Cultural Foundation's Children's Book and Gift Faire	Bethany Presbyterian Church Sacramento, CA
Other Event of Interest that AACP May Not Attend		
Sept. 27-29	California Council For History Education	Riverside Convention Center Riverside, CA
Oct. 13	Locke Memorial Completion Celebration	Locke, CA
Oct. 26-29	CA Lib. Assoc. 109th Annual Conference	Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center Long Beach, CA
Oct. 31- Nov. 4	Nat. Assoc. for Multicultural Ed. (NAME) 2007 Conference	Hyatt Regency Baltimore, MD
Nov. 17 8-3pm	National Pacific Islander Educator Network (NPIEN) 6th Annual Education Conference	Paramount High School 14429 S. Downey Ave. Paramount, CA
Nov. 15-18	CA School Lib. Assoc. Conference 2007	Ontario Convention Center Ontario, CA

Is Diversity Bad for Society

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In his studies he found that greater diversity appears to have the following effects -

- Lower confidence in local government, local leaders and the local news media.
- Lower political efficacy - that is, confidence in their own influence.
- Lower frequency of registering to vote, but more interest and knowledge about politics and more participation in protest marches and social reform groups.
- Less expectation that others will cooperate to solve dilemmas of collective action (e.g., voluntary conservation to ease a water or energy shortage).
- Less likelihood of working on a community project.
- Lower likelihood of giving to charity or volunteering.
- Fewer close friends and confidants.

Editor's Message

Hello Everyone,

September in October - I was hoping to get this to you in the month of September, but I was busy preparing for the Silicon Valley Moon Festival. My apologies for not getting this to you sooner.

Here's a reminder, on October 6th, the San Mateo Main Library and AACP will co-host a Celebration of Filipino-American Heritage Month event. As listed in our schedule, this event is packed with local Filipino authors. Many of these authors' books have been featured in previous AACP newsletters.

The Sacramento Chinese Cultural Foundation's Children's Book and Gift Faire is shaping up to be an interesting event. Authors Li Keng Wong, Oliver Chin, Ann Martin Bowler, and others are going to be in attendance.

Hey, November is just around the bend and it's time once again for National Novel Writing Month. Don't put off writing your novel any longer. Check out their website, take the challenge, and sign up (<http://www.nanowrimo.org/>).

AACP is once again holding its annual January poetry reading day event. This coming year the event will move to the San Mateo Main Library and will be held on January 12, 2008. For all of you poets out there, please get in touch with us, we'd love to have you join our beginning of the year poetry celebration.

My apologies to William Poy Lee for not doing the interview we had hoped to have with you this past summer. I wish we had all the time and manpower to do all the things we'd like to be doing.

Thank you Sophie and Jean for your help.

That's all for now.

Leonard Chan
Executive Editor

- Less happiness and lower perceived quality of life.
- More time spent watching television and more agreement that 'television is my most important form of entertainment'.

Prof. Putnam qualifies his findings and conclusions with an important caveat - we have compared people living in places with different ethnic mixes at one point in time - namely different American communities in the year 2000. Although our evidence does suggest that it is the level of diversity that matters, not the rate of change, we have not yet considered any 'dynamic' evidence about the effects of immigration and diversity over long periods of time within a single place (whether a single community or the nation as a whole). Exploring the dynamics, as opposed to the comparative statics, of diversity and social capital requires entirely different methods, and my research group has only begun to explore those avenues.

Becoming Comfortable with Diversity

Finally Prof. Putnam concludes with this section which addresses the issues of identity and its relationship to diversity. Prof. Putnam sees identity as being malleable and a social construct. The term Asian Pacific American is a case in point. Immigrant Asians and Pacific Islanders that permanently move to America now have an added identity of also being American.

Identity itself is socially constructed and can be socially deconstructed and re-constructed. Indeed, this sort of social change happens all the time in any dynamic and evolving society... Diversity itself can only be conceived in terms of socially constructed identities...

It is my hypothesis that a society will more easily reap the benefits of immigration, and overcome the challenges, if immigration policy focuses on the reconstruction of ethnic identities, reducing their social salience without eliminating their personal importance. In particular, it seems important to encourage permeable, syncretic, 'hyphenated' identities; identities that enable previously separate ethnic groups to see themselves, in part, as members of a shared group with a shared identity...

my hunch is that at the end we shall see that the challenge is best met not by making 'them' like 'us', but rather by creating a new, more capacious sense of 'we', a reconstruction of diversity that does not bleach out ethnic specificities, but creates overarching

identities that ensure that those specificities do not trigger the allergic, 'hunker down' reaction...

My argument here is that in the short run there is a tradeoff between diversity and community, but that over time wise policies (public and private) can ameliorate that tradeoff. Even while pressing forward with research to confirm and clarify these arguments, we must also begin to ask about their implications for public policy...

Scientific examination of immigration, diversity and social cohesion easily could be inflamed as the results of research become part of the contemporary political debate, but that debate needs to be informed by our best efforts to ascertain the facts. It would be unfortunate if a politically correct progressivism were to deny the reality of the challenge to social solidarity posed by diversity. It would be equally unfortunate if an ahistorical and ethnocentric conservatism were to deny that addressing that challenge is both feasible and desirable... The task of becoming comfortable with diversity will not be easy or quick, but it will be speeded by our collective efforts and in the end well worth the effort. One great achievement of human civilization is our ability to redraw more inclusive lines of social identity. The motto on the Great Seal of the United States (and on our dollar bill) and the title of this essay - e pluribus unum - reflects precisely that objective - namely to create a novel 'one' out of a diverse 'many'.

Resources

Prof. Putnam's Websites

- <http://www.bowlingalone.com/>
- <http://www.bettertogether.org/>

A Wikipedia Entry on Prof. Putnam

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_D._Putnam

Another Report on the Putnam Article

- http://postcards.typepad.com/white_telephone/2007/08/1-in-case-you-h.html

A KQED FM Forum Interview With Prof. Putnam

- <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R708201000>

Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 to October 15 is Hispanic Heritage Month.

Yes there are Hispanic Asian Pacific Americans. One of the better know Hispanic Asian Americans is Physicist and Astronaut Franklin Chang-Diaz. He was born in Costa Rica to a father of Chinese and Spanish descent and a mother of Spanish descent. Chang-Diaz moved to the United States as a teen.

Astronaut Chang-Diaz has flown on seven Space Shuttle missions. He is currently an adjunct professor of physics at Rice University and at the University of Houston. You can read about Astronaut Franklin Chang-Diaz at – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Chang-Diaz.

Here are some of the latest (2006) census numbers on Hispanic Asian Pacific Americans.

In the United States:

460,844 - people that are part or all Hispanic Asian American
183,167 - people that are part or all Hispanic Pacific Islander American

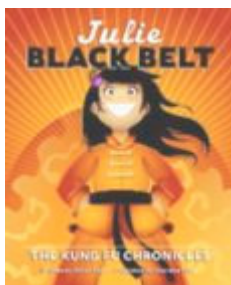
In California:

111,951 - people that are Hispanic Asian American
33,699 - people that Hispanic Pacific Islander American

Resources

- Miscellaneous Hispanic American Trivia <http://www.factmonster.com/spot/hhm1.html>
- Hispanic Heritage Month Teacher's Guide http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson023.shtml
- US Census Bureau 2006 Population estimates on Race <http://www.census.gov/popest/race.html>

The following books are discounted an additional 20% from the listed price for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end October 18, 2007.



Julie Black Belt The Kung Fu Chronicles

By Oliver Chin
Illustrated by Charlene Chua
2007, 32 pages, Hardback.

A story about a girl named Julie whose parents sign her up for kung fu lessons. Julie soon discovers that learning kung fu is more challenging than just emulating her favorite action hero Brandy Wu. In the end Julie learns some valuable life lessons.

Item #3473, Normally \$15.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$12.76**



The Red Thread
An Adoption Fairy Tale

By Grace Lin
2007, 29 pages, Hardback.

A tale of a king and queen who seemingly have everything, but still have an aching in their hearts. When a peddler gives them a pair of magical spectacles, they discover a mysterious red thread tugging at their hearts. The king and queen set off on a journey to see where the red string comes from.

This is a wonderful story dealing with adoption.

Item #3474, Normally \$16.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$13.56**

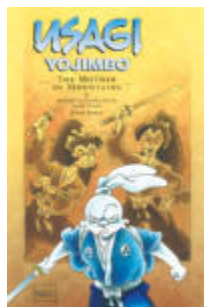


Before Internment
Essays in Prewar Japanese American History

By Yuji Ichioka
Edited by Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma
2006, 360 pages, Hardback.

This is a collection of essays written by the late Japanese American historian Yuji Ichioka. The essays cover the period between World War I and World War II, and explore issues such as Japanese immigrants' nationalism and their American born children's relationship to Japan, Japanese American attitudes toward Japan's prewar expansionism in Asia, and the meaning of "loyalty" in a racist society.

Item #3475, Normally \$60.00 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$55.00**



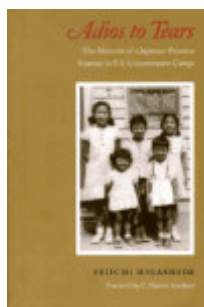
Usagi Yojimbo
The Mother of Mountains

By Stan Sakai
2007, 183 pages, Paperback.

Lord Noriyuki of the Geishu Province sends his bodyguard Tomoe to investigate a mysterious plague in a border town. Once there, Tomoe discovers the truth to the mystery. Can Tomoe's rabbit ronin friend Usagi Yojimbo save her?

This celebrated storyteller Stan Sakai's 21st volume in the graphic novel series about Usagi Yojimbo.

Item #3476, Normally \$15.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$12.76**



Adios to Tears
The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps

By Seiichi Higashide
Foreword by C. Harvey Gardiner
2nd Edition 2000, 259 pages, Paperback.

This is the memoir of Japanese Peruvian American Seiichi Higashide. Higashide was forcibly deported to the United States and interned at the Immigration and Naturalization Service facility in Crystal City, Texas, during World War II.

Higashide became a leader in the effort to obtain redress from the American government for violating the human rights of Peruvian Japanese that were interned during World War II.

Item #2916, Normally \$17.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$14.36**