

# **Does ethnic diversity erode trust?: Putnam's 'hunkering-down' thesis reconsidered**

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# SAPT project

- Large grant under the ESRC  
'Understanding Population Trends and Processes' programme
- Secondary analysis of existing data sources
- What are the origins of variability in social and political trust?

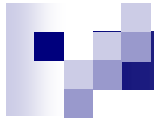


# SAPT papers

- Long-term trends in trust (various data sets)
- Predictors of change over time (BHPS)
- Comparative analysis (ESS)
- Investigating the meaning of commonly used trust questions
- A genetic basis for trust (twin data)
- Intelligence and trust (cohort data)
- Gender and trust (linked studentship)



# What is Social Trust?




*“the role of social trust and cooperativeness as a component of the civic culture cannot be overemphasized. It is...a generalized resource that keeps a democratic polity operating” (Almond & Verba 1963)*

*“a key social resource that seems to oil the wheels of the market economy and democratic politics” (Stolle 2003 p19)*

*“the attitudinal dimension of social capital” (Paxton 2007)*

*“the chicken soup of social life” (Uslaner 2002)*



A means of overcoming collective-action problems, where there are incentives for free-riding

Trust-based cooperation is more gainful than operating in isolation

But if our trust is betrayed, we would have been better off not trusting in the first place



# Trust as strategic decision

- When the return to a risky decision depends on the behaviour of another (Coleman 1990)
- Encapsulated interest (Hardin 2001)
- I trust x to do y
- Trust is a decision about action
- Based on interpersonal knowledge



# Trust as Core Value

- A generalized belief about the trustworthiness of others: strangers, as well as those who are known to us
- *“a default expectation of other people’s goodwill”* (Miller & Mitamura 2003)
- *“a ‘standard estimate’ of the trustworthiness of the average person – someone who is not a friend, not even an acquaintance”* (Paxton 2007)
- *“An assessment of the moral standards of the society in which we live”* (Dehley & Newton 2003)





Trust is irrational  
(from a rational choice perspective)



# Ethnic diversity and trust

- Greater diversity associated with less civic behaviour and lower provision of public goods
- People less trusting of others
- Diversity causes people to ‘hunker down’, “*to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbours, regardless of the colour of their skin*” (Putnam 2007 p151).
- “*high levels of racial and ethnic heterogeneity are accompanied by lower levels of trust and other civic attitudes*” (Stolle et al. 2008 p58)



# Problems with this story

- Empirical record actually quite mixed, some find positive effect, some none
- Relationship depends on measures and level of geography used
- Focus on main effect of diversity
- No real attention paid to how characteristics of areas and individuals moderate effect of diversity
- E.g. diversity moderated by economic deprivation of areas?



# Data

- Taking Part survey – continuous survey of UK households, circa 26000 per year
- Data are from 2005-2007
- Clustered design, individuals within postcode sectors
- We use Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA), containing, on average 1500
- Sample data = 3927 MSOAs, 6.3 respondents per MSOA



# Trust Questions

- Generalized Trust

- Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?*

- Strategic Trust

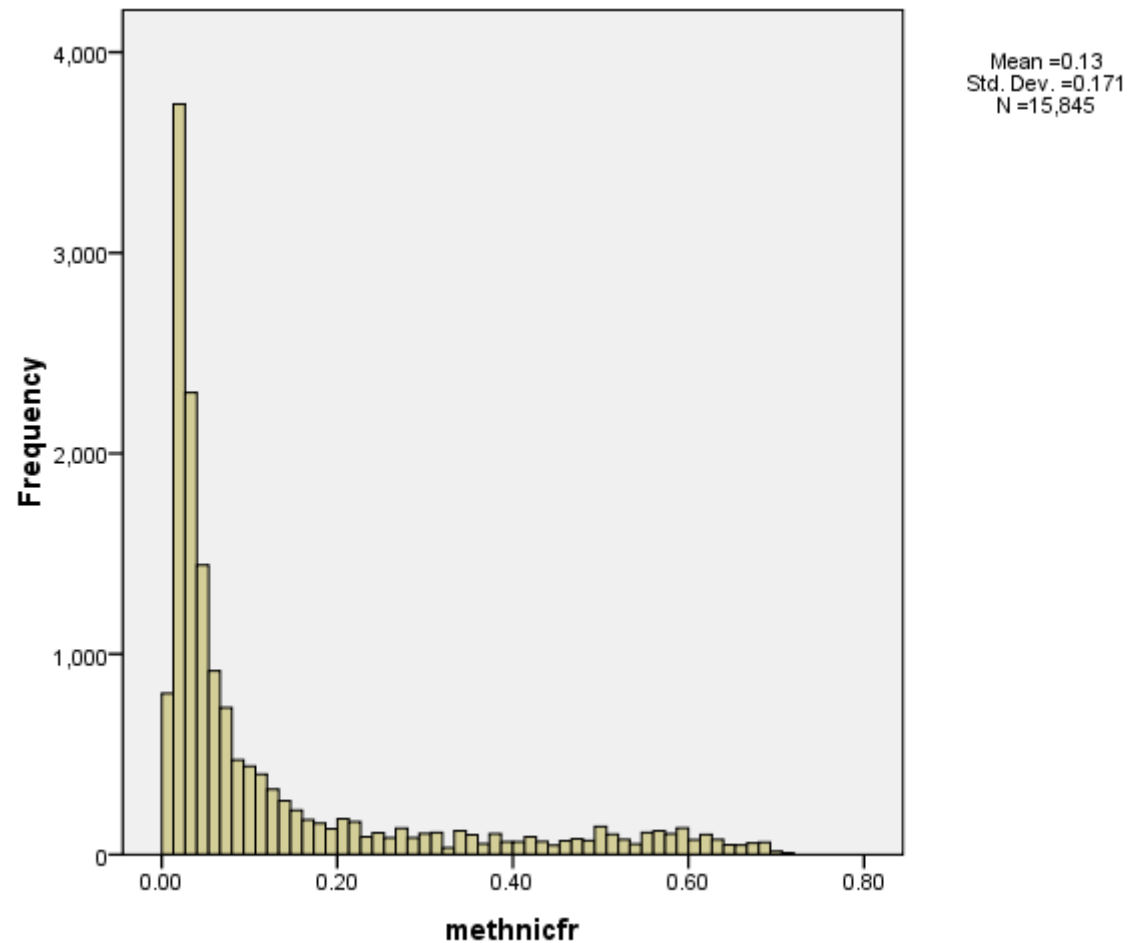
- Would you say...Many of the people in your neighbourhood can be trusted, 2. Some can be trusted, 3. A few can be trusted, 4. (or that) No-one can be trusted (?)*



# Analysis

- Multi-level models: individuals within 'neighbourhoods'
- Neighbourhood ethnic diversity = herfindal index
- Probability that two individuals randomly drawn from neighbourhood will be from same ethnic group

# Ethnic diversity across neighbourhoods





# Predictors of trust

- Individual characteristics: age, sex, social class, education, income, etc.
- Neighbourhood characteristics: economic deprivation, housing, age profile, migration, population density
- ‘factorial ecology’ variables – principal components of census variables





# Model 1 – Generalized Trust

Predictor	Model 1
<i>Level 1 fixed effects</i>	
sex (male=1)	0.245***
age (years)	0.015***
time lived in area	-0.037**
hours watching tv/week	-0.052***
social class (ref=working class)	
middle class	0.168***
own account workers	0.146
general health	0.142***
happy with life	0.049***
<u>marital status (ref=single)</u>	
married/cohabiting	-0.049
widowed	-0.016
divorced/separated	-0.160*
<u>Qualifications (ref=all other quals)</u>	
no qualifications	-0.126*
degree or equivalent	0.311***
<u>housing tenure (ref=social renting)</u>	
home owner	0.382***
private renter	0.322***
<u>ethnic group (ref = white)</u>	
mixed	0.425*
asian	-0.032
black	-0.377**
other ethnic group	-0.394
know neighbours	0.370***

# Model 1 – Generalized Trust

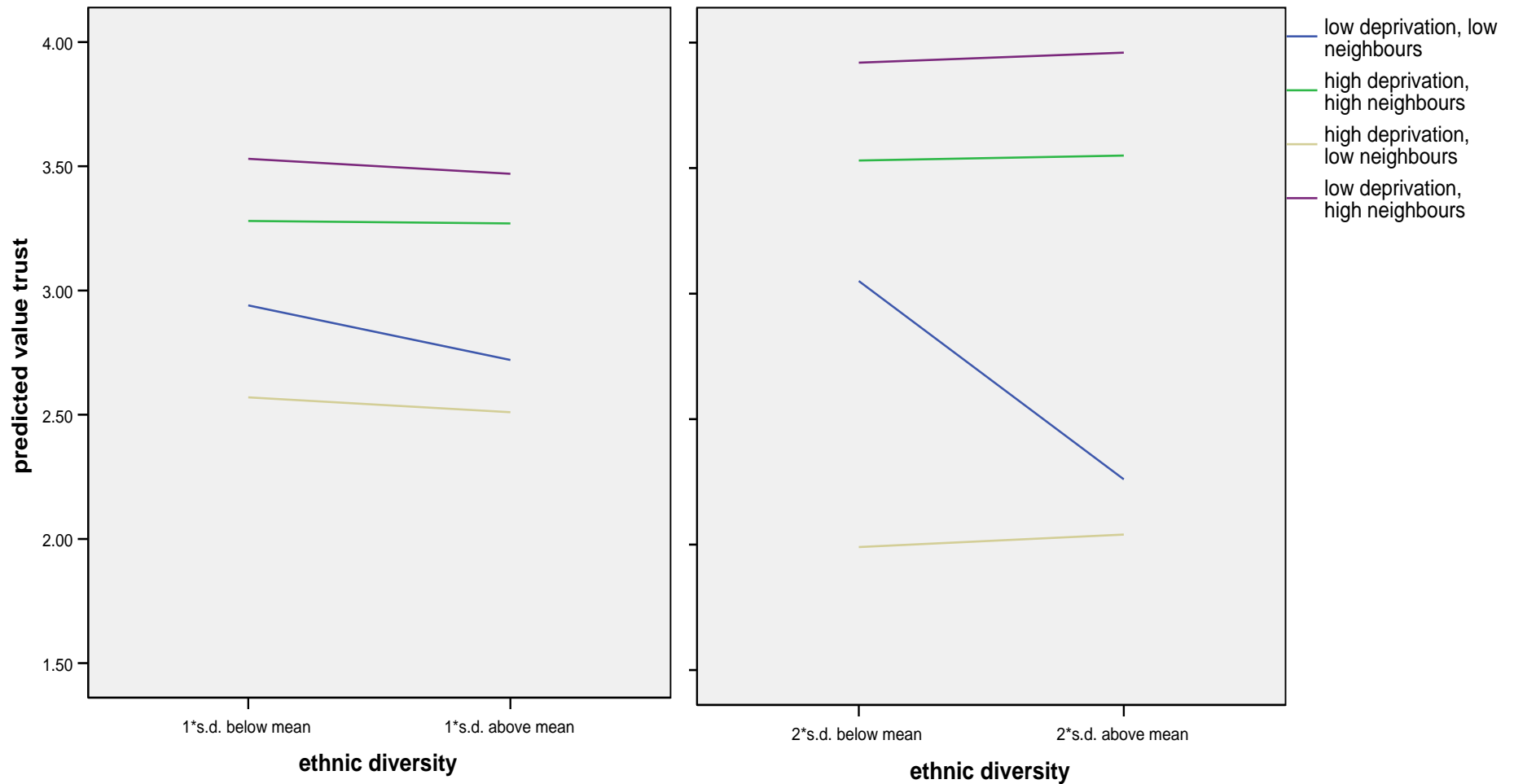
<i>Level 2 fixed effects</i>			
(logged)ethnic fractionalization	-0.064	-0.063	-0.062
economic deprivation		-0.220***	-0.222***
urbanicity		-0.057	-0.058
in and out-migration		0.099***	0.099
age profile		-0.024	-0.024
housing stock		-0.121***	-0.122***
<i>intercept</i>	-0.324***	-0.329***	-0.329***
<i>Random effects</i>			
var(intercept)	0.49570***	0.44172***	0.4417***
var(residual)	3.29	3.29	3.29
% variance at MSOA level	13.1%	11.8%	11.8%

Source=Taking Part Survey 2005-2007; n=11963; coefficients are logits; \*\*\* = significant at p<0.001; \*\* = p<0.01; \* = p<0.05.

# Model 2 – Trust in neighbours

<i>Level 2 fixed effects</i>					
(logged)ethnic fractionalization	-0.183***	-0.068***	-0.081***	-0.081***	-0.082***
economic deprivation		-0.120***	-0.128***	-0.129***	-0.130***
urbanicity		-0.075***	-0.070***	-0.070***	-0.071***
in and out-migration		-0.010	-0.009	-0.009	-0.008
age profile		-0.029***	-0.029***	-0.029***	-0.030***
housing stock		-0.024***	-0.018**	-0.019**	-0.020***
deprivation*fractionalization			0.047***	0.047***	0.049***
deprivation*know neighbours					0.017**
fractionalization*know neighbours					0.055***
deprivation*fractionalization*know neighbours					-0.030**
<i>intercept</i>	3.026***	3.039***	3.036***	3.035***	3.037***
<i>Random effects</i>					
var(time lived in area)				0.002***	0.002***
var(happy with life)				0.002***	0.002***
var(know neighbours)				0.016***	0.015***
var(intercept)	0.042***	0.028***	0.028***	0.028***	0.027***
var(residual)	0.518***	0.518***	0.518***	0.496***	0.496***
% variance at MSOA level	7.6%	5.2%	5.1%	5.3%	5.3%

# Interaction – simple slopes





# Discussion

- Putnam's hunkering-down thesis is a universalist claim – ethnic diversity reduces trust
- No effect of ethnic diversity on the generalized trust question in the UK
- Replicates other research which found no effect of diversity on generalized trust
- This is the question that formed the basis of Putnam's Bowling alone analysis



# Discussion contd.

- Small, positive coefficient for diversity on trust in neighbours
- Strongly moderated by neighbourhood deprivation and social interaction
- In some neighbourhoods, diversity correlated with higher trust
- Nothing deterministic about relation of diversity and trust