

Politics in Peer Groups: Exploring the Causal Relationship between Network Diversity and Political Participation

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Abstract. Social capital researchers have suggested that bridging ties are important for political participation. However, thus far the literature lacks testing on the direction of this relationship: do diverse ties stimulate political participation or does political participation stimulate political diversity among friends and acquaintances? This article examines how ethno-cultural and political diversity within social networks influence political participation among a unique panel of 4,235 young people in Belgium. The results reveal a reciprocal cross-lagged effect. In particular, having politically diverse social networks increases political participation, which in turn promotes meeting politically diverse others.