

Democracy based on difference: Examining the links between structural heterogeneity, heterogeneity of discussion networks, and democratic citizenship.

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Democracy Based on Difference: Examining the Links Between Structural Heterogeneity, Heterogeneity of Discussion Networks, and Democratic Citizenship

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Abstract

This study explores the direct and indirect links between structural heterogeneity, network heterogeneity, and political participation. We review the often conflicting scholarship on discussion network heterogeneity and political participation and place it within a multilevel conceptual framework of heterogeneity. Based on this integrated theoretical model, our study uses a combination of macro-level and individual-level survey data from various sources. First, we use a cross-sectional national data set, based on a telephone survey with a probability sample of almost 800 adults. Second, we combine these individual-level data with county-level data on religious, political, and racial heterogeneity. Based on these data sets, we develop a path model linking structure, context, and networks into an integrated pathway to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of heterogeneity on political participation. Our results show positive links between structural and network heterogeneity that are both direct and indirect, that is, mediated through various communication processes.

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