

An Alternative to the Madisonian Model of Representation: Pluralism & By-Product Representation through Interest Groups

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Agenda

- 1 Foundation of Pluralism: Groups
- 2 By-Product Group Representation
- 3 Small Group Advantage?

Reframing Madisonian Representation: *Pluralism*

Recall that *Madison's Theory of Representation (Primarily in Federalist 10)* posits the following:

- ▶ Human Nature \rightarrow_1 Factions \leftrightarrow_2 Representation
- ▶ Where: $\rightarrow_1 =$ Self-interest & $\leftrightarrow_2 =$ Elections
- ▶ Election & re-election (\leftrightarrow_2) are critical to theory: protects against agency loss by faction (voters)

Recap: Why does no contemporary model buy into Madison's theory of representation as specified?

- ▶ Self-interest not enough to form & join groups that advocate political goals (factions)
- ▶ Voters have a rational incentive to free-ride off of others and abstain from politics (both in sophistication, i.e. rational ignorance, & participation)

Reframing Madisonian Representation: *Pluralism*

Pluralism re-frames the Madisonian Theory in the following way:

- ▶ Human Nature \rightarrow_1 Factions \leftrightarrow_2 Representation
- ▶ Where: \rightarrow_1 = Self-interest & \leftrightarrow_2 = Group membership
- ▶ The primary mechanism by which you secure **representation** isn't through elections, but rather through your membership in non-political & political groups
- ▶ **Pluralism Overview:** Representation in government is a **by-product** of your membership in these groups and these groups fight it out ***across various points of access*** in government to secure collective public goods.
- ▶ How does this differ from the logic of Madison's model positing the critical representation mechanism of elections?

The Starting Point: *Group Membership*

Fundamentally, why do people join groups?

- ▶ Unless you're a hermit, groups fundamental aspect of societal life and we are motivated by self-interest to join/leave groups in society (***inclusivity & self-correcting nature of group system***)
- ▶ Three key motivations by which citizens join groups
 - ① Economic Reasons
 - ② Social Reasons
 - ③ Political Reasons
- ▶ What are some examples of economic, social, and political groups?
 - ▶ University of California System/American Bar Association (Economic)
 - ▶ Church or Social Fraternity (Social Group)
 - ▶ NRA or Sierra Club (Political Groups)
- ▶ These groups can be divided into a dichotomy: **political groups & non-political groups**

By-Product Representation by Groups

- ▶ In your estimation, which groups are more common?
- ▶ **Non-political groups** by-far the most common and are **key** to the pluralist model, given that these groups solve the collective action problem needed to secure public goods through *positive inducements*
- ▶ Positive inducements (selective benefits) are private excludable goods that groups can use to insure that their membership doesn't free-ride and contributes to the organization's procurement of *collective public goods*
- ▶ What are some examples?
 - ▶ AAA Membership (discounts)
 - ▶ UC Davis degree
 - ▶ Magazine subscription or something from NPR
 - ▶ Even coercion & job provided by labor unions

Groups & Government Influence

- ▶ These inducements help build membership base needed to fund lobbying operations needed to influence government policy
- ▶ How do these groups of interest influence government policies?
- ▶ **By definition**, government is pluralistic and features *multiple points of access*
- ▶ Groups can lobby & expend resources at various points: congressional committees, lobbying individual members, state legislatures, local school boards, *bureaucracies that implement policies*, etc.
- ▶ **Public Good:** Result of group competition at various points of group access (policy change still subject to transaction costs)

What About Latent Groups?

- ▶ What about political & latent groups?
- ▶ Large, latent groups, plagued by rational incentive to free-ride in procurement of public goods
- ▶ Olson (1965) defines latent groups as large groups without inducements/coercion needed to secure the resources needed to influence government action
- ▶ Example of latent group?
 - ▶ Migrant Farm Workers of 1960s
 - ▶ Civil Rights Organizations
 - ▶ LGBTQ Organizations
- ▶ Latent groups have political interests, but no way to prevent free-riding and often rely on voluntary contributions to fund their efforts

Small Group Advantage?

- ▶ Resources are ***non-cumulative***, what does this mean?
- ▶ Larger groups & more well-funded groups not necessarily more successful, given multiple points of access, group competition, & inherent status quo bias
- ▶ Is there a danger in representation given the inability of large groups with latent interests to overcome collective action problem?
- ▶ Small groups of interests, those that are able to monitor members to prevent free-riding, are privileged over large groups and are often better organized
- ▶ Gives rise to “special interests” that can either bind together as a coalition of small groups, seeking public goods at the expense of larger disorganized latent groups

Key Points:

- ▶ The *Pluralist Model of Representation* attempts to reframe Madison's ***Theory of the Republic*** by switching the mechanism of representation from elected officials to by-product of group representation
- ▶ All citizens are motivated by self-interest (social, economic, political) to join groups
- ▶ Group system is inclusive and self-correcting; with non-political groups dominating society
- ▶ Positive inducements key to giving groups resources to lobby for political representation & lobbying for public goods
- ▶ American Political System defined by ***multiple points of access*** for groups seeking policy influence
- ▶ Smaller groups better organized and able to offer positive inducements needed to gain resources for lobby than larger, latent groups