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?
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)
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.