

Interest Groups

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PLSC 1

Road map

- Types of Groups and Formation
- Tactics
- Do they have an effect?



Interest Groups

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of interest groups?

Collaborate!

Interest Groups

The Collective Action Problem

How do we solve problems collectively? How are people's interests expressed?

- Political parties - Broad
- Interest groups - Narrow

Interests

“... people and organizations who have a stake in an issue or are affected by it.” (Stone, 229)

Pluralism: The Cure for Faction?

- Theory that all interests are and should be free to compete to influence government
- Formation of groups is natural
- Form out of issue concerns
- Reflect distribution of interests in society

Nuclear Power

Who are the interests?





<https://www.youtube.com/embed/f6JPYkPaR3Q>

Problems with Pluralism?

- 1 Uneven distribution of resources
- 2 Barriers to collective action
- 3 Narrow interests = more success?
- 4 Who is NOT represented?

“The flaw of the pluralist heaven is that it sings with an upper-class accent.” – E.E. Schattschneider

Question

How do people with shared interests mobilize for action?

How Do Groups Form?

Rational Choice View

- Individual
- Selective
- Formed independently
- Rational Self-Interest
- What about free riding?

Political View

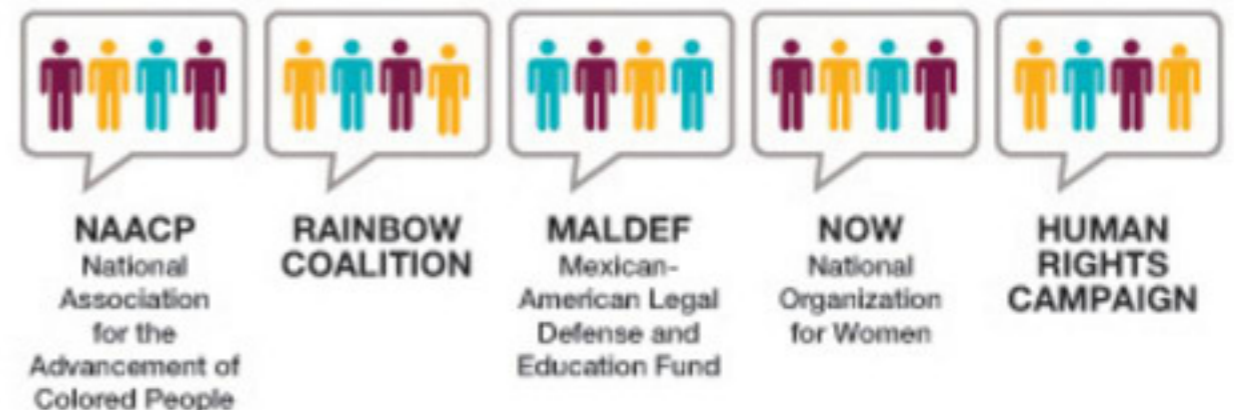
- Dynamic
- Social
- Elite-driven (inform us of our interests)
- Interests and issues define each other

Mobilization

- Lots of interests, not all are demanded
- Common interest + organization for influencing policy
- Selective benefits (free riding)
- Suppression of mobilization

Types of Interest Groups

- Professional, Trade, Unions
- Corporations
- Social Movements (peak organizations)
- Issue advocates



Tactics

Insider Tactics

- Raise money
- Establish relationships with legislators
- Provide information: political and technical
- Help develop legislative strategy
- Draft legislation

Outsider Tactics

- Designed to threaten political costs
- Marches, demonstrations, sit-ins
- Press conference
- Donations to opponents

Activity

Let's break into groups of 5 or so. Each group can choose whether it will be a consumer's advocacy group or a group representing utilities. You can only pick two tactics from the list on the previous slide due to funding limitations. What do you choose and why?

What is a Political Action Committee?

- Private group that raises and distributes funds for election campaigns
- Also run their own ads
- Distinct from interest groups and candidates, but can be affiliated with them

What Effect Do Interest Groups and PACs Have?

What Effect Do Interest Groups and PACs Have?

- No evidence for “best candidate money can buy”
- PACs exert only modest effect on legislators’ decisions
- Party ID, ideology, and district demands have larger effect on legislator behavior
- Money buys access, not necessarily influence
- Information has the biggest influence