

Comparing pluralist, hyperpluralist, elite, class, and traditional theory of gove...

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It is much easier to contrast the four contemporary theories of American democracy than to compare them, as pluralist, hyperpluralist, elite and class, and traditional theory each highlights the competitive foundation of politics. Each contemporary theory investigates the underlying question "Who governs our nation" yielding significantly different conclusions. While the pluralist theory emphasizes that politics is merely a competition among groups - a competition overwhelmingly controlled by the wealthy according to elite and class theory - hyperpluralism contends that these groups weaken the political backbone rather than support it. Pluralism and hyperpluralism are similar in that both agree that groups indelibly impact society and therefore the government by pressing their concerns through organized efforts, however they differ as to whether the impact is positive or negative, respectively.

Hyperpluralism also contrasts with elite and class theory stating that many groups - not just the elite ones - are so strong that the government is unable to act. It asserts that there are too many ways for groups to control policy, regardless of their organization, topic, or funding. Traditional democratic theory is composed of key principles that an ideal democratic process should consist of: voting must be representative, a population must participate, civic understanding, citizen control of agenda, and inclusion. The majority rule - in which the will of over half the voters is followed - guarantees equality, control, and inclusion, guaranteeing rights to those subject to the laws that follow the policy making process. A key aspect to the theory is equal representation from each citizen, which under hyperpluralist and elite

and class theory is thought of as endangered or nullified by the power of groups and the wealthy, respectively.

Pluralism suggests that democratic theory is successful because groups enable people to stand for a public issue as more than a solitary voice. In contrast, the recent explosion of group activity can be seen as a positive development from the perspective of pluralist theory, however, according to traditional democratic theory, our nation's decreased interest in voting (and by extension citizen control, equality, and specifically effective participation) would suggest that our system of government is actually declining.