

Poli 891
Fall 2011
Prof. Baumgartner

Questions for Week 2, Sept 12. Write a one-page paper on one of the topics below and use these topic questions to prepare for class discussion as you do the readings.

Readings: Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz, Riker, Walker-Dahl exchange.

1. Dahl's definition of power is perhaps the most widely cited of any, at least within American politics. (International relations scholars don't tend to use it.) Is it conceptually useful, that is, ignoring any measurement / observation problems?
2. Riker suggests at the end of his review that maybe we'd be better off just abandoning the concept of power. Discuss the pros and cons of his thinking on that.
3. Bachrach and Baratz make one of those arguments that everyone dutifully cites, then ignores. In fact, their article is the number one most cited article in the entire history of the APSR. Come to class with / describe in a few paragraphs each two serious proposals of how to design a study of the "second face" of power.
4. Walker did not really focus on Dahl in his initial article, but Dahl sure took it personal. Discuss the tone of that exchange, and the value of such things in the profession.
5. Walker's argument in some ways is that elite-pluralism, or what Dahl has called "polyarchy" is not really very deeply democratic. Discuss.
6. Do Bachrach and Baratz essentially make it impossible for any further empirical studies of power and influence to be done? Or does Riker effectively explain that, so it was not necessary for B&B to come along?
7. Is there any value in studying political science if we cannot measure power? Or is there a way to measure power that these authors did not find? Or is there value in political science even if we cannot measure such a basic variable?