

TAKE HOME EXAM #1

Joseph R. Diaz
Political Sociology
Dr. Bush
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Question #1: What is political power?

In order to adequately answer this question, one must first clarify some issues involving the definitions of political power. Marvin Olsen, in his book, Power in Societies, states a number of propositions involving the concept.

- 1) power is ubiquitous(all interactions involve power).
- 2) power is a social process involving two or more actors
- 3) power is a relationship
- 4) power is value-laden, often with unacknowledged assumptions.
- 5) power involves an actor A, that affects another actor, B, in some manner.
- 6) power is a generalized, rather than a limited capacity
- 7) the exercise of power necessitates overcoming resistance, because it is a reciprocal process among all participants, and it is it is rarely determined by a single actor, no matter how unequal the situation is.
- 8) organizations wield power more than individuals
- 9) for a person or entity to have power, it must have resources at its disposal,

The above list gives one a fairly reasonable idea as to what Olsen means by power. However, other theorists have their own definitions of the concept. I shall quickly give ~~the~~ other definitions ^{INCLUDED OLSEN'S DEFINITION,} posited by these theorists, and then move on to describe and define more minutely different types of power.

M. Olsen- Power is the ability to affect social activities.

S. Lukes- Power involves or exists when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests.

M. Weber- Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will de-

spite the resistance of others, regardless of the basis for that power.

B. Russell- Power is the production of intended effects.

R. Dahl- A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do what he otherwise might not.

T. Parsons- Power is a specific mechanism operating to bring about changes in the action of other units, individual or collective, in the process of social interaction.

Before classifying the different types of power, five issues need further elaboration.

1) Intentionality- Should the concept of power be limited to activities intended to attain a desired goal, or should it also be applied to activities whose effects on others are unintended and often indirect? According to Olsen, the answer to this question simply depends on the phenomena under study.

2) Latency- Power can be classified as either a) potential, (possession of resources and employment of them if desired), or b) active, (when resources are committed into action). A problem occurs here; how does one measure potential power?

3) Can social power be viewed as a positive factor in promoting organized social life, as well as a negative restriction? According to Olsen again, both sides of all power processes need explaining.

4) Balance-Assymetry- Is social power being exerted when both or all actors are equal in strength? According to Mills, inequality is a necessary precondition for any political activity. Olsen argues that the extent of power balancing is a separate question from the degree of resistance in any situation.

5) Distributive analysis of power systems versus development-
al analysis of power systems- a) the results of a distributive analy-
sis are structural explanations of currently existing power dis-
tributions or historical shifts in power arrangements- the relative
distribution of power among the actors in a system may vary, even
though the total amount of power remains constant. This is what is
known as the zero-sum notion of power; e.g., it is a finite resource.

b) According to the developmental an-
alysis, the total amount of power in a system can increase or de-
crease, while the relative distribution of power among the actors
remains stable- there is a focus on the total organization or sys-
tem. This is known as the positive -sum notion of power, where the
total amount of power is constantly varying so that all actors tend
to gain or lose together.

Finally in answering the question as to what power is, I shall
now describe the different analytical, ideal types of power.

The first type of power is what is known as force. According
to Olsen, to exert force, an actor must bring previously uncommit-
ted resources into the situation and either convert them into overt
pressure or at least convincingly threaten to do so. The power
wielder must invest new resources in the relationship beyond those
already employed, and be prepared to use them to back up his demands
and overcome resistance. The amount of force that any actor can use
at a given time is a finite resource, and is thus very costly. Ac-
cording to functionalist theorists, force is not power, because it
doesn't give a given subject any choice, and in the Parsonian def-
inition of power, the subject must have the ability to choose. How-
ever, according to Weber, force is a type of power, and may be at
the base of other kinds of power. Accordingly, conflict over norms

in society may bring about the use of force by the state. Arendt, another functionalist, states that force is not a good form of power because its effects are very short term. Force is not normatively acceptable, because as was already mentioned, it is a costly form of power, bringing upon the power wielder questions of legitimacy and resistance on the part of the subjects. Easton distinguishes between the threat of force, which may be seen as authority, and the actual use of force, where the individual is compelled to obey. The power wielder has to convince his subject that he is not only capable of applying force, but will do so if he has to.

The next type of power is what is called authority. Weber defines authority as the probability that commands from a given source will be obeyed by a given group. The source of the command is the most important factor here. Simply put, B has an obligation to obey A. This is so because as Olsen states, the actor who has power must be granted legitimacy by those subject to his directions. For Olsen, authority is the exercise of legitimacy, and is most commonly indirectly expressed, as one joins an organization, remains a member, and supports the actions of those who claim legitimacy. There exist four grounds on which authority rests. The first is what is called authority based on tradition or custom. An example of this type of authority is that held by the Pope or any monarch. The position is what is sanctified, usually on the grounds of divine right, and thus the person holding that position is also divinely blessed, to rule. The second kind of authority is charismatic authority. Here legitimacy is granted because of some kind of personal, exceptional quality in the leader. An example of a charismatic leader would be someone like John F. Kennedy or Mahatma Gandhi. The third kind of authority is called legal-

rational authority. Here, belief in the legality of the position is what is most important. Legal prerogatives are established through more or less rational agreements. A fourth type of authority rests upon the special expertise or knowledge required in certain situations. Power or authority is held by the individual because he has special abilities and skills relative to specific situations. Here, it is clear that knowledge^{itself} can be a form of power and authority.

The final types of power are often not really looked upon as ideal types of power. Many theorists classify them as sub-categories of some other type of power. I am referring here to what are known as persuasion and manipulation. Persuasion involves the changing of an opinion of an actor^F, usually through the use of persuasive rhetoric on the part of another actor. In manipulation, A hides something from B that could very well influence B's decision, attitude or behavior. Inherent in manipulation is a conflict of interest between the parties involved.

Finally, Olsen lists several sub categories of power that are really parts of other kinds of power. Here are a few definitions of terms that he has defined for us in his work.

- 1) Compensation- (utilitarian power) the power wielding actor provides others with desired objects or conditions in return for their compliance.
- 2) Deprivation-(coercive power)-occurs when the actor applies punishments or withholds expected benefits as a consequence of non-compliance.
- 3) Dominance- to exert it, an actor must effectively perform his usual roles and activities within an organization or social system, but he need not draw on additional resources. It involves an inter-dependency type or relationship.

Question #2.

In answering the question pertaining to the different views of interests and their very different conclusions regarding power distribution and exercise, I shall cite the issue of union organization among migrant farm workers, specifically the efforts of Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworker Union in California.

According to Isaac Balbus, in his article, "The Concept of Interest in Pluralist and Marxist Analysis," there are two very general types of interests, those that are subjective, and those that are objective. Subjective interests are those that fall under the individual's psychological state of liking something or having an interest in it. By this, we mean that the person is conscious of his desires for specific things. When we say that a person has an objective interest in something, we mean that he has a stake in it, or is somehow affected by it. In this sense, the individual doesn't have to be aware that he has an interest. Objective interests are not contingent upon any psychological state of mind of the individual. For Balbus, when a person is aware of his objective interests, he has consciousness. When a person is not aware of his objective interests, he either suffers from a lack of consciousness or from false consciousness. A lack of consciousness occurs, in situations in which a group is affected by something, but unaware of the effects, and thus inarticulate about them. False consciousness entails not being aware of the true effects of some decision, e.g. - perceiving something incorrectly.

In the struggle for unionization among migrant farm workers, Cesar Chavez had to deal directly with the problems of objective and subjective interests. It was clear to him that it was in the objective interest of the workers to organize. Unionization would provide them with adequate wages, better housing, and humane working con-

ditions. However, many of the workers were unwilling to strike, because they perceived ^{it} as being contrary to their subjective interests. For the migrant worker, ^{often} survival is all that really matters, and it becomes very difficult to deal with long term issues when one has a family to feed. It was Chavez's goal to get the people to see what their objective interests were, and to work from there. On the other side of the coin, the growers knew that it was in the objective interests of the laborers to organize; thus they did all they could to break up the fight for organization. Clearly, the growers knew their own subjective interests. Simply put, it was to get the most work out of the workers at the least amount of cost, thus increasing the amount of profit that they could pocket. To the growers, Chavez was a communist pig. To Chavez, the growers were capitalist pigs, uninterested in the plight of the working people.

Although I have simplified the issue, it is fairly clear that interests do play a major role in political and social issues, and the way one perceives those issues is very important. A

The question of interests is ultimately linked to the different views of power discussed in class and in Steven Lukes' book Power: A Radical View. First I shall summarize the three different views of power, along with the pros and con of each approach, and then apply those views to the farmworker issue. Hopefully, a better understanding of the whole power process and its relation to interests will then become ~~easier to understand.~~ clear

The first view of power, according to Lukes, is what is called the one-dimensional approach. In this view, there exists an observable, concrete decision to be made, with two or more sides to an issue. In ascertaining who has power in the situation, one looks to see which party prevails, as in an election. In this view, one looks

only at the subjective interests of the parties involved, the decision making process must be observable, actors must be aware of the conflict, and they must make a decision. If the issue doesn't come up into the political arena, then you have no way of measuring power.

The positive aspects of this approach include the fact that one can measure power as observable behavior, without having to make too many assumptions. However, this approach does not take into account the fact that power may take other forms other than observable behavior. In the two dimensional view, decision making and non-decision making are both involved and studied. Here the study of power allows for consideration of the ways in which decisions are prevented from being taken on as potential issues, over which there is an observable conflict of subjective interests, seen as embodied in expressed policy preferences and sub-political grievances. To summarize this view then, the two dimensional approach involves, first of all a qualified critique of the behavioral focus, and it focuses on the following:

- 1) decision making and non-decision making

- 2) issues and potential issues
- 3) observable (overt and covert) conflict
- 4) subjective interests, seen as policy preferences or grievances.

The positive aspects of this approach include the fact that potential issues are taken into account, as well as the way in which decisions are kept out of the political arena. However, this view still focuses on behavior, and it does not take into consideration the way in which power wielders may control their subjects by the control of societal institutions. Also, as Lukes suggests, the two dimensional view does not look at what he calls objective or real interests.

Turning to the three dimensional approach, one finds that it involves

a complete critique of the behavioral focus in measuring power. Here, the study of power focuses on 1) decision making and control of the political arena; 2) issues and potential issues; 3) observable (overt and covert) and latent conflict- control of the agenda; and finally, subjective and real interests. To summarize, using Lukes' own words; In summary, the three dimensional view of power involves a thoroughgoing critique of the behavioral focus of the first two views as too individualistic, and allows for the consideration of the many ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individual's decisions. This, moreover can occur in the absence of observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted. This potential, however, may never in fact be actualized. What one may have here is latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those wielding power and the real interests of those they exclude. These latter may not express or even be conscious of their interests, but the identification of those interests ultimately always rests on empirically supportable and refutable hypotheses. The positive aspects of the three dimensional approach are that it takes into account real interests and subjective interests, along with what are known as ideological manipulation and hegemony. However, the measurement of real or objective interests is very difficult. In fact, it ultimately involves a value judgment of the part of the theorists. This is so because in establishing a counter-factual, one does not really know what a party would have done given different circumstances until after the fact.

How may we observe/identify them?

Turning to the farmworker issue, using the one dimensional approach, the fact that the workers chose to be employed by the growers may be an important issue. Usually in the capitalist system, one has

the right to choose whether or not he wishes to be employed by someone or not. The growers could use this argument in refusing to hire union workers. However, the real issue at heart was over unionization. The workers had to decide whether or not they wanted a union. Power in the one dimensional view would be seen as fought over by the union and the growers, with the workers being pushed and pulled by both parties. In many cases, because of its success overall, the new union had more power, as when they won contracts. However, at other times it was the growers who had the power, as when they broke contracts or signed with the Teamsters Union. Power, then if seen in the one dimensional view, may ~~be~~^{switch} from one party to another, depending on the situation. What is looked at are observable wins-losses on both sides of the fence.

The two-dimensional view would also look at the issues that the one dimensional view looked at, but in addition it would also examine, how, up until the formation of the union, the growers kept unionization from being an issue. It would look at the scare tactics, for example, but it would also look at the way in which child labor laws were being broken and how children were being kept from their rights to an education. This example leads one to ~~postulate~~^{postulate} that the growers, if having employed the same migrant workers over a period of more than two generations, were consciously keeping the people from ~~access~~^{access} to knowledge and thus keeping them from understanding their economic plight. They were then, causing the people to make non-decisions about their lives in general.

The three-dimensional view would look at all the above, but it would examine more closely the actual way in which the growers, by virtue of their strength had the whole show under control until Chavez came along. The three dimensional view would also examine the structural framework in which the migrant worker lives and compare it to

to the luxury of the growers' lives. Historically, the Anglo has stolen the land from the people. In the three dimensional view this would be examined, as would the historical development of the migrant worker in relation to the transfer of power from the Californios to the Anglos to the large corporations that own the land today. Finally, the three dimensional view would look at the objective interests of the workers, to see whether unionization was in their favor or not.

In conclusion, each view tends to focus on important issues, but the two dimensional and three dimensional views each add important elements to the picture. Surely, the three dimensional view seems like the most thorough examination of the power process, but again it is often the most difficult to study because of the assumptions needed to be made when looking at power in this framework. One could go into a much deeper analysis of the total power processes involved in the farmworker issue. I admittedly have been biased in my assessment of the situation, but if one studies the situation from a three dimensional view, one should find a similar kind of process of manipulation on the part of those in power.

Structural determinism
U.S. meth. individualism?
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Question #4 In answering this question, I shall first go over the paradigms of the state posited by Alford, and then fit them with the three views of power described by Lukes.

Alford proposes three different paradigms of the state. These paradigms focus upon distinct social and political forces that shape the state and legitimate its actions; individuals and groups for the pluralist paradigm, bureaucratic organizations for the elite paradigm, and social classes for the class paradigm. Also, each paradigm gains its explanatory power by focusing upon a particular context of action; a situational context within which individuals and groups choose to mobilize to influence political decisions for the pluralist paradigm; an organizational context within which bureaucracies de-

ploy resources, for the elite paradigm, and a societal context within which social classes shape institutions that reinforce their rule, for the class paradigm.

The first paradigm is the pluralist paradigm. This model assumes that diverse groups and interests intermitently present demands to political parties and other elite coalitions that in turn aggregate and represent those demands to leaders and officials. In this context, the state is seen as a multiplicity of overlapping jurisdictions, each competing for more resources, manpower functions, and money. Each is linked to a private and public constituency and seeks to broaden its constituency to the maximum degree, while simultaneously retaining maximum autonomy. The issues entering the political arena for decision are relatively limited in number, scope and intensity, because they occur within the narrow boundaries of a fundamental consensus among all social groups on basic values and institutions embodying those values.

The second paradigm, the elite paradigm, assumes that large scale complex organizations tend to form in almost every sphere of social life. All interest groups that exist must themselves become part of the bureaucratic process. In this paradigm, the competition between organizational elites is held to be an essential requirement for democratic politics in societies dominated by industrial and political bureaucracies. Power is held by those who hold dominant positions within the organizations which control key resources. Finally, in this context the state is seen as a cluster of large scale organizations, each based upon a separate institutional sector, the elites of which have come to manipulate and control their political base, not the other

way around.

Finally, the class paradigm views neither the debates nor decisions occurring in pluralistic political arenas nor the battles of organizational elites to maintain their control over human resources as exhausting the crucial facts about the relations between the state and society. Both group interests and organizational elites are operating within a framework of economic appropriation and cultural hegemony that seldom challenges the principles defining the basic structure of the society. These principles guarantee the continued disproportionate allocation of the social product as well as its control to a relatively small portion of the society that constitutes the ruling class. Power is held by those classes benefitting from the structure of society in a given historical period.

To summarize the three views and relate them to the three dimensions of power, within the pluralist paradigm the core function of the state is to achieve consensus, and thus social order through continuous exchanges of demands and responses by social groups, ^{and} government and a continuous sequence of bargaining processes. Similar to this paradigm, the one dimensional view of power looks at the very processes that the pluralist paradigm explains. For example, within the pluralist model, what is looked at are the behaviors of those in society who are making demands to their governments, usually in the form of voting or lobbying. The process of analysis is very simple, for only observable behaviors that occur are studied.

The elite paradigm corresponds closely to the two dimensional view of power in that both deal with ways in which decisions are made and not made. Only in this context, the decisions are made within the context of bureaucracies. As was pointed out earlier, interest groups must have access or become part of the bureaucratic process itself in

order to have their demands heard. In this sense, then, those groups that are not allowed access or do not know how to enter the bureaucratic arena will not have their grievances heard. It follows then, that non-decisions are made in this way.

Finally, the class paradigm and the three dimensional view of power are similar in important ways, also. Both look at the total structure of society and the way that structure was made, and both look at the processes in which control is kept over the political arena and the goods of society, by those in power.

In conclusion, the three models of the state and the three views of power are closely linked. However, the distinctions are not that fine, and one could apply, for example the pluralist model to the two dimensional view of power if one so chose. Nevertheless, each paradigm and each dimension of power add their own special properties to the concept of power, and therefore each must be seen by itself and in *relation* to the other models.

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