

Bachrach P & Baratz M S. Two faces of power.
Amer. Polit. Sci. Rev. 56:947-52, 1962.
[Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA]

One face of power is participation in decision making, in resolution of political issues. The second face is the capability, primarily through manipulation of the prevailing mobilization of bias, to keep grievances about the current allocation of values from becoming political issues. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*[®] (SSCI)[®] indicates that this paper has been cited over 170 times since 1966.]

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"The joint effort that led to 'Two faces of power' and beyond began inauspiciously. Although each of us had read a substantial portion of the relevant literature and had added something to it, each was only semi-literate in the other's primary discipline; one was more interested in what 'ought to be' and the other in what 'is,' and each was inclined to defend stubbornly his positivist or normative predilections. Moreover, unlike so many other scholarly collaborators who join for the explicit purpose of producing published research, we formed our federation primarily to teach ourselves as well as our students. In other words, our initial objective copied that self-described by Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom¹ at the start of their collaboration in the late-1940s: we aim to teach one another enough about our respective disciplines so that either could thereafter teach the course alone.

"In the process of teaching the course the second time we decided to try to put on paper what we had learned in the classroom. In no period before or since that time

has either of us experienced such intellectual excitement, such joy of discovery. Prodding each other in and out of the classroom (often reducing our students to mere spectators), we formulated careful distinctions among power and its several correlates; enlarged and reformulated the concept 'mobilization of bias' as a principal source for nondecision making (which constitutes the 'second face of power'); and showed by reference to their own writing that pluralists such as Dahl and 'elitists' such as Floyd Hunter and C. Wright Mills had overlooked evidence that, because it confirmed the existence of both faces of power, denied their own conclusions.

"Beginning the day after commencement, we needed fewer than 30 calendar days to write the final version of the article. Most of its substance had already been assembled in our minds. To flesh out the argument we drew upon both the scholarly literature and our personal experience in the political microcosm that was Bryn Mawr College. One key illustration in the article is based upon what actually happened to one of us during a faculty meeting.

"We are unable to say with certainty why the article has attracted so much attention, although we felt certain when it was published that it would draw notice after the passage of a few years. That forecast proved accurate for a reason we could not predict: the middle- and late-1960s were a time of intense intellectual and political ferment at home and abroad. For many persons, covering a variety of political persuasions, 'Two faces of power' effectively explained certain events and, just as importantly, certain nonevents.

"Perhaps our greatest satisfaction about the article is that it provoked sharp criticism from pluralists (for example, the *American Political Science Review* thought it appropriate to publish criticisms of the article, all from a pluralist perspective, three different times, over the course of several years) and from the left by both Marxists and non-Marxists. From this body of criticism has evolved a deeper and more useful conception of political power, as is evidenced by Steven Lukes's *Power: A Radical View*² and John Gaventa's *Power and Powerlessness*.³

1. Dahl R A & Lindblom C E. *Politics, economics, and welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. p. xvi.

2. Lukes S. *Power: a radical view*. New York: Macmillan, 1974. 64 p.

3. Gaventa I. *Power and powerlessness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. 267 p.