Your notes

GCSE Sociology: revision notes

Power and authority

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Power and authority

- **Power** is the ability to get your own way, even against the resistance of others (Weber's definition).
- **Authority** is **power** that is seen as legitimate, so people accept it willingly. **Coercion** is power based on force.

Weber's types of authority

- **Traditional authority**: based on custom and tradition, such as a monarch.
- **Charismatic authority**: based on a leader's exceptional personal qualities, such as Martin Luther King.
- **Legal-rational authority**: based on rules and laws, such as a police officer or an elected politician.

Power in society

- **The state** (government, parliament, the civil service, the armed forces and the police) holds formal **power**.
- Other groups also hold **power**: pressure groups, trade unions, big businesses and the media.
- Feminists highlight patriarchy: men holding more **power** in the family, work and politics. Walby identified patriarchy in several areas of society, including paid work, the household and **the state**.

Key terms

Power	The ability to get your own way despite resistance.
Authority	Power seen as legitimate.
Coercion	Power based on force.
Traditional authority	Authority based on custom, such as a monarch.

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Charismatic authority	Authority based on a leader's personal qualities.
Legal-rational authority	Authority based on rules and laws.
The state	The organisations that govern a country.

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is authority?
2. What is coercion?
3. Which type of authority does a monarch have?
4. Which type of authority does a police officer have?
5. What is charismatic authority?
6. Who defined power as getting your own way despite resistance?
7. Which is part of the state?
8. Who identified patriarchy across several areas of society?

Answers

1. Power that is seen as legitimate
2. Power based on force
3. Traditional
4. Legal-rational
5. Authority based on a leader's exceptional qualities
6. Weber
7. Parliament
8. Walby

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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