



GSOC.ST4 Power and Authority

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.

- 1** Which term describes power that is widely accepted by those it is used over as right and legitimate?

- ☐ A) Coercion
☐ B) Authority
☐ C) Status
☐ D) Meritocracy

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define the term 'power' as used by sociologists.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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- 3** Max Weber identified different types of legitimate authority.

(a) Explain what Weber meant by 'traditional authority'. (2)

(b) Explain what Weber meant by 'charismatic authority'. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Weber also identified a third type of authority.

(a) Explain what Weber meant by 'legal-rational authority'. (2)

(b) Give one modern UK example of legal-rational authority, and explain your choice. (2)

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain the pluralist view of how power is distributed in society.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain C. Wright Mills' elite theory of power.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State one criticism that has been made of pluralism.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one criticism that has been made of Mills' elite theory.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 Marxist sociologists have offered different explanations of how the state operates in capitalist society.

(a) Explain Ralph Miliband's Marxist view of how the state operates in capitalist society. (2)

(b) Explain how Nicos Poulantzas' Marxist view of the state differs from Miliband's. (2)

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

10 Explain one strength and one weakness of Marxist explanations of power in society.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

11 Explain the difference between power and authority.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

12 Explain two reasons authority can be more stable than power based on force alone.

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

- 13** Explain two examples of organisations or groups in the UK today that pluralists would point to as evidence that power is spread across society.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

- 14** State one similarity between Weber's concept of authority and functionalist ideas about social order.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Explain two reasons why the type of authority a leader holds (traditional, charismatic or legal-rational) might affect how stable their power is over time.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** State one way legal-rational authority differs from charismatic authority.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

- 17** Explain two reasons the state might be seen as having significant power over ordinary citizens' lives.

(Total for Question 17 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST4 Power and Authority

Question 1

- **B1** B (authority)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies power as the ability of a person or group to get others to do something, even against their wishes or resistance (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists distinguish power from authority, where authority is power that is widely accepted as legitimate
- **Answer: Power is the ability of a person or group to get others to do something, even against their wishes; sociologists distinguish this from authority, which is power widely accepted as legitimate.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** identifies traditional authority as legitimate power based on long-standing customs or traditions, e.g. an inherited position such as a monarchy
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. people obey because 'this is how it has always been done', not because of a formal legal rule
- **(a) Answer: Traditional authority is legitimate power based on long-standing customs, such as an inherited monarchy; people obey because this is how things have always been done, not because of a formal rule.**
- (b) **B1** identifies charismatic authority as legitimate power based on the personal qualities of an individual leader, who is seen as having exceptional or inspiring qualities
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. this kind of authority depends heavily on the particular individual and can be harder to pass on to a successor
- **(b) Answer: Charismatic authority is legitimate power based on a leader's exceptional personal qualities; it depends heavily on that individual and can be harder to pass on to a successor.**

Question 4

- (a) **B1** identifies legal-rational authority as legitimate power based on formal rules, laws and procedures, e.g. an elected government or a bureaucracy
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. people obey the office or role, such as 'the Prime Minister', rather than the individual personally, and authority passes to whoever holds the role according to the rules
- **(a) Answer: Legal-rational authority is legitimate power based on formal rules and procedures; people obey the office or role, not the individual personally, and authority passes on according to the rules.**
- (b) **B1** identifies a genuine example, e.g. an elected Member of Parliament, a judge, or a police officer acting within their legal powers
- (b) **B1** explanation, e.g. their authority comes from the formal rules and procedures of their office, not from tradition or personal charisma
- **(b) Answer: An elected Member of Parliament: their authority comes from the formal rules and procedures of their office, not from tradition or personal charisma.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies that pluralists, such as the political scientist Robert Dahl, argued that power in democratic societies is spread among many different competing groups and interests, e.g. political parties, trade unions, businesses and pressure groups
- **B1** development, e.g. no single group dominates every area of decision-making, because different groups have influence in different areas
- **B1** identifies that this view sees democratic institutions, such as elections and a free press, as helping to prevent any one group holding all the power
- **B1** development, e.g. pluralists therefore see modern democracies as reasonably open to competing interests
- **Answer: Pluralists, such as Robert Dahl, argued power in democratic societies is spread among competing groups and interests; democratic institutions such as elections help prevent any one group holding all the power.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that Mills (1956) argued that real power in society is concentrated in the hands of a small, interconnected elite
- **B1** development, e.g. Mills identified this 'power elite' as coming from the top of political, military and large business institutions
- **B1** identifies that Mills argued this elite shares similar backgrounds and interests, and can co-ordinate its influence across these different institutions
- **B1** development, e.g. this challenges the pluralist view that power is widely and equally spread across competing groups
- **Answer: Mills (1956) argued real power is concentrated in a small, interconnected elite from the top of political, military and business institutions, sharing similar backgrounds and co-ordinating influence, challenging the pluralist view.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue pluralism can understate how unevenly resources such as money and organisation are spread between groups, giving some, such as large businesses, far more influence than others
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Critics argue pluralism can understate how unevenly resources such as money and organisation are spread between groups, giving some far more influence than others.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue it can be difficult to prove that elites in different institutions, such as political, military and business elites, really act together as a single, co-ordinated group, rather than sometimes competing with each other
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Critics argue it can be difficult to prove that elites in different institutions really act together as a single, co-ordinated group, rather than sometimes competing with each other.**

Question 9

- (a) **B1** identifies that Miliband (1969) argued the state tends to act in the interests of the capitalist ruling class because of shared social backgrounds, education and social ties between state officials and business elites
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. this is sometimes called an 'instrumentalist' view, seeing the state as effectively an instrument used by the ruling class
- (a) **Answer: Miliband (1969) argued the state acts in the interests of the capitalist ruling class due to shared backgrounds and ties between state officials and business elites, an 'instrumentalist' view.**
- (b) **B1** identifies that Poulantzas argued the state serves capitalist interests mainly because of its structural position within a capitalist economy, not because of the personal backgrounds or connections of the people running it
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. this means, for Poulantzas, the state would tend to act in the interests of capitalism even if the individuals running it had different personal backgrounds, unlike Miliband's emphasis on shared elite ties
- (b) **Answer: Poulantzas argued the state serves capitalism because of its structural position in a capitalist economy, not because of the personal backgrounds of officials, unlike Miliband's emphasis on shared elite ties.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. Marxist theories draw attention to how economic ownership can shape political power, which pluralism can underplay
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a genuine weakness, e.g. critics argue Marxist theories can understate how much genuine competition and change does occur within democratic political systems
- **B1** development
- **Answer: A strength of Marxist theories is drawing attention to how economic ownership shapes political power; a weakness is that they can understate how much genuine competition and change occurs within democratic systems.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies power as the ability to make others do something, which may or may not be seen as legitimate, and can rest on force or the threat of force
- **B1** identifies authority as power that is widely accepted as legitimate by those subject to it
- **B1** development, e.g. a robber has power over a victim during a robbery, but not authority, since the victim does not see this power as rightful
- **B1** further development, e.g. by contrast, a police officer directing traffic has authority, since their power is generally accepted as legitimate
- **Answer: Power is the ability to make others do something, which may rest on force; authority is power widely accepted as legitimate, e.g. a police officer directing traffic, unlike a robber, who has power but not authority.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. people who accept authority as legitimate are more likely to comply willingly, without needing to be constantly monitored or threatened
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. authority can be passed on through recognised procedures, such as an election or agreed succession rules, reducing conflict over who holds power, unlike power gained purely by force, which may invite challenge from other forceful groups
- **B1** development
- **Answer: Authority is more stable because people comply willingly without constant monitoring, and because it can be passed on through recognised procedures such as an election, reducing conflict, unlike power gained purely by force.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies one example, e.g. trade unions, which can represent workers' interests and influence employers or government
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different example, e.g. pressure groups or charities that campaign on specific issues and can influence public policy or public opinion
- **B1** development
- **Answer: Trade unions can represent workers' interests and influence employers or government; pressure groups or charities that campaign on specific issues can influence public policy or opinion.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both suggest that widely accepted rules or values help hold society together and make it function smoothly, rather than relying only on force
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Both suggest that widely accepted rules or values help hold society together and make it function smoothly, rather than relying only on force.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. traditional authority may be very stable as long as customs are respected, but can be challenged if traditions are questioned or if there is no clear traditional line of succession
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. charismatic authority depends heavily on one individual's personal qualities, so it can be less stable in the long term and difficult to pass on to a successor without formal rules
- **B1** development
- **Answer: Traditional authority can be stable while customs are respected but is vulnerable if traditions are questioned; charismatic authority depends on one individual, making it harder to pass on without formal rules.**

Question 16

- **B1** identifies a genuine difference, e.g. legal-rational authority is attached to a formal office or role and continues regardless of who holds it, while charismatic authority depends on the personal qualities of a particular individual leader
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Legal-rational authority is attached to a formal office and continues regardless of who holds it, while charismatic authority depends on a particular individual's personal qualities.**

Question 17

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. the state can make and enforce laws that citizens are required to follow, backed by institutions such as the police and courts
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. the state can also collect taxes and provide or withhold services, such as benefits, giving it significant influence over people's economic circumstances
- **B1** development
- **Answer: The state can make and enforce laws through the police and courts, and can collect taxes and provide or withhold services such as benefits, giving it significant influence over citizens' lives.**