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SKU: 9781483373973-TEST-BANK

Social Inequality in a Global Age, Fifth Edition

CHAPTER 2
The Great Debate

TEST ITEMS

Part I. Multiple-Choice Questions

1. According to Lenski, early radical social reformers included
   a. the Hebrew prophets *
   b. the Egyptian pharaohs
   c. the Roman Senate
   d. the Hindu priests

2. Confucius believed that the people should
   a. respect rightful authority *
   b. question authority
   c. follow the Tao rather than the emperor
   d. refuse to serve in the military

3. Lenski places Plato as a radical, for in Plato's ideal republic the rulers are superior to the masses only in
   a. income
   b. wealth
   c. power *
   d. property

4. Radical Christian reformers argued that
   a. God favors and honors the poor *
   b. kings rule by divine right
   c. God gave all power to the Pope
   d. riches are a sign of God's favor

5. Marx contends that under capitalism, a society's class structure becomes:
   a. more egalitarian with more opportunity
   b. more complex with many levels
   c. more polarized into two classes *
   d. more based on prestige than property

6. Karl Marx's theories emphasized:
   a. social class and class conflict *
   b. supply and demand
   c. goods and services
   d. the role of personal prestige

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7. Marx maintained that all history was the history of
   a. capitalist accumulation *
   b. great ideas
   c. class conflict
   d. proletariat revolutions

8. Marx believed that socialist revolutions had not yet occurred because industrial workers were
   a. not yet fully class conscious *
   b. not yet alienated from their work
   c. not yet fully exploited
   d. not yet working for subsistence wages

9. According to Marx, the new class that emerges with industrial capitalism is:
   a. the peasantry
   b the patricians
   c. the plebeians
   d. the proletariat *

10. According to John Cassidy in *The Return of Karl Marx*, Marx's correct predictions included
   a. the fall of the Soviet Union
   b. growing problems in the operation of capitalism *
   c. the rise to economic power of the Pacific Rim countries
   d. communist uprisings in the advanced capitalist countries

11. Ralf Dahrendorf contended that the real issue in class conflict was not property but
   a. wealth
   b. prestige
   c. authority *
   d. wages

12. For Max Weber, social honor within a community determines one's
   a. class
   b. privilege
   c. party
   d. status *

13. Max Weber was particularly concerned about how one's position in society affected one's
   a. health
   b. life chances *
   c. voting patterns
   d. class consciousness

14. Max Weber noted that privileged, powerful, and prestigious groups often seek

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a. revolutionary change
b. democratic reforms
c. social closure *
d. a greater division of labor

15. For Emile Durkheim, an important element in modern social solidarity is
a. good government
b. class consciousness
c. improved life chances
d. the division of labor *

16. Conflict theory is rooted in the work of
a. Karl Marx and Max Weber *
b. Emile Durkheim and Adam Smith
c. Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton
d. John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau

17. Conflict theorists differ from functionalists in that they believe stratification:
a. serves the interests of powerful groups rather than all of society *
b. has changed in its form over the course of time
c. was most extreme in traditional societies and has declined over time
d. is multidimensional in nature

18. Davis and Moore argue that social stratification is functional for society because it provides for
a. greater equity
b. less alienation
c. greater participation
d. greater motivation *

19. Gerhard Lenski called his synthesis of conflict and functionalist theories:
a. class differentiation theory
b. ecological-evolutionary theory *
c. world systems theory
d. structural privilege theory

Part II. True/False Questions

20. Ancient philosophers were all in agreement about one basic idea, that inequality was good and right for society. F

21. Hebrew prophets denounced abuses of wealth, even at risk of angering kings and rulers. T

22. Jesus preached that wealth was a sign of blessing from God. F

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23. Muhammad told his followers that the freedoms women of his day enjoyed were wrong, and they should be more restricted in their activities. F

24. Confucius (Kong Fuzi) taught that people should obey and respect rightful authority. T

25. Medieval European kings believed that their right to rule came from the consent of the people. F

26. John Locke argued that the authority of rulers comes from the consent of the governed. T

27. Karl Marx contended that human history was the history of class struggle. T

28. Karl Marx believed that conflict was part of human nature, and all societies would always have class conflict and warfare. F

29. Functionalists have argued that inequality is necessary for the smooth functioning of economy and society. T

30. Conflict theorists believe that inequality serves the interests of powerful groups. T

Part III. Short-Answer Questions (2 items)

31. List four historical proponents of the "conservative thesis" that inequality is right and proper.
Ans: Select from: Code of Hammurabi, Hindu caste system, Confucius, Aristotle, Apostle Paul, medieval theology, John of Salisbury, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Adam Smith, Gaetano Mosca, social Darwinism, functionalism.

32. List four historical proponents of the "radical antithesis" that inequality is wrong and destructive.
Ans: Select from Hebrew prophets, Lao Tzu, the Buddha, Plato, Jesus, James brother of Jesus, desert fathers, St. Francis of Assisi, Waldensians, Anabaptists, Levellers, Gerrard Winstanley, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Max Weber, conflict theory.

Part IV. Essay Questions (3 items)

33. What arguments have been offered in support of the social benefits of inequality, and what counterarguments have been offered to challenge these supposed benefits? How have these arguments formed the basis of conflict and functionalist views of social inequality?

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Ans: Arguments in support of inequality have ranged from theological arguments that an unequal social order reflects the design of heaven or the will of God to sociological arguments that inequality provides social order, motivation to work hard and achieve, and a way to ensure that the most talented are recognized and rewarded. Arguments against inequality or great inequality have included religious and philosophical arguments that all are created equal, have equal rights and dignity, and that inequality is oppressive and exploits the poor. Sociological arguments against inequality build on these to argue that inequality suppresses talent, alienates poor workers, rewards greed, and deprives the poor of the means and the motivation to use their abilities productively.

34. In what ways are Marx and Weber in agreement on the causes and nature of social inequality? In what ways do their views of stratification and class formation differ?
Ans: Both are conflict theorists who see powerful groups trying to maintain and extend their privilege. For Marx, the key factor is ownership of the means of production; wealth is power, and the wealthy use their economic power to dominate the government and social ideology. For Weber, power is multifaceted and also includes struggles to dominate political access and to monopolize high-status positions.

35. Is social inequality desirable for society? Defend your view with arguments from historical and sociological viewpoints discussed in the chapter.
Ans: Students arguing "yes" should be able to draw on the "conservative thesis" arguments from early philosophers up to structural-functional theorists and neoconservative economists. Students arguing "no" should begin with "radical" philosophers and religious thinkers and continue to a range of conflict theorists, perhaps including Marxist and feminist thought.

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