**Chapter Exercises**

**Chapter 7: Social Class and Inequality in the United States**

1. Work with a group of classmates to construct a basic, needs-oriented budget for a family of a specified size (for example, 2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children) for a month. Consider the estimated cost of rent or a mortgage, transportation, communication, food, clothing, school supplies, electricity, and so forth. When you have created an estimated budget, multiply it by 12 to determine how much your hypothetical family would need to meet its basic needs for a year. Compare your calculation with the government’s poverty threshold. Do your calculations suggest that the government’s estimate of what a family needs to cover basic needs is too low, too high, or about right?
2. Using the online version of a national newspaper such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, do a keyword search for “income inequality” (both sites provide a search engine). Choose an article or two and read it carefully. Does the article highlight any of the trends discussed in the chapter? Does it offer something new on the topic that was not covered? Share your findings with a classmate or the group or write a paragraph to situate your findings in the context of the chapter material on income inequality.
3. Carefully read the *Inequality Matters* box on the minimum wage and organize a debate on the topic. Begin by determining the national and state minimum wage. Some students should research arguments advocating a rise in the minimum wage, while others should research arguments against raising the minimum wage. While the debaters discuss the issue, others should observe and take notes. Assuming the role of decision makers at the state or national level, the observers should assess the arguments and come to a decision, offering justification for their choice to raise or retain the existing minimum wage.
4. Make a map of the town and city surrounding your college or university. Mark on the map all the places where you can get food of any kind. For each of these food locations, add a symbol if that location provides “competitively priced, healthy, and fresh food.” Are there any food deserts in your community? Are these two types of food places equally distributed? How well does public transportation in your community provide people the opportunity to shop at the locations providing “competitively priced, healthy, and fresh food?” Why do you think there are or are not food deserts in your community versus other communities?
5. With a group of your peers, each make a list of your personal statuses, both ascribed and achieved. Compare your lists. Which of your statuses carry the most influence? In what type of situations do your statuses matter more or less? Do you get advantages or disadvantages versus your peers based on your statuses?