**Chapter Exercises**

**Chapter 12: Education and Society**

1. Think about movies or television programs you have watched that portray college lifeand *college students*. Together with a small group, put together a list of characteristics of college students that media portrayals convey. Focus in particular on the demographic characteristics of the students shown. To what degree are media portrayals of college students today accurate representations of real life students? How do they differ?
2. Survey 8–10 students in your Sociology class or other classes about their family’s educational history: How many students have two parents who completed college? How many have one parent who completed college? How many are the first in their family to attend college? (You may add other questions you think are useful as well.) Share your results with other students in the class and discuss whether and in what ways parental educational attainment is a good predictor for children’s educational attainment. What does sociological research show? What argument would you make?
3. In many states, public schools are still funded primarily by local property taxes. This has historically translated into unequal funding for schools in well-off and poorer areas. Should this means of funding schools be changed? Prepare a discussion on this issue, attending in particular to arguments for maintaining local funding for local schools and for equalizing funding by distributing funds from the state or federal level.
4. Based on the chapter, make a list of the main reasons students drop out of college before completing a degree. Working with a small group, create two short but specific policy proposals that could be used to address the problem; write one proposal that addresses the issue at a school level and one that addresses the issue at a state or federal government level. Be sure that your proposals directly address the sociological roots of the problem.
5. The functionalist perspective argues that one of the primary functions of school is to foster social solidarity by promoting the development of shared norms and values. The conflict perspective argues that schooling has been primarily used to replicate existing social order rather than to challenge social inequality and as a result schools have perpetuated social conflict. In the United States, school curriculum decisions have historically been largely decentralized with elected state and local officials developing curriculum standards for the students under their jurisdictions. This is a very different model than in many other countries where curricular decisions are nationalized and made by a panel of educational professionals. Compare and contrast these two models of curriculum standards from both a functionalist and conflict perspective. Which model is more likely to create social solidarity? Which is more likely to perpetuate the existing social order?
6. With a group of peers discuss the extracurricular activities (clubs, sports teams, arts groups, debate team, etc.) you participated in during junior high and high school. What did your school say were the manifest functions, educational and otherwise, of these activities? What were the latent purposes of these activities? Did these manifest and latent functions support or interfere with the larger manifest and latent functions of schooling more generally?