1. A substantial body of research documents an association between family structure and children’s educational attainment. Describe at least two major explanations for this association and present evidence to support each.

2. One of the key sections of No Child Left Behind calls for the cultivation of parental involvement in education as a tool for improving American schools and, in particular, for reducing achievement gaps related to poverty and race/ethnicity. Based on the sociological, economic, and psychological research, argue whether this is a good idea or a foolish one? The evidence of the benefits of parental involvement is certainly extensive, but is it sound? If yes, then defend that literature. If no, what more needs to be done to make it sound?

3. Arguably one of the most dramatic effects of education is on gender equality on a global level. Discuss this assertion and consider the consequences for marital and family roles and relationships.

4. Increasingly, schools are considered the institution where children are socialized for adult roles so that they can be productive citizens. Consider how schools as compared to families contribute to (a) social reproduction of inequality, and (b) to reducing social inequality. Choose at least two forms of inequality—racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, or gender—to discuss.

5. In the educational system, the rich get richer, with the children of high SES parents having a competitive edge in school that allows them to get more out of school than their peers with low SES parents. Part of this edge comes from their parents’ efforts to control the educational process, part of it comes from differential treatment by school personnel, part of it comes from their abilities to work the system in their favor. Explain each of these factors and how they come together to reproduce socioeconomic inequality in the early years of the educational system. Be sure to give specific examples of what parents, teachers, and kids do to contribute in concrete ways to this reproduction.