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CHAPTER 13 QUESTIONS

1. Why are industrialized societies more likely to become credentialized societies? What are both some pros and cons to a 'credential society'?

I think that industrialized societies are more likely to become credentialized societies because as a society becomes more and more industrialized and advanced, the requirements for a larger portion of its jobs become harder and more specialized. By requiring a credential or certificate as a minimum bar to entry, an employer with any position requiring more than basic skills knows that the applicants already have a slew of basic skills, such as math, writing, perseverance, a good attendance record, and so on - all the things that it takes to get a college degree or certificate. This reduces the need for employers to do all the training required on the job. Employers are able to reasonably expect credentialed applicants to be ready for advanced or specialized training that would build upon their college or university experience. For example, a person wanting to work as a mechanical or civil engineer requires a lot of on the job training, but that training expects a working knowledge of drafting, materials science, math and english. A serious con is that aptitude for a certain type of job does not mean that the person has an aptitude for a traditional method of learning that material. For example - Software Engineers are often self-taught and learn far more via their own methods than are taught in the classroom. Creative thinkers, artists and graphic designers may chafe at the ordered requirements of a standard classroom or degree program.

2. What is "mainstreaming?" Do you think that schools should practice mainstreaming? Why or why not - discuss pros and cons of this practice.

"Mainstreaming" is the inclusion of special-needs students into regular classrooms and school activities. I definitely think that mainstreaming should be practiced by all schools. I am of the opinion that a great deal of bullying and mistreating of special-needs and disabled kids comes from fear, and often that is a reflection of something unknown. After spending time with a disabled student, other students may become more comfortable with them, removing some of the fear, and therefore, less bullying. The cons of mainstreaming can be weighty, especially if the student has major behavioral problems. This can lead to frequent disruptions in the class, and causes a heavier workload for the teacher and aides. This can also lead to increased teacher turnover.

3. What role does religion play in our society? Why do sociologists study religion and religious practices?

Religion plays many roles in our lives and in society. They can help form a person or group's belief structure, their morals, give them emotional comfort and form a basis for relationships with other people. Sociologists study religion and religious practices because different religions and beliefs can have great impacts (both positive and negative) on society and the individual's role in it. For example, there is no lack of religious symbols (for example, a crucifix, or statue of Buddha), and a symbolic interactionist would want to study the meanings that an individual might derive from them.

4. Is there any evidence to suggest that science could replace religion in its ability to answer the 4 main concerns most people address through religion: the existence of God, the purpose of life, morality, and the existence of an afterlife.

I don't believe there is evidence to suggest that science could replace religion in all 4 of these areas. Two of them (The existence of God, existence of an afterlife) are currently unprovable, and in fact, religious belief surrounding these items require faith - which is nearly an opposite of proof - if something can be proved, there is no need to "believe" in it. The other two are very subjective, and while science can have a basic impact on them, I don't think that it could stand as a replacement. The first - "the purpose of life" - is an individual choice. Some people choose to do one thing, and others choose differently. Science may be able to analyze a person and suggest something that they may be good at and enjoy, but that is far from finding meaning in life. The last item - "morality" can certainly be influenced by science. Evidence proves that some acts carry repercussions, but the choice of action because of the possibility of punishment is not necessarily a *moral* choice. It could merely be a logical choice. People may make illogical, illegal choices that are still moral (from their point of view) - For example - cult Mormons who practice polygamy because they truly believe it to be a religious commandment.