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Jean Anyon: Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work

Jean Anyon's 1980 article, "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" claims that different social classes receive different education. She suggested that a "practical"

curriculum is being taught, and explains how the different social classes are affected in different

ways. There is a claim that "working class schools" have teachings that are limited to a need-to-

know basis. While middle class Schools" have teachings that are a step up from the "working

class school" they're not withheld from as much education. Furthermore, she suggests that

social-classes are being "rewarded for classroom behaviors that correspond to personality

traits" desired for different types of occupations. Anyon, goes on to claim that "Elite Schools" are receiving the best education and

stand to gain social power and reward from this. Now while there is no hard proof of these

claims, there is some evidence to show she may have been on to something.

Although Anyon talks about "power of class" there has been people who have broken through

the cycle. Look at the former 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama. Research tells

us that he didn't come from an elite background. In fact, Barack Obama ended up living with

his grandparents while attending the 5th grade. This was after leaving Hawaii to move to

Indonesia with his mother, joining her new husband. He bounced back and forth from public

schools to private schools, but in the end, he graduated from Harvard Law in 1991. So, there are

cases of the cycle being broken, but I do see where Anyon was going with this.

In my personal experience, I have received education from both private schooling and public schooling. While I won't say the names of the places I went or mention Professors or teachers by name, I will say they are different in more than one way. For example, looking back at my private school teachings, I learned things like Aviation. Where we would have a computer simulator that taught us how to fly a plane, as well as a teacher teach us the different parts and functions of the plane out the textbook. There were teachers that had been in the War and on Navy ships who taught my History and Social Studies class. I also had a basketball coach from the Harlem Globetrotters who taught me how to play ball. It seemed to me that the teachers really wanted me to learn and made sure they did everything they could to help me as long as I was helping myself. Now, let's jump to public school education. It wasn't quite the same.

No aviation class was offered. Teachers didn't serve in the military and really didn't have as much interest if I succeed or not. At least that's what it seemed to me! I remember not liking a few of my classes my sophomore year and the school allowed me to switch and have 3 P.E. classes in one day. So here is what my day looked like, go to school, Play, Play, Lunch, Play, Science! Not the quite the same, is it? I can relate to what Anyon is saying because the private school education I received cost my family \$30,000 a year vs. the free education I received in public school. While I was going over Anyon's writings, a few things caught my attention and generated a

few questions in my head, for example, is this theory of idea of education being taught differently

amongst different social classes still exist today? My opinion would be yes, just from the education I have received and my surroundings at the time. Next question would be what

happens to the elite child that fails? Or the “working class child that isn’t suited for their education’? This makes me ask why would someone want the education system to fail so many people? So, let me get this straight, no one caught on to this enough to spark a real investigation? Anyon says there has been “little or no attempt” to investigate this idea in this Country. But, there have been some people asking questions and writing articles to make the mind wander a bit, like Matthew Malady who wrote a piece on the SAT and stated, “a single part of the test can keep people out of a school.” Mind you the SAT is timed, no scratch paper allowed for ideas, and the grading concept behind it is flawed. Oh boy, is that beyond flawed, the SAT makes up to 30 percent of the total writing grade. Seems like an unfair advantage, wouldn’t you say? Basing someone’s education level or intelligence on the basis of one writing? To me it seems like the concept of rich getting rich and poor getting poorer. But this? Not even a fighting chance for some huh? The biggest flaw I see, is you have so many things in the world that need attention and the education is being withheld. Take Cancer research for an example; how many cures are yet to be found? Tons, too many to count. We could have more people working on these things. Instead, children are being held back from knowing their full potential and exploring those opportunities! Or so it seems huh? Maybe the teachers from lower class schools are receiving less money than those at top schools or universities? Maybe that has something to do with the way the teaching is going on? One thing is for certain, there are too many questions unanswered for this not to spark some questions. In my opinion, we need answers. I believe all the kids deserve the same opportunities to learn. I’m inclined to agree with Jean Anyon, and Matthew Malady on a lot of points they

made, especially after reading what I read, experiencing both sides of the social class and asking the same questions as other around the world, without getting straightforward answers. One would almost have to, right?

Works Cited

Malady, Matthew J.X. "We Are Teaching High School Students to Write Terribly." *Slate Magazine*. N.p., 10 Oct. 2013. Web. 25 May 2017.

Anyon, Jean "The Journal of Education" 1980

"Early Life and Career of Barack Obama." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 22 May 2017. Web. 25 May 2017.

Fine work. It's complex, lively, and identifies a problematic issue. I'm really impressed with the ability to develop your claim. Everything is tied together, and the whole thing has a real progression. Don't worry about all the small "corrections" I made; those are easy touchups. The very difficult job of developing an idea, having a voice, etc. May I use this as an example in class?