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### Summary Paper

The American education system can vary greatly based on the social economic class of the student. In Jean Anyon's essay "From Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" she talks about what these schools look like at each social class level. This article was first published in the Journal of Education in 1980. Jean Anyon was a social activist and a professor of education policy at the City University of New York. Anyon's main audience when writing this essay is professional educators.

In Anyon's essay "From Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" Anyon discusses how typical schools differ in work, academics, and classroom management at each social class level.

Anyon looked at the characteristics of five schools in her essay. The first two schools she calls "working-class schools." Working class schools are located in blue-collar communities with most of the workforce being unskilled. The poverty rate hovers around 15% in these communities and most of the families make below \$12,000 per year (remember the essay was written in 1980.) The middle-class schools are a mixture of the social classes. Most of the workers have white-collar jobs and income range from \$13,000 to \$25,000. Affluent professional

schools are the next tier up from the middle-class schools. The people in these communities can be called “the capitalist class” while others are hard working middle-class people that worked their way up. Lastly, the executive elite schools are where the children of executives of large corporations and enterprises go to school. This represents the top 1% of families in the country.

Work in the working-class schools is based on following directions and procedures. The teacher doesn't usually explain to the students why the work is being assigned, how the work might connect to other assignments, or the reason for why the steps they follow are the way they are. Textbooks are not always used and the notes are expected to be copied down from the board and studied. Work is graded based on whether the right steps were followed, not if the answer is right or wrong.

In math class the students are told what steps to follow to solve the problem but are not told why they are solving the problem in the first place and why the steps are put in place the way they are. English class in the working class school lacks creativity but instead focuses more on mechanics such as punctuation. The students also lack creative thinking as a teacher says “simple punctuation is all they’ll ever use.” In social studies, work is assigned with little explanation or connections. Students copy the teacher’s notes from the board and don’t tend to use a textbook even though there is a copy available.

In the classroom the teacher makes decisions without asking the student’s opinion. There were no clocks in the classroom and the teacher would occucally ignore the bells and would hold students in the class after the period ended.

“In the middle-class school, work is getting the right answer. If one accumulates enough right answers, one gets a good grade.” The reading talks about how getting the right answer

involved following directions which required making good choices. Most of the lessons are based on the textbooks. The students tend not to be excited about the school work.

In Math class the teacher is interested in how the student got the answer to the problem and encouraged students to show work and not to do the problem in their head. In Social Studies class students are expected to read the textbook and the assignments assigned were meant to check to make sure the student had read it. In English class most of the lessons were, again, based on the textbook. Students also learn basic writing skills and vocabulary.

The classroom styles of the teachers differ in the middle-class school. The teachers always honor the bells and there are less rules and regulations put on the students compared to the working-class schools.

The affluent school is primary for students above the middle-class. Work in affluent schools is based on creativity. Creativity is shown with individual thoughts and expressions through essays, illustrations, and recreations. Students in this school occasionally interact with students in other grades.

In math class, each student fills out a data sheet number the amount of possession in each category so the student can calculate the class average. Calculators are available to the students and the work is verified by a fellow classmate before it is handed in to the teacher. The instructor freely criticizes work and provides feedback. English class emphasizes the creativity aspect in the school. The students learn about past civilizations and are encouraged to make recreations for these cultures. In Social Studies, the students are always introduced to events in the news on a daily basis. The teacher makes connections between events. Students are encouraged to express their opinion on topics in the form of creative writing. In Science class, the work is mostly hands

on so the students can better understand the topics they are learning. Getting the answer right or wrong doesn't matter. The work of the students in the class is valued greatly among students and their instructor.

When measuring classroom management in the affluent school there are few rules put on the students. Students are allowed to leave the classroom at any time to use the restroom or to go to the library. However, only three are allowed out at a time and there are no hall passes. The students sign their name on the chalkboard and they are free to leave the classroom.

In the executive elite school, work is met to be intellectually challenging. "schoolwork helps one to achieve, to excel, to prepare for life." Work mainly includes problems and is done with interactions with other students.

In math class getting the right answer is important, however it's not usually the teacher that says that answer is wrong, it's the other students in the class. The teacher says "don't be afraid to say you disagree" to the students. In social studies work usually involves reading and analyzing concepts and sometimes even research. They talk about mistakes of past civilizations and compare leaders then to the leaders now. English in the executive elite school is about advanced grammar and sentence structure. The teacher emphasizes the importance of using the skills learned outside the classroom "It is not enough to get these right on tests; you must use what you learn in your written and oral work."

In the executive elite school, there are no bells to signal the end of a period. The kids are independent and took things that they needed from the closet and even the teacher's desk. They do not need to sign out then leaving the classroom.

In Anyon's conclusion she writes about the impacts each of the schools have on the students. She mentions that it can impact their development and their ability to build relationships and can ultimately lead to them remaining in their social economic class for another generation.

Anyon's essay was interesting for many different reasons. It was interesting to make personal connections with our educational experience to her essay. Many people can interpret her writing differently based on how they grow up and where they went to school. Something that may have stood out to the reader is how social interactions between students in learning increases as the wealth of the community increases. This helps students build connections with one another from an early age which could ultimately lead to better success in the workforce. Another thing that readers may notice is that the hands-on learning experience and connections between real life and learning increases as the wealth of the schools increases. These connections help students to be engaged and interested in what they are learning. It will also help students apply what they learn in school to the real world. Overall, after reading Anyon's essay I do believe that where you go to school can have any generational impact on your wealth and a lifetime impact on your personality although the magnitude may vary.