

An annotated version of the abstract from

Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work

by Professor *Jean Anyon*.

Scholars in political economy and the sociology of knowledge have recently argued that public schools in complex industrial societies like our own make available different types of educational experience and curriculum¹ knowledge to students in different social classes. Bowles and Gintis for example, have argued that students in different social-class² backgrounds are rewarded for classroom behaviors that correspond to personality traits allegedly³ rewarded in the different occupational strata⁴--the working classes for docility⁵ and obedience, the managerial classes for initiative⁶ and personal assertiveness⁷.

Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michael W. Apple focusing on school knowledge, have argued that knowledge and skills leading to social power and

¹ **Curriculum** - the regular or a particular course of study in a school, college, etc.

² **Social-class** - a broad group in society having common economic, cultural, or political standing.

³ **Allegedly** – According to what is declared or stated to be true; supposedly.

⁴ **Strata** – Plural of *stratum* – *in sociology*, a level or grade of a people or population with reference to social position, education, etc.: *the lowest stratum of society*.

⁵ **Docility** – The ability to be handled or managed easily.

⁶ **Initiative** –readiness; taking action; enterprise

⁷ **Assertiveness** – confidence, aggressiveness.

regard⁸ (medical, legal, managerial) are made available to the advantaged social groups but are withheld from the working classes to whom a more "practical" curriculum is offered (manual skills, clerical knowledge⁹). While there has been considerable argumentation of these points regarding education in England, France, and North America, there has been little or no attempt to investigate these ideas empirically¹⁰ in elementary or secondary schools and classrooms in this country.

This article offers tentative¹¹ empirical support (and qualification¹²) of the above arguments by providing illustrative examples of differences in student *work* in classrooms in contrasting social-class communities. The examples were gathered *as* part of an ethnographical¹³ study of curricular, pedagogical¹⁴, and pupil¹⁵ evaluation practices in five elementary schools. The article attempts a theoretical contribution as well and assesses student work in the light of a theoretical¹⁶ approach to social-class analysis . . . It will be suggested that there is a "hidden curriculum" in schoolwork that has profound implications for the theory - and consequence - of everyday activity in education.

⁸ **Regard** (n) – respect or esteem, or deference.

⁹ **Clerical knowledge** – Skills related to office work, such as copying, filing, typing, recording.

¹⁰ **Empirical** – Able to be proven by experience or experiment.

¹¹ **Tentative** - done as a trial, experiment, or attempt; experimental.

¹² **Qualification** - modification, limitation, or restriction.

¹³ **Ethnographical** – pertaining to a branch of anthropology dealing with the scientific description of individual cultures.

¹⁴ **Pedagogical** – Related to *pedagogy* - the art or science of teaching; education; instructional methods.

¹⁵ **Pupil** – Student.

¹⁶ **Theoretical** - of, pertaining to, or consisting in theory; not practical.

Questions for reflection – Answer each of the following in the form of complete sentences which stand on their own. Do not answer in a fragment.

1) What are some of the recent arguments about the abstract's subject which are cited by the author? (Summarize each below. If you use *direct quotes* from the abstract's language, be sure to place those words in quotation marks.):

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

2) According to the author, what is the reason this particular study is needed? (Paraphrase – Put this in your own words.)

3) What does the author say are the *limitations* of the study?

4) What does the author indicate is *found* by the study?

*For the following questions, work on a separate sheet of paper. You may respond to one or more question, and write up to a paragraph on each one. If you reference a reading, be sure to **cite your source** – say how you know what you are writing.*

- 5) What are the *implications* of the study – for you or your community?
- 6) What might this study *mean* to you or your family or community?
- 7) How is this information *supported* by your own experiences, knowledge or readings in this or other classes?
- 8) How might this study be *complicated* by other kinds of experiences, knowledge or readings in this or other classes?