

Reflection on Jean Anyon

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When I was a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, the task of planning a dissertation overwhelmed me. As with many students at that stage, I was simply unsure how to proceed. Also, it was hard for me to find a role model. In the early 1980's, the sociology of education literature was dominated by large, representative samples which (while providing interesting findings) usually lacked insight about the dynamics within schools. Many studies also had valuable empirical findings, but the theoretical contributions were unclear. In addition, most were riddled with jargon. In this context, I remember how bowled over I was when I came across Jean Anyon's article on "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" in *The Journal of Education* (1980). This elegant study illuminated how children and teachers acted differently in different schools. The writing was vivid. It had a theoretical point. It was succinct. The study was downright inspirational, and it helped me get out of a jam. I vividly recall showing it to a professor in the School of Education named Charles Benson who graciously served on my committee. He also thought it was excellent. In essence, he gave me a blessing that this could be a role model for my work. And so, Jean Anyon became a guiding light for me. I returned to her articles numerous times as I floundered around in the field doing my dissertation research. I also read her work during the writing process for the project which was ultimately published as *Home Advantage* (2000). Since even the term "social class" was unusual in education

in those days, it was an enormous help to be able to cite her influential work. And I was excited to meet her some years later. Of course there are people whom I have met who, frankly, I like better in writing than in person. By contrast, I found that Jean had warmth and a sense of humor which are all too rare in academic life. She also had a passionate desire to see schools become better. Her book *Ghetto Schooling* (1997) helped many Americans to look at schools with fresh eyes. It also renewed their desire to help make them better. We will miss her.

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