PART VI

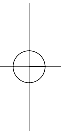
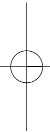
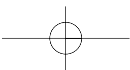
Social Class and Education

Social class is an important topic that is often ignored in American education. Sociologists define social class as social distinctions based on the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and prestige. Social class is much more visible in other cultures than it is in the United States. Because of the democratic traditions in the United States, it is assumed that social class is less of an issue here than it is in a country such as Great Britain or France.

In fact, as the selections included in this section demonstrate, social class is very much at work in American culture, providing privilege and resources to some, while denying the same advantages to others. How social class works in the educational system in the United States is a particularly interesting topic.

As you read the following selections, keep in mind these questions:

1. How does one get assigned to a social class (working class, middle class, elite class)?
2. How does one move from one social class to another?
3. What types of power does one gain from belonging to a specific social class?
4. Do different social classes define personal success differently?

Provenzo-29.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 247

29

Selection From Pygmalion in the Classroom *(1968)*

In the late 1960s, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson made a very important discovery about teaching. They called it the "Pygmalion Effect." Simply stated, the Pygmalion Effect says that when teachers have high expectations of their students in terms of intellectual growth and achievement, the students tend to fulfill the expectations they are given. When they are not encouraged or seen as having potential, then students tend, in turn, to perform at a lower level.

Rosenthal and Jacobson's research points to the importance of teachers not entering the classroom with preconceived notions and prejudices, which may cause them to expect less of their students than what they can actually do. Such attitudes not only affect student performance but are inherently unfair and discriminatory.

As you read the following selection, consider the following questions:

1. How do I deal with people who are the same or different than I along dimensions of race, ethnicity, religion, and social class? Whom am I more comfortable with and why?
2. If I teach, how will I approach students who are culturally and social different from myself?

Provenzo-29.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 248

29

Selection From Pygmalion in the Classroom *(1968)*

Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson

People, more often than not, do what is expected of them. Much of our behavior is governed by widely shared norms or expectations that make it possible to prophesy how a person will behave in a given situation, even if we have never met that person and know little of how he differs from others. At the same time, however, there is considerable variability of behavior so that often we can more accurately prophesy the behavior of a person we know well than we can prophesy the behavior of a stranger. To a great extent, our expectations for another person's behavior are accurate because we know his past behavior. But there is now good reason to believe that another factor increases our accuracy of interpersonal predictions or prophecies. Our prediction or prophecy may in itself be a factor in determining the behavior of other people. When we are led to expect that we are about to meet a pleasant person, our treatment of him at first meeting may, in fact, make him a more pleasant person. If we are led to expect that we shall encounter an unpleasant person, we may approach him so defensively that we make him into an unpleasant person. That, in general, is the concern of this book. It is about interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies: how one person's expectation for another person's behavior can quite unwittingly become a more accurate prediction simply for its having been made.

The existing evidence for the effects of these interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies will be summarized and, in greater detail, new evidence will be

Source: Rosenthal, Robert, and Lenore Jacobson. 1968. *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, vii–viii, 180–182. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

presented. This new evidence is from an educational context, and it is addressed to the question of whether a teacher's expectation for her pupils' intellectual competence can come to serve as an educational self-fulfilling prophecy.

To anticipate briefly the nature of this new evidence it is enough to say that 20 percent of the children in a certain elementary school were reported to their teachers as showing unusual potential for intellectual growth. The names of these 20 percent of the children were drawn by means of a table of random numbers, which is to say that the names were drawn out of a hat. Eight months later these unusual or "magic" children showed significantly greater gains in IQ than did the remaining children who had not been singled out for the teachers' attention. The change in the teachers' expectations regarding the intellectual performance of these allegedly "special" children had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children.

There are many determinants of a teacher's expectation of her pupils' intellectual ability. Even before a teacher has seen a pupil deal with academic tasks she is likely to have some expectation for his behavior. If she is to teach a "slow group," or children of darker skin color, or children whose mothers are "on welfare," she will have different expectations for her pupils' performance than if she is to teach a "fast group," or children of an upper-middle-class community. Before she has seen a child perform, she may have seen his score on an achievement or ability test or his last year's grades, or she may have access to the less formal information that constitutes the child's reputation. There have been theoretical formulations, and there has been some evidence, most of it anecdotal, that the teacher's expectation, however derived, can come to serve as an educational self-fulfilling prophecy. After a consideration of the new experimental evidence bearing on these formulations, the implications for educational research and practice will be considered.

* * *

On the basis of other experiments on interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies, we can only speculate as to how teachers brought about intellectual competence simply by expecting it. Teachers may have treated their children in a more pleasant, friendly, and encouraging fashion when they expected greater intellectual gains of them. Such behavior has been shown to improve intellectual performance, probably by its favorable effect on pupil motivation.

Teachers probably watched their special children more closely, and this greater attentiveness may have led to more rapid reinforcement of correct responses with a consequent increase in pupils' learning. Teachers may also have become more reflective in their evaluation of the special children's intellectual performance. Such an increase in teachers' reflectiveness may have

Provenzo-29.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 250

led to an increase in their special pupils' reflectiveness, and such a change in cognitive style would be helpful to the performance of the nonverbal skills required by the IQ test employed.

To summarize our speculations, we may say that by what she said, by how and when she said it, by her facial expressions, postures, and perhaps by her touch, the teacher may have communicated to the children of the experimental group that she expected improved intellectual performance. Such communications together with possible changes in teaching techniques may have helped the child learn by changing his self-concept, his expectations of his own behavior, and his motivation, as well as his cognitive style and skills.

It is self-evident that further research is needed to narrow down the range of possible mechanisms whereby a teacher's expectations become translated into a pupil's intellectual growth. It would be valuable, for example, to have sound films of teachers interacting with their pupils. We might then look for differences in the way teachers interact with those children from whom they expect intellectual growth compared to those from whom they expect less. On the basis of films of psychological experimenters interacting with subjects from whom different responses are expected, we know that even in such highly standardized situations, unintentional communications can be incredibly subtle and complex (Rosenthal, 1966). Much more subtle and much more complex may be the communications between children and their teachers, teachers not constrained by the demands of the experimental laboratory to treat everyone equally to the extent that it is possible to do so.

The implications of the research described herein are of several kinds. There are methodological implications for the conduct of educational research, and these were discussed in the last chapter. There are implications for the further investigation of unintentional influence processes especially when these processes result in inter-personally self-fulfilling prophecies, and some of these have been discussed. Finally, there are some possible implications for the educational enterprise, and some of these will be suggested briefly.

Over time, our educational policy question has changed from "who ought to be educated?" to "who is capable of being educated?" The ethical question has been traded in for the scientific question. For those children whose educability is in doubt there is a label. They are the educationally, or culturally, or socioeconomically, deprived children and, as things stand now, they appear not to be able to learn as do those who are more advantaged. The advantaged and the disadvantaged differ in parental income, in parental values, in scores on various tests of achievement and ability, and often in skin color and other phenotypic expressions of genetic heritage. Quite inseparable from these differences between the advantages and the disadvantaged are the differences in their teachers' expectations for what they can achieve in school. There are no experiments to show that a change in pupils' skin color will lead to improved

Provenzo-29.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 251

intellectual performance. There is, however, the experiment described in this book to show that change in teacher expectation can lead to improved intellectual performance.

Nothing was done directly for the disadvantaged child at Oak School. There was no crash program to improve his reading ability, no special lesson plan, no extra time for tutoring, no trips to museums or art galleries. There was only the belief that the children bore watching, that they had intellectual competencies that would in due course be revealed. What was done in our program of educational change was done directly for the teacher, only indirectly for her pupils. Perhaps, then, it is the teacher to whom we should direct more of our research attention. If we could learn how she is able to effect dramatic improvement in her pupils' competence without formal changes in her teaching methods, then we could teach other teachers to do the same. If further research shows that it is possible to select teachers whose untrained interactional style does for most of her pupils what our teachers did for the special children, it may be possible to combine sophisticated teacher selection and placement with teacher training to optimize the learning of all pupils.

As teacher-training institutions begin to teach the possibility that teachers' expectations of their pupils' performance may serve as self-fulfilling prophecies, there may be a new expectancy created. The new expectancy may be that children can learn more than had been believed possible, an expectation held by many educational theorists, though for quite different reasons (for example, Bruner, 1960). The new expectancy, at the very least, will make it more difficult when they encounter the educationally disadvantaged for teachers to think, "Well, after all, what can you expect?" The man on the street may be permitted his opinions and prophecies of the unkempt children loitering in a dreary schoolyard. The teacher in the schoolroom may need to learn that those same prophecies within her may be fulfilled; she is no casual passer-by. Perhaps Pygmalion in the classroom is more her role.

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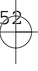
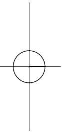
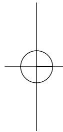
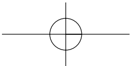

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"Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (1980)

Jean Anyon is a political economist and educational theorist who studies issues of social class in schools. The following selection, first published as an article in the *Journal of Education*, examines social class as an issue in five different elementary school settings. Her research reveals that there is a hidden curriculum at work, based on the social economics of the school, which determines not only what is taught to students but how it is taught. In addition, she demonstrates that students are tracked into different job and career paths based on the schools they attend.

As you read this piece, consider the following questions:

1. How do Anyon's findings challenge the myth that public schools in the United States provide equal education for all students?
2. How is it determined which schools provide which types of education for their students?
3. Can you think of examples of socioeconomic class issues at work in your personal experience in schools? Are socioeconomic class issues at work in the college or university that you attend?

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"Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (1980)

Jean Anyon

Scholars in political economy and the sociology of knowledge recently argued that public schools in complex industrial societies like our own make available different types of educational experience and curriculum knowledge to students in different social classes. Bowles and Gintis for example, have argued that students in different social-class backgrounds are rewarded for classroom behaviors that correspond to personality traits allegedly rewarded in the different occupational strata - the working classes for docility and obedience, the managerial classes for initiative and personal assertiveness. Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michael W. Apple, focusing on school knowledge, have argued that knowledge and skills leading to social power and regard (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 knowledge). 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 empirically in elementary or secondary schools and classrooms in this country.

This article offers tentative empirical support (and qualification) 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 ethnographical study of curricula; pedagogical, and

Source: Anyon, Jean. 1980. "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work." *Journal of Education*, 162 (1): 67–92.

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 255

pupil evaluation practices in five elementary schools. The article attempts a theoretical contribution as well and assesses student work in the light of a theoretical 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.

The social-class designation of each of the five schools will be identified, and the income, occupation, and other relevant available social characteristics of the students and their parents will be described. The first three schools are in a medium-sized city district in northern New Jersey, and the other two are in a nearby New Jersey suburb.

The first two schools I will call working-class schools. Most of the parents have blue-collar jobs. Less than a third of the fathers are skilled, while the majority are in unskilled or semiskilled jobs. During the period of the study (1978–1979), approximately 15 percent of the fathers were unemployed. The large majority (85 percent) of the families are white. The following occupations are typical: platform, storeroom, and stockroom workers; foundrymen, pipe welders, and boilermakers; semiskilled and unskilled assembly-line operatives; gas station attendants, auto mechanics, maintenance workers, and security guards. Less than 30 percent of the women work, some part-time and some full-time, on assembly lines, in storerooms and stockrooms, as waitresses, barmaids, or sales clerks. Of the fifth-grade parents, none of the wives of the skilled workers had jobs. Approximately 15 percent of the families in each school are at or below the federal "poverty" level; most of the rest of the family incomes are at or below $12,000, except some of the skilled workers whose incomes are higher. The incomes of the majority of the families in these two schools (at or below $12,000) are typical of 38.6 percent of the families in the United States.

The third school is called the middle-class school, although because of neighborhood residence patterns, the population is a mixture of several social classes. The parents' occupations can be divided into three groups: a small group of blue-collar "rich," who are skilled, well-paid workers such as printers, carpenters, plumbers, and construction workers. The second group is composed of parents in working-class and middle-class white-collar jobs: women in office jobs, technicians, supervisors in industry, and parents employed by the city (such as firemen, policemen, and several of the school's teachers). The third group is composed of occupations such as personnel directors in local firms, accountants, "middle management," and a few small capitalists (owners of shops in the area). The children of several local doctors attend this school. Most family incomes are between $13,000 and $25,000, with a few higher. This income range is typical of 38.9 percent of the families in the United States.

The fourth school has a parent population that is at the upper income level of the upper middle class and is predominantly professional. This school

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 256

will be called the affluent professional school. Typical jobs are: cardiologist, interior designer; corporate lawyer or engineer, executive in advertising or television. There are some families who are not as affluent as the majority (the family of the superintendent of the district's schools, and the one or two families in which the fathers are skilled workers). In addition, a few of the families are more affluent than the majority and can be classified in the capitalist class (a partner in a prestigious Wall Street stock brokerage firm). Approximately 90 percent of the children in this school are white. Most family incomes are between $40,000 and $80,000. This income span represents approximately 7 percent of the families in the United States.

In the fifth school the majority of the families belong to the capitalist class. This school will be called the executive elite school because most of the fathers are top executives (for example, presidents and vice-presidents) in major United States-based multinational corporations for example, ATT, RCA, City Bank, American Express, U.S. Steel. A sizable group of fathers are top executives in financial firms in Wall Street. There are also a number of fathers who list their occupations as "general counsel" to a particular corporation, and these corporations are also among the large multinationals. Many of the mothers do volunteer work in the Junior League, Junior Fortnightly, or other service groups; some are intricately involved in town politics; and some are themselves in well-paid occupations. There are no minority children in the school. Almost all the family incomes are over $100,000, with some in the $500,000 range. The incomes in this school represent less than 1 percent of the families in the United States.

Since each of the five schools is only one instance of elementary education in a particular social class context, I will not generalize beyond the sample. However, the examples of schoolwork which follow will suggest characteristics of education in each social setting that appear to have theoretical and social significance and to be worth investigation in a larger number of schools.

The Working-Class Schools

In the two working-class schools, work is following the steps of a procedure. The procedure is usually mechanical, involving rote behavior and very little decision making or choice. The teachers rarely explain why the work is being assigned, how it might connect to other assignments, or what the idea is that lies behind the procedure or gives it coherence and perhaps meaning or significance. Available textbooks are not always used, and the teachers often prepare their own dittos or put work examples on the board. Most of the rules regarding work are designations of what the children are to do; the rules are steps to follow. These steps are told to the children by the teachers and are often written on the board. The children are usually told to copy the steps as

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 257

notes. These notes are to be studied. Work is often evaluated not according to whether it is right or wrong but according to whether the children followed the right steps.

The following examples illustrate these points. In math, when two-digit division was introduced, the teacher in one school gave a four-minute lecture on what the terms are called (which number is the division, dividend, quotient, and remainder). The children were told to copy these names in their notebooks. Then the teacher told them the steps to follow to do the problems, saying, "This is how you do them." The teacher listed the steps on the board, and they appeared several days later as a chart hung in the middle of the front wall: "Divide, Multiply, Subtract, Bring Down." The children often did examples of two-digit division. When the teacher went over the examples with them, he told them what the procedure was for each problem, rarely asking them to conceptualize or explain it themselves: "Three into twenty-two is seven; do your subtraction and one is left over." During the week that two-digit division was introduced (or at any other time), the investigator did not observe any discussion of the idea of grouping involved in division, any use of manipulables, or any attempt to relate two-digit division to any other mathematical process. Nor was there any attempt to relate the steps to an actual or possible thought process of the children. The observer did not hear the terms dividend, quotient, and so on, used again. The math teacher in the other working-class school followed similar procedures regarding two-digit division and at one point her class seemed confused. She said, "You're confusing yourselves. You're tensing up. Remember, when you do this, it's the same steps over and over again - and that's the way division always is." Several weeks later, after a test, a group of her children "still didn't get it," and she made no attempt to explain the concept of dividing things into groups or to give them manipulables for their own investigation. Rather, she went over the steps with them again and told them that they "needed more practice."

In other areas of math, work is also carrying out often unexplained fragmented procedures. For example, one of the teachers led the children through a series of steps to make a 1-inch grid on their paper without telling them that they were making a 1-inch grid or that it would be used to study scale. She said, "Take your ruler. Put it across the top. Make a mark at every number. Then move your ruler down to the bottom. No, put it across the bottom. Now make a mark on top of every number. Now draw a line from . . ." At this point a girl said that she had a faster way to do it and the teacher said, "No, you don't; you don't even know what I'm making yet. Do it this way or it's wrong." After they had made the lines up and down and across, the teacher told them she wanted them to make a figure by connecting some dots and to measure that, using the scale of 1 inch equals 1 mile. Then they were to cut it out. She said, "Don't cut it until I check it."

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 258

In both working-class schools, work in language arts is mechanics of punctuation (commas, periods, question marks, exclamation points), capitalization, and the four kinds of sentences. One teacher explained to me, "Simple punctuation is all they'll ever use." Regarding punctuation, either a teacher or a ditto stated the rules for where, for example, to put commas. The investigator heard no classroom discussion of the aural context of punctuation (which, of course, is what gives each mark its meaning). Nor did the investigator hear any statement or inference that placing a punctuation mark could be a decision-making process, depending, for example, on one's intended meaning. Rather, the children were told to follow the rules. Language arts did not involve creative writing. There were several writing assignments throughout the year, but in each instance the children were given a ditto, and they wrote answers to questions on the sheet. For example, they wrote their "autobiography" by answering such questions as "Where were you born?" "What is your favorite animal?" on a sheet entitled "All About Me."

In one of the working-class schools, the class had a science period several times a week. On the three occasions observed, the children were not called upon to set up experiments or to give explanations for facts or concepts. Rather, on each occasion the teacher told them in his own words what the book said. The children copied the teacher's sentences from the board. Each day that preceded the day they were to do a science experiment, the teacher told them to copy the directions from the book for the procedure they would carry out the next day and to study the list at home that night. The day after each experiment, the teacher went over what they had "found" (they did the experiments as a class, and each was actually a class demonstration led by the teacher). Then the teacher wrote what they "found" on the board, and the children copied that in their notebooks. Once or twice a year there are science projects. The project is chosen and assigned by the teacher from a box of 3-by-5-inch cards. On the card the teacher has written the question to be answered, the books to use, and how much to write. Explaining the cards to the observer, the teacher said, "It tells them exactly what to do, or they couldn't do it."

Social studies in the working-class schools is also largely mechanical, rote work that was given little explanation or connection to larger contexts. In one school, for example, although there was a book available, social studies work was to copy the teacher's notes from the board. Several times a week for a period of several months the children copied these notes. The fifth grades in the district were to study United States history. The teacher used a booklet she had purchased called "The Fabulous Fifty States." Each day she put information from the booklet in outline form on the board and the children copied it. The type of information did not vary: the name of the state, its abbreviation, state capital, nickname of the state, its main products, main business, and a "Fabulous Fact" ("Idaho grew twenty-seven billion potatoes in one year. That's

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 259

enough potatoes for each man, woman, and . . .). As the children finished copying the sentences, the teacher erased them and wrote more. Children would occasionally go to the front to pull down the wall map in order to locate the states they were copying, and the teacher did not dissuade them. But the observer never saw her refer to the map; nor did the observer ever hear her make other than perfunctory remarks concerning the information the children were copying. Occasionally the children colored in a ditto and cut it out to make a stand-up figure (representing, for example, a man roping a cow in the Southwest). These were referred to by the teacher as their social studies "projects."

Rote behavior was often called for in classroom work. When going over math and language art skills sheets, for example, as the teacher asked for the answer to each problem, he fired the questions rapidly, staccato, and the scene reminded the observer of a sergeant drilling recruits: above all, the questions demanded that you stay at attention: "The next one? What do I put here?. . . . Here? Give us the next." Or "How many commas in this sentence? Where do I put them. . . . The next one?"

The four fifth-grade teachers observed in the working-class schools attempted to control classroom time and space by making decisions without consulting the children and without explaining the basis for their decisions. The teacher's control thus often seemed capricious. Teachers, for instance, very often ignored the bells to switch classes—deciding among themselves to keep the children after the period was officially over to continue with the work or for disciplinary reasons or so they (the teachers) could stand in the hall and talk. There were no clocks in the rooms in either school, and the children often asked, "What period is this?" "When do we go to gym?" The children had no access to materials. These were handed out by teachers and closely guarded. Things in the room "belonged" to the teacher: "Bob, bring me my garbage can." The teachers continually gave the children orders. Only three times did the investigator hear a teacher in either working-class school preface a directive with an unsarcastic "please," or "let's" or "would you." Instead, the teachers said, "Shut up," "Shut your mouth," "Open your books," "Throw your gum away—if you want to rot your teeth, do it on your own time." Teachers made every effort to control the movement of the children, and often shouted, "Why are you out of your seat??!" If the children got permission to leave the room, they had to take a written pass with the date and time.

Middle-Class School

In the middle-class school, work is getting the right answer. If one accumulates enough right answers, one gets a good grade. One must follow the directions in

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 260

order to get the right answers, but the directions often call for some figuring, some choice, some decision making. For example, the children must often figure out by themselves what the directions ask them to do and how to get the answer: what do you do first, second, and perhaps third? Answers are usually found in books or by listening to the teacher. Answers are usually words, sentences, numbers, or facts and dates; one writes them on paper, and one should be neat. Answers must be given in the right order, and one cannot make them up.

The following activities are illustrative. Math involves some choice: one may do two-digit division the long way or the short way, and there are some math problems that can be done "in your head." When the teacher explains how to do two-digit division, there is recognition that a cognitive process is involved; she gives you several ways and says, "I want to make sure you understand what you're doing so you get it right"; and, when they go over the homework, she asks the children to tell how they did the problem and what answer they got.

In social studies the daily work is to read the assigned pages in the textbook and to answer the teacher's questions. The questions are almost always designed to check on whether the students have read the assignment and understood it: who did so-and-so; what happened after that; when did it happen, where, and sometimes, why did it happen? The answers are in the book and in one's understanding of the book; the teacher's hints when one doesn't know the answers are to "read it again" or to look at the picture or at the rest of the paragraph. One is to search for the answer in the "context," in what is given.

Language arts is "simple grammar, what they need for everyday life." The language arts teacher says, "They should learn to speak properly, to write business letters and thank-you letters, and to understand what nouns and verbs and simple subjects are." Here, as well, actual work is to choose the right answers, to understand what is given. The teacher often says, "Please read the next sentence and then I'll question you about it." One teacher said in some exasperation to a boy who was fooling around in class, "If you don't know the answers to the questions I ask, then you can't stay in this class! You never know the answers to the questions I ask, and it's not fair to me—and certainly not to you!"

Most lessons are based on the textbook. This does not involve a critical perspective on what is given there. For example, a critical perspective in social studies is perceived as dangerous by these teachers because it may lead to controversial topics; the parents might complain. The children, however, are often curious, especially in social studies. Their questions are tolerated and usually answered perfunctorily. But after a few minutes the teacher will say, "All right, we're not going any farther. Please open your social studies workbook." While the teachers spend a lot of time explaining and expanding on what the textbooks say, there is little attempt to analyze how or why things happen, or to

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 261

give thought to how pieces of a culture, or, say, a system of numbers or elements of a language fit together or can be analyzed. What has happened in the past and what exists now may not be equitable or fair, but (shrug) that is the way things are and one does not confront such matters in school. For example, in social studies after a child is called on to read a passage about the pilgrims, the teacher summarizes the paragraph and then says, "So you can see how strict they were about everything." A child asks, "Why?" "Well, because they felt that if you weren't busy you'd get into trouble." Another child asks, "Is it true that they burned women at the stake?" The teacher says, "Yes, if a woman did anything strange, they hanged them. [sic] What would a woman do, do you think, to make them burn them? [sic] See if you can come up with better answers than my other [social studies] class." Several children offer suggestions, to which the teacher nods but does not comment. Then she says, "Okay, good," and calls on the next child to read.

Work tasks do not usually request creativity. Serious attention is rarely given in school work on how the children develop or express their own feelings and ideas, either linguistically or in graphic form. On the occasions when creativity or self-expression is requested, it is peripheral to the main activity or it is "enrichment" or "for fun." During a lesson on what similes are, for example, the teacher explains what they are, puts several on the board, gives some other examples herself, and then asks the children if they can "make some up." She calls on three children who give similes, two of which are actually in the book they have open before them. The teacher does not comment on this and then asks several others to choose similes from the list of phrases in the book. Several do so correctly, and she says, "Oh good! You're picking them out! See how good we are?" Their homework is to pick out the rest of the similes from the list.

Creativity is not often requested in social studies and science projects, either. Social studies projects, for example, are given with directions to "find information on your topic" and write it up. The children are not supposed to copy but to "put it in your own words." Although a number of the projects subsequently went beyond the teacher's direction to find information and had quite expressive covers and inside illustrations, the teacher's evaluative comments had to do with the amount of information, whether they had "copied," and if their work was neat.

The style of control of the three fifth-grade teachers observed in this school varied from somewhat easygoing to strict, but in contrast to the working-class schools, the teachers' decisions were usually based on external rules and regulations for example, on criteria that were known or available to the children. Thus, the teachers always honor the bells for changing classes, and they usually evaluate children's work by what is in the textbooks and answer booklets.

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 262

There is little excitement in schoolwork for the children, and the assignments are perceived as having little to do with their interests and feelings. As one child said, what you do is "store facts up in your head like cold storage until you need it later for a test or your job." Thus, doing well is important because there are thought to be other likely rewards: a good job or college.[10]

Affluent Professional School

In the affluent professional school, work is creative activity carried out independently. The students are continually asked to express and apply ideas and concepts. Work involves individual thought and expressiveness, expansion and illustration of ideas, and choice of appropriate method and material. (The class is not considered an open classroom, and the principal explained that because of the large number of discipline problems in the fifth grade this year they did not departmentalize. The teacher who agreed to take part in the study said she is "more structured" this year than she usually is.) The products of work in this class are often written stories, editorials and essays, or representations of ideas in mural, graph, or craft form. The products of work should not be like everybody else's and should show individuality. They should exhibit good design, and (this is important) they must also fit empirical reality. Moreover, one's work should attempt to interpret or "make sense" of reality. The relatively few rules to be followed regarding work are usually criteria for, or limits on, individual activity. One's product is usually evaluated for the quality of its expression and for the appropriateness of its conception to the task. In many cases, one's own satisfaction with the product is an important criterion for its evaluation. When right answers are called for, as in commercial materials like SRA (Science Research Associates) and math, it is important that the children decide on an answer as a result of thinking about the idea involved in what they're being asked to do. Teacher's hints are to "think about it some more."

The following activities are illustrative. The class takes home a sheet requesting each child's parents to fill in the number of cars they have, the number of television sets, refrigerators, games, or rooms in the house, and so on. Each child is to figure the average number of a type of possession owned by the fifth grade. Each child must compile the "data" from all the sheets. A calculator is available in the classroom to do the mechanics of finding the average. Some children decide to send sheets to the fourth-grade families for comparison. Their work should be "verified' by a classmate before it is handed in.

Each child and his or her family has made a geoboard. The teacher asks the class to get their geoboards from the side cabinet, to take a handful of rubber bands, and then to listen to what she would like them to do. She says, "I would like you to design a figure and then find the perimeter and area. When you have

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 263

it, check with your neighbor. After you've done that, please transfer it to graph paper and tomorrow I'll ask you to make up a question about it for someone. When you hand it in, please let me know whose it is and who verified it. Then I have something else for you to do that's really fun. [pause] Find the average number of chocolate chips in three cookies. I'll give you three cookies, and you'll have to eat your way through, I'm afraid!" Then she goes around the room and gives help, suggestions, praise, and admonitions that they are getting noisy. They work sitting, or standing up at their desks, at benches in the back, or on the floor. A child hands the teacher his paper and she comments, "I'm not accepting this paper. Do a better design." To another child she says, "That's fantastic! But you'll never find the area. Why don't you draw a figure inside [the big one] and subtract to get the area?"

The school district requires the fifth grade to study ancient civilization (in particular, Egypt, Athens, and Sumer). In this classroom, the emphasis is on illustrating and re-creating the culture of the people of ancient times. The following are typical activities: the children made an 8mm film on Egypt, which one of the parents edited. A girl in the class wrote the script, and the class acted it out. They put the sound on themselves. They read stories of those days. They wrote essays and stories depicting the lives of the people and the societal and occupational divisions. They chose from a list of projects, all of which involved graphic representations of ideas: for example, "Make a mural depicting the division of labor in Egyptian society."

Each child wrote and exchanged a letter in hieroglyphics with a fifth grader in another class, and they also exchanged stories they wrote in cuneiform. They made a scroll and singed the edges so it looked authentic. They each chose an occupation and made an Egyptian plaque representing that occupation, simulating the appropriate Egyptian design. They carved their design on a cylinder of wax, pressed the wax into clay, and then baked the clay. Although one girl did not choose an occupation but carved instead a series of gods and slaves, the teacher said, "That's all right, Amber, it's beautiful." As they were working the teacher said, "Don't cut into your clay until you're satisfied with your design."

Social studies also involves almost daily presentation by the children of some event from the news. The teacher's questions ask the children to expand what they say, to give more details, and to be more specific. Occasionally she adds some remarks to help them see connections between events.

The emphasis on expressing and illustrating ideas in social studies is accompanied in language arts by an emphasis on creative writing. Each child wrote a rhebus story for a first grader whom they had interviewed to see what kind of story the child liked best. They wrote editorials on pending decisions by the school board and radio plays, some of which were read over the school intercom from the office and one of which was performed in the auditorium. There is no language arts textbook because, the teacher said, "The principal

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 264

wants us to be creative." There is not much grammar, but there is punctuation. One morning when the observer arrived, the class was doing a punctuation ditto. The teacher later apologized for using the ditto. "It's just for review," she said. "I don't teach punctuation that way. We use their language." The ditto had three unambiguous rules for where to put commas in a sentence. As the teacher was going around to help the children with the ditto, she repeated several times, "Where you put commas depends on how you say the sentence; it depends on the situation and what you want to say." Several weeks later the observer saw another punctuation activity. The teacher had printed a five-paragraph story on an oak tag and then cut it into phrases. She read the whole story to the class from the book, then passed out the phrases. The group had to decide how the phrases could best be put together again. (They arranged the phrases on the floor.) The point was not to replicate the story, although that was not irrelevant, but to "decide what you think the best way is." Punctuation marks on cardboard pieces were then handed out, and the children discussed and then decided what mark was best at each place they thought one was needed. At the end of each paragraph the teacher asked, "Are you satisfied with the way the paragraphs are now? Read it to yourself and see how it sounds." Then she read the original story again, and they compared the two.

Describing her goals in science to the investigator, the teacher said, "We use ESS (Elementary Science Study). It's very good because it gives a hands-on-experience - so they can make sense out of it. It doesn't matter whether it [what they find] is right or wrong. I bring them together and there's value in discussing their ideas."

The products of work in this class are often highly valued by the children and the teacher. In fact, this was the only school in which the investigator was not allowed to take original pieces of the children's work for her files. If the work was small enough, however, and was on paper, the investigator could duplicate it on the copying machine in the office.

The teacher's attempt to control the class involves constant negotiation. She does not give direct orders unless she is angry because the children have been too noisy. Normally, she tries to get them to foresee the consequences of their actions and to decide accordingly. For example, lining them up to go see a play written by the sixth graders, she says, "I presume you're lined up by someone with whom you want to sit. I hope you're lined up by someone you won't get in trouble with."

One of the few rules governing the children's movement is that no more than three children may be out of the room at once. There is a school rule that anyone can go to the library at any time to get a book. In the fifth grade I observed, they sign their name on the chalkboard and leave. There are no passes. Finally, the children have a fair amount of officially sanctioned say over what happens in the class. For example, they often negotiate what work is to be

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 265

done. If the teacher wants to move on to the next subject, but the children say they are not ready, they want to work on their present projects some more, she very often lets them do it.

Executive Elite School

In the executive elite school, work is developing one's analytical intellectual powers. Children are continually asked to reason through a problem, to produce intellectual products that are both logically sound and of top academic quality. A primary goal of thought is to conceptualize rules by which elements may fit together in systems and then to apply these rules in solving a problem. Schoolwork helps one to achieve, to excel, to prepare for life.

The following are illustrative. The math teacher teaches area and perimeter by having the children derive formulas for each. First she helps them, through discussion at the board, to arrive at A = W x L as a formula (not the formula) for area. After discussing several, she says, "Can anyone make up a formula for perimeter? Can you figure that out yourselves? [pause] Knowing what we know, can we think of a formula?" She works out three children's suggestions at the board, saying to two, "Yes, that's a good one," and then asks the class if they can think of any more. No one volunteers. To prod them, she says, "If you use rules and good reasoning, you get many ways. Chris, can you think up a formula?"

She discusses two digit division with the children as a decision-making process. Presenting a new type of problem to them, she asks, "What's the first decision you'd make if presented with this kind of example? What is the first thing you'd think? Craig?" Craig says, "To find my first partial quotient." She responds, "Yes, that would be your first decision. How would you do that?" Craig explains, and then the teacher says, "OK, we'll see how that works for you." The class tries his way. Subsequently, she comments on the merits and shortcomings of several other children's decisions. Later, she tells the investigator that her goals in math are to develop their reasoning and mathematical thinking and that, unfortunately, "there's no time for manipulables."

While right answers are important in math, they are not "given" by the book or by the teacher but may be challenged by the children.

Going over some problems in late September the teacher says, "Raise your hand if you do not agree." A child says, "I don't agree with sixty-four." The teacher responds, "OK, there's a question about sixty-four. [to class] Please check it. Owen, they're disagreeing with you. Kristen, they're checking yours." The teacher emphasized this repeatedly during September and October with statements like "Don't be afraid to say you disagree. In the last [math] class, somebody disagreed, and they were right. Before you disagree, check yours,

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 266

and if you still think we're wrong, then we'll check it out." By Thanksgiving, the children did not often speak in terms of right and wrong math problems but of whether they agreed with the answer that had been given.

There are complicated math mimeos with many word problems. Whenever they go over the examples, they discuss how each child has set up the problem. The children must explain it precisely. On one occasion the teacher said, "I'm more—just as interested in how you set up the problem as in what answer you find. If you set up a problem in a good way, the answer is easy to find."

Social studies work is most often reading and discussion of concepts and independent research. There are only occasional artistic, expressive, or illustrative projects. Ancient Athens and Sumer are, rather, societies to analyze. The following questions are typical of those that guide the children's independent research. "What mistakes did Pericles make after the war?" "What mistakes did the citizens of Athens make?" "What are the elements of a civilization?" "How did Greece build an economic empire?" "Compare the way Athens chose its leaders with the way we choose ours." Occasionally the children are asked to make up sample questions for their social studies tests. On an occasion when the investigator was present, the social studies teacher rejected a child's question by saying, "That's just fact. If I asked you that question on a test, you'd complain it was just memory! Good questions ask for concepts."

In social studies—but also in reading, science, and health—the teachers initiate classroom discussions of current social issues and problems. These discussions occurred on every one of the investigator's visits, and a teacher told me, "These children's opinions are important—it's important that they learn to reason things through." The classroom discussions always struck the observer as quite realistic and analytical, dealing with concrete social issues like the following: "Why do workers strike?" "Is that right or wrong?" "Why do we have inflation, and what can be done to stop it?" "Why do companies put chemicals in food when the natural ingredients are available?" and so on. Usually the children did not have to be prodded to give their opinions. In fact, their statements and the interchanges between them struck the observer as quite sophisticated conceptually and verbally, and well-informed. Occasionally the teachers would prod with statements such as, "Even if you don't know [the answers], if you think logically about it, you can figure it out." And "I'm asking you [these] questions to help you think this through."

Language arts emphasizes language as a complex system, one that should be mastered. The children are asked to diagram sentences of complex grammatical construction, to memorize irregular verb conjugations (he lay, he has lain, and so on . . .), and to use the proper participles, conjunctions, and interjections in their speech. The teacher (the same one who teaches social studies) told them, "It is not enough to get these right on tests; you must use what you learn [in grammar classes] in your written and oral work. I will grade you on that."

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 267

Most writing assignments are either research reports and essays for social studies or experiment analyses and write-ups for science. There is only an occasional story or other "creative writing" assignment. On the occasion observed by the investigator (the writing of a Halloween story), the points the teacher stressed in preparing the children to write involved the structural aspects of a story rather than the expression of feelings or other ideas. The teacher showed them a filmstrip, "The Seven Parts of a Story," and lectured them on plot development, mood setting, character development, consistency, and the use of a logical or appropriate ending. The stories they subsequently wrote were, in fact, well-structured, but many were also personal and expressive. The teacher's evaluative comments, however, did not refer to the expressiveness or artistry but were all directed toward whether they had "developed" the story well.

Language arts work also involved a large amount of practice in presentation of the self and in managing situations where the child was expected to be in charge. For example, there was a series of assignments in which each child had to be a "student teacher." The child had to plan a lesson in grammar, outlining, punctuation, or other language arts topic and explain the concept to the class. Each child was to prepare a worksheet or game and a homework assignment as well. After each presentation, the teacher and other children gave a critical appraisal of the "student teacher's" performance. Their criteria were: whether the student spoke clearly, whether the lesson was interesting, whether the student made any mistakes, and whether he or she kept control of the class. On an occasion when a child did not maintain control, the teacher said, "When you're up there, you have authority and you have to use it. I'll back you up."

The executive elite school is the only school where bells do not demarcate the periods of time. The two fifth-grade teachers were very strict about changing classes on schedule, however, as specific plans for each session had been made. The teachers attempted to keep tight control over the children during lessons, and the children were sometimes flippant, boisterous, and occasionally rude. However, the children may be brought into line by reminding them that "It is up to you." "You must control yourself," "you are responsible for your work," you must set your own priorities." One teacher told a child, "You are the only driver of your car—and only you can regulate your speed." A new teacher complained to the observer that she had thought "these children" would have more control.

While strict attention to the lesson at hand is required, the teachers make relatively little attempt to regulate the movement of the children at other times. For example, except for the kindergartners, the children in this school do not have to wait for the bell to ring in the morning; they may go to their classroom when they arrive at school. Fifth graders often came early to read, to finish work, or to catch up. After the first two months of school, the fifth-grade teachers did not line the children up to change classes or to go to gym, and so on,

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 268

but, when the children were ready and quiet, they were told they could go - sometimes without the teachers.

In the classroom, the children could get materials when they needed them and took what they needed from closets and from the teacher's desk. They were in charge of the office at lunchtime. During class they did not have to sign out or ask permission to leave the room; they just got up and left. Because of the pressure to get work done, however, they did not leave the room very often. The teachers were very polite to the children, and the investigator heard no sarcasm, no nasty remarks, and few direct orders. The teachers never called the children "honey" or "dear" but always called them by name. The teachers were expected to be available before school, after school, and for part of their lunchtime to provide extra help if needed.

The foregoing analysis of differences in schoolwork in contrasting social class contexts suggests the following conclusion: the "hidden curriculum" of schoolwork is tacit preparation for relating to the process of production in a particular way. Differing curricular, pedagogical, and pupil evaluation practices emphasize different cognitive and behavioral skills in each social setting and thus contribute to the development in the children of certain potential relationships to physical and symbolic capital,[11] to authority, and to the process of work. School experience, in the sample of schools discussed here, differed qualitatively by social class. These differences may not only contribute to the development in the children in each social class of certain types of economically significant relationships and not others but would thereby help to reproduce this system of relations in society. In the contribution to the reproduction of unequal social relations lies a theoretical meaning and social consequence of classroom practice.

The identification of different emphases in classrooms in a sample of contrasting social class contexts implies that further research should be conducted in a large number of schools to investigate the types of work tasks and interactions in each to see if they differ in the ways discussed here and to see if similar potential relationships are uncovered. Such research could have as a product the further elucidation of complex but not readily apparent connections between everyday activity in schools and classrooms and the unequal structure of economic relationships in which we work and live.

Notes

1. S. Bowles and H. Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life (New York: Basic Books, 1976). [author's note]

Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 269

2. B. Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control, Vol.3. Towards a Theory of Educational Transmission, 2d ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); P. Bourdieu and J. Passeron, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1977); M. W. Apple, Ideology and Curriculum (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979). [Author's note]

3. But see, in a related vein, M. W Apple and N. King, "What Do Schools Teach?" Curriculum Inquiry 6 (1977): 34I~58; R. C. Rist, The Urban School: A Factory for Failure (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973). [Author's note]

4. ethnographical: based on an anthropological study of Cultures or sub-cultures; the "cultures" in this case being the five schools observed.

5. The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines poverty for a nonfarm family of four as a yearly income of $6,191 a year or less, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1978 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p.465, table 754. [Author's note]

6. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Money Income in 1977 of Families and Persons in the United States," Current Population Reports Series P-60, no.118 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), p.2, table A. [Author's note]

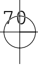
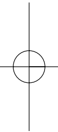
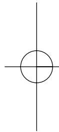
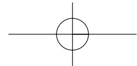
7. Ibid. [Author's note]

8. This figure is an estimate. According to the Bureau of the Census, only 2.6 percent of families in the United States have money income of $50,000 or over. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports Series P-60. For figures on income at these higher levels, see I. D. Smith and S. Franklin, 'The Concentration of Personal Wealth, 1922–1969," American Economic Review, 64 (1974): 162–67. [Author's note]

9. Smith and Franklin, "The Concentration of Personal Wealth." [Author's note]

10. A dominant feeling, expressed directly and indirectly by teachers in this school, was boredom with their work. They did, however, in contrast to the working-class schools, almost always carry out lessons during class times. [Author's note]

11. physical and symbolic capital: elsewhere Anyon defines capital as "property that is used to produce profit, interest, or rent"; she defines symbolic capital as the knowledge and skills that "may yield social and cultural power."


Provenzo-30.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 270




Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 271

31

"Crossing Class Boundaries" (2000)

Bell hooks (Gloria Watkins) is a feminist thinker and educator whose writings cover a broad range of subjects on gender, race, popular culture, education, and social class. In the following piece drawn from her book *Where We Stand: Class Matters,* hooks talks about her experiences coming from a working-class, minority background to attending and working in elite colleges and universities.

As you read this selection, consider the following questions:

1. How does college and university education potentially contribute to class stratification?
2. What do individuals who cross class boundaries potentially gain and lose in their personal relationships?
3. Do working-class populations potentially lose their intellectuals and leaders as they are absorbed into the elite levels of the culture? If this is true, what implications does this have for working-class populations?

31

"Crossing Class Boundaries" (2000)

bell hooks

Most of my formative years were spent in segregated black communities where our immediate neighbors were from diverse class backgrounds. Some folks were poor—just barely getting by and making ends meet. They lived in tiny railroad shacks and kept them neat and tidy. Then there were the working-class families like ours, with lots of hungry mouths to feed, so that even if fathers had good jobs like working in the coal mines, it could still be hard sometimes to make ends meet. If the women in these families worked they did service jobs—housecleaning, cooking, or working now and then in the tobacco fields or on the loosening floor. The lovely freshly painted houses in our neighborhood usually belonged to middle-class folks and the rare person with lots of money. They were schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, and undertakers.

If anyone suffered economic hardship in that world somebody knew and ways were found to share—to meet needs. In that small segregated world it was hard to keep secrets. At school teachers paid attention and they knew if a child was in need. At church everyone saw you. And if all else failed somebody would come by your house and see about you. Not all neighborhoods in the town were like ours; it was a place where folks knew each other's business and often did not hesitate to put their nose in it if need be.

Our family was big, six girls, one boy, mom, and dad. Dad worked various jobs but the one he held for most of his adult life was as a janitor at the local post office. He began working this job when racial discrimination was still the norm, and white folks thought they were doing no wrong when they paid white

Source: hooks, bell. 2000. "Crossing Class Boundaries." *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, 142–164. New York: Routledge.

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 273

workers a fair wage and black workers far less for doing the same job. Laws forbidding unfair practices changed this practice for those employees who worked for the state but continued in all cases where there was no system of checks and balances.

Even though dad worked hard, in our household there was never enough money because there were so many of us. Yet we never lacked the basic necessities of life. Mama cooked delicious food. We always had clean clothes. And even though the old house we lived in was expensive to heat and often cold in winter, we had shelter. We did not think about class. We thought about race. The boundaries of class could be crossed. At times class-based conflict surfaced, often over the desires middle-class schoolteachers had for their working-class and poor students that differed from parental desires. No matter our class we all lived in the same segregated world. We knew each other and we tried to live in community.

When I chose to attend a "fancy" college rather than a state school close to home, I was compelled to confront class differences in new and different ways. Like many working-class parents, my folks were often wary of the new ideas I brought into their lives from ideas learned at school or from books. They were afraid these fancy ideas like the fancy schools I wanted to attend would ruin me for living in the real world. At the time I did not understand that they were also afraid of me becoming a different person—someone who did not speak their language, hold on to their beliefs and their ways. They were working people. To them a good life was one where you worked hard, created a family, worshiped God, had the occasional good time, and lived day to day.

Even though I wanted to attend fancy schools, like the working class and poor around me, I shared these beliefs. I was not afraid to work hard. I just wanted to work in the world of ideas. That was hard for working people to understand. To them it made sense if you wanted to be a teacher because schoolteachers earned a decent living and were respected. Beyond that they could see no practical use for the learning one would get in a fancy school.

I suppose the first major class conflict of my life was my decision about where to go to college. It would have been easier for my family had I chosen to go to a state college near home where I might be awarded a full scholarship, where dorms were cheap, and required books could be checked out of libraries. I wanted to go to a fancy private college. And since my folks did not talk openly about money matters or speak freely of their fears that I would leave home and become a stranger to the world of my growing, I did not realistically consider what it would be like to cross the boundaries of class, to be the working-class girl attending the rich school. No wonder my parents feared for me and my fate. They could see what I could not see.

Against the will of my parents I decided to attend a fancy college far away from home. To attend this school I needed scholarships and loans. I had to

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 274

work to buy books and there would be no coming home for the holidays because it required excess money we did not have. I wanted to attend this school because I had been told by a favorite teacher that it was a place for serious thinkers, where ideas were taken seriously. This teacher, an anti-racist white liberal who came from an upper-class background, did not talk to me about the issue of class.

It did not take long for me to understand that crossing class boundaries was not easy. My class values were not the same as my college peers.' I resented their assumptions about the poor arid working class. I did not find black bourgeois elites to be any more aware of my world than their white counterparts. The few friends I made whether black or white usually came from a similar class background. Like me they worked; they had loans, scholarships. Publicly and at school I mingled with everybody, learning about different class values. Privately, in my home, whether dormitory room or cheap apartment, I nurtured the values I had been raised to believe in. I wanted to show my family and community of origin that I could go out into the world and be among more privileged class people without assimilating, without losing touch with the ground of my being.

Living among folks from more privileged classes, I learned more about class than I had ever learned in a small segregated neighborhood. Before living among upper-class and rich folks, I had never heard anyone speak contemptuously about poor and working-class people. Casual articulation of negative stereotypes stopped me in my tracks. Not only was I usually a dissenting voice about class, after a while it was just assumed that I would go my way. It was among privileged class folks that I developed both an awareness of the extent to which they are willing to go to protect their class interest and a disrespect for their class values.

Even though I was struggling to acquire an education that would enable me to leave the ranks of the poor and working class, I was more at home in that world than I was in the world I lived in. My political solidarity and allegiance was with working people. I created a lifestyle for myself that mixed aspects of my working-class background with new ideas and habits picked up in a world far removed from that world. I learned different ways to dress, different ways to eat, and new ways to talk and think. I took from those experiences what I wanted and linked them with my home training.

Confident that nothing could separate me from the world of my growing up, I crossed class boundaries with ease and grace. At home with my parents I spoke the language of our world and our ways. At school I learned to keep these ways to myself. I did not fit in and I did want to fit in. At the same time I was coming to understand that this crossing of class boundaries had indeed given me a different sense of self. I could go home again. I could blend in, but the doors to that world threatened to close whenever I tried to bring new ideas there, to change things there.

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 275

Like much of the writing I have done on class, I began this essay by telling family stories again and again, often the same stories in different ways. My ongoing connection to the working-class world of my origin has consistently served as the site of challenge and interrogation for my class values and political allegiances. Affirming and sustaining direct connections to that world continually compels me to think critically about class dynamics in this society. In my twenties it seemed a simple matter to journey between varied class experience. During those years the amount of money I made would have placed me among the ranks of the poor or bottom-level working class. But class is more than money. And the doctorate I was earning was preparation for entering the ranks of the upper-middle class.

My first full-time tenure track teaching job at a fancy school, Yale University, signaled a complete transition in class positionality. I was no longer in limbo, moving back and forth between the worlds of the haves and the have-nots. I was no longer officially a member of the working class. Like many folks from working-class and poor backgrounds, much of my salary went to the debts I had accumulated on the way. Raised by all the tenets of racial uplift to believe that it is the duty of those who get ahead to share their resources with others, especially those less fortunate, I committed myself to giving to the needy a fixed portion of my income.

Although I did not see myself as part of a talented tenth in the way Du Bois first used that term, I was among the first generation in my family to go to college and the only one of us then to finish a doctorate. It had been a journey full of personal hardship and struggle. And I knew that I would never have finished without the ongoing support of the working class world I had come from. These connections were my strength. The values I had been raised to believe in sustained me when everything in the new worlds I entered invalidated me and the world I was coming from. I felt that I had both a debt and a responsibility to that world—to honor it and to remain in solidarity with it despite the change in my class position.

One way to honor this working-class world was to write about it in a way that would shed a more authentic light on our reality. I felt that writing about the constructive values and beliefs of that world would act as an intervention challenging stereotypes. Concurrently, I did not want to become one of those academics from a working-class background who nostalgically fetishized that experience, so I also wrote about the negative aspects of our life. My parents and other folks from that world refused to accept that it was important to write about negative experiences. They did not care how many positive comments were made, they felt betrayed whenever I focused on negative aspects of our lives. Not everyone felt this way, but it was still difficult to face that some of the folks I cared about the most felt I had become a traitorous outsider, looking in and down on the world I had most intimately known.

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 276

Ironically, the radical intellectual milieus I circulated in were ones where everyone talked about crossing class boundaries as though it was a simple matter. This was especially the case in feminist and cultural studies circles. To many of my peers from privileged class backgrounds, crossing boundaries often meant slumming or a willingness to go work in a poor community in an exotic foreign land. I was fascinated and oftentimes a bit envious when my white peers talked about their trips to Belize, El Salvador, New Guinea, Ecuador, all over Africa, India, China, and the Middle East; the list could go on. Sometimes these trips were about "eating the other," about privileged Westerners indulging in ethnic cultural cannibalism. At other times they were about individuals trying to learn about the experiences of people unlike themselves, trying to contribute.

Whatever the motivation, these experiences might someday serve as the cultural capital evoked to justify a lack of accountability toward the "different and disenfranchised" in one's own nation, town, community. Like a charity one has donated capital to and need never give again because the proof of generosity was already on record, their one-time contribution could take the place of any ongoing constructive confrontation with class politics in the United States. The starving in a foreign country are always more interesting than the starving who speak your language who might want to eat at your table, find shelter in your house, or share your job.

I found and find it difficult, though never impossible, to move back and forth among different classes. As I began to make more money and gain recognition as a feminist thinker and cultural critic, the money I earned became a source of conflict between me and members of my family and friends. Even though I had held different ideas from family and friends for years, when it came to making money, we were all struggling. By my mid-thirties, I was no longer struggling and my income was growing. The fact that I was single and had no children made it easier for me to pay debts and live cheaply in ways that family and friends could not. While I wanted to share economic resources with them, I also wanted to share knowledge, to share information about how we might all change our lives for the better.

Since I was not a flashy dresser or big spender in any highly visible way, less economically privileged peers often did not see me as a success. To them I was unconventional or weird. Once, my brother, who left the ranks of the middle class by overspending and substance abuse, came to visit me in my New York City flat and expressed shock that it was small and not very fancy. He shared: "I thought you had made it to the big time." And wanted to know: "Why are you living like this?" I explained that I lived a simple but to my way of thinking luxurious life so that I would have more to share with others. Still it was only when I concretely showed him the finances, how much I made, how it was spent (paying my expenses and helping others with rent, education, bills, etc.) that he began to realistically understand my perspective.

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 277

Like many lower-class and poor folk, he had an unrealistic sense of what one could actually do with money. This lack of awareness stems in part from the reality that credit and extended indebtedness allows so many people to consume beyond their means and create lifestyles that they cannot afford. I once did a workshop with a group of middle- and upper-middle-class professional black women on money and how we use it and was astonished to find that the vast majority of them were living so far beyond their means that they were just a pay check away from having nothing. Folks who do not have economic privilege and have never had it often assume that they can measure someone's economic worth by material objects. They do not see the indebtedness that may be bolstering what appears on the surface to be a lifestyle one could create only with class privilege and affluence.

Indeed, black folk with some degree of class privilege often create a lifestyle that has the appearance of prosperity (big house, new car, fancy clothes) though they may be suffering economic distress because of assuming responsibility for less-fortunate family members while still striving to appear on top of it all. Studies show that most middle-income black folks with a sizable income give a measure of that income to help extended family and kin. It is not the giving that undermines their finances but their desire to have an expensive lifestyle as well as excess funds to help others. Stress and conflict over money may undermine the relationships that they hope to maintain and strengthen by sharing resources.

The more money I made, the more needy individuals came seeking financial help. Difficulties began to arise when frustrations about having their material needs met and my response to those frustrations prevented us from attending to the overall emotional needs of any positive relationship. And it was evident that the politics of shame around being needy made it impossible for some individuals to not feel "looked down" upon for desiring assistance even if they were not actually being looked down upon.

Money is so often used as a way to coercively assert power over others that it can easily become an arena of conflict, setting up hierarchies that were not previously present. Like many folks in my position, I often confront needy individuals who see my willingness to share as a weakness and who become exploitative. And there are times when I am scammed and misused (for example, a student says that they need money to finish school—you give the money—and they drop out, pocketing the refund, etc.). Any effort to not ally oneself with the existing structure of class elitism, to share resources, will necessarily meet with conflicts and casualties because many underprivileged folks share the predatory capitalist values often associated solely with the affluent. Often consciousness-raising has to take place with those who lack material privilege so that old models of guilt-tripping and exploiting progressive individuals who are working to live differently are not deployed.

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 278

All too often the affluent want to share using the old models of philanthropy and patronage that support giving while protecting one's class interest. This kind of giving rarely intervenes on or challenges the structures of economic class exploitation. Concurrently, affluent individuals who care about those who suffer the brunt of an unjust economic system often lose heart if their efforts to share are misused. This response can be an act of sabotage and self-indulgence. Politically astute individuals with class privilege have to remain aware that we are working with inadequate models for communalism and social change so that there will necessarily be occasions when the best efforts fail to get the desired outcome.

When I have experienced a breakdown of communication and misuse, I use it as an occasion to invent methods of intervention that will work. When sharing resources does not work, it would be simple to refuse to identify with the class-based suffering of those in need and assume a protective stance that would indicate allegiance to privileged-class interests. However, I remain committed to an anti—class elitism vision of solidarity that sees working things out and processing issues in such a way that bonds across class are strengthened as part of resistance struggle. This has not been a straightforward or an easy task. There is little theoretical or practical work written about how we must behave and what we must do to maintain solidarity in the face of class difference.

The most difficult issues I have had to face in the struggle to help underprivileged comrades create better lives for themselves surface when I challenge the ways widespread acceptance of hedonistic consumerism and its concomitant insistence that one never delay gratification undermines the class power of poor and working-class citizens. Years ago my partner at the time, who was also from a working-class background, and I bought a house. For a year we were overextended financially. When we first moved in we did not have a refrigerator. We had decided we could afford to buy one with cash a few months later and thereby reduce our indebtedness. To many of our working-class friends and family this seemed like a hardship. They did not understand our wanting to stabilize our finances before making another big purchase. Similarly, both our families had difficulty accepting our commitment to driving the same car for years so as not to incur unnecessary indebtedness.

Crossing class boundaries, entering worlds of class privilege, was one way that I learned different attitudes toward money than the ones I was raised with. Among the privileged there was much more information available about how to manage money. Taking this knowledge and sharing with folks without class privilege can be a gesture that provides them with the means to assert more meaningful agency in their financial lives. Through reading self-help books about money I learned the importance of keeping accounts, of knowing how I spent money. When I first shared this with comrades who lacked material privilege they thought it did not pertain to their lives. One of my sisters, who was

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 279

receiving welfare at the time, could not see the point in using this exercise. In her mind she had no money. I called attention to the fact that she smoked cigarettes, which cost money. The important point was to know how you spent your money whether or not you had ten, fifty, or five hundred dollars a month. Taking charge by knowing what we spend money on and budgeting our money no matter the amount empowers. It gives a sense of economic agency and lays the groundwork for economic self-sufficiency.

Like many individuals who have come from poor and working-class backgrounds into class privilege, I want to share my life with folks from diverse class backgrounds, and not simply my resources. Oftentimes it is easier to share resources than it is to bring diverse class experiences together. When we do cross the boundaries there is usually a clash in etiquette, values, the way we do things. Since I want my family to have a firsthand knowledge of the work I do, I often invite them to attend conferences where I am lecturing. At one conference I felt my youngest sister, who had joined me, was behaving disrespectfully toward me. A single parent who received state aid and who was aggressively seeking employment but finding it extremely difficult, she was depressed and fearful about her future. I confronted her about her behavior in front of another academic colleague and friend. This offended her. She felt that I had asserted class power to belittle her although she did not use those terms.

While I still felt my critique was justified, I did agree that I had not chosen an appropriate moment to lodge it. I acted from the assumption that we were all mature adults together who could cope with a moment of tension and conflict. I had not considered the dynamics from the perspective of class difference. Since I work hard to not develop ego-centered attachment to my class power and status it is often easy for me to forget that it can be intimidating to others. My brother and I have had the most productive personal class conflicts because he is totally candid about his own class frustrations. Previous states of indebtedness and unemployment have made it difficult for him to gain economic stability even though he works hard. He openly voices his resentment of my class position and we are able to process together. To maintain our bond, our solidarity, is hard work. Friends from working-class backgrounds where siblings share similar income need not work as hard to maintain connection.

The fear of losing connection has led many an upwardly mobile individual from a poor or working-class background to cease their efforts to change their class status. Among people of color we see that decision to not go forward most intensely around the question of education. In the segregated schools of my growing up, to work hard at ones studies was a source of pride for the race and, though we did not understand it that way, for our class as well. That has now changed. At all educational levels students from working-class backgrounds fear losing touch with peers and family. And that fear often leads to self-sabotage. To intervene on this nonproductive pattern we do need more

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 280

testimony both in oral traditions and in writing of how working-class and poor folk can remain connected to the communities of our origin even as we work to improve our economic lot. Hollywood dramatized these dimensions of class struggle in the hit movie *Good Will Hunting*. In the film, the working-class buddy persuades his blonde, blue-eyed "genius" friend to go forward and enter the corporate world and make big money even if he must leave his friends behind. Ironically, since he is supported by his poor and working-class peers there is no logical reason he must leave them behind. After showing audiences the pleasures that can be shared when people cross class boundaries (our poor boy hero has a lover girl from a rich background with a trust fund), the movie offers the age-old message that attaining money, status, and class privilege is the only thing that matters and not loyalty to friends and comrades.

Many intelligent, sometimes brilliant, young black males end up in prison precisely because they want to make the quick easy money rather than slowly with hard work and effort pull themselves up from the bottom. Their smarts are now being exploited by a booming industry that provides them jobs for little or no wages. They end up doing in prison what they were refusing to do on the outside without reaping minimal reward. In *The Seven Laws of Money*, Michael Phillips contends: "About ninety percent of all crimes are committed because of money . . . and about eighty percent of all people in jail are there because of money related crimes. . . . Money is a very significant reason for people being in jail, . . . Maybe one way of stating it is that their aspiration for money and their ability to accumulate it are radically different. People who commit a crime often reach a state where they want money so badly that they are willing to take a higher risk than most other people are." Of course Phillips, who worked hard to acquire wealth, makes this point using examples of working-class and poor men. However, he does not acknowledge that the values shaping their actions are those appropriated from more affluent individuals, usually white, from more privileged class backgrounds who have been able to make easy money. These attitudes trickle down to the masses through media. And whether true or false they are often passively appropriated.

Like many commentators who write about money, Phillips avoids the issue of economic injustice and makes it appear that anyone who works hard can easily earn money. Even though he acknowledges that the issue for most poor and working-class people is not that they do not make money but that their fantasies of what money can do far exceed reality. It is always troubling to me when I hear individuals with class privilege assert that the poor and working class are unwilling to work hard. I am enraged when I hear black elites talk about how the poor need to learn from those who have made it how to work hard. The truth is that the working class and working poor work hard but the money that they make is not enough to provide them with the means to attain economic self-sufficiency. One of the greatest threats to their economic

Provenzo-31.qxd 12/9/2005 5:57 PM Page 281

well-being is the prevailing fantasy that if they work hard, they can attain all that they desire.

Crossing class boundaries I find that many of the working-class and poor people I know spend an inordinate amount of time fantasizing about the power of money, of what it can do. While this may hold true for middle-class people as well, the extent to which these fantasies negatively impact on those without privilege is more apparent. Obsessive fantasizing about money to buy things not only creates psychotic lust, it prevents individuals from realistically confronting their economic reality or using the time and energy to constructively respond to the world they live in. Poverty need not mean that people cannot have reading groups, study groups, consciousness-raising groups. Time spent fantasizing might be best spent buying a can of bright paint (if the funds are available) and painting old furniture or just cleaning up.

Using the example of two smart black men who were caught up in easy money fantasies, Phillip writes: "They were such bright and charming people that they could have had a high salary in almost any conventional business. At each point, though they always wanted money instantly, not realizing they would always have gotten more money if they had just been able to wait a little . . . The main lesson that I could draw from these two men, both skilled, charming, capable people, is that they have such a completely distorted view of what they 'need' that there is no way they can function in society. A minor adjustment in their sense of reality would have made them capable of functioning in a useful, viable way." Given racial discrimination in conventional business, it would no doubt not have been as simple for these two men to succeed as Phillips makes it seem, but they certainly did not need to turn to crime. The fantasy of easy money led them astray.

Sadly, no group should know better than the working class and poor that there is no easy money to be had in this society. And yet the fantasy of easy money coupled with hedonistic consumerism has distorted reality for many people. Dialoguing across class is one of the ways that we can share together a more realistic sense of the limitations of money—of what it can and cannot do. Like the struggle to attain money, to change one's class position, if you start on the bottom rung, these conversations require courage, a willingness to speak truthfully about class and money that is the first act of resistance challenging and changing class elitism.