

# 1 Some 21 st Century Social Origins of Public Education Failure

2 Steven Gerardi<sup>1</sup> and Steven Gerardi<sup>2</sup>

3 <sup>1</sup> New York City Technical College CUNY

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 During the 21 Century public education in the U.S.A. has become increasingly problematic.  
8 This effort will point to a variety of interrelated social factors figuring among: Social Class;  
9 English Language Acquisition parents' educational level, and parent involvement in their  
10 child's education. This effort also provides a unique socio/cultural percentage matrix for  
11 academic success within the public school sector.

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13 **Index terms—**  
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15 among: Social Class; English Language Acquisition parents' educational level, and parent involvement in their  
16 child's education. This effort also provides a unique socio/cultural percentage matrix for academic success within  
17 the public school sector.

18 I. Overview and Context of the Research social class is an important indicator of cultural capital for academic  
19 success (Bourdieu, P, 1977). Teachers expect a specific form of behavior which they believe supports learning.  
20 If the means of achieving this behavior is not located within the family's social/cultural resources, the child is  
21 likely not to comply with the expected learning behavior.

22 Therefore, distinctive cultural knowledge is transmitted by families of each social class. Children of the  
23 dominant class inherit substantially different cultural knowledge, skills, norms, styles of dress and linguistic  
24 abilities than children of those within subordinate classes. Consequently, educational institutions reward students  
25 from the dominant class background by virtue of a certain cultural competency established through the families  
26 rearing/ socialization process. Educational instructions similarly contribute to this reproduction process by  
27 designing and implementing curricula which rewards the cultural capital of the dominant class. Conversely, the  
28 public educational apparatus systemically and continually misunderstands the social/cultural capital of the many  
29 subordinate classes in the U.S.A. today, often leading to educational failure of these children.

30 Generally, it is common knowledge that both poor/working class and middle class parents want their children  
31 to succeed in school. However, the social position of each class leads its members to employ different means to  
32 this end. Poor/Working class parents depend on the teacher to educate their children (often because they are  
33 less educated than the teacher), assuming that the teacher is the only mediator of educational success. On the  
34 other hand, the middle class educated parent tends to actively participate in the supervision and monitoring of  
35 his/her children school activities. Indeed, the middle class educated family assumes that if their child is failing  
36 in school, it is the fault of the teacher. Lamont/Lareau concluded that the educational values of both groups  
37 of parents did not differ. What did differ however was the manner in which they stressed academic success. The  
38 middle class educated parents viewed their child's education as a shared experience between teacher and parent.  
39 The poor/working class parents on the other hand, relinquished all responsibilities for their children's education  
40 to the teacher (Lamont, M. & Lareau A. 1988).

41 In 2009 a longitudinal study entitled "Long-term Effects of Parents' Education on Children's Education and  
42 Occupational Success" (Eric Dubow, Paul Boxer and L.Rowell Huesmann 2009) followed children from the of  
43 ages 8, 19, and 48 years old. These data suggested that the middle class parent's education and occupation had  
44 a profound influence on their child's educational and occupational trajectory. These children's I.Q., educational  
45 and occupational outcomes where all affected positively by the age of 48.

46 Data in yet another longitudinal study entitled "Fathers Education and a Function of Human Capital"  
47 suggested that Fathers' education and house hold income had a profound influence on graduation from a public

## 2 III. DISCUSSION

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48 urban technical college. If the father graduated from college, and the total house hold Income was 135,000.00 (in  
49 New York City) the student has a 25 % greater chance of graduating from this college over those who did not  
50 have this family background( Gerardi,S. 2011).

51 Moreover, the so-called Boat People of Southeast Asian during the 1970's where poor, had no or little English  
52 experience, and live in urban settings; yet their children excelled in the public school systems around the U.S.A.  
53 According to Caplan, Choy and Whitmore this was the result of the family's culture and behavior in support of  
54 academic achievement for their children (Caplan, N, Choy, M, Whitmore, J. 1992).

55 Finally, the reading achievement gap among the families in the 90 th

## 56 1 II. Language Acquisition

57 Basil suggested that language, coding, curriculum and the transmission of knowledge is an important interpretation  
58 of Socio-economic Status in American society. Bernstein's concept of Code Theory is central to his analysis  
59 of the transmission of knowledge. Code refers to a social principle which underlies and defines the curriculum.  
60 Curriculum according to Bernstein is the "valid" knowledge transmitted via pedagogy. Both curriculum and the  
61 transmission of knowledge are located in language usage. Furthermore, language usage and interpretations are  
62 determined by class, hence acting as a function of social identification Bernstein further suggested a distinction  
63 between language used by the poor/working class referred to as "public language," and the language-use of the  
64 middle class or "formal language." Bernstein argues that formal language has a greater number of possibilities due  
65 to the fact that it is more complex than "public language. Formal language permits higher order understanding  
66 by stressing the significance of concepts. Conversely, public language is limited in symbolic expression. It consists  
67 of words used as part of simple statements in the description of lower order concepts. Public language's emphasis  
68 is on emotion rather than logical implications. Therefore, formal language underlies the attitudes and values  
69 found within the educational setting.

70 Generally the use of public language is not a significant problem except in the superior/inferior relationship of  
71 teacher and student. Teachers in the school environment use formal language in the transmission of knowledge.  
72 Within the school environment public language users are often viewed as hostile, aggressive, and rude, further  
73 reflecting social class distinctions. The result may be a perception that the student is less intelligent. Essentially  
74 the breakdown of communication between teachers and the poor/ working class child may result in a learning  
75 resistance and the failure of the child. On the other hand, the language mode of the educated middle class  
76 background child is that same mode found in the educational setting foster academic success. Bernstein concludes,  
77 and this effort must also conclude that language affects the learning situation in the public school environment  
78 (Bernstein, Basil. 1975).

79 Hence, American Literacy problems are not the sole fault of the teacher; rather rooted in the parent's  
80 inability to promote positive literacy and linguistic interactions in the home. Moreover, the importance of  
81 the family mealtime (in the middle class family structure) where there is quality conversation during mealtime is  
82 a stronger predictor of how successful a child's language and literacy development will be later on in life. When  
83 educated parents have complex conversations, it provides the child with rich explanation, helping the children to  
84 contextualize the concepts. Furthermore, dynamic language used at home also is correlated to the child's success  
85 and ability to move up in the social class of society (Dickerson & Tabor, 2001).

86 At the foundation of socio-cultural contexts, students' family related factors are regarded as the most powerful  
87 external factors on the development of students' academic achievement Therefore, parental influences, such as  
88 expectations and involvement, consistently promote students' academic.

89 This further emphasizes that the social origins of parents are actively involved with their child's education  
90 has a profound influence on academic success. T-score data in a study entitled Sociocultural Approach on  
91 Mathematical Learning Difficulties" (suggested that: 1) the father's language and education is correlated to  
92 the children's mathematical skills, 2) Mother's language use and education is correlated to children's linguistic  
93 expression, and 3) the father's language and educational level is correlated to children's task-orientation (Piia  
94 Vilenius-Tuohima, 2005).

## 95 2 III. Discussion

96 This effort converted all significant T=scores (found in the above cited studies) into percentages The goal being  
97 to assess the impact of parents' social background on their children's educational and occupational trajectory as  
98 adults.

99 Based upon the T=Score conversions, if the parents are English proficient and have completed college or  
100 greater there is an 86 % greater chance of impacting positively their child's education and his/her occupation at  
101 the age of 46 year old.

102 Although this effort strongly suggested the importance of the middle class parent's education and occupation  
103 on their child's social and educational trajectory; the countervailing issue here is that the majority of the publicly  
104 educated students is from poor/working class backgrounds, often are not English proficient. Consequently, only  
105 14% of these public school students have a chance (statistically) moving into a middle class trajectory in their  
106 within life-time.

107 Given these data there needs to be programs which press upon the parents the importance of taking an equal  
108 role with the teachers, in their child's education.

109 One such program is Dr. Joyce L. Epstein of the Center on schools, Family and community partnerships  
110 "National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement programs". This program has six types of parent involvement:  
111 1) Parenting-which supports the school environment; 2) Design strong school-to-home communication; 3)  
112 volunteering of parents for help and support; 4) Learning at Home-provide information to parent on how to  
113 help their children to study and plan for college; 5) Decision Making-include parents in school decisions; and  
114 6) Collaborating Community- identify community resources that may improve life chances. By employing these  
115 6 sample steps the class educational and career trajectory of the poor/working student may well be improved  
116 significantly.

### 117 **3 IV. Conclusion**

118 As this effect suggested, parents' Human Capital is an important resource for the social growth of the children.  
119 Indeed, James Coleman referred to this concept (within education) as Social Capital. Social capital is a set of  
120 skill-sets, experiences, and knowledge that are found in family life which contributes to the child's social and  
121 academic growth increasing the child's social and occupational trajectory as adults (Coleman, J. & Hoffer, T.  
122 1965, Public and Private Schools. New York: Basic Books).

123 To sum up, this effort suggested that the family's social capital (Social Background) is more important than  
124 the quality of the school, the teacher's skills and the curriculum for educational success in the public school  
125 system of the U.S.A.

### 126 **4 Global Journal of Human Social Science**

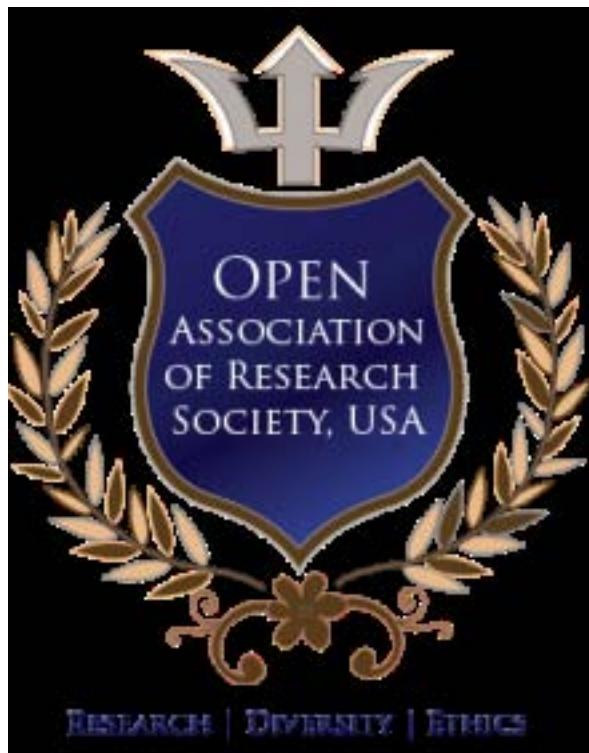


Figure 1:



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