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Compounding Educational Disabilities And Covid 19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This effort will suggest that the compounding educational disabilities of poor/working class students in the nation's educational system has been further exacerbated by the Covid 19 Pandemic and school closings in the USA.

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Introduction:

The mass public educational movement in the USA has its roots in the society that evolved after the Civil War. In 1820 seven out of ten Americans were farmers. During the 1870's farmers comprised half of the work force. However, since the Civil War, especially over the last 25 years, there has been rapid growth in the salaried middle class, and the rise in the technical class requiring formal educational credentials ^[2]. As a result of this major economic/social change from agricultural to salaried middle class, formal education has become increasingly important in post-modern society. Indeed, *Human Capital Theory* has become a social necessity /norm. Human Capital suggests that citizens should invest in education, technical skills and common values as a personal investment and in the advancement prosperity of society. Thus, from the Human Capital Theory perspective the individual citizen is a capitalist functioning in a capitalist nation according to social norms, which advances the individual and society.

Indeed, evidence has been amassing suggesting in post-modern society (such as the U.S.A.) a formal education is critical for the sustained social and economic growth of nations and individuals^[1]

Moreover, studies have shown that the number of years of education is a strong determinant of occupational achievement with social origins held constant ^[1].

Furthermore, recent data suggests that Human Capital growth has advanced at a much faster rate than conventional capital

spurring technological innovation and increased productivity of labor. Lastly, Human Capital Theory data has shown that there is a correlation between per-capita income and levels of education.

Covid 19 Pandemic: Compounding Educational Disabilities and the loss of Human Capital for the Poor and Working-Class:

Whether the sociological perspective is the

influence of family background on school and occupation achievement (Status Attainment approach), or the mode of production in material life Marxist approach), or the language-use at home and at school (socio-linguistic approach), or cultural socialization (cultural reproduction), or the changing needs and requirements of society's educational demands (Structural-Functionalist approach), students from poor/working class backgrounds, do poorly in school relative to the middle class. Indeed, by any measurement they drop out more often than their middle-class contemporaries, score lower on standardized tests and achieve lower high school averages. If college bound they are admitted to a Community College, where these students achieve lower grade point averages, earn fewer credits, drop out more frequently and take longer to be graduated ^[2].

Without exception these poor educational outcomes can be traced to a number of long-standing educational policies enacted in order to create a more efficient and allegedly humane manner of educating students with different learning styles (i.e., ability group assignments, General curriculum tracking, so on) ^[2]

At first glance these educational policies seem independent from one-another, however in the educational continuum of the individual, especially for the individual assigned to the lower ability group (at the primary school level) and the non-college preparatory curriculum (within the high school), for whom the poor/working class are predominant, the educational effect is cumulative in nature; creating student biographies and identities which crystallizes during the individuals' educational life cycles (primary to secondary schools and beyond) referred to as Compounding Educational Disabilities ^[2].

Another significant factor of Compounding Disabilities is the teacher's initial impressions of student ability. This impression is centered around social class, and the family's culture/social background of the student.

There is evidence suggesting that children of the Middle class inherit diverse cultural knowledge,

skills, norms, styles of dress and linguistic abilities than do the children of the poor/working class. Consequently, the school culture is based in Middle-class values, thus rewarding students with Middle Class background, and by virtue of cultural competency established through family socialization. Hence these students are provided with the means to succeed in schools, implicitly do so. Thus, Schools similarly contribute to this reproduction process by designing and implementing curriculum that rewards the cultural capital of the dominant class, while systemically and continually devaluing, demeaning, and debasing the cultural capital of subordinate classes [2]

Additionally, another compounding disability is that the parents of poor/working class and middle-class want their children to succeed in schools, however each social class's culture effects this end differently. The working-class parents depend on the teacher and the school to educate their children, by contrast the middle-class parent actively participates in the supervision and monitoring of his/her child's school achievements (e.g., middle-class parents viewed their child's education as a shared experience between teacher and parent. On the other hand, the working-class parents turned all responsibilities of their children's education to the teacher and school).

Furthermore, language comparisons of working and low SES families and middle-class families suggest that there may be a differential between the language of the home and the language of the schools, especially among the working class and low SES background students [3].

Thus, the school Curriculum is based in middle class knowledge and values, and the transitions of this middle-class knowledge/values can be confusing to the working class/poor student, followed by the loss of learning and poor educational outcomes.

Covid 19, Poor/Working Class Student: and Compounding Educational Disabilities:

As was mentioned above, school policies create an educational identity continuum of the

individual for whom poor/working class students are predominant. The educational effect for the student is cumulative in nature over a lifetime leading to negative educational outcomes, and loss of life-time earnings.

According to National Academy of Science of the United States, Covid 19 has had a negative effect on lifelong learning of all students but has had a greater impact on the poor/working class[5]. The estimate of educational loss is about one-fifth of a school year, the same period that schools remained closed. Furthermore, educational loss in less-educated homes of the poor/working class has increased educational disabilities, widening the educational gap (between poor/working class individuals and the Middle-Class individuals).

The *McKinsey Report* suggested that poor/working class students suffered more learning loss than Middle/Upper class students (about 1 to 3 months of learning loss for the middle-class student), and for the poor/working class students about 3 to 5 months) [4]. Hence, the above-mentioned study suggests that all students lost learning time, however the poor/working-class student had the greatest educational loss. The increase in inequality can be seen as a function of school closings and the digital divide. The lack of access to computers, internet, and WIFI which has been widely documented. Indeed, the pandemic changed the manner in which education was transmitted from In-class learning to On-Line learning, thus further compounded the learning disabilities in the electric age. Indeed, that lower-income households were less likely to own computers, internet, and WIFI, or have cable access, (due to competing economic priorities (food, heat, medical and son on), compared to Middle class families, hence the last compounding disability "Digital Inequality."

Conclusion:

As was mentioned above, the COVID-19 pandemic change the manner in which education was delivered in schools from In-class learning to On-Line learning. This issue further

compounded the learning disabilities because of the electric age. Indeed, that lower-income households were less likely to own computers, internet, and WIFI, or have cable access, compared to Middle class families. Lastly, the McKinsey report estimated that for every year increase in education received, there is a 10% increase in lifetime earnings^[4]. This effort will suggest that if this estimated 10% increase in lifetime earnings is correct; then the argument can be reversed in that for every 10% loss in education there will be a 10% decrease in life-time earnings.

To illustrate this point, an individual worker reared as a child in a poor/working-class household during Covid 19 takes a job which earning \$40,000.00 a year (given no pay increase). This individual student now worker, (being the product of the Covid 19 school closings) lost two years of education. Using the 10% factor over that this individual's lifelong career of 40 years, there could be a loss of about \$4000.00 a year. Over the lifelong career of 40years for this individual a loss of \$160,000.00. Therefore, "Compounding Education Disability" will have reared its final ugly head.



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