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Educational Attainment: The Effects of Socioeconomic Differences

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EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:
THE EFFECTS OF SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

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Education has important functions in contemporary American society. In economics, it is considered an investment in human capital which enhances the recipient's future productivity. The U.S. is a nation comprised of ethnically diverse peoples. But unfortunately, the level of educational attainment varies significantly across some of these groups. Past research in economics and sociology has attributed this disparity in achievement to income differentials and changing family structures. It is yet to be determined if cultural values play a major role in the unequal opportunities available to these minority youth.

My research focuses on comparing four prominent population groups in the United States--whites, blacks, Hispanics and Asians-- to determine if socioeconomic background and other intervening factors such as ability and educational aspirations take on culturally different meanings for each group. A sample of 5806 youth between the ages of fourteen and eighteen in 1979 are drawn from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The statistical method of Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis is used to determine the extent that their educational attainment in 1990 has met their earlier aspirations. This step will involve direct comparisons of educational attainment and aspirations between and within these groups.