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EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT DISPARITIES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN
YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

It has been well-documented that education can have a great impact on such factors as socioeconomic status of an individual. The current study explores educational disparities among African Americans in the United States using data from the Education Longitudinal study of 2002. The study sought to examine relationships between race, total household income, family composition, and parent's highest level of education with a respondent's likelihood to attend post-secondary school. Findings indicate that Hispanics and African Americans are less likely to attend post-secondary school than Asians and Whites. The data also indicate that there is a positive correlation between household income and post-secondary school attendance for African Americans until household income exceeds \$100,001. The data indicate that African Americans living in households with both a mother and father were more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents living in households with a single mother and households with a single father. Finally, the data indicate that African American respondents whose parents have a bachelor's degree and a graduate level degree or higher are more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents whose parents did not finish high school.

Keywords: African American, Education, Income, Family Composition, Parent Education

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Research regarding factors that contribute to educational inequality among African American youth is of considerable social, economic, and political importance due to the correlation between educational achievement and socioeconomic status. In the US, education can have a significant effect on the socioeconomic status of an individual; several of these factors will now be examined.

Of primary importance is the direct impact education levels have on income. There is a positive correlation between educational attainment and income levels. With a higher degree of education comes an expectation of increased employment and salary opportunities (Blanden, Gergg, & Machin, 2004). Not only does a higher income from an increase in education allow an individual upward mobility, it provides the opportunity for an individual to invest in greater resources such as real estate and other monetary assets. This can directly impact the area of residence in which an individual can afford to live. Furthermore, higher levels of income can limit an individual's ability to afford more nutritious foods which could possibly lead to imbalanced diets and less healthy lifestyles.

In addition, education may have a negative correlation with fertility. Individuals with higher levels of education tend to have fewer children than individuals with lower levels of education. This directly impacts the demographic composition among various segments of the population (Huber, Bookstein, & Martin, 2010). Because individuals that have a lower degree of educational attainment are likely to have a greater number of

children, there are direct policy implications that must be addressed in order to deal with greater fertility rates among less educated segments of society; the greatest of these is the phenomena of exacerbating social inequality. Because the primary beneficiaries of individuals with higher levels of education and income are their children, the social cohorts with less education and income continue to stay disadvantaged (Blanden, Gergg, & Machin, 2002).

Not only does education correlate with income and fertility, it also has a direct relation to crime. Individuals with higher degrees of education are less likely to commit crimes than individuals with lower degrees of education (Lochner and Moretti, 2004). This also has direct policy implications regarding resources that may be needed in order to address the possibility of crime and disorder among certain segments of the population with low education levels. Lochner and Moretti found that increases in education have the greatest impact on reducing murder, assault, and motor vehicle theft rates (Lochner and Moretti, 2004).

Furthermore, education also directly impacts political activity. People with lower levels of education are less likely to be informed about governmental policies and are less likely to be politically active than individuals with higher levels of education. There is a consistently documented relationship between political participation and educational attainment (Berinsky and Lenz, 2011). Because of this, the needs of people with lower degrees of education are less likely to be addressed by local and national politicians because they do not constitute a politically powerful constituency.

In the United States, African Americans tend to have lower education levels when compared to other racial groups, such as Whites and Asians (United States Census,

2000). The aforementioned factors therefore have a great degree of implications when it comes to analyzing and understanding the African American community. However, it is problematic and erroneous to label Blacks, as an entire racial group, as having a low degree of educational attainment. This is because there exists a great measure of internal variation between Blacks regarding education achievement. Simply looking at Blacks as a whole does little to explore the inner disparities. It is important therefore, that specific factors that influence educational attainment among high school-aged Black adolescents be examined.

Objectives

The objective of the current study is to determine variables that have associations with the educational attainment of African American youth in the United States. The study would seek to identify correlations between factors such as household income, family structure, and parent's highest level of income with post-secondary school attendance among youth respondents. The identification of such associations will allow researchers to further analyze how these factors interplay in order to determine their relation to educational achievement.

The study focuses on African American youth for several reasons. African Americans were selected for the study due to their overall lower levels of educational achievement when compared to other groups, such as Asians and Whites (United States Census, 2000). It is this achievement gap that has drawn the most attention in order to identify different variables that have correlations and associations with educational achievement. Youth were selected for the study in order to receive more recent data in

regards to educational achievement as opposed to adults and seniors. Youth were also selected because they are exposed to many influential factors relevant to the study; these include family structure, household income, and their parent's level of education. Youth were selected because they have most recently been subject to these factors and the decision to attend post-secondary school.

The study will address several research questions. One of the central questions is the extent to which household income is associated with an individual's degree of educational attainment. Is an individual residing in a household with a higher level of income more likely to pursue education? Is there a positive correlation between the independent variable, income, and the dependent variable, post-secondary school attendance? The study also seeks to identify if there are any associations between family structure and the likelihood that a respondent will attend post-secondary school. Is a respondent with two married parents living in the same household more likely to attend post-secondary school than a respondent with only one parent residing in a household? Does a child living with a parent and a guardian have a lower probability of attending post-secondary school than a child living with two biological parents? Furthermore, the study seeks to explore any associations between a parent's highest level of education and post-secondary school attendance among respondents. Does a parent's level of education correlate with educational attainment of a child? Is there a positive correlation between higher levels of education of a parent and the post-secondary school attendance of their child? Finally, the study wishes to identify how these associations vary across different races. Do household income, family structure, and parent's highest level of education correlate differently between African Americans, Asians, Whites, and Hispanics?

Hypotheses

The current study will address several hypotheses:

- (1) The study hypothesizes that there is a positive correlation between household income and educational attainment; as total household income increases, a respondent is more likely to report attending post-secondary school.
- (2) The study hypothesize that Blacks with two parents that are married and living in the same household are more likely to have a higher degree of education than Blacks residing in a household with any other family composition.
- (3) The study hypothesizes that there is a positive correlation between a parent's level of income and the educational attainment of a child; as the parent's highest level of education increases, a child is more likely to attend post-secondary school.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Significant research has been conducted regarding the relationship between socio-economic status, family structure, parent's level of education, and other factors on educational attainment among adolescents in the United States. Findings have generally indicated that household income has a positive correlation with childhood education achievement, while families with single-parents have little-to-no relationship with the educational attainment of a child. Furthermore, studies have found that higher levels of a parent's education correlate with an increase in educational attainment among adolescents.

Boggess (2008) examines the effect of family structure and economic status on high school graduation and completed education by race and gender. The data for this study was gathered from the first twenty-one waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. The PSID is a longitudinal survey administered annually by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center (SRC). The sample used in this study consists of 1985 respondents who turned 17 between 1969 and 1985 and who were dependent children of panel families at age 17 (Boggess, 2008). Results indicated that family income has a positive correlation with the educational attainment of white males, white females, black males and a borderline significant effect on the educational attainment of black females. Additionally, Boggess found that living with a widowed, divorced, or separated mother has little or no effect on educational attainment once we control for

economic status (Boggess, 2008). This study is important to the current research because it demonstrates a positive correlation between income and educational attainment while simultaneously demonstrating that there is no significant relationship between single mother households and educational attainment when one controls for socio-economic status.

Ku and Plotnick (2000) also studied the correlation between socio-economic status and educational attainment. This study estimates the relationship between parental welfare receipt and children's adulthood educational achievement. The data also came from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), 1968–1997 (Ku and Plotnick, 2000). The sample for models of completed schooling years consists of 1,219 children who were born between 1967 and 1974. The sample for models of high school graduation includes 2,512 children who were born between 1967 and 1978. Results from the study found that greater parental welfare receipt is significantly associated with children's decreased educational attainment. It is noteworthy that the relationship between parental welfare receipt and children's educational attainment is not uniform across childhood stages; parental welfare use during early childhood may have little effect on children's later educational attainment (Ku and Plotnick, 2000). This study is significant to the current research at hand because it indicates that there is a negative correlation between increased welfare receipt and educational attainment among children within the household.

Kao and Thompson (2003) provide an overview of recent empirical research on racial, ethnic, and immigrant differences in educational attainment and examine some current theories that attempt to explain these differences. The research also explores group differences in grades, test scores, course taking, and tracking, especially

throughout secondary schooling, and discusses variation in high school completion, transitions to college, and college completion. The results of the study found that Parental education and family income are the best predictors of eventual academic outcomes among youth. Additionally, racial and ethnic gaps in educational achievement and attainment have narrowed over the past three decades. Educational aspirations are universally high for all racial and ethnic groups as most adolescents expect to go to college (Kao and Thompson, 2003). The results from Kao and Thompson (2003) are important to the research at hand because it demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between parental income and educational attainment among minorities in the United States.

Lochner and Moretti (2004) estimate the effect of education on participating in crime. The study first analyzed the effect of schooling on incarceration rates and found that schooling significantly reduces the likelihood of incarceration. The biggest impact of education on crime is observed in reducing murder, assault, and motor vehicle theft rates. The study demonstrated that there is a significant social return on completing high school when it comes to reducing crime rates (Lochner and Moretti, 2004). This study is relevant to the study at hand because it demonstrates that as education levels increase, the likelihood that an individual will commit a crime decreases.

Blanden, Gergg, & Machin (2002) examined the relationship between education and income to see if a correlation existed between the two factors. The study presented education-income relationships from repeated cross-sectional data and further examined data from various birth cohorts. The models from the study reveal a correlation between education and income. As education levels for respondents increase, so does the total

level of household income. The research revealed that the primary beneficiaries of the increase in education and income were the children of the respondents. Due to this, over time, there exists a tendency to increase income inequalities in society with children from more educated parents receiving more societal advantages (Blanden, Gregg, & Machin, 2002). This study is relevant to the current research because it indicates that lower levels of education can contribute to lower levels of income and, subsequently, societal disadvantages.

Lawson and Mace (2010) tested the relationship between socioeconomic factors, such as income, education levels, and family size. The study gathered data through the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) for 14,472 pregnant women in the U.K. The data were collected from self-completed questionnaires over a ten year period by predominantly white women of mixed socioeconomic statuses (Lawson & Mace, 2010). The results of this study found a negative correlation between income and education and fertility. Households with a greater number of children were more likely to be of lower education and income levels. Mothers that were raising a larger number of children reported having a tougher time meeting economic demands than mothers with fewer children. Additionally, children with a larger number of siblings were found to be more likely to experience poverty than those children with lower a number of siblings (Lawson & Mace, 2010). From this study, it was concluded that mothers of higher socioeconomic statuses perceive higher costs of raising children than mothers of lower socioeconomic statuses, resulting in their lower fertility (Lawson & Mace, 2010). These findings support my research due to the fact that they draw a direct correlation between income, education, and fertility. While education and income levels

increase, fertility subsequently decreases. Additionally, the findings indicate that children from higher socioeconomic families are more likely to attend post-secondary school due to the increased parental investment per-child.

Huber, Bookstein, and Martin (2010) also investigated the relationship between socioeconomic status and fertility. The data for this study were gathered using the 5% US census sample from 1980 provided by IPUMS-USA (Minnesota Population Center Integrated Public Use Microdata Series). The study was limited to women in their first marriage, and husbands were only counted if they lived in the same household as the woman. The final sample consisted of 504,496 married couples in the United States between the ages of 45 and 66 (Huber, Bookstein, & Martin, 2010). The results of this study found that a woman's own income and education are negatively associated with her number of children (Huber et al., 2010). However, it was found that there is actually a positive correlation between a husband's education and income levels, and the number of children a wife will have. Because the negative correlation between income and fertility for women is stronger than the positive correlation between income and fertility for men, the study found there is a net negative correlation between income and education and fertility for married couples in the U.S. (Huber et al., 2010). This study correlates with my research because the results were able to draw a connection between education, income, and fertility levels among married couples in the United States. The researchers concluded that as education and income levels increase, the number of children married couples have decreases.

Jerold Heiss (1996) studied the effects of African American family structure on school attitudes and performance. Data for the study was collected from the first two

waves of the High School and Beyond (HSB) study. The HSB study was a large-scale, national, longitudinal survey of students who were high-school sophomores or seniors in 1980. More than 25,000 sophomores from 1,000 schools participated. Heiss concluded that coming from mother-only families has a small negative effect on education aspirations and the likelihood of staying in school. The effect of family structure is substantial only in regard to disciplinary problems. Whites show about the same pattern as Blacks, and contrary to expectations, the effects are not consistently stronger for whites (Heiss, 1996). The results of this study are relevant to the current research because they demonstrate that parental structure may have only a slightly negative relationship with the likelihood of a child staying in school.

Blankston and Caldas (1998) studied the influence of family structure, racial concentration, and socio-economic status on the academic achievement of individual African American and white students. Data for their research was gathered from the 1990 test results of 18,000 10th graders who took the Louisiana Graduation Exit Examination. Blankston and Caldas (1998) concluded that that going to school with peers from female-headed families is a major source of the comparatively weak academic achievement found in schools with a concentration of minority students. However, it does not provide evidence on how female-headed families can lead to problematic school environments. One possible explanation is that this type of family structure may provide inadequate socialization for the children (Blankston and Caldas, 1998). The findings of this study are important to the research at hand due to the fact that a correlation between single-mother households and reduced academic achievement was discovered amongst children and school peers.

List and Wolfle (2000) examined the effect of father's presence on postsecondary educational attainment among whites and blacks. Data for this study were gathered from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS). The total sample size of the NLS survey reached 22,652, and is representative of high school seniors in 1972. The respondents were initially surveyed in the spring of 1972, their senior year of high school. Subsequent follow-up surveys were conducted in 1973, 1974, 1976, 1979, and 1986 (List and Wolfle, 2000). The results of the study indicate that no substantial differences are to be found in educational attainment for whites and blacks when father's presence is controlled. This study is relevant to the current research because it demonstrates that educational attainment is similar for both whites and blacks, and equal changes in either background lead to similar outcomes in postsecondary schooling (List and Wolfle, 2000).

Krein and Beller (1988) examined educational attainment of children from single-parent families and the differences by exposure, gender, and race. Consideration was given to the effect of living in a single-parent family on educational attainment by gender and race. Data were gathered on two generations, mothers and their sons or daughters, from three data sets of the NLS: the 1967-1979 Surveys of Mature Women (mothers), the 1966-1980 Surveys of Young Men (boys), and the 1968-1980 Surveys of Young Women (girls). The final samples consisted of 797 white men and 318 black men aged 28-38 and 938 white women and 491 black women aged 26-36 in 1980 (Krein and Beller, 1988). Findings from the study indicate that the negative effects of living in a single-parent family increase with the number of years spent in this type of family. The negative correlations are greatest during the preschool years, and are larger for boys than girls.

These findings are important to the research at hand because they demonstrate a negative relationship between living in a single-parent household and eventual educational attainment.

As previous studies have concluded, correlations are to be discovered between factors such as household income, family structure, and area of residence on educational attainment among minority youth. The current research seeks to further examine these relationships in regards to African American adolescents in the United States.

Chapter 3

Methods

Sample Description

The Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 is a longitudinal, multilevel study conducted by the United States Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics in order to monitor the progress of a national sample of adolescents as they advance through high school into post-secondary education and/or a field of work. Questionnaires were administered to parents, math and English teachers, school principals, and heads of the school media centers for 750 schools across the United States. The initial sample size consisted of over 15,000 students and parents in 2002. The first follow-up was conducted in 2004 with additional follow-ups occurring in 2006 and 2012. The current study uses the baseline sample to gather data regarding the respondent's race, total household income, and family composition. The follow-up sample from 2006 is utilized to gather data regarding colleges applied to, enrollment in post-secondary education, and high school completion of the respondents.

Study

The Educational Longitudinal Study (2002) tested achievement in reading and math, grades, achievement over time, retention, high school persistence/dropout, and engagement in school. The study also examined social backgrounds of the individuals surveyed. The measures examined were race, sex, family income, family structure and

composition, parent education and employment, languages spoken, health history, and prior school experience. Additionally, the study observed post-secondary education choices as well as the employment opportunity and fields of the respondents.

Questionnaire and Variables

There are four independent variables in the current study: race, family composition, total household income, and highest level of parent's education (including both the mother and father of the respondent). The dependent variable in the current study is post-secondary school attendance by the respondents.

The respondents were asked the following questions in order to determine race; "Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina?" "Please select one or more of the following choices to best describe your race." Race of the respondents was measured on a range from 1 to 7: *American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic* (1), *Asian, Hawaii/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic* (2), *Black or African American, non-Hispanic* (3), *Hispanic, no race specified* (4), *Hispanic, race specified* (5), *More than one race, non-Hispanic* (6), *White, non-Hispanic* (7). The respondents were asked these questions in order to determine the racial composition of the sample. The current study uses this data in order to determine the differences in post-secondary school attendance by race of the respondents.

The parents were asked the following questions to determine family structure: "What is your relationship to the tenth grader named on the front cover?" "Does one or both of your tenth grader's biological or adoptive parents live in the same household as you and your tenth grader?" "Do you have a spouse or partner who lives in the same household as you and your tenth grader?" Family composition was measured on a range

of 1 to 9: *mother and father* (1), *mother and male guardian* (2), *father and female guardian* (3), *two guardians* (4), *mother only* (5), *father only* (6), *female guardian only* (7), *male guardian only* (8), and *lives with student less than half time* (9). These questions were asked in order to determine the number of parents or guardians living with the student and their relation to the student. This data will be used to determine whether the differences in family composition have a correlation with post-secondary school attendance for the student in the household. The data will also be examined in relation to differences between race.

The Respondents were asked “What was your total family income from all sources in 2001? (If you are not sure about the amount, please estimate.)” Total family income was measured on range from 1 to 13: none (1), \$1,000 or less (2), \$1,001-\$5,000 (3), \$5,001-\$10,000 (4), \$10,001-\$15,000 (5), \$15,001-\$20,000 (6), \$20,001-\$25,000 (7), \$25,001-\$35,000 (8), \$35,001-\$50,000 (9), \$50,001-\$75,000 (10), \$75,001-\$100,000 (11), \$100,001-\$200,000 (12), \$200,001+ (13). This question was used in the current study because it determined the approximate amount of money earned within a given household for the fiscal year 2001. This data will be used to determine whether or not there is a correlation between household income and post-secondary school attendance of students. This data will be used to examine the differences between Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites.

The base year questionnaire distributed to parents asked the following question: “What is the highest level of education you and your spouse/partner have reached?” Parent’s highest level of education (including both mother and father’s highest level) was measured on a range from 1 to 5: *did not finish high school* (1), *graduated from high*

school or GED (2), attended 2-year school, no degree (3), graduated from 2-year school (4), attended college, no 4-year degree (5), graduated from college (6), completed master's degree or equivalent (7), and completed PhD, MD, other advanced degree (8).

This question is necessary for the study at hand because it is used to determine the highest level of education reached by the student's parents. This is for both the mother and father. These data will be used to determine whether or not there is a correlation between parent's level of education and post-secondary attendance by children. This data will be examined between Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites in order to examine correlation between parent's highest level of education and post-secondary school attendance by children of each race.

In the second follow-up, students were asked "Now, we want to know about any schools you may have attended since high school, [even ones you have not already named/even if you did not apply. (Some schools do not require an application for admission. They admit all students who register for classes.)] Since you [received your high school diploma/received your high school certificate of attendance/received your GED or other equivalency/completed high school/left high school], have you attended a college, university, vocational-technical or trade school where you took courses for credit? (Please include all schools, even if you have not completed a course.)" Post-secondary school attendance is measured on a scale from 0 to 1 indicating whether the respondent has attended post-secondary school or not; no (0), and yes (1). This question was asked in order to determine whether or not the student has ever attended or taken courses at a post-secondary institution since the completion of their GED or graduation from high school. This data is used in the study at hand because it is used at the

dependent variable upon which the independent variables are tested against. This data will be used to determine whether variations in family composition, total household income, and parent's highest level of education have a correlation with a student's attendance of post-secondary schools.

Recoding

The independent variable for total household income in the current study is now measured on a range from 1 to 5; \$0-\$20,000 (1), \$20,001-\$50,000 (2), \$50,001-\$75,000 (3), \$75,001-\$100,000 (4), \$100,001+ (5).

Chapter 4

Descriptive Findings

Table 1. Summary Statistics

		Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Household Income	\$0-\$20,000	21.10%	28.51%	23.68%	7.98%
	\$20,001-\$50,000	36.37%	42.82%	46.41%	32.64%
	\$50,001-\$75,000	16.37%	13.96%	14.43%	24.03%
	\$75,001-\$100,000	11.37%	8.37%	8.07%	16.33%
	\$100,001 +	14.79%	6.34%	7.40%	19.02%
Family Composition	Mother and Father	73.11%	35.34%	58.04%	67.86%
	Mother and Male Guardian	8.99%	15.77%	14.83%	12.06%
	Father and Female Guardian	3.52%	3.04%	3.72%	3.19%
	Mother Only	11.65%	43.58%	20.03%	13.74%
	Father Only	2.73%	2.28%	3.39%	3.15%
Parent's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	13.60%	5.71%	27.12%	2.51%
	High School Graduate	18.30%	31.91%	28.24%	24.30%
	Associate Degree (2-year)	8.23%	16.74%	12.09%	14.09%
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	32.41%	27.48%	18.89%	31.69%
	Graduate-level Degree +	27.46%	18.17%	13.65%	27.41%
Mother's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	25.51%	17.42%	41.38%	7.01%
	High School Graduate	22.13%	34.93%	28.28%	32.75%
	Associate Degree (2-year)	8.27%	17.34	9.76%	15.20%
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	30.67%	21.06%	13.50%	30.02%
	Graduate-level Degree +	13.42%	9.25%	7.09%	15.02%
Father's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	21.79%	17.80%	44.71%	8.69%
	High School Graduate	20.30%	44.99%	26.28%	35.85%
	Associate Degree (2-year)	8.29%	8.86%	7.43%	9.57%
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	26.26%	17.08%	12.33%	24.69%
	Graduate-level Degree +	23.37%	11.27%	9.25%	21.21%
Number of Respondents		1,074	1,118	1,427	5,456

Table 1 shows the total percentage of Asian, African American, Hispanic, and White respondents that make up the measured degrees of the independent variables in the current study: household income, family composition, parent's highest level of education, mother's highest level of education, and father's highest level of education.

In terms of household income, the data demonstrate that Asians and Whites have a much greater percentage of respondents reporting higher incomes than Hispanics and African Americans. Conversely, African Americans and Hispanics have a higher percentage of respondents reporting lower household income levels than Whites and Asians. Overall, the data reveals that Whites report the highest household income levels. With 19.02%, Whites have the highest percentage of respondents reporting household income in excess of \$100,001. Whites also have the lowest percentage of respondents reporting income below \$20,000, with only 7.98%. African Americans report the lowest levels of household income. With 28.51%, African Americans have the greatest number of respondents reporting household income levels below \$20,000. African Americans also have the lowest percentage of respondents reporting household income greater than \$100,001, with only 6.34%.

The data for family composition reveal significant differences between the races. Overall, Table 1 demonstrates that Asians and Whites have the greatest percentage of respondents reporting living in a house with both a mother and a father and the lowest percentage of respondents reporting living in a household with only one parent. African Americans and Hispanics report the highest percentage of respondents living with only one parent, and the lowest percentage of respondents living in a household with both a mother and a father. With only 34.35%, African Americans have the lowest percentage of

respondents reporting living in a household with both a mother and father. Additionally, African Americans report 43.58% of respondents living in a household with only a mother present. This number is significantly higher than Asians, Hispanics, and Whites.

The data for parent's highest level of education demonstrate that Asian and White respondents report a higher percentage of parents with a bachelor's degree and graduate level degree than African American and Hispanic respondents. Whites and African Americans have the lowest percentage of respondents who report that their parents did not finish high school with 2.51% and 5.71%, respectively. African Americans have the greatest percentage of respondents who report that their parent's highest level of education is a GED, or high school graduate. Hispanics have the lowest percentage of respondents who report their parent's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree or graduate level degree with 18.89% and 13.65%, respectively. Parent's highest level of education is further broken down to show mother's highest level of education and father's highest level of education. Data for the highest level of education for the mother and father of the respondents is similar to that of the overall parent's highest level of education. The data indicate that African Americans and Hispanics have the lowest percentage of respondents who report that their mother's and father's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree or graduate level degree. Overall, Hispanics report the lowest levels of education for both their mother and father, while Asians and Whites report the highest levels of education for both their mother and father.

Table 2. Post-Secondary School Attendance by Race of Respondent

Race	Ever Attended Post-Secondary School?
Asian	86.65%
African American	67.93%
Hispanic	63.88%
White	79.14%

The results in Table 2 indicate great differences in post-secondary school attendance by race of the respondents. In the current study, post-secondary attendance is the dependent variable which will be analyzed controlling for household income, family composition, and parent's highest level of education. Asians have the overall highest level of post-secondary school attendance with nearly 87% of respondents reporting attending post-secondary school. This rate is significantly higher than Whites, Hispanics, and African Americans. Whites have the second highest rate of post-secondary school attendance at 79%. African Americans have the second lowest rate of post-secondary school attendance. Only 68% of African American respondents reported attending a post-secondary school. The data indicate that Hispanics have the lowest rate of post-secondary school attendance with only 64% of Hispanic respondents attending post-secondary school. Overall, the data indicate the African American and Hispanic youth minorities have the lowest levels of post-secondary school attendance in the United States, while Whites and Asians attend post-secondary school at much higher rates.

Table 3. Post-Secondary School Attendance by Respondent's Race and Family Composition

Family Composition	Post-secondary School Attendance			
	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Mother and Father	89.20%	76.08%	68.20%	84.41%
Mother and Male Guardian	74.48%	67.49%	55.51%	67.15%
Father and Female Guardian	76.74%	66.67%	51.72%	58.13%
Mother Only	83.21%	63.56%	64.83%	74.13%
Father Only	79.31%	46.43%	54.09%	68.26%

The results in Table 3 indicate that rates of post-secondary school attendance vary greatly by family composition both within and between races. The data demonstrates that the greatest rates of post-secondary school attendance across all races are seen when both mother and father are present in the respondent's household, while the lowest rates of attendance for both Whites and Hispanics are seen when the father and a female guardian reside in the household. The lowest rates of attendance for Asians occur when the mother and a male guardian reside in the household, while the lowest rates among African Americans occur when only the father is present. A possible explanation for the decreased post-secondary school attendance among youth of non-traditional households is higher rates of poverty among these families that tend to be negatively correlated with children's education. Furthermore, children of non-traditional households may be insufficiently socialized into the academic realm which deters post-secondary school interest (Blankston and Caldas, 1998). Overall, the data indicate that Asians and Whites have the highest rates of attendance across the range of family composition while Hispanics and African Americans have the lowest rates of attendance. Among African

Americans, the data demonstrates that 76% of respondents reported attending post-secondary school when both the mother and father were present. However, only 46% of African American respondents attended post-secondary when only a father was present; in short, the negative effect of in a single-parent family is greatest among African Americans. Similar rates of post-secondary school attendance among African Americans are observed when there is a mother and male guardian in the household and when there is a father and female guardian in the household; at 67% and 66%, respectively.

Table 4. Post-Secondary School Attendance by Respondent's Race and Total Household Income

Household Income	Post-Secondary School Attendance			
	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
\$0-\$20,000	76.62%	57.09%	53.11%	53.57%
\$20,001-\$50,000	86.05%	66.07%	59.69%	69.54%
\$50,001-\$75,000	88.88%	80.17%	70.03%	81.72%
\$75,001-\$100,000	90.84%	83.01%	83.66%	88.21%
\$100,001 +	97.84%	81.25%	89.85%	94.11%

The results in Table 4 indicate that rates of post-secondary school attendance also vary greatly by total household income both among and between races. Across all races, the lowest levels of post-secondary school attendance occur when total household income is between \$0 and \$20,000. The highest rates of post secondary attendance among Asians, Hispanics, and Whites occur when total household income is greater than \$100,001, while the highest rates of post-secondary school attendance among African Americans occurs when total household income is between &75,001 and \$100,000.

Overall, the data reflects a positive correlation between household income and post-secondary school attendance; as household income increases, so do the rates of post-secondary school attendance. Possible explanations for this association stem from financial ability for students to afford going to post-secondary school. Additionally, there may be a decrease in desire to attend post-secondary school due to the increased likelihood that parents of lower income respondents did not attend post-secondary educational institutions (Ku and Plotnick, 2000). Among African Americans, the data demonstrates that the rates of post-secondary school attendance increase as household income increases also. The data show that the peak rate of attendance among African Americans (83%) occurs when total household income is between \$75,001 and \$100,000. The rate of African Americans attending post-secondary school drops slightly to 81% when total household income is greater than \$100,001, however. Overall, African Americans have lower rates of post-secondary school attendance than Whites and Asians and have higher rates than Hispanics only when total household income is between \$0 and \$75,000.

Table 5. Post-Secondary School Attendance by Respondent's Race and Parent's Highest Level of Education

Parent's Highest Level of Education	Post-secondary School Attendance			
	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Did Not Finish High School	75.52%	46.16%	50.00%	35.21%
High School Graduate	80.80%	55.81%	53.96%	59.76%
Associate Degree (2-year)	83.90%	67.00%	66.09%	77.47%
Bachelor Degree (4-year)	90.98%	80.41%	78.83%	88.53%
Graduate-level Degree +	96.21%	79.92%	80.29%	93.12%

The data from Table 5 indicate that there is a positive correlation between parent's highest level of education and post-secondary school attendance amongst respondents. Across all races, the data demonstrate that as a parent's level of education increases, so do the rates of post-secondary school attendance amongst respondents. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies. Lawson and Mace 2010 found that as a parent's level of education increase, the likelihood that their children will attend post-secondary school increases. This is because parents with higher levels of education wait longer to have children and perceive higher costs of having children; resulting in more parental and financial investment in children which increases the likelihood that their children will attend post-secondary school (Lawson & Mace, 2010). Overall, the results indicate that lowest rates of post-secondary school attendance occur when the parent has not finished high school. Conversely, the highest rates of post-secondary school attendance among respondents occur when the parent has a graduate-level degree or higher. Overall, Asians have the highest rates of attendance while Hispanics have the lowest levels of attendance. Among African Americans, the data show that only 46% attend post-secondary school when the parent has not finished high school. This is the second lowest rate of attendance for any level of parent's education among all races. The peak rate of post-secondary school attendance among African Americans (80.41%) is when the parent's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree. The rate of post-secondary school attendance among African Americans drops slightly to 79.92% when the parent's highest level of education is a graduate-level degree or higher.

Table 6. Post-Secondary School Attendance by Respondent's Race and Mother's Highest Level of Education

Mother's Highest Level of Education	Post-Secondary School Attendance			
	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Did Not Finish High School	76.49%	47.91%	51.19%	46.44%
High School Graduate	83.57%	59.88%	57.04%	67.97%
Associate Degree (2-year)	90.58%	71.43	70.92%	82.35%
Bachelor Degree (4-year)	93.64%	83.75%	84.40%	91.78%
Graduate-level Degree +	96.32%	85.19%	81.63%	93.00%

In order to better understand the influence of parental education, Tables 6 & 7 examine the respective influences of both the mother's and the father's highest level of education on post-secondary school attendance among respondents. The data from Table 6 indicate that there is a positive correlation between a mother's highest level of education and the rate of post-secondary school attendance among respondents. The table illustrates that as the mother's highest level of education increases, so do the rates of post-secondary school attendance. Overall, the lowest rates of post-secondary school attendance for all races occur when the mother has not finished high school. The highest rates of attendance for Asians, African Americans, and Whites occur when the mother has a graduate-level degree or higher, while the highest rates of post-secondary school attendance among Hispanics occur when the mother's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree. Overall, the highest rates of attendance are seen among Asians and Whites. Among African Americans, when the mother has not completed high school, the rate of post secondary education is only 48%. However, the rate of post-secondary school

attendance increases to 85% when the mother's highest level of education is a graduate-level degree or higher. African Americans have the lowest level of post-secondary school attendance among all races when the mother's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree.

Table 7. Post-Secondary School Attendance by Respondent's Race and Father's Highest Level of Education

Father's Highest Level of Education	Post-Secondary School Attendance			
	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Did Not Finish High School	79.54%	57.90%	52.48%	45.47%
High School Graduate	81.73%	62.69%	59.39%	68.49%
Associate Degree (2-year)	82.95%	70.59%	73.84%	81.00%
Bachelor Degree (4-year)	93.03%	81.00%	76.92%	90.89%
Graduate-level Degree +	96.69%	79.88%	81.81%	93.85%

The data from Table 7 indicate that there is a positive correlation between a father's highest level of education and the rate of post-secondary school attendance among respondents. The table demonstrates that as a father's highest level of education increases, so do the rates of post-secondary school attendance among respondents. Overall, the lowest rates of post-secondary school attendance occur when the father has not completed high school. The highest rates of post-secondary school attendance for Asians, Hispanics, and Whites occur when the father's highest level of education is a graduate-level degree or higher. Overall, the data indicate that Asians and Whites have the highest levels of post-secondary school attendance while Hispanics have the lowest levels of post-secondary school attendance. Among African Americans, only 57% of

respondents report attending post-secondary school when the father has not finished high school. The highest rates of post-secondary school attendance among African Americans occur when the father's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree. African Americans have the lowest levels of post-secondary school attendance among all races when the father's highest level of education is an associate's degree and when the father's highest level of education is a graduate-level degree or higher.

The results from the study at hand suggest that African Americans are subject to several schooling disadvantages when compared to other races, such as Asians and Whites. The results indicate several outcomes that were not surprising. There exist positive correlations between household income and parent's highest level of education with the rate of post-secondary school attendance among African American youth respondents. However, there were also several results that were not expected. Out of all the races in the study, African Americans have the overall lowest percentage of respondents who reported attending post-secondary school. This is largely due to the low levels of post-secondary school attendance when looking at family composition, household income, and parent's level of education. With a shocking 46 percent, African Americans had the lowest level of post-secondary school attendance when only a father was present in the household. Furthermore, when observing total family income, African Americans had the lowest levels of attendance out of all races for income between \$75,001-\$100,000 and \$100,001+. Even more interesting, the rate of African American youth attending post-secondary school dropped from 83.01 percent for income between \$75,001-\$100,000 to 81.25 percent for total household income over \$100,001. This demonstrates that the highest rates of post-secondary school attendance for African

American youth do not occur among the highest household income bracket as do the other races in the study. Additionally, African American youth reported the lowest rates of post-secondary school attendance out of all the races when their parent's highest level of education was a graduate degree or higher. The rate of African American youth attending post-secondary school dropped from 80.41 percent when their parent's highest level of education was a bachelor's degree to 79.92 percent when their parent's highest level of education was a graduate degree or higher. These factors all contribute to the overall disadvantage of African American youth when it comes to post-secondary school attendance and further demonstrate the differences among African American respondents.

Chapter 5

Logistic Regression Results

Table 8. Likelihood of Post-Secondary School Attendance

		Odds Ratio	P-Value
Race	Asian	(1.00)	
	African American	0.27	0.00
	Hispanic	0.22	0.00
	White	0.53	0.00
Household Income	\$0-\$20,000	(1.00)	
	\$20,001-\$50,000	1.29	0.00
	\$50,001-\$75,000	2.03	0.00
	\$75,001-\$100,000	2.64	0.00
	\$100,001 +	4.58	0.00
Family Composition	Mother and Father	(1.00)	
	Mother and Male Guardian	0.52	0.00
	Father and Female Guardian	0.43	0.00
	Mother Only	0.8	0.00
	Father Only	0.55	0.00
Parent's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	(1.00)	
	High School Graduate	1.23	0.03
	Associate Degree (2-year)	2.22	0.00
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	3.70	0.00
	Graduate-level Degree +	4.86	0.00
Number of Observations		7,876	

The data in Table 8 indicate that Asians (reference group) have the highest likelihood of attending post-secondary school. Whites, with an odds ratio of 0.53, are 47% less likely than Asians to attend post-secondary school. The data reveals that Hispanics and African Americans have the lowest likelihood of attending post-secondary

school. African Americans (0.27) are 73% less likely than Asians to attend post-secondary school, while Hispanics (0.22) are 78% less likely than Asians to attend post-secondary school. The p-values for African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites are all 0.00, indicating that the results are statistically significant.

Table 9. Likelihood of Post-Secondary School Attendance for Asians, Hispanics, and Whites

		Asian		Hispanic		White	
		Odds Ratio	P-Value	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Odds Ratio	P-Value
Household Income	\$0-\$20,000	(1.00)		(1.00)		(1.00)	
	\$20,001-\$50,000	1.85	0.01	1.13	0.41	2.03	0.00
	\$50,001-\$75,000	4.14	0.00	1.49	0.07	4.35	0.00
	\$75,001-\$100,000	2.32	0.02	3.70	0.00	7.80	0.00
	\$100,001 +	44.19	0.00	8.15	0.00	17.94	0.00
Family Composition	Mother and Father	(1.00)		(1.00)		(1.00)	
	Mother and Male Guardian	0.56	0.11	0.56	0.00	0.36	0.00
	Father and Female Guardian	0.79	0.68	0.59	0.17	0.28	0.00
	Mother Only	0.79	0.46	0.95	0.75	0.51	0.00
	Father Only	0.51	0.20	0.86	0.68	0.4	0.00
Parent's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	(1.00)		(1.00)		(1.00)	
	High School Graduate	1.42	0.21	1.09	0.56	2.69	0.00
	Associate Degree (2-year)	1.50	0.28	1.58	0.03	5.7	0.00
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	3.59	0.00	2.79	0.00	14.66	0.00
	Graduate-level Degree +	8.16	0.00	3.78	0.00	26.18	0.00
Total Number of Observations		7,876					

The data in Table 9 indicate that, in terms of household income, Asians have the greatest increase in likelihood of post-secondary school attendance over the referenced variable (\$0-\$20,000). Asians with a household income in excess of \$100,001 are 44.2 times more likely to attend postsecondary school than Asians with a household

income of \$0-\$20,000. Whites with a household income in excess of \$100,001 are 17.9 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than Whites with a household income of \$0-\$20,000. However, Hispanics with a household income greater than \$100,001 are only 8.2 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than Hispanics in the reference group. The p-values for these three points are statistically significant. Overall, the data reveals that as household income increases, respondents are more likely to attend post-secondary school. The only exception is that Asian respondents with household income of \$50,001-\$75,000 are 4 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than the reference category, while Asians with household income of \$75,001-\$100,000 are only 2.3 times more likely than the reference group to attend post-secondary school.

The data indicates that for respondents of all races, those living in households with both a mother and father (reference group) have the greatest likelihood of attending post-secondary school. While the data for Asians and Hispanics are not statistically significant, the table reveals that respondents that are living in households with a single father and households with a mother and male guardian are least likely to attend post-secondary school compared to the reference group, respectively. For Whites, the data indicate that those living in households with a mother and male guardian (0.36) and households with a father and female guardian (0.28) are least likely to attend post-secondary than those in households with both a mother and father. The data for these points are statistically significant.

The data indicates that for all races, as a parent's highest level of education increases, the likelihood that the respondent will attend post-secondary school increases as well. Whites have the greatest increase in likelihood of post-secondary school

attendance over the control group (parents who did not finish high school). Whites with parents who have graduate level degrees or higher are 26.1 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than Whites whose parents did not finish high school. Hispanic respondents whose parents did not finish high school are only 3.8 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than Hispanics whose parents did not finish high school. The data for these points are statistically significant.

Table 10. Likelihood of Post-Secondary School Attendance among African Americans

		African American	
		Odds Ratio	P-Value
Household Income	\$0-\$20,000	(1.00)	
	\$20,001-\$50,000	1.43	0.02
	\$50,001-\$75,000	3.26	0.00
	\$75,001-\$100,000	4.98	0.00
	\$100,001 +	3.25	0.00
Family Composition	Mother and Father	(1.00)	
	Mother and Male Guardian	0.68	0.07
	Father and Female Guardian	0.67	0.38
	Mother Only	0.56	0.00
	Father Only	0.27	0.01
Parent's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	(1.00)	
	High School Graduate	0.98	0.97
	Associate Degree (2-year)	1.45	0.23
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	3.08	0.00
	Graduate-level Degree +	3.47	0.00
Mother's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	(1.00)	
	High School Graduate	1.18	0.39
	Associate Degree (2-year)	1.83	0.01
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	4.07	0.00
	Graduate-level Degree +	5.29	0.00
Father's Highest Level of Education	Did Not Finish High School	(1.00)	
	High School Graduate	1.04	0.83
	Associate Degree (2-year)	1.5	0.17
	Bachelor Degree (4-year)	2.5	0.00
	Graduate-level Degree +	3.75	0.00
Total number of observations		948	

The data in Table 10 indicate that African American respondents with household income of \$75,001-\$100,000 are the most likely to attend post-secondary school; these respondents are 5 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents

with household income of \$0-\$20,000 (reference group). However, African American respondents with household income greater than \$100,001 are only 3.3 times more likely than the reference group to attend post-secondary school. The data for these points are statistically significant. Overall, African Americans have the lowest likelihood of attending post-secondary school compared to other races. This is most prominently seen with regards to respondents with household income levels greater than \$100,001.

The data reveals that African Americans in households with both a mother and father (reference group) are most likely to attend post-secondary school. African American respondents who live in a household with a single father are the least likely to attend post-secondary school; these respondents are 73% less likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents who live in household with both a mother and father. African Americans living in a household with a single father are also less likely to attend post-secondary school than Asian, Hispanic, and White respondents with single father households. Only the data for single mother and single father households is statistically significant among African American respondents.

The data for parents' highest level of education reveal that as a parent's level of education increases, so does the likelihood of post-secondary school attendance among African American respondents. African American respondents whose parents have a graduate degree or higher are 3.5 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents whose parents did not finish high school (reference group). However, for respondents whose parent's highest level of education is a graduate degree or higher, African Americans have the lowest likelihood of post-secondary school attendance out of all races in the current study. The data for these points are statistically significant.

The data for parent's highest level of education are further broken down to show both mother and father. For level of education for both the mother and father of African American respondents, the higher the level of education the parent has, the more likely the respondent is to attend post-secondary school. Respondents whose mother has a graduate level degree or higher are 5.3 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents whose mothers did not graduate high school. Respondents whose father has a graduate level degree or higher are 3.8 times more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents whose father did not complete high school. These data points are statistically significant.

Chapter 6

Discussion & Conclusion

The current study has demonstrated that African Americans and Hispanics experience educational disadvantages in relation to other races such as Asians and Whites. Asians have the highest likelihood of attending post-secondary school, followed by Whites. African Americans have a slightly higher likelihood of attending post-secondary school than Hispanics.

This study's first hypothesis was that there would be a positive correlation between household income and the likelihood of a respondent to attend post-secondary school. The data from this study has revealed such a relationship. Both Asian and White respondents experience an increased likelihood to attend post-secondary school as total household income increased. The data for Hispanics was only significant for household income over \$75,001, but demonstrated a positive correlation. The data for African Americans also demonstrated a positive correlation between household income and post-secondary school attendance up until household income reached \$100,000. The data indicated a slight drop in the likelihood to attend post-secondary school among African Americans living in households with total income of \$100,001+. The data also revealed that African Americans living in high income households are less likely than Asians, Hispanics, and Whites to attend post-secondary school.

This study's second hypothesis was that respondents living in households with both a mother and father would be more likely to attend post-secondary school than

respondents living in a household with any other family composition. The data from this study has indicated that such a relationship is only experienced for White respondents. The data for Asian respondents were not significant to make a conclusion about family composition and post-secondary school attendance. The data for Hispanics were only able to indicate that respondents living in a household with a mother and father were more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents living in a household with a mother and a male guardian. For African Americans, the data were only able to indicate that respondents living in a household with both a mother and father were more likely to attend post-secondary school than respondents living in households with a single mother and households with a single father.

This study's third hypothesis was that there would be a positive correlation between a parent's highest level of education and the likelihood that a respondent will attend post-secondary school. The data in this study indicate that this relationship is only evident for Whites. The data for Asians revealed that this relationship exists only for respondents living with parents who have a bachelor's degree and respondents whose parents have a graduate-level degree or higher. For Hispanics, the data indicate that the relationship only exists for respondents with parents who have an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and a graduate level degree or higher. The data for African Americans indicate that a relationship can only be concluded for respondents living with parents who have a bachelor's degree and those whose parents have a graduate level degree or higher. The study also revealed that African Americans with parents who have a bachelor's degree and graduate level degree or higher are less likely to attend post-secondary school than Asian, Hispanic, and White respondents with parents who have a bachelor's degree

and graduate level degree or higher. The data for African Americans were also broken down to show the effect of both the mother's and father's highest level of education. The data indicate that a positive correlation exists between a mother's highest level of education and the respondent's likelihood to attend post-secondary school for respondents with a mother whose highest level of education is an associate's degree, bachelor's, degree, and a graduate level degree or higher. The data indicated that a positive correlation between father's highest level of income and the respondent's likelihood of post-secondary school attendance exists for respondents whose father's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree and a graduate level degree or higher.

Based on the data from the current study, several policy implications could be addressed. First, the study has revealed that Hispanic and African American minorities are disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment when compared to other races such as Whites and Asians. More resources should be apportioned to communities with large African American and Hispanic populations geared toward education promotion. Furthermore, as the study has revealed, respondents in higher-income households have greater likelihoods to attend post-secondary school than respondents living in low income households. More grant and tuition-assistance programs should be geared toward low income students in order to ease the cost of post-secondary school education. Finally, more education assistance programs should be implemented to focus on and address students who live in broken households or who live with parents of low education levels to make the reality of post-secondary school attendance more attainable/desirable.

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