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Project 4

Problem Statement

Draft 1

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We have been hired by a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in California to assess factors that may contribute to unequal access to educational opportunity across regions of the state. These NGOs will use our findings and recommendations to shape their own policy goals and political advocacy.

Research has shown that there are many social determinants of educational success, beyond just any child or young adult’s ability (citations), and that obtaining a 4-year degree from an accredited institution leads to greater prosperity, stability, and quality of life throughout an individual’s lifetime (citations). Therefore, we will use publicly available data about a variety of social conditions across California counties to predict the percentage of the population (25 years or older) who have achieved a 4 year degree. This will allow advocates to become more informed about the disparities in educational outcomes across the state. If a suitable predictive model can be created, it will allow advocates to anticipate the percentage of the county population likely to hold a college degree if current trends continue, and make decisions based on the knock-on effects of degree-holding. Furthermore, if a model suitable for interpretation can be created, it will allow us and advocates to evaluate which social determinants may be the most influential on the rate of degree acquisition, and make policy recommendations accordingly.