

*An Analysis of Disparities in Educational Attainment among
China's Fifty-six Ethnic Groups*

Proposed By: Megan Loria

Research Question: What factors influence the disparities in educational attainment among the people of China? Why are educational attainment levels among people of certain ethnic groups lower than those of the Han majority and/or other minorities?

Outline:

- Introduction
- Context
 - Introduction of China's education system and Ethnic Minorities
 - Interviews
- Descriptive Statistics
- Theoretical Framework
 - Explanatory factors and hypotheses
 - Introduction of control variables
- Empirical Test/Analysis
 - Introduction of dataset/Significance of dataset
 - Regression analyses
- Summary and Conclusions

Theoretical Framework:

I will be analyzing the influence of the following factors:

1. **Ethnicity-** Due to difference in cultural background, ethnic minorities are more likely to drop out of school than Han students (Sun and Xu 2010). Ethnic minorities, particularly those who speak other languages at home face

more obstacles in the education system than the Han majority. There is currently a wealth of literature on ethnic minority educational disparities, but most cases do not look at every single ethnic group separately as I will be doing.

2. **Gender:** Many sources claim that despite steady improvements, females in China are still at a disadvantage when it comes to educational attainment. This gender gap is exacerbated in rural regions where there may be a strong “pro-son bias” or education of girls is seen as a form of consumption while education of boys is considered a type of investment (Song *et. al* 2006).
3. **Household Income:** Children of families with higher income levels are more likely to attain higher levels of education than those of lower income families (Song *et. al* 2006). Families that can afford to send children to school should be more likely to do so than poorer families. The opportunity cost of sending a child from a poor family to school should lead to higher dropout rates among poor families, as the children leave school to work.
4. **Geographical/Regional factors:**
 - a. **Rural/Urban:** In his article from the *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Dr. Guo explains that counties with higher proportions of rural residents “spend significantly less on education than more urbanized counties” (Guo 2006).
 - b. **Topography:** Due to transportation difficulties, education in mountainous areas is more costly (Guo 2006). Consequently, this

topographical factor should negatively affect educational attainment in the area.

c. **Province, City, County**

Methodology:

Qualitative: My thesis will contain a brief qualitative section in which I analyze the responses from several interviews with minority and Han students in Yunnan Province. I will be conducting these interviews in person in December and January.

Quantitative: I will conduct regression analyses using two datasets. The first is the data from China's 1990 1% census. The unit of analysis is individual people. My dependent variable is level of education attained, an ordinal variable coded from 1-illiterate to 7-has attended university, where higher numbers indicate higher levels of schooling reached.

The second dataset I will analyze is from China's 2000 Census. Unlike the 1990 1% Census dataset, this dataset is focuses on individual counties as the unit of analysis. When looking at this dataset, my dependent variable provides nine different levels of educational attainment among each county's residents ranging from "has never attended school" to "has attended graduate school." Through regression analysis, I will measure the explanatory power of the above-mentioned factors on my dependent variable. I will also consider a number of factors, such as age to use as control variables.

Bibliography:

- Cheung, Siu Keung. Marginalization in China. New York [u.a.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- China's Minority Peoples. Beijing: China Pictorial House, 1995.
- Connelly, R. "Determinants of school enrollment and completion of 10 to 18 year olds in China." Economics of Education Review 22 (2003): 379-88.
- Davis, Deborah, Pierre Landry, Yusheng Peng, and Jin Xiao. "Gendered Pathways to Rural Schooling: The Interplay of Wealth and Local Institutions." The China Quarterly 189 (2007): 60.
- Guo, Gang. "Decentralized education spending and regional disparities: Evidence from Chinese counties 1997-2001." Journal of Chinese Political Science 11 (2006): 45-60.
- Guo, Gang. "Persistent Inequalities in Funding for Rural Schooling in Contemporary China." Asian Survey 47 (2007): 213-30.
- Hannum, E., and M. Wang. "Geography and educational inequality in China." China Economic Review 17 (2006): 253-65.
- Hannum, Emily, and Albert Park. Education and reform in China. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Hannum, Emily. "Educational Stratification by Ethnicity in China: Enrollment and Attainment in the Early Reform Years." Demography 39 (2002): 95-117.
- Hannum, Emily, Peggy Kong, and Yuping Zhang. "Family sources of educational gender inequality in rural China: A critical assessment." International Journal of Educational Development 29 (2009): 474-86.
- Hansen, Mette Halskov. Lessons in being Chinese: Minority Education and Ethnic Identity in Southwest China. Seattle: University of Washington P, 1999.
- Kai-yuen, Tsui. "Economic Reform and Attainment in Basic Education in China." The China Quarterly 149 (1997): 104-27.
- Knight, John, and Li Shi. "Educational Attainment And The Rural-Urban Divide In China." Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics 58 (1996): 83-117.

- Lavelly, William, Xiao Zhenyu, Li Bohua, and Ronald Freedman. "The Rise in Female Education in China: National and Regional Patterns." The China Quarterly 121 (1990): 61-63.
- Liang, Wenyan, Longlong Hou, and Wentao Chen. "Left-Behind Children in Rural Primary Schools: The Case of Sichuan Province." Chinese Education & Society 41 (2008): 84-99.
- Liu, Judith, Heidi A. Ross, and Donald P. Kelly. The Ethnographic Eye: An Interpretive Study of Education in China. New York: Falmer P, 2000.
- Pepper, Suzanne. China's education reform in the 1980s: policies, issues, and historical perspectives. Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, Center for Chinese Studies, 1990.
- Shi, Xue Lan Rong, Tianjian. "Inequality in Chinese Education." Journal of Contemporary China 10 (2001): 107-24.
- Song, L., S. Appleton, and J. Knight. "Why Do Girls in Rural China Have Lower School Enrollment?" World Development 34 (2006): 1639-653.
- Sun, Baicai, and Jingjian Xu. "Why Ethnic Minority Children are More Likely to Drop Out of School: A Cultural Capital Perspective." Chinese Education and Society 43 (2011): 31-46.
- Tsang, M. "Financial reform of basic education in China." Economics of Education Review 15 (1996): 423-44.
- Whyte, Martin King. One Country, Two Societies: Rural-Urban Inequality in Contemporary China. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010.
- Zhu, Zhiyong. "Higher Education Access and Equality Among Ethnic Minorities in China." Chinese Education & Society 43 (2010): 12-23.