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
  o Introduction of China’s education system and Ethnic Minorities
  o Interviews
• Descriptive Statistics
• Theoretical Framework
  o Explanatory factors and hypotheses
  o Introduction of control variables
• Empirical Test/Analysis
  o Introduction of dataset/Significance of dataset
  o 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:


