

Honors Thesis Proposal -

Working Title

Country-Level Analysis of Differences in Educational Achievement between East and Southeast Asia

Project Purpose

Isolate key distinctions within educational performances between East and Southeast Asia in order to break down generalizations of Asian educational achievement. This disaggregation of the region will help us to understand important differences in patterns of performance, specifically in achievement gaps between gender and socioeconomic status.

Project Importance

This project will highlight the diversity within Asian educational achievement in order to break down the often lumped sum of Asian accomplishment. By distinguishing between regions we are able to show that Asian countries are often incorrectly categorized as high achieving due to widely held, oversimplified images or ideas of the Asian people and culture. Not only are we breaking down by East and Southeast regions, but we are also breaking down to the group level by gender and socioeconomic status. We do this in hopes of finding strengths of low achieving countries such as smaller achievement gaps by gender or SES status.

Project Overview

Asia has long been praised for its high achieving education attainment, especially in math and science. While this praise is often universally applied to all Asian countries, there exists a concentration of achievement in East Asia, specifically in Hong Kong, Macau, and Singapore. Thus far I have begun a basic analysis of the math achievement scores for all Asian countries/large cities available in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) data set. These include: Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Taipei, Hong Kong, Macau, and Singapore. Based on results from the available years of 2009, 2012, and 2015, I was able to group these countries/large cities together in a meaningful way to find achievement patterns. I then further broke down each achievement score into gender and socioeconomic (SES) status. In doing this I was able to isolate comparable patterns which I will base my further research on.

I have also been working on compiling a lengthy literature review on past research conducted using Asian PISA scores as well as basic information on each country including educational attainment, gender differences in education, academic achievement, and educational practices and policies. I have also been looking at literature that lumps together East Asian countries as well as literature which lumps together Southeast Asia in order to isolate their mechanisms of comparison. This will help me as I transition into defending my rationale of examining East and Southeast Asia separately in order to get a truer understanding of their achievement.

Moving forward I am optimistic that with a deeper dive into the data I will be able to isolate more patterns of comparison that support my thesis of a need of separation of East and Southeast Asia in order to achieve a holistic understanding of Asian achievement. This is an important distinction because of its developmental consequences on the region. In clumping all Asian achievement into one group, we are ignoring many countries' need for important stages in the development process. For example, the needs of low-achieving Indonesia are often ignored

when they are clumped with countries such as Korea and Japan. When Indonesian students are ignored, their needs aren't met and advancement in academics becomes even more difficult. This slows the developmental process for the entire country. When we ascribe to an acute focus on the advancements of only a few countries (which we then generalize to the entire region), we miss the wide breath of needs of individual countries throughout the region. We hope that through this work we will be able to bring this issue to the attention of other researchers who will then begin to disaggregate their findings into country specific data, focusing on individual needs over regional trends.

Qualifications of Thesis Committee

Jacob Rugh – Department Honors Coordinator ✓

Dr. Rugh is the Department Honors Coordinator department of Sociology. I have taken both Urban Sociology and Race & Minority Group Relations from Dr. Rugh. I have also worked closely with him for the past two years as the Sociology department student representative and social media manager.

Jon Jarvis – Faculty Advisor

Dr. Jarvis specializes in globalization and education specifically within Asia and Asian Americans. I have taken a Qualitative Research Methods class from him worked on previous data collection project.

Scott Sanders– Faculty Reader

I have worked with Dr. Sanders on previous research looking specifically at childhood malnutrition in the Philippines. I, along with my research partner, was able to present the research at an academic conference with the help of Dr. Sanders. I have also taken Dr. Sanders' Sociology of International Development class. He specializes in rural communities and development.

Project Timeline

Spring/Summer 2017

- Data Analysis
- Literature Search (what do we have/know)
- Gather three data points (at least)

Fall 2017

- Organize data in a meaningful way
- Write up results in publishable manner

Winter 2018

- Submit to American Sociological Association Conference (January) ✓
- Write up results as thesis

IRB Approval

Exempt

Funding

None

Culminating Experience

Both my faculty advisor and I are eager to present this work at the American Sociological Association Conference. We are also hopeful that we will be able to publish in a journal specializing in education, Asian studies, or sociology.