



Education Inequality and Difficulties Encountered by Chinese Students in the United States Discuss the Situation of Chinese Students

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Abstract. As the largest number of international students in the United States, Chinese students encounter certain difficulties. This paper mainly discusses the education inequality and difficulties encountered by Chinese students in the United States to understand the current situation of Chinese students there. According to the survey, the following six main points were documented: a) language barrier: many Chinese students fail to succeed in academic writing; b) cultural differences: like differences in food and differences in thought and behavior; c) racial discrimination: many Asians encounter racism to varying degrees; d) stereotypes: for example, most Americans think Chinese people are nerds; e) social reproduction: inequality in education caused by the gap between rich and poor, and f) parents' performance: teachers' misunderstanding of Chinese parents due to cultural differences. This article explores some of the problems Chinese students, and provides corresponding suggestions to solve these problems.

Keywords: Chinese students · cultural differences · racial discrimination · stereotypes · parents' performance

1 Introduction

The United States, as a world power, has abundant educational resources. For example, the United States has the most universities in the top 100 in the world-The United States is home to 37 of the world's top 100 universities. As a result, most families who can afford it (middle class and above) choose to send their children to the United States for a better education. And with the development of China's economic capacity and the happiness of its people, more and more Chinese students are going to the United States. According to the survey, there were only about 127,628 in 2009, while in 2019 there were 372,532. And Chinese students make up a large proportion of international students in the United States. According to Eerudera College News, Chinese and Indian students made up 47% of international students in the United States in 2020 [1]. Therefore, it is essential to understand the current situation of Chinese students in the United States. Because thousands of Chinese students are studying in the United States, getting bogged down or confused about cultural differences is easy without understanding the situation.

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Z. Zhan et al. (Eds.): SEAA 2022, ASSEHR 675, pp. 1091–1098, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-05-3_131

The main problems that Chinese students encounter in the United States include: 1) cultural difference (including different language, and cultural misunderstandings, and different traditions); 2) racial discrimination (including discrimination against people of color in schools and difficulties caused by stereotypes); and 3) educational inequality (the gap between rich and poor caused by social reproduction and lack of understanding of educational rules).

First, the cultural differences—Most of the Chinese students studying in the US are non-native speakers and weren't born and raised in America. Their understanding of American culture may come from travel, the Internet, and books, so they are more likely to face many cultural obstacles when living and studying in the United States, and because of the different language, even if they want to communicate with their classmates actively, their classmates cannot understand their meaning or become close friends. Even because of the language barrier, Chinese students cannot finish their homework or actively communicate with teachers, leading to academic problems to a certain extent. For example, Weichen Sun mentioned in his research paper that the main problems Chinese people encounter in the United States are: 1) language barrier, 2) cultural understanding deficiency 3) academic achievement [2]. Furthermore, according to Lareau's report, parents' performance also affects how teachers evaluate their children. Chinese parents are relatively difficult to communicate with teachers as fluently as local parents, which makes Chinese students less competitive than local students [3].

Second, the US education system is also relatively unfair, especially for international students. Social reproduction is, in fact, causing a large part of education inequality. For example, the rich regions in America can always have better education resources. Cory and his group mentioned that there can be educational disparities and inequalities—They had only one excellent school in an affluent part of Chicago. On average, parents spend \$28,639 on each one of their children each year, well above the national average of \$11,841. However, in the poor region in Chicago, the average money that the parents spend on their children each year is around 9794\$ each year, and three schools there even share the teachers. And children come from low-income families. Therefore, it is uncertain whether Chinese students can get into a good school and receive a good education in the United States [4].

Moreover, the ethnic composition of the United States is relatively complicated. As a nation of immigrants, the United States has more than 31 ethnic groups with a population of more than 1 million. The cultural collision between different cultures also leads to Chinese students in the United States being prone to receive discrimination. Therefore, Chinese students need to try to adapt to such discrimination. Because in the United States, there is a small minority of people who adhere to white supremacy, people of other races are easily discriminated against by this group. For instance, the extant literature documents that people of color were more likely to drop out of school or be expelled than white students, and even had a much lower graduation rate than white students. Even Qin Zhang notes in his paper that many Americans believe Asians are easily left out and that the United States is least likely to be friends with Asians [5].

The paper will make a summary based on the actual situation of Chinese students in the United States, existing policies, and some experts' views on the situation of Chinese students. Understand the reasons why Chinese students are experiencing difficulties

and give reference to their papers. All standard paper components have been specified for three reasons: (1) ease of use when formatting individual papers, (2) automatic compliance to electronic requirements that facilitate the concurrent or later production of electronic products, and (3) conformity of style throughout conference proceedings.

2 The Problems for Chinese Students in the U.S.

2.1 Language Barrier

The first problem most Chinese students encounter in the United States is the language barrier. This problem is mainly reflected in a) great obstacles in writing and difficulties in listening and speaking, b) Barriers to the accuracy of language expression, c) Adjustment issue due to the language issue. d) Chinese students are hard to speak English fluently enough. In their research report, Robertson et al. pointed out that the Chinese students met some problems in listening, speaking, and reading. And the language problem of writing is a great concern for international students' academic achievement [6]. A large proportion of Chinese students suffer academic achievements because of these problems. Professors Yanyin Zhang and Yinan Mi conducted an experiment in which they surveyed 40 Chinese students at eight Australian schools who had been learning English for an average age of 9.2 years [7]. They surveyed the degree to which the Chinese students had difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to the experiment, students who have studied in Australia for less than two years have great difficulty in listening and speaking, but students who have studied for more than two years do better. However, in terms of writing, especially academic writing, almost all Chinese students have some difficulties. Thirty-eight out of forty students think they will face a lot of difficulties. In addition, according to the interview of these students, many of them feel that when writing an essay, words fail to express their meaning and it is difficult for the teacher to understand what they really mean. Most non-native speakers will encounter this problem, which is also an important factor affecting their academic performance.

Moreover, another professor Pamela, pointed out that the language barrier is the biggest challenge for international students, which may even lead to adjustment issues—it not only affects students' academic performance and affects their daily communication with peers and teachers [8]. For example, many Chinese students in the United States tend to play with people from the same country because there is no such a big language barrier. As for academic writing, it may take American students one hour to complete the task, but Chinese students need to spend twice or more time to complete it. Furthermore, Professor Ozgur Yildirim did a class participation experiment [9]. There were seven students in total. Three were American students, and the other four were international students. The experimenters recorded each person's performance in class. According to the results, the questions Chinese students answered in class were all short questions and questions with clear answers. But when faced with more difficult questions, international students may respond less positively than American students, not because they don't have the answers, but because of the language problem—they need more time to organize the language and formulate it.

2.2 Cultural Differences

Chinese students in the United States need to adapt not only to the language, but also to the conflicts and misunderstandings caused by diversified cultures. These problems are mainly reflected in the following aspects: a) Americans will misunderstand some Chinese students behaviors, b) The school culture is distinct from that in China; c) There is a big difference between the educational philosophy in China and America. d) Chinese students may not be able to get used to American's eating habits. For example, in Pamela's research, the results of cultural differences implies that American students feel wrongly about the behavior of Chinese international students. Specifically, Pamela interviewed a student who mentioned that girls in China hold hands with each other if they are really good friends and familiar. However, in American culture, holding hands like this might mean that the two girls are in a lesbian relationship [8]. In this way, Chinese students' unintentional actions may cause many American students to misunderstand them, which may cause a lot of trouble. Furthermore, the relationship between students and teachers in China is quite different from that between students and teachers in America. For instance, in his thesis, Guofeng notes that teachers are considered superior people in China and need to be respected. As a result, there is a distance between the student and the teacher. In contrast, in the United States class is informal and students and teachers can talk freely [10]. Such culture shock may lead to Chinese students not adapting to the free and relaxed teacher-student relationship in the United States at the very beginning, and even lead to teachers' misunderstanding of students-Teachers may think that these Chinese students are not active enough.

Moreover, America also has a very different idea of education from China. As Jianhua (1991) says in his paper "American culture values individualism, competition, and independence; in sharp contrast, Chinese culture values collectivism, and cooperation. American culture values self-expression, whereas Chinese culture emphasizes more on self-control" [11]. This difference in educational philosophy also leads to the frustration of Chinese students at the beginning of their study-Compared with the more rigid basic education in China, American education pays more attention to students' self-learning ability. I interviewed a student named M from an International high school in the United States. She told me that she was not used to this learning style at first. In China, her homework is only to complete the exercises after class (that is, to write some questions related to the class content), but in American high schools, the homework usually consists of making power points and some homework that requires thinking and doing by herself.

Last-the food. This is actually something many Chinese students are not used to. Just as Pemela mentioned in the paper: Many Chinese students can't adapt to American food, especially junk food. A female said in the interview that even a lot of Chinese food is Americanized—too much sugar and too much oil. So for many Chinese students coming to the United States, the first thing they need to get used to is American food, including Chinese food in the United States [8].

2.3 Racial Discrimination

As a nation of immigrants, racial discrimination is inevitable in America. Therefore, Chinese students and international students in the United States are more or less inconvenient because of their race. And racial discrimination is mainly reflected in a) unequal treatment of people of color in the schools b) Chinese students can not get the equal chance to get into the university c) More than half of the Asians had experienced the racial discrimination in America d) greater racial discrimination against Asians due to COVID-19. For example, Rebecca et al. did research on racial discrimination in American public schools and found that only one school district out of twelve received a passing grade. There is clear racial discrimination in public schools—For example, people of color are more likely to be fired than whites, are less likely to graduate, and even teachers have teams that don't match the race of their students. It is difficult for Chinese students to succeed in this environment—there are no good teachers and schools are not treated fairly [12]. Moreover, Tsuang mentioned in the paper that according to the report, from 1981 to 1987, Caucasians were more likely to be admitted to Berkeley's Five colleges than Asians, even though Asians had better grades and performance overall [8]. This shows that Asians, even with good grades, are not as competitive as Caucasians. In the case of college applications, the percentage of Chinese students likely to get into good universities is even lower.

Moreover, according to a report by Frank Biasco, many students feel they have been racially discriminated against during their college years. Sixty-one percent of the Asian-Americans surveyed said they had experienced racial discrimination in their own lives, 61% said they had been discriminated against by other minorities, and even 27% said they had been discriminated against by professors [14]. That's a scary statistic, because two-thirds of Asian-Americans suffer from racial discrimination at some point. It is even more difficult for Chinese students in the United States to be discriminated against not only by their classmates but also by their professors.

The most important thing is that the occurrence of COVID-19 may lead to even greater racial discrimination against Asians. According to Bongki and Jungmi's report, racism toward Asians in the United States has surged since the COVID-19 outbreak, with more than 1800 reports of racism related to COVID-19 before May 2020. The majority of Asians who experienced extreme racism were prone to depression [15]. This poses a big problem for Chinese students studying in the United States. It is possible that a large proportion of Chinese students in the US will be harmed by the racial discrimination against Asians caused by COVID-19.

2.4 Stereotypes

Many Americans are not actually racist towards Asians, but stereotypes may lead some Americans to be biased against Asians or Chinese students. This problem is mainly reflected in a) Americans think Asians are very passive in interpersonal communication, a nerd b) Not respecting people's personal space and only hanging out with Asians. For example, according to Qin Zhang's research report, Americans' stereotypes about Asians are the same as they are on TV—such as being excluded from other races, not even forming friendships with them, and being seen as nerds who only study [5]. Moreover,

Racheal and Yanbing point out that there are still negative stereotypes around Chinese students, not just for Asian Americans, but also for international Chinese students. For example, most Chinese are not good at English. And only playing with yellow people, dull, and not social at all, and not even respect for other people's personal space [16]. Some of the stereotypes caused by not knowing Chinese students make it more difficult for Chinese students to communicate with or make friends with local students. Some people may even misunderstand these Chinese students and even stay away from them.

2.5 Social Reproduction

In fact, a large part of the education inequality that Chinese students receive in the United States results from social reproduction. As I mentioned earlier, the gap between the rich and the poor in different areas has led to a huge gap in school standards. Mainly embodied in "field", "cultural capital" and "Habitus" According to the survey, it is difficult for Chinese students or Asian Americans to get into excellent schools. According to the United States' education system, most families will choose to study nearby, and the places where Chinese gather are usually relatively poor areas, which also leads to the poor level of the surrounding schools, and these Chinese children cannot get a good education. As Debbie mentioned in her interview, in Philadelphia's Chinatown in the United States, the surrounding schools are not very good schools, not even a public school, and the community lacks many basic learning conditions—not even a library. Most Chinese students in the area come from low-income families, and the high school graduation rate is extremely low [13].

Moreover, Class can also affect a child's education. Just as Lareau mentioned, children from better families can do some formal after-school activities, such as swimming or these activities, which can greatly help children get into good universities. But some of the extracurricular activities that working-class kids can do are more informal, like watching TV or playing video games [14]. In fact, some Asian Americans come from low income families, education inequality will also occur to a large extent. The American's application system and the theory of social reproduction report that there are some rules about education that only local people may know-For example, how to apply to a good college: Chinese students may only know about improving their grades, but native American students know about the "hidden" rules—such as internships and social activities required to apply to a good college. Therefore, even if Chinese students have good grades, they are not as competitive as local students in college applications.

2.6 Parents Performance

For Chinese students, how their parents behave in front of their teachers can actually affect how teachers evaluate them. As Lareau (2010) points out, "parental behavior can be a crucial determinant of educational performance; the evidence demonstrates that the level of parental involvement is linked to the parents' class position and the social and cultural resources that social class yields in American society. By definition, parents' educational status and material resources increase with social class" [17]. It can be seen that parents' performance in school determines their own social status and status and determines teachers' evaluation of students. However, compared with American

students, parents of Chinese students may not perform as well as that of American students, largely because of the language barrier and cultural differences.

3 Conclusion

Chinese students will encounter many difficulties in studying in the United States—it mainly reflects on following aspects: communication and academic problems caused by language, misunderstandings, and stereotypes caused by cultural differences, unaccustomed life, and educational inequity caused by social reproduction and cultural barriers. For Chinese students, to make life in the United States more convenient, language problem needs to be conquered, and they need to have good writing skills. In addition, it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of American culture through overseas students who have gone to the United States and some social media. However, some problems, such as racial discrimination, are extremely difficult to be solved. Therefore, when Chinese students encounter similar problems, they need to use reasonable ways to solve them, such as reporting to the school or finding Chinese organizations.

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