

Educational Inequality between Rural Children in China and Black Children in the U.S.

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Abstract—Educational inequality is caused by regional economic differences, educational resource allocation differences, class differences, and other factors. The concept of equal rights in education is an extension of equal rights in education's political and economic fields. It refers to an important element of democratization of education, in which people are not restricted by political economy, culture, ethnicity, faith, gender, and geography. In law, people have the same right to education and have the same access to education. Conversely, education inequality still exists, and people suffer from certain discrimination or unfair treatment in education. Despite the rapid economic development in the world in recent years and the obvious progress in education investment and development, inequality in education is still widespread. This paper briefly examines educational inequality in four areas: the differences in education and the pursuit of equality between blacks and whites in American education; the educational problems and social reproduction of children in rural China; the influence of black students in the pursuit of educational equality and the influence of assimilation education; and also gender inequality in the field of education in rural China. Based on the principle of pragmatism, this paper attempts to seek the real reasons and substance behind the phenomenon through the current educational inequality situation to discover the factors that lead to educational inequality.

Keywords—schooling, social reproduction, co-schooling, educational equality, gender inequality

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential factor in the development of society and a way to develop talents in national development. Society or government has to ensure that all people receive adequate education and develop students' talents to ensure the proper development of society. According to Nakajima and Nakamura's education price model, it is easy to see those rich families spend more on education than poor families, and it is common for the poor to be gradually excluded from higher education, resulting in a widening gap between the rich and the poor

[1]. However, the fact is that education is so crucial in such a social environment where students in many countries and regions cannot get a proper education. The reality is that excellent educational resources and opportunities are always associated with socially advantaged families. Socially disadvantaged students are the ones who experience educational inequality. This paper will first analyze the impact of educational and social reproduction issues and gender issues on educational inequality among children in rural China, then analyze the impact of educational inequality on African Americans and the impact of assimilation education on African American students and finally provide conclusions.

II. EDUCATION INEQUALITY

A. Differences in Education between Blacks and Whites and the Pursuit of Equality in American Education

As a multicultural country, the United States has always been proud of its racial diversity. Yet, despite her frantic efforts to indoctrinate the world with ideas of freedom and equality, racial inequality remains deeply rooted in the United States. There are still quite a few black people living at the bottom of society in America. Is it history, or is it black people themselves?

In 1954, the Board of Education of Topeka was considered the most successful example of distributive justice in education. For example, Linda Brown, whose family lives in Topeka, Kansas, spends more than an hour commuting to a black school five miles away. Her father applied to the education board for a nearby school but was rejected because the school was reserved for white children. With the help of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), the case was appealed to the Supreme Court, and school segregation was eventually declared unconstitutional.

In fact, blacks gained theoretical equal rights to education during the civil rights movement. Some affirmative action acts even supported "compensation" for blacks by giving them preferential treatment in college admission and admission. However, this did not significantly improve their situation of oppression.

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Against the background of educational equity and multiculturalism in the United States, the seemingly fair and equal black education actually hides invisible racism and unequal black education. The number and proportion of black teachers in the United States cannot be equal to white teachers, and targeted education for black teachers is lacking. In fact, the concept of “equality means sameness” ignores the uniqueness of black culture. The importance of African-American teacher education lies in its ability to impart a sufficient level of culture and lofty ideals of life to the black world and to spread the seeds of civilization among those who are not only ignorant of words but also ignorant of life. The article also deals with the strategies for improving the quality of education of African-American teachers. Clearly, it points out that the key to the development of African-American education is to let black people control the management and discourse power of education, and “black teachers manage black education”. The report shows that 13 percents of public school students in the United States now need special education. There was an imbalance between the students’ performance, but the factors had nothing to do with their specific physical conditions. On average, 62 percents of black students and 65 percent of Latino students in special education in the United States earn a high school diploma, compared with 76 percent of white students, according to the report.

That is just the national average; some states reflect a bigger gap. In Wisconsin, for example, only half of the black students in special education graduate, while more than 80 percent of white students graduate with a diploma.

Experts report about 85 to 90 percent of special education students can graduate with the support they need. According to the Huffington Post, there are several factors behind this phenomenon.

First, the current Individuals with Disabilities Education Act aims to ensure that students with Disabilities receive public Education with additional help. Extra help can come in many ways, such as a study plan that depends on the student’s individual situation. However, the problem is that the government is not spending as much as it should, accounting for less than 20 percent of college spending on special education, according to the Atlanta Newspaper. That means schools have to plug their own funding gaps at a time when budgets are shrinking. Second, the poorer the school district, the more students from black and Latino communities, which explains why there is such a clear racial gap in special education. But racial disparities persist in some school districts, even after the government allocates a certain amount of money.

Parents’ ability to advocate for their students’ rights is also a factor. Paul Morgan, a professor of education at Pennsylvania State University, told Huff Post. Special services for students with disabilities are difficult to maintain because they are expensive for parents and are not mandatory. Therefore, unless parents have enough resources on information, social networks, and enough time, it is difficult for parents to fight for their children’s rights and interests when they need them. Parents who

lack time to advocate for their children’s rights, or simply do not know that their children are not receiving equal education, put them at a disadvantage.

The Supreme Court has previously ruled in favor of students with disabilities, saying they need more than a program or a diploma, the Washington Post reported. The U.S. government has a lot of work to do to close the racial gap in the special education system. At the same time, parents have a right to know and should be confident that the law will be on their students’ side when necessary.

B. The Influence Faced by Black American Students in Pursuing Education Equality

After the American Civil War, from 1861 to 1865, black students began their difficult and long pursuit of equality in education. With the abolition of black slavery, black education started to usher in a new era. However, although slavery was abolished in law, black people still suffered racial discrimination and oppression in real life. Unfortunately, black students had to be segregated for half a century, when the principle of “separate but equal” gained legal status in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. However, due to the enhancement of black economic power, the improvement of civil rights and the awakening of the pursuit of educational equality, the schooling policy of black students being isolated by whites has been ameliorated. The American government adopted the assimilation strategy in the field of education to improve the educational rights of black students to ease the outbreak of racial conflicts in society. And this education policy is divided into three stages: free co-schooling, compulsory co-schooling and autonomous co-schooling. In this paper, we’ll argue such adverse effects that black students have faced from the segregated phase to mixed-race schools phase because of their own black identity. Although their path to an equal education has been tortuous, they continue to advance.

Due to the legitimacy of the principle of “separate but equal” since 1896, even though blacks were no longer slaves, their social status was still lower than that of whites, which indirectly affected the status of their children in the field of education and led to a lot of discrimination against black students when they receive an education: they had no choice but to accept to enter the segregated schools. To make matters worse, isolated black schools lacked adequate faculty, facilities and funding to compete with white schools. In fact, this segregation policy has been found by scholars that segregated racial schools are almost equivalent to vocational schools, aiming to make black students into cheap labor [2]. This discovery highlighted the gap between the quality of education received by blacks and whites. It revealed the traditional prejudices that believe that black students are not suitable or necessary for academic research.

After World War II, black citizens commenced their struggle for equal educational rights for their children, and the struggle had already achieved initial success in the Brown case in 1954. The judgment in the Brown case meant that the apartheid system was abolished, which

gave black students equal rights to education in law and provided legal protection for the stage of free school cooperation. Unfortunately, due to the *laissez-faire* measures adopted by the southern states, the development of the free cooperative school stage has been slow and difficult. Among 10 southern states, the average proportion of blacks in joint schools was 6.01% [3]. Therefore, in this strong contrast, it can be seen that there was still great resistance to the implementation of racial co-schooling in the South during this period, and the equal right to education of black students was obviously greatly hindered in southern schools. Meanwhile, academic life was not easy for black students already in mixed schools. They had to face such strong opposition from white students and white parents. Unfortunately, many white parents were no longer willing to send their children to the learning environment with black children. Some white teachers even did not hide their contempt for black students, resulting in the embarrassing situation of inferiority against black students in class. These various difficulties eventually caused some black students to drop out of school.

In the second phase of compulsory racial co-schooling, the educational discrimination attacks suffered by black students have been partially alleviated. Due to the inefficiency of the free co-schooling phase and to eliminate the racial segregation that still existed in the school, from the case of *Green v. School Board in New Kent County, Virginia*, in 1968, the Supreme Court decided to take enforcement measures to accelerate the implementation of racial joint schools. In the same year, a mandatory school bus policy was promulgated to consciously promote racial union schools and effectively solve the problem of segregation of black students resulting from residential restrictions. In this compulsory policy that required racial co-schooling, black students would be forced to take a bus to the racially mixed school that had been arranged before, regardless of their personal skin color or family background. Surely, this policy did promote the fairness of education to a certain extent. But in general, the impact of this policy on black students brought more harm than good. While taking legal coercive measures to promote racial integration and mixed school integration, the right of black students to choose schools voluntarily has been largely ignored. They were reluctantly forced to take the bus to receive the so-called equal education. Seriously, the racial union school they entered seemed to be full of a ruthless academic environment because there were always white students white teachers who used to despise and reject black students. This kind of cold violence was enough to make black students lose confidence and motivation in their academic life. In the end, they were seriously injured physically and mentally. In such a difficult environment, their academic performance declined severely rapidly. As a result, the academic gap between black students and white students was markedly widening.

With the promotion of the times and the reform of the education law, the autonomous co-schooling phase of ethnic integration schools began in the 1980s and

continues today. In this era of more modern society, black students are no longer forced to enter white schools but have the right to choose the school they want voluntarily. In this way, based on ensuring fairness in education, whether they attend classes with white students or only study with black peers, they can get a high-quality education.

C. Educational Issues and Social Reproduction of Children in Rural China

The issue of education in rural areas of China is an integral part of promoting social reproduction in China. China has been a traditionally agricultural country since ancient times, and land is an essential asset in the hearts of the Chinese people. Since the reform and opening up of new China, China has been developing rapidly in the economy, infrastructure, education and health care. However, the price of too many developments has been the exposure of problems. The problems of educational development are mainly reflected in the widening gap between urban and rural education levels. Children's education in rural areas of China has been a significant concern for the Chinese government. And the rural problem can be analyzed from three aspects. The first is the economic aspect:

- The economic development in rural areas of China is backward.
- Educational resources are back.
- Advanced teaching equipment and excellent teachers are lacking.

Some students have to choose to give up school to help their families work to make a living at home.

Instead, in terms of culture, some farmers have little knowledge of culture and insufficient educational help and life guidance for their children, leading to students becoming bored with school or eager to help their families. The third is the problem of left-behind children. According to the *China Journal of Rural Development Strategy*, as China's urbanization accelerates, more and more farmers are choosing to go out for non-agricultural work, leaving many left-behind children in rural areas, and there were 17,262,900 left-behind children at the compulsory education level throughout rural China at 2016 [4]. The low social capital of farmers and the lagging teaching resources in rural areas are external factors. Meanwhile, the existence of left-behind children leads to their lack of access to family education, which is a problem faced during the development of Chinese society. In addition, it is challenging for rural children to get into good universities through education, supported by more unfavourable conditions: according to Chinese media reports in 2011, more than 60% of students taking the college entrance examination were rural students, while less than 15% of the freshmen at Tsinghua University graduated from rural high schools [5].

Left-behind children are also more likely to develop psychological problems. Moreover, emotionally deprived left-behind children can develop attachment disorder behavioural and psychiatric problems with their parents that may profoundly affect their normal psychosocial

development [6]. In these unfavourable conditions, the education of children in rural areas of China is greatly affected by the economic backwardness that prevents them from having the best learning environment, the lack of a culture of their elders that prevents them from receiving good family education, and the inability of their parents to give them care and companionship when they go out to work. Nowadays, it is complicated for rural children to cross social class through learning. Thus, it seems that the social class solidification caused by education inequality is natural in rural China.

D. Gender Inequality in Rural Education in China

Studies by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) show that there are still some gaps between men and women in indicators such as literacy rate, average years of education, enrollment and dropout rates, but the gap is narrowing. (National Bureau of Statistics of China: "Gender Differences in China: Facts and Figures" [7].

However, researchers selected ten villages in five provinces in the central and western regions where poverty is more concentrated, namely Cangxi County in Sichuan Province, Maiji District in Tianshui City, Gansu Province, Pucheng County in Shaanxi Province, Dawukou District in Shizuishan City, Ningxia Province, and Xiushui County in Jiangxi Province, for field research in June 2005, and found through a qualitative study of the educational situation of men and women in the ten villages in the five provinces that gender inequalities in the field of education are still evident and exhibit complex diversity in rural areas [8]. The main issues addressed in the study were gender discrimination in educational expectations of families, school setting conditions, school attendance ratios of boys and girls, and years of schooling for both sexes in dropout ratios. The lack of gender-sensitive institutional arrangements for school set-up and teacher placement in poor areas of China creates practical barriers to girls' schooling. Surveys show that poor areas still exhibit high rates of boys' attendance, boys' retention, and girls' dropout rates. For adults, illiteracy rates are much higher for females than for males, and the average number of years of schooling for females is much lower than for males.

1) Gender differences in families' expectations for their children's education

Under the condition of scarce resources, poor families' uneven distribution of resources is bound to occur. Traditionally, China is a country that prefers sons over daughters, which is more fully expressed in rural society. The gender division of labor in rural families and the traditional way of raising children for old age highlight the role of men in the family. The role of women is recessive, which directly leads to the difference in access to resources and opportunities for men and women. This directly leads to differences in access to resources and opportunities between men and women and gender inequalities in family expectations for children's education. Parents have higher educational expectations for boys than girls. This gender difference in family educational expectations directly leads to the allocation of limited family assets in favor of boys and the

corresponding deprivation of educational opportunities for girls. Even though girls are better learners than boys in terms of academic performance, it is still not enough to correct the difference in the allocation of family resources to children's education.

Case 1 (Gansu): Wang, a male, 54 years old, has vocational high school education. His wife is 53 years old, has never been to school and has three children. The eldest daughter is 30 years old and stopped studying when she reached the fourth grade of elementary school. The eldest daughter dropped out of school for two main reasons, and one was not yet divided into fields to households, the family labor force is small, economic difficulties; second, he felt that his daughter read four years of school, which can help her find a toilet while going out to work. The second daughter is 17 years old, is in the third year in junior high school. The youngest son is 15 years old, in the first year. The father intends to let the second daughter graduate from junior high school and go out to work. If his son does well in school, he will let him go to high school [9].

Gender differences in educational expectations among poor families not only affect girls' access to educational opportunities, but more seriously, girls have to sacrifice their study time in exchange for the accumulation of family livelihood assets. Low expectations for girls in parental perceptions indirectly deprive girls of learning opportunities. The absence of boys in household production and subsistence labor, on the other hand, helps them to achieve better academic performance than girls, further leading families to exclude girls' right to education based on their high or low academic ability in the internal distribution of their children's education, a criterion that conceals moral discrimination and rationalizes the traditional division of educational opportunities in the family.

2) School settings are not gender-aware

In poor rural areas, the lack of educational resources makes it difficult to ensure that school settings are in areas that are a reasonable distance away. Due to their own characteristics, girls are more sensitive to school location settings, especially in case of bad weather or parents' inability to pick up and drop off can affect the safety of children, especially girls. For example, a dozen girls in Xiao Wang village in Gansu Province stopped attending school when they reached the fifth grade. At the same time, boys generally drop out of school after they graduate from elementary school. Therefore, the school site arrangement affects the enrollment of girls to a certain extent and can easily cause girls to drop out of school.

Case 2 (Sichuan): No kindergarten or preschool in Lihua Village. The nearest one is in Huishui Township, 7 km away and more than an hour's walk. 7 to 11 year olds need to be transported by adults. The elementary school is residential from the 5th grade. There is no junior high school, and the closest one is 7 km away. The school location is far away and does not consider the safety of

the girls. The safety of children, especially girls, is compromised in the event of bad weather or parents being unable to pick up or drop off [9].

The lack of gender sensitivity in school site settings and teacher gender ratios in poor rural areas is partly caused by the strain on teaching resources but also related to the lack of recognition of the need for gender sensitivity in the education sector at the county level. For these reasons, the education sector has difficulty incorporating dropout factors due to gender-blindness in school settings into its framework for managing dropout problems.

3) Gender differences in the distribution of educational opportunities at home

In the 10 villages investigated, except for two relatively economically developed villages in Ningxia, the remaining eight poor villages lacked equity in the distribution of educational opportunities for boys and girls as the unit of educational opportunity distribution - the household's decision making was the determining factor for this outcome.

Case 3 (Jiangxi); Zhu, female, 42 years old, literacy for the 5th grade of elementary school, the family now 4 days, husband died last year, there are two daughters and a son, the eldest daughter 22 years old, read to the second year of junior high school to stop reading, dropped out of school to help work at home, the youngest daughter is now in the first year of junior high school, the son 19 years old, now in Gansu to read the first year of college [9].

Although there is no comparison of male and female enrollment in junior high school, the survey found that if at the primary level, due to the relatively low proportion of education expenditures, and at the junior high school level, where secondary schools are generally located in townships and students require higher cash expenditures for accommodation or meals, families shift from equitable distribution to contributing family livelihood considerations in the long run when cash income is limited. Moreover, because of the traditionally perceived importance of men in household livelihoods, girls inevitably have to sacrifice their educational opportunities and shift all of their limited educational expenditures to boys. This outcome corresponds to the gender differences in household expectations described above.

4) Gender differences in years of education

The gender differences in the stages of study caused by the above reasons present a very clear gender difference in educational outcomes at the adult stage.

Family poverty makes children's access to education a scarce resource. The limited family resources and the traditional pattern of male-dominated distribution of family resources lead to differences in access to education for men and women, resulting in unequal years of education for men and women. In addition to this, the difference in access to education between men and women is also related to local educational attitudes and social culture.

The gender difference in years of education directly affects women's employment opportunities and their effectiveness in receiving technical training. In the surveyed villages, villagers work outside the village, but mainly men. Of course, the fact that women have to take care of their children affects their going out, which is one of the reasons, but it is undeniable that women's low education level makes it difficult for them to adapt to urban life. In the surveyed villages, there is some training on agricultural technology. At present, there is a trend of feminization of agricultural production, but very few women participate in the training. For example, in the village of Taizhuang in Jiangxi, no women participated in the short-term training. More importantly, women are unable to gain the recognition of villagers and the trust of the grassroots government in village elections due to their low years of education, resulting in a lack of opportunities for political participation.

In the urbanisation process, the gap between urban and rural education development levels also persists, and there are still many problems in rural education [9]. The Party and national government have issued a series of guidelines and policies for the development of rural education, such as the National Plan for the Development of Children in Poor Areas (2014–2020) and the Rural Teacher Support Program, the establishment of ad hoc posts for teachers in rural compulsory education schools, etc., has led to a significant strengthening of education in the central and western regions and rural areas [10]. It can be seen that with the support of the Party and the state, there is a good development trend in rural education development, and further development of rural education will inevitably require breaking down the multiple factors that restrict education development in rural real life.

III. CONCLUSION

Due to different political systems, the United States and China have different policies and problems in the field of education. As a multicultural country composed of many races, the United States has been faced with racial discrimination in education, especially the implementation of a series of policies for black students, resulting in a variety of adverse effects on black students in the pursuit of educational equality. In contrast, as a unified, multi-ethnic socialist country, China has a centralized system. Hence, in terms of education, the local education authorities agree to follow the policies implemented by the central education administration.

The compulsory education promoted by the Central Ministry of Education of China is a unique educational system in China compared with the United States. However, in China, with a large population and a large gap between the rich and poor in urban and rural areas, rural children have always been a vulnerable group in the field of education. As China's rural economic development and education resources are generally backward, the problem of education inequality has promoted the situation of social reproduction in China. Among rural children, Chinese girls suffer from educational gender discrimination, and they are the

disadvantaged group at the bottom of the educational level. Due to the heavy family burden and the deep-rooted preference for boys, Chinese parents have low expectations for girls' education, resulting in girls getting fewer educational opportunities than boys. Therefore, China and the United States have their own defects and fatal weaknesses in education, which lead to the instability of the two countries' education systems. If the United States can reduce the racial discrimination against black people and completely eliminate the phenomenon of racial segregation from reality, on the contrary, if China can reduce the idea of favoring boys over girls and promote the common economic development of urban and rural areas, the future development of national education in both countries will be full of hope and expectation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is a collaborative effort by Xiaoshu Ding, Yichen Hou, Ziyang Li, Fuqiong Qi. Yichen Hou wrote A. Differences in Education between Blacks and Whites and the Pursuit of Equality in American Education, Xiaoshu Ding wrote B. The Influence Faced by Black American Students in Pursuing Educational Equality. Fuqiong Qi wrote the introduction and C. Educational Issues and Social Reproduction of Children in Rural China, Ziyang Li wrote the Abstract, conclusion and D. Gender Inequality in Rural Education in China. All authors had approved the final version.

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