Color Blind Racism in the USA and China: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract. This research proposal aims to conduct an in-depth comparative study examining attitudes toward color blind racism among high school students in the United States and China. Despite advancements in civil rights and social justice, covert and systemic forms of racism continue to persist, often exacerbated by the denial of systemic discrimination. Utilizing snowball sampling, an anonymous survey featuring Likert scale and open-ended questions will be administered to high school students in both countries. Statistical methods, including descriptive statistics and two-sample t-tests, will be employed to evaluate the differences in attitudes between the two nations. Thematic coding will be used to uncover nuanced perspectives and attitudes. The study aims to elucidate how sociocultural contexts and historical backgrounds shape generational views on racism. By focusing on high school students, the research taps into emerging opinions that will shape future societal norms. The findings have the potential to significantly inform educational initiatives aimed at combating racism by revealing where prejudices still remain. This research is particularly timely given the current global focus on racial equality and social justice. It expands the scope of existing literature by providing a cross-cultural perspective, thereby offering more comprehensive insights into the complexities of racism as experienced by the younger generation.

Keywords: Color Blind Racism, USA, China, Comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Racism remains a deeply ingrained issue that societies around the world continue to grapple with. While significant progress has been made in the realms of civil rights and social justice, racism has evolved to take on more covert forms, often masked by ideologies that deny its systemic nature. One such ideology is color blind racism, which posits that race should not and does not matter, thereby allowing systemic inequities to persist unchallenged [1]. This form of racism is particularly insidious as it allows individuals to deny the role of race in ongoing discrimination, thereby absolving them of responsibility to address it.

In the United States, the issue of racism has a long and complex history, deeply rooted in years of slavery, segregation, and systemic discrimination. While the civil rights movement led to the abolition of overtly discriminatory laws, covert forms of racism continue to exist, manifesting in various aspects of life such as employment, healthcare, and the criminal justice system [2]. Research has shown that color blind attitudes contribute to a lack of empathy among white Americans towards ongoing discrimination, thereby perpetuating systemic inequities [3].

Similarly, in China, a rising sense of nationalism has led to the propagation of Han Chinese superiority narratives against ethnic minorities and African immigrants [4]. While the context and history differ from that of the United States, the end result is a form of systemic discrimination that is often denied or overlooked [5].

Given the complexities and nuances of racism, it is crucial to examine how these attitudes are forming in the younger generation. High school students are at a formative age, where their opinions on critical issues like racism are being shaped. Understanding their perspectives can provide valuable insights into how societal attitudes may evolve in the future.

This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by providing a comparative analysis of attitudes toward color blind racism among high school students in the United States and China. The objectives of the study include quantifying attitudes related to racism, evaluating the prevalence of nationalism and stereotyping, and understanding the sociocultural forces that shape these attitudes.

By contrasting these perspectives in two major global powers, this study aims to expand cross-cultural scholarship and inform educational initiatives aimed at combating racism.

The research is timely and significant for several reasons. First, it taps into emerging opinions that will shape future societal norms. Second, it offers a cross-cultural perspective, thereby providing more comprehensive insights into the complexities of racism as experienced by the younger generation. Finally, the findings have the potential to inform educational policies and initiatives aimed at promoting racial equality and social justice.

2. Comparative Analysis

2.1. Historical Context and Its Influence on Modern Racism

The United States and China, two global powers, have distinct historical contexts that have shaped their current attitudes toward race and racism. In the United States, the legacy of slavery, segregation, and systemic discrimination has left an indelible mark on the nation's collective psyche [2]. The abolition of slavery was followed by the Jim Crow era, a period of legalized racial segregation that lasted until the mid-20th century. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s aimed to dismantle these overt forms of racism, but covert and systemic forms of discrimination persist [6]. For instance, the mass incarceration of African Americans, racial profiling, and voter suppression are modern manifestations of systemic racism. The concept of color blind racism has emerged as a sophisticated way to deny these systemic inequities, thereby allowing them to persist [7]. This form of racism is often masked by the assertion that America is a "post-racial" society where racial discrimination no longer exists.

In contrast, China's experience with racism is less about color and more about ethnicity and nationalism. The Han Chinese, who make up about 92% of the population, often disseminate narratives of inherent superiority and centrality to the Chinese nation [4]. This has led to systemic discrimination against ethnic minorities like the Uyghurs and Tibetans, as well as against African immigrants. While China does not have a history of institutionalized racism akin to the United States, it does have a form of systemic discrimination that is often denied or overlooked [8]. The Chinese government's policies in regions like Xinjiang and Tibet have been criticized for being forms of ethnic cleansing.

2.2. Manifestations of Racism in Society

In the United States, the manifestations of racism are both overt and covert, and they permeate various aspects of society. The concept of color blindness serves as a mechanism to ignore systemic inequities and the lack of progress in addressing them [9]. This form of covert racism also manifests in victim blaming, dehumanization, and the preservation of status hierarchies [10]. For example, the "Black Lives Matter" movement has been criticized for being "divisive," and the concept of "white privilege" is often met with resistance. These reactions serve to maintain the status quo and prevent meaningful dialogue and change.

In China, racism often manifests through an ardent nationalistic belief in the excellence of Han identity and the centrality of Han culture [4]. This form of racism targets "peripheral" minorities like Uyghurs and Tibetans, as well as African immigrants, through stereotypes, exclusion, and anti-Black narratives in media and culture [11]. For example, advertisements in China have been criticized for their portrayal of Africans and other minorities. The Chinese education system also perpetuates these stereotypes, thereby ingraining them into the younger generation [12].

2.3. Generational Shifts in Attitudes

Emerging research reveals that younger generations in both countries are rejecting overt forms of racism but are still perpetuating covert forms of discrimination [13]. In the United States, high school students increasingly espouse multiculturalism in surveys but also downplay the ongoing impacts of racism [14]. The rise of social media has also played a role in amplifying these prejudices and biases.

For example, the use of racially insensitive memes and the spread of misinformation have been observed among American youth [15].

In China, while overt racism is increasingly becoming taboo, covert forms of discrimination persist [16]. The younger generation, influenced by a rising sense of nationalism and the narratives of Han superiority, continue to exhibit biases against ethnic minorities and immigrants [17]. However, there is also a growing awareness and questioning of these ingrained attitudes among some segments of the youth, particularly those exposed to more diverse viewpoints through education and travel [17].

The generational shifts in attitudes toward racism in both countries are complex and multifaceted. While there is a move away from overt forms of racism, covert forms continue to persist, often in more insidious ways [48,49]. The role of education and media in shaping these attitudes cannot be overstated, and there is a need for more research to understand these dynamics fully.

2.4. Impacts on Youth

The impacts of these racial attitudes on young people in both countries are significant and long-lasting. In the United States, the perpetuation of color-blind ideologies has been shown to have harmful cognitive and emotional effects on minority youth [18]. By invalidating their experiences and minimizing the role of race, these ideologies contribute to a form of "racial gaslighting" that can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and even depression. Moreover, the school-to-prison pipeline and other systemic issues disproportionately affect minority youth, limiting their opportunities and perpetuating a cycle of poverty and discrimination [19].

In China, the impacts are somewhat different but no less severe. Ethnic minorities and immigrants often feel the need to hide or downplay their identities to avoid discrimination [20]. This can lead to a form of "cultural schizophrenia," where individuals feel torn between their ethnic identity and the need to conform to Han Chinese norms. The Chinese education system, with its emphasis on rote learning and conformity, further perpetuates these stereotypes and biases [21].

2.5. Strategies for Change

Addressing these deeply ingrained attitudes and their impacts requires a multi-faceted approach tailored to each country's specific needs. In the United States, there is a growing movement to incorporate critical race theory into educational curricula, despite political resistance [22]. This aims to educate young people about the history and ongoing impacts of racism, thereby equipping them with the tools to challenge systemic issues. Community-based initiatives, such as mentorship programs and youth-led activism, also offer promising avenues for change [23].

In China, the focus may need to be on promoting multiculturalism and challenging the Han-centric narratives that dominate public discourse [24]. This could involve reforms in the education system to include more diverse perspectives and encourage critical thinking. The government could also play a role by promoting inclusive policies and cracking down on hate speech and discrimination [25].

However, it's crucial to note that structural changes must accompany these educational initiatives. Without systemic reform, individual changes in attitude will not be enough to address the deeply rooted issues of racism and discrimination [26]. Therefore, ongoing comparative research is essential to refine these strategies and make them more effective in different cultural contexts.

In conclusion, the complexities of racism in the United States and China are deeply rooted in their respective histories, cultures, and social structures. While the manifestations and impacts may differ, the underlying themes of denial, systemic discrimination, and the need for comprehensive reform are universal. Understanding these nuances is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat racism and promote social justice in both countries.

3. Discussion

The comparative analysis underscores the complexities of racism in the United States and China, revealing that while the manifestations and impacts may differ, the underlying themes of denial,

systemic discrimination, and the need for comprehensive reform are universal. In both countries, younger generations are grappling with a legacy of racism that is deeply embedded in social, economic, and political systems. The internet and social media have a dual role, both as platforms for activism and as echo chambers that can perpetuate stereotypes and biases [16].

In the United States, educational reforms that incorporate critical race theory could be a step toward making younger generations more aware of systemic issues [27]. Community-based initiatives, such as mentorship programs and youth-led activism, also offer promising avenues for change. In China, promoting multiculturalism and challenging Han-centric narratives are crucial [28]. This could involve educational reforms to include more diverse perspectives and encourage critical thinking. Governmental policies promoting inclusivity and cracking down on hate speech and discrimination could also be beneficial.

This study focuses primarily on high school students, limiting its generalizability to broader populations. Finally, the cross-cultural nature of the study introduces complexities in interpreting and comparing data due to differing social norms and understandings of race and ethnicity [29].

4. Summary

This study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of attitudes toward racism among high school students in the United States and China. It reveals that despite differing historical and cultural contexts, common threads of denial and systemic discrimination exist in both countries. The study also highlights the complexities younger generations face in grappling with these issues, influenced by a range of factors including education, social media, and governmental policies.

The findings of this study underscore the need for continued research in this area, particularly studies that delve deeper into the impacts of social media and educational systems on racial attitudes. Future research could also explore the effectiveness of different educational and policy interventions in changing these attitudes. Comparative studies involving other countries could provide additional valuable insights, helping to create a more comprehensive understanding of how racism is manifested and perpetuated globally.

By shedding light on the complexities of racism in two major global powers, this study contributes to a growing body of research aimed at understanding and combating this pervasive issue. It offers both a snapshot of current attitudes among high school students and a foundation for future research aimed at promoting social justice and equality.

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