

Comparing Attitude toward Gender Inequality*

—Based on Data of Eastern and Western Countries

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Abstract

Gender inequality is a major contemporary social problem and this paper is intended to discuss people's attitudes to gender inequality, researching the main factors that affect the attitudes of gender inequality. The author analyzes how these two types of these factors that one is ascriptive factors (gender and age) and the other is achieved factors (education and occupation) affect the attitudes toward gender inequality. Using the data about China, Japan and U.S.A from Asia Barometer Survey (ABS) database do a comparing research. We find that the influence of gender exists in each country and the influences of other factors have different levels in each country. Chinese people tend to believe that the men have a higher social position than women and Americans are more inclined to gender equality, this attitude of Japanese is in the middle level.

Key words: Gender inequality Ascriptive factors Achieved factors China
Japan U.S.A

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1. Social Background and Research Questions

We are living in the highest stage of the development of human society, the spirit of modernity made people living in a relatively fair and justice social environment, to search better living conditions, more suitable development, fair competition, and social harmony. However, not all of the good things are real, the inequality behind modernity is still everywhere, such as race, region, wealth and occupational status. Among the numerous of inequality, inequality caused by gender difference runs through every dimension of social inequality, gender discrimination¹ cause the weak side—particularly the female—suffer a lot of unfair treatment, as a result, their educational opportunities, job opportunities, working conditions and other aspects are at the unfavorable position. As far as my personal experience, I often feel the presence of gender inequality in my school days and job searching process. During the school days, I often found that male students are more than female ones. In recent job searching process, I found that employers prefer to recruit males, requirements for females are often higher than males, so female have more difficulty to find a job. Generally speaking, males can earn more money than females in the same position. This kind of inequity is not only existing in one country or one kind of countries, but existing in every corner of the world, whether in the Eastern countries where patriarchal ideology is very serious, or in modern Western countries, gender inequalities remain exist. Such as, in accordance with relevant study, Chinese female workers' average wage of is only 79% of male workers in 2002; In Japan, female workers' wages are fairly low, just 50% of male workers; This ratio is not very optimistic in Western Countries, 68% in the Britain, and 71% in the United States(李春玲, 李实, 2008). Although gender inequality is also caused by physiological differences, social factors are more important. Because of the reinforcement of social factors, people's understanding of gender differences is changing from difference to gap, from difference to injustice. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore what kind of factors maintain people's notion of gender inequality in different types of countries. What about the impact strength of these factors? I selected China, Japan, and the United States to conduct comparative analysis. These three countries represent three typical kinds of countries: China is a traditional Eastern country, farming culture and Confucianism has significantly impact on the formation of the Chinese people's ideas; Japan has been affected by the Eastern traditional culture, But it is also the first

¹ "American Traditional Dictionary" defined "gender discrimination" as : "one "

modernization of East Asian countries, so its culture also mix with many Western elements. As a consequence, how to maintain and influence the concept of gender inequality in three significant different countries? This is the subject of this article.

2. Literature Review

The formation of gender inequality concept stems from the existence of social fact, the basis of fact analysis and concept is the theory of gender inequality; as a result, we start from the theory of gender inequality, reviewing the theories and empirical researches.

With regard to the theory of gender inequality, the first two main viewpoints are functional theory and conflict theory in the field of sociology. Functional theory believes that males are naturally suited to the "instrumental role", meeting the financial needs of family by going out to work; the role of female is at home and do housework, meeting the emotional needs of family(夏国美, 2001). Although with the development of society, this traditional concept of division of labor between male and female has been criticized by feminists, it is undeniable that this traditional division of gender roles perspective has been deeply rooted in people's consciousness(韩阳, 2007; 周群英, 周文莲, 2006). The main point of conflict theory is that the traditional division of gender roles in modern society is out of date; the reason why female adapt to family roles is because of the absence of effective methods of birth control, and there are no techniques to replace the male's strong physical. However, with the economic and technical constraints that hinder female's full access to the labor market is gradually eliminated, the possibility of great changes in female roles has emerged(戴维·波普诺, 1987). Functional theory represents the traditional gender bias; conflict theory takes solid step toward gender equality; later feminists have improved the gender equality perspective on the basis of the conflict theory, they view gender equality as equality between male and female on the premise of recognition of the individual uniqueness. That is, equality is not female entering the field of male or using male standards to measure female's rights and female's liberation, but using female standard to judge, and refuse to be male or family's vassal(李春玲, 吕鹏, 2008). This includes female's recognition to their own economic situation and social status, etc (Ritter & Hargens, 1975). In addition, feminists also challenge traditional patriarchy concerning the female status at home and at work. They oppose "men go

out and women stay home” in the “gender stereotypes”¹ traditional viewpoint, oppose female’s extreme pressure on domestic labor, because it is the exploitation of female by patriarchal within the context of family production mode (Christine Delphy, 1977, 1984). When female get out of home and get into the workplace, “sex segregation”(Edward Gross , 1968) make them unable to enter important male-dominated industries or jobs, male’s treatment was significantly better than female, thereby increase the economic and social inequality between male and female, and gender composition of occupations has become a basis for unequal division of many social resources. Specifically, the proposition of “revolving doors” and “the glass ceiling” can accurately interpret female’s injustice treatment in the workplace. Jerry Jacobs found that gender segregation causes female’s total turnover ratio is far more than the net change of their overall career opportunities. In other words, this is like a revolving door, if there are 10 female enter the door, nine of them will be sent out finally, few people can left (Jacobs, 1989). “Revolving doors” elaborates gender inequality from a macro perspective, "the glass ceiling” discussed the weakness of female occupational mobility in internal, “there is a transparent barrier that makes female (because you are female) in company cannot be promoted to a particular level(李春玲,吕鹏, 2008; Ann Morrison et al., 1987).”

When applying these theories to empirical research, it is mainly reflected in the relationship among gender inequality and occupational status, labor returns, educational opportunities, fertility will, expectations of children's development. Both China and the whole world focus on female’s work, how about female employment rate comparing with men? What about their wages? Is their occupational mobility smooth, and so on? Based on researches in Japan, an increasing number of Japanese women entering the job market after World War II, involving more and more types of industry, but wages and job mobility are still lagged behind men(Brinton, 1994). For China, in the face of the establishment and development of market economy and the impact of globalization, in order to save human capital and maximize the benefits, inequality at women's wages and other aspects is worsening(蔡禾, 吴小平, 2002). The same situation also occurred in Britain, the United States and other Western countries (Wright, Ermisch, 1991). Thus, gender inequality is inextricably linked with occupation, income and other social elements. In addition, gender discrimination also

¹ Referring to the inherent view of male and female in the society, this view is not necessarily based on evidences, doesn’t take into account individual differences, and have a significant impact on people's perception and behavior. From Hilton J L, Hippel W. Stereotypes. Annual Review of Psychology, 1996, 47:237-271.

has a significant impact on equity of male and female's educational opportunities. Especially in rural China, because son shoulder the basic responsibility for maintenance, so parents are more willing to invest in the education of their son, while educational opportunities for girls are relatively less(苏艳明, 曾春媛, 2006); Although the gap between male and female in higher education is reducing, the gender gap is still on the rise in different levels and types of higher education, especially interacted with geographic, class and other factors. Vocation and education are two social elements most closely related with gender inequality; however, this does not mean that gender inequality in other areas would be weakened. Some studies have shown that, the concept of gender inequality has caused China's current gender ratio at birth imbalance; the ratio will reach 130:100 by 2020(胡书芝, 2004), such inequality has seriously affected the population structure of a country. Family expectations toward their children's future development also showing inequality between male and female, hoping their son to get a successful career, while focusing on their girls' self-cultivation and family stability, this also reflects the traditional thinking —— "men go out and women stay home "(王小波, 2002). At the same time, women are been discriminated and treated unfair in the marriage system, lacking decisive and executive right has plagued many countries' women(李树茁, Monica Das Gupta, 1998).

Although the studies of gender inequality are voluminous, the study about people's gender attitudes is rare; the only ones are not comprehensive enough. People's attitude towards gender is an important indicator influences gender equality in a society, because people's attitude will affect their behavior directly. According to the study of male's gender concept, male's gender concept is different in different social classes, different ethnic groups, different gender, different life stages and different historical periods, because male's concept has social nature (Brod, 1987; Gilmore, 1990; Lazur & Majors, 1995). Chinese current research literature shows, the empirical study examining people's gender attitudes most towards to high intellectual group (吴荣先, Ronald F.Levant Al Sellers, 2001; 李育红, 2003), their concept of gender equality are more obvious, but the result cannot represent the whole society. Foreign scholars have also conducted studies about gender concept or awareness, after study the survey data of Australia, West Germany, Britain and United States, Davis and Robinson concluded that well-educated people are more willing to accept the status quo of gender inequality; when women depend on their working husbands, they

are willing to accept the status quo, if she is lonely, she may be dissatisfied with gender inequality. Although the conclusions of this study are very interesting, but this study is conducted in 1991, it cannot summarize the changes in society these 20 years. Therefore, this article hopes to use the latest data covering all social groups to conduct a comparative study on gender attitudes in the three typically different countries.

3. Research hypotheses

The solidified concept of gender equality is gradually formed by ascriptive factors and achieved factors, China, Japan and USA are 3 different countries, we will examine what extent the two types of factors influence the concept of gender equality.

At first, due to cultural traditions of the long-term effects, gender stereotypes have a significant impact on notions of the inequality between men and women. Therefore, respondents' gender would affect how they treat people's social status of different gender. Therefore, we list one hypothesis:

1. Men are inclined to think that the status of men higher than women.

Secondly, the precipitation of cultural traditions is a process of long time. Over time, people's notion was always changing because new things usually appeared. The elderly are more likely to embrace traditional value, but young people are more inclined to accept new ideas. As the feminist critique of gender inequality, the idea will be more easily accepted by young people, so two assumptions are formed:

2. Older people are inclined to consider the status of men higher than women.
3. The younger are inclined to identify gender equality or women's higher status.

Thirdly, according to the relevant literature review, the concept of gender inequality is closely related with one's level of education and occupational position. The promotion of education increases the awareness that our inherent notion of gender is unfair. Based on the labor theory of dual market, most women are usually limited in the lower level of occupational fields, only very few women can enter into the higher domain (胡书芝, 2004; 李新建, 赵瑞美, 1999). Therefore, the higher the occupational level, the more obvious gender discrimination. Thus, we propose two

hypotheses:

4. Those people who had higher level of education are more consider that the status of women should not be lower than men.

5. Those people who located in higher occupational status are more consider that the status of men should be higher than women.

Finally, using the view of international comparison, I will analyze the different notion of gender among different countries. The United States is considered the model of open-mind. In addition, the idea of gender equity is originated in Europe and the United States. Therefore, societies of Europe and USA are located at higher level about gender equity. As a country in the East, Japan not only maintains its traditional notion but also conducted westernization. Based above analysis, the following hypothesis is that:

6. The notion of men's higher status is more possessed by Chinese, the second is Japanese and Americans have the least gender discrimination among three countries.

4. Data, variables and research methods

4.1. Data

As an international comparative study, we need the social survey data which can cover several major countries, and Asia Barometer Survey (ABS) provides the database. ABS covers not only the Asian region's major countries, but also a diachronic data from 2003 to 2008. In recent years it also includes some European countries and United States, allowed a meaningful comparative study among these countries. According to the purpose of the research, this paper selected the data among China (sample number 4760), Japan (3661 samples), and the United States (1002 samples) from 2003 to 2008. In fact, the data from China and Japan is a combination in several years, while the U.S. data is only once in 2008. The distribution of data among the three countries is as follows:

Table 1: distribution of cases in 3 countries

			Year				Total
			2003	2004	2006	2008	
Country	china	Count	800	1000	1960	1000	4760
		% within Year	48.3%	54.8%	67.0%	33.2%	50.5%
	japan	Count	857	825	967	1012	3661
		% within Year	51.7%	45.2%	33.0%	33.6%	38.9%
	usa	Count	0	0	0	1002	1002
		% within Year	.0%	.0%	.0%	33.2%	10.6%
Total		Count	1657	1825	2927	3014	9423
		% within Year	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Of course, the selected data has been conducted the necessary integration, removed some of missing data and those cases are not suitable for analysis. As the professional issues involved, we will exclude students and retirees; and those people are in the age of about 20 or 70 years, so they were exclude in the age groups.

4.2. Variables

Firstly, the dependent variable of this study is people's attitudes on gender inequality. Therefore, variable should be selected in the question (106): Do you think that on the whole men and women are treated equally in your country? Please indicate which of the following is closest to your opinion? The option is that: (1) Men are treated much more favorably than women; (2) Men are treated somewhat more favorably than women; (3) Men and women are treated equally; (4) Women are treated somewhat more favorably than men; (5) Women are treated much more favorably than men. The five options reflect the different five levels of status of women. This item can reflect people's judgment and orientation on the degree of gender inequality at current society.

Secondly, the set of variables are as follows:

(1) Achieved factors

At first, as mentioned in the literature, education level will significantly affect people's attitude of gender inequality. Therefore, in achieved factors, the level of education can't be ignored. As the response options vary in different years, after sorting out data I divide education into four levels: No formal education =1; Elementary school/junior high school/middle school=2; High school/Professional/technical school/College=3; University/graduate school=4.

Secondly, in achieved factors, social status is the important factor which can affect people's statements, actions and attitudes. Therefore, different occupation may have significant impact on attitude of gender inequality. Social status can be operated by one's occupation. According to the theory of occupational status in modern society by Goldthorpe (Goldthorpe,2000; 李春玲, 吕鹏, 2008), this paper divide occupation into five levels: White-collar = 1; petty bourgeoisie = 2; workers = 3; farmers = 4; no formal occupation = 5 (including non-formal vocational and unemployed).

(2) Ascriptive factors (control variables)

First, gender differences is an important variable influence gender inequality, therefore the first independent variables in this paper is gender: male=1, female=2.

Second, people in different times have inherent view towards particular phenomenon, and this view cannot change easily, age differences can reflect differences in tradition, as a result, I use age to analyze the different views in different age groups. After excluding the respondents who is younger than 20 years and older than 70 years, I divided the crowd into five age groups: 20-29=1; 30-39=2; 40-49=3; 50-59=4; 60-69=5. It should be noted that because the survey data across a number of years, I made some adjustments, establishing age in 2008 as a standard, the ages in the preceding year should increase the number of years to correspond with the 2008, such as if the age is measured in 2003, it should add 5 years, and so on.

Third, social environment and cultural traditions in different countries are not the same, so national difference is also important variables resulting in attitudes to gender inequality. It has similar impact with age, representing the respondents' inherent view and social consciousness. I assigned three countries to different values: China=1; Japan=2; USA=3.

Table 2: The following is a descriptive distribution chart of variable in this paper

Gender inequality attitude	Total: 9213
1 .Men are treated much more favorably than women	1209(13.1%)
2 .Men are treated somewhat more favorably than women	3985(43.3%)
3. Men and women are treated equally	3184(34.6%)
4. Women are treated somewhat more favorably than men	694(7.5%)
5. Women are treated much more favorably than men	141(1.5%)
Gender	Total: 9423
1.male	4593(48.7%)
2.female	4830(51.3%)
Age group	Total: 9423
1.20 to 29	1439(15.3%)
2.30 to 39	2375(25.2%)
3.40 to 49	2248(23.9%)
4.50 to 59	2108(22.4%)
5.60 to 69	1253(13.3%)
Occupation	Total: 8596
1.White-collar	3219(34.2%)
2. Petty bourgeoisie	1050(11.1%)
3.Worker	2173(23.1%)
4.Peasant	503(5.3%)
5.Informal profession or Unemployed persons	1651(17.5%)
Education	Total: 9403
1. No formal education	33(0.4%)
2. Elementary school/junior high school/ middle school	3293(34.9%)
3. High school/ Professional/technical school/College	4025(42.7%)
4. University/graduate school	2052(22.1.8%)
Country	Total: 9423
1.China	4760(50.5%)
2.Japan	3661(38.9%)
3.U.S.A	1002(10.6%)

4.3 Research Methods

Because the dependent variable has sequential characteristics, so just using the

category model of category cannot fully explain the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable, therefore, I plan to use Ordinal Logistic Model to deal with the sequential dependent variable. Specific formula is as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{P_i}{1-P_i}\right) = \alpha + \sum_k b_k X_{ki} + \sum_c g_c C_{ci}$$

In this formula, P_i is the probability women are treated equally or belonging to a certain degree of discrimination, comparing with men. α is a constant term; X_{ki} is social factors (occupational status and educational level) that influence gender equality perspective, b_k is the regression coefficient; C_{ci} is all the control variables, where mainly refers to those ascriptive factors (gender, age, country), g_c is the coefficient of control variable.

5. Result of analysis

Table 3 shows the result of analysis by Ordinal Logistic Model.

	3 countries		China		Japan		U.S.A	
	Estimate	Std. Error	Estimate	Std. Error	Estimate	Std. Error	Estimate	Std. Error
No formal education	.265	.365	.540	.402	—	—	-2.119	1.246
Elementary school and other	.309***	.064	.495***	.098	.327**	.113	-.186	.157
High school and other	.125*	.058	.236**	.089	.177*	.093	-.206	.197
University/graduate school (Reference group)		.						
Age 20 to 29	.259***	.088	-.159	.161	.762***	.147	.125	.230
Age 30 to 39	.204**	.077	-.136	.152	.450***	.113	-.067	.215
Age 40 to 49	.150*	.077	-.173	.152	.279*	.113	.172	.214
Age 50 to 59	-.054	.078	-.370*	.155	.110	.109	-.344	.234
Age 60 to 69 (Reference group)		.						
White-collar	-.144*	.063	.028	.084	-.245*	.101	-.335*	.208
Petty bourgeoisie	-.037	.078	.088	.617	-.111	-.133	-.358	.281
Worker	-.060	.067	.101	.904	-.255*	.102	.066	.221
Peasant	-.106	.101	-.078	.402	.085	.242	-.133	.598
Informal profession and other (Reference group)		.						
China	1.346***	.076						
Japan	.324***	.077						
USA (Reference group)		.						
Male	.516***	.045	.432***	.062	.660***	.081	.794***	.141
Female (Reference group)		.						

Table3: The analysis consequence of Ordinal Logistic Model; *: $P \leq 0.05$; ** ≤ 0.01 ; *** ≤ 0.001 .

5.1 Hypothesis 1

As can be seen from Table 2, integrated data from three countries, attitudes towards gender equality of male are more likely to think that men have high status than women, the odds ratio is 1.68 ($e^{0.516}$). When the three countries analyzed separately, we find that United States has the highest odds ratio which is 2.21 ($e^{0.794}$), the lowest is China which is 1.54 ($e^{0.432}$) and Japan is in the middle which is 1.93 ($e^{0.660}$). It demonstrates that though men are more inclined to think that male is treated more favorably than female, this phenomenon is more obvious in United States and the relative affection of gender is the weakest in China. Therefore, the results of analysis could verify hypothesis 1, which is men are more inclined to think that they have higher status than women.

5.2 Hypothesis 2 and 3

Comprehensive 3 countries' data we can see that the occurrence ratio decreases with age increasing. Group 1 (age 20 to 29) corresponding to the reference group (age 60 to 69), its odds ratio is 1.30 ($e^{0.259}$); the odds ratio of group 2 (age 30 to 39) is 1.23 ($e^{0.204}$) and it is 1.16 ($e^{0.150}$) of group 3 (age 40 to 49), group 4 (age 50 to 59) years has no significant difference from the reference group. The result indicates that the elder people in the age groups which are after 50 years old don't have much difference in the attitude of gender inequality. However, it has significant differences with the age groups before the age of 50 years old. That is to say, more younger, more likely to agree that the status higher of men than women. But because of odd ratios not particularly large, just about one time, so the real difference between age groups is not particularly evident. When we analyze every country, as a variable, the age has no effect on the attitudes of gender attitudes in China and USA, except the odd ratio of China's age group of 50 to 59 years old, so that in China, older people are more willing to believe the fact which is men has a higher status. However, the situation in Japan unlike China, its situation is similar with the comprehensive data of three countries. Therefore, hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 are not fully supported, each angle is given the opposite conclusion to the hypothesis 2 and 3 except China getting partial support.

5.3 Hypothesis 4 and 5

When considering achieved factors, at first, we study the education as a variable.

In three integrated data, with the increasing level of education, the odd ratio is decreasing. The odds ratio of elementary school (including junior high school and middle school) is 1.36 ($e^{0.309}$), high school (including professional/technical school and college) is 1.13 ($e^{0.125}$). The result shows that the higher level of education people have, the more likely they think that the status of women and men are equal even higher than men. The analyzed results of China and Japan are similar with integrated data of three countries; however, the data of USA shows that differences of education level for American people's attitude on gender inequality has no significant effect. From a career perspective, in addition to white-collar to reduce discrimination against women, there is no significant difference in other occupations. In the comprehensive data the white-collar's odds ratio is 0.86 ($e^{-0.144}$), in Japan is 0.78 ($e^{-0.245}$) and in USA is 0.71 ($e^{-0.335}$), but there is no significant impact on occupations in Chinese data. Therefore, hypothesis 4 that the higher level of education people get and the more likely people believe male and female have equal social status can be verified. Hypothesis 5 is only partially verified, which is social status in white-collar position have the awareness of gender equality than other occupational hierarchy, but other stratum of occupation towards the attitude of gender inequality have no significant difference.

5.4 Hypothesis 6

We find that when researching from the national point of view and using the United States as a reference, the Chinese concept of gender inequality is most strongly, the odds ratio is 3.84 ($e^{1.346}$) and the second strong is Japan, it is 1.38 ($e^{0.324}$). According to the result we could know that Chinese attitudes of gender inequality is the most evident among these 3 countries and the second one is Japan, United States' society tends to have the best recognition of gender equality. So hypothesis 6 is verified.

6. Conclusion and discussion

According to the above analysis of data, the summary of the current attitude to gender inequality can be made as follows. What leads to people to have a concept of gender inequality is not a factor but the influences of ascriptive factors and achieved factors together. Gender differences in people's own have an important effect on how they

understanding the social status of men and women. Men are more inclined to think that the status of men is higher than that of women, which is very common in any country, particularly prominent in the United States. However, the role of age is not so obvious. In Japan, there are more young people than old people tending to think that the status of men is higher than that of women. In China, the young people have little differences in the attitude of gender, but the elder persons have a different point of view that the status of men is higher than that of women. In the United States, age does not play a significant impact on gender. From the achieved factors' point of view, people who have high level of education tend to believe in gender equality, which is supported by the data from China and Japan. However, in the United States, education has no effect on the attitudes towards gender inequality. In the professional field, the white-collar workers with high occupational status have more recognition of gender equality. As three types of countries with different cultures, the concept of gender inequality is more obvious in China while American tend to think the concept of gender equality and Japan is between the two countries.

Some reasons which lead to the consequence of this research are examined. First of all, the male-centered social and cultural system is the main reason for strengthening gender inequality, which is the fundamental reason. Because of this, men consider having higher social status than women. Next, accepting the system of modern education indeed has a positive effect on improving awareness of the inherent inequality between male and female. Countries should continue to improve the education system, particularly providing women more opportunities for higher education. Thirdly, the young persons' awareness of gender equality was thought better than the elders'. However, the above analysis of data has provided the opposite conclusion. Maybe the old people have been accustomed to the idea because a patriarchal education was accepted in the past. With the progress of the times, more and more young people realize that gender inequality has not been alleviated but in the deterioration and they are more sensitive to that than elder people. In terms of occupational areas, white-collar workers with high education usually interact with the high-quality people and therefore, they have an apparent awareness of gender equality. While the other class with a low level of education and the low level of exposed people, the sense of gender inequality around them is much easier to strengthen. At last, China still remains patriarchal ideology of the traditional oriental culture which is reflected in people's ideas and attitudes. Although Japan retains the important tradition,

a considerable part of Western culture was accepted, so that the awareness of gender inequality is weaker than Chinese. As a representative of the Western, the United States, which raised the first flag of feminism, has an awareness and attitudes of gender equality in these 3 countries.

This paper is to analyze the level of effect that ascriptive factors and achieved factors work the impact on the attitude of gender inequality. In this article, the degree of influence of different factors has been found and a favorable analysis has been made, but there is a lot of work to need to pursue. For instance, what are the deep-seated reasons that young people have a stronger attitude of gender equality than older people? How much does the interaction between ascriptive factors and achieved factors affect the attitudes toward gender inequality? In addition to these factors, other possible factors need to find based on theories to affect people's attitude of gender inequality. Moreover, majority of research consequences on USA in this paper are not significant obviously, we should explore further reasons. It may be the next step of this study to work.

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