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本辑插图、题图：王克雨，范雪莲

Why Asian-American Students Excel



【美】Fox Butterfield

晓明选注

在今年3月份的美国第46届西屋科学天才奖发奖仪式上，美籍华裔中学生分别获得了该奖的第1、第3、第4和

第7名，获奖人数几乎占了全部得奖者的一半，然而这仅是华裔中学生，并不包括从亚洲其它国家或地区去美国就读的中学生。

美籍亚裔中学生何以能取得如此优异的成绩？这一问题引起了美国众多学者的关注。本篇是关于这个问题的综合报道，它从遗传角度、文化背景、以及美国社会本身的特点汇集了各家学者的看法，很有启发性。

* * * * *

LE THI NGOC, a 33-year-old computer technician who lives in Fremont, Calif., follows a set schedule¹ when she comes home from work. After preparing dinner, she spends two hours helping her ten-year-old son, Alan, with his homework. Alan is not allowed to watch television on weeknights², and if he plays with his G.I. Joe³ toys when he is supposed to be doing his schoolwork, his mother puts them away. "Helping my son to do well in school is a sacred⁴ duty; you want your family to do well," said Ngoc, who fled Vietnam in 1972. "I don't believe in letting kids do whatever they want."⁵

Not surprisingly, Alan is near the top of his fifth-grade class, another in the rapidly growing number of academically successful Asian-American students.⁶ Last spring, Asian-Americans were awarded⁷ the top five prizes in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search⁸, the most prominent science scholarship award for U. S. highschool students. Asian-Americans typically score around 520 out of a possible 800 on the math section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, 30 points higher than whites.⁹

Although Asian-Americans make up only 2.1 percent of the population, you wouldn't know that from looking at the nation's best colleges. At Harvard they constituted 11 percent of the freshman class in the last school year; at M.I.T.¹⁰ it was 18 percent. One-quarter of undergraduates at the University of California at Berkeley¹¹ are Asian-Americans.

This extraordinary record has prompted a new series of studies to find out what lies behind their success. A few scholars believe Asians are genetically superior, with higher I.Q.¹² levels. Harvard pediatrician¹³ T. Berry Brazelton suggests that Chinese and Japanese babies are very alert, quiet and sensitive at birth, conditions that set them up for faster learning. Most specialists believe the secret is cultural, rooted in traditional values of family and education. Others caution¹⁴ that these academically successful children are offspring of a unique immigrant group, the intellectual and professional elite¹⁵ of their home countries.

Whether they favor nature or nurture¹⁶, the new studies offer challenging insights into the state of the American family and school. Sanford M. Dornbusch, a professor of human biology, sociology and education at Stanford University, is conducting a study of six San Francisco-area high schools. He has found that Asian-Americans consistently get better grades than do other students, regardless of their parents' level of education or economic status. Indeed, the more English that was spoken in the students' homes—indicating a greater degree of assimilation into American life—the poorer they tended

to do in school. "To put it bluntly," says Dornbusch, "America may be a melting pot with low standards for its adolescents."¹⁷

The most provocative¹⁸ findings come in a six-year study headed by University of Michigan psychologist Harold W. Stevenson, who compared students in kindergarten, first grade and fifth grade in the United States, Japan and Taiwan. Taking 240 children at each grade level from each country, Stevenson found significant disparities¹⁹ in performance. "At all levels, the Japanese kids were on top in math," he said. "The kids in Taiwan started out below the American kindergarten kids in math, but they were better by the first grade."

In explaining these differences, Stevenson discounted²⁰ the genetic factor. "We didn't find any difference in I.Q.," he said. "But if the differences are already appearing at age five in kindergarten, there must be something in the home."

It is here that almost all the studies converge²¹. They find that Asian or Asian-American parents are able to instill²² in their children a much greater motivation to work hard. In his San Francisco study, Dornbusch found that Asian-Americans spent an average of 12 hours a week doing homework, compared with 8.3 hours for white Americans and 7.9 hours for black Americans.

These findings are repeated in virtually all studies. For example, Stevenson's research showed that American first-graders spent an average of 14 minutes a night on homework and disliked it; the Japanese spent 37 minutes, the Taiwanese 77 minutes, and both liked it.

There are also more subtle²³ differences. Stevenson observed that American students averaged a third less classroom time in academic activities than did their Asian counterparts, and American teachers used more time giving directions and less time imparting information.

“It’s an old-fashioned story—if you work hard, you do well,” said Thomas Sowell, an economist at the Hoover Institution at Stanford who grew up in Harlem and has written extensively about race and education. “Asian parents are teaching a lesson that otherwise isn’t being taught in America anymore. Asian kids study harder than do white and black kids and are therefore getting better grades.” His conclusion: “Work works.”

The question is, then, *why* do Asian-Americans work so hard? Stevenson feels they work harder largely because they share a greater belief in the efficacy²⁴ of hard work and the malleability²⁵ of human nature. “When we asked mothers from three countries what determined success in school,” he said, “Japanese mothers gave the strongest rating to the idea that anyone can do well if he studies hard.” Chinese mothers were in close agreement. By contrast, American mothers were most likely to attribute success to natural talent.

A classic example is Katherine Chen, who graduated from Lowell High School, a prominent public school in San Francisco with admission based on competitive tests, and a student body²⁶ that is now 65-percent Asian-American. Chen, who enrolled in Stanford in the fall, was a straight-A student at Lowell. “In the Chinese family,” she said, “education is very important because parents see it

as the way to achieve. With that environment, it's natural to study. My friends are that way too. It's not a chore. They know the benefits."

In high school she did three hours of homework every night. Chen did watch some television after dinner, she said, "because my mom makes it a point that I relax. I also go to parties on weekends." But, like many other Asian-American students, she does not date. The preoccupation of American teenagers with the opposite sex is seen as dangerous and distracting by many Asian parents accustomed to a traditional society where children grow up more slowly.²⁷

The importance of family and education are themes²⁸ that recur²⁹ with Asian-Americans. Jason Tang, for instance, arrived in the United States in 1980, after two years in a refugee camp³⁰ in Malaysia for Vietnamese boat people. All he could say in English was, "How are you? I'm twelve." Tang had not been in a regular school since 1975, when he was a second-grader. His father, a shopkeeper, bought passage on a fishing boat for Tang and his three sisters. The father and mother stayed behind.

With great effort and devotion to his father's wishes, Tang has succeeded. In June, he graduated from Brighton High School in Boston with nearly a straight-A³¹ average and earned a four-year scholarship to Boston University, where he is majoring in electrical engineering. He lives with two of his sisters, both of whom are attending college. They are virtually self-supporting, sharing a small two-bedroom apartment and managing to pay rent out of their earnings from part-time jobs.

What has helped Tang's motivation, he said, is an obligation to his faraway parents. "I promised my father to do well and to uphold our family honor. My father spent so much to send me here, and I am determined to repay him."

One unanswered question is whether Asian-Americans will continue their record of achievement as they are assimilated³² into American society. Barbara Schneider, a professor at Northwestern University, thinks they may not. In a study of Asian-Americans in two Chicago-area elementary schools, she found "the highest level of academic performance came in the first and second generations. By the third generation they were more socialized in American ways and less interested in school."

But the experience of Rob Ohno, a third-generation Japanese-American who graduated from Harvard last June, suggests that some Asian-Americans may find new, more American ways to draw on³³ their resources. Ohno, a center on Harvard's hockey team, doesn't see himself as Asian.

But he proudly carries some of his traditional values. His family still comes first in his life. And his father stressed the importance of hard work and education. "It's something innate³⁴ in me," he said.

Nevertheless, Ohno has taken a year off to play professional hockey³⁵ in Europe. And next year? Next year Rob Ohno hopes to go to business school.

(From *Reader's Digest*, February, 1987)

1. follows a set schedule: 遵循固定的日程安排。set: 固定的, 一成

- 不变的。 2. on weeknights: 周日晚上, 每天晚上(星期六或星期日除外)。 3. G. I. Joe: 美国兵。 G. I.=government issue, 美国军人的。美国女兵叫做 G. I. Jane。 4. sacred: 神圣的。 5. I don't ... they want: 不让孩子随心所欲是我的信念。 6. Not surprisingly,... students: 毫不奇怪, 艾伦差不多是五年级班上的优等生了, 从而成为迅速成长起来的学业上成功的美籍亚裔学生行列中的一员。
7. awarded: 授奖。 8. Westinghouse Science Talent Search: 西屋科学天才奖。该奖是美国西屋电气公司出资, 美国科学局主办的奖学金。它被公认为美国最有权威的青少年科学奖。每年发奖一次, 每年定期从各州中学里挑选优秀代表40名, 到首都华盛顿进行最后选拔, 选出10名获奖者。奖金定额为14万美元。 9. Asian-Americans ... than whites: 典型性表现在学生智能测验的数学部分, 美籍亚裔中学生能从可能是满分800分的试卷上得到大约520分, 这一成绩要比白人中学生高出30多分。
10. M. I. T.: =Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 麻省理工学院。 11. University of California at Berkeley: 加州大学伯克利分校。 12. I. Q.: =intelligence quotient, 智商。 13. pediatrician: 儿科专家。 14. caution: 告诫。 15. elite: 出类拔萃的人才; 精华。 16. nurture: (后天的)培养。 17. America may be ... for its adolescents.: 美国可能是个对青少年低标准要求的大熔炉。 18. provocative: 引起争议的。 19. disparities: 不一致; 悬殊。 20. discount: 不信任; 怀疑。 21. converge: 集中。 22. instill: 逐渐灌输。 23. subtle: 细微的; 微小的。 24. efficacy: 功效; 效能。 25. malleability: 适应性。 26. a student body: 学生会。 27. The preoccupation...grow up more slowly: 美国青少年专心于异性交往在许多习惯于传统社会的亚洲父母看来是危险的, 同时也是分散精力的。在这样的一种传统社会里, 亚洲小孩的身心发展较慢。 28. themes: 主题。 29. recur: 重复提起。 30. refugee camp: 难民营。 31. straight-A: 成绩最优秀的。 32. assimilated: 同化。 33. draw on: 吸收; 利用。 34. innate: 天生的; 固有的。 35. hockey: 曲棍球。



Spoiled Brats¹

Lloyd Garrison

刘新桂 选注

随着计划生育工作的深入进行，我国出现了越来越多的“核心家庭”。这种新型的家庭通常由父母和孩子组成，而且大多数家庭仅有一个小孩。因此，面对这样的家庭结构，许多独生子女被父母视为掌上明珠，受到了“无微不至”的关心和照顾。

本选文在这方面为我们提供了一些事例，并指出了一些父母之举的潜在危险，望做父母的读了本文之后能有所醒悟。

When little Minmin, a third-grader,² complained to his parents in Peking about having to wear the same clothes twice, they decided the time had come for him to learn something about responsibility. One morning they asked him to empty the family chamber pot³. Minmin dutifully poured out one-third of the contents and returned the pot. "I've done my part," he said. "You're responsible for the rest."

The anecdote⁴ appeared in a series of articles in *China Youth News* on the state of the country's children. Minmin, it seems, is far from alone in being thoroughly spoiled.⁵ The publication also told of an eleven-year-old in a Peking primary school who is so pampered⁶ that he only recently learned to dress himself.

While Chinese parents have traditionally coddled⁷ their offspring, the problem has grown more acute as a result of the government's family-planning⁸ policy, which limits couples to one child. The aim of the regulations⁹ is to hold the population at 1.2 billion people by the year 2000. The policy has led to fears¹⁰ that single-child parents are raising a generation of spoiled brats.

The problem is serious enough for Vice Premier Li Peng, who is widely touted as¹¹ China's next Premier, to have called for stronger emphasis on teaching ideological and moral values¹² in primary schools. Li told a meeting of youth workers in Peking: "Since the danger is high of an only child growing up spoiled,¹³ and since this may have a deleterious effect on society,¹⁴ moral education for children has become an urgent task."

The All-China Women's Federation has announced that 20,000 special courses are available¹⁵ for overly generous parents worried about how to raise their one and only¹⁶. Schools are having problems dealing with pampered pupils. *China Youth News* reports that a third-grade teacher in Peking told her students that the school could not afford to buy them ice cream—to which the children replied that they had the money to buy their own. One youngster, the teacher said, carried more pocket money than the average young office worker earns in a month.

China's long preference for male children has created a great discrepancy between the number of boys and the number of girls¹⁷. According to *Demography Journal*,¹⁸ 48 million males have no hope of finding wives. Officials insist this is due to a genetic tendency¹⁹ among Chinese



to produce more males than females, but there are persistent reports from the countryside of many girls dying at birth.

Lately, Peking has granted some local exceptions to the one-child rule²⁰, apparently encouraged by a February report of the State Family Planning Commission that population growth over the past five years was 14 million less than expected. Minority nationalities²¹ are now permitted three children per family, and couples in sparsely populated regions²², two children. Many local governments, as in Guangxi, have passed laws that, for example, allow parents who were only children to produce two of their own. Such relaxations could be short-lived, however.²³ Last month one of China's leading economists, Ma Bin, told a national science symposium²⁴ that the population may pass the 1.3 billion mark by 2000,

well beyond the intended target.²⁵

(From *Time*)

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1. spoiled brats: 宠坏的孩子。 2. a third-grader: 小学三年级的学生。 3. chamber pot: 尿壶。 4. anecdote: 轶事, 奇闻。 5. is far from alone in being thoroughly spoiled: 娇生惯养的孩子远非(明明)一人。 6. is so pampered: 如此娇生惯养。 7. coddled: 溺爱, 娇养。 8. family-planning: 计划生育。 9. the aim of the regulations: 规定的目的。 10. led to fears: 引起担心。 11. touted as: 推荐担任。 12. ideological and moral values: 思想准则和道德标准。 13. the danger is high...spoiled: 独生子女长大后娇生惯养的危险性很大。 of an only child growing up spoiled 是 danger 的修饰语。 14. this may have a deleterious effect on society: 这对社会造成有害的影响。 15. available: 可利用的, 可得到的。 16. overly generous ... onlvs: 过分宽容孩子但又担心如何教育自己独生子女的父母。 17. China's long preference... girls: 中国长期重男轻女, 已经造成了男孩和女孩人数上的很大差距。 discrepancy: 差异, 不一致。 18. Demography Journal: 人口统计杂志。 19. a genetic tendency: 一种遗传倾向。 20. has granted ... to the one-child rule: 对只准生一个孩子的规定已允许有某些局部的例外。 21. minority nationalities: 少数民族。 22. in sparsely populated regions: 在人口稀少的地区。 23. Such relaxation ... howeve: 然而这样放宽政策是不可能长久的。 24. science symposium: 科学讨论会。 25. may pass ... the intended target: 到2000年可能会破十三亿大关, 大大超过预定的指标。

-
- 最高限度。 5. a transparent glass dome: 透明的玻璃罩。 6. still observe its limitation: 仍遵循其限度。 7. under hindering circumstances: 在受阻碍的环境下。 8. form the habit of self-limitation: 形成了自我限制的习惯。 9. untapped potential: 未发掘的潜力。 10. selfconcept: 对自己的看法。 11. expand your horizons: 扩大你的视野。 12. shatter the ceiling of your restrictions: 冲破对你的最大限制。