Research on Public Cultural Services Reshaping the Social Identity of the New Generation of Migrant Workers

Chun-xiao Xu¹,a,*

¹Department of Cultural Industry Management, The Communication University of China, Beijing, Beijing, China

*a.chunxiao1993@126.com

*Corresponding author

Keywords: New Generation of Migrant Workers, Social Identity, Public Cultural Services.

Abstract. The new generation of migrant workers has serious social identification problems. Whether this problem can be solved has a bearing on if they can truly integrate into the city. In this regard, this article considers that as an important form of social participation form, public cultural services provide an important institutionalized practice system for the new generation of migrant workers, which can be connected with other urban groups and provides a way to reshape their social identity. This article will firstly analyze the social identity of the new generation of migrant workers, and then from the perspective of cultural governance, put forward the view about public cultural services playing a role in breaking cultural distinctions and importing cultural values. Finally, give some suggestions for the social recognition of the new generation of migrant workers.

1. Introduction

The new generation of migrant workers is a group or class who exists in China only and has serious problem of social identity. Now, the number of this group of people has increased to about 290 million, so the issue of social integration and identity of such a large group should be paid more attention from policymakers and researchers. Public cultural services as an important social participation form which can strengthen the connection and improve the interaction of people would be a useful means as to promote social identity and integration.

2. New Generation of Migrant Workers and Their Social Identity

2.1. Who is the New Generation of Migrant Workers?

Migrant workers is a special group in Chinese society. They represent the group who were born and grow up in countryside and work in city, but cannot obtain the identity of the city. In many countries around the world, people living in rural and urban areas have only geographical differences and no differences in status. However, due to the existence of “hukou” which is a household registration system in China, living in urban and rural areas actually implicates the difference of social status in the aspect of institution and also represents different life experiences and habits. This institutional status has been ingrained in their life since their birth, and “peasant” is their identities before they enter the city. However, as they gradually integrate into the work and life of the city, their perception of their identity gradually begins to change. They no longer recognize themselves as “peasant”, but they do not dare to admit themselves as “urbanite”. Because they can't get “urban hukou”, which is the officially recognized symbol of “urbanite”.

401
The new generation of migrant workers appearing along with the inter-generational differentiation of the group of migrant workers, mainly refers to the rural youth born in the 1980s, who enter the city to work in the field of manufacturing, construction, service, and so on. As a matter of fact, they are called the new generation migrant workers, not only because they are younger in age, but also because of the differences between them and the first generation migrant workers in terms of their educational level, their growing environment, in the attitude towards the city and the countryside and in the integration of the city expectations. Compared with the first generation of migrant workers, the new generation of migrant workers prefer to settle in the city forever, due to their identification identity with the city life style, so they prefer to integrate into the city while it is hard to practice realize owing to the institution deficiency and the cultural difference.

2.2. The Problem of Social Identity of the New Generation of Migrant Workers

In fact, great progress has been made in the study of international migrants abroad, in which acculturation has been recognized as one of the most important research topics, referring to the ‘continuous direct contact between peoples with different cultures composed of individuals, thus leading to the phenomenon that one or both of the original cultural forms of change’. Acculturation defines cultural conflicts between different race and less discusses the acculturation problem of urban-rural migrants in the urbanization process. This neglect presupposes that there are little differences between ethnic, social or cultural groups with one country, especially for the western developed countries. However, there is a huge gap between rural residents and urban residents in many developing countries, resulted from the institutional constraints left over from the history. For instance, the existence of dualistic system in China causes the huge gap between the development of urban and rural areas. When migrant workers enter the city, there will also be some degree of acculturation problem, which will form a change of identity. [1]

As a matter of fact, my research would like to focus on social identity, the important aspect of social integration. Social identity means the cognition that an individual considers himself as a member of or belonging to a group in the aspect of emotion or value. [2] Based on the existing research, the Cenozoic migrant workers has encountered serious issue of identity. The study found that the new generation of migrant workers has great differences from the older generation of migrant workers in some aspects: self-identity, sense of belonging to the city, psychological distance between the city and the countryside. The barriers of the city integration and the sense of alienation of their hometown turn them into a roving generation and bring about a crisis of identity in the new generation of migrant workers. [3]

Compared with the first generation of migrant workers, the new generation of migrant workers shows more special characteristics and components. They are restricted by various institutional factors such as the dual structure of urban and rural areas, as well as the strangeness of urban lifestyle, which have made it highly difficult for the new generation of migrant workers to root in the city. At the same time, the distinction between rural life style and communication style results in hardly coming back to their hometown and lead them to wander between the city and the countryside. [4] They don’t belong to to the city nor to the countryside who are seriously marginalized. According to Axel Honneth, ‘self-satisfaction depends on the mutual recognition of the subject’. In other words, successful self-development presupposes a series of mutual recognition forms. If the subject experiences contempt and realizes that he has not been admitted or wrongly admitted, he will devote himself to the struggle for recognition. [5]
Hence, the key of the social identity of them is the question of who I am and who to be. This low sense of self-identity will affect the modernization of the new generation of migrant wokers. I eagerly want to know what can we do to improve their identity in the case of inability to change the present institution system? Mainstream research on identification of cross-cultural immigrants shows that their identity of host culture depends on their attitudes towards local culture and society while other scholars argue that the interaction between immigrants and the mainstream society and the degree of acceptance by the urban society are also the vital factors[6]. Social interaction and connection make effect on the identify construction of migrant wokers in most cases, mainly reflected on participating in group activities of fellowships, collective activities of organization and the condition of making friends. Unfriendly environments, such as discrimination can put pressure on their identity. The more discrimination migrant wokers receives, the lower the degree of urban identity must be, so migrant wokers who lives in communities closely connected to the mainstream urban society is more likely to form social identity.

2.3. Cultural Participation as a Means to Reshape the Social Identity of Them

Through analysis of the problems and determinants of social identity of the peasant workers, we can find possible ways to reshape their social identity. With Regard to its remodeling path, it should be aimed at giving recognition of the new generation of migrant wokers from the urban, and aimed at their confusions about "who am I" and "who to be".

Therefore, this article proposes that cultural participation can be an effective way for the new generation of migrant wokers to strengthen their contacts and ties with urban society. Cultural participation is a research theme with rich content and forms, and it is manifested in different ways in different countries. In the real context of China society, non-profit public cultural services and profit cultural industries are both important ways for residents to culture participation, that is, cultural practices that may involve all kinds of cultural production consumption, including those carried out in communities, which can reflect the quality of life, Traditions and beliefs. This article will take public cultural services as the main field of cultural participation. From the political and living attributes of cultural governance, try to explore and analyze how can public cultural services help the new generation of migrant wokers to socially integrate and reshape their social identity.

These cultural activities may not be difficult to obtain and participate in for common people. However, the migrant wokers in China is such a group with great difficulties in cultural participation which is due to the nature of their work in a degree. Because most of them work in manufacturing industry, construction industry and low-end services industry, their relationship with the company are rarely guaranteed and fixed through labor contracts. They can hardly gain access to cultural resources and participate in cultural activities in their organizations. On the other hand, their long working hours cause too exhaustion to participate in cultural activities. At the same time, the place where they live is not recognized by the local communities qualified to engage in the cultural activities organized by the local. There are a number of other reasons that together lead to a degree of the isolation in cultural participation which would greatly reduce their connection to the city and social identity.
3. Cultural Governance and Public Cultural Services

If we want to have a good understanding of why and how the public cultural services to promote the new generation of migrant workers social identity, we must first understand how public cultural services in China as a complex practice of cultural governance to achieve its goals.

3.1. About Cultural Governance

The academic community has not reached agreement about the cultural governance. Even the Birmingham school, which early introduced governance into cultural studies, had a very different understanding of it. The early Birmingham School was mainly influenced by Marxism and Gramsci's "cultural hegemony" thought, which was more obviously reflected into the academic research of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and others. Developed to the later period, it was more mainly influenced by Fox's "governmentality", which was manifested in Bennett's cultural policy research. If culture is regarded as a series of historically specific governance relationships, the goal is to change the ideology and behavior of the general population, which is partly achieved through the social system of the forms, technologies, and rules of aesthetic intellectual culture, and culture will be more convincingly conceived. For him, between the 18th and 19th centuries, the definition of culture changed in the English-speaking world. With the birth of political economy and social sciences, culture began to be regarded as the object and the tool of governance, which are targeted at the morals, manners, and lifestyles of the lower strata.

Scholars from Taiwan, such as Wang Zhihong, introduced the concept of cultural governance to the Chinese academic world earlier. In the article "How to Govern Culture? A Conceptual Exploration of Analytical Framework", from Foucault's "governmentality" and some governance concepts such as new political organization and communication networks, regime theory and reflexivity, he explains the connotation of cultural governance, which is defined as "a field of political and economic (and various social life-oriented) adjustments and disputes through culture, through various procedures, technologies, organizations, knowledge, discourses, and actions."[7]

The term of "cultural governance" appeared firstly around the 1990s on the Chinese Mainland. He Manzi published an article entitled "Culture Governance" in 1994, but what he refers to as "cultural governance" can be roughly regarded as a synonym of "resistance to vulgar culture and adhere to health interests". [8] It had no relevant theoretical background and academic meaning. By the beginning of the 21st century, under the influence of western theories, the academic research on cultural governance emerged, and "cultural governance" was startly used as an independent vocabulary. Guo Lingfeng's[9] "EU Cultural Policy and Cultural Governance" is the earliest academic use of cultural governance in mainland China. It was proposed that "cultural governance" is the complex network composed of public, private and voluntary/non-profit groups that set the direction for cultural development. At the end of 2013, scholar Hu Huilin[10] published an article named "National Cultural Governance Needs More Citizens' Participation" in the "Guangming Daily", explaining some important distinctions between "cultural governance" and "cultural management". He believes that cultural governance is a country's instrumentation through a series of policy measures and institutional arrangements to use cultural functions to solve problems in the development of the country. Its object is politics, economy, society and culture, and the main subjects are government which is the leading role and society, which participates in co-governance."
By the summary of the issue of "cultural governance", we can find that there are different understandings of it, on the one hand due to different interpretations of culture, governance, and the relationship between culture and governance, and on the other hand, because cultural governance itself has many different "faces"\[^{[11]}\]. In specific cultural governance practice, these different faces converge in various forms.

3.2. Public Cultural Services from the Perspective of Cultural Governance Provide the Possibility to Reshape Their Social Identity

Cultural governance is a modern form of state governance, which reflects the fundamental transformation of government functions in the fields of culture, from traditional public management to modern governance. In our country, public cultural service is the institutional manifestation of cultural governance. The scholar Zhong Qiwan\[^{[12]}\] believes that cultural governance is to explore the supply model of public cultural services under the three-dimensional structure of state-market economy-national society. So, what is the action logic of government public cultural services in the field of cultural governance? This research believes that cultural governance activities present political logic, and life logic.

3.2.1. The Political Logic of Public Cultural Services

According to the "economic foundation-superstructure" framework of classical Marxism, culture is the product of ideology, which is determined by the economic foundation in a specific period, and protects the interests of the ruler. Although the cultural rule technology has experienced a macro-to-micro transition with the modernization transformation, the political nature of the culture that internalizes the value consciousness (mainstream culture) recognized by the ruling class into the subjective demands of each individual actor has not changed. In modern China, public cultural services, as an important dimension of cultural governance, bear the political attributes of cultural construction, that is, "through all types of public cultural activities, build public cultural life and public cultural space, thereby promoting the identity social public values and the core socialist values, to enhance the civilization of the whole society and the quality of spiritual and cultural life of the entire nation"\[^{[13]}\].

3.2.2. Life Logic of Public Cultural Services: Breaking Cultural Segregation

In this topic, beyond the political logic, the living attributes of cultural governance and public cultural services are more important. Because the life logic of it is devoted to shaping the public life under the cultural division of the class. The reconstruction of cultural governance in China today is a complex process with multiple dimensions. Public cultural services take practice in the field of cultural governance in the national macro governance structure where the adjustment of national governance structure and the transformation of cultural governance models provide the basic context of the public cultural services. Through a series of system design and space construction of public cultural service, the government hopes that individuals of different strata will “feel that they are an integral part of a society or local community by engaging in a common action, rebuilding the contractual spirit in which all strata in the stranger community can live in harmony”\[^{[14]}\]. In the public cultural space, a wide range of service projects that are close to life can not only enable all classes to meet their own cultural needs through joint participation, but also create conditions for the interaction between different classes. Therefore, the full public cultural participation in cultural governance create the intersection of the public and private fields. The government encourages people of different cultural tastes and different social classes to engage in rich and diverse public
cultural life, and enjoys various cultural conveniences, to achieve the ultimate goal of the "public spirit"—a common value inquiry and a world of meaning among actors, in the field of public cultural services.

As studying the relationship between public cultural services and cultural governance, we can find the mission and attributes of public cultural services to reshape the public spirit and public life. This provides rationality to help new generation of migrant wokers to eliminate the cultural conflict, and to guide this group to enter public cultural space, to realize associations and interactions with other groups, to stimulate their subjective consciousness as citizens, and to rebuild their social identity.

4. Some Suggestions on Public Cultural Services Reshaping Their Identity

This paper believes that the role of public cultural services in ensuring the basic cultural needs and promoting the social and cultural integration of migrant workers can be brought into effect in the following aspects.

4.1. Construction of Cultural Demand Expression Mechanism

When the government provides public cultural services for the new generation of migrant workers, the cultural content mainly reflects the mainstream values of the society, so the cultural form and cultural content are relatively monotonous. To change this "up-down" supply model of public cultural service, we need to establish proactive expression channels for the new generation of migrant workers to collect their cultural needs. First of all, it is necessary to effectively safeguard the right of expression of the new generation of migrant workers. It cannot be regarded as a dispensable right than the survival right. Whether it is regarded as natural human rights or political empowerment, it is Essential to make their expression right gradually came true. Secondly, we need to build a cultural demand mechanism for the new generation of migrant workers, which includes demand information collection channels, and information review and feedback mechanisms. The form of demand information collection should be based on their social relationships, such as the relationship with the enterprises, the relationship with the community, the relationship with the local government, and the relationship with the local citizens.

4.2. Reduce Institutional Barriers

The problem of the new generation of migrant workers is a systemic social problem which are the structural consequences of China's long-term urban-rural divide and household registration system. Once the system is formed, it will affect society and actors in all aspects. We do not see the possibility of the cancellation of the household registration system for the time being, but we can adjust the distribution of benefits and achieve more equality with more flexible management. The first priority is to bring the new generation of migrant workers into line with the overall social and economic development plan of the local government and expand the city's public cultural service objects, products, content, scope and methods. Based on the original foundation of the public cultural service system, consider the special needs, service characteristics and guarantee strength of this group.

4.3. Guide the Establishment of a Multi-subject Mechanism

Establishing a multi-subject mechanism is equivalent to the process of streamlining government and
delegating authorities of the government. The government must actively guide the market and social forces to create a friend social environment for the joint participation of enterprises and public welfare forces. The government needs to encourage the participation of other entities such as enterprises by enacting certain policies and preferential measures, to guide, arrange and promote the investment and donation of cultural activities, cultural projects and cultural facilities targeted at new-generation migrant workers, and to build a multi-element funding system with subject participation. Since the removal of the one-way supply structure, in the premise of ensuring the core of government supply, a multi-party dialogue mechanism and platform including the new generation of migrant workers have been established to open up new supply forces to meet the cultural needs of the new generation of migrant workers.

5. Conclusion

For the new generation of migrant workers who leave the rural environment to live and work in the city, it is of great significance to complete the process of identity conversion and reshaping. However, due to the influence of various factors, the social identity of the new generation of migrant workers has been in a difficult situation for a long time. The essential core of social identity is culture. How to help this group achieve cultural adaptation is of great significance. As the basic system of national cultural governance, public cultural services can become a basic channel to promote cultural connections between the new generation of migrant workers and other groups. Incorporating the basic needs of the new generation of migrant workers into the local public cultural service system, establishing a diversified supply mechanism and smooth demand feedback channels are the most important basic measures.

Acknowledgement

This article is a preliminary result of the “Research on the Public Cultural Supply of New Generation Migrant workers” (Project No.: CUC200D044) supported by “the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities”.

References


