

On the Basic Characteristics of the New Age Migrant Workers in Beijing: Take Dongying City, Shandong Province as Reference

LEI Yun^{[a],*}; YANG Huan^[b]

^[a]Ph.D., Institute of Teacher Educational Research, Sichuan Normal University, Chendu, China.

^[b]M. Ed., Institute of Teacher Educational Research, Sichuan Normal University, Chendu, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 12 May 2014; accepted 22 July 2014

Published online 27 August 2014

Abstract

Take the migrant workers in Dongying as reference, we find that the average age of new generation migrant worker in Beijing is 5 years younger than the old-age one; the education level is higher than the old-one; in choosing their jobs, the young age migrant workers in Beijing prefer to choose honorable jobs; also, the younger migrant workers are more adaptable to the Beijing city; and the absolute exploitation on younger migrant workers is weakening, while the relative exploitation on them is growing.

Key words: Beijing; New age; Migrant workers; Basic characteristics

Lei, Y., & Yang, H. (2014). On the Basic Characteristics of the New Age Migrant Workers in Beijing: Take Dongying City, Shandong Province as Reference. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 5(3), 148-152. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sss/article/view/5369> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/5369>

INTRODUCTION

Taking the migrant workers in Dongying, Shandong province and the old-age migrant worker as reference, the status quo, culture trait, city adaption and life situation of the new age migrant workers in Beijing will be analyzed in this thesis.

1. THE DIFFERENCES OF AGE, EDUCATION LEVEL

The average age of the new age migrant workers in Beijing is 30.71, which is 9 years younger than the migrant workers in Dongying. In Beijing, New age migrant workers account for 30.15% of all the migrant workers, the old-age migrant worker account for 32.10%. The feature of other transitional migrant worker (25 to 35 years old) tends to be like that of the new age migrant workers. Thus it can be found that as the capital of China, Beijing attracts more new age migrant workers rather than the old-age one, while the city of Dongying attracts more old-age migrant workers from nearby village rather than new age one. The new age migrant workers have become the mainstay of workers in Beijing¹. In terms of age and career, the work of migrant workers can be divided into the following three kinds: hysical work, technical work, and knowledge related work. The workers who are engaged in physical work are generally aged from 26 to 45, and 86% of the workers that are of 26 to 45 years age are devoted to physical work. Migrant workers in Dongying are mainly taking up physical works, such as porters and construction workers. Calculating results indicate obvious differences in choosing jobs between the new and old age migrant workers. On one hand, new age migrant workers have a wider scale of jobs to choose and have greater ability to be adapted to the city. For the migrant worker aging from 16 to 25, 14% are normally doing household service, 19.41% of them are doing jobs relating to computer, and 26.74% of them are doing jobs for building. Other jobs that the 16 to 25 years old migrant

¹Statistics show that 16-25-year-old new generation of migrant workers accounted for 30.15%, with a new generation of migrant workers characteristics of transitional migrant workers accounted for 37.19%, the total proportion of migrant workers has been more than old ones. This seems to think migrant workers in Beijing has been completed.

workers choose are mainly vehicle repairing, business and driving, which show that the migrant workers tend to do non-physical jobs. However, migrant workers in Dongying are majorly doing construction jobs, which account for 46% of all the migrant workers in Dongying. On the other hand, new age migrant worker would like

to choose decent jobs to do, for example, none of the migrant workers younger than 25 are doing collecting scraps. Different from the old-age migrant worker, new age migrant worker would like to do jobs that could not only bring them money, but also give them spiritual fulfilment.

Table 1
The Distribution of Age and Occupation of Migrant Workers in Beijing

Occupation	Age				
	Under 16	16 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	Above 46
Cleaning	0	5	16	12	2
Catering	0	13	5	5	0
Work force	1	31	150	115	11
Housekeeping	0	38	19	13	0
Administration	0	2	5	1	1
IT	0	53	4	0	0
Building industry	2	73	85	54	5
Trading	2	23	42	39	0
Auto repair	0	18	6	5	0
Waste collection	0	0	3	10	2
Driving	0	9	6	7	0

2. THE DIFFERENCES OF CAREER CHOICE

It can be concluded from the above table 2-2 that in terms of education, migrant workers with a high-school diploma or above account for 82.5% of the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing and 18.64% of the overall migrant workers in Beijing. On the contrary, few old-generation migrant workers have been educated in high schools or universities. Among the new generation migrant workers in Beijing, 27.32% of them has been awarded with a high school diploma or above and 81.13% of them has awarded with middle school diploma. It can be concluded that a vast majority of new generation migrant workers in Beijing have accepted secondary education or vocational education or higher education of all kinds. Besides, Beijing migrant workers stand for the new generation of migrant workers and Dongying migrant workers model as the old generation

of migrant workers. There are significant differences in the education with the gap of one year or so in terms of average education time. Moreover, occupation is closely related to education migrant workers have accepted. The illiterate migrant workers primarily are employed to build construction, collecting trash and cleaning. And migrant workers with secondary education mainly work on service industry, computer design, and management and so on. Those with a college degree or above usually work on automobile repair, computer design, business, typing and so on. Notably, technology related to occupation is not in conformity with the degree of education. For example, carpenters and painters are popular among migrant workers of various degree of education. The phenomenon can be explained as below: the occupation belongs to technology related industry, in which the master-apprentice model is prevailing. Despite of education, migrant workers can pick up the skill and find those kinds of jobs from the model.

Table 2
The Distribution of Age and Education of Migrant Workers in Beijing

Education	Age			
	16 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	Above 46
Illiterate	7	15	4	0
Without primary school diploma	17	21	45	3
With primary school diploma	13	41	34	3
Without middle school diploma	13	41	54	3
With middle school diploma	55	96	67	5
Without high school diploma	79	95	80	4
With high school or technical school diploma	49	42	21	1
With College diploma	31	26	11	0
With above college diploma	7	10	2	0

3. GRADUALLY GETTING RID OF FETTER OF LOCAL CULTURE AND FORMING NEW CULTURE

New generation migrant workers in Beijing have gradually got rid of the constraints of local culture and formed a new culture. There are several reasons behind the new culture: First of all, the new generation migrant workers become younger in average age. Little or even none of the migrant workers have to work as peasants without the influence of local culture. It is calculated that 21.53% of the migrant workers have not participated in farming and only 46.34% of the migrant workers have worked in farms for less than two years. And among those migrant workers, 42.82 of them work as peasants when they are less than 25 years old. Secondly, new generation migrant workers mainly transit from students to workers. However, the current education system is urban culture oriented. Therefore, migrant workers can adapt themselves to urban life without the constraints of various traditions and old thoughts. To be specific, the features of the new culture of new generation migrant workers in Beijing can be concluded as followings:

Firstly, with the pioneering spirit, new generation migrant workers in Beijing come from other cities around the country. Far from native place, migrant workers struggle in Beijing. Instead of following old tracks and submitting to the will of Heaven, migrant workers are devoted to improving their skills and learning knowledge with limited time to change their destiny. For example, according to an investigation on "To deal with adversity", although suffered from misfortunes, 35.2% of migrant workers in Beijing still hold that they will stay in Beijing and find a way while 20.5% of Dongying migrant workers agree to stay the policy. And 30.4% of Dongying migrant workers cannot tell. This reflects the Bandwagon effect. Secondly, the life views of dissatisfaction. The new generation of migrant workers in Beijing is dissatisfied with the present situation. They went to the country trying to through the efforts to change their life status. Survey of income disposal, for example, shows that the new generation of migrant workers do not attach importance to "accumulate their own pension", and keen to learn technology which can improve their Urban survival ability. Thirdly, marriage and child rearing view of planned eugenics. The new generation of migrant workers in Beijing has basically abandoned "many sons" obsolete concept of marriage and childbearing, attention to eugenics and eutrophication. Survey of marriage and child rearing view shows that if the state canceled the family planning policy, considered the ideal number of children is a share of 40 percent of those surveyed think three or more children, the most ideal total number does not exceed 3%. Fourthly, the labor view of a disciplined punctuality. The new generation of migrant workers' labor

lifestyle has transformed into "workers" labor lifestyle. On the one hand, they maintain hard-working, diligent and thrifty virtues. On the other hand, they acquire labor workers disciplined punctual lifestyle, overcome the original concept of community, such as "loose", "self sufficiency", "neglect cooperation".

In conclusion, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing formed new cultural traits, and its essence is a "local culture" relative "urban culture", but unlike pure "urban culture", also left "local culture" traces tentatively be called "local culture".

4. ACTIVELY EXPLORE CITIZENIZATION TENDENCY OF "SOCIAL CAPITAL"

Citizenization of migrant workers means workers who leave the original residence and doing business in cities for more than half a year gradually transform to urban residents, and means farmers identity completely converting to urban resident status. Citizenization of migrant workers is an important part of urbanization, but due to the lack of social capital, hundreds of millions of migrant workers cannot achieve the "complete transformation", and cannot compete with real integration of the city. Social capital consists of three aspects: one is that it establish a bond of social networks based on blood, kinship and geographical; the second are all kinds of social organizations, which in certain range, in a specific nature of the organization, to provide services to its members and convenience; the third are rules and regulations, which as a public resource to provide enough convenient for the individual who live in it. Through examining the accumulation condition of the three types of social capital, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing Citizenization tendency exhibited the following characteristics.²

Firstly, the new generation of migrant workers is more emphasis on private social capital. Since the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing continued to develop in city, they cannot simply like the old migrant workers toil and rest. Their ideology is much more open, not only concerned about his family life, and more concerned about their ability to survive and interpersonal circles. Looking from the leisure lifestyle, the new generation of migrant workers in addition to the traditional or customary to contact their families, they are more informed about current events, to expand their information

² The concept of social capital was first officially put forward by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the 1980s. After that, it was developed by Lu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam and other scholars, which has become a widely discussed and academia concept applications. The meaning of social capital generally refers to all kinds of social resources, which contained in the social network, social organization and social system, can be used for people.

content. The results show that 14.6% of people take a lot of time to “read a book, read the newspaper, watch TV,” “understand the relevant laws and policies”; in order to enhance their Urban survival ability, 9.9% of people “voluntarily learn more advanced skills”; 11.8% of people pay more attention to construction of urban circle, spend a lot of time with colleagues, co-workers, fellow gathering, communication, and entertainment. More should pay attention to is that they have gradually got rid of the perspective of “guest”, to the compatible “host” in the view of life in the city, for example, 7.3% of people shopping after work. It indicates that the new generation of migrant workers attempts to learn more about their city.

Secondly, they participate and construct of all kinds of rules and regulations. Migrant workers social organizations have spontaneous organization and extrinsic organization. Spontaneous organizations such as the person of hometown, extrinsic organizations such as labor management organizations, trade unions, etc. Before, most of social organization construction are spontaneous organization construction, multiple labor management organization construction, ignores the social

security organization construction. Recently, it has been changed. In order to protect the rights and interests of migrant workers, the trade union organizations have been established in Beijing (Luo, 2004, June 14).

Thirdly, all kinds of rules and regulations in favor of migrant workers urbanization. All kinds of rules and regulations, for example, factory system generally has strict rules on working attire and working hours, which is helping to train migrant workers to comply with the spirit of discipline and order. It is the basic principle of city life. As a result, migrant workers practice of the workers’ labor is the first step in the urbanization.

In addition, national policies for migrant workers also help to develop the Citizenization of migrant workers. such as the Beijing Municipal Federation of Trade Unions Beijing Municipal Construction Committee, the Beijing Municipal Labor and Social Security Bureau and other departments jointly issued “*About to Safeguard Construction into Town Opinions on some Issues of Migrant Workers Labor Rights and Interests*”. This document on the social security of migrant workers made detailed provisions.

Table 3
Sparetime and Leisure

Leisure	Count	Percent/%
Make a telephone call, greeting family	354	26.3
Have a Rest	118	8.8
Get together with colleagues, workmates and fellow villagers	159	11.8
Read a book, newspaper and TV	197	14.6
Shopping, visiting	98	7.3
Do a part-time job	44	3.3
Looking for a good job	98	7.3
Understand the relevant laws and policy	77	5.7
Lean more advanced skill	134	9.9
Another	68	5.0

5. THE LIFE SITUATION OF “ABSOLUTE DEPRIVATION” WEAKENING AND “RELATIVE DEPRIVATION” CLEARING

To explain the contrast between the huge contribution migrant workers made and their unsatisfactory living conditions, sociologists put forward “absolute deprivation”, “relative deprivation” and “multi-level deprivation”. (Li, 2004) According to the above, we know that the old Beijing migrant workers are almost physical professionals, and their income is about 1,000 yuan. Although their income is higher than Dongying’s migrant workers, they do not live well than Dongying’s migrant workers. Building workers, for example, work from dawn to night with intensive labor; collective sheds are filled with dense ground floor, dirty bedding, inadequate ventilation and dim lights; the room send out a water-stained mixed with sweat smell bad breath, and so on. Combining their flat incomes with their bad living condition, we can see that the “absolute deprivation”

to physical migrant workers is quite serious. But the “relative deprivation” to physical migrant workers is not obvious. For example, 15.4% of the buildings workers are satisfied with the present situation, nearly 50% of them think that it is just so so. In addition, there are “multi-level deprivation” problems in the elderly and the physical disabled migrant workers, which include breaking down from constant overwork, damage from workplace and injury suffered on the job, and so on. All these comprehensively constitute “multi-level deprivation” of the older generation of migrant workers.

The new generation of migrant workers in Beijing mainly distributes in technical and knowledgeable professionals. Technical professions and knowledgeable professions have less obvious absolute deprivation to laborers and have obvious relative deprivation to laborers. Technical and knowledgeable professionals have higher incomes. For example, 60% of auto repair professionals whose income is more than 3,000 yuan, 50% of them up to 5,000 yuan. In addition, in the process of questionnaire survey, we also found technical and knowledgeable

workers working in a better environment. For example, auto repair professionals have overalls, and their work is mainly dominated by technical operations. Because there is a substantial amount of income, they can basically rent a house with their partner in Beijing. Although technical and knowledgeable migrant workers' income is considerable, in the investigation of satisfaction with the present situation, we found most of them are not satisfied with the present situation. For example, more than 70% of carpenters are not satisfied with the present situation, and 16% of them are very dissatisfied with the present situation. The causes of this kind of situation mainly lie in the fact that the relative deprivation of technical professions and knowledgeable professions whose reference object has changed. They have not regard the rural life, income or other income as a reference object. Due to the high level of urbanization, they have realized that they can survive as an urban citizen, and they treated differences between us and other citizens in this identity. They also expressed dissatisfaction about the "difference". Therefore, the change of the reference object led to "absolute deprivation" weakens and "relative deprivation" enhanced in the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing.

CONCLUSION

Through the above analysis, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing showed the following characteristics. Firstly, looking from structural proportion, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing has been basically completed upgrading. They are very young and well-educated, and most of them directly transferred from the society to school. Compared with the older generation of migrant workers, "work" has a completely different meaning for them. If the older generation of migrant workers thinks "the working is to make money", then the new generation of migrant workers considers that "working is life". So, in the field of career choice, they not only consider the "income", but also consider the "decent". Secondly, looking from cultural traits, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing has caused "the imitation of city culture". This culture is based on "local culture", and it is the result of imitating the "city culture". It has the "root" of local culture, such as hardworking and plain-living. It also actively absorb excellent urban culture, such as "actively explore the fate of the concept", "the life

view of dissatisfaction", "the marriage and child rearing view of planned eugenics" and "the labor view of a disciplined punctuality". However, now that it is based on "local culture", then there are some residual of small-scale peasant culture. For example, they pay attention to affinity and despise the work relationship when communicate with people. Since it is "imitating urban culture", there is something wrong with choose, such as the pursuit of consumption, deliberate fashion. Thirdly, looking from adapting to city, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing actively accumulates the capital of urban culture and attempted to integrate into urban life. They are not satisfied with leaving their homes and going out to earn money. They have gradually got rid of "native", eager to gain a foothold in the city and carve out their own space. So they are trying to form the urban life circle, participating in a variety of spontaneous and extrinsic social organization and actively understanding relevant current policies. In this positive city adaptive process, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing produced the consciousness of democracy and peace. Fourthly, looking from life experiences, the new generation of migrant workers in Beijing mainly expressed relative deprivation clearing and absolute deprivation and multi-level deprivation weakening. Due to the new generation of migrant workers are mostly engaged in technical and knowledgeable professions, the characteristics of absolute deprivation and multi-level deprivation will not be the main features. Their living situation is relatively good, and their income is considerable. But due to the change of the reference object, relative deprivation is clear. In terms of income and life satisfaction, old and new migrant workers make an opposite judgment. It is important that the new generation of migrant workers with clear relative deprivation can affect the stability of the society more than the old generation of migrant workers with clear absolute deprivation. It is a present urgency to provide social capital, establish and improve all kinds of social security system.

REFERENCES

- Li, Q. (2004). Deprivation theory of sociology and problems of migrant workers in China. *Academic Research*, (4).
- Luo, T. (2004, June 14). Migrant workers in Beijing become a full member before the end of July. *Economic Information Daily*.