

Research on Identity Construction in the Process of Urban Integration of the Elderly Living with them in the Internet Age

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Abstract: The integration of network media and the social life of the elderly in the network era provides a new opportunity for the urban integration of the elderly who move with them. Based on the theory of cyberspace, this paper collects data through semi-structured interviews and participatory observation, and explores the identity construction of the elderly who move with them in the digital age from three dimensions: self, family and society. Identity construction has become an important link in the process of urban integration in the digital age of the elderly, but the phenomenon of "alienation" cannot be ignored.

1. Introduction

With Socialism with Chinese characteristics entering a new era, China's population aging process is accelerating, and the frequency of population mobility is increasing. According to the "Report on the Development of Floating Population in China (2018)" issued by the Floating Population Department of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, the scale of floating elderly people in China is growing, and the proportion of floating elderly people in the national floating population has reached 7.2%. Old people follow their children to live in the city where their children live, and become old people who move with them. The accompanying elderly are an important part of the urbanization of agricultural transfer population, which has gradually attracted the attention of the government and all walks of life.

At the same time, with the rapid development of digital technology, the ranks of the elderly who move into the network society are also growing. It is of great practical significance to explore how the elderly who move with them can get rid of the rural society and integrate into the urban society through digital media. Based on this, from the perspective of cyberspace theory, this paper will explore the process and path of multi-identity construction of the elderly who move with them in the digital age.

2. Theoretical basis: Interpretation from the perspective of cyberspace

Under the new situation of large-scale development of information and network in social life since the 21st century, profound changes have taken place in human behavior and experience. The theory of network space arises at the historic moment on the basis of the theory of social space. From the perspective of cyber space theory, emotional interactions such as emotional exchanges and consciousness images constructed by network media have become increasingly frequent, and the spatio-temporal relationship of social space has also undergone unprecedented and profound changes, giving birth to the cyber social space of "time without time".^[1] This makes the social space in the traditional sense appear the dual differentiation of "presence" and "absence" under the role of media.

According to the theory of cyberspace, cyberspace is essentially a social space with multiple connotations, and its most prominent characteristic is the absence of field or regionalization. The so-called lack of sex or regionalism, refers to the process and range of communication in the Internet are far from the limitations of the real place space, is the body is not one of the lack of

communication. With the rapid development of information technology, the production and life of human society are gradually transforming from traditional presence space to modern absence space. The network social space is no longer a virtual space, but a real space in which a large number of social members participate.^[2]

Based on this, this paper will base on the realistic foundation of the vigorous development of Chinese network society and the development trend of modern society. Through the theory of network space, this paper will analyze how to use digital media technology to construct the identity of the elderly living with them. This is not only the due meaning of expanding the field of space research, but also the internal requirement of building a better life for the elderly living with them.

3. The identity construction in the virtual space of the elderly.

In the process of urban integration, the old people who move with them face the objective tension of lack of identity. In the digital context, the old people who move with them begin to break away from their original geographical attachment and re-group into the "virtual" mobile space constructed by social media, providing a new space for the identity construction of the old people who move with them.

3.1. Self-identity: remodeling self-awareness in the performance

The digital age has provided people with a brand-new field of production and life, and the mode of production and lifestyle of human beings has undergone structural changes. For the elderly who move with them, they will encounter a new crisis of self-identity when they integrate into the new urban space. In the virtual space of the digital age, the elderly who move with them begin to re-examine themselves, know themselves and establish new self-identity.

3.1.1. True emotional expression shows self-existence.

True emotional expression is the embodiment of self-existence consciousness. In the process of leaving the familiar rural society and entering the unfamiliar urban society, the old people who move with them will have a sense of self-isolation because they leave the familiar living environment, and then hide their true emotional needs in their daily communication practice.

Although most of the elderly people move to cities at the invitation of their children, most of their children are in the rising period of their careers and have no time to take care of their emotional needs. At the same time, in order to avoid adding a greater "burden" to their children's families, the elderly who move with them will not emphasize self-existence too much in their families. Under the digital transformation, the emergence of online social platform provides a space for the elderly who move with them to show their true feelings.^[3] By analyzing the social media accounts of the respondents, it is found that many elderly people who move with them frequently present their "true selves" by publishing their life dynamics and sharing relevant pictures and texts in the "absence" space created by social media. At the same time, express true feelings on social platforms such as WeChat circle of friends and strengthen the sense of self-existence. It can be seen that digital media is largely dispelling the state that the space of the elderly living with them is "ignored" or self-hidden.

3.1.2. Real image performance promotes self-acceptance.

Self-acceptance refers to a positive attitude that individuals can clearly and un-conditionally accept themselves, and then fully express their complete self and shape their sense of self-identity.^[4] Old people who move with them often encounter social discrimination and exclusion because of their household registration status, which makes them construct a kind of "marginal person" role.

However, different from the urban community in the presence space, in the cyberspace constructed by the digital media platform, it is not the body, but the symbols that are gathered together. The elderly who move with them share the identity tag of "outsiders" through the interaction of characters and symbols on the platform. According to the survey, some interviewees will show their true image as an "out-sider", and show their true image through live webcasting, and

show the uniqueness of their regional identity background different from local residents through network interaction, so as to continuously promote the self-acceptance of the elderly who move with them.

3.2. Family identity: technical empowerment to promote family re-embedding

Family is the basic unit of society, and family identity shows that individuals recognize their role in the family. Digital technology not only promotes the self-identity construction of the elderly who move with them, but also empowers their daily life in the family context to a certain extent, so as to realize the important link of family re-embedding in the process of urban integration.

3.2.1. Primary empowerment: strengthening intergenerational family ties

Intergenerational contact refers to the mutual contact within the family, which promotes the feelings and exchanges between two or more generations of family members through communication and family gatherings. In the primary empowerment, the elderly and their children have formed a two-way interaction and communication through the sharing of network information, which enables the elderly to gain a sense of family identity.

It is found that most of the elderly who move with them get all kinds of information such as consumption, health, news and so on through social platforms, and they all have a high willingness to share this information.^[5] Whether it is sent through online links or discussed and shared offline, the elderly think it is necessary to let their children know the valuable information they have obtained on their smartphones. At the same time, information sharing is an interactive process, and children will also communicate with their parents on related topics, so as to strengthen the intergenerational ties between the two generations.

In addition, intergenerational feelings with grandchildren are also an important part of gaining family identity. With the acceleration of urbanization, more and more elderly people who move with them come to their children's cities for the motivation of intergenerational rearing, and appear as caregivers in the outflow areas. In order to establish a closer intergenerational relationship with their grandchildren as soon as possible, the elderly who move with them often learn about their grandchildren's preferences through online platforms and constantly strengthen their emotional relationship with their grandchildren. It is found that online media has become an important means to bridge the ideological gap, bridge the communication gap and continue emotional interaction between the elderly and their grandchildren.

3.2.2. Secondary empowerment: increasing family decision-making participation

In the secondary empowerment, the elderly who move with them can get the information they need from the massive information through digital media, participate in the daily life decision of the family, gain the sense of identity of family members and promote family integration.^[6]

Because the accompanying elderly people come to their children's families, they not only play the role of "caregivers", but also participate in family life in some form such as housework, and they have enough free time to browse and obtain relevant information on the media platform, and make some suggestions in family affairs through forwarding links and other forms, thus indirectly affecting family decision-making and realizing family re-embedding.

3.3. Inter-group identity: the production practice of social relations

Inter-group identification is an individual's subjective confirmation of group identification, which is not only an individual's "consistent recognition of self-characteristics", but also an actor's cognitive evaluation, emotional experience and value commitment to his group qualification or category qualification. When the rural elderly complete their self-identity and family identity in the absence of space, they will be more active in social interaction and interaction with others, and their willingness to seek group identity will be stronger. Driven by this cognition, the elderly who move with them look for groups with similar circumstances on online social media, build a relationship network based on interest and geography, and form a positive and diverse inter-group identity.

In cyberspace, individuals can discuss, communicate, share and narrate around a certain theme

symbol. The use of media platforms such as Tik Tok and WeChat group provides a cultural space beyond reality for the elderly who move with them, connecting the "Other" with common interests and social networks among groups in this new mobile space. In the network platform, the interactive performance can get rapid feedback and resonance, and the elderly who move with them can get a real-time inter-group identity that can't be obtained in real life.

The change in the form of interpersonal communication also proves that the group of elderly people who move with them are actively participating in the media practice. As an object, the mobile phone media is embedded in daily life, establishing a relationship bond for the elderly people who move with them and expanding the original relationship circle. With the intensification and atomization of spatial mobility, the elderly who move with them use the cyberspace that breaks through the time and space restrictions to reconnect based on interest, realize the interweaving and mutual transformation of traditional interpersonal relationships and modern social networks, and carry out the production practice of social relations in the "out-of-domain" mobile space.

4. Conclusion

In the digital age, the birth of cyberspace has realized the coexistence of "presence" and "virtuality", and also subverted the embodied attribute of the traditional space model. By using digital technology to build a sense of identity among themselves, family and society in the virtual and real space, the elderly who move with them try to eliminate the sense of weightlessness and psychological deprivation in the city, and hope to seek emotional comfort in the virtual space to integrate into the life of a strange city.

However, it needs to be recognized that the process of using digital technology to build the identity of the elderly who move with them is also accompanied by potential risks, which still needs timely attention from all walks of life. In the future, the elderly people who move with them will face more diverse and complex practical problems. All sectors of society should pay more attention to the elderly people who move with them under the dual background of aging and digitalization, constantly help them fully enjoy the technological dividend in the digital age, and constantly strengthen their life care and value remodeling, so that they can smoothly integrate into urban life.

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