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КААЛОО ЖАНА АЛАРДЫ ЖЕҢҮҮ: БАТЫШ КЫТАЙДАГЫ ЖЕРГИЛИКТҮҮ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ СТУДЕНТТЕРИНИН СУБЪЕКТИВДҮҮЛҮГҮН КАЙРА КУРУУ ЖАНА ИШ МЕНЕН ТААНЫШТЫРУУ КӨЙГӨЙЛӨРҮНӨ ЛАКАНДЫК ПСИХОАНАЛИТИКАЛЫК КӨЗ КАРАШ

ЖЕЛАНИЕ И ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЕ: ЛАКАНОВСКИЙ ПСИХОАНАЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ВЗГЛЯД НА ПРОБЛЕМЫ ТРУДОУСТРОЙСТВА И РЕКОНСТРУКЦИЮ СУБЪЕКТНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ МЕСТНЫХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ ЗАПАДНОГО КИТАЯ

DESIRE AND TRANSCENDENCE: A LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE ON EMPLOYMENT DILEMMAS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY AMONG STUDENTS AT LOCAL UNIVERSITIES IN WESTERN CHINA

Кыскача мүнөздөмө: Жак Лакандын психоаналитикалык теориясына таянып, бул макалада Батыш Кытайдагы жергиликтүү университеттердеги студенттердин жумушка орношуу көйгөйлөрү социалдык-экономикалык же институционалдык көйгөйдү гана эмес, символикалык тартип менен калыптанган каалоо кризисин да билдирери айтылат. Студенттер "өнүгүүнүн" күзгүдөгү образын өздөштүрүп, карама-каршылыктуу өзүн-өзү элестетүүгө алып келет: алар травматикалык тажрыйбаларды баштан кечиришет, элестетилген улуттук борборго кирүүгө умтулушат, ошол эле учурда өздөрүнүн жергиликтүү инсандыгына кайтып келүүдө кыйынчылыктарга туш болушат. Региондор аралык жумушка орношуу процессинде "Батыш" деген белги көп учурда символикалык девальвацияга дуушар болот, ал эми учурдагы жумушка орноштурууну жогорулатуу системалары көп учурда "Башкасынын каалоосун" кайталап, студенттерди карьералык жүрүм-турумдун стандартташтырылган моделдери аркылуу тартипке салып, алардын жекече көрүнүшүн чектейт. Бул кырдаалдан чыгуунун мүмкүн болгон жолдору сунушталат: аймактык стереотиптерди деконструкциялоо, жергиликтүү инсандыкты калыбына келтирүү жана "Батыш тажрыйбасын" атаандаштык артыкчылык булагына айландыруу. Айылды жандандыруу долбоорлоруна, маданий мурастарды сактоого, айлана-чөйрөнү башкарууга жана башка коомдук демилгелерге катышуу аркылуу символикалык бөштуктарга карабастан жаңы баалуулуктарды калыптандыруу, ошондой эле кесиптик билим берүүнү жөн гана кесиптик көндүмдөрдү өнүктүрүүдөн жашоого болгон умтулууларды ойготууга кайра багыттоо студенттерге өздөрүнүн "күзгү сүрөтүн" четте турган абалдан да өнүктүрүүгө мүмкүндүк берет. Ошентип, жумушка орношуу процесси тышкы таануу тынчсыздануу менен издөөдөн учурдагы түзүмдүк карама-каршылыктардын арасында өзүнүн субъективдүүлүгүн жана жашоо жолун куруу боюнча чыгармачыл практикага айландырылышы мүмкүн.

Аннотация: Опираясь на психоаналитическую теорию Жака Лакана, в статье обосновывается, что проблемы трудоустройства студентов местных университетов Западного Китая представляют собой не только социально-экономическую или институциональную проблему, но и кризис желания, формирующийся в рамках символического порядка. Студенты интериоризируют зеркальный образ «развития», вследствие чего формируется противоречивый образ собственного «Я»: они переживают травматический опыт, стремясь войти в воображаемый национальный центр, одновременно испытывая трудности с возвращением к собственной локальной идентичности. В процессе межрегионального трудоустройства означающее «Запад» нередко подвергается символической девальвации, тогда как существующие системы содействия занятости зачастую воспроизводят «желание Другого», дисциплинируя студентов посредством стандартизированных моделей карьерного поведения и ограничивая проявление индивидуальности. В качестве возможных путей преодоления данной ситуации предлагаются деконструкция региональных стереотипов, восстановление локальной идентичности и преобразование «западного опыта» в источник конкурентных преимуществ. Формирование новой ценности в условиях символических разрывов посредством участия в проектах по возрождению сельских территорий, сохранению культурного наследия, экологическому управлению и других инициативах, укоренённых в местном сообществе, а также переориентация карьерного образования от простого формирования профессиональных навыков к пробуждению жизненных устремлений позволяют студентам сформировать собственный «зеркальный образ» даже из периферийной позиции. Тем самым процесс трудоустройства может трансформироваться из тревожного поиска внешнего признания в творческую практику конструирования собственной субъектности и жизненного пути в условиях существующих структурных противоречий.

Abstract: Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, this paper holds that the employment dilemma faced by students at local universities in western China is not merely a socioeconomic or institutional problem, but also a crisis of desire within the symbolic order. Students internalize the mirror image of “developing” and formulate a contradictory self-image, having traumatic experience in which they struggle to enter the imagined national center, yet also find it difficult to return to a purely local identity. In cross-regional employment, the signifier “western” is frequently devalued, while existing career-service systems tend to reproduce the “desire of the Other” by disciplining students through standardized templates and suppressing individual expression. Possible responses include deconstructing regional bias, rebuilding localized identity, and transforming the “western imprint” into differentiated capital. In view of creating new value within symbolic fissures--through rural revitalization, cultural heritage, ecological governance, and other locally embedded practices--and by shifting career education from “skills delivery” to “aspirational awakening,” students can establish their own mirror image from marginal positions. Employment can thereby move from the anxiety of seeking recognition to a creative practice of constructing existence within structural fractures.

Негизги сөздөр: Батыш Кытайдагы жергиликтүү университеттер; жумушка орношуу; Лакандык психоанализ; күзгүдөгү чагылыш; каалоо; символикалык тартип.

Ключевые слова: местные университеты Западного Китая; трудоустройство; лакановский психоанализ; зеркальный образ; желание; символический порядок.

Keywords: local universities in western China; employment; Lacanian psychoanalysis; mirror image; desire; the Symbolic

I. Introduction: The Symptomatology of Employment from the Perspective of Lacanian Psychoanalysis

The employment challenges faced by students at regional universities in western China are often attributed to a linear causal chain: lagging regional economic development, weak alignment between jobs and majors, and insufficient employment competitiveness. Accordingly, national and local policymakers have taken measures such as connecting higher education with key regional industries, refining academic program structures, deepening university-local-enterprise cooperation, constructing internship and employment bases, and strengthening career planning and skills training. These measures, however, to a large degree, do not totally solve the problem from the standpoint of students with recognition desire.

With long-term engagement in university employment work, Lacanian psychoanalysis can provide a productive interpretive framework, which suggests that one way of employment problem could be solved by support of students' inner psychology and inquiry of social and economic causes. In this sense, job seeking is saturated with representation, identification, and lack; it is a process in which students negotiate the social meanings affiliated with region, institution, major, family expectation, and personal aspiration.

II. From Mirror-Stage Misrecognition to Symbolic Exclusion and Real Trauma: A Lacanian Analysis of Employment Challenges in Western Local Universities

The theoretical foundation for re-examining the employment predicament lies in Jacques Lacan's tripartite structure of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, which he systematically elaborated in the early 1950s [1]. These three orders offer a way to understand how students construct self-images, obtain or fail to obtain symbolic recognition, and encounter experiences that resist articulation.

(I) Misrecognition in the Mirror: The Paradox of Identity and Career Choice

The Imaginary order begins with the infant's encounter with its own reflection in the mirror stage. This moment marks the emergence of self-awareness, yet self-recognition is achieved through identification with an external image. The ideal ego produced by this identification is therefore imaginary and, in a fundamental sense, misrecognized. Lacan describes the mirror stage as a drama that moves "from insufficiency to anticipation," producing an apparently unified form that compensates for the subject's fragmentation [1]. In other words, the subject first recognizes itself through the gaze of the Other, but that recognition is already mediated by illusion.

In career choice, students at western local universities are often situated within the structural circumstance of "western and underdeveloped." The regional mirror reflects signifiers such as underdevelopment, assistance, and low competitiveness, which may lead students to develop a fragmented and contradictory self-image. This mentality of inferiority coexisting with superiority appears in two seemingly opposite forms during job hunting: on the one hand, students may actively lower their career expectations; on the other, they may become excessively attached to certain prestigious occupational symbols. These tendencies are not contradictory. Both arise from the same structure of imaginary identification and reveal how career choices are shaped by the desire to compensate for perceived lack.

(II) The Tilted Symbolic Order under the Gaze of the Other

Lacan's concept of the Symbolic order is deeply indebted to structural linguistics, especially Saussure and Jakobson. It shifts analysis from the mirror image to language, law, social norms, and cultural systems. Through the Symbolic, individuals enter relations with others, acquire social positions, and become legible subjects [2]. Because signs obtain meaning through their difference from other signs, the subject's identity is always produced through a network of distinctions and absences. In the Symbolic order, the subject exists only insofar as it is recognized by other subjects [3].

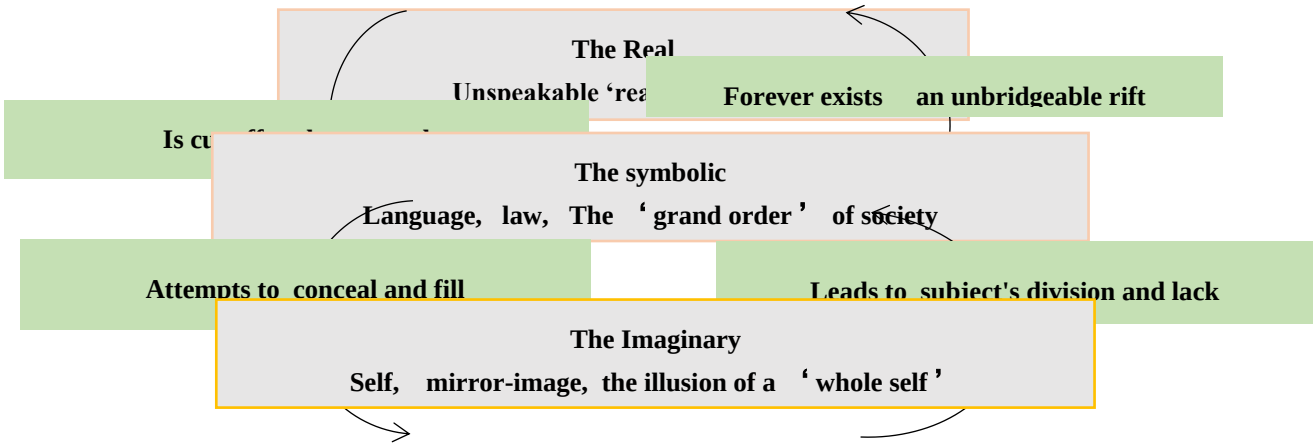
As an order composed of language, law, and social norms, the Symbolic provides the framework through which the student-subject becomes socially recognizable [4]. Within China's employment field, elite universities in eastern regions--supported by reputation, dense alumni networks, and metropolitan advantages--often confer stronger symbolic authority and identity capital on their students, functioning in a manner similar to a "Symbolic Father" [5]. By contrast, the academic credentials of students from western institutions, although formally equivalent, often obtain lower symbolic exchange value in cross-regional job markets. The signifier attached to the institution and region therefore reinforces their marginal position within the employment-related symbolic order.

(III) The Structural Other in the Strict Sense

The Real is the most ambiguous and elusive of Lacan's three orders. It lies outside ordinary speech and resists mediation by either the Symbolic or the Imaginary. The Real is not objective reality in the empirical sense; rather, it is what cannot be fully represented, imagined, or articulated. It persists as the source of desire and as the residue that escapes signification [6]. Lacan thus treats the Real as the vanishing point of the Symbolic and the Imaginary: the point at which the subject encounters what cannot be symbolized.

For students at western local universities, the dual realities of being geographically peripheral and being perceived as the Other constitute a twofold shock. They struggle to enter a national employment system symbolically centered on eastern regions, yet also find it difficult to return to a purely local identity. This produces the trauma of being both at the margin and marginalized--an experience that often remains difficult to name. The following table summarizes the relationship among Lacan's three orders and the employment subject's predicament.

Lacan Orders



III. The Dilemma and Dual Exile of Western Local University Students in the Desire-Object Paradox

In Lacanian theory, the object of desire generated by the Real is not a concrete person or object, but the lack that sets desire in motion. Desire does not arise from a simple biological or psychological deficiency; it is always implicated in the desire of the Other [7]. Desire emerges when the world withdraws from the subject, and it names the effort to make that world return [8].

(I) Being Summoned and Excluded in the Symbolic Order

Within the socio-symbolic order of employment, students from western local universities are often positioned as objects of desire: they are expected to carry the Other's desire and to embody what others want them to become [9]. In the discourse of western development, they are imagined as bearers of grand objectives such as balanced development, rural revitalization, and regional integration. They are objects to be assisted, elevated, and brought into the mainstream. However, once they enter the national job market as complete subjects marked by their western identity, the regional signifier they carry may be devalued or excluded. Their identity is thus recognized precisely as being from the west, while the value of that identity remains unstable.

(II) Employment Frustration and Trauma

Lacan emphasizes that the subject's existence depends on recognition by the Other [10]. In job seeking, students from western local universities may encounter implicit regional discrimination, weakened institutional recognition, and doubts about the symbolic value of their degrees. Such experiences reveal a weakening of the symbolic "Name-of-the-Father" and intensify existential anxiety. The predicament of being unable to integrate fully into the national job market while also being unable to retreat into local identity corresponds to a dual exclusion from the Real: students are caught within a marginal symbolic order and alienated from their original place-based identity.

Curricula that lag behind industrial change, merely formal university-enterprise cooperation, and insufficient career-initiation education all show that the symbolic order within western local universities is not fully aligned with the demands of desire. Students therefore remain suspended between the signifiers of "student" and "professional." Employment choices then easily become forms of passive drifting or compulsive repetition: repeatedly taking postgraduate entrance examinations to avoid entering the labor market, or repeatedly striving to enter the state sector, which is experienced as the dominant professional symbolic order.

(III) Symbolic Domestication in Career Choice

Career choices are also shaped by family expectations of stable social status, regional cultures that totemize positions inside the state system, and consumerist mirrors modeled on the lifestyles of eastern metropolises.

In this situation, standardized narratives like career templates and skills for job seeking may help students to find external pathways. The individual desires are usually silenced before they mature, and these desires are often not accepted by mainstream symbolic order, such as unconventional career aspirations and place-based innovation. Moreover, when making career decision, the idea of investing in the Other again outweighs.

IV. Beyond Reconstruction: Self-Actualization from a Lacanian Perspective

(I) Deconstructing the Mirror: Reconstructing the Subjective Cognitive Framework

To reconstruct the narrative of the West, it is required that local discourse through close interpretation of industrial evolution, diverse success stories and social transformation should be reshaped. Students must acknowledge that the West is not a fixed or essentialized label of disadvantage, it is simultaneously a field of local networks, concrete knowledge, cultural resources, and personal growth experiences [11]. Such acknowledgement is beneficial for students to move beyond abstract geographical labels and towards a more reasonable understanding of their own unique values.

Career education should help students to differentiate between their own genuine aspirations and those external-driven desires, like a state-sector job being the ultimate destination, or first-tier cities being the legitimate sites of success. This can reduce overinvestment in mirror-stage competition. To break the imagined identity of inferiority and grandiosity empowers students to inquire where their desires come from: whether from institutional recognition and metropolitan fixation, or from their own emotional structure, capabilities, and developmental potential [12]. Students should also be encouraged to establish concrete connections with their region, including emotional belonging, practical skills, and accumulated interpersonal networks, by which they can locate their differentiated value in the broader labor market.

(II) Reconstructing the Symbolic: Forging New Pathways in Practice

In Lacanian theory, the symbolic order is a structural network built through language, rules, and value systems, assigning individuals specific positions and meanings [13]. Yet every symbolic order contains fissures. Today's mainstream job market is strongly organized by signifiers such as high salaries, leading technology companies, and state-sector positions. To forge new pathways within the Symbolic is therefore not to compete only at the endpoint of established signifying chains, but to enter domains not yet fully defined by mainstream values and to become creators of new signifiers.

The western context can be transformed into symbolic capital. Local knowledge, multicultural adaptability, and an understanding of complex social contexts should be converted into scarce and recognizable strengths. In this way, the once-marginalized local is reconstituted as a valuable resource. It becomes not only industrial support but also a testing ground for new symbolic frameworks, including urban-rural value exchange, technological localization, ecological governance, and community building. These are lived experiences deeply embedded in the daily lives of many students at western local universities.

For example, emerging industrial forms such as content creation, the experience economy, and digital revitalization move beyond the traditional narrative of intangible cultural heritage preservation. Similarly, ecological conservation and green development in western ecological function zones under the dual-carbon goals have generated new professional roles, including carbon-sink accounting, ecological compensation design, and adaptive technology application. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, the signifier “frontier” can be redefined as “gateway” in cross-border e-commerce, regional governance, and cultural exchange.

(III) Reconstructing Desire: Career Guidance and Subject Fulfillment

University career services should move from delivering standardized templates to awakening desire and cultivating symbolic critique [14]. Students need to understand that employment setbacks are often rooted in structural incoherence within the symbolic order and in the projection of the Other’s desire, rather than in a universal lack of individual quality. The inexpressible frustration experienced in job hunting frequently arises not from personal inadequacy, but from labels and biases that acquire power only through symbolic circulation.

Based on this, universities are supposed to encourage students to keep loyal to their own aspirations under symbolic pressure. Students should not only avoid signifying “western student” in job seeking and career

development, but also highlight cross-regional experience, plural perspectives, resilience, and locally embedded knowledge with a view to persistently rearticulating this identity. In this way, the situation of the marginalized can become a clear standpoint to ask new questions and pursue new possibilities. And universities should shift from simply adapting to labor market to becoming agents of symbolic empowerment and incubators of new pathways. This can be realized by fieldwork-based innovation, interdisciplinary programs and platforms for social experimentation in which students are endowed with academic credibility and symbolic value in career practices.

National policies and public discourse should confer symbolic value on diverse choices, thereby reducing the employment subject's excessive reliance on recognition from the big Other. Moreover, they should also avoid promoting a single legitimate career path. Instead.

Conclusion

By reflecting the employment dilemma that students face at western local universities by employing Lacanian psychoanalytic lens, this paper finds that these challenges extend beyond structural issues in the economy and education. At their core, they involve a crisis of recognition and a predicament of desire within the symbolic order. The ways to solve this dilemma lies in transforming the employment struggle into an inquiry into one's own desire instead of simply satisfying the desire of the Other. Genuine liberation in employment means traversing the fantasy of the Other's desire and holding fast to the truth of the subject's desire within the interstices of the symbolic order, instead of the complete fulfillment of desire.

Students at western local universities can shift from the anxiety of seeking recognition to the practical process of creating value when they move beyond an exclusive fixation on paths validated by others and instead dare to follow their own course by locating their aspirations within marginal spaces. Only in that moment are they able to write their own distinctive stories instead of merely subordinate subjects under the gaze of the Other.

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