



Survival in Poverty Dynamics in Urban Communities ---Empirical Study on Survival Strategy among Urban Poor Population from L Community in China

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The research is financed by Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. No. 09-YS399 (Research and innovation projects)

In addition, the research is also financed by Shanghai Institute of Technology No. SJ2009-06 (Social Science Fund Projects)

Abstract

Urban poverty is a practical social issue which receives increasing focus and given more prominence at present in China, and is an important aspect demanding prompt solution for construction of a harmonious China. In study on current Chinese urban poverty issues, what is the most important but what is often ignored consciously or unconsciously is how the urban poverty population with limited resources and property maintain their life. The topic this paper is going to discuss is to understand how the urban poverty population maintains their living with limited resources and property, that is, to understand what they have, but not what they haven't. Through in-depth study on and empirical analysis in practical and typical cases, the author of this paper exhibits the survival technical tactics of urban poverty population to relieve and extinguish poverty and the obstructive factors existing in their survival tactics. Then, the author reconstructs dynamic image of poverty in poverty process, which provides a brand-new field of view for elimination of urban poverty. The author holds the viewpoint that survival technical tactics of urban poverty population or families affect maintenance of their survival in poverty caused and in the process of persistent poverty as well as poverty relief. Control or change by urban poverty population or families on their consumption structure after falling into poverty plays a critical role in their maintenance of survival and relief of poverty, which is particularly obvious during the period of poverty caused. Portfolio management of urban poverty population or domestic tangible assets (increase of domestic labor force and reduction of human capital investment) and running of the productive assets and intangible assets (alteration and adjustment of domestic relations and maximum value conversion of social capital) reinforce their survival capacity in the poverty process and the ability to relieve and even break away from poverty, but not enlarge their opportunity to fall into poverty. Empirical analysis and in-depth case study in this paper will verify these subjects.

Keywords: Urban poor population, Poverty dynamic & process, Survival technical tactic

1. Study overview and framework

1.1 Poverty process and poverty theory

Study on "Poverty process" (Duncan, 1984) presents to us a dynamic picture about poverty. Poverty trends or process includes the following three flow forms about urban poverty poor population (including family). 1. Poverty caused, a condition from non-poverty to initial poverty; 2. Persistent poverty, namely, poverty from the first year or the year N until the year N+1; 3. Poverty relief, namely, the transition from poverty to non-poverty. As for the quantity of poverty, on one hand, it refers to the process of poverty quantity at different stages, and on the other hand, it refers to explanation on the newborn rate, persistent poverty rate and poverty relief rate. The Taiwan Scholar Lv Chaoxian et al, proposed three theoretical aspects during their review on the American poverty theory and on relevant subjects since 1960s,

namely, shortage of orientation, choice of orientation and limitation of orientation. Thereout, they classified different poverty theories into shortage of viewpoint, choice of viewpoint and limitation of viewpoint (Lv Chaoxian et al, 2000). The shortage of viewpoint mainly includes theories of human capital and status attainment, etc, which advocates shortage of internal conditions of an individual or a family, such as education level, technical knowledge, relationship network and limited family resources etc that are causes for an individual or a family to fall into poverty. According to the choice of viewpoint, poverty is the result of self choice of an individual or a family, and their norm of choice might be determined by rational calculation or by their attitude and value, such as theories of poverty culture and new-poverty culture. According to the limitation of viewpoint, conditions of poor population are limited by external surroundings, so that they have to fall into the current predicament, such as the situations theory, neo-structural and labor force market theory. Without doubt, each theory which explains poverty includes the above orientations to a different degree. That is, fuzziness exists in the type boundary of the above poverty theories, but discrepancy between positioning of theories is exactly within our control (See Table 1). Considering works of study on current Chinese urban poor population, discussion by the academic circles on urban poverty has not exceeded the above three theoretical orientations. Furthermore, their discussion has not acquired as much attention and extensive research as that on rural poverty.

Insert Table 1 Here

In China, study on “poverty-shortage of orientation” among urban poor population lays much emphasis on development of informal social support network, so as to overcome shortage of educational level, technical knowledge and family resource. In their case study on urban poor families in Shanghai, Tang Jun and Zhu Yaoyin et al mainly discuss the community’s poverty support network between social security system and social support network, which is an integrative application of community resources in the sense of shortage of urban poor population or family resources (Tang Jun & Zhu Yaoyin, et al, 1999; Yang Tuan, 2002; Ge Daoshun, 2003;). As for study on “poverty-choice of orientation” in urban poor population, there hasn’t been powerful experiential support and research in China, because no one would choose poverty by regarding poverty as rationality. After all, China is not a welfare state, but since 1999 when the system of “subsistence allowances for the urban poor” was carried out all around the country, some scholars have paid more attention to urban poverty of the choice of orientation (Hong Dayong, 2003). In a more significant sense, poverty culture is a method by poor population or families to resolve their daily living issues, so it can be said to be an adaptation to their situations. As a matter of fact, this article is not only aimed at discovering adaptive patterns of urban poor population, but to explore obstructive factors of their adaptation, so as to finally prove that, their survival technical tactic is not a result of choice, but a result of limitation due to shortage of imagery. Obviously, study on “poverty-limitation of orientation” in urban poor population not only integrates the above two theories, but more concentrates on responsive tactics of poverty relief. Elimination of limitation on a series of factors, such as productive, social, structural and situations factors, and resource allocation of equalization and support of opportunities to obtain these resources, is without doubt helpful for elimination of poverty. Of course, that is unavoidably ideal, but after all, it can be achieved by social policies (Wang Shaoguang, 1999; Shen Hong, 2000).

1.2 Framework of technical tactic of survival

<<World Development Report in 1990: Poverty>> by the World Bank outlines the overall framework of the country to relieve its poverty. Firstly, economic growth, that is, to focus on using labor force of poor population as their most important assets. Secondly, investment in basic health and education (human capital), so as to stimulate effective use of labor force among poor population. Thirdly, offer of social security network, so as to guarantee fundamental living of poor population. As a general action framework for the country to relieve poverty, it actually comes from experiences of poor population in the community to maintain their living, and it also has become a foundation for communication between the government and the social citizens to relieve poverty.

In addition to programs by the government to relieve poverty, urban poor population also has their own responsive program in the process of poverty relieve, which, as a survival technical tactic, exhibits certain adaptability in its response to persistent poverty. That is to say, the government should not only regard urban poor population as helpless paupers, since they also have lots of responsive and adaptative means in poverty happening or in the process of persistent poverty, and these means are exactly the foundation for them to detach from poverty. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to have a clear idea about survival technical tactics of urban poor population, to encourage creative resolutions methods and to give a continual national strategic leading in elimination of obstructions in these methods. The government should not replace, obstruct or damage their survival technical tactics (Caroline Moser, 2001). How to maintain subsistence or livelihood is usually a question of questions in daily life of urban poor population. Starting from the most elementary food guarantee, urban poor population usually adopts the following two tactics. On one hand, the tactic of changing consumption, which a short-term responsive means. On the other hand, the tactic of increasing income, which a long-term responsive means. The former is a short term response to limitation to consumption of food or non-food resources in cases when poverty happens, while the latter is a perpetual responsive competence to obtain food in the process of persistent poverty, and is also required for poverty relief. Based on the

duality of relative weakness of resource assets and the vulnerability, Caroline Moser further regards urban poor population as tactic managers of complex resource assets portfolio in terms of income increase (Caroline Moser, 2001). That is to say, urban poor population employ effectively their own technique by means of portfolio management of their resource assets, so as to maintain subsistence or relieve poverty. These resource assets usually include tangible assets (labor force and human capital), productive assets (housing, motor cabin/rickshaw, sewing machine and washing machine, etc) and intangible assets (family relationship and social capital etc). Framework of survival technical tactics of urban poor population in this article basically follows Caroline Moser's portfolio management of resource assets, as is shown in Table 2. This framework approves the "subjectivity of poor population" and "establishment of subjectivity of poor population" in poverty relief or elimination, which is exactly the other main topic the author is going to discuss (Shen Hong, 2002).

Insert Table 2 Here

2. Data sources and research methods

What the research in this article is based on are data in the investigation in 2002 on how urban poor population or families in L community in W District of China's S City maintained their subsistence and relieved the poverty conditions and data in relevant statistical returns in the neighborhood committee. This investigation was finished by undergraduates of Grade 2002 in our department during their internship in Bureau of Civil Affairs in W District within one month, and the specific research design is briefly introduced as follows. Here, it is necessary to note that this paper adopts encrypted name of administrative area according to research practice.

As for choice of communities of sample case study, we just conduct random sampling in 195 communities governed by 14 subdistrict offices within W District, and just sample one community from tables of random numbers, namely, L community. W District is the central area of S city in China, located in the south of Yangtze River. L community is located in the Southeast of W District, a large old residential area, in which occupations of residents have strong homogeneity, and most are employees of shipyards, some small size enterprises, and small public institutions. L community altogether has 1308 households and 4709 residents, which include 126 poverty households, and 492 poor populations. Due to small scope of the sample, we use a unified questionnaire table to conduct a flexible structural visit of residence registration on these 126 poverty households, and also make an in-depth individual case visit on these poor populations. Use of these two methods is not only for statistical convenience, but to obtain breakthrough in some research issues through in-depth visit. The overall situation of the sample is shown in Table 3.

As for formulation of the unified questionnaire table in the structural visit, we follow the portfolio management of resource assets by Caroline Moser, and place extra emphasis on measurement of the following several concepts or variables. 1. Labor force, which refers to people's labor competence or work competence (state) and labor force (quantity), and which is considered the most important assets of poor population or families. Based on that, we can understand alteration of occupations in the poverty process and increase and decrease of family labor force. 2. Human capital, which refers to people's state of health (affecting their work competence), skills and educational level (determining their labor remuneration). Based on that, we can understand alteration conditions of health, skills, education or training (supply and demand). 3. Productive assets, such as housing, motor cabin/rickshaw, sewing machine and washing machine, and other tools that can bring more economic income. Based on that, we can understand possession and employment of poor population or families in the poverty process. 4. Family relationship, a mechanism which centralizes income and assumes consumption. Based on that, we can understand influences of alteration of family structure or family scale on poverty in the poverty process. 5. Social capital, which here refers to trust from social relationship and mutual assistance between non-governmental organizations and families (relationship of between neighbours and relatives). Based on that, we can understand trust, cooperation and mutual assistance in the poverty process and use and changes of relationship network.

The basic hypothesis of this research: survival technical tactics of urban poor population or families affect the maintenance of their subsistence in poverty caused and in the process of persistent poverty, and the detachment from poverty.

Insert Table 3 Here

3. Research results

Through research, we discover that urban poor population has the following technical tactics to relieve poverty in how to maintain a living.

3.1 Change of the structure of consumption

According to Gans' situations theory, change of the living situations can help poor population break away from current predicament, and their detachment from current life style is the primary way out (Gangs, H.J, 1968). Obviously, here implies such a logic: change of a life style can relieve or cope with short-term poverty. However, detachment from

current life style needs a process, and also some opportunities and elimination of resource limitation. In daily life, once poverty happens to us, each of us will cope with actively in misery. Employment of a series of measures to change former consumption pattern, such as reduction on non food items, can help us avoid exhaust our food and non food resources, so as to achieve a short-term food guarantee. In Table 4, the author lists out per capita consuming level and consumption structure each month of the 126 poverty households in L community before and after the poverty.

Insert Table 4 Here

Through comparison before and after poverty, we can discover that, expenditure on clothing, household equipment and service, medical care, entertainment, education and culture, and miscellaneous commodity and service in the period of poverty caused or persistent poverty process is reduced by over 60% compared with that before poverty, while difference of expenditure on food, traffic and communications between these two periods is less than 35%. It is not difficult to find out that, reduction on expenditure of non food items is a general responsive tactic for urban poor population or families to maintain their subsistence and relieve poverty. In addition, during our in-depth visit, there is also such a typical case. Case 12 (visit No): [Zhang X, Male, 42, Worker] in 1998 when my mother's malignant tumor was cured, we were almost reduced to poverty and ruin... At the initial stage of falling into poverty, the four members in my family ate green vegetables almost each meal, and we ate porridge each supper. We didn't take the bus any more for work, but walked to the factory each morning by getting up 1 hour earlier... At that time, my daughter was very thoughtful, and even hasn't bought a pretty diary... Besides, my hairdressing then was all done by my wife... To be frank now, although our income condition has been improved since my wife has had a "cloth art" job (taking some work back home, mainly hemming-stitch), we are accustomed to this living style, and it can also help store some money for special use... From the above individual case, it is not difficult to find out that, food substitution, changes of diet habits and shopping habits etc, cannot be ignored in the process of maintaining the subsistence and relieve poverty by urban poor population.

3.2 Portfolio management of tangible assets

Just as what the previous theoretical hypothesis says, portfolio management of tangible assets in the poverty process has significant effect on maintaining the subsistence and relieving poverty for urban poor population. Furthermore, the key to maintaining the subsistence and even detaching from poverty is effective portfolio management of tangible assets in the poverty process.

Insert Table 5 Here

3.2.1 Increase of family labor force

In table 5, a general trend of increase of labor force and the number of family employed members and change of corresponding income in the persistent poverty process among urban poor population or families. Statistical results in Table 5 indicate that, in our study on L community, the general responsive way of families falling into poverty is to mobilize extra labor force, and more women throw themselves into the large army of labor. Rate of women's work in the entire poor population increases from 14.43% before poverty to 24.39% after poverty, with a difference of 69.01% between the two periods. Occupations of women are mostly concentrated on some informal employment areas with instability, temporality, non-contract, non-welfare, low remuneration, low technique, bad working environment, and low security areas, such as household service, etc. Besides, in terms of private operation or secondary occupation, whether for male or female householders, the period after poverty is over 80% higher than the period before poverty. It can be seen that, expansion of labor force or expansion of working competence is also a general trend to relieve or detach from poverty. In Table 5, we can also find out that increase rate of employment among children at the age from 15 to 24 is particularly obvious. And for males, the rate is 533.33% higher after poverty than that before poverty, and for females, the rate is 200% higher after poverty than that before poverty. Actually, our in-depth visit also reflects such an actual situation. In order to relieve the poverty conditions in the family and to break away together with parents from poverty, more children choose employment rather than continual education. The large majority of them are engaged in industries of service, such as hotel attendants, and securities custody clerk, etc. Furthermore, in the situation when parents cannot maintain the living of the whole family, they are more inclined to asking their children to participate in the army of labor, which is also a tactic of labor force mobilization in urban poor population or families. In addition to the above situations, mobilization of labor force is also reflected in more dependence on children between 8 and 14 in housework, because this leaves much more time for parents to earn more income. Housework done by both boys and girls is over 700% higher after poverty than that before poverty. Given corresponding disposable income changes, in the process of implementation of this tactic of labor force increase, per capita income each month is over 60% higher in persistent poverty than that during the period of poverty caused. It is not difficult to find out that, labor force mobilization plays a crucial role in income increase, and necessarily affects poverty relief and detachment.

3.2.2 Reduction on investment in human capital

According to human capital theory, salary of an individual in the labor force market is determined by his/her capacity of

employing his/her labor force, which, in turn, differs due to different human capital of individuals. That is to say, limited human capital reserves or level makes it difficult for them to acquire excellent employment opportunities and more salary, so that the risk of falling into poverty is increased. As a matter of fact, our research also verifies this point, as is shown in Table 6. Educational length and average income per month in the table tell us differences of educational level and income level between urban poor population and non-poor population, which proves that educational level of the population is closely interrelated with income level, and the risk of falling into poverty for families in which householders have low educational level. However, investment of human capital also decides accumulation or storage of human capital in the future. From comparison of per capita consuming level of poor families and their consumption structure after poverty and before poverty in Table 4 and from investment of human capital in Table 6, we discover that, entertainment, education and cultural expense of poor population is reduced by 64.74%, their medical care expense is reduced by 73.14%, their average educational expense each month is 68.24 Yuan lower than that of non-poor population, their average medical care expense each month is 38.66 Yuan lower than that of non-poor population, and their average technical training expense each month is 11.83 Yuan lower than that of non-poor population. However, average miscellaneous fees of children under 14 years old each month is relatively low, merely 5.94 Yuan, but average miscellaneous fees of poor population each month account for 89.34% of average educational expense each month, while the expense rate of non-poor population is merely 35.08%. It is thus clear that, poor population or families still lay great importance to education of their children or investment in education, but they have no choice but to frugally assume part miscellaneous fees of the compulsory education of their children. In fact, in our in-depth visit, we also find out that most poor families are incapable of continuing to assume junior and higher education fees after the compulsory education. Therefore, most children choose employment after the compulsory education, help their family make a living, and take an active attitude to throw themselves into attempt to break away from poverty. Obviously, overall human capital investment of poor population has been reduced, and based on general reasoning of human capital theory, poverty condition of poor population should be aggravated, but it is not the case in actual life of poor population. To a great extent, reduction on investment in human capital has relieved poverty conditions of urban poor population, and has become basis for them to recover or break away from poverty, which has been verified in the previous analysis, and is a management tactic of property and assets combination in poverty process. Here, it is not aimed at propagandizing positive effect of reduction on human capital, but to introduce the viewpoint of situations.

Insert Table 6 Here

3.3 Operation of productive assets

As for urban poor population, due to high commercialization and separation of the rights to use and own land resources, it is unlikely that their productive asset is land, but their housing, sewing machine, washing machine, motor cabin/ rickshaw (or bicycle), and ice chest, etc all can be used as productive assets. That's because use of the above assets, in a certain operation meaning, can bring in income for urban poor population or families. As the most critical asset for urban poor population, housing may reduce insecure risks and alleviate burdens in the family in an economic predicament. Besides, for poor population or families falling into poverty, housing is also favorable for alleviating and breaking away from poverty, which here involves the tactic of housing as productive asset. Likewise, possession of sewing machines, washing machines, motor cabin/ rickshaw, and ice chest etc and operation of them in an operational meaning, or their portfolio management, is also regarded as significant productive assets that cannot be ignored. In daily life, poor population or families use productive assets to increase their individual or domestic income, which is a generally adopted tactic to maintain subsistence or relieve poverty. As for specific use and combination, it depends on situations in a poverty process.

Insert Table 7 Here

In our in-depth visit, there is such a typical individual case, Case 35: [Bai X, Female, 39, office clerk (laid-off, private operation currently)] Our life was somewhat good (loosened up), and my husband was also a clerk in a small public institution. However, three years ago, we two were laid off in the downsizing disturbance, when we had just purchased a second-hand apartment, and we didn't have any savings at hand. We borrowed fifty thousand Yuan from several of his (my husband) friends. Well, it was from then that we began to live through our life hard... At the first half year, we were totally at a loss... The neighbouring subdistrict was a station and a shopping centre, so we planned to cook in our kitchen, and then took it by a pedicab to the neighbouring station to sell for box lunch... Now, each day we can sell almost 100 shares. The five-and-ten business cannot earn much, but we are able to lead a normal life, able to pay tuition fees for our 13-year-old son, and only a small part can be saved for repaying the debt (It seems far away for us to pay off the fifty thousand Yuan). She (interviewee) also told us that, there was also a poor household in this building, who had two elderly to support, one daughter with congenital disability, and had one son to take the exam of entering the university. With convenience to live in the first floor, they made a signboard for specially washing woolens, and washed clothes for others with their own washing machine... Obviously, in cases when a family loses its income resources or when its income resources are reduced, as a productive asset, housing plays a particularly prominent role in increasing

income and relieving poverty, while identification on productive assets excluding housing is relatively scattered. However, the recognition is unanimous in feasibility of regarding productive assets as the tactic to maintain the subsistence or relieve poverty.

3.4 Operation of intangible assets

3.4.1 Change and adjustment of family relations

From Table 8 and Table 9, it can be found out: (1) change of family structural factors is an important cause for resulting in poverty. In our survey, we place extra emphasis on subjective attribution of poor population on their family structural factors, and we also find out that, the total poverty proportion caused by “death of bearers of livelihood” is 19.05%, while that in families of single female is up to 60%. The total poverty proportion caused by “inability to work due to high ages” is 19.84%, while that in families of single elderly is prominent, up to 57.9%. As for families with two parents, their family structural factors which cause poverty lie especially in “a large number of members that lack the competence to work” (22.95%) and “Handicap of bearers of livelihood” (21.31%), while “serious illness of family members” (18.03%) is also a relatively obvious factor to cause poverty. (2) Correspondingly, adjustment or change of family relations is also a significant factor to relieve poverty in the poverty process, and here, we pay special attention to measurement of subjective feelings of poor population in effectively relieving poverty by family relations or structural factors. Furthermore, we discover “remarriage” (40%) is an important family structural factor in families of single female to effectively relieve poverty. As for families with two parents, they are mostly influenced by “increase of labor force” (55.74%), while for “families of single elderly”, it is “growth of their children” (47.37%) that contributes to effective relieve of their poverty. Considering the sample, “increase of labor force” (38.89%) and “growth of the children” (20.63%) are adjustment and change factors of significant family relations or structures to maintain the subsistence or to relieve poverty.

Insert Table 8 and Table 9 Here

A family is the most significant resource for urban poor population. In the field of view of study on poverty, family relation is regarded by Caroline as a mechanism to centralize income and assume consumption (Caroline Moser, 2001). Therefore, change and adjustment of family relations affect the centralization degree and assuming of consumption. In other words, family relations decide competence of urban poor population to respond to external environmental changes. In fact, family relation is the structure and pattern of family combination and the unification of family members, which, in turn, affect the aggregation of resources and the ability to mobilize extra labor force. The statistical results in Table 8 about the poverty conditions caused by family structure changes and the statistical results in Table 9 about effective relieve of poverty thanks to family relation changes have verified the above topic.

Insert Figure 1 Here

3.4.2 Maximum value conversion of social capital

In a social security meaning, social capital can be interpreted as welfare of members in a certain social network. Through relative relation network, and social relations such as friends and social associations, poor population or families can acquire external resources, so as to help them overcome difficulties in daily life, so social capital is considered an important property for urban poor population. In other words, the competence of urban poor population to respond to poverty or to break away from poverty is closely interrelated with their social capital accumulation. Likewise, social capital might be strengthened or weakened in daily life. As for urban poor population or families, it is the case that they maintain their subsistence in the process of using and strengthening or weakening their social capital, which is also a survival technical tactic selected to relieve and break away from poverty in the situation when their resources are lacking or limited.

Insert Table 10 Here

From the statistical results in Table 10, it is discovered that social capital in poor population or families is used as a sort of assets for maintenance of subsistence and extinction of poverty in the poverty process by means of informal credit. Here, we merely take network of economic support in poor families as a consideration target, because for poor population, nothing is more important than competence of allocation in economic assets. In the poverty process of poor population, their network of economic support (relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues, social associations or non-government organizations) provides them support of economic life by means of an informal credit. From Table 10, we can find out that, in the first year of poverty (5 households), the second year of poverty (9 households) and in the third year of poverty (12 households), all poor families have acquired informal credit in network of economic support, which has played a crucial role in terms of maintaining subsistence and relieving poverty for poor families. Times of contact between poor families and members of their network of economic support or the interaction condition also reflects operation of their social capital, which is either strengthened or weakened in use (For details, please see Table 10 and Figure 1). As a whole, times of contact between poor families and their network of economic support is on the rise. From another perspective, it can be predicted such a fact that, they all attempt to make full use of resources and opportunities with an active attitude in use and reuse of social capital, so as to resolve the current poor predicament.

Furthermore, from Figure 1, we can also discover that times of contact between poor families and their relatives and neighbours is on the rise, while their interaction with friends and colleagues is task back. Besides, the interaction with neighbours exhibits an obvious fluctuation trend, while interaction with relatives and colleagues is relatively stable. A mere reference to contact and interaction of poor families or population with members of their network of economic support cannot tell exactly operation situation of the social capital, but without that, social capital can, by no means, bring corresponding resources and opportunities, let alone strengthening or weakening. As a matter of fact, the above trends also illustrate the maximum value conversion of social capital in poor families, which is interrelated with the automatic operation of the technical tactic to maintain subsistence or relieve poverty.

4. Conclusion and discussion

As for factors of assets portfolio management to relieve poverty, such as labor force, human capital, productive assets, family relations and social capital, which are technical tactics of subsistence in urban poor population, we haven't made an analysis of logistic regression in the extent to which they affect maintenance of subsistence in urban poor population and relieve of poverty and even the detachment. Generally speaking, through the previous analysis, we come to the following conclusions.

1) Reduction on expense of non food items, which is a general responsive tactic by urban poor population or families to maintain the subsistence and relieve poverty. Constitution of food, change of diet customs and changes of shopping customs etc cannot be ignored in the process of maintaining the subsistence and relieving poverty in urban poor population or families. 2) Reduction on investment in human capital relieves poverty of urban poor population, and becomes a basis for them to recover or break away from poverty, which is a management tactic of assets combination in poverty process. Here, the author is not propagandizing positive effect of reduction on human capital, but introducing the viewpoint of situations. 3) The most generally responsive method by families falling into poverty is to mobilize extra labor force. And a large majority of women and children are thrown into the army of labor. 4) As an important asset in urban poor population, housing can reduce insecure risks and alleviate burdens of a family in an economic predicament. And for the population or families falling into poverty, housing may also help relieve and break away from poverty, which involves the tactic of housing as a productive asset. Likewise, possession of sewing machines, washing machines, motor cabins/rickshaws and ice chests, and their running in an operational meaning or the portfolio management, is also regarded as the most important productive assets that cannot be ignored. In daily life, poor population or families employ productive assets to increase their individual or domestic income, which is also a generally adopted tactic to maintain subsistence or relieve poverty. Specific use and combination is usually determined by situations in poverty process. 5) A family is the most significant resource for urban poor population. In the field of view of study on poverty, family relation is regarded as a mechanism to centralize income and assume consumption. Therefore, change and adjustment of family relations affect the centralization degree and assuming of consumption. In other words, family relations decide competence of urban poor population to respond to external environmental changes. In fact, family relation is the structure and pattern of family combination and the unification of family members, which, in turn, affect the aggregation of resources and the ability to mobilize extra labor force. 6) In a social security meaning, social capital can be interpreted as welfare of members in a certain social network. Through relative relation network, and social relations such as friends and social associations, poor population or families can acquire external resources, so as to help them overcome difficulties in daily life, so social capital is considered an important property for urban poor population. In other words, the competence of urban poor population to respond to poverty or to break away from poverty is closely interrelated with their social capital accumulation. Likewise, social capital might be strengthened or weakened in daily life. As for urban poor population or families, it is the case that they maintain their subsistence in the process of using and strengthening or weakening their social capital, which is also a survival technical tactic selected to relieve and break away from poverty in the situation when their resources are lacking or limited.

Some scholars consider it a passive choice, but we believe that this is finally a subjectivity construction of an individual, and is an subjective tactic of response to predicament. However, whether the survival technical tactics of urban poor population or families also have their limitations or obstructive factors? For example, whether this adaptive tactic would cause poor population to fall into recursion of poverty? Or whether this individual adaptation or responsive plan would cause urban poor population to step into the trap by themselves and for themselves? Or whether this adaptive tactic might lead to poverty transition to the next generation? And whether the accumulated weakening and corrosion effect of cultural capital and social capital in such a survival culture adaptive to poverty is an important cause for poor families or population unable to break away from poverty? There is no doubt that, here we cannot ignore limitations of survival technical tactics of urban poor population or families, which is also an important subject introduced in this research, but we will discuss it in another paper due to limited space length. Of course, there is also flaw in this paper, because its investigation and research targets are merely confined to one urban community, which decides that the author cannot unfold a public discussion effectively. Likewise, As for factors of assets portfolio management to relieve poverty, such as labor force, human capital, productive assets, family relations and social capital, which are technical tactics of subsistence in urban poor population, we haven't made an analysis of logistic regression in the extent to which they

affect maintenance of subsistence in urban poor population and relieve of poverty and even the detachment, so we haven't got an obvious level of relevant survival technical tactic or assets portfolio management factors. Furthermore, there are also some issues to be open for further study, such as mutual restriction of such factors as labor force, human capital, productive assets, family relations and social capital etc, which deserve full and accurate discussion, and which is also one of subjects to be studied in the future. Without doubt, discussion on survival technical tactics of urban poor population or families is also limited by shortage of our theoretical level. Such a large space hasn't enabled the author to carry out, not to mention finish, our discussion on obstructive factors of survival technical tactics, which is naturally a shortcoming.

Acknowledgements

Ms Kong Ping from Bureau of Civil Affairs in W District gave cordial assistance for this study; Prof. Xia Yuzhen and Prof. Jiang Lihua from Central China Normal University gave precious suggestions for design of this study and for correction on the paper. Besides, this article was read at the international seminar (Beijing, China, Oct. 22-Oct. 23, 2005) of "Community of Transient Population" and "Urban Poverty and Social Protection", and received comments and recommendations from Prof. Meng Xin from Australian National University, Prof. Guo Fei from Macquarie University in Australia and Prof. Zheng Zhenzhen from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Here, the author expresses his thanks to them all.

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Table 1. Types of poverty theory

Positioning the theory	of	Poverty trend	Study approach	Name of argument	Classical study
Shortage orientation	of	Poverty caused	Action	Theories of human capital and status attainment	Becker (1993) / Kelso (1994)
Choice orientation	of	Persistent poverty	Process	Theories of poverty culture and neo-poverty culture	Lewis (1966)& /Murry (1984)
Limitation orientation	of	Poverty caused	Interaction	Situations theory, neo-structural theory and labour force market theory	Carmon(1985)/Tomaskovic(1988)/Wilson(1987)

Table 2. Framework of survival technical tactics

Survival tactics	Poverty trends	Major features	Specific content
Change of consumption	Poverty caused	Response/survival (short term)	Food substitution, Change of diet habit, change of shopping habits, reduction of expense on non food items, etc
Increase of income	Persistent poverty/ Poverty relief	Adaptation/Survival (long term)	Portfolio management of tangible assets (labor and human capital), productive assets(housing etc) and intangible assets (family relationship and social capital etc)

Table 3. Overall condition of the sample

	N	%		N	%	N	%	
Poverty incidence			15-24	93	18.90	2	9	7.14
Poor households	126	9.63	25-34	32	6.50	3	12	9.52
Poor population	492	10.45	35-44	91	18.50	4	18	14.29
Gender of poor population			45-54	85	17.28	5	15	11.90
Male	241	48.98	Above 55	102	20.73	6	21	16.67
Female	251	51.02	Occupation			7	19	15.08
Educational level of poor population			Technical workers	26	5.28	8	14	11.11
Primary school and below	46	9.35	Unskilled workers	214	43.50	9 years and above	13	10.32
Junior high school	182	36.99	Office Clerk / Office staff	107	21.75	Patterns or types of a family		
High and middle school and technical secondary school	219	44.51	Cadres of government enterprises			Single citizens	19	15.08
Junior college	45	9.15	Professionals & technical			Female single-parent family	15	11.91
Undergraduate and above			Others	145	29.47	Two parents	61	48.41
Age of poor population			Time of persistent poverty (Year)/(Household)			Others	31	24.60
Under 14	89	18.09	1	5	3.97			

Note: * Occupations refer to current occupations or occupations before unemployment, and others usually include students, obligatory servicemen, and individual operation persons etc.

Table 4. Comparison of per capita consuming level and consumption structure each month of poverty households before and after the poverty

Name of index	Poverty family (After poverty)		Before poverty		The period after poverty lower than that before poverty%
	Amount (Yuan)	Composition %	Amount (Yuan)	Composition%	
Consumption expenditure	300.60	100	666.13	100	-54.87
Food (Engel's coefficient)	146.59	48.77	215.28	32.32	-31.91
Clothing	25.16	8.37	62.92	9.45	-60.01
Household equipment and service	22.06	7.34	91.49	13.73	-75.89
Medical care	13.18	4.38	49.07	7.37	-73.14
Communications	17.30	5.75	50.39	7.56	-33.09
Entertainment, education and culture	37.72	12.55	106.99	16.06	-64.74
Residence	22.30	7.42	48.95	7.35	-54.44
Miscellaneous commodity and service	16.29	5.42	41.04	6.16	-60.30

Table 5. Changes of labor force and the number of family employed members and also changes of per capita income each month in the poverty process

	After poverty		Before poverty		The period after poverty higher than that before poverty %	Poverty caused		The period of persistent poverty higher than that of poverty caused %
	NO of people	%	NO of people	%		Per capita income each month (Yuan)	Per capita income each month (Yuan)	
Employment status of householder (25-)								
Male	112	22.76	126	25.61	-11.11	191.67	197.59	3.09
Female	120	24.39	71	14.43	69.01	113.34	194.72	71.80
Avocation of householders (25-)								
Male	83	16.87	46	9.35	80.43	59.48	105.16	76.80
Female	98	19.92	52	10.57	88.46	56.17	90.78	61.62
Employment of children(15-24)								
Male	19	3.86	3	0.61	533.33	74.65	180.36	141.61
Female	21	4.27	7	1.42	200.00	69.26	175.91	153.98
Housework by children (8-14)								
Male	11	2.24	1	0.20	1000.00	—	—	—
Female	24	4.88	3	0.61	700.00	—	—	—

Note: (1) Employment here refers to informal employment, because the proportion of informal employment among urban poor population is quite large, and is mostly concentrated in private, domestic and community districts, which cannot be ignored. (2) The content within the parenthesis represents age bracket. (3) Avocation here mainly refers to private operation or the second occupation, which, to some extent, overlaps with employment situation, so here it is ignored. (4) Here, per capita income refers to disposable income. Per capita income each month at the stage of initial poverty is chosen for the period of poverty caused, while that of the current year (1+n) is chosen for the process of persistent poverty. In this article, the author ignores different persistent time (n) of poverty.

Table 6. Human capital conditions of poor population and non-poor population

	Poor population	Non-poor population	Difference of average level
Average educational years (Year)	9.62	12.15	-2.53
Average income per month (Yuan)	304.67	825.42	-520.75
Average education expense per month (Yuan)	33.12 (29.59)	101.36 (35.56)	-68.24 (-5.97)
Average medical care expense per month (Yuan)	13.18	51.84	-38.66
Average technical training expense per month (Yuan)	1.37	13.20	-11.83

Note: (1) Per capita income each month here refers to actually disposable. (2) Part data come from annual statistical returns by the neighborhood committees. (3) The content within the parenthesis in the column of average educational expense per month refers to miscellaneous fees of children under the age 14 per month.

Table 7. Subjective evaluation of poor population on operation of productive assets

Types of assets	Average score of evaluation on income increase	Average score of evaluation on poverty relief	Average score of evaluation on operation difficulty
Housing	67.81	75.33	10.03
Washing machine	55.62	41.25	5.36
Sewing machine	36.94	30.61	16.21
Motor cabin	44.17	33.12	8.67
Ice chest	30.17	23.23	24.59
Others	35.45	26.76	11.43

Table 8. Family relations which cause poverty or the structural factors and their distribution

Family structural factors	Families of single elderly	Families of single female	Family with two parents	Others	Total
Death of bearers of livelihood	1 5.26	9 60.00	8 13.11	6 19.35	24 19.05
A large number of members that lack the competence to work	—	—	14 22.95	8 25.81	22 17.46
Unable to work due to high ages	11 57.90	1 6.67	6 9.84	7 22.58	25 19.84
Serious illness of family members	—	1 6.67	11 18.03	3 9.68	15 11.90
Low work competence of bearers of livelihood	1 5.26	1 6.67	9 14.75	5 16.13	16 12.70
Handicap of bearers of livelihood	6 31.58	3	13 21.31	2 6.45	24 19.05
Total	19 100.0	15 100.0	61 100.0	31 100.0	126 100.0

Table 9. Family relations which relieve poverty or the structural factors and their distribution

Family structural factors	Families of single elderly	Families of single female	Family of two parents	Others	Total
Remarriage	1 5.26	6 40.00	—	3 9.68	10 7.94
Increase of labor force	—	3 20.00	34 55.74	12 38.71	49 38.89
Growth of children	9 47.37	3 20.00	9 14.75	5 16.13	26 20.63
Recovery of wound and illness	8 42.11	2 13.33	6 9.84	3 9.68	19 15.08
Acquisition of work with high salary	1 5.26	1 6.67	8 13.11	7 22.58	17 13.49
Death due to serious wound and illness	—	—	4 6.56	1 3.23	5 3.97
Total	19 100.0	15 100.0	61 100.0	31 100.0	126 100.0

Table 10. Distribution of annual average contact and informal credit relations between urban families and the members of their economic support

Time of persistent poverty	Relatives		Friends		Neighbours		Colleagues		Social association non-government organization)		Network of economic support (Total)	
	Annual average times of contact	Households of informal credit	Annual average times of contact	Households of informal credit	Annual average times of contact	Households of informal credit	Annual average times of contact	Households of informal credit	Annual average times of contact	Households of informal credit	Annual average times of contact	Households of informal credit
1(5)	16.8	0	21.6	4	8.0	0	14.4	1	0	0	60.8	5
2(9)	18.6	1	23.4	3	19.6	1	14.8	4	3.1	0	79.5	9
3(12)	20.5	2	31.6	5	26.8	1	16.6	3	2.8	0	98.3	11
4(18)	20.8	5	21.5	4	30.5	2	20.6	2	2.5	0	95.9	13
5(15)	26.4	6	32.1	4	25.3	2	22.4	1	1.6	1	107.8	14
6(21)	22.4	4	26.7	7	26.5	4	20.6	2	1.5	0	97.7	17
7(19)	23.9	6	23.5	3	28.6	2	21.5	1	2.8	0	100.3	12
8(14)	26.6	8	21.6	2	29.8	3	19.3	0	3.2	0	100.5	13
≥9(13)	28.3	5	17.8	1	30.6	3	14.1	0	4.6	2	95.4	11

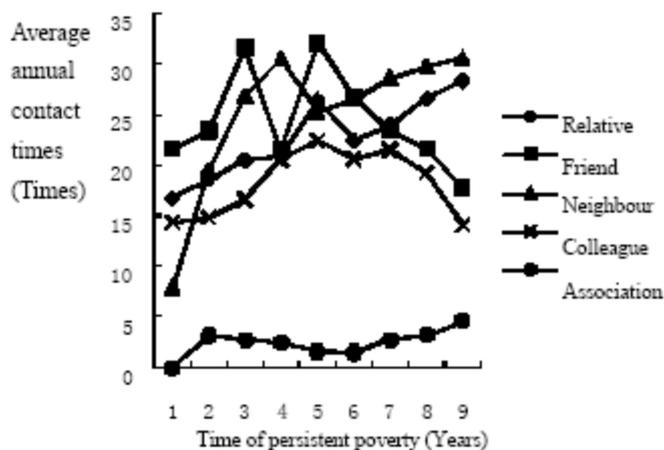


Figure 1. Distribution of annual average times of contact between urban poor population or families and members of their network of economic support