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Thesis: The Corner of Silence: an Initial Research Report  
of Case Studies of the Deaf in Urban Guangzhou

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# The Corner of Silence: an Initial Research Report of Case Studies of the Deaf in Urban Guangzhou

[Abstract] In line with the development of the Chinese society, increasing attention has been paid to the management of welfare systems for the deaf, which are being improved. Deaf people, constituting an important part of the disable, are in a way isolate to the mainstream society because of their aural poorness and difficulty in communicating with sound people. Therefore, to have a further study into their living condition, their group culture, their feelings and demands will be of great importance and helpful to the promotion of the disable cause in China.

This dissertation is going to focus on a number of the deaf people living in Guangzhou, whose social life and group culture will be discussed. From an anthropological point of view, reflection and analysis will be given to the living situation and self-adjustment of the deaf.

Due to the time limit, this dissertation serves as an initial research report only, and based on the present information, it is only able to put forward some basic and brief discussions about the theme.

[Keywords] deaf people, group culture, social adaptation

## 1. Overview of the Deaf Research

### 1.1 A Brief Introduction of the Deaf

Deaf people, also known as the hearing impaired or hearing disabilities, are contradictory to the hearing people. According to definition in the *Disability Standard* published in 1987 in China, 'deaf' was called 'hearing disability', whose explanation is as follows, 'Hearing disabilities are those who cannot hear or cannot hear clearly of the surroundings, because of their binaural hearing loss or hearing impairment due to all kinds of causes.' . Hearing disabilities vary in different needs and standards. For example, classifications based on the degree of hearing loss are levels of 'hard of hearing' and 'deaf'; while based on the period when the disability occurred, it can be divided into 'congenital deaf' and 'postnatal deaf'. However the group of people are divided, those who are greatly affected by their hearing loss in their lives are called 'the deaf' by both of the society and them themselves.

The means of communications in the society today are mainly hearing and speaking. Thus, being not able to hear or hear clearly has become the biggest obstacle when deaf people are interacting within the society. Although there are hardly injuries in the sound systems of most deaf people

theoretically, which enables them to talk, the impairment in their hearing will block their way to learn speaking well (especially to those who became deaf when young). That is what people often call 'Mute caused by deaf'. Therefore, lots of the deaf cannot speak well, even don't know how to speak.

In order to communicate with others, deaf people have created a particular language (some people think that this cannot be considered a language) - sign language. Sign language, based on a certain shape of things, is a tool for describing the world and for passing information. It's purely visual sense, without the aid of sound. Thus it's the main communication tool for the deaf community. Like different kinds of dialect, sign languages in different places also have more or less the difference (and sometimes only the family member of the deaf can understand his' /hers' gesture). But after all, sign language is mainly evolved from the image of real things, thus, sign language in different area will have some extent of similarity.

Today, the deaf who have received some essential education can communicate with hearing people through writing and typing. With the development of science and technology, hearing aid and cochlear implant technology have become more mature, and have been gradually accepted by some of the deaf. However, communication difficulty still lies between the deaf and the hearing. It limits the contacts of the two groups, widens the distance between them. Deaf people become mysterious to the hearing ones, and are ignored, misunderstood, even discriminated by the latter. This barrier in communication also brings difficulty when the society wants to lend a hand to the deaf community. Meanwhile, since deafness is not as easy to observe as extremity disability, and neither is it without daily capacity as intelligence disability, deaf people in the disability community cannot be called a 'key protection', and have not been placed in an urgent position in need of help.

Therefore, the deaf people in general are in a corner without sound and attention in the society.

Compared to those who lived in traditional society and rural society, deaf people living in cities also have its particularity.

As we all know, city is a geo-polymer with dense population, frequent social interaction, concentrated resources, better social facilities and services, as well as relative progressive science and technology. Urbanization makes the originally scattered Deaf gathered in a relatively small space, with a closer link in geo than rural Deaf. Accordingly, they can get more resources not only in interpersonal networks but also in social welfare, and then interact more both within their group and with the outside world.

On the other hand, today, the society of China is getting continuous progress in economic and technology, which has brought tremendous social

and cultural change. Under such a social transition, the social life as well as the interaction of the deaf community must be more or less influenced.

Therefore, this study will focus on the deaf community in Guangzhou city. The researcher will go in-depth into the deaf group in Guangzhou, to understand their social life and group culture, observe their living and adaptation methods to this changing society full of sound and hearing people.

## 1.2 Deaf Undertaking in Guangzhou

Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province, is the third largest city in China. Guangzhou has a high degree of urbanization with a dense population, a high level of economic, social and cultural development, abundant social resources, and relatively sound social security. According to the recent statistics published by Guangzhou Disabled Person's Federation, Guangzhou has about 28 million disabled people at present, among which 13.07 million are Deaf.

Currently, Guangzhou Disabled Persons' Federation (GDPF) is the only official disabled organization in Guangzhou. Within it, there're two associations related to the deaf, which are the Deaf Association and the Sign Language Research Association. Under GDPF, each district has its own disabled person's federation and deaf association. Apart from the above, some civil and spontaneous organizations of Deaf and sign language were also established.

In 2010, Guangzhou hosted the Sixteenth Asian Games and the Tenth Asian Paralympic Games. The open of the Asian Paralympic Games forcefully promote the improvement of Guangzhou Disabled Facilities Construction and disability-related services.

Since 2010, GDPF annually organize a Chinese Sign Language (CSL) training, followed by a sign language qualification examination. After that, each student will get a certification issued by the official sign language office. However, this training is still limited and its class information is difficult for ordinary people to get. Beside GDPF, some sign language lovers in the society and many college students have also established some sign language organizations in recent years, regularly carrying out the teaching of sign language, sign language performances, as well as communications on sign language between colleges.

At the same time, each disabled person's federation will carry out some activities related to Deaf from time to time, such as employment training, exchange activities, Deaf sports competitions, sign language song contest, Deaf sodality, and so on.

Besides, the government has successively promulgated a series of laws and regulations to give Deaf social assistance. For example, grants, deaf

children language training, medicaid, hearing aid purchase subsidies, and so on. Some social work station will also have staffs that can play sign language, to help the deaf group.

### 1.3 A Brief Review of Previous Deaf Studies

Deaf studies at home and abroad mainly focus on three fields: First, medical studies on deafness therapy; Second, researches in the field of education, such as deaf school teaching, bilingual teaching and translation (both oral language and sign language), and psycho-education; Third, identity, deaf community, and deaf culture study in social and cultural field. Apart from the above, there are also some life stories and literary works about the deaf scattered throughout the Internet, newspapers, and some journals.

Before 2000, deaf studies in mainland China mainly limited to some early deafness treatment. Also, from time to time, there were some inspirational stories and news about the deaf published in disability presses. But most of these stories were descriptions from non-deaf people. During this period, studies of sign language and deaf education were very limited. *An Introduction of Sign Language of the Deaf* by Fu Yiting and Mei Cikai was the only published book in these area in those years, research articles were very few, either.

Around 2000, Deaf Studies occurs to have three main changes: First, with the development of science and technology, deafness therapy was getting more progress; Second, focuses had rapidly expanded to the field of deaf education and sign language teaching; Third, some life and experience narration and literary works on Deaf' s own view started to occurred. For example, *Recall the Past* (Dai Mu & Song Pengcheng, 1999), *Trace Back to the Old Deaf World* (Song Pengcheng, 2000), *Talk about Deaf in the Past Hundred Years* (Dai Mu & Wen Damin, 2003), *My Silent World* (Yan Pengfei, 2004), *From Deaf to Dragon: Must-Read for Deaf Life* (Chen Shaoyi, 2009), *I Married a Deaf* (Yanghua, 2009), and so on. But these books were in very little circulation, or were even internal published, so they are very difficult to find now.

In recent years, a new field of deaf studies is rising - research on Deaf culture and Deaf community. "Deaf culture" began to appear in some sign language teaching materials as well as research articles, and slowly, turned to be an important topic. 'The Sign Language and Deaf Culture Series, successionally published since 2008, edited by Professor Zhang Ningsheng in Zhongzhou University, is the most representative works. This set of books have been published in four, respectively, they' re *Sign Language for Sports Session* (Jingmei, 2008), *Introduction to Sign Language Interpreters* (Zhang Ningsheng, 2009), *The Deaf and society* (Meng Fanling,

2010) and *Introduction of the Deaf Culture* (Zhang Ningsheng, 2010). The former two focused on the Deaf language – sign language, while the latter two focused on the society and culture of the Deaf. The series introduced and discussed topics such as development and rules of sign language and language translation, development of deaf education, social life, education, employment, interaction of the deaf, Deaf identity, as well as Deaf culture, which rises in recent years and mainly led by the American deaf. The books have provided important reference for people to approach the deaf and understand them better.

However, so far, most of the research on the social and cultural aspects of Deaf is still limited in Theory research or just introduced the Deaf Culture Movement in foreign countries. Analysis of the space-time was weak, and cases was scattered. Few of the researches were sociological or anthropological, having a systematic point of view and a well-described historical background.

Therefore, this paper hopes to start from this deficiency. The research will start from an anthropological point of view; try to systematically discuss the social life of the deaf community in Guangzhou. Hopefully, it will help carrying out the deaf undertaking and provide some valuable reference for helping the deaf.

#### **1.4 Research Methods**

The initial interest in Deaf studies began during the researcher's participation in some sign language activities during campus period. Researchers joined in the sign language team in a social service groups during the first two years in university, had learned some simple sign language, and participated in a number of sign language activities. At the event, I met some deaf people, got to get more understanding about them, and gradually became interested in this particular group.

Therefore, this study took these original deaf friends as a start. The researcher took numerous in-depth interviews on these deaf friends, and participated in some of the Deaf activities and gatherings via their introduction. In these activities, the researcher took participant observation of their interactions, and was acquainted with more deaf people. Due to limited time and personal effort, the research did not interviewed all the deaf in those activities, but selected a number of them as well as some hearing people participated in the activities as samples for in-depth interviews. With other deaf people, I only had some simple chat.

The researcher also visited Guangzhou Disabled Persons' Federation and Guangzhou Deaf School. In GPDF, the researcher interviewed some Deaf work in there; while in Deaf School, the researcher took part in a few

students' activities inside or outside the school, expand some chat with some of the teachers and deaf students.

Besides, the researchers also collected a number of government documents and data, as well as some previous researches and deaf narrations. In the writing, the author also took some of the experiences, feelings and thoughts with deaf in the past two years as supplement.

This study has just been started. Due to time constraints, many aspects have not been worked out nor have they been depth analyzed yet. Therefore, this initial research report at present will only give a rough depiction on the life and culture of the deaf in Guangzhou, and put forward some shallow thinking.

## **2. Social Life and Group Culture of the Deaf**

### **2.1 Means of Communication**

As the name suggests, deaf people' s biggest feature is their loss of hearing, even can not speak normally. Therefore, the biggest difference between them and ordinary people is the different ways of communication. For most deaf people, their most commonly used and most convenient means of communication is sign language. In addition, the majority of deaf people can read lips, or communicate with others through writing. Some Deaf, due to some reasons, such as have been trained, or retained some hearing, or lost their hearing after they had learnt to speak, can also interact with hearing people by oral language (whether it' s good or bad) as well as by hearing under the help of hearing aid.

The current used Chinese Sign Language is standard according to Chinese Sign Language published in 2003 by Huaxia Publishing House. This sign language is the equivalent of Mandarin in Chinese. Just like Guangzhou hearing people tend to use their own dialect - Cantonese to communicate, the Guangzhou deaf people also have their own local sign language.

However, CSL is a produced language combined sign languages in various places together. Thus, there are big differences in vocabulary gesture between it and Guangzhou Local Sign Language (GLSL). Another big difference between CSL and GLSL is the grammar. Unlike CSL grammar similar to Mandarin, authentic GLSL expression is typical natural sign language, that is, it' s not according to Mandarin Chinese grammar but use more visual, natural, and direct word and sequence to express their meanings, which, see from hearing people, may be thought 'incoherent and topsy-turvy' .

The Guangzhou deaf people accustomed to using Guangzhou Local Sign Language. All that be asked agreed that they favor GLSL much better to CSL. They think playing GLSL is much faster and can use single hand but

not two hands in many cases. Many elderly deaf people may even think that CSL is not as beautiful as GLSL.

Most of the elders older than fifty-year-old don't play Chinese Sign Language. Some of them basically do not understand CSL. Some can broadly understand it but when they come to sign themselves, what they use is still GLSL. Young people basically understand CSL, and in the conversation of they usually combine two in one. This also resulted in changes of GLSL. And this shift is also closely related to the sign language teaching in deaf school, as well as today's social communication.

In the past, few deaf were educated, many people did not go to school, nor were they literate (I have met several such elderly in the research). Some of them even rarely had interaction with people outside the family. These old Deaf use totally natural sign language in their daily communication. They just signed visually without lip language, having little involvement with abstract concepts and little impact from Mandarin grammar. During these years, even in deaf school, no matter on class or after class, teachers and students use GLSL only. They had no sign language lesson particular. Both teachers and students learned sign language from the older teachers and students in life interactions after they got into the school. Of course, some people might have already learnt how to sign before they enter school with the Guangzhou Deaf around them.

From the time Chinese Sign Language has been finalized and put into effect, like Mandarin popularization in Guangzhou many years ago, it begins to popularize in deaf school. Since CSL have teaching materials with comprehensive vocabulary and gesture diagrams attached to it, it is easy for people life in non-deaf environment to learn sign language by themselves (such as college sign language teams, people who love sign language, as well as some new teachers in deaf school). GDPF teaches CSL, too. This allows deaf people have more opportunities to come into contact with the Chinese sign language.

Teachers in deaf school introduced: in early years, the school did not force to promote CSL. During these ages, although some students and teachers had learned CSL themselves, they didn't use it often in daily chatting. But in recent years, the school began to popularize CSL. Although special sign language course hasn't been open yet, a few experimental classes have already been set up. Students and teachers in these classes are required to use CSL in class and after class. Thus, there comes a situation in deaf school—students who enter school these years knows both CSL and GLSL, while the earlier students still use only GLSL and know little about CSL.

This standardization of education on deaf, regardless of sign language teaching or Chinese writing and reading skills, is profound. Today, most of the city-deaf are educated, can read and write. Obviously, Mandarin teaching enables young deaf people to communicate with hearing



people more easily than the elders. They can read, write, and even create their own works. In this way, they are able to get more information from the outside, as well as to convey their mind and thought to the outside world. In sign language, although there are still many deaf people do not master or are not used to sign CSL. It cannot be deny that interaction between domestic deaf from different regions began to increase. More and more Deaf from different places is playing songs in Chinese Sign Language and shares the videos online. Communication between deaf and many in different regions of the Deaf will play Chinese sign language the sign language song video or other sign language video upload to online, the majority of users to share; communication between deaf and sign language-loving hearing people becomes feasible. The researcher herself can also get benefit from the standardized education. She found it much easier to talk with young deaf people than the olds, since with the youths, she can communicate by writing and CSL (the researcher learned CSL from the teaching material).

On the other hand, the popularity of mobile phones, networks and other digital communication tools has turn the sign language no longer the only communication tool for Deaf, either. These tools make text communication become more important, also led to the Deaf attention to their own level of Chinese grammar. Meanwhile, the promotion of hearing aids also effects the deaf' s Chinese communication: 'How fortunate young people today have hearing aids! They learn oral language followed by the hearing aid, and soon they' re used to talk sentence by sentence.' Ms. Chen, one of the interviewee, said.

Master both sign language and grammar Chinese unavoidably brings language hybridity. GLSL is no longer a purely natural sign language, but is added into many Chinese grammar rules, become a relatively grammatical, more slowly-signed 'new' Guangzhou Local Sign Language.

While the interaction between youth Deaf and the outside world is becoming easier, the communication between the youths and older generation has also undergone a subtle change. Ms. Chen told the researcher the olds' reaction to this change: 'The old deaf people do not like to talk with the youth deaf Friends; they can' t understand each other clearly, because the youths sign sentence by sentence.'

## 2.2 Daily Life

Deaf people will get into many inconveniences in their daily life because of their obstacles in hearing. But they also have their own solution. 'Seeing' and 'writing' are their main alternative methods.

Some of the deaf are better in spoken, or had once been a hearing person, so that they can communicate with the outside world via lip-language,

speaking or listening. Ms. Wang, one of the interviewee who became deaf after she graduated from university, can talk almost as normal as hearing people. So, she has no obstacles to talk herself when going out to buy things. When the seller talks to her, she can grasp their meaning by reading their lips. If she can't see clearly, she'll ask for repeats. She does not carry a pen and paper all the time, because 'they (the sellers) are busy with business, have no time to write me.'

Another interviewee, Ms. Lee can understand others by reading lips and hearing, because she still have a little hearing remained and is now wearing hearing aids. Lee's oral language is fine in deaf people, so even strangers can understand her by carefully distinguishing. However, she herself is not so confident, and will not talk to strangers unless necessary. Therefore, she likes to go shopping with hearing friends who can play sign language, so that she can talk to them in sign, without having directly face with the seller.

However, most of the deafs' hearing is poor. So under these kinds of circumstances, they'll try to avoid talking. For example, they can point to the object for indication, or do everything on their own, even if it is more a waste of effort and time. I had once accompanied a deaf friend shopping at a supermarket. She is looking for a commodity but don't know the exact place. Instead of turn to the salesman for help, she walked round and round between the shelves to find the commodity herself.

Deaf often encounter a few setbacks when travel, too. The most common is when on bus or on subways, and they don't know what the station is at the moment. Once a deaf friend had complained to me, she and her deaf friends sometimes miss the subway station on the train, because they can't hear the broadcast clearly. But nowadays, many new subway lines have set lights diagram, so it is much more convenient than before.

There're some other seemingly insignificant details but will do lots of help to the deaf, such as flash doorbell and vibratory alarm clock. Society together with the deaf is doing every little effort to improve the lives of deaf people.

Unlike mental retardation or physical disabilities, although deaf people belong to the category of persons with disabilities, most of them can act and work as well as every normal people, as long as it does not involve listening to speaking. Therefore, most of the deaf people are at work.

'The People's Republic of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons Act' provides that: Disables should be employed proportionally. Thus deaf people looking for work do have a certain degree of protection. But admittedly, impacted by the physiological characteristics and their education level, deaf employment has a lot of limitations. Of all the deaf I contacted, the majority of them are doing the work of clerks, typists in each unit, among which the majority are in all kinds of schools.

Individually, a few Deaf work as staffs at hotel backstage, or is a member at some social work station.

Whatever work these Deafs are doing, there are several similarities: First, no verbal communication with colleagues, or they can communicate by pen and paper or by Internet chat tools; Secondly, the generally income is low. In every place, when the deaf and hearing people are doing roughly the same job, the salary of the Deaf is always the lowest, only at a minimum wage standard. After graduated, Ms. Lee has done three jobs so far, all of them are as a unit clerk. Now she is doing administrative clerk at the primary school, the monthly wage is only around 1,300RMB. A hearing clerk doing the same job can earn a higher wage than her, because she was also with classes to teach. Sometimes on holiday, her school colleagues will go on a trip, and asked whether she would like to come. Because of her limited income, she had no choice but to give up.

Of course, some deaf people can engage in higher income occupations, such as art design, computer design, and so on. However, the majority of deaf people are still at a relatively low income level. The reason for this is with closely relevance to the education they have accepted. The discussions in this regard will be concerned later in the article.

## 2.3 Leisure Activities

The amateur life of Deaf might be more vivid than most people would imagine. They do sports, watching TV (with subtitles), watching videos and movies on the Internet, chatting online, go shopping with friends... Some deaf youths even like to go to Karaoke. They don't mind whether they sing good or not, they yawl and laugh, all they care about is to be happy. Since October, 2011, the program 'common concern' in CCTV channel3 begins to add a sign language translator for the service of the majority of deaf people. However, according to the interviews, most of the Guangzhou Deaf does not focus on this, or simply do not know it. 'Do not understand' is the reason why they seldom watch it- the sign language used in this program is CSL, quite different from the natural GLSL Guangzhou deaf people usually used.

There are also a variety of gatherings and parties in deaf group. For example, Christian Fellowship Worships at every Friday nights and in Sunday daytime; sodalities held by Deaf Association or non-governmental organizations; sign language organizations, sometimes carry out the exchange of sign language on a regular basis, parties, performances, and recording sign language songs; of course, there are gatherings, shopping, afternoon tea time among some good friends, and so on.

In Guangzhou School for the Deaf, the only comprehensive deaf school in Guangzhou, two-thirds of the students are boarders. Usually at weekends, students either study by themselves, or play sports on the playground.

Student Xie, a sophomore in deaf school, sign up a class outside the school to learn oral speaking. In the last couple of years, the school also consciously increased the deaf student exchanges with external organizations Fraternal. For example, visited Sun Yet-sen University campus; having study tutoring given by college volunteers each week; go to the Tianhe Sports Center to promote sign language, and so on.

In addition to interacting with people in real life, in recent years, the network has gradually become an important platform for deaf people to interact with the outside world, and have an amateur life. In the early years when online forums being fashionable, Deaf also established various cities Deaf Forum, and Forum of sign language. Ms. Li once served as a hearing aid donor webmaster of the forum. The forum provides a platform, for those people who want to eliminate their old hearing aids can donate the old ones to others who cannot afford to buy hearing aids. These years, the online forum is slowly reducing. But on the other side, qq, microblog has take over the online forums' places, become a mainstream network media and communication tools. Deaf people build up a variety of qq groups, which become an important daily interaction channel for some groups, and friends. Many deaf people, especially the younger generations, are also keen to write microblog, qq space log, to express their daily sense.

Obviously, everything has been great different from the closed, neglected condition of older Deaf

## 2.4 The Deaf Family

Family is an important place in which people lives and grows. To deaf people, family is more important. Attitudes from family members will have enormous impact on the deaf. Each of the families has their own particular circumstances. The different Deaf, growing experience as well as his family's attitude towards them is also different. In the interview, there are Deaf whose family environment is not so ideal, that some of the family members didn't give much recognized to the Deaf; also, there are people grew up in a good family environment, and can turn to family members for support and help.

Respondent Ms. Wu did not have much talk on her own parents and sisters. But it can be seen from her brief description that her parents was holding a negative attitude to her. Wu is the oldest sister in her family, following by three younger sisters. 'My parents are not good to me, they despise me.' Wu frowned and shook her head. Her two big sisters ostracized her since she is deaf. They have little interaction with Wu. But when talking about the youngest sister, Wu smiled slightly, nodding, 'Then the little sister was born, she was very nice to me and play with me, help me.' Therefore, Wu has strong feelings with her little sister, and they two contact a lot.

Ms. Wang's family is special. Her older sister is a deaf also due to drug injection. Having lost hearing before school age, her sister is an 'authentic' Deaf, use natural sign language and can not speak. Because of her sister, Wang had learnt some daily sign language since young, as well as made some deaf friends. For this reason, after Wang experienced a period of tough time after hearing loss, she can stand back on her feet in a short time and go back to work, at the same time strengthening her ability to lip reading and sign language.

Ms. Lee might be a fortunate one among deaf people. Her parents were both well-educated, graduated respectively from a famous senior high school and a university. Later, both of them got good works, so the family does not have much economic burden. From the easy expressions Lee talked about her parents, it's easy to feel that she really have a harmonious relationship with their parents. She will chat everything with her mother, not only the interesting things happened in the school, but also the mistakes she made. Lee's parents would not be too gingerly to their daughter because of her deafness, neither would they despise nor snub her. They would be angry with her and criticize her when needed, and take good care of her in most time. After noticed the problem with little Lee, her parents had took her to all kinds all hospital for treatment for a long time. When somebody told them that this problem can be cured by acupuncture, her parents once took her to the acupuncture place every a few days. Her father also bought a lot of relevant books to get more knowledge about hearing loss. Even until today, the bookshelf in her home is still filled with these books.

Lee's childhood education should owe to her parents. Because of the hearing problem, Lee can't hear clearly on the class. So since Grade One in primary school, Lee would carry a bulky tape recorder and a stack of tapes to go to school, to record the course of the day. After her returned home, her parents will first listened to the tape, studied themselves, and then teach Lee with loud sound, day after day, year after year.

However, Lee's parents were reluctant to let Lee get along with deaf people, nor would they send her to deaf school. 'My mother hid me up.' Lee said calmly, but with a bit of disapproval. The reason her parents do not want her to get along with the deaf is that they were afraid that this will weaken her ability to listen and to speak. Thus, during her primary stage, Lee transferred school almost once a year. Because every time it comes to the end of a year, her teachers would find out her hearing impairment, and then recommend her parents to sent her to deaf schools for education more appropriate. The parents do not want to, so every time it would end up by transferring schools.

The entire married deaf (except for Ms. Wang, since her life basically has no different from hearing people) researcher has made acquaintance to married a deaf instead of a hearing people. Ms. Wu and her deaf husband

were acquainted with each other in a local Deaf Friendship solitary. Miss Li said most deaf people still willing to marry a deaf but not a hearing people, because marriage with a hearing people will bring a lot of pressure to the deaf.

Interviews to the majority of the families of the deaf are less likely to master sign language, and most of them won't deliberately learn sign language because of their deaf children. Most of the deaf people communicate with their families by speaking, reading lips and writing, occasionally assisted with some simple sign language (these sign language is not necessarily specifications, some just own family was able to understand it).

## 2.5 Social Network

Social interaction between deaf people will not be too complicate; most of their social networks consist of family, friends, fellow colleagues, and acquaintances in some social organizations. Whether he social network of a deaf consist mainly of Deaf or of hearing people, depends on the life experience of that deaf and the recognition of his/hers own cultural identity.

Ms. Wang, became deaf after her attended work, had made mainly hearing friends in her previous life. So, even after her deaf, her oral capacity still remains, so as her ability to communicate mere normally with the outside world. Therefore, most of her friends are hearing people, but few deaf people. Usually she would not participate in the deaf activities apart from activities held by GDPF. Speaking of the Deaf since childhood, she said, 'their habit of speaking and doing things is a bit different with the normal people ... they are not very easy to get along with, have lots of contradictions. There're lively outgoing ones as well as irritable ones.' Ms. Wang herself will not take the initiative to integrate into the deaf community.

Wu is a contrary example. Growing up in a Deaf environment, she had her primary school to senior high school all in Guangzhou Deaf School. Her friends are mostly deaf people, very few hearing ones. She is a Christian. She joined the Christian Fellowship of the Deaf, and now served as 'President'. She has close contacts with her Christian fellows, who were Deaf like her.

Lee's situation is somewhere in between. She has a considerable number of deaf friends and hearing friends. Lee's best girlfriend is a hearing person who is her classmate in junior high school. Being not good at talking before and always transferring from one school to another, Lee has very little friends in her student age. After her growing up, she began to reach out to the deaf initiatively; slowly she met some deaf friends.

But the friends of her with closest contacts are those teammates in a sign language team she joined. Most of these teammates are hearing people.

On the surface, Lee seems to share a good and intimate relationship with both two types of people. But the subtle and awkward situation can only be felt by Lee herself. Lee is hearing-impaired, but she wears a hearing aid, so that she has a hearing better than the average of the Deaf. Deaf people think she has better hearing, so she is a hearing people; while hearing people also think the same- that since she is with a hearing aid, thus she is a Deaf. This brings a problem. Although Lee' s life is more convenient than the most of the Deaf, she turns to be a neither-deaf-nor-hearing. Neither of the group will truly accept her to be a part of them. While she talked, she shook her head, feeling helpless.

In the building of deaf social network, Guangzhou School for the Deaf is a very special existence. Not only is it a school providing a 12-year-education for deaf students, but also it is an important place for the social interaction within deaf group. Most of the Deaf deaf since childhood I encountered had gone to school (especially those young and middle-aged Deaf under 50), and almost all of them are graduated, or are going to graduate from Guangzhou School for the Deaf. Many deaf people told me, Deaf circle is quite small, you introduce me to him, and I introduce another guy to you, now and then, it can be connected together. Sometimes you ask a deaf friend of another deaf, 'Hey, you know 'someone' ?' You' ll often get an answer like this, 'Oh, sure, we were classmates!'

## 2.6 Deaf Education

According to '2009 Guangzhou Disabled educational institutions enrollment plan' published by GDPF on its website, there' re eight institution in total to recruit deaf students. Among them, Guangzhou School for the Deaf is the only systematic, specifically educational institutions that recruit a large number of deaf students. The school provides pre-school, compulsory education (six years of primary school, **three** years of junior high school), high school and vocational high school education. In addition, only three institutions provide a small amount of the education of pre-school rehabilitation and compulsory education. Four educational institutions can provide tertiary education, adult education, and vocational education. The choices for major direction are very limited, with only computers and art design related aspects. . Unless be accepted by a regular classes in an ordinary university, deaf people can not obtain full-time undergraduate qualifications in Guangdong Province. According to the researcher' s generally information, there are only three universities (which are in Beijing, Tianjing and Changchun)

that can provide a full-time undergraduate degree for the deaf all over the country.

Apparently, Deaf education choices are very limited both in academic levels and in the major direction. Unless one can overcome his/hers hearing impairment and enter into an ordinary school, or 'real' Deaf almost have no chance to break the limitations of education, towards higher learning steps. Lee once had I complained, nowadays, one must have at least an undergraduate degree for looking for a good job. However, few of the deaf can get a bachelor's degree, not to say engaging in any high-level work!

Of course, the education limits in some reasons - which the deaf are truly in some natural limitations of cultural learning. I attended several Deaf Christian Fellowship activities. One section of it is the *Bible* Seminar. In this section, it can obviously observed that compare to hearing people, the deaf have some unavoidable disadvantages - that is the deaf, through sign language class, came out with the information received far less than hearing people during a same period of time. On one hand, the sign language is usually slower than speak; teaching of sign language, on the other hand, can only be watched to receive information. It is too a single way to get more information, difficult to realize and receive information passed out by different persons, especially in different direction. Also, it is impractical to take notes while watching.

During the deaf pastor's 'talking', none of the deaf took notes, they were just watching carefully. I myself had once tried to take notes midway, or looked to the direction where some 'students' were asking something, but the consequence is, I missed the follow words of the priest.

Thus, the deaf can only try to bear what the teacher says in mind for a period of time, and then note it down later, but not write while listen like hearing people. Of course, this may be able to exercise the memory power of the deaf, but the greater the impact might still be reducing the memory efficiency of their classes learning. Since teacher will teach a lot in class, one can hardly remember all of them all by memory. Once you forget them, it'll be difficult to find back. Or teachers can leave some time left after every few sentences for students to take notes. However, it'll take up lots of the time and drag the schedule of the class.

Thus, this could also be one of the reasons of the slow teaching progress in deaf school.

With the improvement of national education policy and compulsory education's turning to be free, deaf people can afford to go to school (at least during compulsory education), parents of deaf students also start to aware of the importance of education. Guangzhou School for the Deaf, as the only formal and comprehensive Deaf special education school in Guangzhou area is bound to become and has already become a gathering place for the deaf of school age in Guangzhou area. Education accepted



during their school ages will undoubtedly have directly effect on the future development of these deaf students. Meanwhile, schoolmate relationship today will one day turn to be an important part of their social network. Sessions of deaf students who come out from the school, in fact, constitute the core strength of the local deaf community, at the same time, directly reflects the mainstream of the social and living realities of the local deaf community and its cultural adaptation.

### **3. Silence Adaptation**

After a period of in-depth research, the researchers has found that, on the one hand, the city Deaf tend to live in a silence corner of the city, whether in the interaction with the outside world, or in the fact of the social status, these people are in an edge position of the society; on the other hand , the deaf community is also under constant adaptation to adapt to the social reality, which both includes exchanges between hearing people and deaf people in order to meet the audio adaptation of the world, but also includes transition from the older generation of the Deaf to the younger generation, to keep up their pace with this fast changing world..

The researcher believes, when the society and the government are to give a helping hand to these deaf people, it would be of great benefit to combine the historical background and the transition of the deaf community together with the support measures.

#### **3.1 Transition: Intergenerational Changes in Deaf Community**

It can be clearly see that, with the changing of technology, economics, society, ages, there has also undergone a significant intergenerational changes within the deaf community.

Education became more widespread, brought the upgrading of the educational level of the entire deaf community. In the past, many deaf people are illiteracy, use only sign language to communicate, met with many troubles when interact, as well as been ignored by the outside world. Nowadays, deaf people can communicate with hearing people by writing. They try to integrate into the society and actively participated in employment market.

The change of the local deaf communication tool - Guangzhou Local Sign Language- also reflects a greatly improve of young deaf people integrating into the mainstream society. Although it is difficult to judge whether the grammatical sign language or the natural one is better, at least the Chinese Sign Language has put up a bridge of communication between deaf people in different places, deaf and hearing sign language enthusiasts, most importantly, between the deaf and hearing people.

Deaf intergenerational change is also reflected in the changes of social contacts and of information passing methods. Mobile phone, Internet and other communication media has increasingly become an indispensable part of people's lives. Especially in developed cities, technology is more penetrated and widely spread. The network is gradually changing the way people live and think, and is tying a wide range of spatial and temporal closely together. Deaf also inevitably caught in this squeeze and changes of tradition, thoughts and space-time. Via the network, the deaf, who was once scattered all over the country without much interact, can now communicate, share information and views; some foreign frontier information about Deaf Culture Movement and Deafs' Rights Movement are able to introduced into the country, collide to new sparks.

Or perhaps these things are too far from the majority of the Deaf. Well, more realistic, deaf people can use qq space, microblog network platform, to express their thoughts, feelings, and get the hearing people closer to the heart of the deaf.

In short, the most important feature of the Deaf intergenerational change is: Deaf world is no longer seal off and isolated as it was in the past.

### **3.2 The Margin: In-between Deaf and Hearing**

Although compared to the old days, the social life and the group culture of the deaf in Guangzhou has undergone tremendous changes and deaf people began to integrate into mainstream society, the general group of deaf still live in the edge of the city and of mainstream society.

The deaf share special education resources given by the society, but their level of education is still rather limited. Whether due to objective physiological conditions, or due to limit opportunities, the fact is that, they are difficult to break through the barriers of hearing and deaf, in order to achieve higher academic qualifications, access to more discourse of social capital. Therefore, their overall cultural level and the level of employment in the community are at a low level. In the interviews for the study, many deaf people complained to the researcher, 'Deaf is not stupid, some of them might even be particularly clever. But they' re not able to receive a good education, so their developments were limited.' Indeed, even though many deaf people are not stupid, but in the end they will be squeeze back to the edge by a variety of social facts and forces. So, in the end, they can do nothing but continue to act their role in silence in the corner.

Therefore, in order to have a better life, many deaf people began to actively contact between deaf community and the hearing world.

Although hearing impairment and hearing loss still remain a fact of the deaf, the deaf nowadays are no longer blindly limited only in the world

of the deaf. In fact, although staying in a relatively marginal position, deaf people, especially the younger generation, start to constantly run back and forth between hearing deaf, they are actively adapting themselves, to adapt to mainstream society.

They learn Cultural knowledge, and do their best to master language skills (not only Chinese, but also English), to exercise speaking ability, use words to talk to the non-Deaf world ; they efforts to improve the cultural level (many students in deaf school have set the three undergraduate deaf university for goal, but they also frown at the difficulty they' ll face with to enter the schools), to enhance their employability and competitiveness, and to find the balance in the so-called 'disability' and self-reliance; many of them are also making actively contact with college sign language organizations, to narrow the distance between the deaf and the hearing, and enhance the possibility of dialogue between the two groups.

Deaf in the margins of society is now an indisputable fact, some of them just stay in the edge with clam, and there are also people who want to break free of the edge. Either the way, the reality is, voluntarily or forcedly, deaf people today are looking for a balance point silence and sound, between listening and deaf.

#### **4. Conclusion: How to Lend a Helping Hand?**

About deaf assistance and deaf career, the government and the Disabled Persons' Federation at all levels have been issued many documents and regulations, and take a lot of action. Many of these measures indeed paid off. However, the researcher holds that, there is still much space for us to improve. For example, some of the related assistive ways are actually palliatives.

As an old saying goes: 'Instead of giving a man a fish, it is better to teach him how to fish' . Therefore, the key to enhance the living standards of the deaf is to improve the overall quality of the deaf community. And the key to enhance the quality of the fundamental is to raise the level of deaf education.

Deaf in the learning process will encounter more difficulties than the average person, but there is no barrier in their reaching a higher level of intelligence. On the contrary, some of the Deaf are more likely to achieve higher success than the average in some ways Therefore, education for the deaf should be more individualized. Not only should the deaf education has particularity in language , but it should also have its own characteristics in the selection of subjects, not like the current deaf schools - only with painting, computer and some related minority professional choice.

At the same time, we should not have educational degree limits the employment of the deaf. Society and the government should give deaf people more chance and energy to access to a higher level of education approved by the employer, but not forced to stop learning before training schools and adult undergraduate.

On the other hand, for deaf people, the school is often an important place for them to live in, to grow in, and to develop social relationships, forming culture of the deaf community. Deaf school, once again, gather the deaf people who have already gathered by the city, becoming a significant field of the deaf community.

In Guangzhou area, Guangzhou School for the Deaf is such a field of integration' s integration. Guangzhou, The vast majority of deaf people in Guangzhou, and even some deaf from some of the surrounding areas, too, will be included in this unique school for education and cultivation. Therefore, Guangzhou School for the Deaf will undoubtedly become the key place of the social life development and the culture shaping of the deaf community.

How should people lend a hand to the deaf? The authors believe that a good grasp of the problem of the education of the deaf school, and to provide more education opportunities to enhance the self-quality of the deaf, is presumably the key to the good service and management of Guangzhou Hearing Impaired Group.

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