

Left-handers: The Hidden Minority

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This is an ethnographic study of left-handers in the context of Hong Kong, as commented by Coren (1992), “*one of the last unorganised [and unrecognised] minorities in society*”. There are two main foci in this research, the first one is to understand the social situation of left handers as ‘deviants’

to the right handed majority. I argue that although left-handedness seems to be merely a trivial personal habit, social norm and bias still operates at this unnoticed level. The informants’ experiences reflect that the society still remains to be predominantly right-handed even though the traditional negative images of left-handers have mostly gone - left-handers are taught and required to use right hand in various social events; the right-handed social structure also gives them different kinds of inconveniences in everyday life.

Another focus is about how do my informants interact with the right-handed social structure and identify themselves. This focus aims to study how do they utilise their agency on everyday basis. Different topics are covered, including the remaking of right-handed space/objects, self- ascribed advantages in being left-handed, and the potential of left-handers in Hong Kong to gather up for more recognition and changes. Intriguingly some of the left-hander’s benefits they ascribed are in symbiotic relationship with the right-handed social structure. On the other hand, despite of the daily inconveniences, most informants consider left-handedness gives them an unique meaning and identity which right-handedness cannot replace. However, few of them feel the need to gather up and ask for more left-hander’s right in society. This second focus is especially significant because it serves as a response to certain previous works that portray left-handers as ‘being oppressed by the right-handed hegemony’. The emic approach in this research is deliberately adopted to avoid one-way victimisation of left-handers; what is revealed here is also far more multi-faceted than those accounts.