

Economy and Social Inclusion
Creating a Society for All

William P. Alford
Mei Liao
Fengming Cui *Editors*

An Oral History of the Special Olympics in China Volume 3

Finding and Keeping a Job

Economy and Social Inclusion

Creating a Society for All

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This series provides a forum for theoretical, empirical, historical, and experimental analysis of issues related to economy and social inclusion and exclusion. Included are the interconnected problems of alienation, deprivation, discrimination, economic inequality, polarization, and prejudices caused by or related to abusive behavior, aging, depopulation, disability, the educational gap, the gender gap, natural disaster, poverty, rare diseases, war, and various other economic and social factors.

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An Oral History of the Special Olympics in China Volume 3

Finding and Keeping a Job

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To the people and organizations dedicated to promoting the dignity and the social inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities and a better world for all

Preface

I.

This volume is a collection of interviews with the families of 16 employees with intellectual disability (ID) employed at Shanghai Papa John's restaurants.

Shanghai Papa John's is a company that is very friendly towards people with ID and committed to its social responsibilities. Following the Special Olympics World Summer Games held in Shanghai in 2007, it started hiring employees with ID. Since 2012, Papa John's and Dairy Queen have been the co-sponsors of Special Olympics East Asia and have organized 43 unified soccer games and bocce games in 23 cities in China. As a result of our good communication with Papa John's, we chose to interview its employees with ID for the *Finding and Keeping a Job* volume and have received its full support and assistance.

In June 2016 at the beginning of the interview process for this volume, there were a total of 87 employees with disabilities at Shanghai Papa John's, 80 of whom have intellectual disabilities while the rest have hearing and other disabilities.

Initially, we hoped that the company would help recruit oral history families, but it didn't turn out to be effective. The company then decided to hold a meeting for the parents of all their employees with ID, through which we could introduce the project ourselves and recruit families for the project.

Because the parents had different schedules, between June and August 2016, we held four meetings attended by 41 parents in total. Twenty parents signed on to the oral history project at the meetings. Among these 20 parents, 1 withdrew after talking to family members; 1 withdrew after the initial interview; and we had to cancel the interview with a third because the employee had hearing impairment instead of intellectual disability. In the end, a total of 17 families were interviewed, with some entries appearing in either the lead volume or the volume focused specifically on Special Olympics athletes. As a result, this volume contains interviews with 13 families.

As far as the recruitment process is concerned, nearly 47% of the families of employees with ID voluntarily attended the meetings, and around 49% of families that attended the meetings voluntarily signed on to the oral history project. In other words, the 17 families chose to participate voluntarily and naturally rather than having been selected by the project team—support for which we are very grateful.

Families have opted out of the oral history project for the following reasons: some parents were single moms and too busy with work to accept interviews; some were advanced in age with poor health and reluctant to talk about a painful past; some cared about privacy; some did not relate to the project; and some refused to participate in the project because they felt that it was using people with disabilities as guinea pigs.

II.

Oral history aims to present a truthful and comprehensive picture of reality. Both sunshine and storms are a part of reality. Oral history should both motivate and disclose problems, which is the best way to drive social progress.

Shanghai Papa John's stated that the company had taken the first step by hiring people with disabilities and that it had faced challenges while gaining experience. The company is ready to take the next step by sharing with society its experience and challenges. Just as Internet companies do not yet know where big data can be used in the future, Papa John's isn't sure about what effects its experience can have. However, once shared, this experience can definitely inspire companies, organizations, experts, scholars, and other interested groups.

For companies, hiring employees with ID can help build the corporate culture, establish values focusing on people, and strengthen the company's sense of unity and social responsibility. Also, to show support for people with ID, some customers make special efforts to dine at the restaurants.

On the other hand, hiring people with ID can be challenging for companies. First, the company's management costs will rise. The company needs to regularly update parents on the performance of employees with ID. Especially in the case of new hires, in order to avoid misunderstanding stemming from the employees' inability to express themselves clearly, the company needs to maintain communication with parents through contact books similar to those used by schools to communicate with parents; and if the employees experience unstable emotions, the company is liable for emergencies and repercussions, as well as risks to customers and other employees. Second, service quality will be more or less impacted. For example, employees with ID normally work at fixed stations in the kitchen and cannot help out in the dining area during peak hours. It is, however, incomprehensible to some customers who will then complain on the rating sites, "The employees were just hobnobbing in the kitchen and no one of them came out to serve the customers!" Third, the increasingly IT-dependent society, in other words,

the establishment of a digitalized society, will lead to conflict between the company and its employees with disabilities. For example, most companies have replaced paper pay slips with texts from banks or intranet inquiries, but employees with ID and their aging parents are sometimes unfamiliar with such new technologies and will consequently become distrustful of the company.

For people with ID, having a formal job helps their inclusion in society and participation in regular social life. And the five kinds of social insurance and one housing fund that come with the job can provide some protection for their future. However, despite working at friendly companies like Shanghai Papa John's, some of the wishes of people with ID and their parents still cannot be fulfilled. For example, since the company offers equal pay for equal work, a lot of employees with ID make less than regular employees because they might be less capable at work; some employees with ID are physically weaker and feel overwhelmed when working 8-hour shifts with regular employees; and some employees with ID are slow-paced, and therefore, unfit for the fast food industry. If more companies could hire employees with ID, people with ID would be able to find jobs that they are better equipped for.

The challenges Papa John's and its employees with ID have faced are surely common issues for all of the companies hiring employees with ID. And these issues cannot be resolved without joint efforts from the companies, the government, society, and families of people with ID. For example, enterprises employing people with disabilities urgently need professional support from social workers in psychological consultation and interpersonal communication. At present, however, social workers in China mainly use community committees and welfare enterprises as their work platforms. Therefore, hopefully the government and society can broaden the social workers' service scope as soon as possible. There are other issues that may not be resolved at all until human beings have reached the next stage of civilization and economy. For example, equal pay for equal work means that people with ID are no longer used as cheap labor, which is an indication of social advancement. However, when the same criteria are applied to both people without ID and people with ID, does it signify equality for people with ID?

Interviewers for this volume were conducted by undergraduate and graduate students from Fudan University and East China Normal University. The youngest was a 19-year-old sophomore but the majority of the rest were in their early twenties. Even though they lacked social experience and were younger than the interviewees, they prepared themselves well and did a great job of putting together the interviews. They were all inspired by the interviews and learned a lot, which has validated another key function of oral history, namely, education.

Shanghai, China

Mei Liao

Translated by Cissy Zhao

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

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About the Editors

William P. Alford is Henry L. Stimson Professor at Harvard Law School where he also serves as Vice Dean for the Graduate Program and International Legal Studies, Director of East Asian Legal Studies, and Chair of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability. A scholar of Chinese law and society, his books include *To Steal a Book is an Elegant Offense: Intellectual Property Law in Chinese Civilization* (Stanford 1995); *Raising the Bar: The Emerging Legal Profession in East Asia* (Harvard 2007), *Can ji ren fa lu bao zhang ji zhi yan jiu* (A Study of Legal Mechanisms to Protect Persons with Disabilities) (Huaxia 2008, with Wang Liming and Ma Yu'er, in Chinese), *Prospects for the Professions in China* (Routledge 2011, with William Kirby and Kenneth Winston), and *Taiwan and International Human Rights: A Story of Transformation* (Springer 2019, with Jerome A. Cohen and Chang-Fa Lo). In addition, he has published dozens of articles concerning China, law, and international affairs. Professor Alford's work has been recognized with an honorary doctorate by the University of Geneva in 2010 and honorary professorships at Renmin University of China and Zhejiang University. He is also the recipient of the inaugural O'Melveny & Myers Centennial Award, the Kluwer China Prize, a Qatar Pearls of Praise Award, an Abe (Japan) Fellowship, the Harvard Law School Alumni Association Award, an award from Special Olympics International recognizing his work on behalf of persons with intellectual disabilities, and several other fellowships and honors. He is a graduate of Amherst College (B.A.), the University of Cambridge (LL.B.), Yale University (M.A. in History and M.A. in Chinese Studies), and Harvard Law School (J.D.).

Mei Liao is an independent scholar at present. Founder of Shanghai Shida Public Welfare Foundation. From 1996 to 2004, she taught as an assistant professor and associate professor in the History Department of Fudan University in Shanghai. Her research interests include Chinese intellectual history and history of late Qing dynasty. She has published the book *Wang Kang-nian: From the Civil Rights*

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Worries About His Future



Xinhui Chen

Interview with Mr. QJ's Family

QJ, male, born in 1984. Has an elder sister. Has severe intellectual disability. Graduated from a mainstream school. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2010.

Interviewees: QJ's parents and QJ's aunt

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview dates: October 27 and December 9, 2016

Interview place: QJ's home

Government-Mandated Relocation from Pudong Airport

QI: would like to start by getting some background information. How many people are there in your family?

QJ's mother: Four, but my daughter is married with an 11-year-old son. I am retired. I would like to find some work, but my health isn't good.

QJ's father: There are four people in our family and my daughter is older than little QJ. Little QJ's mom has diabetes and high blood pressure and has to take medication all the time. Even with insurance coverage, we can barely pay for her medication

Q: How did you two meet?

QJ's mother: Someone introduced us. We were not the kind to date around.

QJ's father: I was local whereas she was sent by the government to work in the countryside. We came together because we kind of clicked.

X. Chen (✉)

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QJ's aunt: Both my sister and I were sent by the government to work in the countryside while we were still single, and we ended up working on the same farm. I got married first and she followed. We were on the same boat financially and we both started from scratch. We went out to work and saved every penny we made. People were building their own houses in the countryside, so we built our houses which were kind of alike. Back then, we put everything we had into the houses. The government relocated us in 1996. I got a three-bedroom apartment on the sixth floor, and because of her son's condition, the government allowed her to take a ground-floor apartment.

Q: How long did you date before getting married?

QJ's father: About 2 years.

Q: How long did you wait till you had your first child?

QJ's mother: About 2 years.

Q: What about QJ?

QJ's mother: Little QJ is 2 years younger than his sister.

Q: What did you do before retiring?

QJ's father: I used to have a very ordinary job, security. There are a lot of companies close to Pudong Airport and they all needed security people. We used to make a living farming and developing barren land, but we lost our land to the airport. So we registered with the Labor Division and I was hired for my looks. I worked for 6 or 7 years and qualified for a pension. Then the manager told me, "We would have kept you were it not for your age." He then suggested that I find work somewhere else, which I did.

QJ's mother: I used to work in a company. After the government-mandated relocation, I started receiving the pension early,¹ at age 40, and have been on it since then. I worked for several years at a private company and didn't continue because of my health.

Q: What did your early pension have to do with government-mandated relocation?

QJ's mother: Back then, you were eligible for a pension at 40. I happened to be 40, or maybe 45, I can't quite remember.

QJ's father: Most people in our neighborhood and in the neighborhood over there retired early for pension. The government wanted our land for the first runway of Shanghai's international airport and we were the first group to receive early pensions from the government.

QJ's mother: We were a family of four back then, so we qualified for this apartment measuring less than 100 m².

Q: How much was your pension when you first started receiving it?

QJ's mother: It was less than 200 yuan about 20 years ago, only around 180 yuan.

¹Early pension: Under a preferential policy, residents relocated by the government could retire early and receive a pension.

A Cute, Starry-Eyed Child

Q: Did anything unusual happen when QJ's mom was pregnant?

QJ's aunt: QJ's dad was herding ducks for someone else on the beach. Shanghai No. 2 Plastics Plant was practicing shooting and a bullet pierced his hand. The plant paid him nominal compensation. Soon after the accident, little QJ's mom got pregnant with him. I believe the gun wound did something. Or maybe it's genetic, because little QJ's dad's younger brother has some intellectual disability. Little QJ's grandpa and uncle tend to repeat what they say, but not as many times as he does. They usually stop after repeating once or twice.

Q: Did you do anything special in order to have a boy the second time around?

QJ's mother: I didn't eat anything special. There wasn't much to eat back then. I barely had enough to eat.

QJ's aunt: You did eat. She had a girl the first time, so did I. Then I had a boy the second time around. Before she got pregnant with the second one, I told her that what she ate could affect the gender of the baby, which I read in a magazine. So I told her, "Don't eat meat or peanuts or desserts, just eat vegetables." She followed my instructions and only ate what I believed was good for her.

QJ's father: There were quite a few families with a boy and a girl, it was quite normal to have two kids like us.

Q: Was the one-child policy already in effect then?

QJ's mother: It was and there was a penalty of 700 or 800 yuan for having a second child, which was a fortune back then. It was a little over 80 yuan for the first year, then the penalty was increased at the rate of 300 yuan per year and reached 600 yuan after 2 years. Also, benefits that came with land ownership were taken away, which brought the total penalty to around 1,000 yuan.

Q: When QJ was a toddler, was there anything different about the way he talked or walked?

QJ's aunt: Not really. He had big eyes and was really cute and not afraid of strangers. But his head seemed to be drooping when he was young.

QJ's mother: His head wasn't exactly drooping, but by age three or four, he seemed to have lost interest in playing.

Q: What did QJ like to play with when he was young? Like blocks or toy cars?

QJ's mother: He liked them all.

QJ's aunt: He wanted to play with those, but his parents couldn't spare the money to buy them for him.

QJ's father: He really wanted to play with those.

QJ's aunt: My son is 2 years older than little QJ. Wherever he went, he wanted to buy toy cars and toy planes. I did buy them for him but not every time. Sometimes you had to give the kids what they wanted; you couldn't deny them every single time.

QJ's father: Back then, life was hard for everyone. The grown-ups didn't make a lot by farming or working in a factory. QJ's aunt was like us and started with nothing. We had to build our own houses, so we could hardly spare the money to buy the kids toys. Life has improved now, of course, and it's easy to buy the kids toy guns, toy

cars, and toy planes. You want your kid to grow up to be someone, so if other kids have toy planes, your kid must have one, and if other kids have balls, your kid must have one too. All for the sake of intellectual development.

Q: Did he go to a regular preschool?

QJ's aunt: He never went to preschool. Preschool wasn't for everyone back then. We were living even further away from the city than Pudong Airport, which was like a forgotten corner. My sister and I were sent there to work from Yangjing. After we had kids, there was no daycare or preschool, so we had to keep the kids locked up at home. Once the kids were older and couldn't be kept at home anymore, we just took them to the field with us in the morning. We would lay some cover on the ground for them and an umbrella over their heads. That's how they were brought up.

Being Bullied All the Way and Having to Quit School Early

Q: How old was QJ when you realized that he couldn't keep up with other kids?

QJ's aunt: Since he started elementary school. I believe that the bullying he suffered at school made him the way he is. Also, he hadn't received proper guidance at home. When he was in elementary school, he would be bullied and would tell me, "Aunt, this kid hit me." If he went home and told his parents, his parents would brush it off as they were too busy working in the field. So he could only tell me. I would ask him exactly who had hit him and he would say he didn't know. So I would ask if he was making it up and that would give him pause. But after a little while, he would come and tell me again that someone had hit him.

He was always saying things like that. I actually believe that no one really tried to hit him. Someone might have just bumped into him or wanted to tease him seeing that he was a little slow. Or maybe someone did deliberately hit him pretty hard on the head because he looked like he could easily be bullied.

QJ's mother: He wouldn't tell us if he was bullied. Now he won't tell us anything. His classmates all bullied him, but he never said anything once he got home. On the way home, a classmate hit little QJ. I questioned the kid about it and he denied it, and his mom denied it too. She was not someone to reason with.

Q: Have you ever taken him to see a doctor?

QJ's mother: Yes, when he was seven or eight. At Shanghai Children's Hospital, the doctor gave him a pen and asked him if he knew anything about it, and he said he did. So the doctor thought I was being paranoid. I told the doctor, "I feel that my son isn't doing as well as other kids." I took him to the doctor several times and every time the doctor would say, "There's nothing wrong with him. You are not making sense. He knows everything. Whatever you show him, he knows what it is."

QJ's aunt: You should have asked me along the very first time. She never consulted me on anything till things got serious. In my opinion, even though QJ is already in his thirties, he could still use some guidance and we can't just give up on him. He will definitely improve with the right guidance.

Q: Have you ever taken QJ to any special place for an IQ test?

QJ's father: We did take him to a major hospital, No. 8 People's Hospital, and the doctor said that his IQ is a little low.

Q: Was there a more specific diagnosis?

QJ's mother: He didn't give any specific diagnosis. He just said that QJ didn't have any intellectual disability.

Q: Did you ever go back to the hospital?

QJ's mother: No.

Q: At elementary school, which subject did QJ do better in?

QJ's aunt: He didn't do well in math, that I know.

QJ's mother: He couldn't draw. Except for Chinese, he didn't do well in anything.

QJ's father: He was doing only slightly better in Chinese, better than in math. He was failing math.

Q: At elementary school, how did QJ communicate with the teacher?

QJ's aunt: There was hardly any communication at all. The teacher basically put him in a corner and ignored him.

QJ's mother: The teacher not only ignored him but also bullied him. When it rained and the window at the back of the classroom got broken, the teacher put a blackboard there and asked him to hold the board.

Q: Did QJ tell you this when he came home?

QJ's mother: No. His classmate did.

Q: Where was he seated?

QJ's mother: Last row, in the corner.

Q: Have you been to any parent-teacher meetings?

QJ's aunt: I went several times. I don't know how many times his mom went.

QJ's mother: I went twice.

QJ's father: I seldom went.

Q: Which grade was he in when QJ's aunt went?

QJ's aunt: Either third or fourth grade. Then I stopped going. Parent-teacher meetings were not frequent back then.

Q: Did the teacher communicate with either of you at the parent-teacher meeting?

QJ's mother: There was no communication whatsoever. I was invisible and had nothing to say anyway. The teacher just said that my kid was useless.

QJ's aunt: I communicated to a degree. The teacher said that QJ used the empty classroom upstairs as a bathroom, and I asked why he would even go upstairs in the first place. As it turned out, some classmate had tricked him into it. That was a failure on the teacher's part. Something was amiss in the kids' moral education. I asked little QJ why he would do what he did. The teacher took a kid from the class upstairs to clean up the classroom and told little QJ not to come to school anymore as he had made such a mess there. He repeated first grade, then moved up with no more disruption.

QJ's mother: He repeated first grade, then continued as an unregistered student till the end of elementary school. Being an unregistered student meant that he sat in the last row of the classroom and was not treated as an official student.

Q: How was the decision made to switch him to unregistered student status?

QJ's mother: I ran into his teacher outside school who told me, "It makes no sense for him to keep repeating grades. Why don't we just have him move up?"

Q: Did QJ still do homework after he started second grade?

QJ's mother: He did, but he wasn't taking it seriously.

Q: Did the teacher check his homework?

Q: Yes, and almost everything was marked wrong.

Q: QJ went to two different elementary schools, right?

QJ's mother: Yes, because of our relocation. The elementary school was part of the relocation program, so we switched from San Xing Elementary School to Jiang Zhen Elementary School.

Q: How much did you pay for elementary school back then?

QJ's mother: Less than 100 yuan per semester.

Q: When he was at elementary school, did you help him with his homework after school?

QJ's mother: His sister and he did homework together. We were very busy then, having to sell vegetables after growing them.

QJ's aunt: The two of them hadn't had a lot of education themselves, so they couldn't help with homework. And it wasn't effective for his sister to help him either.

QJ's mother: She was doing so-so at school anyway.

QJ's father: It was frustrating for us, because his mom had never been to school. My dad sent me to school when I was young, but I wasn't a good student. We should have helped my daughter with her homework when she was going to school, but we didn't have the ability. So she stayed up past 10 p.m. every day doing homework.

Q: How did his sister usually take care of him?

QJ's mother: His sister was very close to him, keeping him next to her, cooking for him, doing his laundry and basically everything else for him. They would go to school together and come home together, unless she stayed late at school in which case he would come home first. If he went out to play, she would go out and look for him and tell him, "Mom will be mad at me if she comes home to find you not at home." Little QJ said that she was like a mom to him. But she didn't help him much with his homework because she had to do her own homework and help around the house. She started cooking when she was four or five. Their dad was working in Shanghai and only came home once a month. I was working too, in addition to managing more than a dozen acres of land. I also had to catch crabs from the ocean to sell in the market. Then their dad got a job with the ocean farm and moved back.

QJ's aunt: His sister is very nice. At home, his dad talks a lot and his mom seldom talks. There's no one little QJ can communicate with.

Q: At elementary school, did QJ go out and play with classmates after school?

QJ's mother: His sister kept him at home and wouldn't let him out.

QJ's father: What happened then was this: His mom had to work and so did I—we literally had to work from dawn till dusk. My mom passed away at 60, so there was no one to help take care of the kids. It was pretty sad.

Q: Was there any sports that QJ liked?

QJ's father: Not really.

Q: Were there any kids the same age in the neighborhood?

QJ's father: There was one.

Q: Were the two of them close?

QJ's father: So-so. The grown-ups would tell them to play with each other, and they did when we were not around.

Q: How old was QJ when he graduated from elementary school?

QJ's mother: Fourteen or fifteen.

Q: Which school did he go to after graduating from elementary school?

QJ's mother: There was no school to go to. No one told us where to go.

Q: Why didn't he go on to middle school?

QJ's mother: We were told not to have him continue schooling. He failed the middle school entrance exam. After graduating from elementary school, he should have received a notice to enroll in a middle school, but he didn't.

QJ's father: Both of us went to the middle school to inquire and the first thing we were told was, "We won't take this kid." We were crushed hearing this. We wanted him to continue schooling even if we had to borrow money from relatives to do so, but the principal rejected us.

QJ's mother: The middle school said that it wouldn't take unregistered students. We were not allowed to submit his name, so we didn't.

Q: After QJ graduated from elementary school, did you know that there were special education schools set up specifically for special-needs children?

QJ's mother: Yeah.

QJ's aunt: I reminded her saying, "Go look up those schools and send the kid there to learn something. It will help him get a job later on. Failing that, it's still good for him to have a chance to communicate with other people." She might have asked around and decided that the fees were high, so she dismissed those schools.

QJ's mother: The schools were far away. I was retired and working part-time at the airport duty-free shop, and I had no time to take him to any of those schools. Back then, there were no such schools in Pudong New District—they were all located in urban Shanghai. There was also the transportation fee. We made little money back then, so we didn't send him to any of those schools.

Q: Which school did you look into?

QJ's mother: The one that was close to Gaoqiao.

Q: How much were the fees?

QJ's mother: I didn't ask. I just heard that they were pretty high.

QJ's aunt: My nephew isn't really that slow. It's just that he grew up being looked down upon and discriminated against. People thought he was slow, so he has come to believe that he is slow. But he isn't. From an early age on, he could recognize all those words in books and on street signs. And he has beautiful handwriting. He just can't do math. If you ask him to do addition, multiplication, or subtraction, his response is extremely slow.

Changing Jobs Frequently

Q: What did QJ do after graduating from elementary school?

QJ's mother: He stayed home.

Q: What did he do at home all day?

QJ's mother: Nothing much except playing games and watching TV. We bought him a handheld gaming device for 800 yuan. He insisted on having it and stayed home to play it.

Q: What was his daily schedule like?

QJ's mother: He didn't exactly sleep in. He would get up around seven or eight and have the breakfast I made for him before playing on his computer. For lunch, he would eat leftovers from breakfast, and I would cook him dinner after I got home. Sometimes he would go out for some fresh air after dinner and come back to play on the computer again, and sometimes he would be on the computer until after midnight.

QJ's father: Just like kids nowadays who play on the computer all day long.

Q: Do you think QJ was happy during that period of time?

QJ's mother: He was very happy when he was young—he's never happy now that he's grown up.

Q: After graduation, would QJ go out for fun besides staying home?

QJ's mother: He would, but he always came back after just a little while.

QJ's aunt: When he was young, he would go out with no specific plan. Now he seems to have specific places to go every week.

Q: When did QJ start looking for a job?

QJ's mother: After he turned 20.

Q: Did he find any jobs before the one at Papa John's?

QJ's mother: He did land three or four jobs, by registering with the Bureau of Labor Services.

QJ's aunt: He started working pretty early, when he was around 20. Someone got him a job at the airport but it didn't last long. So since joining Papa John's, he is constantly worried about being laid off. It's always on his mind and he keeps saying it out loud.

One time when he was still looking for a job and wasn't getting anywhere, he totally gave up on himself. So he stood on the bridge and talked to himself non-stop. Some passersby felt that there was something wrong with him and called 110 for fear that he might jump into the river. He was picked up by the police and taken to the police station. The police asked him his home phone number and he wouldn't tell them. He wouldn't tell the police his mom's phone number either, because he didn't know what would happen once his mom took him home. When the police pressed him, he had no choice but to give out my number. The police called me and asked me to identify myself, which I did. Then I was told that QJ was at the police station. I asked why and what he had done to end up there. And I was told that he had done nothing wrong and that someone from the family had to pick him up and take him home.

Q: What kind of jobs did QJ have?

QJ's mother: He worked at the airport and at warehouses too, more than once. At two terminal restaurants at the airport, one of which was operated by a famous hotel in Shanghai. He just followed the chef around and passed him utensils. But he didn't do well. He also worked at moving and packaging things.

QJ's father: Yeah, he worked at the terminal restaurants and also moved things at the airport. The restaurant job was pretty decent. He was asked to separate big bowls from small ones, but he couldn't do it. He was asked to distribute food and not to distribute too much in case the boss got mad, but he couldn't do it. When he was laid off from the restaurant job, his mom and I almost cried, because it was a good job and close to home, but he just couldn't do it.

Q: All of the jobs QJ has had were at the airport, right?

QJ's mother: Right.

QJ's father: He felt that those workplaces were pretty nice, but the thing is that he should have tried harder to keep those jobs.

Q: Did he come home and tell you that he enjoyed working at those jobs?

QJ's mother: He did enjoy it, but no one had wanted to keep him.

Q: How long did he work at those jobs approximately?

QJ's mother: Six months or so. He couldn't get along with people, so he was laid off.

QJ's father: Six months or not even that long at some jobs. This Papa John's job has lasted the longest so far.

QJ's aunt: Six months or several months, and when the managers saw the way he was...

QJ's mother: At first he was hired because of his build. Once he was hired, he couldn't do the job well, so he was laid off. Sometimes he was laid off probably because he couldn't get along with the co-workers.

Q: Did QJ show any intention of sharing with you after he got his first paycheck?

QJ's mother: He was happy, saying, "I got paid and I got this much." He went to get the money himself.

Q: How does QJ spend the money he makes?

QJ's mother: Not sure, probably on food for himself. One time he bought a box of milk for his grandma and told her that the milk was pretty good.

QJ's aunt: Not really. He visited me often, so I told him jokingly that kids his generation should buy something for their grandma once they got their first paycheck. There was another time when he bought two boxes of pizza, probably because the store manager told him that he could get a discount if the pizzas were intended as gifts to his relatives. So he bought two, one for each uncle, and he brought the pizzas to the uncles' houses.

QJ's mother: I didn't know about that. I didn't know till you just told us.

QJ's aunt: She doesn't get along with one of my sisters-in-law, so her son bought the pizzas without consulting her and told his uncles not to tell his parents. That's why I had kept it a secret till just now.

Q: Has he ever bought his parents anything?

QJ's mother: Nothing.

Worrying Obsessively About Losing Job

Q: How did QJ land this job at Papa John's?

QJ's mother: He found it online himself. He can do a lot online but nothing around the house. He wanted this job a lot, which he has been working at for about 7 or 8 years, ever since the restaurant opened.

Q: Did he go to the Papa John's interview by himself or did you go with him?

QJ's father: We went with him. He wouldn't have known how to go by himself, because his mom and I had always gone with him. One time, the three of us went together for a job interview and the secretary questioned what was wrong with him since he had to have his parents go with him.

QJ's aunt: You should have kept out of sight of the manager.

QJ's father: The manager did say that there were dozens of job applicants at the interview and none of their parents went with them. Especially as we are local and lived close by and knew our way around. Once the parents showed up, people would have questions.

QJ's aunt: You hadn't known better. You should have just stepped outside and stayed away.

Q: Did you sit in on QJ's interview?

QJ's father: No, he was interviewed inside and we waited for him outside.

QJ's aunt: He went to a lot of job interviews and watched when other people were interviewed, so he knew how to do it. If he had been the first one to be interviewed, he would have been in trouble. A lot of employers interviewed all applicants in the same room, so he could stay in the back of the line and listen to what other people said. But fancier employers interviewed in a separate room, in which case he had no chance to listen.

Q: Had anyone ever taught QJ how to go to an interview?

QJ's aunt: I did. I also taught him what to say on a date.

Q: How is this Papa John's job?

QJ's mother: When he started this job, he really wanted to keep it, but I didn't want him to. He had been receiving a low-income subsidy² which he lost once he started working at Papa John's, and what he made at Papa John's couldn't even cover grocery expenses. His starting salary there was 800 yuan whereas the low-income subsidy from the Civil Affairs Bureau was 500 or 600 yuan. It's not a good deal if you really think about it. You stay home not doing anything and still receive 500 or 600 yuan, or you go out to work for not much more money but have to pay extra for transportation and meals and whatnot, so it's better that you just stay home.

He wouldn't listen to me and even threatened me with his life. He said, "What do you mean by not wanting me to keep this job? I found this job myself on the Internet." So he cried and insisted on keeping this job. The leader from the Community Affairs Committee said, "Just let him continue and see what happens. You may not think that this extra 200 yuan is worth the effort, but it's not good to keep your son at home.

²Low-income subsidy: The local government subsidizes residents whose average household income falls below that required for minimum-standard living in that area.

He needs to go out to work and to have human interaction.” I changed my mind after thinking about what he said. At first QJ was all motivated and went to work very early every day. But he has been wanting to quit these last couple of years. He got into arguments with his manager and his manager couldn’t really reprimand him, because if he did, QJ would have just got madder and refused to go to work.

QJ’s aunt: When he first started, he was really proud and had a great sense of achievement, that “I found this job all by myself” feeling. He was saying, “I am doing well at the place, and the managers and co-workers treat me very well.” He claimed that he was very happy.

The workplace was planning to pay into insurances and pension for him. Upon learning that he had been receiving a low-income subsidy, the workplace told him to give up the subsidy for the insurances and pension. I don’t know what my sister was thinking. She was probably worried about whether this job could be long-term, and about QJ losing the low-income subsidy and grocery subsidy from the local government once he got a paying job. She didn’t think it was a good deal, so she asked QJ not to continue at the job.

QJ’s mother: Yeah, I was thinking that he had to pay for transportation and for meals when he went to work, whereas he could save on meals if he stayed home. But I couldn’t get him to listen to me.

QJ’s aunt: There was no WeChat back then, only the QQ App. He posted on QQ saying that he wanted to jump from a building. I read it and asked him what was going on and why he was feeling depressed. He said, “I found a decent job but my parents won’t let me work there anymore.” I asked him whether we could reach his manager. I waited for a while before his manager answered my phone. I introduced myself and told him about little QJ. The manager said, “Today is the last day. His mom came yesterday and said he won’t work here anymore, so we already put that into the system.” I asked the manager, “What do you think of him now that he has been working for a while?” The answer was positive. I said, “I already asked him if he wants to continue, and he does. So will you keep him?” The manager said, “We will, I will. I will change it in the system and he can continue working here.” So he continued. I told the manager that even if little QJ had been paid less than what the restaurant was paying him, I would still have chosen for him to continue if I were his parent, because I would want him to have a higher sense of self-value in society. I would want him to build his confidence and believe that he can make his own money and make his own living.

Q: What does he mostly do in the restaurant?

QJ’s mother: Washing dishes and moving things around. He is strong and very tall, even taller than his dad. (See Fig. 1)

QJ’s aunt: He is good-looking. He looks like Yao Ming, not as tall of course, but with a similar face structure.

QJ’s father: His face is square, like his mom’s.

Q: How does QJ commute to work normally?

QJ’s aunt: He takes the bus both ways. He rides the free supermarket shuttle bus to work and takes the public bus home since there’s no supermarket bus by the time he gets off work. He likes to go to work early, by 1 or 2 h, because he can go to the



Fig. 1 Mr. QJ at work

Telecommunications Bureau across the street where he can use the free computer and free Wi-Fi. He likes to kill time that way.

He used to come to my house often because the computer at his house wasn't working, so he would come to hang out with my husband and me. Then I told his mom to buy him a new computer. That took some persuading. Now that the computer is working, he doesn't visit me anymore. He said, "I have a computer at home, so I am not going out."

When he came to my place, he wouldn't stay long because he had to go to work the next day. My husband asked him when his workday started and he said, "Either 8 or 9 a.m., I forgot." My husband said, "I get up at 5 a.m. Why are you in a hurry to go back home since you start work at 9 a.m.?" But he insisted on going home because he didn't want to be late for work. He goes to bed very early at night and won't go back to sleep once he wakes up at 2 or 3 a.m. He will just play on the computer till it's time to catch the bus to work.

QJ's mother: He sets the alarm at 7:45 a.m. every day. The cell phone wakes him up and he goes to work after washing his face.

QJ's father: He usually comes home at 9 p.m. after work. I have asked him to limit his computer time to 2 h if he can. He usually plays on the computer till 2 or 3 a.m., which should have been the best time for sleeping, so I don't like it. Sometimes he

would play till 4 a.m. before going to bed, and I would tell him, “This isn’t right. I want you to sleep the first half of the night rather than play on the computer till midnight. It’s not right to be still up after midnight.”

Q: Is QJ doing a good job at work?

QJ’s mother: He has the physical ability. He will do what he is told to but won’t volunteer for anything. He would not have been hired at some other places.

This kid doesn’t know how to cook. I cook two meals for him every morning for him to bring to work. Leftovers are not fresh. He doesn’t monitor his physical condition but at least he knows to eat on time. So that’s the thing about Papa John’s. Privately owned factories usually provide at least one free meal, and we wouldn’t have expected two free meals anyway. But by the time he comes home at 9:30 p.m., he would already have had two meals at the restaurant. I think Papa John’s should provide free meals, with some meat and some vegetables for every meal, what do you think? You can’t have all meat or all vegetables.

Q: When do you get up every morning to prepare his meals?

QJ’s mother: I don’t have to get up too early, since he doesn’t go to work so early anymore. I just get up early enough to get the meals ready for him. He can’t do it himself; I have to get everything ready for him.

Q: You have a tough job there.

QJ’s mother: Not exactly a tough job. He is my own kid, so I have no choice. And I can’t keep him home and not working.

Q: Are all of QJ’s co-workers without disability or are there others like him?

QJ’s mother: Most of them are without disabilities. There are not many who are like him, only two girls actually.

Q: Does he get along better with the two girls or with co-workers without disabilities?

QJ’s mother: Neither, because he easily offends people.

Q: Did he ever come home and tell you that he had made good friends?

QJ’s mother: No, never.

QJ’s father: We have never talked about this.

QJ’s aunt: He did talk about it before. People who knew about his condition liked to tease him sometimes, and he would say, “That girl is very nice to me and quite into me.” He would often tell me things like that. If some girls without disabilities came to eat at the restaurant and joked with him, he would be over the moon and tell me, “That girl Tingting is tight with me.” My husband would then say, “If she is tight with you, you should be the aggressive one and take her out, like to the park or afternoon tea at a coffee shop.” But of course, that would have cost money. And he would say, “It will cost a lot of money, so I am not doing it.” My husband would then say, “If you ever want to get married, you will have to spend money.” And he would say, “What if I spend all my money on her and then she dumps me?”

QJ’s mother: He said, “If I got together with someone from outside Shanghai, she might take off in the end with all my money, like what happened to Uncle. So it’s a big no-no.” He is street smart in that way.

Q: Does QJ eat out or go out for fun with co-workers after work?

QJ's mother: Not now. At first, they would invite him along to karaoke, but then they stopped. He mentioned that they no longer invited him. I think maybe the co-workers are worried that there would be no public transportation for him to go home after midnight.

QJ's aunt: Another possibility is that he probably didn't know how to pull up the songs, so he would occupy the karaoke console for a long time and people would lose patience. Also, he liked to sing old songs which no one wanted to hear, and he monopolized the machine and kept singing one song after another, so that put people off too.

Q: Which songs does QJ like to sing?

QJ's aunt: Old songs like *Paddle in Hand*. There's another one but I forgot the name.

Q: How much does QJ make per month now?

QJ's mother: Around 1,500 yuan, or around 1,800 yuan with triple-pay³ for overtime.

Q: Has QJ had pay raises since he started working?

QJ's mother: Not often. He started with 800 yuan and makes around 1,500 yuan now.

QJ's aunt: I have a suggestion. He found the Papa John's job himself, and that place hired quite a few people with ID. People with ID usually don't know how to find jobs themselves, but QJ was able to find one on the Internet. I believe that we should help this kid build confidence. Why? He has been working for a long time now but makes so little money. My sister can't get a specific number out of him, and I don't know either. I just have the impression that it is 1,800 yuan. He has worked at Papa John's for 8 or 9 years, if not quite 10 years yet, and his pay is pathetic next to what most people are making.

Q: Who is in charge of QJ's salary now?

QJ's mother: He picks it up himself.

QJ's aunt: It's like that. His mom doesn't know how to operate the bank machine, so he does it himself. I figure that his mom tells him to only withdraw whatever he needs to use every month and to leave the rest in the account. He is very thrifty.

QJ's mother: He takes 400 yuan and gives the rest to me every month. He told me to deposit 10,000 yuan into his savings per year.

QJ's father: Young people need to know how to make money last. He doesn't make much money to begin with. If you don't save when you are young, it will be too late to save when you get old.

Q: Where does he spend this 400 yuan?

QJ's father: Not sure. His mom prepares two meals for him every day. If those are not enough sometimes, he might buy snacks.

QJ's mother: Yeah, he buys snacks.

Q: What snacks does he like to buy?

³Triple-pay for OT: Triple pay for working on statutory holidays.

QJ's mother: There are a lot of drinks at Papa John's and he could have taken some but he doesn't. He likes to go out and buy other drinks and just throws the empty bottles under his bed.

QJ: Does he save money himself?

QJ's mother: He doesn't. He uses up the 400 yuan I give him every month. He spends most of it on the transportation card, because he spends 2 yuan every day taking the bus. If I give him more than 400 yuan, he will spend it all. If I give him less than 400 yuan, the same thing happens. When he is out of money, he won't tell you or ask you for more, but he does spend every penny he has with him.

He used to be very serious about this job, but now he wants to quit. He already fought with the shift manager twice and just left the restaurant for that day. But he didn't come home till the time he would normally come home from work, so I had no clue about anything. He told me, "They laid me off and I am not going back." I asked him what was going on and he couldn't really tell me. So I called the manager who said, "It didn't happen like that. We were very busy on October 1 and the lady who helps washing dishes didn't show up, so I asked QJ to wash some more dishes. But he spent several minutes washing just one dish, because I walked around the restaurant and came back to see him still washing the same dish. So I asked what's going on with him and he got mad at that and threw down the dish and stormed out." This manager is a very nice person and told me, "Ask him to come back to work tomorrow." This happened twice, his refusing to go back to work. I told him, "Where are you going to work if you don't go back to this place? You can come home, but you already lost your low-income subsidy. If you don't work, how are you going to feed yourself?" So he had to go back to work, I forced him to go back twice already. I said, "If you run away from work for a third time, they will really lay you off." He said he understood. He still listens.

QJ's aunt: Even with his intellectual disability, he has self-respect, and actually his sense of self-respect is stronger than that of people without disabilities. People without disabilities might consider compromising, but he won't, his only thought is to go forward.

QJ's mother: His co-workers used to treat him as equal, so he was serious about the job. Now people at the workplace just ignore him, so he isn't motivated to work. Because he talks too much, people get mad at him. Maybe what he said offended people, so he was reluctant to continue working there. I asked the manager whether it was because little QJ would say things to offend people and people would get mad and not talk to him. I also asked the manager to make sure that the co-workers are more tolerant towards QJ and don't take him too seriously. The manager said he would do that. He is a really nice person.

QJ's aunt: Sometimes people find him funny and tease him for a laugh. Out there, people make fun of kids like him. Then they lose interest after a while because there's only so much to tease about, so QJ might feel that people are staying away from him.

QJ's mother: When he first started working, he was not assigned the triple-pay OT. Then he asked for it and got it. He said he didn't want to take afternoons off but he doesn't seem happy going to work in afternoons.

QJ's aunt: One thing little QJ says all the time is, "They laid me off." He would often call us up to say, "Aunt, they laid me off. Uncle, they laid me off." He always says this and not much else.

Q: Were there only two times when he was frustrated at work? On what other occasions, besides when he is down, would he say, "They laid me off"?

QJ's aunt: He always says this whatever the occasion. He says this whenever he sees us and he also says, "So now you can gloat, they laid me off—you must have badmouthed me at the workplace." I don't know where he got this from or whether he had this planted in his mind by someone else. His dad often tells him, "Try your best, otherwise you will be laid off." So this was probably where it all started. When he meets with my husband, he says similar things like, "Now you're happy, they laid me off." When he first said this, my husband was puzzled and found it hilarious, so he said, "Whether you were laid off or not has nothing to do with me. You don't make money for me. I actually hope that you can make money, so why would I be happy if you were laid off?" My husband came back home and mentioned this to me, and I had to tell him that's just what QJ likes to say. He is always mumbling to himself.

Q: Do you talk to the manager often?

QJ's mother: We seldom contact him although we have his phone number.

QJ's aunt: I have his number too.

Q: Have you ever been to the restaurant to see how QJ works?

QJ's mother: We haven't.

QJ's aunt: They don't care. Even though they both stay home all day, they won't bother. My husband and I want to go, but I won't let my husband go because I don't want to be liable should something happen. My husband suggested that we go to the restaurant to eat. He said quite a few times, "Little QJ, we are going to eat at your restaurant—you better give us a bigger pizza!" He was joking, of course, because we couldn't have finished a pizza between the two of us.

Q: How does QJ communicate with his parents?

QJ's aunt: He would consult me on important things, but he hasn't done that for a while.

QJ's father: He needs someone to support him when it counts, and his aunt supports him a lot. He actually tells people that his aunt supports him when he needs support most.

QJ's aunt: He said, "Aunt, thank you. Because of you, I am able to keep my job, otherwise I would have been laid off a long time ago."

Q: Growing up, how well did QJ communicate with his friends?

QJ's aunt: There was hardly any communication with classmates, co-workers, or neighbors. He used to come to my house often, but stopped after he got a computer. My husband asked, "What's going on? He used to come all the time. Now it must be his parents who won't let him come." I said, "That's not it. He has a computer at home now, so he stays home to play on it." My husband likes a full house. Every time little QJ visited, he would ask him whether he had had dinner. Even if he had, my husband would ask him to drink some wine and eat more.

QJ's mother: A neighbor asked him once, "QJ, how are things at home?" And he replied, "Mind your own business." He asked people to mind their own business, which was offensive.

Q: How do your own kids get along with QJ?

QJ's aunt: They don't hang out and have no contact. If I invite my sister's family over to eat, they don't talk to each other. The only thing QJ says to my daughter is that he is going to be laid off. He doesn't say anything else.

Difficulty in Learning to Take Care of Himself

Q: When did QJ learn to brush his teeth and dress himself?

QJ's mother: Around ten, or maybe when he was seven or eight.

Q: Does QJ help around the house?

QJ's aunt: No, he doesn't.

QJ's mother: We don't want him to.

QJ's aunt: But you should still have taught him.

QJ's mother: He doesn't do a good job. I asked him to do laundry and told him, "Why don't you do it yourself because once we get old, no one will do it for you." But he messed it up. After he hung up the clothes and left, I took them down and washed them again.

Q: Did you teach him how to do laundry?

QJ's mother: I did, but he still can't do it well.

QJ's father: He really has no clue how to wash the clothes clean.

Q: So does he do his own laundry now or does Mom do it for him?

QJ's mother: I do it for him most of the time. Now that he is working, I do force him to do it himself and I just wash everything again if he messes it up.

QJ's father: Since he goes to work late, I have asked him to do his own laundry. Whether he wastes water doing it is another matter, since it's kind of normal for kids to waste water when doing the laundry. Then his mom will wash again what he has washed. He doesn't do a good job hanging up the laundry either. (Walking to the balcony to show the interviewer) Just like when you put on your clothes, you need to pat down every corner to look sharp. I told him, "When you hang up laundry, make sure where the left side is and where the right side is, and straighten everything out so there will be no wrinkles." He is not a kid anymore, but we have to teach him how to hang up laundry. Such things as hanging up laundry should be no-brainers, right? He is in his thirties and can't even do a good job with laundry. We are both 60 now, and by the time we are in our eighties, he will have to be independent. But he isn't independent now.

Q: Do you take the time to teach QJ common sense things?

QJ's mother: It doesn't work. We would teach him today and he would forget tomorrow, so we have to repeat every day.

QJ's father: When he was young, his mom would plant in the field and I would be helping out when I was not at my own work. I remember that when we were

planting together, sometimes we would run out of seedlings and other kids would have fetched some for us. But he wouldn't because he had no sense. Even as far back as then, it was already apparent that there was something missing with him.

Q: Does he clean his own room?

QJ's father: Never. Don't even get me started on that. He never cleans his room and when I clean it for him, I always find empty bottles and other trash under his bed. He would drink and eat dry noodles, for example, in his room and never bring out the trash to throw away or put the trash in the trash can. His room is dirtier than public places. In the morning, he just throws back the comforter when he gets up and leaves for work.

QJ's mother: He does clean up but doesn't do it well.

QJ's aunt: When he sweeps the floor, he doesn't have a pattern. He does it really random, so how can he do a good job?

QJ's mother: He doesn't know how to organize. Before he leaves for work every day, I would straighten his clothes for him because he won't bother if the clothes are sticking out in all directions. He has Monday off, so I bet the manager or someone else has told him, "QJ, your work clothes are too dirty, can you take them home to wash them on your day off?" That's why he brings them back. The work clothes are washed at least once a week. If no one reminded him, he would not have brought them back. If the clothes had been left at the restaurant, he would not have washed them himself.

Multiple Interests Including Travel and Photography

Q: When QJ was at elementary school, did you take him out on weekends?

QJ's mother: His aunt took him out.

QJ's aunt: I always took him out on my days off.

QJ's father: We seldom went out on weekends because we were so busy. The first time was when his sister wasn't in school yet. His mom proposed it since she had time and I had time. The kids always had time anyway, so it was fun to go out as a family. The farthest we traveled was to Chuansha.

Q: So you took QJ out a total of two times?

QJ's mother: Yes, a total of two times. The first time was when his sister wasn't in school yet and little QJ had just been born. The second time was when little QJ was seven or eight and already in school.

QJ's aunt: They went out two times and his mom fell into the river on the second trip, so they just stopped going anywhere.

QJ's father: Had an accident on our second trip. There was a stone bridge on our way back home and QJ's mom fell off the bridge into the middle of the river. She would have drowned if she had stayed long in the river, so I jumped in after her. Luckily, I knew someone living in that area, so I told him, "It was supposed to be a happy outing for the entire family, but my wife fell into the river. Can you please

help us?" So he lent us some clothes. My wife washed them and hung them to dry and I returned them the next day. She is very accident-prone outside the house.

Q: Does QJ go out for fun on weekends now?

QJ's mother: Now, if he doesn't have to go to work, he will get up in the morning, wash his clothes, and go out for some fun.

QJ's aunt: Little QJ will take pictures of this and that on his phone and post the pictures on QQ, captioning them *Childhood Memories* or memories of other times. I asked him why he always lives in memories. It's not good to do that. We should look forward, not backward.

Q: On weekends when he goes out for fun, does he come back for lunch or eat out?

QJ's mother: Sometimes he won't come home till night, sometimes he comes home for lunch.

QJ's aunt: Actually, when he was young (to QJ's mother) (takes out the pictures), little QJ was very cute.

(QJ's father showed the interviewer pictures of his grandson on the coffee table and family pictures at the airport. QJ's mother went to another room to fetch more pictures.)

QJ's mother (with lots of QJ's pictures): He had these printed.

QJ's aunt: He likes to take pictures.

QJ's father: He takes really good pictures; I am not kidding.

Q: How old was he when he started showing an interest in photography?

QJ's aunt: When he was really young. (Pointing to a mole on QJ's face) He doesn't have this mole now. He asked his parents to take him to have it zapped.

Q: Was he going out for fun by himself in these pictures?

QJ's aunt: Yes, by himself.

Q: Then who took the pictures for him?

QJ's aunt: He asked passersby to take pictures of him.

Q: Does QJ like going out for fun by himself and traveling?

QJ's aunt: He isn't into travel. He just bikes around the neighborhood. And he knows how to take the bus, which is why I don't think he is slow. He told me, "Aunt, when you take the bus, tickets for lines that are numbered start at 2 yuan and lines with Chinese names such as Shilao Line start at 1 yuan. So what do you do? You get on Shilao Line and pay 1 yuan, then you get off and switch to a line that is numbered and pay another 1 yuan, and that will save you money." So he rides the bus around for only 1 yuan.

Q: QJ's aunt said that he really likes to play on the computer. Who taught him how to get on the Internet?

QJ's father: Neither of us two know what to do. He saw that everyone had a computer, so he wanted one too.

QJ's aunt: I figure that his sister taught him, because computers became popular in 2009, or maybe 2010 or 2012, just one of those years. My husband sells accessories for home appliances and bought a used computer for 400 yuan. Then my sister said that her son wanted it, so we gave it to him and he started using it. I don't remember whether I taught him or someone else did, it has been so long.

QJ's mother: He took classes, spent 100 yuan on learning how to use the computer.

Q: How old was he when you sent him to learn how to use the computer?

QJ's mother: He was in his twenties.

Q: Is he still using the original computer?

QJ's aunt: No, he got a new one.

Q: Who bought the new one for him?

QJ's mother: His aunt bought it online.

QJ's aunt: I bought it on Taobao for 1,380 yuan, or maybe 1,480 yuan. Over 1,000 yuan anyway. I bargained for a price reduction.

Q: Did he pay for it himself?

QJ's aunt: His parents paid for it. Here's the thing, no one else can access his computer. He has set a password for the computer, and for his cell phone too, so no one can access his cell phone either.

QJ's father: What's happening now is that he stays up late to play on the computer. The two of us would be sleeping and then get up at 1 or 2 a.m. to use the bathroom, and he would still be on the computer. Not sleeping at that hour isn't right.

QJ's mother: When he has to work, he gets up late. On his days off, he will get up very early and go out after doing his laundry. If I tell him not to go out, he will just ignore me.

Q: QJ's aunt said that he likes to play on the computer. What does he usually do on the Internet?

QJ's aunt: I don't know what he does on the computer, but if you ask him to write something, he won't know how. One time when his dad needed to write a work report, I said, "Little QJ, you know how to get around on the computer. Can you look up online how to write work reports?" But he didn't know how to do it. So I ended up writing the work report for his dad. If I ask him to check something online, he won't know how to do it. I taught him to just enter the keywords for the results to show. He didn't even know that—it's amazing how he managed to find the job.

He would play on QQ sometimes, but he types really slow and doesn't know how to chat. Some people would get mad at him for typing so slow. At first, he applied for several QQ accounts and kept them all active and added a lot of friends. But once a girl reached out to him to chat, he didn't know how to chat. Several times when he came to my house, I would pretend to be him and chat with his QQ friends. As for meeting in person, he asked, "What if they want to meet?" And I told him I would go with him to meet them. Now I don't know how he chats with other people.

You need a password to log in QQ, so he would input his password while facing you to keep it secret from you. He has 16,411 pictures and 3,017 posts in his QQ and the last post was from 2014. He always posts some strange numbers and letters which make little sense. He also forwards pictures from my QQ to save in his own QQ album.

Q: Does he have a lot of friends on QQ?

QJ's mother: Nope. He lied to people by telling them that his mom worked as a teacher and his dad worked at an equally high-level job. Once people found out that he was lying, they just stayed away.

QJ's aunt: He has no friends, no friends he can talk to. Just people he will chat a bit with one day and never talk to again.

Q: He must be good with the cell phone, right?

QJ's father: He is good with the cell phone, better than we are. We don't know what to do with the cell phone.

QJ's aunt: He is good with the cell phone and I added him on QQ, actually my whole family added him on QQ. But he keeps bothering us, so we didn't add him on WeChat. My sisters all ignore him on QQ and WeChat, they either deleted him or blocked him. My daughter said he bothered her at work so she blocked him. He would call for no reason with only one thing to say, "I have been laid off, now you can gloat. You must have badmouthed me."

Q: Does he have his own cell phone?

QJ's aunt: He does. Maybe his mom bought it for him.

QJ's mother: He had a phone which my younger sister gave him. It's a nice one with a big screen. But he wanted an iPhone. I told him, "iPhones cost too much and it doesn't make sense to buy one." He said if people said bad things about his phone, he wouldn't keep it. So he took the phone to work and someone said, "This is a cool phone, QJ. Where did you get it?" He said his aunt gave it to him. So he kept that phone and really liked it. Then he bought a used iPhone which is pretty decent—worth 2,000 or 3,000 yuan.

Q: Who is using the iPhone now?

QJ's aunt: His mom doesn't know how, so he uses it himself.

QJ's mother: He uses it and usually leaves it at home. He might have brought it to work today.

Hoping to Have a Wife and Kids

Q: You mentioned QJ's uncle before. Does this uncle have the same condition as QJ?

QJ's aunt: No, his uncle can live independently. After he got married, the wife ran away. The two of them were just so unsuited—even their lifestyles were different, so she left and he has been on his own with no kids.

My feeling is that when little QJ's father communicates with him at home, what he says isn't to the point. He would say things like, "Without your disability, you would have been married with everything." He shouldn't have said that. Little QJ is already at this age, and of course he wants a wife and everything. He would be looking at a picture of a couple with a child in the supermarket and say to me, "Aunt, they are married with a son, my younger cousins are all married, but I'm not." So that's weighing on his mind.

Q: When did your family start matchmaking for QJ?

QJ's aunt: When he was 25 or 26. He would keep saying that everyone had a girlfriend. My husband always told him he would find someone for him and he would ask, "Uncle, how do you date?" And my husband would joke with him, "Get the money ready, ask your parents to get the money ready." I would say, "You don't

have to tell him that. Once he has a girlfriend to bring home, his parents will definitely have the money ready, because what they have been doing their entire life is for this son.” Little QJ asked how much money he would need and my husband just threw a number out there to scare him.

Q: How many times did you try matchmaking?

QJ’s father: Two or three times.

Q: Was there anyone who lasted?

QJ’s aunt: No. It never went past the first date, because he doesn’t communicate, even though he wants to from the bottom of his heart.

Q: Did his parents find the dates for him?

QJ’s mother: Someone else did.

QJ’s aunt: When he first started working, people liked his looks, and one girl asked him if he wanted to date her younger sister. So he met with this girl who worked at Pudong Airport. On the bus, the girl sat next to him and put her head on his shoulder. Other guys would have reacted to this by patting her or some other gesture, but he was too scared to do anything. His mom heard about this and asked him to give the girl a little pushcart the next day. But then the girl just stopped dating him. Now he is always saying, “That girl would have been a good match, but you badmouthed me to her and ruined it.” He accused us of telling the girl that he has ID and of saying bad things about him, which was why the girl stopped seeing him. That was nonsense because we knew nothing about anything.

QJ’s mother: He did tell me about this, when he was 25 or 26. I told him to bring the girl home but he didn’t.

Q: How did QJ’s aunt teach him how to date?

QJ’s aunt: I said, “Let’s start with role playing. I will pretend to be your girlfriend and you will be yourself. But you will have to talk first by asking me how old I am.” He said, “You ask me my age.” I said, “No, you ask me how old I am.” He said, “How old are you?” Then I said, “Now you can ask me my name.” So I asked him to go on with the questions and to tell the girl about his own job and family. But he started losing focus if I went on and on.

When I was teaching him this, my other younger sister who also lives in Shanghai was present and she said, “Sometimes you don’t want to say too much because it could have the opposite effect.” After she said this, he decided not to utter a single word. But if he doesn’t break the ice by asking questions, girls won’t take the initiative.

Last time my younger sister introduced a girl to him. She seemed to have some disabilities, something wrong with her eye. She was good around the house and had a job too. A decent girl who had been single for a long time and was 2 or 3 years older than him. She sounded like a good choice. I wanted to go with him to meet her that day, because he wouldn’t know how to communicate and I would have to communicate for him. The two of them would have to live under the same roof if it ever came to that. If there was a third person around, he wouldn’t say anything. But if it was just the two of them, he would have the chance to get to know her and he would definitely find things to say. So they met for the first time, and since I didn’t go with him, I had no idea what he said or didn’t say. My younger sister told him not to talk too much. So the two of them spent some time alone in a room and neither

of them said anything. How would that work? The girl's older brother said, "They don't have anything to say to each other, how can they form a family?" So the girl turned him down. I had a good feeling about that girl. If she had married into the family, she could be taking good care of his parents. Too bad she is blind in one eye.

QJ's mother: There's nothing wrong with her eye. She has a scar on her face and is actually pretty.

QJ's aunt: Right, she is pretty, and probably had a trauma wound. If I had gone with him that time, he might have succeeded with her.

QJ's mother: He wasn't interested in that girl, he said, "Her face is scary to look at. I can't possibly be seen with her."

QJ's aunt: The one we were talking about was introduced by my younger sister. There was another one that I went with little QJ's mom to check out.

QJ's mother: We checked out that girl twice and it wouldn't work. On the date, there were two matchmakers, and two from the girl's side, which made for five including little QJ. Her parents came too and followed in the back. In front of all those people, that girl talked non-stop to her parents. It's not the right way to behave on a date. She also told little QJ, "You will give me your money in the future." Rumor had it that she spent all the money she made. Then someone else introduced this same girl to him. She asked him out and he refused to go, saying, "I don't make enough for her to spend."

Insurance Purchase Out of Worry

Q: When did he get his disability certificate?

QJ's mother: When he was 17 or 18, close to 20. We took him for an assessment at a hospital in Pudong and the results showed that he has severe disability.

Q: Why did you choose that particular time for the assessment?

QJ's mother: Because at the time of the government-mandated relocation, neither my daughter nor my son had turned 16. The team leader told me, "Once your son turns 16, go get him a disability certificate." Because once a kid with a disability certificate turns 16, he can receive subsidies from the local government.

Q: Exactly what subsidies did he start receiving once he got the disability certificate?

QJ's mother: He received a subsidy of 200 to 300 yuan per month for the unemployed and severely disabled. There's also a grocery subsidy for people with disability certificates. You got 12 coupons each year and you could exchange 1 coupon every month for either rice or cooking oil but not both, and 1 coupon got you 20 lb of rice. So we went to get the rice every month and there was always some leftover from the month before, and we got enough to cover his consumption. But that subsidy stopped once he started working.

The disability certificate also qualified him for 200 or 300 yuan per month in disability subsidy. But it stopped too, like the grocery subsidy, once little QJ started the Papa John's job. There's nothing now.

The disability certificate was kept on file at the Civil Affairs Bureau which distributed the subsidies. Once little QJ got the job, the bureau returned the disability certificate to us and stopped all subsidies.

Q: Were there any other subsidies besides the grocery coupons and cash?

QJ's mother: Not really. One time he received a comforter for Chinese New Year, but things like that are very random.

Q: Does the current workplace pay into social insurances for QJ?

QJ's father: We're not sure.

QJ's mother: It should be doing that. When he was receiving low-income subsidies, the Civil Affairs Bureau paid into his insurances. Now the workplace does it.

Q: When QJ was growing up, what care do you think he received from the society besides the low-income subsidies?

QJ's mother: Now there's nothing. Before he started working, there was the grocery subsidy, but it stopped after he got the job. Before he joined Papa John's, he received free things every year or the Community Affairs Committee would give him 100 or 200 yuan for Chinese New Year. Once he started working at Papa John's, everything stopped. Like this year, he only got two towels, because he sang at an activity hosted by the community for people with disabilities and was awarded the towels.

Now he receives 100 yuan per month. The Community Affairs Committee asked me to get a bankcard and I asked the bank if I could use an existing one and the answer was "Yes." So I asked for the money to be deposited into the existing card. I don't really know what this monthly 100 yuan is for, but it's definitely from the Civil Affairs Bureau. He has been receiving it for less than 6 months.

QJ's aunt: Families like theirs with a childlike QJ must feel depressed and unhappy, so society should show them more care. If only there was an organization that would allow them and their kids to live there after they get old, they would be very happy living there despite the ID of their kids.

QJ's father: Just like QJ's aunt mentioned, I wish there was an organization to connect us with families like ours.

QJ's aunt: Luckily, they have a daughter too. If they had only one child, this child would be isolated from society and not be able to get a girlfriend. Once the parents get old and need someone to take care of them, they wouldn't be able to count on kids like QJ and wouldn't have anyone to take care of them. I think society or the government should do something for these families, like setting up an organization for them to be with each other. The parents can have fun talking to other parents, and families can have a chance to communicate and interact.

QJ's father: I couldn't agree more. We are already 60 and should have passed down everything to the kids. But we can't pass anything down to him, and even though I have a daughter too...

QJ's aunt: Their daughter has her own kid and is busy with her own family. She can't be involved all the time.

Q: Do you know anything about the organization Sunshine Home?⁴

⁴Sunshine Homes: One of the practical projects of Shanghai Municipal Government in 2005. These are training institutions set up to assist and train people with ID aged 16–35 years. The main tasks

QJ's aunt: I do. I read about it on the Internet before. It's a place for kids and parents to be together and to communicate, and it sounds fun. As a matter of fact, society should give kids like QJ and their families more warmth and not discriminate against them.

All of my sisters and other relatives hope that QJ would have a better life, and we would worry less if QJ's parents had some place to go where they can be taken care of when they get old. In some other families, the siblings might compete against each other and not want the others to have a better life than they do. But with us, I will be happy when you are doing well, and if you are not doing well, I will find money to help you even if I am broke myself. So the society should show them more love and care, in all aspects. They should receive equal treatment in life, at work and in pay.

QJ's current workplace seems to think that they have already done QJ a big favor by hiring him and paying him despite his disability, so he should have no reason to complain. But they enjoy tax exemption for hiring people with disabilities.⁵ QJ has been working there for almost 10 years and doesn't have any sense of achievement. Now he only looks forward to Chinese New Year because he can get paid more then. He is always saying he wants to have the triple-pay OT and whenever he gets to do it, he's over the moon and won't stop telling me about it.

Q: What plans do you have for QJ's future?

QJ's mother: If we have the chance, we will find him a wife. If there's no chance, it's better for him not to have a wife than having a bad wife. We don't want him to end up like his uncle whose wife took off with his money and who ended up with nothing. We are at the age where we can't afford for that to happen to us or to him. We have to put some money aside for him to use when he gets old, right? If we can't find a good girl for him, he will have to settle for being single. He did ask me, "My older sister has a son. What am I going to do in the future?" I told him, "Don't worry, even though your older sister has a son and you don't. You will definitely live better than we do. We don't have enough pension, so we might go to live in a nursing home. But by the time you get old, you will have enough pension. If your sister and nephew will support you, we will give her this apartment. If not, we will leave this apartment to the government or to the nursing home and you can continue living in it. I also bought you insurance and you can start receiving pension once you turn 60. You will definitely live more comfortably than we do." And he said, "It sounds good." He has street smarts.

include educational training, rehabilitation training, Special Olympics, and simple physical works, etc. The purposes are to help people with ID improve self-care ability and social ability, and to enhance their inclusion into society. Most trainees are people with ID of medium to severe level. The opening hours are normally between 9:00 and 15:00 on workdays. Currently there are 241 Sunshine Homes in Shanghai, covering all communities, villages, and towns in the whole Shanghai area. There are also similar institutions in other places in China, though their names might be slightly different.

⁵Chinese Government has issued tax-exemption policies for hiring people with disabilities, applicable solely to welfare enterprises; e.g., exemption of land usage tax. Non-welfare enterprises cannot enjoy these tax exemptions, but are entitled to a reduction of corporate income tax. Papa John's is a non-welfare enterprise.

Q: So you bought QJ insurance? Can you be more specific?

QJ's mother: I bought it from Ping An Insurance Company for him to receive more pension in the future. We paid for 6 years for him at 3,000 yuan per year. It started the year we moved into this apartment, which was 18 or 19 years ago. We did make two withdrawals already, when he was 18 and 20, at a little over 1,000 yuan each time. The rest will stay in the account till he retires at 60 and he will probably withdraw once a year. Once he retires and has to rely on his sister, we hope that she won't have too heavy a financial burden. So I just wanted to buy more insurance now for him to have more pension when he gets old.

QJ's father: My idea is that with a child like QJ, we will still be burdened even after we get old. Daughters are married off to help another family continue the bloodline. Sons are your own who are to inherit from you. I am 60 already and can't expect to live another 60 years. I don't expect much from him except that he keeps a stable job. Parents are supposed to be supported by the son, but we can't expect him to support us. He can't even take care of his own life, so the best we can hope for is not to have to support him.

I am lucky that I have a daughter too. Things would have been really bad without this daughter, because who is going to take over this family then? We have had a happy first half of our lives. As for the second half, my biggest worry is that QJ cannot live on his own. I told him to be brave, meaning that he shouldn't rely on parents. At his age, I was already working and fixing breakfast for myself. If I had to leave the family for a couple of months to work, I would bring 50 or 60 yuan for food. I gave QJ a comparison. My sister's son has been saving all his gift money his relatives gave him for Chinese New Year ever since he was young. That guy really knows how to save. I told QJ, "No matter how high your pay is, if you don't save, it won't work."

My son is already in his thirties and overdue for marriage. Despite his disability, I wish for a daughter-in-law from the bottom of my heart so that he can carry on the bloodline. If I can't have a biological grandkid from him, even an adopted one will serve the purpose. Everyone seems to have a good family life, but what about us? We don't feel good about it. I am already 60, like the setting sun, but I see no hope. Parents get old and kids are born, like a rolling wheel. How can I not be anxious seeing him the way he is?

Interview with QJ's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Ms. A

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview date: December 2, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QJ works

Q: What do you think of QJ?

Ms. A: I feel that he is very well behaved. He is willing to work, but is just too well behaved and doesn't say much.

Q: Is there any difference between him and other co-workers?

Ms. A: The only difference is that sometimes he would put a dish away that is not totally clean. But he is willing to work. When it was time to take annual leave last time, he said, "Are they asking me to take annual leave? I won't get paid if I take the leave." He works hard. He washes dishes when there are dishes to be washed and just sits in the back when there's nothing to be washed. That's why I said that he is too straight laced.

Q: Do you interact with him often?

Ms. A: Not really because I work in the dining area. Sometimes I would ask him to move things if they are too heavy for me—he is willing to do whatever you ask him because he has the physical strength.

Interview with QJ's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Mr. B

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview date: December 2, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QJ works

Q: Do you think QJ does his job well?

Mr. B: He does.

Q: How would you describe him?

Mr. B: He is serious and earnest about his job.

Q: Is there any difference between him and other co-workers?

Mr. B: There is, since he is an employee being cared for⁶ after all. But he does his job well, does not make mistakes and is very reliable.

Q: Do you interact with him a lot?

Mr. B: Not a lot.

Q: Does he approach you to chat?

Mr. B: No. He just washes dishes and rests over there or sleeps when he is done. And he goes home as soon as he clocks out.

Q: Do you hang out with him after work?

Mr. B: No. He goes straight home after work.

⁶In Shanghai Papa John's, the employees with disabilities are referred to as "employees being cared for." (爱心员工) Words such as "handicapped" are not used.

Interview with QJ's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: Mr. C

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview date: December 2, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QJ works

Q: What do you think of QJ?

Mr. C: He is nice.

Q: What about his work?

Mr. C: As for his work, he washes dishes every day. We only want him to finish what he is supposed to do and don't really expect anything extra from him. When he was first hired, there was job training. He couldn't boil noodles or do anything except for washing dishes. I used to ask him to watch the noodles I was boiling and to stir when necessary. He was doing okay at the beginning, but then the noodles got all stuck together, so I stopped asking him to help. All he needs is to do what he is supposed to do. Look at him, sometimes I wonder if he knows where he is. We don't usually have a lot of customers and he usually has to wash only two or three baskets of dishes. Even when we're busy, he isn't. So he would sit there sometimes and run off other times to no one knows where.

Q: Do you have any feelings about working together with employees being cared for?

Mr. C: I don't have any feelings about that.

Q: Is there frequent interaction?

Mr. C: No, because I work part time and there's hardly any chance for interaction.

Interview with QJ's Co-Worker (IV)

Interviewee: Ms. D

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview date: December 2, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QJ works

Q: Did you join the restaurant at the same time as QJ?

Ms. D: QJ joined 1 month before I did.

Q: What was your first impression of QJ?

Ms. D: He is a well-behaved person and can get things done. If you ask him to do something, he obliges. His mind is outdated sometimes. He is very careful about his belongings, like his cell phone, and always handles them gingerly. Overall, he is a nice person.

Q: What about his work?

Ms. D: He does a good job. He obliges if you ask him to do something. He stays in the dish-washing room to wash dishes and only comes out to use the restroom when he has nothing to wash.

Q: Does he talk to you?

Ms. D: We used to be close. When we first joined, he would come out to the dining area to help, like taking orders. Now he seems to have withdrawn into himself and talks less. Maybe he doesn't feel free. We really used to be close which is better than the way things are now.

Q: Why do you think he has withdrawn into himself?

Ms. D: Every time he attended a wedding, he would come back and say, "He is younger than I am and already a dad. I'm not even married." So that could be weighing on his mind. Also, maybe someone said something out of line about him and he didn't feel good about it. I feel that sometimes we can't do without QJ around here, because we are always looking for him and asking, "QJ, please come here and help with this."

Q: In what other ways has QJ changed after all these years?

Ms. D: He has withdrawn into himself and talks less now. Sometimes he listens to songs. He likes *Little Apple* and would just sit there by himself listening to it.

Q: His mom said that he used to go out for karaoke with co-workers, is that right?

Ms. D: Right. The previous managers went with us at night for karaoke.

Q: Why did it stop?

Ms. D: We invited him once and he seemed to have made plans. The co-workers seldom do things together after work anyway. He gets off after 10 p.m. every day. Bus No. 991 used to run till after 11 p.m. but now it doesn't run after 9:45 p.m., so he doesn't do anything with us anymore because if he goes home too late, there's no bus.

Q: How does QJ get along with his co-workers?

Ms. D: He gets along fine on the whole.

Q: Does he talk to you when he is down?

Ms. D: No, he doesn't talk to anyone. Sometimes I would say to him, "QJ, thank you." And he would say, "No problem, we are co-workers." Now, maybe I get a little irritable sometimes and I would nag at him if I see something I don't like about him. He does have one shortcoming, that is, he doesn't shower often, so there's this smell about him. Every time I nag at him, it's about that. I would say, "QJ, you do smell and need a shower."

Q: How does he react when you say that to him?

Ms. D: I would say, "QJ, you need to shower and keep yourself clean. That's how you find a girlfriend and get a wife." He said yesterday, "I can never get myself a wife." At the end of the day, that's really the main reason he is unhappy. He also said, "I am going to work at the airport." I don't know why he would say that, so I teased him, "If you get a job at the airport, take me with you." QJ is actually pretty cute sometimes and very kind-hearted.

Q: Have you ever had any argument with QJ?

Ms. D: No. He doesn't fight with co-workers in the store, he never fights with anyone. He is actually very kind-hearted.

Q: Does he volunteer to help you?

Ms. D: He did, but he seldom does it now. He used to come to the dining area to greet the guests, bring them menus and take their orders. Now he doesn't come to

the dining area. He seems to have low self-esteem, and just slouches there when he has no dishes to wash. He might be staying up late every night. He is very smart in some ways. Since he doesn't want to spend the money taking public transportation in the morning, he takes the free Carrefour shuttle bus at 8:30 a.m., gets to Carrefour at 9 a.m. and hangs out there till 10:45 a.m. which is when he will get to the store. Sometimes I would tell him, "QJ, why don't you catch some sleep? You can come early to wash the dishes afterwards."

Q: Do you feel that he is in a good mental state recently?

Ms. D: Yes, he is.

Q: What about his work...

Ms. D: He works hard. Like with the dishes, he is the one washing them on Saturday and Sunday.

Q: How many days does he work per week?

Ms. D: Six days, and he takes Mondays off. If there's something going on at home, his mom would call the manager to ask for time off. He took last Wednesday or Thursday off because of a family gathering.

Q: You said that he used to come to the dining area to help, right?

Ms. D: He hasn't done that for 2 or 3 years. The previous managers were super nice to him and cared a lot about him.

Q: When did this change start?

Ms. D: I can't pinpoint it. It might have something to do with the ladies who washed dishes. Those who were doing it before all left. They were very nice to him. They never got mad at him or nagged him. I overheard a previous manager saying, "Don't ask QJ to wash dishes, he is not here to wash dishes. I want him to do something else." He was really nice to QJ. So QJ was very outgoing back then. We used to have a co-worker in the dining area who was always teasing QJ and joking with him.

Q: When you communicate with him, do you feel any difference between him and other co-workers?

Ms. D: There is a difference. Sometimes he just doesn't get what you are trying to tell him.

Q: I heard from his aunt that he likes to say repeatedly, "I am getting laid off."

Ms. D: He did say that, and our previous manager told him, "We won't lay you off because we don't have the right to do so." It's all in his own mind.

Q: The manager said that QJ lives in his own small world. What do you think?

Ms. D: Right, he doesn't talk or chat with anyone. During break, he just listens to songs on his cell phone instead of talking to anyone, just like that.

Q: But if you approach him to talk to him, he...

Ms. D: He will respond.

Q: I heard that QJ was unhappy about something at work and just took off. Do you know what happened?

Ms. D: He threw a tantrum and was sulking, so the manager said, "Why don't you go home?" And he did go home. After maybe a week, his mom called, and he came back to work. The manager communicated with his mom. He does have a temper sometimes and is very stubborn.

Q: After he came back to work, did he ever talk about this with you?

Ms. D: No, he won't approach us to talk, he won't take the initiative.

Q: Will he respond if you ask him, "Why are you unhappy?"

Ms. D: He will say, "Nothing, nothing." He just won't talk.

Q: When you first met him, did you feel any difference between him and other co-workers?

Ms. D: Yeah, I did feel some difference. I could see it. Like T, another employee being cared for that we have here. She is a little different, in the way she talks and the things she says.

Q: What did he do when he first started working here?

Ms. D: Before, he would clean the tables and move things around in the dining area, while in the kitchen, he would fold boxes, carry dishes around, mop the floor, and clean up the area. Now he is basically the only one washing the dishes.

Interview with QJ's Co-Worker (V)

Interviewee: Mr. E

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview date: December 2, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QJ works

Q: Can you talk about your impression of QJ?

Mr. E: Overall, he is a mild and honest guy. The good thing about him is that he does whatever is asked of him most of the time and does a good job. But he does have some shortcomings, because he is an employee being cared for after all. So we need to be more loving and tolerant towards him in a lot of things. But if we get busy, we might forget about him during certain periods of time or when it comes to certain things. So we might not have been taking the best care of him. He is an introvert and keeps many things to himself. We have to approach him to ask him, and he isn't very good at communicating.

Q: Do you feel any difference between him and other co-workers?

Mr. E: The difference is pretty significant. If he had been assigned any of the other jobs we have around here, it would not have been easy for him. It would have been not only frustrating for him, but also demanding for co-workers around him because he wouldn't have been able to keep up the pace. So it's not easy to really treat him the same as everyone else.

Q: When did you start working here?

Mr. E: I have been here for more than 2 years. It's my third year here.

Q: What did you think of QJ when you first got to know him?

Mr. E: He is an introvert and a man of few words. He is lost in his own small world and obsessed with the past, always mumbling to himself about what he was doing in 2004 or how he was in 2005. As far as I know, his family isn't doing the best job taking care of him, because I talked to his mom on the phone several times. His

mom is very earthy too and doesn't know how to take care of him in many aspects, which has led to his being dissocial now.

Q: How does he interact with you and everyone else?

Mr. E: There's hardly any interaction. QJ has been with this store since it first opened, and I don't know what the previous managers thought of him. Personally, I feel that he seldom interacts with us. We have to take the initiative to show him that we care, like we will be eating something good and remember to share with him. He is like a kid who hides his good things. We can't treat him as an adult. He is more like a kid who isn't even ten.

Q: I heard from his mom that he ran away and skipped work a couple of times. What happened?

Mr. E: I was here during one of those two times. He probably had been traumatized at home. He's already in his thirties, and some of the family relatives are always laughing at him, saying, "How come you are still single when you are already getting old?" Most of his peers already have kids of certain ages, which reflects badly on him and he gets depressed at work. One time I asked him, "QJ, you have not been looking happy lately." And he just broke down and said, while crying, "I want to be a dad, I want to be a dad. Everyone in my family laughs at me for still not being married." So I had to say, "I really can't help you with that. You'd better have a good talk with your family." After a while, something just snapped. It was around the time the golden-color 100-yuan bill was issued, and he held up one of those bills and said, "Golden bill, golden bill, no one likes us, so it's just you and me together." If you don't know him, he can be a little scary sometimes.

Q: Was it his mom who contacted you afterwards?

Mr. E: I reached out to his mom and told her the things that were happening at work. His mom doesn't care much about his work. If we don't contact her, she seldom has questions for us and doesn't even visit the store.

Q: Are there any co-workers he is close to?

Mr. E: Because he doesn't communicate with anyone, there's no one he is really close to. But, at the same time, there's no one he can't get along with. Everyone knows his condition. He has no conflict with any co-worker but has not bonded with anyone either. He just comes to work silently, and if we ask him, he will move things around for us diligently. If you tell him, "QJ, please do this", he will do it, but he won't volunteer for anything.

Q: Is QJ the only employee being cared for at this store?

Mr. E: There's another one, a girl whose disability isn't as severe as his.

Q: How do the two of them get along?

Mr. E: They are not exactly tight, because of the way QJ is. He doesn't want to talk, and a lot of times you will have to get him to talk. He will frown at you, and all his emotions are written on his face for you to read.

Q: Has QJ ever done anything that really impressed you?

Mr. E: He does very ordinary work every day, so there's nothing really impressive. All I can think of now is where he could have improved at work. I can hardly see any highlights about his work. If he were a person without any disability, he probably

wouldn't have been able to stay at the store. Because of his condition, we have been very patient with him. On the whole, there's no highlight about his work.

Q: Have you seen any changes in him since you joined this store?

Mr. E: He is even less social than before. When I first joined, he wasn't as bad. Now he is basically living in self-imposed isolation with his own self being the center.

I feel that he goes out of his way to be respectful, in other words, he listens well to those above him. He is particularly afraid of messing something up and would rather just not do it at all. Sometimes he would make a minor mistake which we could easily correct with a little extra time, but he would apologize profusely. Even after he was told that everything was okay, he would still sulk for a long time. Maybe he has low self-esteem.

His family is very stingy with him, giving him only several yuan for his allowance every day. He spends only 2 yuan on his daily commute. There's a free shuttle bus from his house to this area, so he takes that bus at 8:30 every morning. Since he gets here really early, he will hang out at the supermarket and not come to the store till it's time to work. Sometimes he would just stand next to the traffic lights, in a daze and not exactly doing anything. When I see him sometimes, I'll invite him to come to the store with me. Sometimes he would follow me, other times he wouldn't and would only come to work close to the starting time.

When he does talk to you, he is always repeating himself and spending several days telling you the same thing. We get a little bored when he does that often. He seems to live in his own world.

He often says that he will go to work at the airport. Maybe he interviewed at the airport before interviewing with us. The airport didn't want him, which may be the reason he really wants to go to work there. Whenever he has time, he will go to the airport and hang out there. He took out his cell phone once and showed us pictures of airplanes he had taken at the airport. There's a bus with a stop in front of his house going around the airport, and he would take that bus to go and hang out at the airport. When he came back from annual leave, I asked him, "QJ, where did you go for fun during the 3 days?" And he said, "Manager, I didn't go anywhere except around the airport."

I really don't think his parents are doing the best job taking care of him. But I might have been nosy because this is just stuff I've heard. He has an older sister, and his parents don't seem to care what he does. Sometimes when he wasn't doing well at work, I would call his family. No one could talk to me in the morning because there was something going on at home, and no one had time in the afternoon because his mom probably went somewhere to play mahjong. Eventually someone called me back after dinner, around six or seven. But by that time I was already off work and busy at home, so I had no time to go into detail with his family about him.

Interview with Mr. QJ

Interviewee: Mr. QJ

Interviewer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Interview date: December 2, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QJ works

The interviewer asked QJ whether he was willing to be interviewed. He shook his head and said “No.” With help from co-worker D (who told QJ that the interviewer was not a reporter but another co-worker), QJ agreed to the interview. Throughout the interview, QJ avoided looking directly at the interviewer and kept his eyes fixed to the left of the interviewer.

Q: How many years ago was it when you started working here?

QJ: I started on December 22, 2011.

Q: How did you find out there were job openings here?

QJ: On the Internet on the computer, a public recruitment site for Shanghai.

Q: Did your parents go with you to the job interview?

QJ: No, that wasn't the case.

Q: So you went to the interview on your own?

QJ: Right.

Q: Were you nervous during the first interview?

QJ: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember what questions were asked during the interview?

QJ: No, I don't.

Q: Do you think your co-workers are nice?

QJ: No, not at all.

Q: Do they talk to you?

QJ: No.

Q: What do you do at work?

QJ: I'm a dish washer.

Q: I saw you play on your cell phone back there. What did you do on the phone?

QJ: I didn't. (Silence and refusal to answer)

Q: Which bus did you take to come to work today?

QJ: No. 991.

Q: When do you get off work today?

QJ: Eight.

Q: Which bus will you take to go home?

QJ: No. 991.

Q: Is it tiring for you to wash dishes?

QJ: Washing dishes, it's not too bad. I get busier sometimes on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Q: I heard that there's an older lady who comes and helps you with the dishes on Saturday and Sunday, is that right?

(No reply)

Q: Which day of the week do you have off?

QJ: I have every Monday off and work from Tuesday through Sunday.

Q: So you work 6 days a week.

QJ: I work 6 days and have 1 day off.

Q: When do you usually start work and get off work?

QJ: I start at 11 a.m. Tuesday through Friday, and the same on Saturday and Sunday. (Correcting himself) 11 a.m. Tuesday through Friday. As for Saturday and Sunday, no, let me think. (Shaking his head) I start work at 11 a.m. Tuesday through Friday, and at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Q: What about getting off work? Is it 8 p.m. every day?

QJ: Eight Tuesday through Friday and eight-thirty on Saturday and Sunday. Eight-thirty in the evening, I mean.

Q: Do you get busy on Saturday and Sunday?

QJ: Yeah.

Q: Do you feel tired?

QJ: It's not too bad.

Q: How many hours do you usually wash dishes on Saturday and Sunday?

QJ: What?

Q: How many baskets of dishes do you have to wash?

QJ: Sometimes it gets really busy on Friday night.

Q: What do you usually do when you have Monday off?

QJ: I stay home.

Q: To play on the computer?

QJ: Yes.

Q: What do you play on the computer?

QJ: What?

Q: Do you play computer games?

QJ: I watch news and videos.

Q: Do you use WeChat on your phone?

QJ: No.

Q: How do you chat with your family then?

QJ: My parents don't know how to get on the Internet.

Q: How do you chat with your friends then?

QJ: I don't chat. I don't have friends.

Q: Which co-worker are you close to?

QJ: No one. There has never been anyone.

Q: Did you have good friends when you were young?

QJ: When I was young, my elementary school classmates loved me.

Q: Did you play with them after school?

QJ: After school?

Q: Did you go home with your classmates after school?

QJ: We went home together.

Q: Did you all live close to each other?

QJ: Yes. I originally lived in the direction of Pudong Airport, but the government relocated us in 1996.

Q: And that's when you moved to where you live now?

QJ: Shiwan, I live in Shiwan now.

Q: Have you kept in touch with your old classmates?

QJ: No. They all have jobs and kids, so it's different now. Having kids and jobs makes it all different. They are married. (Looking very sad)

Q: Is there anything at work that makes you happy?

QJ: (Taking a while to answer) I have nothing to be happy about, nothing at all.

Q: I heard that you really like listening to music, right?

QJ: Right.

Q: What music do you normally listen to?

QJ: *Little Apple*.

Q: Can you sing it?

QJ: No, I am learning.

Q: Do you go and hang out at the airport when you have time?

QJ: I miss my old home.

Q: The manager just told me that you would go and take pictures of the airplanes, is that right?

QJ: Right.

Q: You really like taking pictures, do you?

QJ: I take pictures at the airport. I don't go anywhere else. I only go to Pudong Airport.

Q: Do you go there on your own?

QJ: No. When I was going to school as a kid, I had to walk a long way. I still remember it very clearly.

Q: On Mondays, do you go out for fun on your own?

QJ: I work triple-pay OT on New Year's Day, during Chinese New Year, also on Tomb-Sweeping Day, Labor Day, Dragon Boat Festival Day, and National Day.

Q: Do you work even on holidays?

QJ: I get triple pay, there's triple-pay OT on holidays.

Q: You have annual leave, right?

QJ: I did take annual leave.

Q: Did you take it this year?

QJ: I did.

Q: Did you go anywhere for fun during those 3 days?

QJ: I stayed home and went to Pudong Airport for fun.

Q: Your job is to wash dishes. Do you think you are doing a good job?

QJ: I also take out the trash.

Q: Do you think you are doing a good job?

QJ: Not really.

Q: Do you remember the previous managers?

QJ: Manager W.

Q: Of all the previous managers, which one was particularly nice to you?

QJ: They were all the same.

Q: What did they usually talk to you about?

QJ: Nothing.

Q: At work, you are on break from 3 to 5 p.m. What do you normally do during the break?

QJ: I sleep.

Q: Will you play on your cell phone?

QJ: I play on my cell phone and sleep.

Q: On the days you go to work, when do you get up?

QJ: Whenever my alarm goes off.

Q: What time do you set the alarm for?

QJ: Seven.

Q: So you go to work immediately after brushing your teeth, washing your face and having your breakfast?

QJ: I start work at 11 a.m. and I take the Carrefour shuttle bus to go to work.

Q: When do you get on the Carrefour shuttle bus in front of your house?

QJ: I get on at 8:30 a.m.

Q: When do you arrive here?

QJ: About 9 a.m. The bus leaves at eight from Carrefour, eight in the morning.

Q: So what do you do in between?

QJ: I hang out at Carrefour. Carrefour.

Q: You take the No. 991 bus to go home. When do you get home?

QJ: Very late sometimes because of traffic. There is traffic sometimes because of road construction.

Q: What time is the latest you get home if there is traffic?

QJ: I am not sure.

Q: What time do you go to sleep at night?

QJ: Ten at night.

Q: Who taught you how to use the computer?

QJ: I started using the Internet in 2003.

Q: How did you learn how to use the computer?

QJ: I was playing in the Internet bars back then.

Q: Do you have a computer at home now?

QJ: I do now. I didn't have one before.

Q: Did you buy the computer yourself?

QJ: My parents bought it.

Q: In which year did they buy it?

QJ: In December 2014.

Observation of QJ at Work

Observation date: December 2, 2016

Observation place: Restaurant where QJ works

Observer and writer: Xinhui Chen

Time	What QJ did	Remarks
10:45–11:00	Arrived at the restaurant and changed into work clothes	Workday started at 11 a.m
11:00–11:10	Helped co-worker wipe chopsticks and forks	His main job is to wash dishes
11:10–11:20	Waited in the kitchen since there were no dishes to wash	
11:20–12:00	Rested on a bench in the kitchen since there were no dishes to wash	
12:00	Cleaned up the dish-washing room	
12:10	Rested on a bench in the kitchen	
12:40	Rested on a bench in the kitchen	
13:00	Rested on a bench in the kitchen	
13:06	Was summoned by a co-worker to the lobby to move a large basket full of plates, bowls, and glasses yet to be washed	
13:09	Moved the basket to the dish-washing room and started washing	
13:30	Finished washing and sat on a chair in the back	
13:45	Started washing dishes that co-workers had just brought in	
14:00	Finished washing and left through the back door	None of the co-workers knew where he went
14:40	Brought back a snack and sat by a table off the center of the lobby to play on his phone	Two co-workers sat at another table
15:00	Slept with elbows on the table	QJ's break time was 15:00–17:00
16:00	Slept with elbows on the table	
16:36	Slept with elbows on the table	
16:46	Got up and walked to the kitchen	
17:00	Started running water and washing dishes	
17:10–17:23	Was interviewed	
17:32	Washed a pan cover, shook it dry, and put the cover back	
18:05	Filled a big plastic box with water and poured the water out	
18:08	Left the kitchen	
18:29	Played on his phone outside the back door	

(continued)

(continued)

Time	What QJ did	Remarks
19:02	Gave the washed bowls to his co-worker to put on the shelf. Went to the dining area to collect dirty bowls, plates, and glasses	
19:06	Stood in front of the sink to wash dishes	
19:36	Took out trash and put in a new trash bag	
19:48	An older female co-worker and QJ stood at two different sinks to wash dishes. QJ was very slow-paced and spent a very long time washing one single bowl. QJ put the washed bowl in a draining basket next to him	At peak time, both the female co-worker and QJ had to wash dishes
19:52	Washed dishes on his own and put the washed dishes in the draining basket	
19:58	Organized washed spoons before putting them in the drawer	
20:02	Took the container he had brought his meals in from home, took off his apron and got ready to clock out	

Translated by Cissy Zhao

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

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Traveling for Auto Shows



Ting Song and Yuan Gu

Interview with Mr. JL's Parents

JL, male, born in 1983. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school—Shanghai Yangfan School of Yangpu District in 2000. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2009.

Interviewees: JL's mother and JL's father (who left for work in the middle of the interview)

Interviewers and writers: Ting Song and Yuan Gu

Interview date: September 11, 2016

Interview place: JL's home

Regret not Having Had Time to Take Care of the Petit Baby

Q: Shall we get started? So, both of you are from Shanghai, right? How did you meet?

JL's mother: Yes. We met through someone else. I used to live in Pudong while he lived on Xiangyin Road. I moved to Puxi after marrying him, and we just recently moved back to Pudong. We used to plant vegetables right across from Tongji University, then we went to work at Postal Mechanics Plant which was pretty close, too.

Q: How old were you when you got married?

JL's mother: Twenty-eight.

Q: You married late, didn't you?

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JL's mother: Not really. It was very normal to get married at that age in our time. Back then, no matter how well you did at school, you would end up in the countryside. Now there's hope, because whether you are originally a rural or urban resident, you can get a job if you do well at school, and if you get into a college, the college will get you a job.

Q: How much schooling did you receive?

JL's mother: I did several years of high school. Someone in the neighborhood repeated high school later, but I didn't, and no one did where I lived. Going to college wasn't a big thing then. You would need a tutor to repeat high school and I couldn't have spared the money for that. People nowadays realize the importance of education.

Q: When did you and your husband graduate from high school?

JL's mother: We both graduated in 1974, which was still during the Cultural Revolution. We had 2 years' high school and got a high school graduation certificate, but by today's standards, that certificate wasn't exactly official and didn't really carry much weight. We started working right after graduation.

Q: So, you started working on the farm right after graduation?

JL's mother: Right. We planted vegetables.

Q: You got married when you were 28. Which year was that?

JL's mother: It was 1982. Planting vegetables was hard work back then, not like now. If you worked in the rice paddies, you got off-seasons, but you had work to do every day for every season of the year when planting vegetables. Even after I got pregnant with JL, I still had to work.

Q: You mean you had to work during your pregnancy?

JL's mother: Yes, I had to work on the farm. People used to be not as delicate as they are now and didn't realize they had to take good care of themselves during pregnancy, including eating right. Back then, we didn't seem to care, actually no one seemed to care.

Q: Were you still working even when you were 7 or 8 months pregnant?

JL's mother: Yes, I was. I didn't really get much time off before having the baby. Some moms even kept working till the baby was born.

Q: Did you have any abnormal reactions during pregnancy?

JL's mother: The reactions were not that bad. But I was working too hard planting vegetables. The baby moved often in my tummy, so he probably was feeling really uncomfortable.

Q: Was the birth easy?

JL's mother: It was an easy birth at the hospital. When he was first born, the doctor said he was a perfect baby who had no problem sleeping or eating. Then he started fussing and crying non-stop, and was hardly eating, and we couldn't figure out why.

If we had known there was something wrong with him, I would definitely have quit my job and spent more time taking good care of him. Back then, we were kind of careless and went back to work 2 or 3 months after childbirth. We were super busy and there was no one babysitting him, except that the grandparents would lend a hand sometimes. I believe JL turns out to be the way he is today partly because no one had been there to take good care of him when he was young.

Q: Was there no one to take care of him at home?

JL's mother: There was a lot to do at home and he has only one pair of grandparents. Grandma actually had a job at a community-run company, and Grandpa wasn't in good health. All he could do was to get a bottle for JL when he was hungry or to rock him when he cried, but he couldn't really take any responsibilities. Not eating well could have had affected JL, too. If I had stayed home to take care of him, he would have been in better shape, but I didn't want to give up my job. Nowadays, people give up everything for their kids, including their jobs. Now we feel really bad that we didn't do our best for him when he was young.

JL's father: Kids were not a priority back then...

JL's mother: They were, for the average person.

JL's father: We didn't have such a strong sense then. It was the eighties, and the Cultural Revolution just...

JL's mother: What Cultural Revolution? It was already over! Kids just were not the priority then. Also, we were paid well for planting vegetables, so we didn't want to quit.

Q: Were you living with the grandparents?

JL's mother: Yes, we were. My husband's younger brother's kid was just 1 year old, and the two kids were raised together. We all worked, and no one could stay home to take care of the babies. If I had been working in a factory, I would have been able to take a year off. I wasn't working in a factory yet. I wish I had been.

Q: When did you start your factory job?

JL's mother: Around 1985. JL was just a little over 12 months. My husband and I worked in the same factory.

It was later that we realized that JL was petit in size and different from other kids who were all so chubby. We took him to the doctor who said there was something wrong with him.

Q: When did you take him to the doctor?

JL's mother: If we had taken him earlier, the doctor wouldn't have been able to tell anything. He needed to be at least 12 months or older. He started walking and talking later than other kids.

Q: When did he start talking and walking?

JL's mother: He started walking at 17 months and talking a little earlier than that. He is timid, like me, so he didn't get good genes from me there. His dad is more daring (laughing), I am more detail-oriented while he is more careless. JL is smart in his own way. He would watch TV on his own and watch the news, military channel, and sports channel, which few other kids ever watch. And he has a good memory.

Rejected by Both Kindergarten and Elementary School

Q: When did JL enter preschool?

JL's mother: I don't quite remember. We just sent the kids to the preschool affiliated with the farm once they met the age requirement. At the preschool, JL seemed to be

okay in the beginning, except that he would cry every night as if he didn't really want to go. When he got a little older, we realized that he seemed to be slower than other kids and was lagging behind. I could tell that the gap wasn't that big as to label JL dumb, because he still had certain abilities. While other kids would pick playmates that were older, he only played with the really young ones, which reflected badly on his IQ.

Q: So, he was born like this?

JL's mother: I would think so. When he was first born, he looked perfect to the doctor, but then, the doctor wouldn't have been able to tell anyway. Then the non-stop crying started.

Q: When did JL start kindergarten?

JL's mother: He was four, or was he five?

JL's father: I seem to remember that he started kindergarten at 25 months.

JL's mother: That was preschool, then he started kindergarten when he was three or four. He was petit in size and younger for his age mentally, too, so I held him back 1 year. He didn't like to be ordered around. Other kids seemed to be able to stay put and do whatever they were told, whereas he was self-centered and oblivious to the rules. So, the teacher wanted to kick him out saying that he wouldn't listen.

I tried to let him do the LRC (learning in regular classroom) and the teacher didn't want that either. Back then, teachers had the power to pick good kids and reject the others. The teacher's reason was that JL was 1 year behind and should not have been in her class in the first place. Had it not been for that, she would have agreed to let him do the LRC. We were not very savvy ourselves and didn't know much. Had it been today, he would have been able to do the LRC. We are in a more people-oriented age where kids who can't keep up will be allowed to do the LRC at school as long as they don't distract the other kids. Back then the government had no such policy, and kids got kicked out of school just like that. So, he didn't spend much time at the kindergarten and had to stay home afterwards.

Q: When did he start first grade?

JL's mother: When he was six.

JL's father: When he was eight.

JL's mother: He wasn't doing as well as other kids at school either. He was in a regular class for 1 or 2 years. He could understand everything the teacher taught, but his handwriting was awful. When he was young, there was something wrong with the way he held a pencil. I felt that he couldn't control the pencil and whatever he managed to write was all wriggly and not appealing. Even now his handwriting is bad. And he just muddled through school. He knew a lot of Chinese characters and all the *pinyin*. Occasionally he would ask us about a word he didn't know but we weren't much help.

Q: Did he suffer low self-esteem when he couldn't keep up at school? Did you panic?

JL's mother: I don't have a lot of patience. If he didn't get whatever I had taught him twice or three times, I became irritated, and being timid the way he was, he would become even more lost. I didn't do it the right way, of course. I should have

given him time to cool down, because pushing him just had the opposite effect. With some kids, if you leave them alone for 15 or 30 min, they will get it on their own.

I used to do very well at school. From elementary to middle to high school, I always had excellent grades. I had to get to the bottom of everything, otherwise I couldn't sleep. JL couldn't care less if he didn't understand something. He performed well sometimes, like when I taught him addition and subtraction within 100. And he was fast with mental calculations and had a good memory. We didn't really do much in terms of teaching him. If he got something, we felt that it made our lives easier. If he didn't get it, we had no patience to teach him anyway.

Q: How long did he stay at the regular elementary school before being sent home?

JL's mother: About a year. He couldn't keep up, didn't know how to write the Chinese characters, and wouldn't do his homework. So, he was sent home and stayed home for a year or two.

Q: At the regular elementary school, did he get along with his classmates?

JL's mother: He played with them but was not close with them. The other kids realized that he was different and kind of stayed away from him. He wasn't good at socializing or mingling. He played the way he wanted to and didn't care how others played.

Q: After he was sent home from the elementary school, how did he spend every day at home?

JL's mother: He just stayed home and played by himself.

Q: Did he play with friends when he was young?

JL's mother: He played with kids younger than he was. He has male cousins, but they didn't get to play together a lot.

Q: What's the grade of his disability? When did you have him tested?

JL's mother: Grade IV. And he got tested when he was in elementary school. We saw that he couldn't keep up at school, so we took him for a test.

Q: How did you feel when you got the results?

JL's mother: We weren't surprised because we could already tell ourselves. He wasn't doing well, but he wasn't failing that bad either. He was just different from the other kids.

Q: Did you consider having another kid?

JL's mother: I was traumatized and worried about having another child like him... I didn't want to take the risk.

Q: How did your relatives feel about him getting a disability certificate?

JL's mother: All the relatives knew. We have a good relationship with them, and they will help whenever JL needs it. JL is the baby of the family. Everyone else is grown up and busy with work. But they will help whenever we ask for it.

Uneventful Time at Special Education School

Q: What did you do with him after he was rejected by the elementary school?

JL's mother: Xiangyin Road Elementary School set up a special education class for kids not doing well at school, and JL went there. He did well in that class and had decent grades, except that his handwriting remained awful. He would write sometimes, and his writings actually made quite some sense. I don't remember how many years he stayed in that class. Then all the students in the special education class at Xiangyin Road Elementary School were transferred to the special education class at Yangpu District Elementary School, which was bigger, so JL went there. He took good care of himself in that he would ride his bike to school, which was pretty far. He knew the way and I didn't have to worry about him.

Q: How did you know about the special education class at Xiangyin Road Elementary School?

JL's mother: Someone gave us the information that was released by the Education Bureau. We had to donate to the school.

JL's father: We donated more than 2,000 yuan, which was a lot of money back then.

JL's mother: Two thousand is nothing right now, but more than 20 years ago, it was a small fortune. And we had to pull some strings to get access to the principal for the donation. It wouldn't have happened today because kids can go to whatever school they are supposed to go. I asked my workplace to donate on our behalf but didn't succeed, because there was no such expenditure budgeted. We had no option but to donate ourselves because we wanted him to have a place to go to. We were not savvy back then. Had it been today, I would have demanded my donation back. The government is very people-oriented now and will do things for kids like JL, so donations will not have been necessary.

JL's father: Back then, we were paid less than 100 yuan per month.

JL's mother: We probably would have got away with not donating. But we didn't feel like we were in a position to try that.

Q: What's the curriculum like in the special education class at the elementary school?

JL's mother: It's the same, covering both math and Chinese. Even though it was a special education class, some of the kids were actually very normal. They ended up in the class because they had been lagging behind, but once they got older, they moved on to regular classes. I ran into their parents later and they all have regular jobs now.

JL did well in the class. He had good grades in math, he spoke well, and he wrote decent essays and diaries. And he remembered things. He might not have done as well as other kids, but it was good enough for us. He was kind of in the middle.

Q: Did the school offer afterschool activities or field trips?

JL's mother: It did, but not a lot. Nowadays schools offer family-bonding activities, but not back then.

Q: Were there parent-teacher meetings at the elementary school?

JL's mother: There were and only one of us would go. I didn't think it was a big deal because JL was in a special education class anyway, so I was happy just listening to whatever the teacher had to say. Nowadays parents will try to bond with the teachers. We had no big hope, so we didn't bother with that.

Q: Did he make friends with any classmates at the elementary school?

JL's mother: He was on good terms with several of them, and one of them has remained in close contact with him. There were about two or three who were close to him, not a lot. Kids bullied him too. Sometimes he would play with kids in the neighborhood. He would ride his bike to their places, and I wouldn't be able to find him anywhere. And when he came home, he would just tell me where he had been.

Q: Did he go to a special education school, too, for middle school?

JL's mother: He only had 2 years' middle school. The free compulsory education covers 9 years, and since I held him back a year, he missed 1 year of free schooling.

Q: Did he make new friends at middle school?

JL's mother: Not a lot.

Q: Was the curriculum different there?

JL's mother: It wasn't very difficult. We started school late ourselves, and under the 9-year compulsory education system, we had to graduate at the specified time no matter which grade we were in.

Q: How did he do at the special education school?

JL's mother: He did okay and listened well. Once he got older, his temper got worse. The teachers were very nice to him.

Q: Did he behave differently at the special education school than he did at home? Did anything unusual happen?

JL's mother: We didn't feel that he was behaving differently. He just followed whatever was taught at school. As far as we were concerned, he went to school and he came home.

Q: Did he like going to school?

JL's mother: He did, because there were more kids to play with at school than at home.

Q: Did anyone bully him there?

JL's mother: Once or twice, not too bad.

Q: So, the kids got along pretty well? Would he tell you about his day at school when he came home?

JL's mother: He wasn't very coherent. Sometimes he would talk about it, but not too much.

Q: So, you didn't know very well how he was doing at school?

JL's mother: Right. As parents, we didn't pay too much attention to him and were not very thoughtful about him, which was wrong. Normal kids will enjoy a lot more attention, and kids like JL won't. Some kids are very smart and the parents will be very pleased with that. He can often be a handful and isn't very happy himself. And we feel bad about our own kid not doing as well as other kids.

Q: You don't really have to feel bad.

JL's mother: We make sure we feed him really well, only the best actually. But we don't focus as much on the mental side. He is used to having the best of everything (laughing).

Q: Since he is the only child.

JL's mother: How should I put it? We feel a little guilty.

Q: About him?

JL's mother: A little. And we don't talk about him in front of other people, we just listen while others talk.

Q: Except for not being able to keep up with schoolwork, he did well in everything else as a child, didn't he?

JL's mother: He wasn't very capable and didn't pay attention to details, at which I was disappointed.

Q: Do you normally take him to amusement parks or movies?

JL's mother: We don't take him out a lot. We used to be busy with work and I don't remember taking him out much. We would go to the park, but not often. The things we did most was to take him to visit my mom every week.

Q: When did JL learn to take care of himself?

JL's mother: I don't remember, except that it was later than other kids. He could dress himself even though he would often wear things back to front. He was okay with taking care of himself.

JL's father: He is actually very detail-oriented sometimes.

JL's mother: If we go out, he will turn off the gas and all the electronics. I don't do it myself. He will do it meticulously, and I will have to plug everything back in when we get back.

Q: Does he help around the house?

JL's mother: When he was young, I would offer him 2 yuan to do the dishes and he would take it. Then we stopped asking for his help and he just doesn't help now.

Q: When was that?

JL's mother: Either when he was at the Sunshine Home or when he was in middle school. Definitely before he started working at Papa John's. For quite a while he would do the dishes and wash his pants for 2 yuan. Then it just stopped, and it became a habit for him not to help around the house. He won't do the dishes now even if we ask him. It doesn't really matter anyway.

Slow-Paced at Work, but with Positive Attitude

Q: You mentioned that he stayed home for several years with no school to go to. So, what did he do?

JL's mother: He was just killing time. He bikes well, so he would go out on his bicycle and come back and go out again.

Of course, it wasn't good for him to stay home all the time, so I asked around at Wujiaochang and found a job that's for people with disabilities. It was at a factory manufacturing shoe buttons in Wujiaochang Town. He wasn't very capable to begin

with and was still young, and the work was hard, so he didn't do well in that he was slower than people without disabilities. And it wasn't exactly the kind of job that let you earn a living. So, after a month or two, we felt that it was too much for him and had him quit and stay home again.

Then he went to the Sunshine Home, and stayed there for several years and was paid several hundred yuan per month. I am losing track, but he probably already has 15 years' work experience.

Q: Fifteen years, that long?

JL's mother: Right. Under the state law, people with 15 years' work experience can retire. He probably started working in 2000.

Q: What did he do at the Sunshine Home?

JL's mother: He did some odd jobs, like crafts, making soap boxes, and pasting labels with double-sided tape. He didn't work hard. We never ask him to do anything at home, so he isn't very capable. And the teacher said his productivity was low. Whereas others would make several hundred yuan, he would only make a couple hundred, because they were paid for the number of items made. Some kids might not be that smart, but they were eager to work and could make quite a lot of money. JL had no idea about working and was picky about what he wanted to do. So, the Sunshine Home was basically a hangout place for him where he would play some ball games and help unload shipments. He couldn't handle delicate work.

Q: When did he start working at Papa John's?

JL's mother: About 6 or 7 years ago, and the contract was signed every year or every other year...

Q: I saw his personal information, and it looks like that he joined Papa John's in 2009.

JL's mother: Right. He didn't have any steady job before that. But once he joined Papa John's, he has always stayed there.

Q: How did he find the Papa John's job?

JL's mother: Sunshine Home referred him. There were several Caring Homes in Yangpu District dedicated to helping kids like JL. Papa John's ran a Caring Home too, with a storefront. It was almost like a base where there were people managing and teaching kids like JL how to work. Then other Papa John's stores started recruiting people with disabilities, so JL was transferred to where he works now after several years at the Caring Home. He isn't very capable at work, so it's surprising how he has managed to keep his job. I think he is blessed by the state policy. And Papa John's knows that they can't expect too much from kids like him, which is why he still has the job (See Fig. 1).

The pay is definitely low, but as long as he has a job, it's okay. What would he do if he had to stay home all day? Staying home for a couple of days is okay, but you would get numb and dumb if you stay home for a long time, and being on the computer all the time isn't good, either. So, it's nice for him to have a job to have a sense of responsibility, whatever the pay. Now that he interacts with people and with society, he is more alert and has a sense of going to work and getting off work. He is better with human interaction now and understands things better.



Fig. 1 Mr. JL at work

His job is actually pretty tough. He leaves for work very early and gets home very late, really late like close to 11 p.m. I don't know if he hangs out somewhere before coming home. In principle, he should be able to come home after 8 h at work. But he isn't fast at work to begin with, and he isn't good at saying "No." He is supposed to get off work at 8:30 p.m., but if someone comes in and places an order, he will have

to work more. I told him to come home as soon as it's time to get off work, because commuting on public transportation takes a long time for him. But he didn't want to hear that and believes that what I said makes him lose face. We used to have to work at both our day jobs and at home, but it's not the same for him. He has no work waiting for him at home, he only has a workplace to go to outside home. I really don't know whether he lingers outside or works too late at the store. Maybe some stores are still open when he gets off work, so he goes window shopping. I don't want to interfere too much. He should be left to his own devices.

Q: Did he want this job?

JL's mother: He started working at Papa John's a long time ago, when he had no real idea of looking for a job. He is protected by the state policy, and unless he makes a really bad mistake or there's no other option, he will not be let go. So, he is where he is now because of the state policy. He has some smarts, so he is doing okay at what he does.

He used to work close to Dabaishu, and I had him transferred to the current store to be closer to home. I talked to the manager of the previous store and he said, "I don't really want him to go. He is good." JL isn't picky at work. He will work till very late and won't leave till everyone else has left. That's why the manager said what he did about JL leaving that store. At the current store the business is good, so everyone has to work hard. At the Dabaishu Caring Home, it wasn't so busy, and he didn't have to work as hard. There's nothing wrong with doing what you are told to do, and if you are not very capable, you can make up for it by doing more. He doesn't have to do anything at home, and at work, he isn't looked down upon.

Q: How does he commute to work?

JL's mother: By bus. One problem with us living here now is that there's no bus if he comes home too late, in which case we will pick him up on our electric bike. There's no ferry after 8:30 p.m., but he doesn't get off work at that hour. So, it's been tough for him these last couple of years. Subway Line 10 will stop right in front of where we live, but it's still under construction. It will be easier for him once the construction is completed.

Q: Now that he is working, does he still eat at home?

JL's mother: He usually leaves for work at 8:30 or 9:30 in the morning, so he will have a simple breakfast. He buys lunch. He doesn't get to eat lunch till 4 p.m. and gets a 1-hour break. Between 4 and 11 p.m., he will probably buy something to eat. He knows how to spend money (laughing). He will eat after he gets home at night.

Q: Does he like the job there?

JL's mother: He does. Some kids don't bother to work and would rather stay home and live off their parents. He does us proud. At the store, he oversees drinks. He will make all kinds of drinks and pass them to the servers. It's not hard work per se, but he works long hours.

Q: How much does JL make per month?

JL's mother: Sometimes 2,300 or 2,400 yuan, and sometimes 2,800 yuan. One time he made more than 3,000 yuan, which was really nice, and I don't know whether it included OT pay. I couldn't ask further because JL would be unhappy about that.

Q: Does he save or spend his pay?

JL's mother: I won't leave the bankcard with him. He is a spender and will spend however much you give him, and sometimes will want more. I used to give him a small allowance, which I have been increasing little by little. Now the allowance is 1,000 yuan, and I put the rest aside for him. He buys his own transportation cards, but I pay for his phone cards because he doesn't know how to calculate them. Sometimes he will come home and tell me there's no balance on his phone, and I will just top it up for him.

Q: Does he know how to top up his phone balance?

JL's mother: He does, but he doesn't know how to make it go a long way. I used to give him 300 yuan for every 10 days which added up to 900 yuan per month, but it wasn't enough for him. Since he will use however much I give him, I decided to set a limit to stop him from becoming an even bigger spender. Now his phone expense is about 1,000 or 1,100 yuan.

Q: Does JL talk to you about school or work?

JL's mother: Not a lot.

JL's father: He won't talk about it, but he will tell you if you ask him.

Q: Have you been to the store where he works?

JL's mother: Not a lot. We visited the previous store twice and haven't been to the current one many times.

Q: So, you don't worry too much about him.

JL's mother: Not really. Sometimes we will do some shopping in that area and just stop by to check on him.

Long-Time Obsession with Cars and Trains

JL's father: Even before he started school, he wanted to see trains. He is very interested in cars and trains.

JL's mother: He used to draw them. When a new style of bus came out, he would try to draw it. His drawing wasn't very good since there was no one to guide him.

Q: When did he start drawing buses?

JL's mother: I forget. He has always liked doing it. We never asked him to learn drawing, he just really wanted to do it himself, drawing the front of the bus. He bought a lot of rulers of different shapes including round, square, and triangular. He would buy the rulers himself and use them for drawing. I thought his drawings were pretty nice. The vehicles were three-dimensional, and he only drew two-dimensional, which is different, after all. It's tricky to render the drawings three-dimensional, like shortening the line in the front and stretching it in the back. He would draw all the lines the same length because he didn't know better. He liked drawing cars, and he got excited whenever a new style of bus was introduced.

He used his pocket money to buy a lot of auto magazines which cost quite a bit. There were no computers back then, so we had to buy magazines to support his interest. He would devour the magazines on engines, models, brands and prices, and he understood everything.

JL's father: The magazines cost 20 yuan each back then.

JL's mother: Some of them cost 30 yuan each. There were magazines on sedans and he was really into those.

Q: When did he start buying the magazines?

JL's mother: When he was still young. I don't remember exactly when he started.

JL's father: He would buy the magazines himself, and he even went to auto exhibitions himself.

JL's mother: There was an auto exhibition in Pudong and I didn't want him to go. I was living on Xiangyin Road in Puxi, so I had no time to take him to the exhibition. He ended up going by himself, and some kind of big shot there gave him a business card and he brought home a lot of pamphlets. He really enjoys auto exhibitions.

Q: When was the auto exhibition in Pudong?

JL's mother: It must have been when he was in middle school. He was so into it and would never spend his pocket money buying snacks. I would have been okay if he had spent his money on snacks. He bought so many magazines that it got almost too much. Now that he should be buying books, he buys snacks and he'll say, "You told me to! Now that I am buying snacks, you are mad at me."

(JL's father fetched a stack of magazines from his room.)

JL's father: Look, so many of them... all on cars!

Q: Do you still allow him to buy those magazines?

JL's mother: Not now. I sold some of them when we moved, and he got mad at me. There are still some magazines left at home and I dare not touch them.

JL's father: His mom also embroidered a car picture and hung it in his room.

Q: Did he ask for it to be embroidered?

JL's mother: I mainly did it because he likes autos, so I embroidered that picture to put in his room. His room was decorated according to his preferences. Unlike other kids, he didn't hang a lot of things on the wall. He used to do a little of that and wasn't very neat about it. Now he has no such sense.

When he was really little, we bought him a tricycle, the kind for kids. We taught him how to get on it and he got it immediately. He had good technique, so we took off the training wheels quite quickly and he started riding around really fast on two wheels instead of the original four wheels. He doesn't need too much teaching with those things.

We went to Yangpu District to buy an electric bike. He had never ridden it before, but once we bought it, he rode it home. I think it comes natural to him, he doesn't have to learn.

Q: When was the first time he took the bus alone?

JL's father: It was a long time ago.

JL's mother: He knows everything about which buses to take to where in Shanghai, and I would consult him before I go anywhere. He used to find his way around, now he just looks up the routes on the computer and GPS. He is very familiar with routes, and I don't worry about where he goes on his days off. He knows his way around and I know that he will have no problem coming home.

He has a circle of friends who often talk about where to take pictures of cars, and two of those friends are interested in trains, too.

Q: Is JL interested in trains as well?

JL's mother: He is, but his main interest is buses. Whenever a new style of bus came out, he would look for it and take pictures of it.

Q: Is he still interested now?

JL's mother: He is, but he doesn't go out as often. Now he has the computer. Before he had the computer, he would go out to see the buses.

He doesn't have a lot of friends he can get together with, but he has a lot of WeChat friends who are all interested in trains and autos and they will talk about their shared interests. One time several of them made a plan to go to Hangzhou, and two friends picked him up at the train station. A new bus came out and they all went to take a look—JL took a lot of pictures on his cell phone. He doesn't have a lot of friends he meets up with, but he has a lot of friends whom he doesn't meet up with.

Q: When did he get to know this circle of friends?

JL's mother: I'm not sure. Four or five of them came to visit before, and maybe they just brought their own friends in. Two of them live a little far from us, so they don't come by now but might still have kept contact on WeChat. There's this friend who is really close and JL always goes to his place when he has time off. He also goes to the place of a young lady, who used to hang out at our place all the time but doesn't do that as often now.

Q: When do the friends come to visit?

JL's mother: After he gets off work.

Self-Dependent and a Comfort to Parents

Q: Does he know how to cook rice?

JL's mother: Last time I left the rice out and went somewhere. I came back to find that he already cooked it and folded the laundry. He knows what to do, he just doesn't do it a lot.

Q: Maybe with you around, he doesn't feel like doing much.

JL's mother: Right. I complimented him on cooking the rice.

Q: When did he learn how to cook rice?

JL's father: He has never seen us do it.

JL's mother: I asked him to do it and he refused, but if I really got to teach him, he picked it up fast. He can cook pancakes and eggs with tomatoes. He just doesn't want to do it, being a little lazy. I don't force him. He lacks self-discipline and plays on the computer all day long and won't go to bed till really late at night.

He is pretty independent. Sometimes we will go out after having fixed his meal, and he will have no problem microwaving it for himself. We aren't worried about that. Nowadays money solves everything, and takeout orders are delivered so easily. I am thinking about putting some money aside just for him to eat out if we don't want to cook for him.

He knows what to do with his computer, and we have to consult him on that. He is good with theories but not as good in practice. He has a lot of knowledge and

watches international and sports news. In that regard, he is like the average man. He likes to watch what every other man watches, like science and technology. I have no idea about the leaders and capitals of different countries, but he knows them all. He doesn't watch a lot of TV—he spends more time on his computer and watches news there.

Q: Does he buy his own clothes?

JL's mother: I don't usually let him do it, because I am not sure about it. Last time he went shopping with a friend and spent 200 yuan on a shirt that I didn't like much, because not many people would wear that kind of shirt. He is better with picking the right brand of shoes to buy and has good taste in that regard. I don't let him buy whatever he wants. I will transfer some money to him each month and not ask how he spends it.

Q: Do you know what he normally buys?

JL's mother: Miscellaneous stuff like snacks and small things that are not very practical. I told him not to buy small things but to save for big things, but he doesn't get it. There's that month when I gave him 1,500 yuan and he came back asking for more. When we had a parents' meeting, I asked another parent how much allowance she gave her kid and she said 500 yuan. The truth is that if you are really frugal, 500 yuan is more than enough. A bowl of noodles is 20 or 30 yuan, so 500 yuan won't go a long way if you buy that, but you can save money by buying steamed buns instead. People asked him to go traveling with them, and I told him that the fewer days he traveled, the more money he would have left. He doesn't exactly spend a fortune, but he spends a good amount. He doesn't have the habit of being careful with money. People like you can spend 2,000 or 3,000 yuan without blinking an eye. He makes less, so he should spend less. We are putting money aside for him, but he should do it himself, too.

Q: I believe you need to be patient when teaching him about money.

JL's mother: I will still worry that he can't manage money. Whoever invites him out, he will go, and whenever he goes, he spends money and comes home late, and taking a taxi costs money, too. Sometimes I feel that while we are still around, we should allow him to take it easy, but we worry that we have saved money for him for nothing. It's hard to explain it to him. We should probably let his cousins handle his money for him in the future.

Q: What do you think his strengths are?

JL's mother: He has an excellent memory and JL knows the capitals of different countries in the world and who sang which song, things that I have no clue about. We took him to Taicang to see relatives and friends, and years later, he can still remember who he met. He is just a little small in size. I wish he were taller and bigger.

Q: How are his reactions?

JL's mother: His reactions are okay, pretty fast. But people are not comfortable with them because they are like those of a kid.

Q: Can you recall things he did that made you happy?

JL's mother: He can be caring when he wants to be. (Laughing) He doesn't do the dishes because we do it all the time. If I nag at him about him going to bed late, he will push back and want to be left alone.

Q: Maybe a lot of people his age are like that.

JL's mother: But sometimes I realize that he understands and will try to comfort us.

Q: How does he do that?

JL's mother: If something really happens, he can understand it, analyze it, and talk about it in a very sensible way. He can do this the same way an average person does. For example, if I run into some difficulty, he will ask me not to dwell on it since it has already happened. You are going to interview him at his workplace, aren't you? He will be a little nervous at the interview and not be able to be himself, even though he will try to present his best to you. Sometimes the unwanted happens.

Self-Esteem, Self-Dependence and Friends as Priorities

JL's mother: He gets home from work late and will still be on his phone. I always ask him not to talk on the phone if it's too late. He has several friends. When some of them need help with something, he will step up and tell me he is going out. He looks all serious about being the savior. I will tell him to be more realistic about his own ability and to think twice about going so far to do something he may not be capable of.

Q: So, he will go out whenever his friends ask him to?

JL's mother: He doesn't know how to say "no." He will already be ready to hit the hay, but the call comes, and he doesn't want to lose face, so he will go out however late it is. Other kids will just say "no" if they don't feel like going out.

Q: Maybe he feels that friends are very important.

JL's mother: I would think so. If I keep saying "no" to his friends, he won't even talk to me. He wants his friends. If those friends abandon him, I am sure he will feel bad. If he had a bigger circle of friends, he could have moved on from one friend to another. But he doesn't have a bigger circle of friends. I wish there was some kind of club where volunteers and college students could host some activities each week. That way JL would have something to turn to. Now he doesn't, and he spends way too much time on the computer.

When he has time off, he will just hang out with several friends, and they don't exactly do anything specific. He has three or four friends whom he went to school with, and they all have disabilities, too. Those without disabilities won't hang out with them anyway. His circle is too small. Seniors can use the seniors' discount card when taking public transportation, but people like JL don't make much and taking a taxi costs 20 or 30 yuan. He has a disability certificate, but he wants to save face and is unwilling to use it.

Q: So, he doesn't want to be treated as someone with ID, right?

JL's mother: Right. When we went to the park, he didn't really have to pay for admission. But he would rather pay, even though it was 30 yuan, which was pretty expensive. He told us not to interfere.

Whenever he goes out, he will come home very late. His dad got so mad that he almost spanked him. We told him to come back earlier, and he would acknowledge it, but then he would come back really late again.

Q: How late are we talking?

JL's mother: As late as 1 a.m. Had it been any later, there would have been no taxis to bring him home. We would call him and he would tell us he was on his way back, and we would remind him that taxis costs extra when it gets late. When he got back, he was spanked because we were so mad. (Laughing)

Q: Do you still spank him even now?

JL's mother: We do whenever he doesn't listen. He was spanked many times, and his dad would feel bad about it and soften up afterwards, telling him, "I don't really want to spank you, but you have to listen and come home earlier." And he would howl in displeasure. He had gone all the way somewhere to hang out. If that place had been closer, he would have come home earlier. So, he would apologize to his dad. He is very small and skinny, and he has his frustrations. It's actually funny to see him that way.

Q: How does JL get along with his dad?

JL's mother: They don't communicate a lot. His dad is very stubborn, especially when something happens. If nothing happens, they can still talk.

I don't think JL has a good temperament. He will raise his voice almost as soon as we start talking to him. I wish he could listen better. Sometimes he just likes to be contrary, but sometimes he is really nice. I don't want to nag at him because it might turn him against me.

Q: Young people live in a different world from older people.

JL's mother: Right. It's normal for him to want to go out. We will worry but we can't really keep him home. So, I decided to leave him alone. He will be unhappy if we don't allow him to go out, saying, "Everyone goes out and comes home happy, so why are you treating me this way whenever I get off work?" He is not being unreasonable, so I told his dad to dial back a bit and put ourselves in his shoes. Still, we will worry and won't sleep till he is back.

Q: Ask him to call you or text you to let you know where he is and when he is coming home.

JL's mother: If we call him, he will tell us he is on his way back, but an hour later, he still won't be back. He won't tell us where he goes. If he went to World Expo, he should have just told us so. He won't communicate with us. He told us that he was hanging out on Yinhang Road which is close, but then he wasn't back as early as we had expected. If he had told us he went to World Expo which was farther out, we would have had different expectations. Sometimes he and several friends will go to Chenghuang Temple which is very far, and he will tell us that he's at a classmate's place instead, which is quite close. Sometimes he will say he is eating out, but he will leave at 5 p.m. and come home at 7 or 8 p.m., so we are very confused.

Q: Do his friends work?

JL's mother: They do. One of them works at McDonald's. He's a nice one, 1.78 m tall and good looking. He has better looks than JL.

Q: How tall is JL?

JL's mother: He isn't even 1.70 m. That friend looks decent and seems to be more understanding than JL. He found his job himself, whereas JL was referred. He makes more than JL does, 3,000 or 4,000 yuan sometimes.

Q: So, what disability does that friend have?

JL's mother: He couldn't keep up at school. I feel that his intellectual disability is less severe than JL's.

Q: Will JL go up to strangers and talk to them?

JL's mother: He is very courteous. When we met with relatives last time, he was very good at calling them "elder sister" and "auntie." My observation is that really smart kids won't do that. When he was still at school, people from the Education Bureau visited, and he would say, "Leader, thank you for your hard work." (Laughing)

Q: Kids have different personalities.

JL's mother: I just find it hilarious, and even for me, he is being too courteous. But he told me not to laugh at him. He would apologize profusely if he bumps into someone, and I would tell him it's not necessary, and he would tell me to mind my own business. (Laughing) When we have visitors at home, he will come out of his room to say "Hi." Not everyone does that.

Q: Does he have any difficulty chatting with other people?

JL's mother: He can chat. The content is okay, but I don't quite like the way he talks. He suffers a little bit of low self-esteem. He hopes to draw attention to himself and to have people look into his eyes. But I realized that he dares not look into other people's eyes. I told him to do it, because otherwise some people would look down on him.

Q: I believe it's not just a problem for him. Even people without disabilities have some pressure when chatting with others.

JL's mother: I am just not comfortable with it because it shows disrespect. Sometimes when he chats with someone, if that person changes subject, he should too. I believe that because his social circle is small, he may not like what other people talk about and other people may not be interested in what he says, they just have different interests. He will keep talking to someone about cars and soccer, oblivious of what that person wants to talk about. Sometimes he will watch soccer till 2 or 3 a.m. It used to be even later, but now that he works, he doesn't have the energy to stay up that late. He likes soccer and that's a very normal interest. People think he is capable at work, and he is indeed capable.

Q: From another perspective, this is fate. Even though there are things he is not good at, he is a unique kid, just like everyone else.

JL's mother: The biggest regret about him is that he is too small and skinny. If he were taller, he could have got a more physical job. His dad isn't tall, nor am I, which is why he isn't tall and why he's skinny too.

Less Time on Sports and More Time on Computer Games

Q: Does he exercise?

JL's mother: He comes home very late from work now, so he hardly has time for exercise. There's a basketball court in front and I bought him a basketball. He only played once or twice after I bought that ball.

Q: Does he not like exercising?

JL's mother: He does. When he was going to the Sunshine Home, he would win prizes at bike races and a lot of other sports competitions. He won either first or second place and brought home comforters, pillows, little trophies, and a lot of other prizes.

Q: Did he train for the bike races?

JL's mother: Not really. He knows how to ride a bike. He started with races at the Sunshine Home and moved on to district-wide races, and the opponents were all in a worse condition than he was. He was the only one among kids like him who knew how to do it. He couldn't have competed against people without disabilities.

The bike races weren't that easy. You were supposed to ride slow instead of fast, and you needed to be skillful at balancing and braking. The slowest was actually the champion, and the rear wheel had to touch the finish line for you to complete the race. He didn't quite get it and stopped as soon as his front wheel touched the finish line.

Q: What other sports competitions did he win besides biking?

JL's mother: There were quite a few that he always won prizes at.

He isn't in the best physical condition. There's a minor defect with his heart and it beats a little fast. We took him to the hospitals and were told by some that he needed surgery and by others that he didn't. It's nothing major. The doctors just said that we need to watch out in case he passes out, and he shouldn't engage in sports that are too strenuous. He gets short of breath when he runs fast.

Q: Does he like soccer and basketball?

JL's mother: He likes ball games. He used to be really into sports, but he isn't in the best physical shape.

Q: What other sports does he like besides basketball and soccer?

JL's mother: There's no other sports that he likes. And he doesn't even play ball games now. He gets lazy. I bought him the basketball and he won't play with it. He used to have a small circle of friends who would invite him to play ball games. That's why I said it would be nice if each district had a club where kids with disabilities like JL could play together. He has no circle of friends now and people without disabilities won't hang out with him. What's he going to do when we get old? So, this could be a major problem.

Q: Does he play games on the computer?

JL's mother: He will watch the news and play games on his computer. He doesn't watch a lot of TV now. When he has time off, he will spend the whole day playing games with friends, and even when he comes home at midnight, he will still play on his computer. We just don't get it.

Q: Young people nowadays seem to all be like that.

JL's mother: It's like a general addiction.

Q: I was flipping through your pictures and realized that you have traveled extensively. Did you take him on all your travels?

JL's mother: He would still go with us a couple of years ago, but not now. He did mention once that he definitely wants to visit Beijing. He hasn't been traveling a lot with us in recent years, because he prefers to spend time with friends in his circle. I would worry if those kids go traveling on their own, so I offered last time to take all of them to Beijing.

Q: So, you have a lot of free time now?

JL's mother: I do, since I'm retired. I would have no problem taking kids like JL traveling with their parents' consent, but they might not be able to appreciate it as much.

Q: When JL was young, was he very happy about traveling with you?

JL's mother: We took him to Hainan and he was very happy. His dad is still working even though he has officially retired. We will take JL traveling once his dad fully retires.

Q: When did you retire?

JL's mother: In 2006, when I was 50. His dad worked till 2014 when he was 60, and now he still has some kind of a job. I cook and clean the house. I used to make JL breakfast like pancakes, but now he wants to eat out for breakfast, which means less work for me. But I do need to cook lunch for him to bring to work. I don't want him to bring leftovers. So, I will cook and leave it in the fridge so that it won't spoil on hot days, and he will take it when he leaves for work. It's a lot of work cooking. A lot of companies provide employees with meals, but Papa John's doesn't.

Q: It's better to bring your own lunch than to eat out.

JL's mother: Right. But he leaves for work early, so he probably eats the lunch early and eats out sometime in the afternoon. I have no idea what he eats and he won't tell me.

Worried About Old Age and Hoping for Better Policies

Q: Why did you decide to move over here?

JL's mother: My elder brother and elder sister all live here. And we moved partly because of JL. What will he do when we get old? My siblings can help take care of him.

Q: How do you think JL is doing now?

JL's mother: He isn't very capable. When we first sent him out to work, we were not optimistic. Now that we see he has been doing well, has managed to keep his job for 6 or 7 years and can make a living on his own, we are less worried. I am thankful to the government for its policies creating job opportunities for kids like JL. He works pretty hard and the managers at the workplace all say good things about him. I am actually a little lost because I see him as not capable at all. (Laughing)

Q: Kids behave differently in front of their parents than they do in front of others.

JL's mother: They do. And I am sure the managers are protective of him.

Q: The government is doing what it should do and some other countries are doing a better job than we are.

JL's mother: At the meeting last time, some parents complained about pay inequality. I actually believe it's already a blessing that the government gives kids like JL opportunities. I won't complain, and I couldn't be more appreciative. The government is watching out for them, so they won't lose their jobs. Had it been some other workplaces, they might have been sent home if they were not performing well.

Q: What goes through your mind when you are with JL?

JL's mother: We have no choice, seeing how smart other kids are and how our own kid is...

JL's father: He gets depressed himself too.

JL's mother: We have low self-esteem ourselves. People will ask us how our kid is doing; how old he is and whether he wants a date. The people asking may not know our situation well, so I will have to turn them down. Who is going to marry him, except someone who is from outside Shanghai, a really poor place actually, and who isn't a top pick herself, isn't wild and is willing to settle down. It's not going to be easy. Girls without disabilities will have high standards, and we don't want JL to just settle for anybody because our financial situation isn't bad at all and we make good money. But there has to be a matchmaker. I wouldn't mind him having a date and it's okay if the girl has no money. Do you know a lot of girls?

Q: We don't, but I am sure there are families like that in Shanghai, and you could discuss it with other families when you get together with them.

JL's mother: I seldom meet with other families. There was one time when the teacher got us together for a meeting, but no one really talked. And those meetings were held just once or twice.

JL's father: We have to find JL someone who knows her way around the house.

JL's mother: That's a must. What else can we expect of her?

JL's father: We are getting old. While we are still alive, we can do things for him. What's he gonna do when we are gone?

JL's mother: We will have to find JL someone who can do household chores, is handy, and can take care of him for the rest of his life. To put it bluntly, life won't be rosy for JL when he gets old. I hope that he can find a wife now who won't mind his disability, is willing to do more around the house, and can live a good life with him. The key is that there has to be someone who will settle for him.

Q: Does he think about it himself?

JL's mother: He doesn't take any initiatives, because he isn't quite there yet. One time, there was this girl who had a crush on him. She was from Papa John's Caring Home too, and she was really into him. She has some disabilities, too... I told JL to bring the girl over when he got a chance and to go out with her. He would never take the first step, he just didn't have that sense. If he doesn't think about it, I won't either. I will just let him be and cool my own enthusiasm.

Q: Maybe the right girl will just come along like that.

JL's mother: They should probably meet in a shared circle so that they can get a chance to bond.

Q: Do you and your husband have any expectations for the government and for society?

JL's mother: His social circle is too small, and he doesn't have many people to hang out with. He isn't as smart as other people, so those with high IQ have nothing in common with him to want to hang out with him. A lot of people his age have a big circle of friends and some of them are already dads now. The best scenario is that each district will set up a club for people with disabilities where no one will look down on anyone and everyone can hang out together, have all sorts of activities, make friends and broaden their mental horizons.

Another thing is what will happen when we get old. We are the ones to take care of JL. It will never be the other way around. We will take care of him till we can't do it anymore, and what happens then? JL doesn't make much, so we won't be able to depend on him. So, the government is the only one who can take care of us. We hope for better policies so that we and JL can be taken care of when we get old.

Some families have kids who are in a worse condition than JL, and the parents would rather the kids depart the world before they do. What will JL do when we are no longer with him? Even if we put aside a fortune for him, can he manage it? Without kids and grandkids, what will happen in his old age? The best thing that I can hope for is a nursing home providing good care and offering discounts to people like JL. Nursing homes nowadays are very expensive and not everyone can afford it with just their pension. I hope that JL can enjoy a higher social status in the future and that people will take better care of him.

So that's what is on our mind now. We regret that we didn't do more when bringing him up. Our lives and his life so far have been miserable. We are still not too old ourselves, so we try not to overthink. We rely on the government and rely on relatives and friends. We are happy that he has a job now so that he can have some pension when he retires, and we hope he can stay at this job for a long time. But what if he is not physically up for this job several years down the road? We don't want to suggest anything. We just hope that the government can foresee that and issue some policies accordingly.

Interview with JL's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Mr. A

Interviewer and writer: Yuan Gu

Interview date: December 19, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where JL works

Q: What does JL normally do at work?

A: He makes drinks and appetizers. We do a lot of takeout orders and we get busy doing that. Sometimes the delivery guys will come to pick up the orders and he will pack and hand them to the delivery guys.

Q: Do you normally talk to him or interact with him?

A: Yes, I do talk to him and say “hi” to him.

Q: How does he get along with people and how is his personality?

A: His personality is okay. I don’t really talk that much with him. Mostly it’s just saying “hi.”

Interview with JL’s Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Ms. B (restaurant manager)

Interviewer and writer: Yuan Gu

Interview date: December 19, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where JL works

Q: How long has JL been at this store?

B: He was transferred here from another store 2 years ago. I joined after he did. I was transferred here 2 years ago, too.

Q: How is he at work?

B: He takes his job seriously, but he is slower-paced than the other two employees being cared for. We are required to bring food to the table within 15 min after an order being placed, and he gets flustered when we get busy and doesn’t know what to do first and what to do next. I am not comparing him to regular employees, I am just comparing him against the other two employees being cared for, and he is a little slower in keeping up at work. He can handle making drinks and he remembers the ingredients and how one drink is different from another. When asked to cover another position, he won’t be able to keep up with our pace when we get busy. Our employees are expected to work at multiple positions, but it will be a little over his head if he has to make appetizers, too. There’s another employee being cared for who knows what to do at almost all of the stations. Of course, he has limited abilities, but his attitude is very positive. He is eager about keeping this job, and he can do what management asks him to do and beat quotas set for him. I hope that he can learn more and do more.

Q: JL mentioned in his interview that the manager and co-workers help him a lot.

B: The co-workers are very tolerant of him and take good care of him. And the company has good policies towards employees like JL. When their contract expired in November of this year, they signed a long-term contract with no expiration date.

Q: Does he chat with his co-workers during breaks? How does he get along with them?

B: They do chat. He gets along very well with his co-workers. He knows routes very well, so if some co-workers don’t know where is where, he will tell them. He is

also into cars, which we all know about. And if we talk about things he is interested in, he will come over and chip in.

Q: So, he has an outgoing personality.

B: He is pretty outgoing and not the kind to keep things to himself. He will verbally acknowledge whatever work we assign to him. He will notice the expiration dates of products and remind everyone of them, and he cares about product quality.

Q: What do you think of the policy to hire employees being cared for?

B: I am very supportive of it. Every Papa John's store has several employees being cared for, and J store only has employees being cared for. Sometimes the store will replace managers but will never let go of employees being cared for. This is how the government helps people with disabilities.

Interview with Mr. JL

Interviewee: Mr. JL

Interviewer and writer: Yuan Gu

Interview date: December 19, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where JL works

Q: Which school did you graduate from?

JL: I graduated from Yangfan School of Yangpu District.

Q: What did you mainly learn at school?

JL: Arts and crafts, illustrations, and horticulture.

Q: Did you find those classes interesting?

JL: They were okay.

Q: Was the school far from where you lived?

JL: Not too bad. It took me 20 min riding to school on my bike.

Q: Did you feel any pressure about schoolwork?

JL: Pressure about schoolwork? I was very bad at schoolwork. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't learn, and that broke my mom's heart, and my dad's, too. But there's nothing I could have done. I wanted to learn, who doesn't? But I just couldn't. My parents worried themselves sick over my schooling, but I really couldn't learn. Chinese and math were the hardest for me. I was okay with PE, and also arts and crafts and drawing.

Q: What did you do for PE?

JL: We would alternate between playing basketball, soccer, and badminton. A little bit of everything.

Q: When do you leave for work now?

JL: 8:25 a.m.

Q: That's pretty early. Do you take the subway or bus coming to work?

JL: Bus, two different lines.

Q: Have you always lived in Pudong?

JL: We moved there 2 years ago. I hadn't wanted to move because living in Puxi is much more convenient, but my mom insisted, and I had no choice. The new place is so far, but what can I do? (Laughing) I have friends in Puxi and commuting to work would have taken only 20 min. Now I have to catch the bus and it's really a hassle. Something happened on my way to work today, as bus Line 453 collided with a car. I would have had to wait 30 min for another bus. I didn't want to be late for work, so I took a taxi.

Q: Do you live with your parents in Pudong?

JL: I do.

Q: How many days a week do you work?

JL: Five days, but not consecutively.

Q: What do you normally do at work?

JL: I make drinks and appetizers.

Q: How many years have you worked at this store?

JL: I have worked at this store for 2 years, and at another store for 6 years.

Q: Was it a J store where you worked for 6 years?

JL: Yeah.

Q: When you were new on the job, how did you familiarize yourself with the operational processes?

JL: I had someone teaching me, and I would try to remember everything bit by bit. I couldn't have remembered everything all at once.

Q: How do you make the drinks and appetizers?

JL: Cokes are easy since they come from machines. Some drinks need to be mixed by hand, for example, I mix lemon tea powder with water to make lemon tea. Appetizers are already made and just need to be baked in the oven. A lot of food is half-cooked and kept in the fridge, and I just bake it before serving.

Q: Does it get busy during peak hours?

JL: It does sometimes, and it gets really tiring. But what can you do?

Q: What food are you relatively skilled at making?

JL: I like to make milkshakes, but I am not good at making them. (Sighing)

Q: Do you find it easy to work here?

JL: There's a lot of work pressure here. I will start in the morning and maybe take a break at 3:30, then I will start again at 4:30 and work till 8 p.m. Sometimes I feel enormous pressure and I don't know how to adjust to it. Sometimes I feel so tense and almost breathless. I feel like I'm going crazy unless I can take a breather.

Q: How do you get along with your manager and co-workers?

JL: My manager and co-workers are all very nice. They will help me when I have difficulties, like when I don't have enough time to make all the food.

Q: When do you usually have lunch?

JL: During my 1-hour break. We have specific time slots for taking breaks, and if my break starts at 2:30, I will eat at 2:30.

Q: Does the store provide lunch?

JL: You will have to pay if you eat at the store. We figure out our own lunch.

Q: Besides lunch, what do you do during your break?

JL: Sometimes I will relax and chat.

Q: Do you go anywhere after work?

JL: I might hang out somewhere if I have nothing planned, and if there's something planned, I will go straight home. I actually don't hang out that much, unless friends come over to eat out with me.

Q: Are you still in the habit of playing sports?

JL: I only play occasionally. Since I'm busy at work, I get tired sometimes and just want to stay home and sleep.

Q: What do you normally do on your days off?

JL: I just chill out at home. And I like basketball and soccer.

Q: When I interviewed your parents at home, I saw a lot of auto magazines. You are interested in that area, right?

JL: My favorites are magazines on buses and trains because I am really into them. I have been to a lot of train exhibitions and auto exhibitions. I used to go with three friends, because we shared the same interest. Some of the exhibitions are held once a year. I didn't have time this year, but my friends went.

Q: What would draw your attention at the exhibitions?

JL: How the cars are made and their performance.

Q: Do you travel?

JL: I went with friends to Nanjing, just for a day. I visited the Nanjing Massacre Museum.

Q: What do you do with friends?

JL: We visit the auto exhibitions and eat out. We became friends because we could communicate in a certain area. For example, all of us are train fans and we share the same interest, which makes communication easier. Not everyone understands trains and buses or is interested at all.

Q: It's nice that there are exhibitions related to those both in China and abroad.

JL: But there's a technical gap between China and abroad. The buses we had before in China couldn't even compare against those abroad. The gap was huge. Now the technologies have matured quite a bit in China. We didn't have bus cards till the 1990s, when they had been around abroad for 20 or 30 years. Now we are catching up and our technologies are very mature.

Q: So, what's the gap with regards to trains?

JL: We used to not have high-speed rail, and we borrowed some technologies from Japan and some from Germany. For example, technologies for high-speed rail CRH380 were borrowed from Hitachi in Japan, and technologies for high-speed rail CRH5 were borrowed from Siemens in Germany. Express rail and high-speed rail are different in speed. High-speed rail is faster at 350 km per hour, and express rail runs between 240 and 260 km per hour.

Q: So, will you choose those transportation methods when you travel?

JL: High-speed rail and airplane will be my choices. I want to travel just on high-speed rail. And it's going to happen soon. I plan to visit Beijing, since I have never been there.

Q: Thank you for taking time from work for this interview.

JL: It's fine.

Observation of JL at Work

Observation date: December 19, 2017

Observation place: Restaurant where JL works

Observer and writer: Yuan Gu

Time	What JL did	Remarks
11:20	Arrived for work	
11:31	Made drinks at the drinks station	
11:38	Sent out appetizers he made and organized orders	
11:51	The manager assigned work and briefly talked with the employees	
12:00	Made drinks and appetizers	
12:30	Made appetizers, and handed takeout orders to the delivery person	JL handed out a wrong order, and the delivery person came back for the right one
14:10	Had interview	
15:00–16:00	Rested in the back of the kitchen	
16:00	Made appetizers, and handed takeout orders to the delivery person	
16:28	Made appetizers, and handed takeout orders to the delivery person	The delivery person got impatient waiting for the order, and talked to JL
17:00	A co-worker took over the shift, and JL went to the back of the kitchen	
18:14	Made appetizers, and handed takeout orders to the delivery person	
20:00	Punched out	

Translated by Cissy Zhao

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

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It Is What It Is



Qiangyu Lu

Interview with Ms. ZZ's Mother

ZZ, female, born in 1984. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a mainstream school in January 2009. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in July 2009.

Interviewee: ZZ's mother

Interviewers: Qiangyu Lu and Mengyuan Yu

Writer: Qiangyu Lu

Interview dates: November 29 and December 25, 2016

Interview place: ZZ's home

Predestination

Q: How are you, ma'am. Shall we start with when you first met your husband?

ZZ's mother: We were co-workers and met through someone else. I was 25 when we got married and ZZ was conceived 1 month later.

I didn't have any issue with the pregnancy. The birth itself was a bit slow, but it was still a natural birth because she was vacuumed out. If forceps had been used, it would have been a different story.

We didn't notice anything wrong when she was first born. Most babies cry immediately after they come out, but she didn't. She was deprived of oxygen coming out but was saved. Some babies can smile at around 1 month old, but she couldn't even smile at 3 months old, which we found strange. Then we gradually realized that she was slower than everyone else at almost everything.

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We took her to see some doctors, including the ones at the Children's Hospital. The doctors said to feed her some MSG to make her smart. We also gave her medication. I figured that the doctors could help improve her condition, but they couldn't really tell what was wrong with her. Her brain had already developed by that time, so we stopped seeing any doctors.

There are kids who grew up in the countryside and don't really have anything fancy to eat, but they're smart and can get into Peking University. It's all about the genes. Kids nowadays are fed imported milk. But at the college for seniors, I heard about this kid who grew up in a really thrifty family and just drank Guangming brand milk but still ended up having the best scores in the class. So it doesn't really matter what you feed the kids, don't you agree?

Qigong was popular back then, so we did it with her. You would do anything for your kid, right? But that was no help either.

We didn't know what else to do and were frustrated about how slow she was. Had we known she would turn out this way, we wouldn't have asked to save her when she was first born and was in danger. She grew up only to be bullied, and I can't feel good about that, can I? I am her mom, after all.

Q: In addition to not being able to smile, what other signs were apparent that she might be slower than the average kid?

ZZ's mother: I also found that she was timider than other kids. Maybe that's normal for kids like her. For example, we bought her an electric toy that could walk on its own, and that freaked her out.

Q: When she was young, how did she react when grown-ups approached her?

ZZ's mother: Her reactions were okay. ZZ was the first child to be born in this apartment building, so everyone loved her. Unlike other kids who looked smart, she was slow, fair-skinned and chubby. She did play and hang out with other kids on the block, and she got to go places that the other kids went, but she was just really slow.

We were both working full time back then, so her grandma took care of her. Her grandma didn't see anything wrong, she thought she was a very good kid. ZZ would do such stupid things that I almost wanted to spank her, but her grandma felt that she was just being a kid.

She started preschool around age three or four and the preschool teacher told us that she was slower than the other kids and couldn't get certain things done. In fact, that was when she started lagging behind the other kids including kids who were younger than her.

What happens in preschools everywhere is that good kids hang out together and the other kids are just brushed aside. So she ended up hanging out with a kid who wasn't doing well at school. That kid might have come from a filthy house because she had lice in her hair, and ZZ ended up getting lice from playing with her.

It's not easy bringing up a child like her. You try so much harder than other parents, but to no avail.

She didn't know her own condition. If she had known, everything would have been all right with her, right? Sometimes I would ask her jokingly, "Is there something wrong with you?" She would reply, "No." I would ask again and she would reply

“Yes.” That’s just how she was. But she is my child, so I have no choice but to face it head-on and always try to make things easier for her.

When she reached school age, she was required to take some kind of test. The school here is a very good one, No. 1 Central Elementary School of Jing’an District. But the school rejected her because she was not smart enough. A teacher there suggested that we send her to a special education school. “Maybe you can come back next year,” the teacher suggested. Some kids, especially boys, failed one year but got in the next year. Since she couldn’t go back to preschool, it was better for her to go to a special education school than stay home for a year.

I saw the teacher calling the special education school on the spot, “I am sending someone to your school. You have space, right?” It was as if the teacher called a favor for us and ZZ ended up going there.

She did pretty well there where some of the kids were even more intellectually disabled. So the teachers said, “She isn’t too bad and shouldn’t waste time staying with us.” She was at the special education school for 6 months or a year before the teachers sent her away to a regular school, X Road Elementary School, where she started from first grade again.

Once back at the regular elementary school, she was again the slowest, and you know what happens to the slowest kids. They get bullied and even the teachers ignore them. Her intellectual ability is way below that of the average kid, so she could hardly keep up.

We were young back then and didn’t know better—now I read about how to educate kids on WeChat. For example, if a kid isn’t doing well at school, the mother would go to the parent–teacher meeting and come back, instead of asking the kid why he isn’t doing well, saying, “You are doing great and the teacher said you have improved.” And the result is that the kid would improve, right? It’s the case for some kids. There are even inventors who were not smart when they were young.

That’s really just the way it is. It’s actually kind of funny—because we have a kid like this, we naturally pay more attention and would often see on TV or read in the papers how some kids with cerebral palsy still have a sharp mind and go to elite schools, even though their family members have to carry them to school. There are kids like that, right? Like [Stephen] Hawking—he is super smart even though his body is damaged.

Q: Back then, did you often help her with schoolwork?

ZZ’s mother: We did try to help her all the time, but she never remembered what we taught her.

She had a homeroom teacher who thought ZZ was the worst student and held the whole class back, so she took her to the Children’s Hospital to test her IQ several times. The score was 80-something. That’s lower than the 100 or more which is considered high, but not by too much. So she was kind of normal but the teacher said that she scored on the test by rote memory (laughs). Had her IQ score been really low, the school would have kicked her out. But her score fell within the normal range, so there was nothing the school could do.

The homeroom teacher later introduced a tutor to us who asked for 400 yuan a month—back in the 1990s that was considered quite a lot. We wanted to help her

improve and to make it easier for ourselves too, so we sent her to the tutor for Chinese and math. She went there after school, Monday through Friday. There were a couple of other kids with her and she went for at least a year. But there wasn't much the tutor could do to help. If a kid is normal, he can study on his own and won't need a tutor at all. But what could we have done? And what could ZZ have done?

Because she wasn't doing well at school, we had to suck up to the teacher. Like when her window broke, we had a sheet of glass prepared and delivered it to her house ourselves.

Q: She spent 5 years in elementary school back then, right? What about middle school?

ZZ's mother: She did go to a middle school, just one of those regular schools.

There was no test for graduating from elementary to middle school, so she went to the neighborhood school. She lagged behind all the time and had a really tough time catching up.

We hoped that the teacher would treat her well, so we tried to be very nice to her, like giving her gift certificates which seemed to have helped a little. It's like this at every school, as you know, although good students don't have to suck up as much. At your elementary or middle school, there will be kids who aren't doing well, and you know how it is, right? The teachers, of course, like good kids—I would be the same if I were a teacher. How many people do you know who really have a big heart? No one has really cared for them, who would have cared for them anyway?

She sort of graduated from the middle school and went on to a vocational school. Well, she didn't exactly graduate from the middle school. Back then, kids who weren't doing well at school could be diverted to another school without any tests. I was pretty close with her homeroom teacher because I always gave her gifts. So once I heard about this option, I asked the homeroom teacher whether ZZ should go to a vocational school, and she said it was up to me. I figured that since she wasn't doing well in middle school, there was no point in staying on because she couldn't have made it to high school anyway. I forget the name of the middle school. It wasn't as academically advanced as some of the other middle schools and the kids there weren't the smartest.

She left the middle school for a vocational school and I don't recall her taking any tests. So what should she focus on at the vocational school? There were many choices like jewelry appraisal, but none of them were right for her.

We had a neighbor who was teaching at a vocational school. We wondered if the school would arrange a job for her after graduation, as had been the custom. But as it turned out, you had to look for a job yourself. We were advised that since the Expo was going to be held in Shanghai, there would be a lot of restaurant-related jobs, so she chose hospitality as her major and has been in that sector ever since. It's not easy at all, but I don't know what other choices would have been viable for her.

After graduating from the vocational school, she got her first job at Lvyang Village Restaurant, if I remember correctly. Do you know that restaurant? It's pretty big and she worked there for a couple of years. At first she had to wash dishes—it's a very tough job but she didn't have to do it after a while.

There were still polytechnics back then. I read about those schools in the newspaper and figured she could give it a try. So she went to a polytechnic for 2 years and her

major there was Restaurant Services and Management, but the curriculum covered Chinese, math, and whatnot and didn't really prepare her for jobs after graduation.

So she did get a degree from the polytechnic, but kids going to this kind of school were not good at academics to start with.

Q: Was she happy going to the polytechnic?

ZZ's mother: She just did what she was told, she wasn't arguing.

Q: What was she like when she was going to school? Was she an introvert? Did you often take her out?

ZZ's mother: She was indeed an introvert. She would talk a lot sometimes, but what she said didn't quite make sense to me. That's just the way it was.

We did go out a lot, the whole family. Her dad really spoils her. Even now, you know, he calls her "babe girl" in Shanghai dialect, because she is his baby girl.

Q: Did she have a lot of friends at school?

ZZ's mother: She was struggling with schoolwork and was the worst student in the class, academic-wise. Because of that, as you can imagine, she hardly had any friends. She was almost always on her own. There's a girl living next door—they used to hang out sometimes but they're no longer in touch.

Q: If she didn't have any friends at school, would she be upset about it when she came home or become reluctant to go to school?

ZZ's mother: Not really, she still went to school. But I knew that she was very unhappy.

I felt really bad for her. Like she would go on a field trip and we would pack food for her or give her money and tell her to go buy KFC with her classmates. There were mean kids in her class who probably just took her food or money.

And she wouldn't tell us when she came back. I wished she had told us. Sometimes I would say to her, "If someone bullies you, you have to come back and tell us. If you keep it to yourself, you will get bullied even more." But the bullies must have threatened her, "You cannot tell! You don't want to know what I am going to do if you tell," so she was afraid to tell us. I saw how starved she was when she came back from the field trips and I knew someone had taken her money. She just wouldn't tell us about it, poor kid.

Q: So you could sense it when she was unhappy?

ZZ's mother: She couldn't express it when she was unhappy. She just couldn't. But sometimes she would talk to us about this or that.

Q: Hmm. Was she ever injured at school or in any fights with classmates?

ZZ's mother: Injured... yes, she was. Kids like her, they are slow not only mentally but also physically, like in their actions and reactions. One time someone pushed her and she fell and half of her tooth was knocked out. I think it was in elementary school. The kid who pushed her had a fever, so we just let it go and took her to a dentist ourselves. It wasn't easy getting the damaged tooth fixed, especially since it was a front tooth, but we just took care of it ourselves.

She really had a tough time, very tough.

Q: Did you drop her off and pick her up from school?

ZZ's mother: We did when she was in preschool. For elementary school and middle school, she walked. She was okay finding her way around, especially since the schools were close to where we live and we have never moved.

Q: Hmm. Was ZZ interested in anything when she was a child?

ZZ's mother: Not really. I would count myself lucky if a day went by without her breaking something. She wasn't exactly being naughty or hyperactive, she just messed with things she had no business messing with.

When she first got her period, it was horrible because she would smear it on the wall sometimes. And I would just say, "Why don't you just rub it on your face?" I really said that.

You are too young to comprehend, but it's so tough having someone like her in the family. But what can I say? Parents with smart kids do not necessarily have an easy time, either—at least that's what we told ourselves to feel better. And girls are better than boys, right? Like you, girls listen really well.

Q: Have you and her dad ever thought about having another child?

ZZ's mother: Not really, and we couldn't have done it anyway. I might have regretted it, especially if we had a boy the second time around. You know, a son would need a house when getting married and things like that, it's just too much.

Combing Newspapers for a job

Q: So she worked at Lvyang Village Restaurant for a while after graduating from the vocational school, then went to the polytechnic, then got other jobs after graduation, is that right?

ZZ's mother: Right. Her first job was at Lvyang Village Restaurant and her pay was next to nothing. How many years ago was that? She made a little over 1,000 yuan, which was pathetic.

Her work schedule was slightly better than now. She came home around 9 p.m., and sometimes later. You know, the dish washers at restaurants are always the last ones to punch out. And she would walk home from work, about one or two stops if by bus.

After graduation from the polytechnic school, she worked as a waitress somewhere close to Jing'an Temple, if I remember correctly—the people there were awful. I don't recall the name of the restaurant, it's one of those places serving Hong Kong-style food. She started as an intern and once the internship was over, the place wouldn't sign any contract with her because it would have had to raise her pay—she was paid almost nothing as an intern.

And her teacher wasn't nice either. She wanted her to get a job at a public bath, and I was adamant about her not going there because the customers are all men—her teacher didn't really care what the men would want to do after they had taken a bath.

Then I was reading the newspaper and saw a Papa John's advertisement recruiting the disabled to make piazza dough, so she went. When she came back, I asked her, "Do you know how to do it?" And, this is what I don't like about her...she replied,

“Yes, I do.” She should have told me the truth if she didn’t know what to do. I would ask her every day, “Do you know how to do it?” and she would reply every time, “Yes, I do.”

She gets really frustrating. Month later the place called me, “ZZ doesn’t really know how to make pizza dough.” What was I supposed to do? So I asked, “She used to be a waitress—do you need a waitress?” And the answer was yes, so she has been a waitress there ever since.

She got some training in making pizza dough before she started working there, because that place really needed people to make pizza dough. I asked her sometime later and she told me she didn’t know how to make pizza dough, but she used to tell me that she knew. There’s really something wrong with her.

Q: Which newspaper carried this job advertisement?

ZZ’s mother: *Xinmin Evening News*. Its Tuesday edition often had a special section for the disabled, advertising jobs and featuring motivational articles.

I labeled her “disabled” later myself even when she didn’t have a disability certificate. When I was watching Special Olympics several years back, I figured that she must be intellectually disabled, because she didn’t cry when she was born and her brain must have been damaged from oxygen deprivation. So it was then that I went to apply for a certificate for her at the Disabled Persons’ Federation (DPF). We went there and someone talked to me about her and talked to her too. There was no IQ test on the spot, all we did was go there and then she got her certificate for Grade IV disability. Just like that, kind of funny when you think about it (laughs).

I don’t know if I did the right thing by giving her this label. I mean there’s clearly something wrong with her, but she wouldn’t have been a disabled person if I hadn’t got this certificate for her. So even now I wonder if I have done the right thing. I really wonder.

Q: Was her dad okay with applying for this certificate for her?

ZZ’s mother: He was kind of indifferent.

Q: How did she react to getting this certificate?

ZZ’s mother: She was indifferent, too. She just went with me to apply for it and I didn’t see any reaction.

Q: So you found her current job yourself, not through the DPF?

ZZ’s mother: Yeah. The DPF... it didn’t really help.

Before she started this current job, I went to the DPF for her certificate. No one there knew what job she should get or what job she could get. I saw the job advertisement in the newspaper several days later and took her to the interview myself. I went to the DPF again and asked the old guy there, “Why didn’t you tell me about jobs like this?” And he just replied, “Too many applicants.” Just like that, no one really helped.

Q: So she has been working at Papa John’s ever since?

ZZ’s mother: Right. That place has its own reasons for hiring the disabled, it’s to their advantage to do this.

Her salary is very low. I wouldn’t call it a salary myself—minimum pay, you know. She gets the minimum pay allowed in Shanghai.

When she first started, she was paid even less. Now, because it's October, she got paid a little more for overtime over the National Day holiday. Look here, I have all the information in my cell phone because her pay slip is sent to my phone every month. She was paid a little more last month, around 3,000 yuan, whereas her normal pay is just over 2,000 yuan.

As for the young men working there, I learned when we went to the place for a meeting last time, they can make 3,000 yuan because of overtime.

I believe she needs to work 167 h per month, and any day worked after that counts as a day and a half. I ask her to send me the hours she works every day and add up the hours herself. Once she hits 167, 8 h worked extra, for example, will count as 12 h, right? I don't double check the hours with the restaurant, I ask her to do it herself, after she has added up her hours.

She comes home really late sometimes, like around 10 p.m. She normally has a 2-h break at work, which is kind of a waste, right? It means that she is out of the house 12 h a day, leaving at 10 a.m. and returning at 10 p.m. Most days are like that.

Q: Does she get tired?

ZZ's mother: Of course, but what can she do? It would have been better if she got paid more for the hours she puts in, right? Sometimes I say to her, "You should be earning 20,000 yuan for the amount of work you do!" It would have been okay if she was making more, right? Her pay is really low.

Q: Does she get healthcare and social security?

ZZ's mother: She gets some every year deposited into her account.

The disabled... let me put it this way: you feel bad for them. They are paid so little, and the places they work at... you know how society is. If you are more able, people are nicer to you. If you are like her, then you get bullied, right?

Q: Has she been working at the same store all these years, or has she ever switched?

ZZ's mother: She did switch. She started at another store, then that store closed.

Q: Has she ever considered other jobs?

ZZ's mother: She has, but there are not many choices, so she has to stay put for now.

I often read *Xinmin Evening News* and the Tuesday special section for the disabled carried advertisements for jobs in other districts paying between 3,000 and 6,000 yuan, but those jobs were soon taken.

I don't know where else to look. Maybe on the Internet?

Q: Yeah, you can check online. Does she buy you little gifts when she gets paid, especially when she first started working?

ZZ's mother: She gave me all her pay when she first started working.

Watching Her Dating and Marriage for Protection

Q: We heard that ZZ is married. Which year did she get married in?

ZZ's mother: I think it was in 2011. They met in 2010.

They met through someone else, you know, the old lady you saw when you came up just now, her daughter bought a place here too. She wanted to play matchmaker for ZZ and we couldn't afford to be picky because she can't live off us forever. The old lady said, "This guy is good for ZZ." They seemed to get along well, so we didn't stop it (laughs). So they dated for a while and then got married.

Her husband is 8 years older, but it's good that way. Age gaps between celebrity couples nowadays are 20, 30 years, right? (Laughs) He works as a coordinator and coordinators do not appear the smartest for some people, right? Just tell me the truth. He only gets Sunday off but only works 6 h a day.

Q: She was born in 1984, so she was 25 or 26 when she met her husband. Did you monitor it when they were dating, or did you just let them go out by themselves?

ZZ's mother: I let them go out on their own. She went on some other dates before but those didn't work out. Some of the guys thought there was something wrong with her and just stopped seeing her.

She does meet other people, I mean people are okay meeting her and some of them feel that she isn't that smart. People either get along or don't get along, that's just the way it is, right? (Laughs)

I did monitor it closely when she was dating. She didn't date at the vocational school even though there were classmates who liked her. Have you met my daughter? She has good looks, people often tell me that, and good height. Actually, she is around 1.65 m and very fair-skinned.

She went out with someone at the polytechnic. Before they went on a date, I asked to talk to the guy. If my daughter was normal like you, I wouldn't have been able to meddle even if I wanted to, right? But I had to because she is the way she is. So I invited the guy over and said, "She is still in school. People have loose morals right now—if you get her pregnant, you will have to marry her." This guy told my daughter later, "Your mom is watching us." So he was very careful with her.

I mean my daughter isn't smart, so I had to set the rules for him before they got started, right? I have to protect her.

The guy told his mom sometime later that he found there's something wrong with her. His mom said, "I would rather you date someone physically disabled than intellectually disabled." Because life with an intellectually disabled is harder, right? The guy relayed the message and I said that I agreed with his mom. You have to be understanding, right?

Q: ZZ must have been really upset.

ZZ's mother: I don't think she was that upset. She asked me about it and I said, "Because there's something wrong with you." And she said nothing.

Q: Can you show us a picture of her?

ZZ's mother: Her picture? Let me see. I will show you... (gets up to look for a picture).

Here's her wedding picture. Wedding pictures are all big, I will get them for you if you want.

Q: She has short hair.

ZZ's mother: Yeah, she has always had short hair. She can't do her own hair so it's better to keep it short. I will get the wedding album if you want to see it.

Q: We want to see it.

ZZ's mother: Let me put this away first. (Leaves to get the album)

You can look at this one first. The other one is with them.

Q: (Looking at the album) Her husband has fair skin too.

ZZ's mother: He has dark skin and is chubby and short. For pictures like this, ladies always wear nice makeup, right?

Q: She has kept up really well.

ZZ's mother: Really well...maybe too well. Don't laugh at me when I tell you this. I clip her toenails even now, can you imagine it? She used to do it herself, but I didn't think it was very neat. Now I am thinking maybe I should let her do it after all, I am being overprotective.

Q: Does she let you do it?

ZZ's mother: She does. She just sticks her feet out and I will clip her nails for her.

Q: She is really pretty.

ZZ's mother: She looks okay. I haven't taken a good look for a long time. They got married in 2011, so it has been 4 or 5 years. (Picks up the album to study it.)

Happy Family

Q: Do they have kids?

ZZ's mother: No kids. I don't think she plans to have kids and I'll leave it up to them.

Q: Do you want them to have kids?

ZZ's mother: A little. At first I really wanted it—two kids would be ideal, one staying with us and the other with my in-laws. She lives with my in-laws and is very close to where we live.

Q: What about your in-laws? Do they want them to have kids?

ZZ's mother: They do.

They just don't have kids, not by intention. They both have something wrong with them, let me put it that way. The husband, too, I find that he is a bit slow. They are okay with not having kids, and they saw a doctor and were taking TCM for a while, then they just stopped trying.

Q: Does her mother-in-law like her?

ZZ's mother: She does. ZZ gets along really well with them and is more talkative than before. With me, I will let her know if what she says doesn't make sense. With them, she can let loose. People say that her parents-in-law and her husband spoil her—she doesn't lift a finger around the house because her husband does everything. Normally the wife does the ironing for the husband, but with them, her husband does it all including changing the bedding and cooking.

People say that despite her condition, she is blessed, but I don't want her to get lazy because of that. I used to go to her place a lot, now I don't do it as much, because I will be upset if I go. I mean, I get upset for my own reasons, because her room is

just such a mess and she won't do anything about it. She is the wife, how can she rely on the man to do household chores?

I really got mad at her at her place. I said, "Can't you at least dust the place?" But her parents-in-law would stop me and blame me for having too high expectations of her.

That's why I said that they really like her and spoil her. Normally, for someone like her, if the mother-in-law is picky, she won't hear the end of it. Even me, I'm not happy with her sometimes.

When she was getting married, we met with our in-laws as is the custom, and I told them, "My daughter isn't good at anything, and she even throws tantrums sometimes." And her mother-in-law immediately said, "I like her a lot." If they are okay, then I am okay, since I already told them everything upfront.

Q: What's her relationship like with you normally?

ZZ's mother: Her relationship with me... she is a little cautious around me but is also very attached to me. If I don't like some of the things she does, I will get mad at her. She won't react strongly to that but she will take it out on her husband (laughs), and it's really funny. Sometimes I figure that I should just let her be (laughs), because that's the way she is, and her husband doesn't seem to mind.

Q: What about her dad? He sounds like a hands-off dad.

ZZ's mother: Her dad... she is actually very sneaky. Her dad does try to discipline her while spoiling her, but she gives him a hard time sometimes (laughs) and the entire apartment building knows it. She is cautious around me and is attached to me too, I guess that's just human nature (laughs).

Q: How does she give her dad a hard time?

ZZ's mother: She calls him "country bumpkin" sometimes (laughs).

I don't know how to put it. She is intellectually disabled for sure, but not completely so. Sometimes I wonder, is she 30% or 40% disabled? And what's the exact percentage of her smartness?

Sometimes I would talk to the store manager and the feedback would be, "ZZ is not intellectually disabled at all." Maybe she does have some sparkle about her that you just can't ignore.

Q: Everything is good now. She married herself off and having kids is just a matter of time.

ZZ's mother: I won't put my money on the kids, really (laughs). Honestly, it's not going to happen and I don't want to meddle. It's no use anyway, since they aren't even trying. If they do have kids, we will definitely be the nanny, right?

Q: She has her husband to take care of her now and you have less to worry about, so all is well.

ZZ's mother: Yeah, I am good. I often go out and have fun myself. Both her dad and I are retired, I have been retired for more than 10 years.

Q: Does she still commute to work by bus?

ZZ's mother: Yeah, and sometimes her husband picks her up on an electric bike. I am against them driving that bike and I tell them, "Don't drive it, don't say I didn't warn you if you have an accident." But they won't listen. My in-laws drive an electric

bike too, so the four of them often go out on two bikes. It's always like that, and my in-laws are 10 years older than I am.

Q: What does she do at home on her days off?

ZZ's mother: She usually gets 2 days off at some stage between Monday and Thursday, and then has to work on Friday and Saturday which are busier days.

She goes out sometimes, to the park, like Changfeng Park, with her husband's family, or they eat out.

She visits me once a week, and when she does, I will cook and ask her to join me and talk with her. I was going to meet with you last Tuesday, but she had that day off, so I asked you to reschedule our meeting. I only see her once a week and if you came... you know what I mean.

Q: Yeah. Does she like to play on her cell phone when she stays home?

ZZ's mother: She was on her phone all the time. She played games and was very good at it, she even ranked. You know, people can connect on WeChat and play together, and someone who knows me told me, "Your daughter is very good at it." Then I told ZZ, "Don't play anymore. It's not good for your eyes and you won't get a pay raise for doing it, so why do you do it?" She listened to me on that one and stopped playing. Later on, people tried to get her to go back to playing and I told her to just ignore them.

Q: Does she like to post on WeChat Moments?

ZZ's mother: She doesn't bother with Moments, actually I am better at it than she is. I like to post pictures on WeChat. But she did teach me other things, like when I bought a Xiaomi bracelet and had to connect it with the phone. I didn't know how to do it and she helped me. She seems to know more about this kind of thing than I do.

If she needs information, she will look it up on Baidu search engine. And sometimes she watches shows on her cell phone.

Q: How much do you know about the place she works at now? Does she have co-workers she's close with who she goes out with sometimes?

ZZ's mother: She doesn't go out often. Occasionally she will go out with co-workers to sing, and she doesn't spend much. There seems to be a co-worker she gets along well with and she went to that co-worker's place last week. But people with her problems, they don't have many friends, generally speaking.

Q: Did she invite any co-workers to her wedding?

ZZ's mother: Not a single one. That's what I meant by saying that people like her really have few friends. I just saw a small card that's probably sent by her co-workers.

Q: Okay. How is her health? Was she sick a lot growing up?

ZZ's mother: Yeah, she was. People like her don't enjoy good health, and you know why? Because they didn't have a lot of physical exercise growing up. And I realized that fair-skinned people have poorer health than dark-skinned people.

And she doesn't quite know how to take care of herself. Her husband knows to dress warm. It's not that he doesn't care about her, he just has no control over her. She doesn't know to dress warm when it gets cold, so she often catches a cold and was always like that growing up.

With me, I seemed to have taken better care of her. With her parents-in-law, I found that... for example, I asked them to feed her a smaller dinner, but they said

that would be mistreating her, it was... (laughs) you know, you shouldn't eat too much for dinner, a small dinner is better.

Q: Her husband must really spoil her.

ZZ's mother: She has her husband wrapped around her little finger.

Q: So things are really looking up now.

ZZ's mother: Looking up... I still don't think her life is as good as others'.

Q: Do you have any expectations for her now?

ZZ's mother: I have no expectations whatsoever. I just hope that she can take better care of herself and enjoy better health, because she knows nothing about these kinds of things. She has always had a sinus infection, and I keep telling her to use salt and to wash with cold water. Her sinus infection is really bad and I feel sorry for her, looking at her runny nose every time she visits me.

She did something last year and didn't tell me about it until much later. I told you that she is cautious around me, and I know it. She probably felt uncomfortable with the sinus infection, and since you can get all kinds of surgeries nowadays, she thought about getting one for the infection. This kind of surgery actually doesn't help, she knew that I would be unhappy about it, so she consulted her parents-in-law and they took her to get it done.

She did feel much better immediately after the surgery. She had a lot of blackheads on her nose which were caused by the sinus infection—after the surgery, the blackheads disappeared, believe it or not. But they came back this year. So I told her, “The surgery you had didn't really help. You have to learn self-maintenance because that's how people heal, there's no quick fix.”

Q: Does she know how to dress up for going out?

ZZ's mother: Not really.

And I buy almost all of her clothes for her now. For a while she carried a card with her. You know she has a 2-h break at work, so she would buy clothes and boots at W Plaza where she works. People like her... of course we make these kinds of mistakes too... she always ended up with boots that were the wrong size.

I found that... or maybe it's because of my age, I don't know how to put it... I go to a college for seniors and I dress up whenever I go out, although you see me dressed so casual at home. So she couldn't get the right clothes for herself and I asked her to leave it to me and she listened.

Q: We will go to her store next month and observe her at work.

ZZ's mother: So you are going to the store. I found... sometimes I would tell her, “Can you not look so serious?”

When she visited me sometimes, I would notice that she had really dirty nails. I told her, “How can you face customers with such nails? You have to keep them clean.” But she just ignored me. I kept saying, “Clip your nails.” Someone gave me a nail clipper that keeps the clippings from flying everywhere, but she just wouldn't use it. On her days off, I would tell her, “Don't come to my place till you have clipped your nails. I really can't stand how long your nails are.” She doesn't have nice-shaped nails, otherwise she could have kept them long. So she would look neater with shorter nails, which is the way she should look since she works in the restaurant business, right?

And her hair—it's always so oily. I would tell her, "Can't you wash your hair since you are not working today?" What does she do at home on her days off? Nothing. I would get mad at her, "You just wait to be served on or spend all your time trying to get someone to go out with you or eat out with you." That's really what's on her mind a lot of the time.

Q: She doesn't cook herself?

ZZ's mother: No. She doesn't even know how to turn on the gas. I don't think she can do a good job cooking, so I don't let her.

Q: Hmm. Since we will be observing her at her store, is there anything you would like to know? We can find out for you.

ZZ's mother: Not off the top of my head... or maybe you can ask her about her pay. Once she hits 167 h, does every hour worked after that count as an hour and a half?

And there's another question. She gets a year-end bonus, so how is this bonus calculated? We are almost done with this year, so I will let it go for this year. Next year... it's not easy getting access to the company. I will go to the company myself to ask if I still don't know how the bonus is calculated. Her bonus should increase year by year, but the company only factors 10 days or so into the calculation.

She won't ask about it herself. I would ask her, "Did you talk to someone?" and she would say "Yes." If I tried to intervene too often, the store manager would say, "Let ZZ handle it herself." They are growing up and we should probably trust them to do their own thing, but it's hard sometimes.

Q: Is she happy with the current job? Does she complain when she comes home?

ZZ's mother: She often talks about changing jobs. She wants higher pay, but I told her, "You are already used to working here, you should be happy about it because people might take advantage of you at some other job."

She wants to look for another job and even to exchange jobs with her husband. She gets on my nerves sometimes. But most of the time it's just talk, because what else can she do if she quits her current job?

Q: Do you still go to see her at her store?

ZZ's mother: I went once. I wanted to see her, so I went with her dad to her store to eat.

Q: We'll go inside to watch her, too.

ZZ's mother: Yeah, take a look at how she works there (laughs), she won't strike you as very smart.

Q: We feel that you are overall happy with her.

ZZ's mother: (Laughs) Not sure about happy. I have no choice.

Q: She has a good husband, and good parents-in-law.

ZZ's mother: How should I put it? I don't think they have a high quality of life, really. But they feel happy. I can't quite explain it, and nothing can be changed sometimes. I told you, I tried to teach her certain things but she wouldn't listen. So what can I do but leave them alone?

Q: You can go out and have fun with her dad.

ZZ's mother: Yes, we do go out.

She has vacation time every year too and she always goes somewhere when she is on vacation.

Q: I think we have covered everything. Thank you!

Interview with ZZ's Co-Worker

Interviewee: Ms. W

Interviewer and writer: Qianyu Lu

Interview date: December 16, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where ZZ works

Q: Hi there. When did you meet ZZ?

W: I think it was 2014. I joined around 2013 and she came probably in 2014. I may have it wrong, though. But she has been with Papa John's longer than me, because she was transferred from another store.

Q: So you have known each other for almost 2 years.

W: Right. At first, I didn't realize that she was an employee being cared for. I just thought that she was childish and would sometimes have a child's temper, but I figured it was very normal. I was kind of surprised when I learnt later that she's an employee being cared for, but when I think back, it makes sense, because she is just like a child and will do things at work that should not be done.

Once I knew about her disability, I felt that I should have been more forgiving instead of being... sometimes we get busy, so I would talk to her pretty harshly. I felt really bad afterwards, especially since she is disabled.

And she has always called me "elder sister." It was only later that I learnt she is older than I am. She looks cute, so I never thought she was older.

Q: How did you know that she is an employee being cared for?

W: Hmm... I think it was when she told me that if she goes to certain places, she has a certificate that can get her in for free. She said, "If you want to go, I can take you." She likes to offer. So I wondered what kind of certificate she has. Then she told me everything about herself, and I was quite surprised.

Q: You feel that she behaves normal most of the time.

W: Right, really normal. Because when she has something—I don't know how she is with other people—she would say, "I have this, do you want some? I can share with you." Just like that. I share my food with her too.

At work, if there's something that needs to be done, I would tell her and she would do it really well. So I trust her with her customer-facing job. I mean, with her out there, I don't worry.

Q: She does her job well.

W: Right. She does everything well, and she is really good with promotions.

Q: She can talk, right?

W: She can talk, and she likes to chat. I see her chatting with customers sometimes, and the customers would tell me, “You have very good services, thank you, thank you very much.” I am very happy whenever that happens.

Q: You just said that she behaves like a child sometimes.

W: Hmm... We have different sections here. Sometimes I would tell her, “ZZ, you watch section B today for me.” She gets a little unhappy maybe because she doesn’t want to watch that section. If she is unhappy, she will sometimes end up watching section C when I check on her after a while. I would then remind her, “ZZ, you are supposed to watch section B today.” And she would say, “I don’t want to watch that one.”

So she would behave like that occasionally, and I feel that’s what a child would do. Because usually when we assign work, everyone would say, “Okay, got it.” No one would say, “I don’t want to do it.” But she is like a child and she gives you the impression that she will say whatever is on her mind. She is often like that. A lot of the time, whatever she thinks, she will say it directly. She will tell me, “This is exactly what I think.”

Q: So her personality is on the outgoing and straightforward side?

W: Yeah, pretty outgoing. If she is unhappy today, she is just unhappy and will show it when she comes to work. I would ask, “What’s up? Not happy today?” “Yeah.” “Because of what?” Then she would ramble on. Sometimes it’s something at home, or she might complain, “It’s raining tonight—I didn’t bring an umbrella, but my husband can’t pick me up,” or she would simply say, “No, not happy.”

Q: It’s actually not a bad personality.

W: Right, right. I am okay if she is like that from time to time.

Q: During lunch break, does she ask to eat out with you?

W: Yes, I do eat out with her. I live close by and if I don’t plan to cook at home, I would ask her, but it has to be when she doesn’t bring her own lunch. She often brings lunch that her parents pack for her. I would ask her, “ZZ, did you bring lunch?” She would say “no” sometimes, so I would say, “Let’s go out to eat,” and she would agree. So we would eat out at some place inside the plaza and chat while we eat.

She talks and I listen most of the time when we eat out. She would tell me what is going on with her family—how her parents are doing, how her parents-in-law are doing, and how her husband is doing. She isn’t exactly complaining, she just tells me things. I kind of like it.

At work, she talks to me too. Like right now, we are trying to sell prepaid cards, and she would say, “W, I only sold a few cards today, what should I do? I am a little stressed.” She would say things like that to me and I would say, “Take it easy.” So random things would come to her mind and she would talk to me about them.

Q: I feel that she gets along well with all of you at work.

W: She is doing well, because she likes to talk and likes to laugh. And another main reason is that she is very forgetful. Like she would have an argument with you 5 min ago, and 5 min later, she would come up to you and say, “W, you wanna eat something with me?” Just like that, and you can’t even stay mad at her.

Q: So she is indeed like a child, right?

W: Right, she doesn't hold any grudges, which is really good. Because there are other employees being cared for in the store and they would sometimes hold grudges. If you are unhappy, you are unhappy, I mean... ZZ is really good about this and I am happy that she is that way.

When she makes a mistake sometimes, I would tell her directly, "ZZ, you didn't do this well." And I would ask her to think about it and say, "Let's talk after you have thought this through." I always tell her that and after a while, she would come up to me and say, "W, I know where I did wrong today, and I know what to do in the future." As far as work is concerned, I actually think she is doing a great job and she seldom makes mistakes. Also, whatever people tell her, she easily accepts it and follows the advice immediately. So I really think she is very good with this. That's why I was very surprised when I learnt that she is an employee being cared for. I mean, she is doing a good job.

I am very happy that she joined us. And I feel that maybe no one talked to her at other places the way I talk to her. She likes compliments, everyone does. If we are promoting something and her numbers are good, I would go over to her, pat her on the shoulder and tell her, "ZZ, awesome job today, you already sold this many, that's really good." She would be very happy and she would... for example, if you set her goal at five, she might beat your expectations and sell eight or ten.

Q: She super-performs with encouragement.

W: Right. She would do her job really well, which is something really nice about her. Because our encouragement is purely verbal and we don't offer any material incentive. So it's great that she can do her job really well and without any complaints. Some other places would give you extra pay or food items for doing a good job selling, whereas we give nothing. So she is very good about this.

Q: Is there anything that you wish she could do better?

W: Maybe she is too direct when talking to customers sometimes. Especially if someone says negative things about our food, she seems to take it really badly. I don't know if this is a good thing or bad thing about her. A lot of times the customers would say, "What you offer here isn't good." She would react strongly because it is not true. Sometimes the customers would say, "Your salad is such a small portion, did you do something to it before you served it?" That's not true, because our salad comes in individual boxes. We just empty the box onto the plate and we don't control the portion. When customers question, "Why am I getting less and less salad?" she won't have the patience to explain to them but would get on the defensive side and talk back, "That's not true! We always serve the same portion of salad."

Of course, she is trying to defend the company, but the customers will not take it that way and will feel instead that our services are bad. At such times, I would intervene and tell her, "ZZ, it's okay, why don't you take a break." I will then tell her that maybe she could have done better at this. I would also tell her that I don't expect her to change overnight and that it takes time. I feel that maybe I am asking too much of her.

Q: You have 1–2 h break each day. What does she usually do during the break?

W: If there's something going on in the plaza, she would go and watch. If not, she would just stay at the store to use the Wi-Fi to watch shows and play games. She

doesn't go out much because there are not many places for fun around here. Even if we do go out, we do girlie things like window shopping.

Q: Does she go out with you to buy clothes?

W: Not really. She told me that her mom buys all her clothes. "I'll look online and find things I like and my mom will just buy them for me." She doesn't have to do it herself because her mom knows her size and can just buy online and have them express delivered. It's really convenient.

Q: Her mom takes good care of her.

W: Yes. She comes over occasionally to check on her and I have seen her. She didn't come to eat, but her parents-in-law did. I forget how many times they've been in.

Q: Really? Does her husband come often?

W: She told me before that her husband picks her up after he gets off work. But he won't come in, he just waits outside. Her husband doesn't look like the outgoing type. He was really quiet last time he came to eat and doesn't seem to like to talk.

Q: Okay, I think we have everything we need now. Thank you for providing us with so much information.

Interview with Ms. ZZ

Interviewee: Ms. ZZ

Interviewer and writer: Qianyu Lu

Interview date: December 16, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where ZZ works

Q: Let's start with when you went to school. Do you remember anything about it?

ZZ: Not much.

Q: What classes did you take?

ZZ: Everything, including Chinese and math.

Q: Did the school organize any activities?

ZZ: No, no.

Q: Did the school take you to the movies or on field trips?

ZZ: We went on field trips in elementary school.

Q: Where did you go?

ZZ: Probably Shanghai Zoo.

Q: How was your relationship with your teachers and classmates at school?

ZZ: Relationships... how should I put it? I would say that they looked down on me.

Q: Even the teachers?

ZZ: Yes.

Q: Did you have any classmates you were close to?

ZZ: No. Because I didn't get along with them, and they would say really mean things about me.

Q: What about at work now?

ZZ: I get along well with my co-workers.

Q: Your mom said that you even went to a co-worker's place, right?

ZZ: Yes.

Q: Which co-worker?

ZZ: She works in the kitchen now. I get along well with them, so I often go out with them. They don't look down on me. Before, most people looked down on me at school. My co-workers at least treat me as a normal person. But the schoolteachers wouldn't, and I was called "dummy" sometimes.

Q: The teachers called you that?

ZZ: Yes, because I didn't get along with them.

Q: Were you unhappy at school?

ZZ: Yes, of course.

Q: Would you talk to your mom when you were unhappy?

ZZ: I would.

Q: Your mom said that you are very close to her.

ZZ: Yes, I am.

Q: Hmm, do you remember where you went to school most recently?

ZZ: I really don't.

Q: According to your mom, you went to a polytechnic, right?

ZZ: Right, I went to Shanghai CNST Institute of Continuing Education.

Q: What was your major at that school?

ZZ: Hotel management, or something related to that.

Q: How old were you when you graduated?

ZZ: I really don't remember.

Q: Did you work for a while after graduating from the vocational school?

ZZ: I did, at Lvyang Village Restaurant.

Q: Did you work as a waitress there too?

ZZ: Yes.

Q: What happened then?

ZZ: In the end the place didn't need people like us, so we were let go. I stayed home for a while, then my mom saw the job advertisement in the paper, so I came here.

Q: How long have you been working here?

ZZ: Many years. I think I joined the year before the Expo.

Q: Your mom took you to the DPF, right?

ZZ: Yes. The DPF kind of referred me to this job, so I really appreciate it, that people like me are given a shot at getting a job.

Q: You have always been working in the dining area ever since you joined, right?

ZZ: Right (See Fig 1).

Fig. 1 Ms. ZZ ready to welcome guests



Q: Do you think you are doing a good job at the restaurant?

ZZ: I am doing okay (laughs).

Q: How do you usually commute to work?

ZZ: By bus.

Q: How long does it take?

ZZ: A bit less than an hour.

Q: That's a long commute.

ZZ: Not too bad.

Q: Are the buses crowded?

ZZ: No, because there aren't many commuters at that time. Unless I have the 11 a.m. shift, then there will be some traffic.

Q: What do you usually do on your days off?

ZZ: I stay home.

Q: Do you go out with your husband?

ZZ: He is pretty busy with work, so we don't get to spend a lot of time together.

Q: You mean you two have different days off?

ZZ: Yeah, different.

Q: Do you travel with him?

ZZ: Yes, because I have annual leave.

Q: Do you remember where you went last time?

ZZ: Qingdao. We went there during Mid-autumn Festival of this year.

Q: How many days did you two spend there?

ZZ: Six days.

Q: How did you get there? With a tour group?

ZZ: Yes, we did. The tour package included round-trip flights.

Q: Who found the travel agency?

ZZ: We both looked.

Q: Did you look online?

ZZ: Not online. It's an agency close to where I live. I found it and it offers good packages.

Q: How did you like the trip?

ZZ: It was fun, we covered most of the tourist spots in Qingdao.

Q: Were there any places that you enjoyed more than others?

ZZ: I liked them all.

Q: Have you been to any other places?

ZZ: Ah... I've been to many places including Sichuan and Beijing. Hainan, too. We went there for our honeymoon.

As a matter of fact, it's pretty nice working here. The pay is a little low, but the other benefits are good.

Q: Did you go to Hainan with a tour group too?

ZZ: Yes, with a tour group every time.

Q: What do you think of your life now?

ZZ: You mean life after I got married or...?

Q: After you got married.

ZZ: Pretty good, because I get along well with my parents-in-law.

Q: Your mom said that your parents-in-law really spoil you.

ZZ: Yeah, they do.

Q: How do you get home from work?

ZZ: By bus too.

Q: Does your husband pick you up sometimes?

ZZ: Yes, with his electric bike.

Q: What do you do at home after work?

ZZ: I play with my cell phone. Everybody does.

Q: Like reading WeChat Moments. Do you like to post there?

ZZ: No, I don't. I just read them. I also read news on Tencent.

Q: Do you eat out with your husband on your days off?

ZZ: Seldom, because we have different schedules. Like he has Sunday off, but I have to work on Sunday. It's like that most of the time.

Q: I see. You have lipstick on—do you wear makeup every day?

ZZ: No, I don't.

Q: Who bought the lipstick then?

ZZ: The store manager.

Q: And she gave one to each of you?

ZZ: No, no.

Q: What is it then?

ZZ: She bought it on Taobao for all of us and we paid her back. It's a company rule.

Q: That's good. You look pretty with the lipstick on. Do you have any future plans with your husband?

ZZ: Not really.

Q: Do you plan to continue working here?

ZZ: Yeah, I just hope that we can get better pay. Other benefits are okay, so my mom really just cares about the pay.

Q: Have you thought about changing jobs?

ZZ: It's very difficult, for people like us. Because the employers will look at your information and will see the certificate for the disabled, which won't help.

Q: What kind of pay would be decent for you?

ZZ: We are on minimum wage now. I don't want too much of a pay raise, maybe a couple of hundred yuan per month. My husband brings home a little more than I do after all those deductions.

Q: Okay, I think we are done here. Thank you.

Observation of ZZ at Work

Observation date: 09:00–20:00, December 16, 2016

Observation place: Restaurant where ZZ works

Observer and writer: Qianyu Lu

Time	What ZZ did	Remarks
09:00–10:40	In the kitchen, she prepared the store for opening: setting the tables, washing the sanitizer bottles, and refilling the ketchup bottles	She had the morning shift today and had only 1 h for the preparation work She kept her own pace when working
10:00–10:20	In the dining area, she wiped the white mats and highchairs	

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Time	What ZZ did	Remarks
10:30	In the dining area, she started to fold napkins at the service station	There were no customers yet. She talked to co-workers or delivery people from time to time and expressed her own views Other co-workers arrived for work. The customer-facing ones talked to her and discussed how many sets of dinnerware should be put on the tables in the morning, and she talked with ease 11:10 She mentioned to the observer her low pay and hoped that the observer could deliver the message to the company Because the break was 13:00–15:00 today, she asked her manager if we could interview her after her lunch
11:15	In the dining area, two customers arrived and she immediately went up to greet them and hand them the menus. She then returned to the service station to continue folding napkins while a co-worker took the order	She greeted the customers in a warm and loud voice
11:20	A co-worker asked her for a bag and she got the bag from the cashier's station. The co-worker thanked her and she said "No problem."	After the co-worker left, she told the observer, "This is our store manager."
11:25	In the dining area, she finished folding napkins, put them in the bag and took the bag to the cashier's station. She then went to the hostess's station to wait. At the station, she organized the menus and occasionally checked on the customers at the nearby table	
11:40	In the dining area, she again greeted the arriving customers in a loud voice. She returned to the hostess' station to wait after handing the menu to the customers. The same co-worker took the order	She chatted with the observer occasionally. When her co-worker was taking the order, she told the observer, "She is doing what I normally do." The dining area is open with a direct view of the stores and people outside. She often fixed her gaze outside
12:00	In the dining area, no other customers arrived. She came over and chatted with the observer and talked about her worries about being interviewed. She then chatted with co-workers in a low voice	She had good logic and vocalized well. Her facial expression showed that she was cautious and worried

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Time	What ZZ did	Remarks
12:10	In the dining area, the customers left and she cleaned up the table	When passing the observer, she asked, "Will you interview my parents-in-law at their place one day?"
12:14	In the dining area, she ran to pick up the restaurant's ringing phone	
12:20	The manager asked her to go to the kitchen to refill several ketchup and Thousand Island dressing bottles	
12:25	She returned to the dining area and said to the observer, "Other restaurants are all full but look at us here..."	Two co-workers were chatting. She watched for a while before joining them
12:35	She fetched the takeout orders from the kitchen for the delivery person	Since it was not busy at the store, she would often get lost in her own thoughts and frown occasionally
13:00–15:00	She took her break	
15:00	She came back to work and cleaned up the dinnerware	
15:15	In the dining area, she changed the paper mats on the tables	She communicated and joked with the store manager (who was not the same person as the manager in the morning). She was in her element
15:30	In the dining area, she packed takeout orders	She also joked with delivery people
15:35	In the dining area, she greeted an arriving customer, "Hello, ma'am."	She chatted with a customer for about 15 min, and chatted with the same person again later when she was free
16:00	In the dining area, a customer came for a backpack left behind. She asked about the color, went to retrieve it from the cashier's station and chatted with the customer	She took the time to pour warm water for the observer
16:05	In the dining area, she took an order from a customer (on the machine at the service station).	
16:15	In the dining area, she took an order and explained to the customer that cheese sticks and durian cheese sticks are not the same product	
16:25	In the dining area, a customer she had chatted with asked her about something and she gave a brief answer as she was busy taking another customer's discount card number	

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Time	What ZZ did	Remarks
16:45	In the dining area, she greeted arriving customers, “Welcome and good noon.”	A co-worker corrected her, “ZZ, it’s afternoon now.” She was okay with the correction
17:25	In the dining area, she took orders	
18:15	In the dining area, she took orders and took payments	
18:37	In the dining area, she packed takeout orders	
19:25	In the dining area, she packed takeout orders	
19:40	In the dining area, she cleaned up the service station and wiped the tabletop and the white board	
19:55	She returned to the kitchen, punched out and got ready to leave	
20:00	She was done for the day and left	

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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Simple Goal of Having a Stable Job



Jingjing Shen

Interview with Mr. W's Parents

W, male, born in 1987. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Dropped out of a regular school in 2003. Joined a Sunshine Home in Shanghai in 2007. Started working at a supermarket in Shanghai in 2008 and at Shanghai Papa John's in 2009.

Interviewees: W's mother and W's father

Interviewer and writer: Jingjing Shen

Interview dates: November 5, 2016 and January 14, 2017

Interview place: W's home

An Introvert Child

Q: How did you meet your husband? Are you both Shanghai natives?

W's mother: We met through someone in 1981 and got married in 1985. We were both born and raised in Shanghai, but our ancestors were from outside Shanghai. Mine were from Jiangsu and my husband's were from Ningbo.

Q: What did you and your husband do?

W's mother: I had always worked in a public transportation company, and my husband worked at No. 2 Thermal Bottle Factory.

Q: How did you get hired?

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W's mother: I applied for the job, whereas my husband inherited¹ his dad's job.

Q: How soon did you have the baby after you got married? Were you happy about getting pregnant?

W's mother: We got married in 1985 and had the baby on May 10, 1987, which was more than 12 months later. Of course, I was happy about getting pregnant.

Q: Did you immediately go back to work following maternity leave?

W's mother: No. I took a year off.

Q: W has a very nice name. Who gave it to him?

W's mother: His dad.

Q: Does it have any special meaning?

W's father (with a shy smile): I like snowy days, so I gave him a name that has to do with snow.

Q: Was there anything wrong with the baby when he was born?

W's mother: No. The birth was smooth and everything was normal.

Q: Is there anyone with a similar condition in the family?

W's mother: No. Everyone is normal.

Q: How was his health when he was young?

W's mother: He was in good health. He would just have a fever or a cold or coughing at preschool. He seldom had a high fever, so he was healthy compared to other kids.

Q: Was he fed well when he was young?

W's mother: He was fed very well. If he wasn't fed well, then no kid was. My husband's side of the family was from Ningbo where everyone loves kids. My mother-in-law was 68 when she had this grandson, so you can imagine how happy she was. My husband was 35 and I was 29 when we had the baby, so we spoiled him. And my husband's two elder sisters spoiled W too. We went overboard with the spoiling.

Q: When did he start preschool?

W's mother: He started preschool at four and went to the preschool affiliated with the marine branch of the Second Military Medical University. We used to live in Wujiaochang and the preschool was close to home. I would drop him off every day and my mother-in-law would pick him up. My son was always dropped off and picked up, until he was no longer a kid. We could never stop worrying.

Q: How did he do at preschool?

W's mother: He did well. He was in good health while going to preschool and seldom got sick. He had no problem brushing his teeth, washing his face and taking care of his own needs.

Q: Did he like playing with other kids? Was he particularly close with any kids?

W's mother: He never liked playing with anyone and was an introvert. We used to live in the old-style public housing and each family stuck to themselves, like

¹Job inheritance: In June 1978, the State Council issued *Temporary Practices for Retiring Workers* which stipulated that when factory workers retired, "in the case of real financial hardship in the family or multiple children of the workers working in remote areas or children of the workers being unemployed, one child of each worker can be hired by the retiring parent's workplace, in principle and provided that he/she meets the hiring requirements." In other words, when parents retired, their children could replace them at their workplaces.

nowadays, and the neighbors had nothing to do with each other. My mother-in-law was the one taking care of him. He got along well with other kids, but whereas other kids would have a whole bunch of friends, he had only one or two.

Q: When did he start elementary school? And how did he do at the school?

W's mother: He started elementary school after 3 years' preschool. The elementary school was Songmou Road Elementary School. It was back in 1993 and he just went to the school of our district.

Q: How were his grades there? And what did the teachers have to say about him?

W's mother: His grades were average, actually below average. They were not really good. He did best at math and could score 96 points in fourth grade and fifth grade. He did worst at Chinese and PE. When we talked to the teachers, we were always told that he was doing okay and listening well. He was never naughty like other kids. He didn't like to hang out with anyone and would just stay home as soon as he came back. It would have been nice if he had been willing to get to know more people, but he wasn't. He couldn't tell if a person was good or bad. He didn't even want to go on school field trips and we gradually just stopped forcing him. He was a little autistic.

Q: So, you ended up not forcing him to go on the field trips?

W's mother: We just let him have his way, and we do that now, too. We consulted the doctor on whether he had any mental problems, and the doctor said that we had to sweet talk instead of antagonizing kids like him. If you talk to him nice, he will listen. If you go against his wishes, he will get mad.

W's father: He doesn't exactly have an intellectual disability. He is just not as smart as some other people. He doesn't have it as bad as intellectual disability.

Q: Has he always been an introvert who isn't interested in human interactions, ever since he was young?

W's mother: He has always been like that ever since he was young. You are young and maybe still single. You should never take Chinese medicine during pregnancy, because it will adversely affect the baby. I had a difficult time getting pregnant, so I was on Chinese medicine to keep the baby. I got married at 25 and had the baby at 29. I was on Chinese medicine all the time to preempt a miscarriage and it was a mistake. I learnt a hard lesson and I would like you to know about it. You really have to heed what I say, because my lesson was so costly. But of course it won't be like this for everyone. I probably just hit the jackpot.

Q: He doesn't like to talk. Have you tried to teach him to talk more?

W's mother: We did try to teach him like we would have taught an average person. We tried harder than other parents and would point it out to him if he did something wrong. He would listen but would soon forget about it. That's just how he is, forgetful.

Q: Who helped him with his studies when he was in elementary school?

W's mother: Sometimes my husband did it after coming back from work at night. My husband's sister would help him too. She was a teacher and speaks very good Mandarin. We would teach him whatever he didn't understand and we wouldn't spank him if he didn't listen. We really spoiled him.

W's father: He really doesn't like to communicate with anyone.

Bullied in Middle School

Q: When did he start middle school and how did he do?

W's parents: He started middle school in September 1999, at Tongmou Middle School. That's when other kids started bullying him, but we didn't realize it till May or June of 2000.

Q: How did you find out?

W's mother: I saw bruises on him and he wouldn't tell me how he got them. It was the next-door kid who went to the same school as W who told me. My husband had lost his job and I was working. I was short-tempered, and W figured that if I ran into trouble because of my short temper, our family would be done for. So, he just kept it to himself because that's how gentle he is. He was worried that his mom would beat up the other kids if she knew he was bullied and that his mom would go to jail for that.

Q: How did the other kids bully him?

W's mother: They would play tricks on him, kick him, and write on the back of his clothes. They would also take pencils and other nice-looking things from his schoolbag. I would check his schoolbag sometimes when I had time and find there was literally nothing in the bag.

W's father: Those kids were all from single-parent families and they envied W for having both parents.

W's mother: W ate well and dressed well. At elementary school, he didn't like the school food, so I would cook lunch every day and deliver it to him at school. But the lunch would be taken from him and he wouldn't say a thing. When I saw that he was starving, I wondered why since we delivered food. Then I found out that the lunch was in the hands of other kids. They just robbed him of it. W wouldn't defend himself. He told me to let it go since the other kids had nothing to eat—kind-hearted kids always get shortchanged.

Q: Did you not tell the teacher about him being bullied at school?

W's mother: We did but it was no use. In fact, W got bullied even worse after we told the teacher. W wouldn't tell us about being bullied and the teacher didn't care. She actually assigned the kid who bullied W to sit behind him in class. We asked for something to be done about it and she just ignored us, and W just continued to be bullied. The environment at school wasn't very good, and the teacher was very young. She was only 26 then, with no experience and no sense of responsibility.

Q: When did you realize there might be something wrong with W's intellectual ability?

W's mother: When he was a teenager. How did we realize it? We found that he was a little slow after being bullied at school. It took us a while to realize it. Maybe he was traumatized by the bullying. There were a total of six or seven kids from divorced parents who constantly bullied him. W was afraid to tell us about it, but we figured it had done something to his mind.

Q: Where did he go after graduating from middle school?

W's mother: He started at a vocational school in 2002 after graduating from middle school. We figured that since he wasn't doing well at academics, maybe he could acquire culinary skills at the vocational school which could help him open a restaurant later. I was working in a canteen back then and it seemed to me that he enjoyed food. So I told him, "When Mommy was young, your grandpa said if I liked food, I should learn how to cook. I know you don't know how to cook, but I can teach you."

Q: How did he do at the vocational school?

W's mother: W was very good with the kitchen knife. He could do all the chopping at the school, like chopping vegetables and dried tofu to make certain dishes. He only attended the school for less than 12 months. He was doing well at first, but then the bullying started. The students were required to bring their own chicken, pork, and knives to school to cook, and everything he brought from home was taken away from him, so we stopped him from going to the school.

Q: So he never went back to that school?

W's mother: We gave up on it because we didn't want to send him there to be bullied. He only stayed at the vocational school for one semester and dropped out during the second semester. He wasn't really into it anyway.

Q: Had he ever been to any special education school?

W's mother: No. There's nothing wrong with my son's intellectual ability. His mind wouldn't have been on academics at a special education school, which was why we never sent him there.

Obtaining a Disability Certificate

Q: What did he do after dropping out of the vocational school?

W's mother: He just stayed home to play on the computer. He was good at playing with that and his cell phone, and watching TV. He can type really fast, using *pinyin* and not even looking while he types. We heard that he wouldn't have got a job even with a vocational school education, so we were resigned to having him stay home.

Q: Who cooked for him while he stayed home?

W's mother: *A'niang*, which means Grandma in Ningbo dialect, took care of him at home. He didn't like going out. Our family was very protective of him. If he went out, there would be two of us following him because we would worry otherwise.

Q: How long did he stay at home?

W's mother: He stayed home from 2002 to 2007 which was when he went to the Sunshine Home. We didn't let him do anything. He was still young and not yet an adult, so we spoiled him. Once you become a parent, you will know how precious your kid is to you.

Q: When did he get the disability certificate? Was an assessment required?

W's mother: He was able to start at the Sunshine Home. The Community Affairs Committee suggested that because he is an introvert, getting a disability certificate for him could give him a certain advantage which might help improve his mood. He

probably couldn't compete against the average kid, so we resorted to getting him a disability certificate. Kids his age were getting regular jobs and he wasn't, so we took him for an assessment.

Q: Did you take him to a hospital for the assessment?

W's mother: Yes, we took him to a hospital, which I believe was in 2006. The assessment showed him to have Grade IV disability. During the assessment, the doctor was actually impressed with the way he talked, so we were quite optimistic that he definitely didn't have any disability. We were astounded when the Community Affairs Committee later told us that he has intellectual disability and was even issued a disability certificate.

The main reason we got him a disability certificate was to get him a stable job. My son definitely cannot compare with the best out there, but there are people in much worse shape than he is which kind of gives him some confidence. We cried about the disability certificate because it put a label on him forever, but there's nothing we could do about it.

Q: Did you seek any treatment after the assessment at the hospital?

W's mother: No, we didn't. We had wanted him to see a doctor, but he refused to go for fear of being traumatized. So, I figured that we might as well take our time mentoring him ourselves. He is not doing bad on the whole and doesn't need to be on any medication like some other people. The doctors advised us against medication too, and we couldn't decide whether we had done the right thing not taking him to see a doctor. My son doesn't look like someone with severe intellectual disability. He is just a little off, like people often say, and the only thing with him is that he doesn't speak well.

W's father: His intellectual disability isn't apparent. He just can't control his emotions sometimes, has slower reactions and isn't as smart as some other people. That's it. His intellectual disability isn't severe at all. He knows geographical locations and provinces and knows a lot about life, just like an average person. It's really a pity that my son has this slight disability.

Q: So, he doesn't take any medicine?

W's mother: The doctor said not to give him any because medicine could make him worse. He might become addicted, like to opium. The doctor said that my son's condition could be controlled without medicine.

Q: I heard that your husband has a disability certificate too, is that right?

W's mother: He has a problem with his eye and was born with it. My father-in-law had eye problems too. My husband got his disability certificate before my son did.

W's father: My eyes were okay while I was working and got worse later on.

W's mother: I was a contracted worker back then, and the contract was renewed once my husband got the certificate.

W's father: I got it 6 years before my son did. I got it in 2000 and he got it in 2006. I did it for the sake of a job, too. If your spouse had a disability, you could get your work contract renewed.

Going to the Sunshine Home

Q: He went to the Sunshine Home first, did he? How did he get in there?

W's mother: The Community Affairs Committee referred him to the Sunshine Home where he stayed for about 2 years. He started there in 2007 and moved on to a supermarket in 2008. We wanted him to get a job earlier so that the workplace could pay into his pension and insurances² and he could have something to live on after retirement.

Q: What did he normally do at the Sunshine Home?

W's mother: Some handiwork like stringing beads and wrapping soaps. He would check in at 8 a.m. and come home at 4 p.m.

Q: Do you think the Sunshine Home was good for him?

W's mother: Going to the Sunshine Home was, of course, good for him, because he was exposed to society that way which was better than staying home. After he started going to the Sunshine Home, he seemed to have become more willing to communicate with others, whereas he hardly talked about anything coming back from school.

Q: Did he get monthly pay at the Sunshine Home?

W's father: He got 200 yuan per month, as stipend, not pay.

Q: Did he ever participate in Special Olympics activities when he was there?

W's mother: He did every year. We have a good relationship with the Community Affairs Committee, and they would send W to all of Special Olympics activities. My son could sing, do long jump, and dance, which we didn't even know ourselves. He was very good at long jump and shooting basketball, which was his favorite. Back then, the Community Affairs Committee told us that my son was quite capable and wondered why we hadn't known before.

Q: Did he ever win anything?

W's mother: He would win either first place or second place every time and a lot of prizes like the electric fan and bedding set we use at home. We didn't want him to monopolize all of the events this year, so we only registered him for one event and the prizes were, if I remember correctly, shampoo, shower gel, and soap.

Q: When were Special Olympics activities usually held? Did he always go on his own?

W's mother: Usually in summer, in June and July when it's really hot.

Q: Was there any organized special training before the activities?

W's mother: He didn't need to train. The Community Affairs Committee was over the moon that he agreed to go to those activities, because his wins made everyone look good.

Q: Did he always go to the activities on his own?

W's mother: He did every time and came back on his own. Sometimes his dad would drop him off at a certain place and there would be prearranged transportation from that point on.

²Pension and insurances: Employers contribute to employees' pension, health insurance, unemployment insurance, and work-related injury insurance.

Q: Did he make any friends at Special Olympics activities?

W's mother: No.

Q: Did the activities normally last 1 day?

W's mother: Right, just 1 day.

Q: Do you see any room for improvement for the Special Olympics activities?

W's mother: Not really. They are actually very good, giving us a chance to discover my kid's strengths. I hope that he can continue participating in Special Olympics activities.

Six Months Working at a Supermarket

Q: After staying at the Sunshine Home for a while, he moved on to a supermarket, right?

W's mother: Right. He passed a test and was picked to work there, in 2008 while he was still at the Sunshine Home. He collected shopping baskets and carts at the supermarket most of the time. He liked that job, but only stayed there for 6 months because they didn't want him anymore.

Q: Why not?

W's father: That's what happens when people with disabilities are hired. You probably are not aware of this, but the Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF) assigns people with disabilities to the workplaces and,³ as a result, the workplaces can enjoy tax deductions for every person with disabilities that they hire. What supermarkets do is to use people with disabilities for trial periods and let them go after the 6 months' probation. That's their practice all the time.⁴

Q: Do you remember how much his first pay was at the supermarket?

W's mother: It was the first month he worked in 2008 and he made 1,300 yuan. He was so happy when he got the money and bought us things with it. I don't remember exactly what, but we were so happy too. When the supermarket let him go after 6 months, he went back to the Sunshine Home and was soon picked up by Papa John's.

³In fact, the Disabled Persons' Federation will recommend disabled candidates to enterprises who are willing to recruit disabled people. The enterprises will then assess and make decisions about recruitment. The Federation won't assign disabled people to enterprises.

⁴According to the state policies, welfare units, massage institutions of the blind and non-welfare enterprises can only enjoy tax exemption or reduction on certain conditions, including lawfully concluding a 1-year or longer term employment contract or service agreement with each disabled employee, contributing sufficient monthly social insurance fee for each disabled employee, and paying monthly the city's minimum wage or higher remuneration via banks or other financial institutions to each employee. If a supermarket fires its disabled employees after 6 months' probation, it won't be entitled to enjoy any tax favor policies issued by the government for employers recruiting disabled people.

Joining Papa John's

Q: Exactly when did he join Papa John's?

W's parents: In November 2009. He was picked from the Sunshine Home.

Q: Was there a test to get into Papa John's?

W's father: Yeah, and he did excellently on the test. He was tested both on book knowledge and practical knowledge. For practical knowledge, he was asked to make pancakes as part of the test. Once he started working at the store, he learnt whatever the manager asked him to learn even though he already had some knowledge. He makes pizza dough at the store and makes drinks too (See Fig. 1).

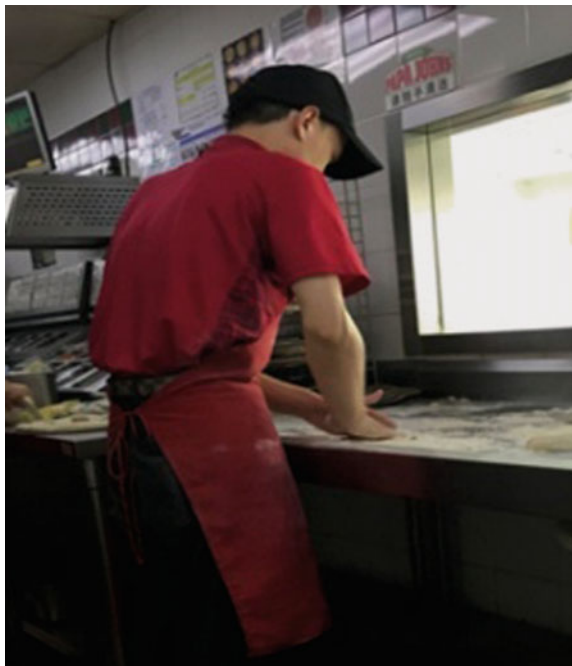
Q: How is he doing? How many days a week does he work?

W's father: He really likes what he does and wants to do it. He works 5 days a week and different shifts depending on the store's schedule. If the store doesn't have enough people, he will work longer shifts. And if the store has enough people, he will work shorter shifts. Normally he works afternoon shift starting at 11 a.m. or 12 p.m. He gets home at 9 p.m. sometimes, or 10 p.m.

Q: How is he doing at his job?

W's mother: Some people said he is doing very well while others said he needs to improve. The store manager just said that my son isn't doing very well or listening well. We know our son, he would never lie. If the manager said he wasn't behaving, we would definitely give him a talk. Sometimes when we tried to talk to him, he

Fig. 1 Mr. W at work



would say that what the manager said wasn't true. But what can we do? We can only ask him to watch out for his own behaviors. We don't want any trouble; we just want him to keep his job. I told him that whatever he does, he has to start from the bottom and take advice from other people, which is how he can improve. I can't say my son did wrong, or other people did wrong. We just hope that he can have a stable job, what with his disability and all.

W's father: Right. We never care how much money he makes or that he has to work more. We just want him to have a stable job.

W's mother: We are pretty happy now thinking that our son has a job. His pay is not an issue, like it would be for some other people. If you know us well enough, you can tell that we take it really easy in our family. My husband retired for medical reasons when he was 50, and his retirement pay isn't high. I worked in a public transportation company and had to commute a long way, so my mother-in-law told me to retire early and my retirement pay is pretty low, too. But we are happy that we have clothes on our backs and food on our table, that we enjoy good health and a stable life. We don't ask for anything more. Other people want to strike it rich and make hundreds of thousands, we just need to have enough to spend every month with some left over to cover when we get sick in the future.

Q: Has he always worked in the same store?

W's mother: No, he moved around quite a bit. When he first joined, he worked at J store where the manager thought highly of him. He even brought him to the kickoff meeting in Jiujiang at the end of the Chinese New Year holiday. He was the only one from the store picked to go. So he worked there for 6 months, from November to May, then he was transferred to W store.

W's father: He worked at W store till December 2012.

Q: Why was he transferred to another store?

W's father: Because W store was closer to where we live. He just needed to take bus Line 55. Then the store was taken over by other people. All the employees were dispersed, so he was transferred to yet another store.

Q: How did he do at W store?

W's father: The manager was okay with him too, saying that he was willing to work hard. But of course there's a gap between him and people without disabilities, and it really depends on whether the store manager is caring enough.

W's mother: Older managers are better whereas younger ones are not as caring. Some people are very picky, whereas others are more easygoing and didn't exactly say anything bad about him.

Q: What do the co-workers think of him?

W's mother: We will call his co-workers sometimes and they will all say that he is doing well. W will do well if his mind is there and not do as well if his mind isn't there. That's the way he is, and if we expect him to do well all the time, that would be overkill.

Q: After he was done at W store, where did he go?

W's mother: W store was bought off and the employees were sent to other stores. W ended up at Y store where he worked from December 2012 to January 2016. He mostly made drinks at that store.

Q: So, he joined the current store after having worked at Y store for a while, right?

W's mother: Right. Y store was going through renovation, so he was transferred to D store.

Q: How much does he make at Papa John's every month?

W's mother: On the average, 2,500 yuan. Sometimes less than that. He is on minimum pay and gets paid more sometimes and less other times. He makes more when the store is busy and less when the store isn't busy. But I don't like it that he isn't paid OT for working during Chinese New Year.

W's father: We are actually not sure whether he is paid OT because we don't really bother with calculations. We just want him to have a stable job and it's not really an issue how much he is paid.

W's mother: It isn't an issue for us. At the meeting last time, we said that it wouldn't be an issue for us, because we just want him to have a stable job and to receive monthly pay. The pay isn't to support any of us. We are happy as long as he is employed, considering his disability.

W's father: We just want him to have a stable job—our objective is stability. We don't really care whether he gets paid several times his regular pay for working OT during Chinese New Year. It isn't an issue for us.

Q: How many days does he have to work OT during Chinese New Year?

W's father: What happens during Chinese New Year is that he gets several days off sometimes and works other times.

Q: Is that the way his co-workers are paid too, during Chinese New Year?

W's father: He never bothers to find out how many days his co-workers get off or how much they are paid.

W's mother: His pay is deposited into the bankcard and I keep it with me. I withdraw the money at the interval of several months and I never ask how much he is paid. There's that one time when I realized that he was paid an average of only 1,400 yuan or so every month which was too low, so I asked the store for an explanation. I was told that he got into trouble and the pay was deducted. So I said it's okay and didn't really want to argue.

W's father: Sometimes the store counts fewer work hours and pays him less, and we won't make a big deal out of it. My son never asks anyone how much he makes and how many days he works. We don't care about any of that, because our objective is for him to have a stable job. We don't have high expectations. We just want him to have a job.

W's mother: To put it bluntly, because of the way W is, we don't really care if he makes money or not. We just want him to be exposed to society in a safe manner, to acquire some knowledge, and if possible, to bring home some money and to have deposits into his social insurances. We don't expect the impossible, like some other people do. W spends 4 yuan on the subway every day commuting to work. It used to be 8 yuan. So, he doesn't really have a lot of take-home pay. We don't even want to talk about his pay. Where's the money for him? There's no money.

Q: How many employees like your son does a Papa John's store have?

W's mother: Two or three. The DPF assigns people with disabilities to each workplace based on a certain percentage.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers? Do they contact each other after work?

W's mother: Not really. He doesn't reach out to people.

Q: Does he sleep in?

W's father: He does on his days off and doesn't when he has to work. He is very punctual. He is never late and never leaves early. And he helps out when other employees can't finish their work. He takes the subway commuting and he knows the route better than we do.

W's mother: He is very good with going to work and coming home, very on time. I told him to be on time because I would worry otherwise.

Q: Is your son happy with his job now?

W's mother: He is very happy with his job now and willing to work hard. He won't tell us if someone says unfavorable things about him. As parents, we know him for who he is, so we swallow a lot of things and normally do not complain to the store. Our son is very honest and doesn't say untruthful things. When he was going to school before, there were thefts on the bus. The teacher said she would only believe what W told her and not anything other kids told her. W is really honest and down-to-earth, and it's such a pity about his disability. We get frustrated sometimes.

W's mother: The store manager is a little too strict with him. I told her that she shouldn't have unrealistic expectations of W and that she should contact us if something happens. Our kid finds it hard to accept when expectations for him are too high.

One time we were both summoned to the store and I fell on the way there. It was about nothing serious except that W wouldn't listen to the manager. But our son had his side of the story. There was a job-related test but the test materials were supposed to be shown to our son beforehand. That didn't happen and W had to take the test cold turkey, so he failed, of course. And he didn't like it when people talked about how he failed the test. He got mad because he didn't want to lose face, and the store had to call us because no one could calm him down. Afterwards, W said to me, "Like when we were going to school, we should have been prepared for tests." And I agreed with him. But some people keep saying that there's something wrong with his mind. I don't think so. He just tells things the way they are. He speaks his mind and he is very considerate towards his parents.

Our son is very kind-hearted. There are things at the store that are not his job responsibilities, so I told him to only focus on what he is supposed to do and to not do anything the store manager doesn't assign to him. I feel that the store takes advantage of people with disabilities, because W is asked to do everything. We feel bad for him when we hear about it, and the store manager shouldn't ask W to do things that are not his responsibility to do. Sometimes our kid does all the dirty work that no one else is willing to do at the store. We don't see what's going on because we live far away. When he was working at W store, what we saw made us really sad. The store wasn't doing a good job at all caring for its employees being cared for. Kids like W need love, so the workplace should show them love, and it's not right to judge them using the mindset of the average person.

W's father: We were very disappointed about the work-related injury this time.

Q: What happened?

W's mother: Our son was injured at work. He called me saying that his hand was injured and asked me to go see him at work. I said it would take me an hour to get to the store and asked why the store didn't send him out for treatment. The store ended up having the delivery guy bring my son to the hospital and didn't pay a single penny for the hospital visit. My son paid for it using the money he had on him. Afterwards the hospital must have called the store manager and the store manager said the store would reimburse my son for the hospital visit, and I said I didn't really care about that.

Q: Did he get a cut on his hand?

W's mother: He did, and he had to get two stitches. We almost cried over it. We don't want to make trouble as long as the store is nice to our son. Washing dishes is not part of our son's job but we don't protest when he is asked to do it. We asked around and none of the co-workers had anything bad to say about our son. The store manager is actually the only one who has a problem with our son. Every time we call, we will remind her that our son has an intellectual disability, but if we call too often, she will get irritated. But she is the manager, so what do you think we can do about it?

W's father: In the case of the work-related injury this time, he was asked to do the dishes even while the person assigned that job was there at the store. He has an intellectual disability, so he should have been forewarned if there's danger involved in certain work. He wasn't and ended up with the cut on his hand.

W's mother: Exactly. We entrusted our son with the store. How would you have handled it if he was your child?

W's father: All of society should care about people with disabilities. Now the store's intention is to send him back and we are resisting it. What will he do if he is sent back? He will be staying home, unemployed.

W's mother: He wasn't happy about it when he was asked to do the dishes and had a hard time swallowing it. So I told him that everyone starts at the bottom at the beginning which is the way to get established. I said, "You have to learn to crawl through a hole before you can jump over a gate and you will just have to work your way up. No work is beneath you. You should be prepared to try all kinds of work and do well at whatever job you are given." He didn't disagree. We have to guide his thinking in this way, otherwise he will get stuck in his mind. What happened that day when he was doing the dishes? After he was done, someone with a disability said that he would have endless dishes to wash. He probably got a little mad hearing it and got flustered too, which was why he got that cut on his hand.

Q: Hadn't he been asked to do the dishes prior to the incident?

W's mother: Before the incident, he was asked to help out here and there, but doing the dishes hadn't exactly been assigned to him. Maybe he had never felt good about it, and he felt even worse when someone said that he would have to always do the dishes now that the lady doing that was leaving. It probably destroyed his mood. He gets moody sometimes. People without disabilities like us can adjust our mood and just settle for doing the dishes when asked to.

Q: He probably couldn't resign himself to it.

W's mother: He definitely couldn't resign himself to it. People really should be caring towards him. I mean, even people without disabilities like us wouldn't be able to resign ourselves to that. He was teased about having to always do the dishes. Would people without disabilities have been teased like that? Would anyone have even dared to tease like that? We didn't like hearing about it, but what could we do? We normally try to be pleasing since our son works at that store. But we have had enough this time, and being his guardians, we had to stand up for him. He has been with Papa John's for 7 years and is an experienced employee—it's too bad that he still gets bullied after 7 years' service.

Q: Have there been similar incidents at other stores?

W's father: No. It only happened at this store.

W's mother: I am sure you can tell that our son is very precious to us. We spoil him all the more, precisely because of his disability. If he gets bullied and we don't make up for it, he will have an impossible life.

He has low self-esteem and normally doesn't get into big trouble. But the store feels that he is too stubborn. He is stubborn sometimes, but he listens to reason. The manager doesn't reason with him because she feels that she is superior and when she says W has done wrong, W has done wrong. W doesn't agree with her sometimes and talks back as a result. I believe that's what happens. But what I can't understand is why the manager is always picking on him. She could have just tried to communicate with us and we would have tried to help W improve and would have felt better about it. All that the manager tells us now is that W doesn't listen. But exactly how is he not listening? She should have told us.

Q: Do you see any changes with him after he started working?

W's mother: When he was going to school, he didn't tell us what had happened when he came home. Now he will tell us and communicate a little with us. Maybe it has to do with his work environment. Now he tells me what's going on with this or that person, whereas he had never told us anything about his schoolmates before. Maybe he had been a little depressed from being bullied.

Hoping for Stability in the Future

Q: What do you think of your life now?

W's father: Life is so-so. We had some tough times, but we had no choice.

W's mother: We are pretty satisfied and used to life as is. Life was harder before, so I am happy with the way things are now.

Q: Can you talk a little about the past?

W's mother: We had a hard life, because neither my husband nor I made a lot of money. He was actually laid off. I was the only one working, and we had to support our son through school, so we were barely getting by. I asked for a contract renewal so as to support the family. Unlike some other people, we didn't want a rich life. We just want to have enough money to live on, and we have no high expectations.

W's father: We just want food on the table and a roof over our heads. We just want a stable job. We are so worried without a job.

Q: What does W normally do when he isn't working?

W's mother: He plays on the computer and on his phone. He stays home every day. When his dad has time, he will take a walk with him. He went with his dad to Dishui Lake. He wanted to go to that place and couldn't wait, so we went with him. At home, he likes to walk around. That's the thing with him.

W's father: He is a little hyperactive. He is active and doesn't like to stay put. Maybe he has excessive energy and doesn't like to sit around all the time.

Q: Do you do some things together as a family?

W's mother: No. There's nothing much to do. We eat together and then do our own things. Sometimes he will mention certain things he wants to eat. We don't go out for fun as a family, and he has no desire to do that anyway. Sometimes we will be invited to eat out and he will opt out. He is a little weird and I can't pinpoint it. He doesn't cling to us. Instead he will go out on his own if he wants to relax. Even if he goes out with his dad, he will be walking in the front and his dad is not supposed to follow too close.

Q: Where does he usually go to relax?

W's mother: He will go somewhere to be close to a mountain or to a river. Or he will go and look at new apartments. He will come back and tell me where he thinks is the best place to invest in. I tell him we will wait till he has saved enough. He has aspirations and is frugal at the same time. He is saving up all the allowances we give him, and his savings are in the thousands. Unlike other kids, he doesn't throw his money around. He is a penny pincher.

Q: You mean he saves everything you give him?

W's mother: Yes, he does, instead of wasting it. He will tell me what food he spends the money on and I will reassure him it's okay. He will tell me how much money he starts with for a day and how much he has spent and how much is left and where the money is spent. He can tell me everything. And sometimes he will say that he has overspent for that day, and I will tell him it's okay because he has spent it on food. He loves food. Our son really loves food.

Q: What do you hope him to be like in the future?

W's mother: I just hope that he can be self-dependent. That's very realistic. We actually only want the bare minimum for him. People with disabilities should have stable jobs and the pay itself doesn't really matter, right? All of society should be caring and inclusive towards them. That's our expectation.

Q: Have you thought about him getting married?

W's mother: We have, but we have no idea whether it would work out, so we will let things take their own course.

Q: Has anyone tried matchmaking for your son?

W's mother: Someone has but I rejected her. Our son is too mild, and I don't want some aggressive girl taking advantage of him.

Q: What was the girl like?

W's mother: She seemed to have an intellectual disability too, so how could it have worked? For me, as long as the mind is sound, I can live with a limping leg or something wrong with the eye. My son has never given this too much thought.

Q: If he ever gets married, will you want him to have kids?

W's mother: No, definitely no. It's not easy to raise a child. I just want someone to keep him company. I will feel better once he becomes self-dependent. As for finding a wife, it depends on him and I don't want to force anything. If he wants to look for someone, we will support him. If he has no such intention, we won't push him. That's what we expect of him. He is getting older, so he should understand that he can't always depend on his parents and that it's best for him to be self-dependent.

Q: Does your son enjoy any benefits now?

W's mother: He has no benefits or subsidies, because his disability isn't severe. His disability is only Grade IV, which is low on the scale. Those with severe disabilities enjoy financial benefits, whereas W has to work for his money. The disability certificate is to help him get jobs.

We only have one child. Couples like us were allowed to have a second child, but we didn't do it. The government gives each of us 4,800 yuan per year which makes it a total of 9,600 yuan. We are putting it in W's account because it's subsidy. So, we save 10,000 yuan for him every year. We have been receiving the subsidy for only a few years and at first it was only 1,440 yuan. I was confident that things would improve, and I was right—the subsidy was gradually increased.

Q: What expectations do you have for society? Where do you see room for improvement in the way people with ID are treated?

W's mother: I don't have much to say about that.

W's father: We just hope that society can give them stable and long-term jobs and can keep them from losing their jobs.

W's mother: A job is the most important thing. People like W just need simple jobs and whoever hires them can enjoy tax benefits. His take-home pay is really low, but we want him to work because that's how he can be exposed to society. W is luckier than some other people. There are those having a tougher time than he does. W can work and isn't picky about what he does. He gets into trouble when he is in a bad mood, like what happened this time.

Interview with W's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Ms. S (manager of restaurant where W worked previously)

Interviewer and writer: Jingjing Shen

Interview date: July 10, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where S works

Q: How long did you work with W?

Ms. S: More than 2 months, 2 or 3 months.

Q: Where did he work before joining your store?

Ms. S: As far as I know, he started at Y store. Something happened there, so he was transferred from Y store to D store. Then something happened again at D store. His mom was unhappy with that store, so he was transferred back to Y store.

Q: So, you got to know him at Y store, right?

Ms. S: Right, at Y store.

Q: What did you think of him at work? I mean from the perspective of a store manager.

Ms. S: While I was manager, he was doing okay in everything, but the feedback from the supervisors wasn't exactly glowing. According to the supervisors, W seemed to be living in his own world at work and would only do things he wanted to do, and he didn't react positively to what he was told... Let me just say that he wasn't good at execution.

Q: What did he do at Y store?

Ms. S: Under my management, he mainly made drinks. As far as I know, he could work at every position but wasn't excelling at any.

Q: When you were at Y store, how many employees being cared for like him did you have?

Ms. S: Five including him.

Q: How would you rank his performance against the other four?

Ms. S: He was in the middle.

Q: What did the other employees do?

Ms. S: They did all sorts of things. A young guy with the last name Yu mainly made pasta, the mute lady could make dough and do everything else, and also helped with washing dishes. There was a girl and a guy who worked at everything because they knew what to do at all positions.

Q: When you were manager, how did you treat him?

Ms. S: I believe that I was able to engage him in pleasant communication. Because of previous miscommunication between him and his family, every time I had a talk with him, I would text his parents or call them to brief them on what I had said to him. I guess that's what two-way management is about. His parents are pretty old and his dad is in poor health. His mom is very devoted to him, and every time I needed to talk to them, I would call his mom. So, between the two of us, we tried to manage him by playing good cop bad cop.

Q: What kind of person do you think he is?

Ms. S: That kid easily drives himself into a corner and gets agitated, but I am convinced that he has a good nature. Whatever I told him to do, he seldom wasted time getting it done. He was ready to admit his mistakes, even though I wasn't sure if he truly realized where he had done wrong. But whatever you pointed out to him, he would immediately say, "I got it, Manager, and I won't do it again."

Q: Was there anything you were really impressed with about him?

Ms. S: He was eager to help. He made drinks, and the food delivery window was right outside his workstation. Sometimes when he saw that the window was getting crowded, he would run out to help move the food along. He might have messed it up despite his good intentions. Because he worked in the kitchen, his clothes could be a little soiled and he wore a hat. We have strict requirements for how employees

present themselves to customers in the dining area. He really wanted to help and I could understand and appreciate that.

Q: Did the employees being cared for and regular ones work together?

Ms. S: They mostly worked in the same work environment. When it got busy, the manager on duty would pay more attention to how he was doing because of his limited ability.

Q: How did the employees being cared for get along with the regular ones? Did they interact with each other?

Ms. S: They did. There was a larger percentage of older female employees at Y store, so they would act like moms telling him what to do and what not to do and help him when it got busy. When it was quiet in the store, the employees would communicate while folding boxes and wrapping knives and forks, but the communication was mostly limited to work.

Sometimes W would talk to me about his personal life. For example, he would tell me about the friend he had made on WeChat. His mom told me that he wouldn't tell his family what kind of friends he made and she was worried that he would make the wrong friends. So I advised him to be cautious when making friends online. That's how we tried to take care of him.

He gets easily agitated. Other than that, there's nothing wrong with the way he thinks. He would say that he is entitled to having his own friends and his own circle and to privacy. That's his thing and why his mom said that he wouldn't tell her anything. But he would talk to the older female employees at the store sometimes. So I would remind those employees to tell him to be careful when making friends and not to fall for the wrong people.

Q: Did the employees have any activities after work? Did you organize any fun activities for them?

Ms. S: We seldom did that. We basically just brought some snacks to the store for everyone to share during Chinese New Year, or got everyone to eat together. We also had town halls. But the town halls were always held after we had closed the store, and parents got worried when some of the employees went home that late at night. While I was manager, W never participated in any group activity.

Q: While you were manager, did he have any run-in with anyone or any other unpleasant incidents? And did his family have any conflict with the store?

Ms. S: There were run-ins. Like I told you at the beginning, he butted heads with the supervisors. W is a typical guy born and raised in Shanghai, while a large percentage of our supervisors are college graduates from outside Shanghai. When they communicated with W, W would speak some Shanghainese and his tone would be a little off. So I did witness him having a conflict with a supervisor. I talked to the supervisor later and talked to W's mom too. His mom was very cooperative, and we were on site trying to smooth things out.

Q: What did you think of his personality?

Ms. S: He is not a bad kid, but he lacks patience and easily goes to extremes. Maybe that has to do with him being spoiled at home. From what I heard from his mom, he was kind of spoiled.

Q: What's his work schedule at Y store?

Ms. S: He mostly worked afternoon shift from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., with 1 h's break in between.

Q: How good was he at making drinks?

Ms. S: He did okay. New products were a little challenging for him, but he had no problem with old products.

Q: Did you hold him up to different standards than regular employees?

Ms. S: The standards are the same for everyone. The only difference is that we can tolerate or re-educate regular employees if they make mistakes once or twice, whereas for employees being cared for, we will need to spend more time on mentoring and be more tolerant of the number of times they make mistakes. But the standards are the same because we can't allow the quality of the restaurant to be affected.

Q: Was he already working at Y store when you joined?

Ms. S: Yes. I had asked about him before his transfer to the store. He had worked at Y store a long time ago. He had worked at quite a few stores including Y store and T store, then he moved from Y store to D store, and ended up being transferred from D store back to Y store. He was still working at Y store by the time I left.

Q: What about his pay and year-end bonus when he was working at Y store?

Ms. S: He was paid for the days he worked and the pay was deposited directly into his bankcard. I don't recall him getting any employee bonus.

Q: There's 1 h's break every day. What did he do during the break? And what did the other employees in the store do?

Ms. S: They mostly ate in the employees' break room, watched videos on their phones and chatted online. That's pretty much what I saw.

Q: Did he hang out with any co-workers during the break?

Ms. S: What I saw was him chatting with some older female employees. He seldom went out with anyone.

Q: Making drinks must require training. When you were working there, he must already have learned how to do it, right?

Ms. S: He had been there for a long time, so he must have completed the training.

Q: Did you talk to him after work?

Ms. S: The supervisors might have had minimum communication with him. I would chat with him sometimes. When he was first transferred to the store, on the first day of work, I invited his parents over to talk about things upfront including what kind of special attention to him at work they expected from us. My goal was to preempt future conflict at work. We have had employees being cared for for a long time, and where I had worked previously, there were many employees being cared for too. We could communicate with them on certain things, but they couldn't relay all the messages to their parents which could lead to certain conflicts. We understand how the parents feel. They send their kids to work with us and they are worried whether their kids will be bullied because they are more difficult to manage or lacking in some areas. Parents are actually under a lot of pressure in that whenever something happens, they will feel that the regular employees are excluding or bullying the employees being cared for. When that happened, we would invite the parents over and break things down for them.

W's dad also has some disability, so his mom has a really tough time. Sometimes she would cry as soon as she started talking to me. At the store, I tried to spend more time chatting to him because he came to work whenever I was at work, and everyone said that he would only listen to me. I communicated more with his mom, mostly about how he was doing at work. Sometimes, when he made a mistake, I would have a stern talk with him, then I would call his mom and brief her on what had happened. I would advise his mom to talk to him instead of verbally or physically punishing him, because his mom would be very upset, anxious, and sad. I would tell her that we were keeping an eye on him and that since we had already had a talk with him, she shouldn't do it again because he would feel wronged getting a talking to from everyone. I actually feel that I kept up the communication pretty well. I would call or text his mom almost every week.

Q: It's clear that you were very nice to him.

Ms. S: Because I am a mom myself and I felt that I could relate with his mom.

Interview with W's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Ms. Z (manager of restaurant where W worked previously)

Interviewer and writer: Jingjing Shen

Interview date: July 8, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where Z works

Q: How long did you work with W?

Ms. Z: Let me think. I would say more than 6 months. He joined around April 2016, so I worked with him for about 8 months.

Q: How many employees being cared for were there at the store, including him?

Ms. Z: Two. Actually, three if we count the mute and deaf employee.

Q: What did you think of W at work?

Ms. Z: Since he was transferred from Y store to our store, it implied that he wasn't doing well at that store. Good employees would have been kept by the store, right? Strictly regarding work, his performance must have affected the store operation and he must have become a liability to Y store, which was why he was moved to D store. Then D store felt that he was obstructing operation, so he was returned to Y store.

Q: So that's what happened. What did he do at the store?

Ms. Z: When I asked him, he said he could work at all of the positions. But he was tested only on making drinks and he didn't even pass that test. He did a lousy job slicing pizzas and the customers were always complaining about him. Drinks are supposed to be presentable, right? The customers complained about the drinks he made, too, and the complaints were posted on the rating sites. I told him about the complaints and he said to ask the customers to bring it up with him. I couldn't empathize when it's about his work, but I was more understanding from an emotional point of view, because I couldn't exactly expect his mind to work the same way as that of people without disabilities.

Q: How did he get along with his co-workers? What kind of person did you think he was?

Ms. Z: He is not a bad kid, but he did often cut corners at work. When I told him to wipe the table, he was inclined to wipe just the section right in front of him. He was selective about what he wanted to do and he only worked when he felt like working. When you confronted him about it, he would either say he forgot what he was supposed to do or he had already done it. The employees all felt that since he had been with us for a long time, he wasn't taking anything seriously.

Q: So, he was kind of a senior employee. Did you hold him up to the same standards as the other employees?

Ms. Z: The truth is that I have compulsive disorder myself, and deep down, I want every employee to do his or her job well. Even if you only know how to do one thing, you should get that thing 80% done, right? But I took it easier on him when it came to interpersonal relationships and workload. It's really simple. For example, when I asked him to slice pizzas, that's probably the only job I would assign him. Had it been a regular employee, I would have added the job of making drinks. And I did lighten his workload. Work around the restaurant is very simple. It's not as if it's beyond his ability. He could get things done, but he didn't take his job seriously and didn't get things done well.

Q: His parents mentioned that W was injured at work. Was he?

Ms. Z: I wasn't at the restaurant when it happened. He did tell me that he could do everything, but unexpected things happened when he was given a certain assignment. He was asked to do the dishes that day, but there's a designated dishwasher for that and there was no need for hand washing, was there? I didn't know how it happened, but it seemed that he got a cut on his hand.

Q: His mom mentioned it.

Ms. Z: We called his mom and she said everything was okay and he just needed a break. She was being considerate towards the restaurant and wanted him to go back to work at the restaurant after the break. But the break lasted more than a month.

Q: Did he go back to D store after the break?

Ms. Z: He went to Y store. It's not that we didn't want to give him another chance, we were just unsure about him. He had pretty bad mood swings, and to tell you the truth, I was traumatized by him one time. A customer complained about him, and being the manager, I was caught in the middle. So, I figured I would talk to his mom and called her. I told him to go back home with his mom to get some rest and to come back to work after he had stabilized emotionally. He got mad at that and started kicking and tearing up things in the store, which was pretty scary for all of us. He could be a liability to himself as well as to the store. We all work in a public setting, and if you can't control your emotions, it will affect not only the customers but also other employees in the restaurant, and the restaurant operation will be disrupted as a result.

Q: What's a day's work like for him?

Ms. Z: I was pretty considerate towards him. Because of the way he is, I couldn't assign him to open the store or close the store, so I only arranged for him to work

afternoon shift. We were all there for the afternoon shift, so we could help him. He was only responsible for doing his job well.

Q: How much did he make per month?

Ms. Z: Two or three thousand yuan, depending on how Marketing and HR calculated it, and his social insurances were covered. In my opinion, his pay was decent and not much lower than that of people without disabilities. Our regular employees were paid about the same. In fact, I really think that the company and the stores are very caring towards employees being cared for. I work for a living too, and I don't have to make things difficult for myself. Having one more employee means I have fewer things on my own hands. But that employee can't affect operation or other employees. That's the bottom line.

Q: How would you rate his ability against other employees being cared for?

Ms. Z: I really had reservations about his ability at work. And he knew it himself. He can do a good job but he can't control his emotions. I would tell him, "You need to get this done well because a customer complained." He would acknowledge it. And after 5 or 10 min, another customer would complain. When you told him about it, he would lose his patience and demand that the customer complain directly to him. Where could we go from there then? I had a simple way of handling it. If you failed at one position, I would move you to another position. But even when he was moved to another position, he would do okay for the first 15 or 30 min, and then he would get forgetful. I couldn't possibly monitor him the entire 8 h at work. That would be unrealistic because I had so many other employees to watch. But the real issue is that he needs to get better at controlling his emotions.

Q: His mom said that he made dough and drinks, is that right?

Ms. Z: He said he could work at any position, and his mom said the same about him. His mom was asked to come to the store. I actually gave him many chances. When I have people working for me, I normally will not involve parents unless I have no other option. When I have parents come onsite, you must have made mistakes and it must not have been the first time you have made the mistakes.

Q: What did the other employees being cared for do?

Ms. Z: They did everything.

Q: They knew how to do everything?

Ms. Z: Right, they could make appetizers and could fill in at other positions. They did a good job cleaning up and knew how to make dough, too. As a matter of fact, the three employees being cared for I had did a better job than the regular ones. They were so good.

Q: One of them had an intellectual disability, what about the other one?

Ms. Z: The other one was mute and totally deaf, but was a top performer at work and understood what you wanted just by the look in your eyes, which is more than I can say about a lot of people without disabilities. There's another employee being cared for whose leg was broken before and who has had problems with it since. But that person also did very well at work, cleaning up really nice, taking apart microwaves and noodle steamers to wash, and never giving me reasons to worry. W was the one I had to really watch over. You should ask his mom whether he is like that at home. His mom said that he just has to talk back and won't listen to reason

when you talk to him about the mistakes he has made. Maybe it has to do with the way he lives his daily life. I don't know how to put it except to say, like I said before, that if he was really a good employee, all of the stores would have been fighting over him.

Q: Now that he has been transferred, you still have two employees being cared for with you, right?

Ms. Z: Three actually. I normally don't refer to them as employees being cared for or mute, because I feel that as long as they can work, they are no different from anyone else.

Q: How do you usually refer to them then?

Ms. Z: By their names. Like with Le, because she can't hear, people will call her by this or that, and I will point out that she has a name and that since she can't hear, we can all write down for her what we want to say. Everyone gets along well with everyone. From the standpoint of the restaurant, it would not have let W go had there been a choice, because everyone knows that it's not easy for him to have a job, being the way he is.

Q: He seems to have worked at Papa John's for many years.

Ms. Z: Right. Actually, everyone was trying so hard to be patient with him and to give him another chance so that he could be retained. That's the truth.

Q: At work, how did he interact with co-workers including the other employees being cared for? His mom said that he seldom interacted with anyone at the store.

Ms. Z: It's not that bad. I think there was interaction for him. It depended on him. When he was in a good mood, he would communicate with someone.

Since we are in the food industry, I won't allow employees to come to work if they are sick or itchy somewhere or have a cold. But if I told him, "W, you are sick, why don't you go home and have it checked out?" he would reply that he could still work. I would insist that he go home and if he wouldn't listen, I would ask his mom to come over. That's when he would agree to leave. So that's how things were. From an emotional perspective, I believe that he needs sympathy and protection. That's all I can say.

Interview with W's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: Ms. L (district manager)

Interviewer and writer: Jingjing Shen

Interview date: July 15, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where L works

Q: How long have you known W?

Ms. L: I didn't take over this district till the end of April of this year. I probably visited the restaurant two or three times a month, and he had days off, so I didn't have too many chances to interact with him. At most, I saw him three times per month.

Q: So that was when he was working at Y store, right?

Ms. L: Right.

Q: As far as you know, how was he doing at that store?

Ms. L: He has been with Papa John's for a long time, about 8 years. Under normal circumstances, he behaves okay. But on some unusual occasions, things would become physical. His job was to deliver dishes at the window and make drinks. There was a counter directly facing customers. One time I walked over and he started gesturing wildly... I asked what was going on and he immediately controlled himself.

The store manager told me that's what he suffered from. He would try to control it on an average day, and he was smart about it. If he sensed that he was about to blow up, what did he do? There's a wall that he would seek shelter against. He would pound on the wall for a bit before returning to work.

That's one thing. Another thing is that drinks are a product for direct, instant consumption. I slapped his hand several times. Why? Because I saw that he wasn't wearing disposable gloves. I pay attention to that sort of detail.

The plus side is that sometimes I would randomly test him on product procedures, and he was able to give me answers, even though the answers were less than smooth. We can't treat him the same as people without disabilities, so I was happy with how he handled the random tests. So there were both good and bad things about him.

Also, the manager on duty told me that we had a kind of drink that should be tossed out once it was opened and unfinished. But he didn't do that. Why? I could only put a positive spin on it and figure that he was trying to save money for me. Or maybe he just couldn't remember. But if I gave it a negative spin, I would see it as his refusal to correct himself. So, I told the manager on duty to keep reminding him, because there was no other option. You need to be more patient when dealing with people like W. He was okay in other areas.

The store manager asked for W to be transferred because she couldn't handle him anymore. He had been transferred before, to D store. So, I talked to HR about it and looked for a solution, because otherwise no one would want to work the same shift as W. The district manager before me told me that even when the most minor thing happened, either W's mom or his dad would visit the store and behave very agitated which made it very difficult for the store. There was actually a store manager with the last name Z. I asked her to communicate more with W's mom, and W's mom said, "No one had said a bad word about us before. Now that you guys are in charge, you are unhappy with us." I tried to calm her down and got in touch with HR, and the feedback from HR was that no one had said a good word about him. Hanging on the wall was a record of communication with him and mentoring for him. In the record, he messed up our oven which was valued at 100,000 yuan and cost more than 10,000 yuan to repair. So, I told the store manager, "You didn't have enough communication with his mom previously and didn't provide feedback in time, so his mom had the misunderstanding that the previous manager had thought highly of W."

The bottom line is that whatever he did, there's a good side and a bad side. I am not saying that employees being cared for are not contributing to the store. They are, and W did have productivity. But it's a different matter whether his productivity met the requirements.

Q: So, something happened to him at D store, which was why he was transferred back to Y store?

Ms. L: Right, because no one could put up with him anymore.

Q: Was there some conflict between his parents and the store?

Ms. L: At that same store, there were many other employees being cared for including some with ID, one who was deaf and another one who had a bad leg. Like Shi from Y store. I like that kid because he has a good attitude and is willing to correct mistakes. Kids that I like are of this kind: I only need to tell them once to correct mistakes, they remember what I say and don't overreact.

One thing good about W was that he would say, "Okay okay, I got it, Boss." But he just wouldn't correct his mistakes no matter how many times he was told to, and that was a big headache, you know. Last time he made a salad and left some ripped plastic on the table. I didn't bill the customers for the salad which was an easy out for us. What if the customers made a big deal of it and said their kid might have swallowed the plastic?

We had thought about moving him to another position, but he couldn't have done well at any other position and making drinks is the easiest job, relatively speaking. If he had been moved to a position where he had to work with ovens, we would have been worried about his safety because we wouldn't have wanted him to get burnt. For him, we have made adjustments and have moved him to different stores and different positions. It's not that we haven't tried to help him. I did everything I could to help, and I was out of options. Some employees would say that W had it really easy and how come they couldn't enjoy the same treatment. Everyone would have something to say about that. Besides, headcount in restaurants is tight. When one position was occupied by W, the number of people I could hire would be reduced, right?

That's the problem we are facing right now. Because we want to show that we care, the boss asks us to just live with it, but what can we do when we just can't live with it towards the end? That's our struggle. I feel that Papa John's has become a restaurant just for employees being cared for. There are almost three employees being cared for per store. The maximum number of employees working in the dining area is six, and sometimes three of them are employees being cared for. But the customers won't understand. They will only complain that our services are slow, and they won't care that we are performing a public service. Their logic is that they spend money to enjoy services or products, and it's our fault if we blame the employees being cared for for not delivering the expected services. The managers on duty often have to take the blame, which they are not happy about, and my repeated explanations always fall flat. So, what can I do?

Q: Have you ever communicated with his parents?

Ms. L: No.

Q: Because it's the job of the store manager, right?

Ms. L: Right. Z, who was the previous store manager, talked to his mom on the phone. She took over around the same time as I did. Last month our QV expired, which means that there was some quality issue. So the store manager was replaced. As you can see, we have very tight quality control here, and if something happens, the store manager will be replaced or transferred to another position to be trained

again. Being trained again is a less harsh consequence. They are under tremendous pressure, and if they have under them employees who refuse to correct mistakes, they are done for themselves. That's why I told you that when the greater interest is impacted, we will have to do something about W.

Q: At the store, how did the employees being cared for get along with the regular ones?

Ms. L: At that store, there's a girl who doesn't look like an employee being cared for, a guy who did the best job at his position, and another girl who had the ability but who got lazy sometimes.

Q: What did she do?

Ms. L: She made dough. W can do that too, actually, if you ask him, but his mind wasn't there yet. I haven't known him for long. For example, when I tested him on products, he knew what he was talking about, which means that he had the presence of mind and the memory power. But where did that lead him? So the only reason was that he didn't really care, right? I know because I am a mom myself. You watch your child trying hard to memorize English words, but the test score was only 60. That means the hard studying was for show for your sake and the child was just killing time.

Q: When does W get tested?

Ms. L: We are super busy at the restaurants now and seldom give tests. Normally I will give verbal tests myself.

Q: How often are the tests?

Ms. L: Whenever I visit the stores. I have given him two tests since I took over.

Q: And he did pretty well on both tests, right?

Ms. L: Right, I have to give him that.

Q: What's your impression of him as a person?

Ms. L: He is a smart kid but his heart isn't in his job. I am not saying that he will do anything out of line. They all say that he is easily agitated and cannot control his emotions, and right now the store manager just can't connect with him.

Q: His mom mentioned that the store goes through managers quite often.

Ms. L: Right, because no manager could relate to him. Everyone finds that store a headache. W is entitled to have his thoughts. And his mom had an agitated talk with the previous manager about the special circumstances of the family, their financial hardship and W's disability. But our store is not exactly a non-profit organization and we need W's cooperation too. He can be scary—who will take responsibility if something happens? Would you not be afraid if you were sent to work with him? A lot of his co-workers are older females. Had they been young girls, his grumbling and yelling when he gets agitated would have scared them. And we have never felt comfortable to have him work evening shift.

Q: So what shift does he normally work?

Ms. L: Mostly afternoon shift lasting about 8 h from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Q: Do you have the same standards for employees being cared for and regular ones? How do you set the standards?

Ms. L: We probably have to spend more time with employees being cared for than with regular ones, since we will have to repeat what we say. The new standards

for employees are out and I will reiterate them every time I see the employees being cared for, but I won't be like a drill sergeant. At the store, I witnessed several times how an older female employee talked down to them in a loud, stern voice, so I pointed out to her that she should be reasonable instead of loud when talking to them. But I have also realized that using reason was less effective than using a loud, stern voice if you wanted them to take to heart what you said. Maybe they are more fragile at heart, that's all I can say.

Q: There's a lunch break in the afternoon, is there?

Ms. L: He will eat his lunch sitting on a stool somewhere. Because it gets hot in the store, he might look for another place to take his lunch break. There's a place close to the restrooms with a row of tables. It seems that he was doing something over there the other day, and Property Management had a problem with it.

Q: Are the employees being cared for paid differently from regular ones at the store?

Ms. L: No, they are paid the same.

Q: How much does W make per month approximately?

Ms. L: It's like this, the standard work hours per month are 168 and time worked above that is counted as OT which is paid differently. W normally works 168 h, and we hardly ever pay him a penny less unless he has skipped certain hours. And we pay into every employee's social insurances the same. We won't pay into his differently just because he is an employee being cared for.

Q: Are there any group activities for the employees?

Ms. L: The group activity we have most often is making and tasting new products. Basically the employees being cared for enjoy whatever regular ones do. They were given bonuses last time based on contribution to the store and the store manager decided the distribution.

Q: Do the regular employees at the store discriminate against the employees being cared for?

Ms. L: This depends on the individual store. There are certain older female employees who see themselves as older and senior and believe that everyone else should listen to them even if they talk in a condescending manner.

Q: What do these female employees do at the store?

Ms. L: They do the heavy lifting at the stores, and also slice pizzas and check expiration dates. We are not yet trusting W with writing expiration dates because we don't want him to write the wrong ones.

Q: So, each store is different.

Ms. L: Right, and people are different. I am not degrading the female employees. They are straightforward and most of them are from outside Shanghai, like Gansu. They have only one way of doing things, and I can only ask them politely to do it the right way... Bullying might have happened at the stores. I can't say that didn't happen, but I haven't witnessed any myself. But then, some employees don't ever get bullied. Why? Because they can get things done nicely. Just like in my case, I am the district manager, but I have to prove that I can get things done, otherwise no one will listen to me. Therefore, we have to lead by example and do a better job ourselves which is how we can mentor others.

Q: Was there anything involving W that impressed you?

Ms. L: The truth is that I haven't had much interaction with him and there's really nothing that has left a profound impression on me.

Q: Does the district manager visit individual stores for a fixed number of times per week?

Ms. L: Right, I visit the stores. When I visit the store where W works, it may not be on the day he works. Several times when I visited the store, he was off. He takes Saturday off normally. And since Saturday is the busiest day, I feel that the store is giving him special treatment. The store needs more hands on deck when it's busy, but they worry that he might mess things up and make it even busier for everyone. So you could say that the store is being considerate towards him, but you could also say that the store doesn't want him to mess things up. It really depends on how you look at it.

Q: As far as I know, he has worked at Papa John's for many years.

Ms. L: He has.

Q: What do you think is the biggest problem with him?

Ms. L: What I am most frustrated about is that he has extreme mood swings and I am worried about the safety of the customers and of other employees. The store wants to see collaboration and productivity. He seldom talks to other people and is somewhat a shut-in. I believe in more communication and that you will have to leave your small world to include into the big world around you. The company has in fact provided you with the platform to do so—you just need to open yourself up, be more humble, and focus more on what the managers teach you. I am sure every manager will take kindly to a kid who listens and takes responsibilities. When I first visited the store, I let it be known that anyone failing the tests would be let go upon contract expiration. W must have remembered it, since he passed the verbal tests. That means he cared about that one particular thing but not others. Maybe he has no control over other things, just like he has no control over his emotions. We did see him trying to control his emotions, but there's only so much he can do, and he is like a balloon just waiting to pop someday. He is a security risk and I have no idea when he will explode. I am actually quite scared, because I am in a different position and see things differently.

I have never met W's mom, and I am sure she has raised questions like, "How come my son never had such issues before? Why do you see this and that wrong with him now?" The answer is that our current business volume is on a totally different scale than the old volume. Now we use twice the labor, and work efficiency both for delivery and dine-in has doubled. And problems occur when everything has doubled. Previously, whoever worked with him could cover him. Things are different now and there are complaints from right and left. I just wish that he can make normal contributions to the store, but he can't and gets into trouble all the time instead. The store manager cannot spare the time and energy to babysit him, and wants nothing to do with him out of frustration. I had no option but to bring it to HR. It's not that I am trying to assert my power as the new district manager by targeting someone's son.

Interview with Mr. W

Interviewee: Mr. W

Interviewer and writer: Jingjing Shen

Interview date: July 16, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where W works

Going to School

Q: Do you remember anything from when you were going to school?

W: I went to Songhu Road Elementary School, in Yangpu District.

Q: I heard from your mom that you didn't like to go out, is that true? You didn't even like to go on school trips.

W: I didn't go out much when I was in elementary school. I didn't even play much in the apartment complex.

Q: Was there anything that was memorable for you?

W: Nothing from elementary school.

Q: According to your mom, at middle school, other kids would take your things including your food. That didn't happen till you started middle school, did it?

W: Nothing like that happened at middle school.

Q: Your mom said that they took your pencils and packed lunch. Was that at middle school?

W: No, no.

Q: How were your grades at elementary school and middle school? Do you still remember?

W: My grades were all bad, but I have always believed that's because the teachers didn't teach well.

Q: Which subjects were you relatively good at?

W: As far as I remember, at elementary school, I scored 96 on math and above 80 on English. And I did pass Chinese for the middle school graduation exam. That's because the teachers taught well. When they taught well, I learnt well.

Q: So, you went to Yangpu Vocational School after middle school graduation, right?

W: Right, I went to Yangpu Vocational School.

Q: Why did you decide to go there?

W: My dad picked a major for me which was culinary class at Yangpu Vocational School.

Q: So, your dad picked it for you. It wasn't your own choice.

W: Right.

Q: How did you do in the culinary class?

W: I didn't do well and dropped out after a little over 3 months.

Q: Why did you drop out?

W: I just didn't want to go anymore.

Q: You didn't want to go anymore. Your mom said that while you were going to school, some kids would take the meat from your meal. Did that happen?

W: Nope.

Q: Was there any dish you cooked best when you were in the culinary class?

W: I was only there for 3 months and hadn't started learning to cook dishes.

Q: What did you learn then?

W: I learnt chopping potatoes and dried tofu.

Q: Will you cook at home for your parents?

W: No.

Q: Was there any class that you liked best at school?

W: Not really.

Q: How did you eat at school?

W: At elementary school, the lunch was pre-ordered. At middle school, my dad delivered lunch to me at school.

Q: You were at the vocational school for 3 months, right?

W: At the vocational school, I ate out and also pre-ordered lunch.

Q: Did you live far from elementary school, middle school, and vocational school?

W: I used to live on East Guoding Road and went to Songhu Road Elementary school, which was where Songhu Road crosses Zhengtong Road. There's also a Wanda Plaza there, you know? Then I went to Tongji Middle School, which used to be called Songhu Middle School and was close to Zhengtong Road. Yangpu Vocational School was close to Benxi Road.

Q: So all of the schools were close to where you lived, right?

W: Right, not far.

Q: Were you close to any schoolmates at elementary school, middle school, or vocational school?

W: No. Actually, there was one at vocational school.

Q: What did you do with schoolmates you were close to at the vocational school?

W: Nothing much.

Q: Were there any teachers from elementary school who had left a lasting impression on you, by being either nice to you or really nasty to you?

W: There was. I remember that when I was in Class 1 of Grade 6, I didn't get along with my homeroom teacher.

Q: Why?

W: Mainly because my mom had an argument in his office and he was on bad terms with me ever since. He was nasty to me twice, but my mom only went to the office to reason with him once.

Q: Why did your mom do that?

W: Because the math teacher tore up one of my math exercise books.

W: Because you didn't do the math homework well?

W: Because I was making noises in class, he tore up my book.

Q: Were there any teachers who were especially nice to you?

W: I have no really good teachers.

Dropping Out of School

Q: After you dropped out of the vocational school, you stayed home, right?

W: After I finished middle school, I took the exam and got into the vocational school. After 3 months at that school, I started staying home.

Q: What did you usually do at home?

W: I was usually online.

Q: What did you usually watch online?

W: I played games.

Q: What games?

W: I played the King and QQtang. I don't play QQtang anymore. I also played kaixin001 games.

Q: Did you watch TV?

W: I watched TV series.

Q: Did you watch cartoons?

W: Occasionally. Why do you want to know?

Q: When you stayed home, who cooked for you?

W: My dad did.

Working

Q: It was quite a few years later that you started going to the Sunshine Home, right?

W: Right, right. Let me think. I dropped out of school in 2002, and I didn't start going to the Sunshine Home till 2007.

Q: Who referred you to the Sunshine Home?

W: The Community Affairs Committee did.

Q: So, you stayed at the Sunshine Home for a while, then went to work at a supermarket?

W: Right. I went to work at the supermarket in March 2008.

Q: And you joined Papa John's after some time at the supermarket?

W: After 6 months.

Q: Which Papa John's stores have you worked at? It must have been quite a few.

W: I worked at J store and W store which was close to Wujiaochang. I worked at Y store and was transferred to D store before being transferred back to Y store.

Q: Oh, I know about that. What about T store? You worked there too, didn't you?

W: I only helped out at T store, which was located where Luban Road crosses Liyuan Road.

Q: How long have you worked at Y store?

W: I joined Y store in 2012 and was transferred to D store in 2016. In February of this year, I came back to Y store.

Q: How many employees being cared for like you are there in the store?

W: There are four, but only two with ID like me.

Q: Did you know them before joining the store?

W: No.

Q: Were they picked from the Sunshine Home the way you were?

W: I have no idea.

Q: Which store did you like working at best?

W: I liked J store and T store.

Q: Why?

W: I felt that it was more fun there.

Q: Was it because of the environment or the people there?

W: I just felt really good there.

Q: What was it about those stores that made you feel really good?

W: At J store, it was the environment outside the store. At T store, it was something inside the store.

Q: What do you do at work every day? You made dough today. What did you do the previous days?

W: I made drinks.

Q: As far as I could tell, you didn't make a lot of dough today, did you?

W: Not really.

Q: How do you get along with your co-workers at the store?

W: So-so.

Q: How do the managers treat you, in your opinion?

W: They are all nice to me.

Q: You normally work afternoon shift, right?

W: Right, afternoon shift.

Q: You seem to have a break in the afternoon. How long is the break?

W: One hour.

Q: Where do you eat?

W: Right here.

Q: When do you usually get up on workdays?

W: Usually at 9:15 or 9:45 a.m.

Q: How do you get to work in the morning?

W: I take the subway, Line 8 and then Line 2.

Q: Do you live far? How long does it take to come to work?

W: One hour and 15 min.

Q: Is the subway crowded?

W: No, not really.

Q: Is it easy for you to come to work?

W: The transportation is convenient.

Q: When do you get off in the evening?

W: Sometimes 8 p.m., sometimes 8:30 p.m. and sometimes 9 p.m.

Q: So you have dinner at the store?

W: I go home and eat.

Q: Do your parents wait for you for dinner or do they eat first?

W: They eat first.

Q: When do you get to go to bed then, since you have to eat first?

W: I get to go to bed around 10 p.m.

Q: How many days do you work per week?

W: Usually 5 days.

Q: Which 2 days do you have off?

W: It depends.

Q: What do you do with your monthly pay?

W: It's all in bank savings.

Q: Since you have worked at so many stores, are there any co-workers who are really close to you?

W: Yu is closest to me here.

Q: What does he do?

W: He makes appetizers.

Q: Do you two hang out when you are not working?

W: No.

Q: Does the store organize any group activities?

W: No.

Q: Have you ever bought pizzas here and brought them back to your parents?

W: Yeah.

Q: Did they like them?

W: No, they didn't.

Q: Of the three places, the Sunshine Home, the supermarket, and Papa John's, which one do you like better than the others?

W: To be honest, I liked the Sunshine Home, but I didn't make much money there.

Q: What did you do at the Sunshine Home?

W: There wasn't much to do.

Q: How much did you make each month?

W: Only 300 yuan.

Q: What about at the supermarket?

W: I don't quite remember.

Q: So the pay is higher here, right?

W: The pay isn't high here.

Q: But higher than at the Sunshine Home, right?

W: Right.

Q: Did the Sunshine Home refer you to the supermarket?

W: No. My family talked to the DPF and I went there for training.

Q: But the Sunshine Home referred you to Papa John's?

W: Yes, they did.

Q: Are you happy working at Papa John's?

W: So-so.

Q: Happier than at the Sunshine Home?

W: There's no way I can compare the two, no way to tell which is a happier place for me.

Q: Do you exercise?

W: I don't exercise, and I don't do sports.

Q: What do you think of your work and life now?

W: I think my work is okay. And life is not too bad either.

Q: Will you tell your mom if something upsets you at work?

W: I will. I won't be upset exactly. Something might just be off, but not upsetting.

Q: So what happens when something is off?

W: I will just vent with my family.

Special Olympics

Q: Let me ask you about Special Olympics. You have participated in many Special Olympics activities, haven't you?

W: Yes, the community Special Olympics activities.

Q: Do you participate every year?

W: Yes, every year.

Q: When do they normally take place? Have you participated in any this year?

W: July is the month, like right around this time of the year.

Q: Do you know the exact date for this year?

W: I don't know. Maybe around the 20th.

Q: Oh, that's like tomorrow. Do you like participating in Special Olympics activities?

W: I do.

Q: What's your favorite?

W: Long jump.

Q: What prizes have you won?

W: I won prizes at long jump because I always came in first.

Q: That's awesome. Did you win a lot of prizes?

W: Not a lot. You can only win one prize.

Q: What's the prize like usually?

W: They gave you whatever they had available, like an electric fan.

Life

Q: Do you go out as a family when you have time?

W: No.

Q: So, your parents just stay home?

W: My parents will go out. My dad goes to the park behind where we live, and my mom goes out with people she knows.

Q: Do you go out with relatives about your age? There must be relatives about your age.

W: There are, but we don't go out.

Q: Do you travel as a family?

W: No.

Q: Have you thought about getting married?

W: I have.

Q: Is anyone matchmaking for you?

W: I don't need it. I have the freedom to find my own date. And I do have a girlfriend.

Q: Oh, you have a girlfriend? Your mom said you don't.

W: She doesn't know everything.

Q: How did you meet your girlfriend?

W: On QQ.

Q: Have you met in real life?

W: Not yet.

Q: You hope to get married some day, do you?

W: I do.

Q: How do your parents treat you, in your opinion?

W: My parents treat me very nice.

Q: Is there any difference in the way they treat you? Who is the bad cop, your mom or your dad?

W: They are both very nice.

Q: How do you get along with your parents?

W: We get along very well and my mom is super nice to me.

Q: Are both your parents retired?

W: They are.

Q: If you get married one day, will you continue to live with your parents, or will you move out?

W: I will continue to live with my parents.

Q: Do you often buy things for yourself?

W: No. Actually, I buy food every day.

Q: Do you mean snacks? What snacks?

W: Nothing in particular that I really like. I just buy drinks.

Q: Do you have any interests?

W: Not really.

Observation of W at Work

Observation date: July 16, 2017

Observation place: Restaurant where W works

Observer and writer: Jingjing Shen

Time	What W did	Remarks
11:00–11:10	Arrived at the store and got ready for work	
11:10–11:25	Made dough at own station	
11:25–11:28	Had no orders	Chatted with co-workers at the station
11:28–11:30	Spread ingredients on the dough	Reminded the co-worker making salad next to him to put on gloves
11:30–11:33	Made dough and spread ingredients and sauce on the dough	
11:33–11:35	Spread sauce on the dough	The manager on duty walked up to W and reminded him not to hold the dough in his hand while spreading sauce
11:35–11:44	Went to the back of the kitchen to fetch flour, made dough and put the dough aside	
11:44–11:50	Made dough and refilled sauce	The manager on duty reminded W that the bread sticks were not made well and the pizza crust was made too narrow. A co-worker pointed out that there were bubbles in the cheese sticks
11:50–11:55	Placed takeout orders at the drinks window, made dough and put it aside	A co-worker spreading sauce gently reminded W to do a more even job when making dough
11:55–12:02	Had free time, washed hands, and made dough	A co-worker spreading sauce reminded W not to make the pizza crust too thin
12:02–12:10	Had free time and cleaned up flour on the counter	
12:10–12:15	Made dough, dropped some on the floor and tried to pick it up	The manager on duty pointed out that the flour on the floor couldn't be used and should be marked as wasted
12:15–12:25	Had free time	Fetches things for co-workers
12:25–12:40	Made dough and spread ingredients on the dough	W had an emotional episode and got super excited, kneading and tossing dough with excessive force He calmed down gradually Everyone was very busy at the store
12:40–12:45	Made dough and bread sticks	
12:45–12:50	Helped pass out takeout orders	
12:50–12:55	Had free time	
12:55–13:14	Made dough and fetched appetizer plates for a co-worker	
13:14–13:15	Washed hands, had a drink, and took a rest	Went to the employees' break section

(continued)

(continued)

Time	What W did	Remarks
13:15–13:45	Folded boxes in the kitchen and placed them in the dining area	W was still unnaturally excited
13:45–14:20	Had free time and took a rest	
14:20–14:39	Was interviewed in the dining area	
14:39–15:10	Had lunch in the employees' break section in the kitchen and played on cell phone	
15:10–15:30	Received the first order of the afternoon, fetched flour, made dough, and spread ingredients on the dough	
15:30–15:37	Helped pass out takeout orders	
15:37–15:38	Wiped tables and cleaned up the drinks station	
15:38–15:45	Made dough	
15:45–15:48	Had free time, used the bathroom, and chatted with co-workers	
15:48–15:53	Helped fetch ketchup and refilled pizza ingredients on the counter	
15:53–16:10	Took out trash from the kitchen	
16:10–16:20	Fetches cheese sticks, made dough, spread ingredients on the dough, and helped bring out a dine-in order	
16:20–16:40	Had free time and helped co-workers next to him	
16:40–17:00	Fetches flour and made dough	
17:00–17:10	Had free time	
17:10–17:40	Fetches flour and made dough	W spread the wrong ingredients and tried to wipe them off with water. The manager on duty stopped him and asked him to immediately throw out the dough
17:40–19:00	Made dough and helped a co-worker refill pizza ingredients	
19:00–19:15	Brushed the counter and cleaned up the flour on the counter	
19:15–20:20	Helped put things away and cleaned up	
20:20–20:30	Punched out and got ready to leave	

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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I Am Capable, So I Will Do More



Mei Liao

Interview with Mr. QZ's Mother

QZ, male, born in 1988. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2009.

Interviewee: QZ's mother

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview dates: July 5 and September 22, 2016

Interview place: QZ's home

Delayed Development and Fragile Bones

QZ's mother: When he was first born, QZ looked fine and there seemed to be nothing wrong...

Maybe that's because the baby was protected by its own immune system for the first 6 months of its life. Once he turned 6 months old, he started getting sick all the time, with a fever running at 40 degrees as well as pneumonia. He probably didn't have a strong build to begin with. And we were driven crazy.

I had 90 days of maternity leave. I was asked to go back to work to a better position, but after 2 days back at my job, I realized it wouldn't work out because there would be no one to take care of the baby at home. My own mom had to work, and I couldn't exactly ask my grandma to babysit, especially as the baby was still young and his bones were not as strong as those of other babies. I figured that after the baby got older, like after he turned 6 months, I could go back to work. But he

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just kept getting sick and I just couldn't go back to work. I ended up taking a year off. Back then, the longest leave you could take was 1 year—longer leave was near impossible.

I took 1 month off before my due date. Before the baby was born, there was pressure on the nerves on one side of my body and one of my legs hurt really bad when I walked. The doctor said it was no big deal, that I would be okay after childbirth and that I couldn't take any medication. So I took 1 month off before the baby was born, which means that my 1 year worth of leave actually ended when the baby was 11 months old.

My mom worked in the hospital and we lived nearby, which was convenient. We knew the hospital well, so we took the baby there all the time. At first there was no definitive diagnosis—he just kept getting sick. And he had allergies and developed rashes so easily. He had tests at the hospital, but no allergens could be found. The pediatricians at the hospital all knew him (giving a miserable smile). If we didn't show up at the hospital during a certain week, they would ask for a reason. That's how often we visited. My workplace was really supportive and didn't mind my frequent trips to the hospital. During my darkest hours, the people around me were all very helpful, so was my workplace.

When he was about 10 months old, we realized that he was developing slower than other kids—he couldn't crawl or sit like the others. He could only sit for a short while before toppling over, and we failed at teaching him to crawl.

We took him to Xinhua Hospital, to the outpatients division for kids with delayed development. The doctor said that what he was going through was not rare, and back then there was no medication or any other treatment. The only prescription he gave was fish oil and other brain supplements that kids nowadays take routinely. In the early 1990s, however, that kind of medication was new and for hospital prescription only. It was pretty expensive and we had to pay out of our own pocket.

We had no choice but to keep investing in buying medication for treatment, but the medication wasn't very effective. To be honest, we were getting too adventurous. There was a research institute with a new drug for internal experiments, and we tried that one too. The brutal truth is that we were desperate enough to use a drug that had not yet been tested or approved. I remember that it was for injection and we used up several boxes for an entire regimen. We were quite liberal with using medication that we believed would help him, because we wanted to speed things along. But nothing really worked.

Q: I heard from some parents that when something goes wrong with the birth...

QZ's mother: I don't think that's the case with me. Right now there's pregnancy screening, but not when I was pregnant. Everything went smoothly when I gave birth and there seemed to be nothing wrong with him when he was first born. The newborn check-up results were normal and he looked perfectly fine. Maybe it's genetic because we have relatives with similar conditions.

I went back to work when he was 11 months old. Back then workplaces still had affiliated preschools. In retrospect, he had a tough childhood. I would bring him to work with me and leave him at the preschool of my workplace.

He has never had a sense of security. He didn't make any fuss at the preschool, but he needed to be cuddled or to have someone keeping him company, otherwise he would cry. My workplace's preschool wasn't a fancy one and one teacher had to take care of a lot of kids, so he ended up crying all day long there. I couldn't do anything about it. I was constantly informed of his non-stop crying and I could only defend him by saying that his development was a little slower than that of other kids.

He didn't have good balance and was more delicate. In almost everything including walking, he wasn't as strong as other kids. Cribs in the preschool came with hand bars. He would hold onto them and stand for a little while before he had to sit down, and he couldn't walk till he was almost 2 years old. When he played with other kids, the slightest push would send him to the floor. My siblings have kids who are 1 or 2 years younger than he is. When the three of them played together, grown-ups were always called to rescue him because one thing or another would always happen to him.

Where I worked was some distance from the preschool, but the medical clinic was right next door so the ladies in the clinic kept an eye on him. They told me they heard him crying all the time and they would often go over to check on him and to cuddle him which they told me helped calm him down. When the preschool teacher had time, she took special care of him, too.

He stayed at my workplace's preschool for 2 or 3 years. When he was 4 years old, he outgrew it and had to be sent to another one outside my workplace. So we enrolled him in a preschool close to where I worked. Again, he was slower than other kids there, so we tried to build rapport with the teacher in the hope that the teacher would take good care of him.

The teacher was very nice. There were stairs at the preschool. Whereas the other kids would sail down the stairs, he was scared and had to walk down one step at a time. The teacher would always walk with him at the end of the line so as to watch him and help him.

We never had grandparents take care of him. It's always been my husband and me bringing QZ up. He was a little bit of a loner at preschool. He spent most of the time playing toys with the other kids, but after a while, he would walk away to be by himself. He is like that even now. Maybe he understands in his heart, but he can't vocalize well. Preschool teachers always told me that he was slower than other kids, but the delay in development wasn't as obvious as in some other kids and wasn't that severe.

There was a physical check-up before elementary school enrollment, when he was 5 or 6 years old. The doctor at the hospital wanted an IQ test for him. When he was younger, the hospital only told us that his development was delayed and that medication should be used to stimulate his nerves, but no IQ test was ordered. So the IQ test results showed that he was indeed developing at a delayed pace and that he had intellectual disability. We tried every treatment and every medication during the earlier stages, and things were just the way they were. There were no more options, so we had to accept it and face reality instead of deluding ourselves.

Q: QZ is the only child. So you didn't have another one?

QZ's mother: There was strict control back then and normally nobody was supposed to have a second child. After the IQ test, the doctor said that because of his condition, I would be allowed to have a second child. I hesitated, thinking, "What if something went wrong with the second child?" There are all kinds of prenatal tests nowadays including tests of the amniotic fluid, which were not available in my time. QZ already has this disability and there were no grandparents to lend a hand. I was already having a tough time with him. If I had a second child, I would be spread thinner and wouldn't be able to focus on QZ, which would affect him to a great extent... After discussing it with my husband, we decided not to have a second child.

Free Rein in Developing Intellect and Building Self-Dependence

Q: After the IQ test, did you think about how to develop his intellect? Did you teach him to read?

QZ's mother: I did teach him and it was extremely difficult. The preschool teachers only taught numbers, and by the time he graduated from preschool, he had been taught simple one-digit additions and subtractions. At home, I kept encouraging him and reinforcing the knowledge, because I already knew that he was slower than other kids. His calligraphy was bad, including writing letters, numbers, and his own name, so I would hold his hand and take my time practicing with him. It just took much more time for him compared with other kids. Numbers like "2" and "3" were difficult for him to write. I would teach him one day and he would forget the next day, so I had to do it all over again.

Q: When did he learn to feed and dress himself?

QZ's mother: Even though he was slower at schoolwork, he picked up other things pretty fast. He learnt to feed and dress himself just like any other kid. And we treated him like any other kid and let him do whatever he was supposed to do at different stages of his life.

He was not at an age to be able to properly feed himself yet, but he would take a spoon and try to do it. He started doing that when he was 2 or 3 years old and made a mess every time. But we let him do it whenever he felt like doing it, while we still fed him at the same time.

He needed to brush his teeth in preschool, so we taught him several times and encouraged him. He was terrible at it but we insisted that he do it himself. One thing good about him is that he has good hands-on ability and likes to apply it. Whenever something physical needed to be done at home or things needed to be organized, he loved to participate. Even now, if I need to clean up the house, he will ask me to wait for his day off so that he can help me. He might get distracted after a while, but he does want to participate. That's why we have encouraged him to learn on his own ever since he was young, and he could dress himself at a very early age. But kids like him still learn at a slower pace.

We used to not have a shower at home and had to go to the workplace to take showers. When he was young, some of my close co-workers would help me give him showers. When he got older, he would go to the men's shower. His dad used to work at the same place as I did, so QZ would know people in the shower room and would mess around with them in there. He was quite outgoing and no one thought he was different except that he started walking late. Once he got older, people saw that he is different. He was talkative, too, but couldn't speak clearly because he was tight underneath his tongue. After he got a snip at the hospital, he became less inclined to talk. He used to talk a lot and he liked communicating with people.

When he was young, he had a pet peeve, some kind of neat freak thing, but he doesn't have it now. When he was almost two and just started walking, he refused to step on mud and would only walk on concrete. And when we took him to the park and put him on the grass, he would howl as soon as we walked away and wouldn't move his feet. He wouldn't touch anything with water on it, and if someone got water on him, he'd be grossed out. When he was at my workplace's preschool, at the end of the day, my co-workers would take him out to play, because he was very mild and obedient when he was young. He was a little neat freak, so the co-workers would tease him by purposefully getting water on him and just mess around with him.

Once we discovered that pet peeve of his, we decided to help him overcome it. So we took him to the park every week and forced him to walk on the grass. Gradually, and unwillingly, he overcame it.

He had been going with me to work since he was very young and he was exposed to all kinds of people. When he was in preschool, my workplace was profitable. In the 1980s and 1990s, the workplace would sponsor travel for the employees, and he traveled with me many times. We would travel several times a year. Everyone at my workplace knew him and called him "little luggage" because he followed me everywhere.

Q: Where have you been to?

QZ's mother: We've been to so many places, like Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Beijing, Nanjing, and Ningbo, and most of the places were close to Shanghai. Actually, he was a bundle of energy when he was very young and his disability wasn't apparent. Every co-worker of mine knew him, because he was the only kid traveling everywhere with us adults. When we went to Beijing, he didn't have the strength to walk and I didn't have the strength to carry him. He knew my co-workers well because he hung out at my workplace all day long. Now he won't talk to them when he sees them. Anyway, without me telling him what to do, he would walk up to one of the co-workers and call him "Uncle" and ask him to carry him. He was nicknamed "the little force" because he liked to join in wherever the action was and he wasn't afraid of strangers. Everyone liked him a lot. He had no temper, wasn't picky about food and didn't fuss when he was tired. All you needed to do was cuddle him when he got tired and he would fall asleep.

He was very gullible and would go with anyone. In fact, my co-workers could easily sweet talk him into leaving with them. And he had the best temperament. Even now, everyone is still saying what a cute child he was. He went along with whatever the grown-ups wanted, made no fuss, and never howled when crying. If he got a

bump from falling and was on the verge of crying, we would just tell him not to cry because everyone was looking at him. He would struggle a little before succeeding in holding back his tears.

We've been taking him everywhere ever since he was young, and he is used to that. So he was not the kind of child that was anxious about leaving home or anxious to get home at certain hours. We have trained him not to be like that. So it's safe to say that we have always given him free rein. I have never been overprotective just because he is different. We give him all kinds of opportunities to participate.

We cut down on traveling after he started elementary school, because it wasn't as easy to travel with him in school. We did go out during summer and winter vacations and on our days off, and we made sure to take him somewhere almost every week.

Q: So he became self-dependent in daily life at an early age. When did he start helping around the house, like making his bed?

QZ's mother: Probably when he started elementary school. He used to share our room. When he was 8 or 9 years old, he moved into his own room, which he was required to keep neat on his own. One good thing about him is that he will organize his room as soon as things are out of place. He would even tidy up our room, and he likes to clean up around the house.

When he was about 10 years old, my mom took him to stay with my younger brother for a couple of days and it was pretty far from us. He tidied up the house there. My brother has a kid who is 2 years younger—he helped her clean up and organize her messy drawers. He has good hands-on ability and is good at helping around the house and taking care of his own needs.

He was a neat freak when he was young, but not anymore. Now he doesn't care as much about being neat. I always point out how sloppy he is and ask him to make himself presentable like clipping his nails. He doesn't pay attention to those details; I don't know why. He is the total opposite of when he was young and doesn't care how he looks.

Special School Education at a Cost of Sponsorship Fee

QZ's mother: An interview was required for him to enter elementary school, and he failed the interview because he was perceived as slow.

We figured that with his delayed development, we would hold him back a year, so he went to preschool for an extra year. We had hoped that he could get into a regular elementary school that way. But he didn't, even though he had been held back for 1 year.

The schoolteacher said that he would have a hard time following the curriculum if we insisted that he go to a regular school. He wouldn't be able to learn anything because of the fast teaching pace. It would also affect the teaching quality at the school.

I backed off after being told the cold truth, and I had to accept it instead of deluding myself about my child's disability, so he ended up going to a special education school.

Q: Did he start with a regular elementary school and drop out later, or did he start with a special education school?

QZ's mother: He interviewed with a regular school and we talked to the schoolteachers. They said very clearly that he would have a hard time at the regular school which wouldn't be good for him, so they suggested that he go to a special education school.

We figured that placing QZ in a special education school was preferable to imposing him on a regular school. The pace at the special education school would be slower so that he could learn something. Before he started school, we tried to teach him at home but felt like we were fighting a losing battle. No matter how many times we repeated, he couldn't remember, and he couldn't focus either. Moreover, once he was older, he seemed to be afraid of other people, so he would be an easy target for bullying in a regular school. So we settled for sending him to a special education school.

It was different back in the 1990s. People nowadays are more accepting and sympathetic. I didn't really expect sympathy, but to have QZ's disability be accepted would have been nice. We had a hard time getting him into a special education school. The truth is that I had to use a lot of my connections, and I even visited the Education Bureau. You had a special-needs kid but it's not easy for you to send him to a special education school.

Q: There were not many special education schools around?

QZ's mother: There's only one in each district and this school would set up special education classes in a number of regular elementary schools in the district. But to get into that class, you would have to register first with the special education school's headquarters. I really pulled all my strings. I was frustrated at having a hard time getting my special-needs child into some sort of school. But I couldn't keep him at home, because he still had the ability to learn and to accept new things. He was not entirely incapable of learning. So I asked for favors and made inquiries everywhere, including the Education Bureau.

There's a special education class in an elementary school close to where my mom lived, but you would have to register with the special education school's headquarters first. So we went to the headquarters and had QZ tested. He met all the criteria and was accepted on the condition that the workplace of one of the parents be notified and then donate to the school.

My workplace was a state-owned enterprise that's getting outdated and losing money. It was willing to provide a letter verifying my family situation, but when it came to donation, maybe they'd never had to do that before and didn't know how to go about it, and they really had no money to spare, so nothing was done about it. I was getting antsy, as QZ might miss the school start date because of inaction.

We had no choice but to seek help from my husband's workplace. He had just started a new job and was reluctant to tell anyone at work about QZ. His side of the family wasn't interested in QZ, maybe because they didn't see him coming to anything. They seldom asked about him or showed that they cared. His mom helped bring up the kids of his older brother and older sister, but refused to lend a hand with QZ, saying that she didn't have the energy anymore.

I was under tremendous pressure, from both inside and outside the family. Luckily my own side of the family was very helpful. My mom was working the whole time and she wasn't good with babysitting or household work anyway, so we were bringing up QZ on our own. QZ got sick a lot, and when we got overwhelmed, my younger brother, younger sister, and sister-in-law would offer help. So my side of the family was a blessing.

When asked to donate to the school, my husband's workplace said that the company, which was a foreign-funded one, had no such precedent, so the only help it could offer was a certain amount of subsidy from the Workers' Union. I decided then that we would pay the donation ourselves. However much the cost, I must get QZ into a school to learn. There was no way I would let him stay home, because he was not completely hopeless.

Before sending QZ to the special education school, I met with the principal. After meeting QZ, he tried at first to kick the ball to the regular elementary school by insisting that QZ go there. But I was told by the regular school to send QZ to a special education school because he wouldn't be able to follow at the regular school. I was very realistic. My ultimate goal was not to send QZ to a regular school but to have him learn as much as possible. So I talked to both the principal and the academics director and told them that the curriculum at a regular school would be impossible for QZ. I didn't care if I came off pathetic, because that wasn't really the issue. I had to respect reality and lobby for a chance for QZ to learn things and to become more self-dependent. So I told them that if I had to, I would pay the donation myself so that QZ could get into the school.

I had asked around and learnt that a lot of kids struggled at regular schools till second or third grade before being forced to transfer to special education schools, which was the ultimate destination for them anyway. I didn't think my kid would be able to graduate from a regular school, so I was okay sending him to a special education school from the very beginning. That way he could learn things, even though it would be at a slower pace. So we ended up paying the donation ourselves for QZ to get in.

Kids with severe disabilities would attend school at the special education school's headquarters. Kids like QZ, who were just slightly slower than other kids, were assigned to special education classes at regular elementary schools. That's how QZ ended up in the special education class at the elementary school close to where my mom lived. The teacher to student ratio at that class was one to a dozen or so, whereas at regular elementary schools, a teacher would have to supervise more than 50 kids, and if your kid was transferred from another school in the middle of the school year, the teacher would have no time for him. At the special education class, which was smaller in size, the teacher could have a relatively easy time supervising the students since there were only a dozen or so of them. Come to think of it, the teachers really had a tough job.

The special education class had two teachers, both of whom were approaching retirement. They had taught for many years and were experienced—they were great teachers and very patient with kids. Young teachers tend to have a shorter temper. QZ has been to several schools and has always had experienced teachers getting close to

retirement. When QZ was in third grade, the special education class had to shut down, maybe because the teachers had reached retirement age. So QZ was transferred to another elementary school where the special education class was a combination of classes from several schools. There were more kids in that class, more than 20 in fact.

The regular elementary school always assigned a small room to the special education class to make it easier for the teachers to keep the kids in check. QZ was relatively quiet and timid. He seldom caused trouble and wouldn't run crazy outside during recess. There was a kid in his class who had ADHD and intellectual disability, but he was smart in some other ways and would fidget in class and give the kids sitting next to him a hard time. The teacher would be talking and he would misbehave or go to scribble on the blackboard. On Open House day, the parents all sat in on the class and that kid just stood up before his parents restrained him.

One time I was picking QZ up and saw the teacher checking homework with her foot on the desk to stop that kid from running out. She said that whenever she wasn't watching closely, he would run out and cause trouble. While other kids were his victims, his own parents would blame the teacher for having failed to control him. That teacher looked already to be in her 50s or 60s, and I really admired her for having taken on such a demanding job.

The kid's parents knew what was going on at school, so they were always apologetic towards us. We were understanding because our own kid has disability too, but we can't lock the kid up at home, can we? We kept telling QZ to be forgiving because that kid had a disability, saying, "If he is constantly messing up your schoolbag, just let it go because he has ADHD." QZ is normally very mild, but he can be very stubborn when he gets worked up. If someone kept bullying you and messing around with you, you'd get mad, wouldn't you? But we kept advising him to not take it to heart.

Q: Did each class come with two teachers?

QZ's mother: Right, that's the common practice. One teacher for Chinese and the other one for math. Not much else was taught, and some other teachers would step into cover subjects other than Chinese and math. The two teachers were mainly responsible for keeping the kids in check and their office was inside the classroom. Some of the kids were especially naughty and the teachers had to keep a close watch over them from day one. Most of the girls and some boys, including QZ, were very quiet, making it easier for the teachers. But as long as there was one naughty kid in the class, the teachers had to be on high alert.

The kids could manage to learn certain things in the special education class, because the teachers kept repeating the instructions. The kids had bad memory and might forget things if they were taught only once or twice. All of the teachers were nice.

Q: Did you have to tutor QZ at home?

QZ's mother: We did, because we wanted to push him. The first thing after he got home and the minimum requirement for him was to finish his homework. He was timid and a little scared of the teachers, so he normally had no problem finishing homework due the next day. Once we got back home, one of us would do the

housework and the other would stay with him while he did homework. Other kids would finish a lot of homework within a short time, but QZ was slower. We had to teach him repeatedly what had already been taught at school. Even though we didn't expect him to be like other kids, we still hoped that he would learn some things and be able to keep up in the special education class.

He didn't get a lot of what we were trying to teach him. The biggest problem was that he couldn't settle down to learn. You would be talking yourself hoarse and he wouldn't be listening at all. When he first started school, like in first grade and second grade, it was exhausting for us to repeatedly teach him the same things. I would ask him what I had just taught him and he wouldn't know a thing because he had taken in nothing. At school, he looked all peaceful sitting there. Sometimes he would get it but couldn't remember it, and sometimes he wouldn't get it at all. He couldn't answer the questions you had for him because he hadn't been able to focus. If I kept repeating myself, it would get on his nerves and he would throw a tantrum and refuse to learn. A lot of times in elementary school, he would throw a tantrum and refuse to learn. Whatever you said to him, he would ignore you.

The special education class tried to keep pace with regular schools, so there were mid-term and end-of-term exams and quizzes. He would study for the exams at home and get fidgety after a while, so we would take him out for a change of environment. We would go to KFC or McDonald's where we would try to make it fun for him to learn. We had to do that because if we got all pushy, he would get mad. If we yelled at him, he would push back even harder. He was so very stubborn, but kids like him tend to be that way.

We often talked to other parents when picking up kids from school. There were two girls in the class who looked so quiet. They studied hard too and were excelling in every other way. I was quite envious, but the parents said, "They may look quiet outside the house, but at home, they are different." The same with QZ. He was very quiet outside the house, but at home he was unbelievably stubborn. The other parents also said that the girls couldn't take any criticism at home.

After he had finished his homework, if we gave him extra work to do or asked that he review what he had learnt, he would get impatient. Then we would get mad when teaching him, and sometimes I felt like having a breakdown.

Q: So you gave him extra homework?

QZ's mother: No. I was just worried that he wouldn't remember what the teacher had taught, so I wanted to go over it again slowly with him to reinforce the knowledge.

Q: When you tutored him at home, was it harder to tutor him in math or in Chinese?

QZ's mother: About the same. It's a little easier tutoring him in Chinese. When he started elementary school, we changed his first name to characters that sound the same but are simpler to write to make it easier for him.

We wanted him to learn some basic math like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and to memorize the multiplication table. We didn't ask him to learn complicated division. Math problems were difficult to teach and we had to repeatedly explain them to him, because his comprehension was limited. If I gave him just numbers to add and subtract he could do it, sometimes on his fingers. We told him

that doing math on his fingers was a bad habit that he should get rid of and that he should learn to do math in his head, but he was bad at doing math in his head.

Q: At the elementary school, in addition to Chinese and math, did he have music, drawing, and PE?

QZ's mother: He did have all of them, but those classes were not frequent and the kids weren't expected to do much. PE, music, drawing, and arts and crafts, they were mainly supplemental subjects.

Q: What did he like?

QZ's mother: I have never seen him particularly interested in anything. When he was young, once we realized his disability... we kept an eye out for whether he had some particular interest so we could help him develop that interest. We also had him try many things, but nothing really interested him.

Q: Did he ever come back from school and tell you that he liked this or that class?

QZ's mother: Not really.

Q: Did you drop him off and pick him up from elementary school?

QZ's mother: We did that when he was in lower grades. I would drop him off in the morning and my mom would pick him up after school. Then my mom had a car accident and broke some joints and couldn't do the pickup anymore. The teacher in elementary school was very nice. Since my mom couldn't pick him up anymore, the teacher would take QZ home with her as she lived right next to school. She would help him finish homework and I would pick him up after I got off work. It went on like this for 2 years before the teacher retired. She offered to pick up QZ for me, but she wasn't getting any younger, so I couldn't impose on her in that way. I decided to have QZ learn to go home by himself, which he should be able to do to be self-dependent. I rode the bus with him back and forth. He only needed to take one bus and walk some distance to get home, since the bus stop was not right at our doorstep. After I rode the bus with him several times, he knew the way.

We were not control freaks with QZ. He had always been with us growing up and we were always out there somewhere, because we traveled a lot both for business and for pleasure. So he had a sense of direction from always traveling with us. I am bad with directions, so I would ask him to figure out the way. We had to train him and to let him do things by himself. I see a lot of parents not being able to let go, which is actually bad for the kids because they miss the chance to train their abilities. You have to force yourself to let go, which is the only way the kids can get trained little by little. I didn't waste time training him to be self-dependent, and when he was in sixth grade, I asked him to go home by himself after school, even though I still dropped him off in the morning.

Q: Did kids in the neighborhood bully him when he was young?

QZ's mother: Not really, since we didn't interact with our neighbors a lot. Even after he started school, he still had limited exposure to the outside world and he only interacted with kids from his school. When he was going to school, kids who lived close by would drop by. There's one schoolmate who lived in the complex right behind us, and he often came to play at our place.

Q: What did the kids play?

QZ's mother: They would talk, watch TV, and play puzzles and board games sometimes. They had some communication. Kids like them had a difficult time keeping up when communicating with people without disabilities. Even though they were taking in new things all the time, their communication with other people was simple and superficial.

Q: How many years' elementary school did he have?

QZ's mother: Six years. Starting in 1996, he was at the elementary school close to my mom's place for 2 years. He spent the next 2 years at a school on Baichen Road, and another 2 years at a special education school. That special education school used to be a preschool, which was rebuilt into a special education school servicing the entire district so that regular elementary schools didn't have to host any special education classes. Those kinds of schools kept being moved and combined. For middle school, he went to an official special education school called Yang Fan School, which is both an elementary school and a middle school. QZ didn't go there till he started middle school. Even though elementary school and middle school for QZ were separate, he only got one graduation certificate showing that he was at Yang Fan School from 1996 to 2005.

Overcoming Temporary Autism

QZ's mother: QZ has his own thoughts, a lot of thoughts actually. But he can't express them and he is an introvert. There was a time when he had slight autism, probably when he was in fifth or sixth grade. He could accept people he often interacted with, but with people he knew but seldom saw, he would behave as if he was scared of them and wanted to avoid them.

When we went out, we couldn't even say hi to people, because he would run off as soon as he saw people he knew. He wouldn't even go into see his grandparents on Sunday. We would be at the building they lived in, and he would refuse to go up to visit them. Whatever we said, he insisted on staying downstairs by himself. His grandparents would come downstairs to get him and he would just run off by himself. Can you imagine how we panicked when we couldn't find him, especially since we didn't live with his grandparents and he wasn't familiar with their neighborhood? He wasn't close to them and they weren't exactly fond of him. And they were not careful about what they said and looked down on him a little because they didn't think he was as good as the other grandkids. QZ couldn't vocalize it, but he has his self-respect. So we had to trick him into going with us to visit his grandparents, telling him that we would go somewhere else immediately afterwards. He would agree to go with us, but once we were there, he wouldn't go upstairs.

Also, we couldn't have company at home. If someone dropped by, he would go out on his own. If the guest stayed for 2 or 3 h, he would linger outside for 2 or 3 h. I was so worried that he might have autism.

Q: Did you not chase after him?

QZ's mother: We would look everywhere for him, sometimes without success. He would stay out for several hours and come back in the middle to check how everything was at home. He would listen at the door. If the guest had left, he would come in, otherwise he would continue lingering outside. One time it was raining hard and he had nowhere to go, so he just sat on the sixth floor staircase. A neighbor tried to talk to him and he just ignored her. The neighbor later told me that he just sat on the stairs for several hours and wouldn't reply when talked to. I explained that he was slightly autistic and would run off as soon as we had company at home. On that rainy day, after the guest had left, we looked everywhere in the apartment complex for him, but we didn't expect him to have been in the building the whole time. He wouldn't tell us later where he had been, and I didn't find out till the neighbor told me several days later.

But we were determined to help him overcome the autism, so we always took him out and forced him to interact with people. We often involved him in what other families were doing. For example, if some family needed help, we would bring him with us to help, and he was very happy and eager to help. If some family was cleaning the house, he would want to participate and help, too.

He likes traveling, so we traveled a lot and exposed him to a lot of people and to society. We traveled to many places, including overseas. He has annual leave at work now, so we will take him traveling when he has leave. We went to the US, Europe, and Japan. Two months ago, we went to Australia and New Zealand.

He got better gradually. As he interacted more with his schoolmates, he started bringing them home, which he had seldom done before. When he was in higher grades in elementary school and especially in middle school, his schoolmates hung out at our place all the time—he wasn't as scared of people anymore. If there was some guest he didn't know, he would go off to his room instead of running off.

Q: So he likes human interaction and is willing to participate in group activities. Was he willing to go to his grandparents' later on?

QZ's mother: He was. He was unwilling to do it when he was in elementary school although he got better once he started middle school. But he has never been able to communicate with his grandparents. He was willing to lend a hand at their place if asked to, like moving heavy things around.

Thriving at Yang Fan School

Q: Did you have to pull any strings again for him to get into a middle school?

QZ's mother: No. Maybe once we were in the system, we could just follow the system. Also, society started to pay more attention to children with special needs. That wasn't the case before, so we had a hard time getting him into a special education elementary school and we had to ask for favors everywhere. Now I don't think parents are asked to donate anymore. (Laughing)

Yang Fan School was very well equipped and different from the elementary school. It had its own campus with gates that were locked as soon as the kids arrived. The

teachers wouldn't focus on any specific kid because there were a large number of them and all of them had special needs. But the kids were allowed to move freely on campus. Some kids couldn't sit still and would fidget and walk around all the time.

At the school, they were taught both from textbooks and other skills such as baking and arts and crafts. Basically, the teaching was limited to their perceived abilities.

Q: Was there less pressure at middle school than at elementary school?

QZ's mother: A bit less, yes. There wasn't as much they needed to learn from textbooks. At the special education school, the expectations were not that high. Of course, we still had to monitor his studies, but he was older and more disciplined when it came to studies. He would finish his homework as soon as he got home and sometimes he would even finish it at school. And we did make sure that he prepared for tests.

Q: Were there tests at middle school?

QZ's mother: They did have mid-term and end-of-term tests like in a regular school, but the tests were simpler and requirements were not that high. He was too young at elementary school and couldn't sit still to study, so it was tiring to teach him when he knew nothing. It got better in middle school. We just needed to repeat a couple of times and he would get it, like when he had to solve math problems.

He even went to a vocational school for a while. The special education school recommended several kids whose disabilities didn't show as much and who were self-dependent to attend a vocational school in the district. That school had set up a special class for kids from Yang Fan School under the Yang Fan name, but the physical location of the class was a little far from Yang Fan School. The majors offered by the class included horticulture, like planting trees and pruning branches, and baking. I figured that he needed to have a job later on and to be independent, so I sent him to the vocational school to acquire some skills.

Some parents, including us, visited the school and found it to be less than ideal. The kids there were all dropouts from regular middle schools because of misbehavior, so the school was almost like a correctional place.

We proposed that the school set up a separate class for our kids so as to keep them away as much as possible from the other students. It's not that we discriminated against those kids. We realized that the school's environment might not be the best and the kids there didn't exactly look like role models, so we didn't want our own kids to be led astray. So the school set up a separate class for us. We needed only one class since not everyone was interested in going there.

It was during the SARS outbreak in 2003, I remember clearly. The school kept a close watch and measured everyone's temperature before allowing anyone past the gates. QZ's temperature had always been relatively high, higher than 36.5 degrees as a matter of fact. So he was always kept outside the school gates. Since he went to school by himself, he had a difficult time explaining his temperature to the teacher. For that, I made a special trip to the school to talk to the teacher.

The class was shut down after just several months. The environment was really bad and unacceptable to a lot of parents from our class, and the kids got bullied, so a lot of kids stopped going there. We still tried to keep up at first so that QZ could

learn something. But then the school notified us that it was shutting down the class because of a lack of parent recognition and student determination.

So we all went back to Yang Fan School. The teacher there was serious about teaching them baking and often asked them to measure sugar and flour. QZ was happy to do that. The teacher would help the kids get the ingredients ready for what they wanted to make, but would ask them to measure the ingredients and bag them. At the school, there was a special baking classroom with its own oven. Kids often baked there and tasted what they made and commented on the taste.

All of the teachers at Yang Fan School had had training in special education and were very nice. Towards the end, probably because of school downsizing, several teachers were let go. The teachers sought help from parents, hoping that the parents would call on the school to keep them on. We did that, but were unsuccessful. QZ graduated soon after the downsizing.

Q: Did he practice any of the baking skills he learned at home?

QZ's mother: We had wanted him to practice, like baking cakes. But we couldn't get a lot of the ingredients, so he couldn't practice.

Sometimes he would be very excited when he came home after having baked at school. He would bring back little pastries for us to taste and ask us to buy ingredients so he could bake at home for us. I had an agreement with him to encourage him. Whatever he wanted to make at home, we would try our best to make it happen. And he liked it. We bought common things like flour. He wanted baking powder, but it's probably only available at special stores. We couldn't find it in supermarkets, so he wasn't able to use it. We also bought little molds. Most of the time they baked Western-style cakes and bread. He also made Chinese-style steam buns at school and brought them home.

Q: Did the school organize field trips in autumn or spring?

QZ's mother: It did. At elementary school, the teacher had a hard time chaperoning the kids, so they didn't have many field trips. They had a lot more in middle school. Back then, every district had a special education school. The government and society cared about the special needs group, so there were often activities and activity sponsors as well, and the kids went to many places. They tried all of the new things including Dongfang Oasis and the EML train.

Q: Did he come back and tell you how he felt about the field trips?

QZ's mother: He isn't good at expressing himself, but he was happy going out with friends of the same age.

Q: As he grew older, did you ever have this feeling that "this kid is suddenly all grown up"?

QZ's mother: I found that he was becoming more and more like a big kid once he started middle school. At elementary school, we were very protective of him. Once he started at Yang Fan School, he would go to school and come home by himself. The school was close to Tumen Road, which was some distance from where we lived, and he had to take more than one bus to get to school. Fortunately he had a schoolmate who lived in the complex behind us, so they would go to school together sometimes. He would also go to school by himself sometimes. After several times, he knew the way well. We just had to let go and he did well after that.

Q: Has he ever taken the wrong bus and not been able to find his way home?

QZ's mother: He has never gotten lost, but he did take the wrong bus. We bought him a prepaid transportation card, so we told him to take a taxi home if he got really lost. Also, if he got confused about which bus to take, he could walk home. We often walked around where we lived and knew the area well. So he has basically never become lost. It might have happened and he probably just didn't tell us. (Laughing)

He got to interact with more kids at Yang Fan School where the classes were big, with 20 or 30 kids in each class, whereas there were only twenty-something kids per class at elementary school. Once he was older, he interacted more with schoolmates and they would visit each other at home. They would also go out together, like to the supermarket or the mall, but we would remind them not to wander too far. We still worried about kids like them when they were out there and we worried that we might lose them. But I felt better when he was with schoolmates. I would make sure that I knew where they were, which was usually somewhere close to home or to school, and I was okay if they didn't stay out long. There was a time when he would hang out with several other kids all day long and not come home till very late. We would panic and go out looking for him everywhere. We would call the other kids' home and the other kids wouldn't be home either, because they were all together. He wouldn't come home till it got dark and he had had dinner somewhere out and about. It happened several times and I stopped worrying, because they were in the neighborhood and they all knew their way around. But I did question him about where he had been and how he got there. Once I was satisfied with his information, I stopped worrying and let him continue doing it.

If he had stayed home, no matter how we tried to let go, he would still have been under our wings. When he was with other kids and being exposed to the outside world, we couldn't monitor what he did, and that's how he could be free and progress further. I felt that he was different in middle school than in elementary school.

A Good Member of the Sunshine Home

Q: Where did QZ go after graduating from Yang Fan School?

QZ's mother: He stayed home for a while after graduation, but not for long. Then he went to the Sunshine Home. There was no Sunshine Home till after 2000. We have always wanted to expose him as much as possible to the outside world instead of keeping him home. I had the impression that right before and after Special Olympics, people with ID became the center of attention. They were not getting as much attention in the 1980s and 1990s. But then, special education schools were already in existence back then.

Before Special Olympics, there was a principal of a special education school in Xuhui District. He did a great job with TV advocacy, and we felt that finally our kids were getting attention. They used to be discriminated against and people tried to stay away from them as much as possible...

Q: Did he go to the Sunshine Home every day?

QZ's mother: He did. It was like school, with a start time and an end time, and he didn't want to be late or to leave early. (Laughing) He would stay there all day and have lunch. They would do handiwork in a big classroom and each person would be assigned a desk. There would be two teachers watching them, but they didn't get to interact much with each other or with the outside world. He worked hard and the teachers had good words for him. He didn't talk much, didn't make trouble, and was serious about the handiwork.

Q: What exactly did the handiwork involve?

QZ's mother: They did some simple processing for companies which sent the Sunshine Home orders. They wrapped soap bars. Soap bars nowadays come in boxes, but Bee & Flower is an old brand and its soap bars were wrapped in paper. They pasted labels for the soy sauce manufacturer Toudaoxian. They also copied addresses on envelopes for the teachers. They had to copy a lot and QZ often brought the envelopes home to continue copying when he couldn't finish at the Sunshine Home. Because the Sunshine Home got all those orders from companies, it would pay the kids for their work, between 100 and 300 yuan per month, depending on individual contribution. So QZ worked pretty hard for the money.

Q: Did he make new friends at the Sunshine Home?

QZ's mother: There were two boys going to the Sunshine Home with QZ, but we forbade QZ from hanging out with them.

We often went to the supermarket, but QZ never wanted to go with us. It took a long time for him to finally tell us why. There were some kids from the Sunshine Home who worked at supermarkets organizing merchandise, and the other kids would all go together to the supermarkets to both check on their friends and to look around. Two of the kids were bad because they stole from the supermarkets, so we forbade QZ from hanging out with those two.

Those two didn't stay long at the Sunshine Home. One worked for a while at a supermarket, but apparently wasn't doing well, so he returned to the Sunshine Home soon afterwards. But he didn't go to the Sunshine Home a lot, and since we kept a close watch, QZ gradually stopped interacting with him.

The other kid stayed at the Sunshine Home for a while before joining his dad in making a living repairing bicycles. He was always taking things from other people and always coming to visit QZ. I didn't want him to come and told that to his face, so he stopped coming. He was much more active than QZ and smarter, too, but he failed at school. It might have had something to do with his family situation. He was from a single-parent family, without a mom and with a dad who collected garbage and repaired bicycles.

The other kids at the Sunshine Home were all the stay-put kind. The two active ones just stopped going there.

Q: How long did he stay at the Sunshine Home?

QZ's mother: About 3 or 4 years. Then the Sunshine Home referred him to Papa John's and he has been working there since 2009.

The Sunshine Home hadn't really wanted to let him go. He worked hard at the Sunshine Home. For the processing orders, there was a lot of heavy work like loading

and unloading, and QZ was the one doing it. He was very close with the driver because he was always helping with the loading and unloading.

Working like a Person Without Disability

Q: Was he interviewed before being hired?

QZ's mother: He was. We just sent him to the interview place and he went in for the interview himself while we were told to wait outside. The company now signs a contract with them every few years and he is asked to fill in the information and sign himself.

At the interview, he was required to perform several tasks including kneading dough, and he didn't pass. Other kids could probably talk their way out of it, but he didn't feel comfortable speaking even though he understood everything. He wasn't willing to communicate, so he didn't do well at the interview.

So he failed the tasks and didn't pass the interview. But we went to the company and explained his situation, and he was hired later than those interviewed at the same time as he was. We desperately needed to get him a job, because the people he interacted with at the Sunshine Home were not... It was a closed environment, so I hoped that he could venture into the real world. It wasn't for the sake of any pay, since the pay isn't high. I just want him to have a stable job and to keep up with society, and it doesn't matter if the work is heavy. Restaurants, after all, service the public, and even though he works in the kitchen, he is still part of society.

When he first joined, he didn't quite get the rules, so when he had nothing to do, he would hang out at co-workers' workstations and talk to W who was his schoolmate. They had been schoolmates since they were young and have always been close and comfortable talking to each other, and I guess they communicated well too when they were going to the Sunshine Home together. The store manager gave them a talk saying that they would be fired if they kept visiting each other and chatting during work hours. He came home and told us about it, and I said, "Where is your common sense? I told you not to go to other workstations. Just stay at your own and do what you are supposed to do." I immediately asked the store manager about it and the store manager said it was no big deal and he was just bluffing. We asked the store manager to be stricter with him because he really didn't understand a lot of things in the workplace, having never been in one before. We also asked the store manager to immediately point out to QZ whatever he was doing wrong, because he is slower than other people and he gets confused about certain things. Gradually QZ got the hang of the workplace and started working hard.

My impression is that he is doing pretty well at the store. A lot of the employees there have fixed responsibilities like making drinks, but QZ can do everything. He used to make appetizers, now he can make pizza dough and step in wherever help is needed. His workload is pretty heavy in the store. He will go open shop in the morning, meaning that he will take out from the fridge everything that's to be used

for a day's business and set everything up. Opening and closing shop are the most tiring jobs. Now he either opens in the morning or closes at night (see Fig. 1).

Q: So he can be entrusted with important work now.

QZ's mother: (Laughing) Now he basically closes shop 4 days a week, which means he has to work till 10:30 p.m. There's hardly any business around 10 p.m., so



Fig. 1 Mr. QZ engaging in cleaning work

he will start organizing, putting all the leftovers in the fridge, and cleaning up. All of the managers the store has ever had said good things about him, including that he is willing to work. He doesn't really care what he does. We have always told him that to be shortchanged may turn out to be a bonus. When he is out there, not everyone will sympathize with him, because in society, no one wants to be shortchanged. He lacks in abilities, which can't be changed, so he has to accept it and not think that everything is a big deal. He will complain sometimes about being overworked, and we will try to comfort him and encourage him.

Q: Do you feel bad about him getting overworked?

QZ's mother: I do, but I seldom vocalize it. If I show it, he will have the psychological hint that he is indeed being overworked and that he shouldn't be. What if he goes to the store and accuses people of abusing him? I am worried about him having a falling out with his co-workers. People like him can't express themselves well and other people might misinterpret and not be able to accept what they say. They are, after all, different from people without disabilities.

He has self-respect too, so we try to encourage him whenever we can. We always tell him that it doesn't matter if he is overworked, because after one night's sleep, he will have been rejuvenated. Having a lot of work to do means that he has value, his presence is appreciated, and he is a pillar in the store instead of dispensable. Some of his work can't be done by anyone else, so what can he do? He likes to listen to encouraging words, so we keep telling him that because he is capable, he gets more work assigned to him. Sometimes hearing this makes him very happy and he will agree with us. Not everyone likes to close shop.

Q: Some of his co-workers might have limited abilities...

QZ's mother: Of all the employees being cared for at the store, he might be the only one who can open and close shop. Don't underestimate the employees being cared for. Even though they are perceived as the weaker group, some of them refuse to be shortchanged and are very stubborn. The store manager is always saying that some of the employees being cared for are impossibly stubborn and if they don't want to do something, no one can make them do it. Only QZ will do whatever he is told to. And he doesn't mind working more. We visit the store sometimes to ask how he is doing, and all of the managers, past and present, recognize his work. He was named an Outstanding Employee for the first 2 years after he joined the store. But sometimes he will throw some small tantrums and misbehave.

Q: What kind of small tantrums?

QZ's mother: Sometimes things will get tense with his co-workers, so he will come home and vent. And we will tell him to compromise whenever he can. Sometimes he just gets exhausted from the long work hours, but we keep encouraging him and making him feel better about it. For a while, the store had no one to wash dishes, and the manager couldn't get anyone to do it. So he had to ask QZ and QZ just took over the job, which was good. We always tell him not to care what kind of work he is assigned, because things need to get done, and if someone else doesn't mind doing something, he shouldn't mind either. He should do whatever he can do and always watch out for things to do and be ready to help if someone is not keeping up the pace.

Q: Has he ever thought about quitting?

QZ's mother: No, because he has the drive. We always monitor how he is doing at work and remind him to cherish the job. It's okay if the work is tiring, because I have always believed in not being overprotective of the child and in letting the child try it out on his own. He might get tired working at the store, but in my opinion, the store is a platform for him to be exposed to society.

He actually knows how to act in unfamiliar situations. He is sometimes sent to other stores to deliver or pick up things, and he has to switch subway lines on this job. He came back and told us that one time after he got off Line 3, which took him downtown, he got on another line in the wrong direction. I've done that too myself. Last time I went to the company, I was supposed to switch from Line 3 to Line 4, but I wasn't paying attention and got on Line 4 going in the wrong direction. So I went all the way to the new train station before riding back the right way. So I asked him what he did then, and he said that he immediately got off after realizing he was going in the wrong direction and took the subway going the opposite way.

He knows most of the Chinese characters, so he can read everything in the subway. I told him, "Don't panic if you always get lost. You just need to remember where the store is and where your home is. The store is on Line 3 and your home is on Line 8. So you can keep switching subway lines and you will eventually reach where you want to go. And you can ask people around you." But he will never ask for help from other people, never. He would rather read the signs himself. I think it's good that he tries things on his own, so that he can handle emergencies in the future. We should just let go.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers?

QZ's mother: The interaction is routine like chatting and joking. He isn't vocal at all. There's someone who had always been in the same school with him, except for a little while in middle school. Even during that time, that girl still came with other schoolmates to hang out at our place. Then they became schoolmates again. They also went to the Sunshine Home together and joined the store together. She is a little older than QZ. When they were going to school, sometimes kids of different ages ended up in the same class. Maybe she went to a regular school for a while before transferring to the special education school, which is why she is a little older than QZ. QZ interacts with her quite a bit. As far as I know, he doesn't interact much with other co-workers. He doesn't speak much at home either, just routine conversations.

If some co-worker wants him to work a shift for him, he never says no. But when we asked him to talk to the co-workers or the manager about switching shifts for a day that we had made other plans for, he wouldn't do it and insisted that we call the store manager instead. He is really timid.

He is really an introvert who doesn't want to interact with other people. He keeps a lot of things to himself and won't vocalize them. If he did something and is asked why he did it, he will only say, "Because that's the way I wanted it." And he doesn't greet people and gives the impression that he is bad-mannered. We will remind him to greet people when we go out, and he will be contrary and say, "Then I might as well not go today."

Q: Was he happy the first time he got paid?

QZ's mother: The first time he got paid... We ask him to give his grandmas on both sides a red envelope with money inside for every Chinese New Year, and he is happy to do that. The grandmas are happy about it, too, not because they really want the money. He doesn't use his pay. The money just stays in the bankcard and is transferred every once in a while. We will give him an allowance whenever he asks for it, and no one has ever touched his pay. When we plan some travel, he will offer to take money out of his pay to do it. (Laughing) We have never used his money. It stays in the account. When we get older, he will need that money.

Q: When I observed him at the store, the manager on duty and co-workers all complimented QZ on his willingness to work and his not complaining about the tiring work. Even though he graduated from a special education school, the manager treats him as a regular employee. I believe that's where he has succeeded in life.

QZ's mother: The store basically uses him as a regular employee. He is willing to work and to learn, no matter how tiring it is. He is doing well at work except with regards to communicating with others.

Q: Having spent the past several months getting to know your family, I realize that the reason QZ has developed well is that you, as the parents, are willing to let go and have a big heart.

QZ's mother: A lot of parents might think that kids like QZ always get short-changed because of their intellectual disabilities. In my opinion, however, being shortchanged is okay sometimes because it makes him stronger. You just have to let go in a lot of ways. Kids like QZ lack in abilities, so most of the parents are very protective. We are very protective too and do a lot of things for him. But in other things, you must let go.

While he was growing up, he was often verbally abused by other people. Especially at the regular school, other kids would go to the doorway of his classroom to provoke him with abusive words. He would come back and tell us about it. But what could we have done? He is the way he is and we have to accept it. If he was shortchanged, so what? If he was bullied, so what? I couldn't keep him home just because he was being shortchanged. He needed to go to school. So I just told him to ignore those kids and take it easy himself. Sometimes when he was verbally abused, he took it pretty hard even though he didn't express it.

Kids like QZ need self-esteem—and my sister and brother are good at helping him with that. They always encourage him and prioritize his needs. His female cousins are like that, too. If they want to dine out together, they will always wait for QZ's day off. That boosts his confidence and as a result, he likes to interact with them more.

Harmonious Family on Its Way to Stability

Q: He gets along well with his female cousins. Does he interact a lot with similar-aged kids of other relatives?

QZ's mother: His dad's side of the family lives some distance from us, so we don't see them often and there's not much interaction.

The kids of my brother and sister are 1 or 2 years younger than QZ and live close by. We used to have to work on Sunday, so I would leave QZ with my brother or sister. The kids basically grew up together and QZ used to be more talkative. Now that they are older, they talk and interact less, but we still see them a lot. The female cousins often come to our place and say hi to him when they see him. He won't greet them except for some mumbled acknowledgement. We often dine out together. He doesn't talk a lot in front of them and there's not much one-on-one interaction.

Q: How does he interact with his dad at home?

QZ's mother: QZ is stubborn. His dad likes to talk down to him as a parent and if he does that too often, QZ gets mad and extreme and will just ignore his dad. He needs more encouragement. Sometimes he will do something wrong like breaking something, and before we can say anything, he will get mad at himself or even blame us for not having put that thing in the right place.

Q: Did his dad take him out a lot when he was young?

QZ's mother: He did take him out a lot. We have always brought QZ with us wherever we went, including traveling. His dad would do the preparation and figure out where to go and what to do, and I would just tag along. Now that QZ is older, he will help his dad with the preparation before every trip and do some research on the cell phone or computer. And he will argue with his dad sometimes. His dad is busy at work, but he always goes on trips with us. He does interact with QZ a lot, but QZ just doesn't like to open up to his dad.

He will tell me things and ask me to relay messages to his dad. I will tell him to talk to his dad directly, but he won't. He isn't exactly scared of his dad, because he often argues with him. But he really doesn't like talking to his dad, maybe because his dad doesn't know how to talk to him either. He is always talking down to QZ as a parent and QZ finds it hard to accept.

Q: Would you be comfortable going out with just your husband and leaving him to fare on his own at home?

QZ's mother: Not for long. I am comfortable only if he is home by himself for a short time. When he was young, we would leave him with my mom when we traveled for business. One time when he was in middle school, we prepared food for him and he stayed home by himself for one night. When he was going to the Sunshine Home, there were several times when we were gone for 2 or 3 days. When we are not home, he can boil wontons for himself. After he started working, there was one time when we went on a trip for 2 or 3 days but he couldn't take time off, so I cooked some food for him. If he wanted to eat wontons, he would boil them. Otherwise he would just make some rice and microwave the food I had cooked.

He learned how to make rice when he was in middle school. He would go to school in the morning by himself, and since he got home early, he would scoop up some rice, put some water in and cook it in the electric rice cooker. My workplace used to be around here, but then it moved to the suburbs. He would get home earlier than I did from the Sunshine Home, so he would make the rice and I would make the dishes after I got off work. I normally keep him away from the gas stovetop.

He can survive at home by himself with no problem, but not for long, because he can't really cook.

Q: What does he do at home on Sunday?

QZ's mother: He doesn't seem to have a lot of interests. He watches TV and plays games on the cell phone and computer sometimes. He doesn't read much. We used to ask him to read newspapers and books as much as he could, but he wasn't interested. When he was young, we bought him a lot of children's books, but he wasn't into them at all. He likes handiwork. If we need to get something done, he likes to participate and to use his hands.

Q: Have you thought about him dating?

QZ's mother: People like him won't get dates that easy. There are not many of them and the circle is small. He hasn't met anyone who is right for him.

Q: Has he ever told you how he feels about this?

QZ's mother: Not in so many words. We thought about matchmaking for him and asked him if he wanted it and he did want it. And we did look around, but there's just no one right for him.

Q: So you will let things take their own course?

QZ's mother: Right, we will let things take their own course.

Q: Do you have any expectations for the future, or for society and the government?

QZ's mother: I just hope that QZ can have a stable job and can work long term at companies like Papa John's. People with ID have no expectations except to be included into society instead of being abandoned by society.

I hope that the government will issue more preferential policies encouraging companies to hire special-needs groups and to provide them with a platform to work so that they can be guaranteed basic living standards.

I also hope that all walks of life can care more about their emotional lives and daily lives and provide them with a healthy and happy living environment. If that can be done, the future will be bright for them.

Interview with QZ's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Ms. Qu

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: July 15, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Q: How would you describe QZ at work?

Qu: He is very down-to-earth, hard-working and doesn't complain. He doesn't talk much and is very mild. He will do whatever you ask him to do. For example, when the lady doing the dishes is late, all you need to do is to ask him, "Mr. QZ (in a friendly and teasing tone), could you please do the dishes?" and he will immediately do it. Sometimes we will be short-staffed, and he will be asked to work OT and he will do it, no questions asked. He is the most capable of all the employees being cared for. He can do everything both in the dining area and kitchen, and he can close shop too.

I kind of admire QZ. The company is always launching new drinks. Those drinks are formulated differently from the previous ones, and we are supposed to memorize the new formulas. I can't do it all the time, but whenever I ask him, he can tell me.

Q: As far as work goes, is there any difference between him and regular employees?

Qu: He doesn't do an even job when he spreads ingredients on the pizza, and he can't quite control how the pizza ends up looking.

All of the employees being cared for have a tough time making sure that the pizza is perfectly round and good-looking. Sometimes the customers will complain and we will have to apologize and make another pizza.

Our store is a special store that's known as a Caring Restaurant,¹ with quite a few employees being cared for. Several years ago, there were four female employees being cared for working in the dining area greeting customers, ushering, and waitressing. They would make mistakes sometimes like spilling water, and the regular employees would apologize for them and try to make up for the mistakes and explain that they were employees being cared for. Some customers were very understanding, while others wouldn't take it saying that they were paying to be served well and employees being cared for were none of their business. Shanghai is such a big city and you get to see people of all sorts.

We received a lot of complaints, and some customers even posted online pictures of one of the employees being cared for. I am talking about that girl there (pointing to an employee in the kitchen). She looks pretty and not like an employee being cared for, and you can still find her pictures online. Gradually the company changed the policy and moved the employees being cared for to work in the kitchen.

Interview with QZ's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Mr. ZH

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: July 15, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Q: How would you describe QZ at work?

ZH: He works hard and doesn't mind it. We will get busy sometimes and ask him to work OT, and he will do it without any complaints whatsoever.

Some of the employees being cared for will get mad if you have a talk with them about where they did wrong. You will ask them if they know where they did wrong and they will reply that they don't know. QZ doesn't talk back like that. He will just nod and admit his mistake without saying another word.

¹In Shanghai, Papa John's has two Caring Restaurants (爱心餐厅) where there are a larger percentage of full-time employees with disabilities than regular full-time employees. Therefore, they are demo stores for how Papa John's is creating jobs for people with disabilities.

QZ is capable at work and his workload is the heaviest among all of the employees being cared for. In fact, he has the same workload as the regular employees.

The employees being cared for can't keep anything to themselves. They show it whether they are happy or unhappy, and their lives are relatively simple. Regular people like us have a lot to think about and to fret about. They don't. They sleep when they are tired and work when they are not. And they don't have a lot of fun. They just stay home on their days off. QZ is better in that regard. His dad takes him traveling every year and he always gets a 10-day trip or so to see the outside world.

Interview with QZ's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: Ms. Zhou

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: March 16, 2018

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Q: How long have you known QZ?

Zhou: QZ joined early, probably in 2009. I joined even earlier.

Q: So you have known him ever since he joined. When you first met him, did you know that he was an employee being cared for?

Zhou: I did, because more than a dozen employees being cared for joined that one time.

Q: Did they all train with you?

Zhou: Right. There were probably 15 of them and they all got trained here before being assigned to other stores.

Q: So you were literally running a training base.

Zhou: Right.

Q: How many from that group stayed with you?

Zhou: I still have eight with me now, having lost several in between. Now there are one, two... eight employees being cared for at our store.

Q: Did anyone new join later?

Zhou: Yes, like Guo. He joined later.

Q: Back then, did you train the employees being cared for yourself?

Zhou: I did. I was the main person training them on the job, because I had worked in training previously.

Q: Were there any differences between training them and training regular employees?

Zhou: Definitely. They had to be taught many more times. Regular employees would get it after being taught one or two times, but they had to be taught eight or ten times and a lot of repetition was required. Even now, daily repetition is a must. You will talk and they will listen and acknowledge. But they will forget once they are really doing the job.

Q: Which positions was QZ trained for?

Zhou: QZ was trained to work in the kitchen, to make pizzas and appetizers.

Q: How long did the training take?

Zhou: He could work independently pretty soon, but he fell short of the standards.

Q: “Pretty soon...” was that in comparison against employees being cared for or against regular employees?

Zhou: QZ is adaptable compared against employees being cared for.

Q: Once the job became official, how is QZ performing?

Zhou: He can get his job done on his own. In other words, he hardly needs help with his job, unless we get really busy during dining hours, at which time he will need one or two co-workers to lend a hand.

Q: His mom said that when he first started the job, he didn't quite get the rules and would exchange positions with his classmate. Does he still make mistakes like that?

Zhou: It was normal for him to make mistakes when he had just started. Even now, he still makes some minor mistakes, but everyone does.

Q: What kind of minor mistakes, for example?

Zhou: For example, you will ask him to move things to the other side and he will say he got it. But when you check later, the things are still at the original place.

Q: So he gets forgetful.

Zhou: Whether QZ gets things done depends on his mood. When he is in a good mood, everything goes smoothly. When he is in a bad mood, he will just ignore you. You will be standing here talking to him, and he will just turn around and walk off. Sometimes when you try to talk some sense into him, he will get impatient, throw a tantrum and throw things around. But those occasions are very rare.

Q: QZ's mom said that he knows how to close shop. Does he still do that?

Zhou: He doesn't do that now, because now we have a late-night shift selling take-out till midnight. If he closes shop after that, he won't have any public transportation home. He normally gets off work at 9 or 10 p.m.

Q: Of the eight employees being cared for, how would you rate QZ's work attitude and capabilities?

Zhou: He is up there.

Q: Are there any other employees being cared for who can also close shop?

Zhou: He is the only one who can.

Q: Then who closes shop now?

Zhou: An older guy who lives several minutes from the store.

Q: What are the processes for QZ learning about new products?

Zhou: He can do it, but he can't vocalize how he does it. He can't memorize things.

Q: How does he pass the tests then?

Zhou: He seldom passes. We allow them to copy from printed materials, because it's impossible for them to memorize anything.

Q: Will you scold him when he makes mistakes?

Zhou: He will throw things around if you scold him, so it's too scary for you to scold him. He will calm down himself and everything will be fine. You don't have to say anything.

Q: After he has calmed down, will you still point out his mistakes to him?

Zhou: Of course I will.

Q: Do you also give him compliments?

Zhou: I do when he has done a good job.

Q: Do you see QZ chatting with co-workers?

Zhou: He doesn't do that a lot.

Q: Does QZ communicate more with regular employees or with employees being cared for?

Zhou: QZ doesn't normally communicate with anyone.

Q: Is QZ connected with anyone on WeChat?

Zhou: No. We have a WeChat group for the store but he isn't in it. He probably doesn't use WeChat.

Q: Do you interact with him a lot?

Zhou: Our interaction is limited to work.

Q: He and W were classmates, and they seem to have a lot to talk about.

Zhou: W is very bubbly and can chat anyone up. She has today off. QZ seldom talks. If you don't talk to him, he won't approach you to talk.

Q: Do regular employees look down on employees being cared for?

Zhou: Not at our store, because everyone knows about the employees being cared for. Almost all of the current regular employees joined after the employees being cared for, and there have been quite a few turnovers. I am the only one remaining from the earliest group.

Q: So the employees being cared for are experienced employees.

Zhou: Right. Time flies, and they have been here for more than 8 years.

Q: Can employees being cared for mentor new hires?

Zhou: We do have employees already working at certain positions train new hires, and we will track the progress and provide more training if they didn't get the standard training.

Q: Has QZ ever trained anyone?

Zhou: No. He is kind of shy and can't vocalize even though he can get things done.

Q: What shifts does he normally work now?

Zhou: Afternoon shift. Employees being cared for normally work afternoon shift from 10:30 or 11 a.m. to 8:30 or 9 p.m. Two other employees being cared for, Xu and Yin, joined at the same time as QZ. They perform very well and are mild-tempered. They were transferred to W store and carry the weight in the kitchen. In fact, all of the three workstations in the kitchen at W store are manned by employees being cared for, three of them in total. We have a lot more employees being cared for here.

Q: Because this store is a Caring Restaurant.

Zhou: Right, and it used to be the store where training was given. For many years, regular as well as employees being cared for were trained here. But the store is too old, so is the equipment, so no more training is given here.

Q: How do you know that those two employees being cared for carry the weight at W store?

Zhou: Our store is close to that one and there's something going on between the two stores every day, like moving supplies from one to the other. There's also the WeChat group, and everyone knows everyone, so I have access to feedback from W store.

Q: Too bad that the two employees being cared for you mentioned are not on our interview list. Parents had to volunteer for and agree to the interviews.

Zhou: Xu is the best-performing one, doing a great job at all of the positions and very mild in temper.

Q: How many employees are there at this store?

Zhou: A total of 21 including part-time. Five work in the dining area and the rest work in the kitchen.

Q: Of the 16 that work in the kitchen, 8 are employees being cared for.

Zhou: Seven.

Q: And the eighth one works in the dining area?

Zhou: As cashier.

Q: Really? Can employees being cared for work as cashiers?

Zhou: They can. She was hired as cashier. You can't really tell that she is an employee being cared for. She has delicate looks and dresses stylish. She has today off.

Q: There are different kinds of disability, some are intellectual whereas others are physical. Does she have intellectual disabilities?

Zhou: She does. Every employee being cared for at our store has intellectual disabilities. There's a deaf and mute employee at K store who is doing great.

Q: It's great that an employee being cared for can work as cashier, because calculations are required and money is involved.

Zhou: Per company policy, employees being cared for are not to work in the dining area. But she has special approval from the boss, because she has the ability and good looks.

Q: Do you treat employees being cared for the same as regular employees?

Zhou: Not really. Regular employees can recognize their mistakes, but employees being cared for can't. They will feel wronged if you point out their mistakes, so you will need to be more patient with them.

Q: Do you communicate a lot with the parents?

Zhou: I don't, because it's the store manager's job. For the past several years, the manager had had a meeting with the parents once a year.

Q: Are there group activities at this store?

Zhou: We have a monthly town hall at the store. We will buy some food and chat about business for that month and who has done well and who should have done better.

Interview with Mr. QZ

Interviewee: Mr. QZ

Present at Interview: Ms. W and Ms. ZZ

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview date: Afternoon on July 15, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where QZ works

Because of the interview, QZ came to work early. W is also an employee being cared for and an old schoolmate of QZ's. She is outgoing. After getting permission from the manager on duty to sit in on the interview, she yelled excitedly, "Come over here, QZ!" while running with ZZ, another employee being cared for, to the dining area. QZ is more of an introvert. He followed them with a faint smile, and the three of them sat down facing the interviewer. At the beginning, QZ would often look at W before answering questions. He stopped doing that as he gradually relaxed.

Q: Were you and her (pointing to W) schoolmates?

QZ: Right, ever since elementary school.

W: Right, ever since elementary school.

Q: Your mom said that while you were going to school, you would visit each other at home.

W: Right. QZ came to my place and I went to his.

Q: What did you do?

W: Poker, hide-and-seek, everything.

Q: QZ, do you remember what you guys played?

QZ: (Looking apologetic) I forgot.

Q: Do you remember which year you graduated in?

QZ: I forgot.

Q: Did the two of you graduate at the same time?

QZ: No. I graduated after she did.

W: He did it later, I did it earlier.

Q (directed at W): Which year did you graduate in?

W: June 2005.

Q: So QZ might have graduated in 2006.

W: Either 2006 or 2007, right?

Q: Were you ever in the same class?

QZ: No. She was in the senior class and I was in the junior class. I am younger.

W: We got to know each other in PE.

Q: Do you remember how you got trained before you started working?

QZ: I went to a school for the training.

Q: How long was the training?

QZ: Two months.

Q: Do you remember what you were trained in? And which parts were easier and which were more difficult?

QZ: I forgot.

Q: Do you remember anything from the first day at work?

QZ: No.

Q: Which shifts do you normally work?

QZ: Morning, afternoon, evening. I work all shifts.

Q: When does morning shift begin?

QZ: 8:30.

Q: But the store doesn't open till 10, right?

QZ: I will come at 8:30, set up everything including the ingredients on the counters and chop up vegetables. The delivery guy helps sometimes.

Q: What do you do at work?

QZ: I knead and toss dough, slice pizzas, and make drinks and appetizers. I do pretty much everything.

Q: Is it hard to knead and toss dough?

QZ: Not really.

Q: How long does it take to learn? How long did it take you?

QZ: Two months.

Q: You do it best now. Are you the best employee at this?

W: He is.

QZ: I am not. Ms. Zhou does it best. I mean the manager on duty, Manager Zhou.

Q: What else can you do?

QZ: I can make drinks.

Q: Can you be more specific?

QZ: I can make mocha and pretty much anything.

Q: Which drink do you make best?

QZ: They are all very simple to make.

Q: So you are very good at making all of them?

QZ: Right.

Q: That's awesome. How long did it take for you to learn to make the drinks?

QZ: One week.

Q: So making drinks is easier than kneading and tossing dough.

QZ: Right, it's easier.

Q: What else do you make?

QZ: Appetizers.

Q: How do you make appetizers?

QZ: You just put them in the oven. It's really easy.

Q: So appetizers are the easiest to make?

QZ: Right. For example, you take four chicken wings, put them on a tray, put the tray in the oven, and that's it.

Q: How long is the baking?

QZ: About 15 min.

Q: Does the oven make a sound automatically after the 15 min?

QZ: It doesn't. You put the tray in the oven, the tray will come out by itself when the time is up, then you transfer everything from the tray to the plate.

Q: What else do you do?

QZ: I slice pizzas.

Q: That's good. What else?

QZ: I clean up tables in the dining area when it gets busy. I also do the dishes.

Q: Isn't there a dishwasher?

QZ: There is. The person doing the dishes normally comes to work at 4 p.m. When we get busy and run out of forks and knives, the manager on duty will ask us to hand wash some.

Q: What else do you do?

QZ: That's about it.

Q: You already do so much, kneading and tossing dough, slicing pizzas, making drinks and appetizers, cleaning up tables and doing dishes. That's awesome.

W: Of all the things that need to be done in the kitchen, making drinks and appetizers is easiest for me. Kneading and tossing dough is a little hard because it needs physical strength.

Q: What do you do when things quiet down and there are not many customers, like now?

QZ: I get the ingredients ready and chop up vegetables.

Q: So you do the prep work?

QZ: Right, prep work.

Q: You are all very capable. I heard from your mom that sometimes you open shop and sometimes you close shop. Every one of you is doing great.

W: When it gets busy in the dining area, I go out there to help too.

Q: Do you ever do customer-facing work?

QZ: I don't. She did (pointing to W), such as taking orders.

W: I did a couple of times. The customers said I was very good and thanked me. I got water for them and they thanked me saying, "This waitress is really nice."

Q (talking to W): Right, you are always smiling.

W: The most important thing is to finish your job first before taking on other tasks, right?

Q: Right. Have you ever made any mistakes kneading and tossing dough or making appetizers?

QZ: Rarely. Sometimes they would take the wrong order in the dining area, and the food I made would just be left there since it's not what the customers wanted.

Q: So you rarely make mistakes yourself?

QZ: Right.

Q: Does the manager on duty tell you what to do every day?

QZ: Right. On Saturday night, the manager will print a form showing when I should arrive for work and when I should leave. Most of the work is assigned by the manager.

Q: What about the part of the work that's not assigned by the manager?

QZ: I will figure it out myself. For example, I will refill the ingredients or take them out of the freezer to defrost.

Q: Your mom said that sometimes you are sent to other stores to pick up things.

QZ: Right, things are moved across stores. For example, if we are out of chicken wings or dough here, we will just go to another store to get them.

Q: Do you take the subway yourself to get them?

QZ: Yeah. Sometimes two people will go if there's a lot to be picked up.

Q: Have you ever taken the wrong subway?

QZ: No.

Q: You have a 1-h break at work. What do you do during the break?

QZ: I don't get to take the break when it gets busy sometimes. We are not as busy Monday through Friday, so I will rest and play on my cell phone during my break.

Q: What do you play on the cell phone?

QZ: I do some random browsing or watch movies.

Q: What do you do for lunch?

QZ: I bring what's cooked from the night before, put it in the fridge and microwave it for lunch.

Q: Do you get tired at work?

QZ: Not really. It's okay.

Q: None of you gets tired at work?

(Asking W): Do you not get tired?

W: Not really.

Q: You come to work every day and you are not tired?

W: No, none of us gets tired. We don't mind working hard.

Q: Do you ever get unhappy? Have you ever thought about quitting?

QZ: No.

W: We have never thought about that. QZ and I have been working here for more than 6 years, actually closer to 7 years. I joined in November 2009 and he joined in December 2009.

Q: So the two of you are senior employees. (Pointing to ZZ) And she is a newbie.

W (laughing): We are senior and she is junior. We are old generation and they are young generation.

Q: Do you get along with co-workers?

QZ: I do.

Q: Can you give me an example of how you get along with them? Do you do anything with them besides work?

QZ: When there are a lot of orders for drinks, the manager on duty will send them over to help make drinks.

Q: So you help each other when it gets busy.

QZ: Right.

Q: Have you made any good friends here?

QZ (pointing to W): Her.

The other employees being cared for joined later. We were among the first ones to join.

Q: So you can mentor the new staff.

QZ: Right.

Q: How do you mentor them? I would like to hear.

QZ: I teach them step by step, starting with making appetizers and drinks before moving on to kneading and tossing dough.

Q: It's awesome that you are kind of a teacher now. What's your plan for the future? Do you want to work here long term?

QZ: I do.

Q: Anything interesting happening at work?

W: Do you mean at work or outside work?

Q: Both. Working and interacting with co-workers, for example.

W: There is. I remember that we had a townhall meeting in either June or July of 2010...

QZ: We were given pizzas, snacks, and goodies including birthday gifts.

W: We also went to sing karaoke.

Q: This job sounds fun.

QZ: ...I am happy here and I get bored at home. I have no one to hang out with at home, while I have a lot of co-workers and friends here. It's just my parents and me at home, and I am on my own sometimes when they go to work.

Q: On your days off, if your parents are not home, do you go out by yourself?

QZ: I seldom do that.

Q: What do you do after work and on your days off?

QZ: On my days off? My friend owns a hot pot place and I help out there.

Q: What do you do there?

QZ: I clean up tables.

Q: What's the difference between working at the hot pot place and working here?

QZ: It's much busier there than here. On winter days and rainy days, we have a lot of takeout orders here and hardly any dine-in. At the hot pot place, it gets busy from noon till night and the table turnover rate is four or five.

Q: Do you go to that place on all of your days off?

QZ: I only go when it gets really busy, which isn't often.

Q: What else do you do at home? Do you know how to cook?

QZ: I do. I learnt at school. I know how to cook some dishes and cook rice.

Q: Do you still cook now?

QZ: My mom cooks at home. I don't have time to cook now that I work.

Q: Do you watch TV, play games, or read books?

QZ: I watch TV and use the PC.

Q: What kind of TV do you like to watch?

QZ: I watch shows.

Q: What kind of shows do you like to watch?

(Silence)

Q: You don't remember? What do you do on the PC?

QZ: There are movies on PC, right? So I watch movies.

Q: What kind of movies do you like?

QZ: ...Action movies.

Q: Your mom said that she often takes you traveling. Do you remember the places you went?

QZ: I have been to Japan and Australia.

Q: Which places do you like?

QZ: ...Japan, I guess. It's clean there and the hotels were nice, all five-starred. I have been to other hotels that were pretty far and not as nice, because they were part of the travel agencies' packages to save money.

Q: Did anything interesting happen on your trips?

QZ: Traveling is tiring. You have to get up really early and fly from one city to another. Sometimes you have to get up at two or three in the morning. And you don't get breakfast till you have packed and got on the plane. And you stay up late at night. Also, I swam and saw the ocean.

Q: Do you swim?

QZ: Not often.

Q: Now that you're working, do you still have time to travel?

QZ: We have annual leave and I use that for traveling.

Q: Do you parents decide where to go or do you suggest places?

QZ: They make the travel decisions.

Q: Is there any place you want to go?

QZ: I've been everywhere.

Q: Okay, that's it for the interview today. Thank you all.

Observation of QZ at Work

Observation place: Restaurant where QZ works

Observation date: 16:30–22:30, July 15, 2016

Observer and writer: Mei Liao

Because of the interview, QZ arrived at the store before his normal workday started.

Time	What QZ did	Remarks
16:10	Put on apron and got ready for work	
16:57	Made pizza (kneaded and tossed dough, added ingredients, and put the pizza in the oven)	
17:05	Took the cheese pizza out of the oven and placed it in a to-go box Took chicken wings out of the oven and placed them in a to-go box	Together with a co-worker, double-checked the quantities of the takeout orders and engaged in small talk with a light-hearted expression
17:18	Made thin-crust pizza	Saw a hole in the tossed dough and patched the hole
17:25	Made pizza	
17:31	Made pizza	
17:40	Made pizza	
17:44	Made pizza	
17:48	Made pizza	
17:55	Took pizza out of the oven	
17:59	Made pizza	

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Time	What QZ did	Remarks
18:10	Made pizza	
18:13	Made pizza	
18:16	Took bread sticks out of the oven. Refilled the ketchup bucket on the pizza-making counter	
18:20	Made pizza	
18:25	Made pizza	
18:30	Took pizza out of the oven	
18:42	Made pizza	
18:45	Made pizza	
18:49	Made pizza	
18:56	Refilled the ketchup bucket on the pizza-making counter	
19:10	Made pizza	
19:30	Refilled the ketchup bucket on the pizza-making counter	
19:51	Checked stock in the fridge against a list	
20:01	Put empty plastic dough molds in the storage cabinet	
20:03	Made pizza	
20:10	Organized ingredient containers	
20:14	Made pizza	
20:18	Took inventory	
20:28	Made pizza	
20:40	Took pizza out of the oven and placed it in a to-go box, boxed chicken wings	Together with a co-worker, double-checked the quantities of the takeout orders and engaged in small talk with a light-hearted expression
20:51	Mopped down the dough kneading counter	
20:53	Organized ingredient containers and cleaned up counter	
21:07	Made baked rice	
21:09	Made pizza	
21:24	Put away cleaned storage boxes	
21:26	Took pizza and other items out of the oven and placed them into-go boxes	
21:35	Made appetizer tray, chicken rolls and other food	The employees clocked out one by one. Only QZ and the manager on duty were left in the kitchen

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Time	What QZ did	Remarks
21:43	Took food out of the oven and placed it in a to-go box	
21:46	Sanitized work counters	
21:50	Rinsed the drains	According to a co-worker in the dining area, rinsing the drains is the job of the delivery person who is a regular employee. QZ gets along very well with the delivery person. The delivery person helps out in the kitchen when he has time. Taught by regular employees, QZ learns fast and makes great progress in everything. At that particular moment, the delivery person was out on a delivery. QZ happened to have time, so he rinsed the drains
22:00	Cleaned up the dough kneading counter and used a mop to scrub off flour stains	
22:09	Pushed inside four delivery vehicles from outside the store, took in the advertisement board	According to a co-worker in the dining area, the delivery person is in charge of the delivery vehicles. But he wasn't back yet, so QZ did his job for him
22:12	Locked the front door	
22:13	Turned off lights in the dining area and the main lighting in the kitchen	
22:30	Left for the day	

Translated by Cissy Zhao

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

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Chenyi Tang

Interview with Ms. ZH's Father

ZH, female, born in 1988. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school (Shanghai Primary Vocational and Technical School of Changning District). Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2009.

Interviewee: ZH's father

Interviewers: Chenyi Tang and Yuan Gu

Writer: Chenyi Tang

Interview dates: September 24, 2016 and February 19, 2017

Interview place: Xing Xiang Le Restaurant inside Longemont Shopping Mall near Zhongshan Park, Shanghai

A Special Family

Q: ZH's first name is really special. Did you and your wife give her the name?

ZH's father: I gave her the name. It was actually a no-brainer.

Q: Does it mean anything?

ZH's father: It's just my last name and my wife's last name put together. Like I said, a no-brainer. If I had been more into this sort of thing, I would have looked up which of the five essential elements she is missing and given her a name implying this element.

Q: Are you and your wife both from Shanghai?

ZH's father: Yes, we are.

C. Tang (✉)

Fudan University, 220 Handan Ro, Shanghai 200433, China

Q: How did you meet your wife?

ZH's father: Someone introduced us.

Q: How long did you date before getting married?

ZH's father: Five years.

Q: That long?

ZH's father: Yeah, five long years, because we didn't have a place of our own.

Q: So you didn't get married earlier for financial reasons?

ZH's father: Mainly because of a lack of housing, and financial worries were another reason. We needed to have a place to live after getting married, so we dated for 5 years. After 5 years, her parents figured that nothing could be solved by us dating any longer. So they moved to some older housing and let us have their place for a month. And that 1 month led to ZH. (Laughing)

Q: When did you get married?

ZH's father: In 1987. ZH's mom was 28 and I was 30.

Q: What did you and ZH's mom do back then?

ZH's father: ZH's mom worked at a processing shop affiliated with the community and I worked at a state-owned place.

Q: What exactly did you do at the state-owned place?

ZH's father: I was the warehouse supervisor.

Q: Was the job tough?

ZH's father: Of course it was tough. I have a disability too, a physical disability.¹ And you just saw for yourself, my wife has an intellectual disability. All three members of my family have disabilities. So when you asked me whether my job was tough, how could it not be tough?

Q: Back then, were you able to get by on the combined salaries of the two of you?

ZH's father: Barely. We could keep food on the table, but soon we had a third mouth to feed.

Q: When was ZH born?

ZH's father: In 1988.

Q: Do ZH and your wife have the same disability?

ZH's father: My wife had a fever when she was young, and her mom closed the windows to keep her warm. Now we understand science and know that if someone has a fever, you should give her air and keep her cool to control the fever. ZH's grandma wasn't educated and had no idea. She just thought that my wife needed more clothes since she had the fever. She actually did a lot of damage that way.

Q: So your wife wasn't born with the disability, it was caused by a fever later on.

ZH's father: Right, it happened after she was born.

Q: Everyone on your wife's side of the family is healthy and she was born healthy, right?

ZH's father: Right.

Q: Did your wife go to school?

ZH's father: She did.

Q: Until approximately what grade?

¹ZH's father was born with a deformed arm and a limp.

ZH's father: Third grade.

Q: Did she start working right after finishing third grade?

ZH's father: No. She stayed home after quitting school, then she got a job at the processing shop.

Q: What exactly did she do?

ZH's father: She made small parts, like staplers that kids need for school. The shop gave her a separate space to work in, but she couldn't assemble the entire stapler on her own.

Q: So she could only do simple things?

ZH's father: Right.

Q: When did she start working at the processing shop?

ZH's father: Let me think... She had to stay home when that place was shut down in 1995, and she had 10 years' work experience, which means that she started working in 1985. Right, she was 26 and worked for 10 years. She receives a pension now.

Q: After that place was shut down, did ZH's mom look for another job?

ZH's father: No.

Q: So she has been staying home and living on her pension?

ZH's father: No! (Raising his voice) It's not like that. I was paying into her pension until she turned 48. Someone told me that people with disabilities can retire early once they lose the ability to work, so she retired at 48.

Q: So your wife started receiving a pension once she turned 48 and has been staying home since?

ZH's father: Right.

Q: Did the community give her the job as part of an aid program?

ZH's father: I guess you could put it like that.

Q: How was the pay?

ZH's father: The pay was minimal. When I married her in 1987, she was making 200 yuan per month.

Q: Was that considered low at the time?

ZH's father: Her pay was based on the quantity of what she produced. For example, if she made cups at 2 cents per cup, and she made 100 cups during a certain month, you just multiply 100 by 2 cents and that's how much she would get paid for that particular month.

Q: That's why the pay was pretty low.

ZH's father: Right.

Q: After you got married, who wanted kids? You and your wife, or parents in the family?

ZH's father: My parents wanted us to have kids.

Q: Were you not worried that the kids would inherit your wife's disability?

ZH's father: No. Because according to her parents, she wasn't born with the disability, whereas I was. When ZH was born, there was nothing wrong with her physically. Before she turned five, we never had her checked for any disabilities. After she turned five, she had a fever every week, and the cramps and spasms that came with the fever damaged her brain.

Q: Is your wife's intellectual disability more severe than ZH's?

ZH's father: It is.

Q: Do they have any difficulty communicating?

ZH's father: No.

Q: How does ZH get along with her mom at home?

ZH's father: They get along very well because her mom doesn't spank her or yell at her.

Q: Can you give some examples of what she normally does at home with her mom?

ZH's father: ZH used to not lift a finger around the house before she got married, and she even brought back her work clothes for her mom to wash. But moms love their kids no matter what, right? Despite her intellectual disability, her mom gets things done.

Q: So it's just a normal relationship between a mom and a daughter?

ZH's father: Right. She would tell her mom, "Oh Mom, I want some tea now." And her mom would get her tea. And her mom would go out and buy chow mein for her. That's just how they are with each other. Sometimes I would tell ZH off, tell her that with her intellectual disability, she shouldn't just lie around doing nothing. And when she was going to the vocational school, I signed her up for cooking, Ikebana, and baking classes. But she wouldn't do any of those at home. Now that she is married, she has no choice. She even has to cook for her husband.

Q: Have you noticed any changes in society when you look at your wife's experience and your daughter's? Is society more caring towards people with disabilities now?

ZH's father: I know nothing about my wife's experience when she was young. When I met her, she already had a workplace taking care of her and was making money, even though she was making barely enough to get by. As for society caring for people with disabilities, right now we receive some subsidies for October 1st and Chinese New Year every year—200 or 300 yuan each time, nothing more, nothing less.

Q: So nothing fundamental has changed since your wife's time?

ZH's father: No, nothing has changed.

Q: Do you and your wife have a lot of siblings?

ZH's father: My wife has five and I have three.

Q: Do you visit each other?

ZH's father: I live at ZH's grandma's place and often visit my brother. My wife's siblings visit ZH's grandma a lot, so I see them quite often.

Q: Do you get along well with them?

ZH's father: I get along fine with my wife's brothers.

Q: Of all the uncles, aunts, and cousins that ZH has, is there anyone who is particularly close?

ZH's father: On my wife's side, she is close to her second brother and his wife because we used to live in the same complex. On my side, my elder brother and his wife are nice to ZH and don't look down on her. The others live far from us and we don't talk a lot, so there's no feeling of closeness.

My wife's elder brothers have kids who are all older than ZH. They all had jobs and no time to hang out with her. They knew about her intellectual disability and that she got sick easily and that they shouldn't tire her out, but they didn't know what to say to her for fear something would trigger her sickness... So, she didn't see or talk to her female cousins often. Some of them were nice to her and she was happy about that, whereas some just ignored her. I figure that even in your own family, you will be looked down upon because you are the weakling.

I have several siblings, but they live far away, so I couldn't take her to visit them often. Even when we visited occasionally, she didn't fit in—because to speak, you will need your brain to react, and if you can't talk coherently, your relatives will look down on you. She did hang out with kids who lived in the same apartment complex as us. Another way to look at it is that they all knew about her intellectual disability and knew not to bully her. That's just how it was.

Q: Did these relatives have any influence on her when she was growing up?

ZH's father: Her grandma took care of her, so they had little influence on her.

Q: Was grandma the one with the influence?

ZH's father: Right. ZH is married now and her grandpa has passed away. Her grandma still gives her money sometimes for living expenses, so she is still helping her. Her grandma spoiled her too. Grandparents always spoil the grandkid if they all live under the same roof. The good thing about three generations living together is that the grandparents will help with childcare. The bad thing is that they'll spoil the grandkid. How do we do a good job educating her as her parents? Being strict is helping her whereas spoiling her is doing her harm.

Q: Is she grandma's youngest grandkid?

ZH's father: Yeah... Oh no, there's one after her. My wife's youngest brother remarried and had a kid who's younger than ZH.

Q: But is ZH still grandma's favorite?

ZH's father: She is, because my wife is the only daughter while all the other granddaughters are from her brothers. There's no grandson. It's weird that my wife has five brothers and four of them are married with daughters. Is there something wrong? A fortune-teller once told them, "Your mom had all the sons. Now you are all having daughters." Now ZH has three female cousins who got married, two of them had kids and both are boys. This gender thing must have skipped a generation.

Getting Spoiled due to Childhood Sickness

Q: You found that ZH wasn't in good health after she turned five. Did you take her to the doctor's?

ZH's father: We basically reported to the hospital once a month, whether it was the children's hospital or a general hospital. It was something extra for me to do every month. I got very busy and tired with work, so sometimes her grandma would take her, since my wife definitely couldn't do it. Then my co-worker referred me to a hospital that put her on daily medication. She was cured after 8 years. I often tell

her that she has taken tons of medication in her life. Now that she doesn't get sick anymore, I feel very happy.

Q: So she has healed?

ZH's father: Right. But on the other hand, you can't frustrate her or tire her out, and she can't eat anything too spicy or too sour. My workplace had very strict rules, but everyone knew that I had family difficulties, what with all three of us having disabilities and ZH getting sick often. So the managers were very supportive and gave me time off whenever I had to take her to the hospital or get medication. After I got the medication, I would need to reimburse it and I always got priority reimbursement. The monthly reimbursement was about 200 yuan, so my workplace was really supportive of me because of my disability.

I always tell ZH, "Since you were five, the money daddy spent buying you medication could have been better spent buying you fruit. Fruit would have been more nutritious for you, whereas medication could have done you more harm than good." You are more educated than I am, so you should know that medication doesn't look good or taste good. You need to take good care of yourselves and rest well.

Q: What was her life like from preschool to elementary school?

ZH's father: She was very bad with her hands at preschool. We didn't let her do anything at home, so she was very slow, both physically and mentally, at preschool, like when playing with blocks. And she got sick and missed school a lot. The preschool teacher couldn't give her one-on-one care because there were so many other kids at school, so we would drop her off in the morning and pick her up after lunch.

Q: What about elementary school?

ZH's father: The same. She would doze off at school sometimes and it was actually caused by fever. I was born with a physical disability, but she wasn't born with her disability. She got it from her mom, which is the only way I can explain it.

Q: Did she start taking care of herself when she was young, like brushing her teeth and dressing herself?

ZH's father: Yes, she did all that by herself. At preschool, they were required to wash their handkerchiefs. She didn't do it until she was seven or eight. She was born in September, so she was held back 1 year for school. Sometimes her mom would wash her handkerchief and that got her curious and eager to try. But she really just wanted to play with water instead of washing her handkerchief. I saw it and told her, "You are wasting water and not washing anything."

Q: Have you ever taught her to read and write?

ZH's father: I taught her to read and sometimes helped her with homework. She just wasn't getting it. The way Shanghainese put it is that she refused to use her brain, and I would get mad at her for that. But she used her brain in other ways, like I was about to spank her and she would yell to get the attention of her grandma who would definitely take her side.

Q: Grandma really spoiled her.

ZH's father: Right. She got sick a lot, so grandma spoiled her. I kept thinking that you have to be strict to raise a good kid and to help the kid do well at school, but she just refused to use her brain.

On what grounds did I apply for a disability certificate for her? She had to repeat one grade because she couldn't keep up. And her sickness had affected her brain. So I took her for an IQ test and after the test, the doctor said that her IQ was lower than that of the average kid but much higher than those with ID. So I figured that her problem with homework was really that she refused to use her brain. For example, when the doctor showed her several pictures, people without disabilities couldn't even tell what's missing with the animals but she could, so how do you explain that? She scored 70 points which implied intellectual disability, and her disability certificate specifies Grade IV.

Why did I apply for a disability certificate for her? Because I had a tough job myself and wasn't well paid. Keeping her in school would have been a huge expense for me every year, right? So to get her a disability certificate was to have society help take care of her.

Q: When did you apply for the disability certificate for her? Was it when she was in elementary school?

ZH's father: When she was ten, in second grade, because she repeated a grade.

Q: Which grade did she repeat?

ZH's father: First grade.

Q: Did she repeat any other grades later on?

ZH's father: She wasn't allowed to, because of the family financial situation.

Q: Was she failing academics before repeating the grade?

ZH's father: Yeah. She wasn't getting it or using her brain.

Q: Did she learn Chinese, math and English at elementary school?

ZH's father: English wasn't until later. Back then, she was learning only Chinese and math.

Q: And she wasn't good at either?

ZH's father: Right. She isn't good at math. Even now, when she spends money, I would tell her, "I'll give you 100 yuan and when you spend it, you need to do the math in your head to make sure you are getting the correct change back, do you understand?" She wouldn't say a word. And I would take that as meaning that she knows how to mentally calculate whether she is getting the right amount of change when she spends money. I would also tell her sometimes that if she doesn't spend wisely and doesn't know how to calculate change, her husband would just carelessly pocket the change and 100 yuan would be gone just like that, and she should watch out for that.

Q: Were you the one helping her with homework when she got home?

ZH's father: I had a long commute. We were living in Zhabei District back then. Transportation wasn't as convenient as it is now, and Bus No. 69 was a tough line. On a good day, the commute took more than an hour. On a bad day, it could take close to 2 h. There's no way I could help her with homework, so her grandpa would pick her up and help her, because her grandma isn't educated. I would go home and check it. If it was okay, I would sign off on it, otherwise I would tell her to redo it when she got up the next morning.

Q: What kind of homework would you have her redo?

ZH's father: Whatever she didn't get right.

Q: So you would go over everything and make sure everything was correct?

ZH's father: Right.

Q: Were you the one who was the strictest with her in the family?

ZH's father: I had to be because there was no one else. Like I just mentioned, her intellectual disability isn't really inferior intellectual ability. Her IQ isn't really that low, so if she would just use her brain, she wouldn't have needed the disability certificate.

What's the real deal with my kid? First, she had this sickness which had affected her brain. Second, we had financial difficulties at home, and if she had stayed at school, it would have meant one more expense for me every year. That's why I got her the disability certificate. I am not sure if you agree with me on this one. Do you think I did the right thing by getting her the disability certificate? Now that she has it, there's actually backlash like being looked down upon.

Q: Did ZH get dropped off and picked up from school?

ZH's father: At first, I dropped her off, then I let her go by herself, because after I dropped her off several times, she knew the way.

Q: Has she ever got into trouble on the way to school?

ZH's father: She has. Some boys from school would bully her. They even bullied her at school and beat her up. She would come home and tell me about it and I would go to school and tell the teacher the next day.

At elementary school, there was a boy who hit her. I didn't know about it but her grandma did. So the boy hit her and she came home crying. Her grandma went to school with her and asked for the boy. The teacher tried to reprimand him by telling him, "If you hit her and she gets sick, you will need to go get your mom to take care of her." That's one way. Another way the teacher tried was saying, "She has a lot of uncles. Her mom is the youngest with five older brothers, so she has five uncles. What will you do if they all come and beat you up?" After that tongue-lashing, the boy left her alone.

Some of the classmates said, "I am gonna hit you but you can't tell the teacher, otherwise I will hit you again." So do you think she dared to tell the teacher? Being a parent, I would of course tell the homeroom teacher, otherwise how could she survive seeing those boys at school every day? I told her teacher there was a kid in the class who was always hitting her. And that kid's parents were not difficult to deal with. On my part, I am not the kind of parent who will ask you to compensate me for medical expenses or other losses when your kid hits mine. I didn't care about any of that, but I did care if she got sick because of the bullying. So I just told the parents to cover whatever medical expenses their kid caused. That's the bare minimum, right?

Q: Were there any teachers that she liked at elementary school? How did the teachers treat her?

ZH's father: The teachers respected her. At elementary school, the teachers respected her. At Changning Primary Vocational School, there were also teachers who liked her. Why did they like her? Because she did whatever they asked her to do. She literally ran to do their bidding because she wanted to please them. Because of that, the teachers rewarded her and encouraged her. And at home, we kept telling

her that she should behave in class and listen to the teachers. She was good in that regard.

Q: Which classes did ZH like at school?

ZH's father: She liked PE.

Q: When did she start at Changning Primary Vocational School?

ZH's father: After she graduated from elementary school.

Q: Was it after she graduated from fifth grade?

ZH's father: Sixth grade.

Q: How long did she stay at the vocational school?

ZH's father: Six years. It's a vocational school where skills are taught in ikebana, baking, cooking, services, and management.

Q: When ZH was young, did you take her out when she wasn't sick?

ZH's father: I did.

Q: Where did you normally go?

ZH's father: One place was Jiaotong Park, and another place was the Zoo where she could learn about the animals. Sometimes I took her to Suzhou to be on the water. I wanted to develop her intellectual ability and to have her see more of the world.

My father-in-law told me that when ZH's mom was young, her parents couldn't take her anywhere as both of them had to work, so she knew little about the world. Before I married her, her parents didn't allow her out at all because they worried about her getting lost. When we were dating, I always took her out so that she could learn about the world. Like we would walk from home to Zhongshan Park and even now, she still remembers how to get home.

Once I learnt how ZH's mom had been brought up, I made sure I always took ZH out. Sometimes I would take her out when she was feeling okay, then the next day she would come down with a fever. Her grandma would scold me, "The child just got better and you took her out, and now she is sick again." But I believed that I should expose her more to the world. Her grandma didn't like it that she got sick again and had to take medication and have shots, which wasn't enjoyable of course. There's a gap between her grandma and me, and another gap between me and her. That's three generations for you.

Q: Can you elaborate on your trips with her to the Zoo? Did you want to teach her how to find her way around and to expose her to the world?

ZH's father: You know we are being relocated by the government. I asked her where we are moving to and her reply was very vague, "Around Jiadingbei." And where is Jiadingbei Road? She couldn't tell. This shows a lack of education. I told her to try harder at school and she wouldn't listen. Still, I kept reminding her to do it. Now that she is working, the same thing applies. Even though her intellectual ability is lower than that of other people, the workplace is where people work and if you work hard, people will recognize it, right? If I were the manager and you worked hard, there would be no reason for me not to recognize it. But what seems to be always on her mind is, "They don't treat us as equals because we have intellectual disabilities. They are not even from Shanghai like we are, and they are bossing us around." I believe that's what she thinks.

Q: When she was attending Changning Primary Vocational School, did she mention any field trips during spring or fall?

ZH's father: She did.

Q: Did she talk about how she felt?

ZH's father: I asked her and she said, "I don't know." Bad memory goes with low IQ. Sometimes I would buy her candy and cookies for a trip in spring and she would eat them all. I would ask her, "What did the teacher ask you guys to do today?" She would say, "The teacher asked us to write about what we saw." I would ask, "So what did you write about?" and she would say, "I have nothing to write about."

Q: So the teacher gave writing assignments before field trips?

ZH's father: It's just to write down what you saw with your own eyes and she couldn't do that. She would see something and forget all about it on the same day. That means that she can't retain anything in her brain. That's also why she has never liked math.

I told her, "Now you see that you do need Chinese and math in real life, right? Why didn't you study Chinese and math harder when you were young?" She wouldn't say a word. Like I mentioned before, when you don't say a word, you try to give the impression that you know, but the fact is that you don't know.

Q: Does ZH have any really close friends?

ZH's father: Really close friends... I know about one now, from a good family. Her name is C and she works at McDonald's. Sometimes she would call to check on ZH. When they were both going to Changning Primary Vocational School, this classmate often helped ZH.

Hoping to Work for Independence

Q: After graduating from Changning Primary Vocational School, ZH went to the Sunshine Home. What did she do there?

ZH's father: She didn't exactly work at the Sunshine Home. The teachers have disabilities themselves and just gave them some lessons, or sang or drew with them. At lunchtime, the teachers would buy groceries and ask them to help sort them out. That's about it. She would hang around a bit in the afternoon before coming home, which was almost like going to school.

After she graduated from Changning Primary Vocational School, her grandma couldn't babysit her anymore, so I sent her to the Sunshine Home. It was the year of the Asian Games,² 2005, wasn't it? At that time, the Sunshine Home organized several sports meets and she won some events. She is very happy doing sports.

Q: Exactly which events did she win?

²Asian Games: It will have been the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games held in Shanghai. After winning the bid to host the Games, Shanghai rolled out supporting programs at Sunshine Homes.

ZH's father: One was table tennis, another was shooting basketball, and there was also some singing competition. The Sunshine Home organized those events and she won all of them.

Q: She plays table tennis very well. Does she go out to practice table tennis?

ZH's father: No. She said that I sent her to a place she didn't feel she belonged to and I said that she went to the right place. Why? Because the place trained her to be caring, just like the students and the teachers were caring towards each other. Don't you agree?

Q: Why did she say she had no business going to the Sunshine Home?

ZH's father: She said that it was a waste of her time. The vocational school found her current job for her whereas the Sunshine Home didn't really help her. That's her logic.

Q: So she had wanted to get a job?

ZH's father: Right, because kids at the Sunshine Home have intellectual disabilities, like kids at her school. She felt that she should have a job and income so that she could spend her own money. I haven't taken a penny from her since she started working and got married. I told her once, "If you give me 100 yuan every month now, I will give you 200 yuan every month after you get married." That's just my wishful thinking. She has never given me a single penny.

Q: So ZH spends the money she makes herself?

ZH's father: Right, but she doesn't make enough for her to spend, so she still sponges off me. I believe this means that she can't manage her own finances, right?

Q: Back then, why didn't she get a job right after graduation?

ZH's father: Because nobody wanted her.

Q: You mean nobody referred her to any jobs?

ZH's father: Right. There were recruitment notices posted around where we lived and I made inquiries. They asked me whether my kid is from Shanghai or from outside Shanghai. They didn't want anyone from Shanghai. Why? Because Shanghai locals can't handle tough jobs. And if you are from out of town and they hire you and provide room and board, they will be able to control your time and have you work however many hours they want, like 12 h a day or even 14 h. Since you are from out of town, you will have no relatives or friends in Shanghai and nowhere to go, so you will spend all your time working. That's the logic. Even before I had the chance to show them ZH's disability certificate, they told me they didn't want anyone from Shanghai.

Q: When did she decide that she wanted to work at Papa John's?

ZH's father: The teacher from Changning Primary Vocational School referred her to Papa John's. There was an opening in 2013 and that's how she got in. The workplace is caring towards her and gave her a consolation prize at the skills competition, which made her pretty happy (see Fig. 1).

Q: Does she have any close co-workers?

ZH's father: You are writing this report in order to help improve their self-esteem, right? But the thing is that now, she finds it a bore to go to work sometimes. She would come home and tell me that at her workplace, the shift manager and manager are from outside Shanghai and they often ridicule and bully her. I would tell her that

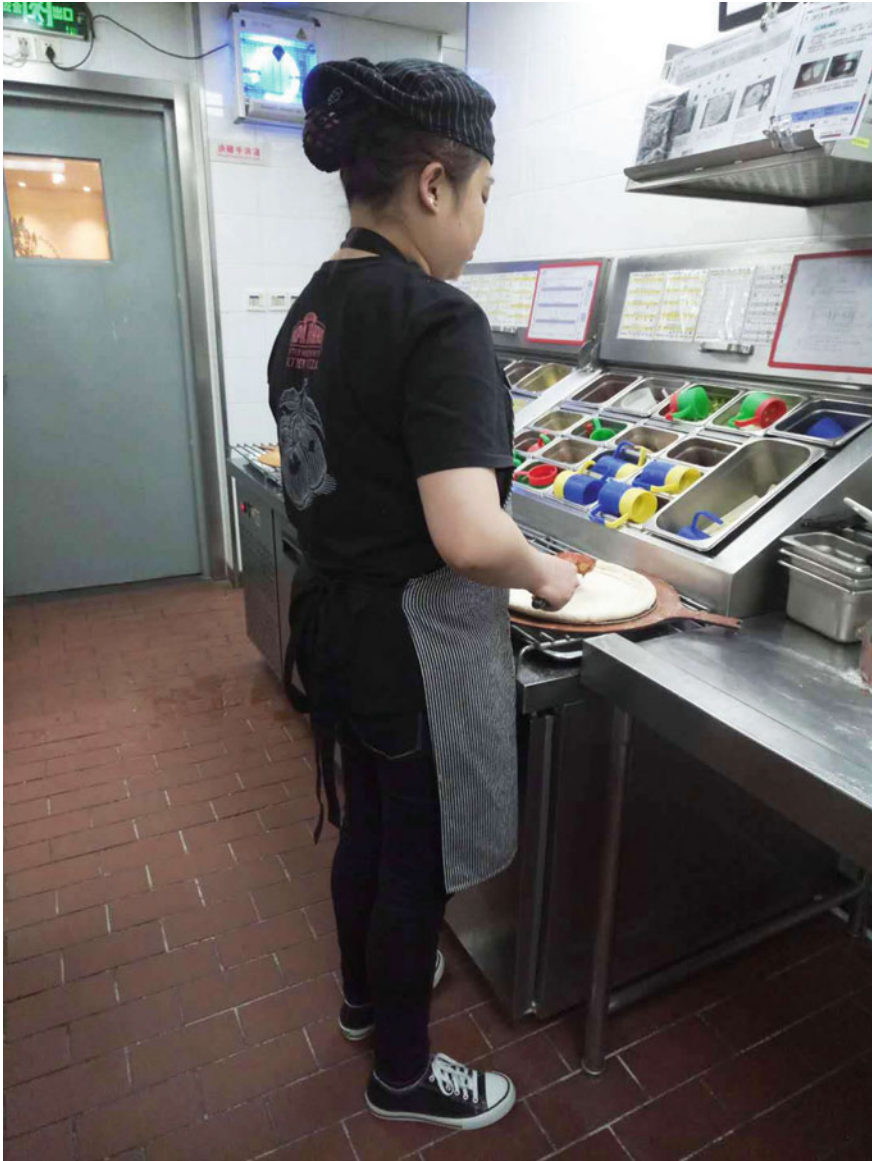


Fig. 1 Ms. ZH at work

she has no choice but to put up with it. Even though society looks down on her, she must have self-esteem and be strong. I try to make her understand that she needs to be able to get along with her co-workers.

I told her that it's not easy to make money now or to keep a job. Because of her disability, people look down on her. But she needs to value herself and to protect herself.

Q: Why is she reluctant to go to work? Because there are co-workers who laugh at her?

ZH's father: Right, some co-workers laugh at her. Right now the shift manager and manager are from outside Shanghai, while she is from Shanghai. They sometimes laugh at her saying that she has low IQ and is not worth talking to. That's what's going on.

Q: Even the shift manager says that? When we visited the store last time, the manager was sweet talking, saying that everyone is equal in the store.

ZH's father: Of course! When you interviewed them, they had to say, "We are all equal." There's no way they would tell you that they discriminate against anyone.

This is the fourth restaurant she has worked at. The previous two were shut down. She went to the store in Xujiahui at first, then switched to the one in People's Square. There's a Papa John's near where we live too, but that one is franchised. The company wouldn't let her work at a store close to home, but wouldn't subsidize her for transportation or meals when it sent her to a store far away to work, which means extra expenses for her. Being her parents, we kind of expected that if the company doesn't subsidize for transportation or meals, it should arrange for her to work closer to home, right? She doesn't make much to begin with, and the extra financial burden... It wouldn't have mattered as much if she were better paid, that's how I look at it.

I wonder if you could talk to the store manager? The store has quite a few employees with disabilities and doesn't really shortchange them on pay. So the management can be righteous about standard pay for everyone. But some workplaces pay for transportation and meals. So it would be ideal if ZH could work closer to home. Right now, she commutes 90 min one way which means 3 h both ways.

Q: Taking the subway is expensive too.

ZH's father: Yes, it is, especially now that she has the baby. At 10 yuan both ways every day means 220 yuan per month. The store isn't going to pay for this!

Q: Did she really mean it when she said she didn't want to work at the restaurant anymore? Has she ever thought about what she would do if she quits?

ZH's father: We talked about it and I asked her, "What will you do if you quit? Can you be your own boss?"

Q: She had no answer for you?

ZH's father: Exactly. How can she be her own boss and handle her own management? She needs to be able to manage herself before managing others. If she can't even manage herself, forget about managing others. She immediately spends whatever money she makes—how can she call that "making money"? It's actually a waste. It's wasting her energy. So I told her, "You don't know better, so you can only be managed by others. Once you know better, you can manage others."

Q: Is she making pizzas at work? How is she performing?

ZH's father: I went to the restaurant she worked at before, not the current one, but the previous one which was on Xizang Road. I asked her manager and was told

that she performed well at work but that her reactions were too slow. I said that's to be expected since she isn't completely there intellectually, so something's gonna be missing, right? So I pleaded for more help for her, since there's no way around it.

On the other hand, there are many people with ID in my neighborhood. They just stay home, without a job and living on minimum government subsidies, whereas ZH goes to work every day. Companies usually offer at least one free meal a day as part of the benefits, but Papa John's doesn't. It just provides the bare minimum required in Shanghai. ZH is married now and I don't know how she and her husband are going to sustain the family. They actually can't, so they look to us for help. They really shouldn't after they got married, but she still does. I often tell her, "You should have married a better man. Why did you marry someone who doesn't make more money than you?" I still have money to support her, what about when I don't?

Q: Right now, a lot of people with disabilities just stay home and live on minimum government subsidies. Is that what you want her to do too, or would you rather she go out and work?

ZH's father: I prefer that she go out and work and be exposed to society. If she stayed at home on minimum government subsidies without human contact, she would be isolated from everyone.

Q: Does she have any interests when she is home?

ZH's father: When she was going to the Sunshine Home, she would do embroidery when she got home. It's sort of a hobby, but I don't really think much of it.

Bittersweet Marriage

Q: How did she meet her husband?

ZH's father: A classmate introduced them. You know, all of her classmates have intellectual disabilities and don't really know better. I tried to find someone for her but she wasn't interested, and now you see what kind of life she ended up having.

Q: Does ZH's husband have any disabilities?

ZH's father: ZH's husband... He has disabilities by my standards.

Why do I say that? When they were dating, they seemed to be spending every day together. I asked her, "You are together every day. Are you trying to bond, or talking about what's happening in the world, or discussing your future?" She didn't know what to tell me.

On her days off, she would go to his place around 9 a.m. after having breakfast and come home at 9 or 10 p.m. I said I never spent such a long day out and about with her mom when we were dating, so how come she can stay out for so long? If both were highly educated, then they would have a lot to talk about. But I don't think that's the case with ZH and him. I found out later that he had dropped out of school at 16, which is telling about his IQ, right? They both enjoy good physical health, but the mind isn't quite there.

Q: Does her husband have any kind of medical certificate?

ZH's father: No. I only said that about him because you asked me.

Q: Do you know which school her husband dropped out of?

ZH's father: His parents worked in Anhui, so he grew up in Anhui and didn't come to Shanghai until he turned 16.

Q: So he moved to Shanghai after he was done with school?

ZH's father: Right.

Q: Did he start working as soon as he moved to Shanghai?

ZH's father: Not immediately. The community found him a job later.

Q: So he stayed home for a while, but the community arranged a different kind of job for him than the one ZH got?

ZH's father: Right, he enjoyed some special treatment because his parents had volunteered to work outside Shanghai. If you were highly educated, you wouldn't need the community to arrange anything for you, you could just get a job with your degree. So when you asked me about her husband's IQ, I figured it can't be too high. What do you think?

Q: Are both your in-laws originally from Shanghai or is one of them from Anhui?

ZH's father: His dad is from Shanghai, he went to work in Anhui, and his mom is from there, that's why he qualified for special treatment.

Q: Do they talk in Mandarin at home?

ZH's father: Yeah. His mom talks to his dad in Anhui dialect, he talks to his dad in Mandarin, and ZH talks to her husband in Mandarin.

I kind of think he should have been taught Shanghainese. His dad is from Shanghai, so why should they speak Mandarin? But he couldn't learn because he isn't that smart. For example, the Shanghainese for a cup is "Be Zi", but he can only say "Bei Zi" with some kind of tongue twisting. Simple things like this, he just can't learn—what can you do?

Q: What does her husband do?

ZH's father: When they were dating, I knew that he was on the cleaning crew at Xujingdong Station of Subway Line 2. After they got married, he worked on the cleaning crew at the Shanghai office of a Singapore company, now he works in security at Food Plaza in Xujiahui.

Q: Do you know how long they dated?

ZH's father: Three years.

Q: When did you know about their dating? From the very beginning?

ZH's father: I didn't know about it until 18 months later.

Q: Did she bring her boyfriend home to meet you?

ZH's father: No!

She used to come home from work on time, but then she started coming home late. So I needed to find out what was going on. Her mom and I went to wait for her in front of the restaurant she was working at, the one close to Shanghai Indoor Stadium. We saw her coming out but she didn't see us. The two of them got on the bus. They were totally into each other and didn't even turn their heads. They were sitting in the front row and her mom and I were sitting in the back row.

Q: So both you and her mom went to wait for her? (Laughing)

ZH's father: We did. They took No. 808 bus from the stadium. Supposedly the lady should come home first after being picked up from work by the guy, but she took him home first before coming home herself.

I asked her, "What's going on with you?"

She said, "I went out for a bit."

And I said, "You were not telling the truth. I saw you and him on the bus. Your mom and I were sitting right behind you!"

I asked her again and she told me the truth. The guy is older than she is. I asked where he worked and what he did for a living, and she told me he was on the subway station cleaning crew. Now he works in security. Both are jobs for people who are not well educated. If you have a good education, do you think you would work at jobs like those? Cleaning crew and security are jobs for the elderly like us, not for young people from Shanghai. So when you asked me about his education level and IQ, it's easy to tell.

Q: When did they get married?

ZH's father: In 2015.

Q: That's when ZH was 27?

ZH's father: Right. I didn't want to give them permission, but her grandma was on me about it. Her reasoning was that ZH hardly spent any time at home, so it's better to marry her off to keep her out of trouble. I had no choice. Now that she is married, she regrets it. I told her that she shouldn't have got married and shouldn't have spent all that much time with him before getting married.

I don't find it shameful to tell you this. I asked her, "Why did you date this guy?" Do you know what she said? She said, "All three of us in the family have disabilities and he didn't mind that. What more could I expect?" I said, "You look down on yourself and have no self-esteem! Are you expected to support your mom and me?" Even though I have a disability, I walk normal and work alright even though my speed is half that of my co-workers. I said, "Your mom takes care of the house even with her intellectual disability." She looks down on herself, what do you think?

I had tried to find someone for her but she didn't want it, she only wanted that guy. I was against them dating and they coaxed me into agreeing to it. I don't mind telling you this... on the night of their wedding, I cried my eyes out because I knew that she would suffer in the marriage. Why would anyone marry down when she grew up spoiled?

Q: You didn't want them to get married because you didn't think they were in a position to do so?

ZH's father: The first reason was that they both have intellectual disabilities; secondly, they didn't have the money, and lastly they didn't have a place of their own. A lot of government-mandated relocation is going on right now, you know, like around Tianshan Road, Loushanguan Road, and Furongjiang Road.

Q: Where do they live now?

ZH's father: With the husband's family.

Q: Is it far from here?

ZH's father: Not far. I live on Loushanguan Road and she lives on Gubei Road, literally across the street from me.

Q: Did she help around the house before she got married?

ZH's father: No. Do you think anyone in the house would have asked that of her?

Q: So grandma did a lot?

ZH's father: Yes.

Q: You just mentioned that your wife takes care of the house and ZH didn't help. Did your wife do household chores before getting married to you?

ZH's father: Rarely.

Q: So she gradually picked that up after getting married. Wasn't that the same with ZH?

ZH's father: Yes, it was. That's the way it is in big cities now. They live with parents before getting married and are spoiled. Once they have their own families, they have to be on their own and can't expect parents to follow them there to be nannies.

Q: A lot of people are like that now.

ZH's father: It has nothing to do with whether they have intellectual disabilities. My wife's elder brother used to live next to us. After he bought his own place, a tenant moved in. The door is left open sometimes and I see how messy it is inside. That's bachelors for you. Once two people get married, I am sure the husband will force the wife to do things around the house and the wife will force the husband to do it. ZH didn't do anything while she was living with us. Now that she has her own family, she has to buy groceries, cook, and do laundry for her husband. It's the same with you, isn't it?

She doesn't come over to our place to eat after she got married. She shops and cooks at home instead. I said, "You didn't do grocery shopping or cook at our place. Now you do it all since you have your own family?" And at Changning Primary Vocational School, she did learn baking, ikebana, and cooking. I made sure that she learnt all of that at the school, and she has graduation certificates for all of them. Also, when she came back from the Sunshine Home, I asked her on Sundays to go buy groceries, because since she had learnt how to do it, she should practice it at home. But she wouldn't do it. So what do you want me to do with her?

Q: Have you ever had anything she cooked?

ZH's father: Yes. Fried rice, very simple, and fried eggs with tomatoes. As long as she cooks, I won't be picky. I don't care too much about taste. My mother-in-law won't eat anything I cook. I have high blood pressure and diabetes, so I can't eat cakes like this (pointing to the cheesecake on the table). I don't use MSG when I cook because it's harmful for the human body. I don't use sugar either, which isn't what my mother-in-law is used to, so she says I don't cook well. I can't do anything about it. She used to buy groceries and cook, but now that she is old, I have taken over.

I worry about ZH every day now. How is her own family going to survive? I always tell her, "You have to spend money as soon as you open your eyes, and since the two of you together make just a little over 5,000 yuan a month, how do you get by? And you have the baby too."

I helped her a lot with her wedding. She wanted a nice one, so I had no choice but to give her a nice one. Her husband's family wasn't as generous. They were

welcoming a daughter-in-law instead of stealing a woman, and they wouldn't even celebrate with firecrackers, isn't that pathetic? I tried to reason with her father-in-law and he said, "We are trying to save money." But you shouldn't skimp on this kind of thing. It's okay if you are thrifty in life, but you need firecrackers to tell people that your son is getting married. Skimping on firecrackers wasn't saving money, it was penny-pinching (raising his voice)! Don't you agree?

Q: By "helping her a lot," you mean you prepared dowry for her?

ZH's father: I did. She told her husband, "My dad bought us a fridge and microwave. Why didn't your dad do it?" I told her, "That's the face I gave you. You could have bought them yourself if you had had money. Since you had no money, your parents had to make it decent for you somehow."

And ZH's father-in-law is really cheap, I was so mad at him. On the wedding day, I asked him, "Do you have a car for the newlyweds to ride in?" The answer was "No." I said, "You can rent one." And he said he had no money. So I ended up borrowing a car and sending her, after she had makeup put on, to her husband's place. I also made sure to light firecrackers when she left my place, but there were no firecrackers to welcome her.

This really shows that she isn't that smart. Before she got married, she spent all that time at his place and gave everyone the wrong impression that she was already married. So the neighbors would be surprised at the firecrackers on her real wedding day. And her father-in-law is Christian. But what do firecrackers have to do with Christianity or Buddhism? His son was getting married and he was afraid to let people know? Lighting firecrackers shows joy and invites others to share the joy. And you know what he said? He told ZH, "I can't buy the firecrackers anywhere." How could he have said that? His son was getting married so shouldn't he have made preparations? How could I not be mad at such an in-law? I know he isn't rich, but he isn't that poor either. He made me feel that the marriage was not to see the light of day and that my daughter wasn't really worth it.

Q: In a lot of marriages now, one person will be in charge of finances. Is that the way with ZH and her husband? Or do they make their own money and spend their own money?

ZH's father: Before they got married, I sat down with her father-in-law and discussed who should be in charge of finances. Her husband said that ZH should do it, and her father-in-law agreed saying that the wife should do it. But what they do right now is that they keep their own pay and contribute 1,000 yuan each towards living expenses, which is called "going Dutch." You guys are all fancy and learned all sorts of fancy things from the Americans. But who pays for the baby's expenses? I don't know.

Q: So you think it's better that one person manages family finances?

ZH's father: Too right! She tells me sometimes that her husband is stingy. Every month after he gets paid, he will give her 300 yuan to deposit into savings. That is nothing nowadays. So it means that they don't make much and can't save much. Three hundred yuan per month means 3,600 a year which is less than what I make per month.

ZH had maternity leave after having the baby and received a lump sum from social security. They didn't understand what the money was for, so they spent it all. So ZH went back to work after the 4 months' maternity leave and the workplace started deducting from her pay the social security money she had received. She ended up with almost no take-home money. You guys are probably going to have this issue later on. If they receive money from social security, new moms won't get any from their workplace. Maternity leave is 128 days, so for more than 4 months, you will have to pay towards your own social security from your salary.

I asked her, "What did you do with that lump sum?" She said she had spent it all on traveling to Beijing and Anhui which is where he used to live. I said, "That's unbelievable. You don't care what happens next?" So there you go.

And being the parents, we end up paying the price. She often comes to me asking for money, because she doesn't have enough for food and other expenses. Her husband won't even give her money for doctor visits. And she doesn't seem to mind. Whatever extra money she has, she spends it with her husband doing whatever they want. When the money runs dry, she suffers. She is supposed to save extra money instead of spending it, but she just doesn't get it.

If she were better educated, she could be working at a better place now and not still sponging off her parents. I had wanted to find her someone but she resisted and insisted on doing it herself. But then parents can't really arrange marriages. They won't like it because they want to marry someone of their own choice.

Q: You said that her husband won't give her money for doctor visits. Doctor visits for whom?

ZH's father: For ZH.

Q: What for?

ZH's father: For the pregnancy. She had diabetes during the pregnancy and was hospitalized, but she couldn't pay for it. Her husband asked his dad for help and his dad said, "I don't have money. Aren't her parents loaded? Go ask them." So he called me at night. I was still working after she got married, so I took a half day off just to deliver the money to her. She is my daughter, I wouldn't have done it for anyone else.

Even though I gave her the money, I made it clear that I was unhappy about it, about the status of her marriage and about her still taking from her parents.

Q: When was the grandchild born? Boy or girl?

ZH's father: March of this year, a girl.

Q: Were you hoping for a boy or a girl?

ZH's father: I had wanted her to have a girl, because girls listen better, right? I mean you spend more on girls than on boys. Girls need more and different kinds of clothes whereas boys can always wear the same things, so girls cost more, right? I am just telling the truth and not hiding anything.

Q: You were happy when the granddaughter was born, weren't you?

ZH's father: I was happy, but it's a burden financially. They don't make much and the baby is one more mouth to feed. She didn't have enough breast milk, so the baby needs formula each month which is very costly. I don't know how they handle it with the money they make.

Q: How does she take care of the baby?

ZH's father: Her in-laws do it most of the time. When she was on maternity leave, she helped. Now that she is back at work, there's no choice.

Q: Is the granddaughter healthy?

ZH's father: She is very healthy now, but I am not sure about the future.

Q: When I interviewed ZH last time, she said that her number one requirement as a spouse was being nice to parents. Do you feel this from your son-in-law?

ZH's father: No, I don't feel it.

Why? ZH had a fight with her husband at home and said her father-in-law was mean to her. Her mom, of course, wanted to protect her, so she called her husband. Her grandma ended up talking to her husband on the phone, saying, "What's wrong with your dad? Why did he fight with ZH?" And you know what her husband said? He said, "There's nothing wrong with my dad. There's something wrong with everyone in your family." And he immediately hung up. I didn't get on the phone with him. Do you think that was being nice to the parents?

Also, from the time they got married to now, he's only visited me three times including the wedding in 2015 and Chinese New Year of 2016. His parents were in Anhui then and ZH was pregnant. So I asked both of them to come to my place for New Year's Eve dinner. That was the first time. The second time was when she had the baby and they came to my place together. The third time was November of last year. They were being relocated by the government and ZH came to my place. I said that it was getting cold and they should take the baby's clothes with them, so she asked her husband to come over to do it. When they visited during Chinese New Year of 2016, he brought a box of dried fruits. And he was empty-handed the other two times. I don't really want anything from them, I just hope their marriage is peaceful.

ZH wants a divorce now. Why? Because the marriage isn't working anymore.

Since you are taking the trouble to interview me, I'm not shy about sharing and telling you what's really going on.

A Dad with a Physical Disability and Strong Will

Q: Was there anything really memorable from when she was growing up?

ZH's father: Not really.

I tried to be strict with her but her grandparents were always defending her, so how could anything be memorable for me? I was constantly telling her that she must be strong herself to not be looked down upon. If you are not strong, you will be bullied.

Right now, she doesn't have the baby with her since her mother-in-law is taking care of it. She is supposed to take care of the baby herself since it's her baby. But she drops in on me and sweet talks, "I want to see you and see grandma." Then you should have brought the baby with you. But she never does. I am not belittling her, but she isn't responsible for herself when she should be.

Q: Can I ask what expectations you have for her and for society?

ZH's father: For society, like I said at the beginning of the interview, I hope people without disabilities won't discriminate against people with disabilities. Discrimination isn't helping people with disabilities. It's damaging them and posing difficulties for them.

I want to tell you something about myself. I have a physical disability. I am a member of the Communist Party. The party doesn't just take everyone, you will have to prove yourself. I have been on radio and in newspapers, and I was recognized for work dedication by the National Workers' Association. With my physical disability, if I hadn't tried so hard to prove myself, I wouldn't have received any recognition. I see myself as someone without a disability, that's how I can be where I am now.

I am not exactly well educated. I told my son-in-law that at his age, I was still going to night school. I graduated from middle school without any certificate, so I went on to secondary vocational school. That's why I didn't focus on family all the time. You can get a pay raise for finishing middle school, and another raise for finishing secondary vocational school, so that's what I had wanted for myself. But I got lucky in that my mother-in-law helped at home. I asked him to get some more education that can bring in more money. He just keeps changing jobs, from cleaning crew to security. (Laughing)

Q: You have had an exceptional life. Can you tell us more about it?

ZH's father: I went to a regular elementary school. My parents lived in Zhabei District, so I went to whichever home school I belonged to in that district.

I had special treatment for middle school and was allowed to go to the one closest to where I lived. I graduated in 1974 without any job arranged for me. I was frustrated staying home. I had turned 18 after all and should have got a job, but there was no job for me.

Back then, jobs were arranged by a countryside civil affairs office. I would walk 30 min to the office after breakfast at home every day and come home after everyone had had lunch. I found someone in the office who told me that all the new graduates had already got jobs and there was nothing the office could do since it had returned my paperwork to my local community office. Still, I tried to connect with them saying, "It's okay that all the jobs were gone. I will wait a year."

Q: Why hadn't the office arranged a job for you?

ZH's father: Because of my disability, of course. I was discriminated against. For new graduates in 1975, there was a mandatory ratio of 1:1 between people with and without disabilities. For example, it's not okay for a workplace not to have employees with disabilities. It had to take in some. Nowadays, if the ratio is not satisfied, workplaces will have to pay money to the Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF).

Q: So the benefits are improving little by little.

ZH's father: Right. At Papa John's where ZH works, the percentage of employees with disabilities is considered very high, because the company doesn't have to pay money to the federation and enjoys tax deductions. It wasn't the case in my time. People with disabilities were discriminated against.

I stayed home for a year. There was a person on my block who was in charge of arranging jobs. I talked to him and he said he would help me. Then new graduates came along in 1975, and I talked to the community office and submitted my paperwork. Two months later, almost everyone except for me got a job. I asked my neighbor if he had picked up my paperwork and he said someone else had taken it.

There was someone my dad used to mentor who was a leader in a government bureau. He went to my dad's workplace to inspect work and saw my dad. He asked my dad how things were at home. My dad didn't mention our housing issue—instead he said that I hadn't got a job. So this person took my paperwork and that's how I started working. Otherwise where could I have got a job? Selling chips at a bathhouse or diner? Bathhouses used to be owned by the state, now they are all run by private parties.

My workplace was right next door to where I lived. At home, I could hear the bell ring in the workday. That was the arrangement. Someone in charge of hiring met with me to check what I could do. So how did he check? He asked me if I could pour a bucket of water. I have one good arm, so I lifted the water with no problem. That person saw that I could get things done and just hired me.

I was put in charge of the warehouse of the factory at first. After a while I was transferred to the company's warehouse. We made shadowless lights for hospitals and I was in charge of all the parts. I knew where each part belonged just by looking at it. I also got creative with the packaging. Back then workers were paid according to the amount of work done. The team leader would assign different workers to different work processes and count how many parts they made each day. So I would lay out the materials for them like a chef setting out ingredients in the kitchen. I took this extra step and made all of them happy.

The person my dad used to mentor got this job for me and I think I did my parents proud. My grandma helped me with dressing and washing till I was eight, then I decided that I had to do everything myself and to study, because one day I would need to live on my own. When I was going to school, my homeroom teacher had a difficult time teaching me because she was using her right hand to teach me to write with my left hand. Everyone was writing from left to right and I was writing from right to left. I didn't learn how to write certain words till much later.

I make my own shoes now. My grandma used to make them, but she used cloth for the sole which got soaked whenever it rained. Then there were vendors making leather shoes in the neighborhood but it didn't really help. When I was young, my grandma would carry me on her back to school. After she passed away, my mom made me shoes. After my mom passed away, I started making my own shoes. ZH's mom doesn't know how to do it, nor does ZH, so I have to do it myself. There are no shoe factories that will make them for me, and even if there were, I wouldn't be able to afford it. Other people can just go out and buy shoes at reasonable prices, but the prices will shoot up if the shoes are customized for me. I haven't found anyone who can make shoes for me, and I can do it myself anyway. But what will happen when I can't do it anymore?

Last week I went to buy a piece of leather and the vendor asked for 500 yuan. I told him that I am not a businessman and that I was buying it for my own use, so he lowered the price to 300 yuan.

Q: He asked for that much at first?

ZH's father: He has to run a business, so it's normal. He had thought I was a businessman too and that he could make money off me. I told him it was not the case. He looked at my shoes and decided to do me a favor.

Q: So he was pretty nice after all.

ZH's father: Right. There are many nice people out there and a lot of caring for people with disabilities.

Q: Compared with old times, would you say society is gradually changing for the better?

ZH's father: Yeah. But as you can see from WeChat, some of the beggars on the street are just pretending.

Q: Right, they just pretend to have disabilities.

ZH's father: And they have whole organizations behind them.

Q: They try to get sympathy by pretending to have disabilities.

ZH's father: That's just wrong and if they are caught, they will be sent out of Shanghai. People with real disabilities receive government support. If you don't know, you will give the con men what they want. If you know, you will definitely not give them a penny.

WeChat also carries all the stories about kids being abducted and sent out to be beggars when they turn eight or nine. That's child abuse. Society today isn't really that good, but isn't that bad either since there are things that are helpful for people with disabilities.

Q: Let's come back to your life story. So you were doing very well at work.

ZH's father: Right. When I graduated, I wasn't even a member of the Red Guards. In elementary school, I was in the Children's Guards, but when I graduated from middle school, I wasn't in the Red Guards. Why? Because if you were not native and people didn't know you well, there was no chance for you to shine.

Also, I figured that I had a disability, so it was impossible for me to be with people without disabilities. They would definitely look down on me, so I'd better not try to hang out with them. So I kept my distance and didn't exactly mingle with kids from school. That's also why I didn't participate in any Red Guards activities in middle school. If I had, I would have moved on to the Communist Youth's League. I didn't join the Communist Youth's League till I started working, not only because I was in charge of the warehouse but because I was active in the Workers' Union. I was actually on the management team at the union.

Q: What did the Workers' Union normally do?

ZH's father: The Union oversaw library management including magazine and newspaper subscriptions. I used to be in charge of giving out movie tickets. We also organized table tennis and chess games and I kept track of all the rackets and nets. If some people wanted to play during lunch break, they would come to the union.

I received some certificates of merit which I have brought with me. (Showing the interviewers the certificates.)

Q: You were not only doing well at work but also actively participating in Workers' Union activities?

ZH's father: Right. These certificates are historical documents, aren't they?

Supposedly I shouldn't have shown them to you since they are past glory. They were issued by the National Workers' Union. I have only one good arm, and I used to tell my son-in-law, "We didn't have any certificate when we graduated from middle school back then. Then I went to work at a factory. The factory sent people to schools if they had no certificates. First middle school, then secondary vocational school. So I graduated from a secondary vocational school."

Q: Did you go to the secondary vocational school in the evenings?

ZH's father: On my days off and in the evenings. So after ZH was born, my mother-in-law took care of everything and I didn't have to do anything at home.

After I graduated from the secondary vocational school, I got a pay raise of 30 yuan. So I like to say that with better education, no one can rob you of your knowledge and you get higher pay at that.

Q: When you were going to the secondary vocational school, did you meet anyone you really bonded with?

ZH's father: I went to the school with co-workers from the factory.

Q: Were all of your classmates from the same factory?

ZH's father: Right. The company arranged for employees to get their middle school graduation certificates. Whoever wanted to get it would let the company know, and the company would get everyone together to go to the same school.

Q: What did you study at the secondary vocational school? Management or something like that?

ZH's father: Management, yes, like corporate management and financial management. There were also math and Chinese classes. After you got the middle school graduation certificate, your pay went up by 3 yuan. Back then, pay raises depended on your job title. Once you graduated from secondary vocational school, your pay would go up by 30 yuan and you would qualify for getting an official job title. I was in charge of the warehouse and got the title of financial assistant. If you worked on the shop floor, you would have the title of technician before you could get a pay raise. Pay raises were not given easily.

I tried to talk to my son-in-law but he refused to listen saying, "Your time was your time and our time is our time." He is happy just playing on his cell phone, and if he doesn't want to listen to me, there's nothing I can do.

Q: So you encouraged your son-in-law to resume schooling.

ZH's father: I did. I told him that I tried really hard back then. I would get home sometimes at 10 p.m. and leave again at 6:30 a.m. the next morning. Who did I do it for? For the family. ZH's mom didn't make much, so what could I do? She had an intellectual disability, so I had to accept that. I have a good IQ, so I should be the one to study. So after I got this award, I was invited to join the Communist Party. I joined in 1983 and have remained a party member since.

Q: You are a senior party member.

ZH's father: Right, I am supposedly one.

Q: Back then, only the most enthusiastic and the best could join the party, right?

ZH's father: Right.

Q: You mentioned that pay raises back then depended on your job title. So you got a pay raise because you were performing well at work?

ZH's father: Right. Because you were doing a good job and delivering results, people recognized it and gave you pay raises. Without any results, there would be no recognition. Also, the leaders at the workplace alone couldn't decide on pay raises. The organization had to have meetings to make such decisions.

Q: When did you get on radio and in newspapers?

ZH's father: That was in 1983, around the same time that I got the certificates of merit.

Q: Did you get interviewed for radio and newspapers?

ZH's father: I did. I was interviewed at my workplace.

Q: Were you the only one to be interviewed?

ZH's father: Yes, I was. That meant that I was outstanding at my workplace. I had a certificate from the bureau, right? So I was picked on the bureau level before being recommended to the state level. After I got the certificate from the bureau, Shanghai People's Radio Station came to interview me.

Q: Was the interview broadcast on radio?

ZH's father: It was.

Q: So your certificate of merit had to be approved at different levels.

ZH's father: Right. First the workplace, then the company, then the bureau, and eventually the state. My mother-in-law saw how busy I was and how little time I got to spend at home. Then I brought home the certificate to show her and she understood that I had not been busy for nothing. I also got a pay raise. Still, my workplace subsidized my pay every year. Because ZH got sick a lot which meant I had medical expenses. I could reimburse 50% of the expenses whereas the rest was from my own pocket. She had to see a doctor every month, otherwise she wouldn't feel well, so I had medical expenses every month.

Q: What do you do at home now that you're retired?

ZH's father: Now that I'm retired, I sleep late in the morning. I will wake up but will just stay in bed and not get up till 8 a.m. After freshening up and having breakfast, I will go out for groceries with ZH's mom. Then her mom will do the washing and I will do the cooking. If I have time in the afternoon, I will play poker.

My place measures 16 m² with three people living in it. I don't watch what they watch on TV and they don't watch what I watch.

Q: What do they watch?

ZH's father: They like to watch the same thing over and over, like *Princess Huanzhu* and *Love in the Rain*. I asked them why they want to watch that every day. I don't exactly watch but I already know the plots.

I like to watch war movies and movies about history and about what China has gone through. But they don't like to watch. Japan invaded China but with all the Chinese traveling to Japan and helping with the Japanese economy, aren't those Chinese slapping themselves across the face? If you want to beat Japan, you shouldn't travel to that country. You are contributing to the Japanese economy, then who is contributing to ours? And not all of the people traveling to Japan are clueless about that part of

history. Some of them know that Japan invaded China and did awful things to the Chinese people. Another theory is that you don't have the money. If you had the money, you would be going (to Japan). A lot of Shanghainese go to Japan to work, in much the same way as the people from outside Shanghai are coming to Shanghai for jobs.

Q: People also go to Japan for school.

ZH's father: I don't believe the school part. They really just go for jobs. School costs so much—how can the parents afford it? I am just telling you what I think. You decide whether I am talking about something touchy and whether to keep or delete what I have said.

Q: You are very proactive and independent in thinking. Have you ever asked ZH to resume schooling?

ZH's father: I already gave up on her. Why? She has a baby now and has to take care of the baby. She has a family too, so how can she go back to school? She doesn't even know, and refuses to learn, even basic math like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, so how can she learn anything else? A foreign language? Learning a foreign language needs a nimble tongue and clear enunciation which is beyond her. I am her father and I know about her IQ even though I am not happy about it. If she can do it, she can do it. If not, then so be it.

Q: Do you think it's a matter of personal abilities or of attitude?

ZH's father: She doesn't want to learn.

Q: So it's mainly a matter of attitude?

ZH's father: Right. We were born in the 1950s and like to carry on good things. The next generation is not like us. People like us who were born in the 1950s have both living parents and kids and even grandkids. Don't I have a granddaughter myself?

Q: So to sum up what you have said, on one hand, society should help people with disabilities, and on the other hand, people with disabilities should be strong and independent.

ZH's father: Right. Like I just said, my grandma was still helping me dress when I was eight. But then I figured that I would have to live on my own, so I should be strong.

Back then, after my interview, the news story described me as "having disability but not a weak mind." You have to want to be strong. Without the will, you can't be strong.

ZH has failed with her marriage. She had low standards to start with because she figured that there are three people with disabilities in the family and she couldn't really afford to be picky about a husband. But she should have been strong. I told her that as her parents, we wouldn't live off her but we might depend on her to take care of our lives. For example, if I pass away before her mom does, she will definitely have to take care of her mom. That's just for daily life, because we have pensions and won't need financial support from her. But she had thought that we needed support for both money and daily life. I told her she was wrong in thinking that way which had misled her into marrying that husband of hers. Would you have been happy with such a husband? You want someone who can support the family and has a sense of responsibility, not someone who is just killing time and wasting life.

Q: Even with a disability, you should see yourself as someone without a disability and try to improve yourself. And hopefully people without disabilities will treat people with disabilities as equals.

ZH's father: Right.

Q: Thank you for the interview.

Interview with ZH's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Co-worker at the restaurant

Interviewers: Chenyi Tang and Zhuojun Zhang

Writer: Chenyi Tang

Interview date: October 28, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where ZH works

Q: Can you please tell us your position at the restaurant?

Co-worker: I am a team leader. I am in charge of the kitchen and allocating workers and resources.

Q: ZH is an employee being cared for. How many employees being cared for do you have at this store? And what do they each do?

Co-worker: We have four in total. There's W who makes pizza dough, there's ZH who makes appetizers and pizza dough, and there are another two who make appetizers.

Q: Exactly how are the appetizers and pizza dough made?

Co-worker: You knead and toss the pizza dough before making pizza, those are the only two steps. Appetizers refer to corn chips, chicken wings, and so on. We have standards and it's very simple to make them following the standards.

Q: Which is more complicated to make, appetizers or pizza dough?

Co-worker: Pizza dough is more complicated. Ingredients for the appetizers are more complicated.

Q: Why do the other three only make pizza dough or only make appetizers whereas ZH makes both?

Co-worker: I don't interact with her a lot. She is a native employee here³ and I have only known her for about 2 months. We have fixed stations for working and she often works at two stations, so she knows how to work at both. She works pretty fast.

Q: How is ZH performing compared to the other three?

Co-worker: They are equally good and perform equally well.

Q: Was she already doing very well when you joined this store?

Co-worker: She was.

Q: How do you treat her now? Like any other co-worker?

Co-worker: Yes, we treat everyone the same and we don't give her any special treatment just because she is an employee being cared for.

³This co-worker only joined this restaurant several months earlier because of one store closing.

Personally, I don't see any difference between employees being cared for and other employees. I have met a dozen or so employees being cared for and the only difference is that they take in things slowly. But then, some people without disabilities do that, too, either because they are slower by nature or just lazy. So I don't treat employees being cared for any differently and I have the same expectations for them as for any other employee.

Q: I think it's better for their self-esteem that way.

Co-worker: Sometimes we'll joke with W about them being employees being cared for, and they seem to have grown numb to it, so they don't really mind. Sometimes they are actually the ones making such jokes.

Q: When do they usually receive compliments?

Co-worker: We will compliment them on outstanding performance at work and on scoring high on evaluations. The truth is that we do the same for any other employee and they don't really receive any special treatment.

Q: You mean that they don't receive more compliments just because they are employees being cared for.

Co-worker: We don't treat them as minors. We treat them as grown-ups.

Q: Did anything strike you in particular when you interacted with them? How do you get along with them?

Co-worker: We get along very naturally and there's nothing special about it.

Q: So the employees being cared for mingle with everyone instead of keeping to themselves with an "us and them" mentality?

Co-worker: Right, we don't group separately.

Q: Do you have any activities together after work like going somewhere for fun?

Co-worker: We eat out together. But the truth is that we get tired at work and don't do much after work. And we usually work from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., so it's not easy to go anywhere together. Right now we are understaffed and have to work every day, so we just take it easy at home whenever we get time off.

We do go out for group dinners sometimes, but the parents of the employees being cared for tend to worry, so those employees normally go home earlier. It's not that we exclude them from our activities. It's just that their parents worry they will not know the way home if they stay out too late, so there's nothing we can do. Even if they stay out late, they will still go home earlier than the rest of us and seldom stay past 9 p.m.

Q: Does the restaurant organize any annual meetings or travel?

Co-worker: Non-management employees seem to just get bonuses. The restaurant won't arrange for everyone to be out at the same time, because there needs to be people working at all times, so it just gives out bonuses.

Q: There's nothing that can be done about that.

Co-worker: Right, nothing to be done. If we get cash bonuses, we just buy everyone food.

Q: What do you think of ZH's personality from interacting with her?

Co-worker: She is very outgoing and easy to get along with.

Q: Has there ever been any conflict?

Co-worker: Not yet. We all get tired at work, so we just chat and joke with each other and we never fight. We are never in the mood to fight, you know... how do I put it? We don't really care enough to fight.

Q: What does everyone do during the 1-hour lunch break?

Co-worker: We eat and play with our phones.

Q: Do you chat with each other?

Co-worker: We do, we chat about games and things like that. We don't have too many things to talk about. Only really narrow topics.

Q: Narrow topics such as what? And what games do you play?

Co-worker: Internet games like *Connect All* and other small games. Right now, we are talking about *Greedy Snake* and about how newcomers can fight against humans in that game.

Q: So you just chat about small things.

Co-worker: Right, just small things. We don't feel like talking about big topics.

Q: Do the employees being cared for interact with customers? What if customers complain about the food?

Co-worker: We will handle those complaints because they are quality issues and have nothing to do with the employees being cared for.

Interview with ZH's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Manager of the restaurant

Interviewers: Chenyi Tang and Zhuojun Zhang

Writer: Chenyi Tang

Interview date: October 28, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where ZH works

Q: How long have you known ZH?

Manager: I was transferred to the store this year, so I have known ZH for about 3 months.

Q: What's the process for them to learn a new product?

Manager: The training manager or I will demonstrate and they will watch. Then they will take home the training materials to memorize and come back to do it themselves. We will point out if there are any problems and they will correct them.

Q: Do you have any special impression of ZH?

Manager: I have known her for 3 months and she is like W. They can take care of their own lives including going out to shop or to run errands, and they can learn about new products. Some employees being cared for immediately strike you as such because of the way they talk and act, but with others, the signs are subtle, and you won't be able to tell until you have interacted with them for a while. ZH and W are of the latter kind. People without disabilities like us can look at things from a different angle, but they will find it difficult. Other than that, they are just like us.

Q: Is ZH good with self-discipline?

Manager: So-so, that's all I can say. She isn't as good at that as W, and it might be to do with her personality and family environment. Everyone is different. If I ask ZH to do something, I may have to keep reminding her, "You haven't got this done, please get on with it."

Q: But she still does pretty well at her job, right? Like the real technical part?

Manager: She has good skills and does a good job.

Q: Are you the only supervising manager at this store?

Manager: There are three supervising managers. I am the store manager.

Q: Do you know how the employees being cared for get along with their co-workers?

Manager: Co-workers get along the same as classmates and minor arguments are unavoidable. But ZH has a good personality, and the key is that everyone has been here for several years instead of just a month or two. We all know that they are employees being cared for, so we don't take it too seriously with them and everyone gets along just fine. We are all happy.

Interview with Ms. ZH

Interviewee: Ms. ZH

Interviewers: Chenyi Tang and Zhuojun Zhang

Writer: Chenyi Tang

Interview date: October 28, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where ZH works

One Out of a Hundred Thousand

Q: What did you like to play when you were young? Like blocks or some other toys?

ZH: Blocks, I liked to play with the round blocks.

If I was playing with blocks and my dad was distracting me by trying to talk to me, I would tell him, "Leave me alone! Can't you see I am playing with blocks? Why don't you go outside and wait till I am done."

Q: And your dad would go out?

ZH: Yeah.

Q: Were there any kids in your neighborhood who liked to play with you or were good friends with you?

ZH: Not really. I was really naughty when I was young. I liked to play with boys I didn't know, so no girls would play with me.

My dad would tell me, "Why would a girl play with a bunch of boys? You should be playing with girls, not boys."

I would say, "Dad, you didn't raise me right. It's almost as if you were raising a boy, not a girl. You were not raising a girl at all."

Q: You mean that your parents raised you like a boy and not like a girl at all?

ZH: Right.

Q: For example?

ZH: Like how I should act and sit. If you are wearing pants, you can sit with your legs either apart or together. A girl shouldn't sit like that in a dress.

Q: What did you play with the boys?

ZH: We usually played flipping cards. You won if you were able to flip all the cards. If not all the cards were flipped over, and you got a second try.

Q: Is there anything memorable from when you were going to elementary school?

ZH: Yeah, in class. To tell you the truth, when I was young, the teacher would have me standing or staying after school as punishment.

Q: Which grade was that?

ZH: Hmm... maybe third grade.

Q: So the teacher kept you after school and your parents had to come to pick you up?

ZH: Not my parents. A boy in my class hit me. Then my grandma, who was already 60, evened the score for me. She came to my school and asked my teacher to teach him a lesson.

Q: And the boy never dared to bother you again?

ZH: Yeah.

Q: So you graduated from Changning Primary Vocational School?

ZH: Right, Changning Primary Vocational School. It's not a regular college or a school for people without disabilities. It teaches cooking including Western style dishes and horticulture like flowers and plants. The employee being cared for you just interviewed graduated from that school, too. It's difficult for people like us to get a job, because they are looking for well-educated people with college or doctoral degrees. Regular workplaces would not have hired any of us.

Q: Did you know the other employees being cared for back then?

ZH: I didn't know any of them when I first joined. Then I got to know them.

Q: And you realized you had graduated from the same school after you started talking?

ZH: Right.

Q: How old were you when you entered Changning Primary Vocational School?

ZH: My grandma told me that when I was young, I was the only kid out of one hundred thousand kids to get sick as I didn't get enough oxygen. Every other week I would come down with a high fever, my mouth would turn purple, my eyes would look like there were bugs flying in there, and the fever would linger around at least 40 degrees. My grandma would put cotton in my butt and my fever would go down.

When I got to fourth grade... oh, it was fifth grade, because I had to repeat fourth grade. The teacher at the school said that I wasn't doing well with my studies, so I was given a graduation certificate before being sent to Changning Primary Vocational School. The Chinese and math that were taught at that school were first to second-grade level.

Q: You felt that the curriculum was too simple?

ZH: Yes.

Q: Were you ever class president at that school?

ZH: At that school... I was team leader in first grade. If someone didn't do homework well, the teacher would tell me and I would return the homework to that kid.

Q: You learnt cooking at that school, right? Was there any dish that you cooked best or liked cooking most?

ZH: A lot. Braised pork belly and so many others.

Q: Do you cook at home for your husband?

ZH: Yes, because sometimes my parents-in-law are not home. If I get off work early, like at 5 p.m., I will go buy groceries and cook and wait for my husband to come home and eat.

Q: Does your husband cook for you?

ZH: No, I will have to teach him.

Q: When you cook at home, do you use the culinary skills you have acquired before?

ZH: I did. Sometimes I would flip the food in the pan the way I was taught at the school. But the pan at home is heavier, not like the one at school that I could easily flip by twisting the handle. So I did what I was taught at school and my parents-in-law said, "This isn't school, this is home."

Q: Was there any class that you really liked at school? Such as PE?

ZH: My favorite was PE! (Laughing) Table tennis, basketball, jump rope, shuttlecock... I really liked PE and I hated math!

Q: Do you still do a lot of sports now?

ZH: Yes. Before I came to work here, the Sunshine Home organized Olympics activities and I won a lot of gold, silver, and bronze medals. I was first place in badminton and table tennis, second place in cycling, and third place in volleyball. (Laughing)

Q: Had you ever trained in any of those?

ZH: No. We had PE classes quite often at school, so I learnt how to do them all.

Q: Are your parents good at sports too?

ZH: No. At the apartment complex, I would play with my mom using the badminton racket my dad had bought for me.

Q: Can your mom beat you?

ZH: No. She can't even rally with me.

Q: At the school, were there any teachers that you remember best?

ZH: I remember best my homeroom teacher, PE teacher, and math teacher. When I was young, my teachers were very strict and serious with me. Usually the PE teacher, Chinese teacher, and math teacher were the ones that were nice to me.

Q: So you liked your PE teacher best?

ZH: Right, my PE teacher.

Q: Did you like the teacher because you liked the class?

ZH: Yeah.

Q: What about the math teacher?

ZH: I wasn't doing well at Chinese and math, but I could do everything in PE.

Q: And the teacher really liked you, right?

ZH: Right. In PE, sometimes the teacher would ask us to do sit-ups and I could do 30.

Q: Did the school organize any field trips or trips to the cinema that were memorable to you?

ZH: I don't like watching movies.

When I was in elementary school, the teacher said we would go watch a movie the next day. Then I couldn't fall asleep at night because I just wanted to wait for the next day. My dad said to me, "You are losing sleep over such a thing, what's the matter with you? You are going out tomorrow—why are you not sleeping yet? Go to sleep." Then he kicked me in the back.

Q: (Laughing). So you were traumatized.

ZH: Right.

Q: What about field trips in spring and fall?

ZH: We would go to the park in fall and a group of us would sit on the grass playing. I liked it.

I won't watch movies. The only movies I watch are animated ones like *Lion King* and *Little Fairy Balala*. I won't watch action movies because I fall asleep over them. I prefer going on trips in spring.

Spending My Own Money

Q: Your dad said that after you graduated, you went to the Sunshine Home for a while before coming to Papa John's to work. Were you happier at the Sunshine Home or at the restaurant?

ZH: I felt that the Sunshine Home was a little too "low." I didn't want to go, but my dad forced me. He said, "What will you do at home? You have nothing to do but to hang out. If you keep hanging out just like that, you will end up like all the other girls in the neighborhood." So he sent me to the Sunshine Home. But people in the Sunshine Home do not have high IQs and are of various kinds. I said I didn't want to go but wanted to find a job instead. People like me cannot afford to wait around for a job, because not many places will hire us, so I needed to actively look for a job. My dad said, "Why don't you go to the Sunshine Home? The teachers there will help you and give you lessons, get some common sense into you."

Q: So you went to the Sunshine Home?

ZH: Right.

Q: For how long?

ZH: Four years, I think. I didn't do anything there except for playing, sleeping, and eating. I had hoped that the teachers there would help me find a job, because that's what's supposed to happen. I stayed there for a long while, like 1 or 2 months, and no one helped me find a job.

Then a teacher from the vocational school, Ms. Fan, helped me find a job. She asked me, "Do you want to find a job, ZH?" I said, "I do! You asked the right person. I want to find a job and not spend my time like this at the Sunshine Home." Then the

teacher said, “Sure, I will help you find a job. Bring your disability certificate and ID card and I will take you to job interviews.”

The teacher took five or six from each class, including me, to interview with Papa John’s. Papa John’s headquarters are close to Changshou Road, so she took me there. After the interview, I went for an apprenticeship at the restaurant across from the company. I watched how pizza was made and immediately learned how to do it. Then as a test, I was given some dough to knead and toss on my own. They were happy with the result and hired me.

Q: Are you happy with your job now?

ZH: Sometimes I am, sometimes I’m not.

Q: But happier than at the Sunshine Home?

ZH: Much happier.

Q: You have a sense of achievement, don’t you?

ZH: I do. If I had stayed at the Sunshine Home every day without a job or income, I would have had to ask my dad for money which would have been a bore. I prefer to have a job and my own income, and I feel better spending the money I make myself.

Q: How long have you worked at Papa John’s?

ZH:(Thinking) Five years.

Q: Have you ever been transferred in between?

ZH: Several years ago, I was transferred to Raffles City near People’s Square. But rent in that area is high, so we moved here.

Q: Is commuting here more convenient than to People’s Square?

ZH: It’s very convenient for me, but a little far for others.

Q: Do you live close? How do you come to work?

ZH: Not too bad. I take Subway Line 2.

Q: Does it get crowded during commuting hours?

ZH: Yes, very crowded sometimes. Other passengers would push you and not even say sorry if they bump into you. I don’t really mind since they don’t do it on purpose.

Q: Does work start at 10 a.m. every day?

ZH: It depends. Sometimes morning shift is from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., sometimes afternoon shift is from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and evening shift is from 5 to 10 p.m.

Q: Ten p.m. is pretty late.

ZH: Because we close at 10 p.m., and we still need to stay afterwards to prepare and clean up.

Q: Your manager just said that you make appetizers and pizza dough. In your opinion, what’s the best way to do your job well?

ZH: You need experience. You watch how something is done, then you learn how to do it. That’s it.

Q: How did you feel when you first started learning?

ZH: It was a little difficult, but it gets very easy after you have been doing it long enough.

Q: I heard that you were helping the manager write something. Can I ask what you were writing?

ZH: Something to do with dough and appetizers. We are in October now. After I finished writing about October, I moved on to November.

Q: So you were tallying the amount that was sold, right?

ZH: Right.

Q: Have you always been doing this?

ZH: Yes, I have. The manager gets overwhelmed so I would give him a hand. I help him if the store isn't too busy. Once the store gets busy, he is on his own.

Q: Do you think people look down on you for not having done well at school?

ZH: If you didn't do well at school when you were young, people look down on you after you have grown up. W and I are both full-time employees being cared for. For some people, employees being cared for are the lowest level.

Q: So you feel that you are the lowest level at the restaurant?

ZH: Yeah, the lowest level.

Q: We just interviewed your team leader who said that you are treated the same as any other employee.

ZH: As far as the manager is concerned, we are like everyone else. But for other employees and even the cleaning ladies, we are the lowest level. They constantly refer to us as "special," which really bothers me. Why can't they just treat us as people without disabilities instead of employees being cared for? I don't like to be seen as different. (Shaking her head)

Q: That's true, that's not good. The manager just said that he doesn't have different requirements for you than for the other employees. You get the same compliments when you do a good job and you get criticized for not doing a good job.

ZH: The manager I had before liked to pick on us. The manager here treats us as people without disabilities and really likes me.

Q: After you got transferred to this store, you found that the manager is nice here. Did the manager of the previous store have some issues?

ZH: He was a little cruel and always got mad.

Q: Was the previous manager mean to just you or to everyone?

ZH: It was only when he got stressed at work that he would be mean. He wasn't like that under normal circumstances.

Q: How do you usually spend the money you make?

ZH: I don't give my dad any money now. I am worried that he would use all my money.

My dad goes out once a week. He has a problem with his legs, so I don't like him to go out. Especially on rainy days when it gets slippery, I don't allow him to go out because I don't want him to slip and fall. He needs to socialize sometimes like eating out and playing mahjong, and I don't like it. I would tell him, "Dad, you should be staying home and helping mom around the house. Don't always go out. For you, it's no big deal, but I have a problem with you always going out." He won't listen to me at all. If he wants to go out, I can't really hold him back, so all I can do is to say, "Come back early."

Q: So you would spend it on things you want?

ZH: On cosmetics. I had some black spots on my face, which are gone now. I normally buy hand lotion and moisturizer for my face.

Q: I see that you have makeup on today. Did you learn how to do it yourself?

ZH: Yeah, I applied the makeup myself.

Q: You did a great job. How did you learn how to do it?

ZH: I learnt by watching other people do it.

Q: Did you learn online or from other people?

ZH: No, no, I applied the makeup myself.

Q: Besides cosmetics, do you also buy clothes?

ZH: I usually buy clothes on Qipu Road. One time I was looking at some clothes and the vendor asked for 39 yuan. I said, "Can I have it for 30 yuan? If not, I am leaving." She said, "Sure sure sure. Just pay me 30, I don't want that extra 9. You are a sharp one. Usually no one bargains with me." That's how I bargain, by threatening to leave. She kept saying that I am not easy to deal with.

Q: So you mainly spend on cosmetics and clothes, do you?

ZH: I do.

Q: Do you have any interests?

ZH: I am in my twenties. When I was a teenager, I liked to watch people do cross-stitch embroidery such as embroidery of cartoon characters and of pillowcases. I liked to do all of those.

Q: Do you still do it now?

ZH: I do.

Q: And it is cross-stitch?

ZH: Right.

Q: Have you ever spent a long time making something that you really liked?

ZH: I have, small things to hold transportation cards and bankcards.

Being a Wife and a Mom

Q: How did you meet your husband?

ZH: My classmate introduced us.

Q: Classmate from where?

ZH: A male classmate from Changning Primary Vocational School.

If he asked me now, "Do you want to date?" I would have said no because dating isn't fun when two people fight. A couple of days ago I fought with my husband and we got physical, and he hurt me. My back is still hurting from where he hit me, so I am walking with a limp.

But back then when that classmate asked me, "Do you want to date?" I said "Yes." He asked, "What kind of man do you want? Someone who is nice to your family?" I said, "I don't have other requirements except that he has to be nice to his parents." Being nice to parents is the most important for me. But he should be loyal too and not have affairs. If he has an affair, he might end up deserting his family and girls hate that most. So my expectation is simple: just being nice to his parents.

Q: Being nice to his parents is nice for the parents, but having affairs is not nice for you, so he shouldn't have affairs, right? Not having affairs and being nice to his parents are two different things, aren't they?

ZH: Right, they are two different things.

Q: So which one is more important?

ZH: Being nice to his parents. He should be nice to his wife and to his parents too.

Q: What do you like about your husband?

ZH: He isn't calculating. But that's not the case anymore.

So how did we end up fighting yesterday? He was paid two nights ago, but I won't get paid till the fifth. So I asked him for 200 yuan pocket money. He said he didn't have the money. I said, "If you don't give me the money, you will do your own laundry and buy whatever you need to eat or use. I won't take care of it for you anymore. And you take care of the baby too. We take care of our own business and don't ever ask me to do anything for you anymore." That's what I told him. And we ended up fighting because he badmouthed my family and I got mad. I told him, "Let's keep it between the two of us—don't bring my family into it. I hate it when he does that."

I wish I hadn't got married or even dated. If I were by myself, no one would tell me what to eat, to wear, or to use; no one would bother me.

Q: How long did you date?

ZH: Two years.

Q: You got married after only 1 year of dating?

ZH: Because I got pregnant before we got married and it's a boy.

Q: You get to learn the baby's gender before birth now?

ZH: No, but I knew deep down. Girls have their period every month but I missed it. There are those who feel sick and lethargic during their period. I got anxious when I missed it and I checked the calendar to find out whether I was (pregnant). I lied to my dad saying I had tummy ache and went to the doctor myself. I was told that I must be pregnant.

Q: How did you know for sure it was a boy?

ZH: Because I looked at my belly button. It's a boy if the belly button sticks out and a girl if it goes in.

Q: Did you end up having the baby?

ZH: I had an abortion the first time because I was on medication and IV treatment and didn't want the baby. I had the baby the second time I got pregnant and it's pretty healthy.

Q: Did your dad have any worries when you had the baby? Did he say anything at all?

ZH: He did talk to me about it. He said, "Why did you get yourself knocked up without me knowing about it? What are you going to do about the pregnancy now? You went on medication for a week and IV treatment, too, and hid it from me. You got pregnant but told me it was tummy ache. You are pregnant and not yet married, so what do we do now?" So I had the abortion.

Q: Was it your dad who asked you to have the abortion?

ZH: Yeah. I was reluctant to do it.

Q: Mainly because you were on medication and IV treatment?

ZH: Exactly. I went to the hospital that day and the doctor asked me why I wanted to get rid of the baby. I didn't know what to say except to tell him that I had been on medication and IV treatment and was worried about the baby being affected and being born with an intellectual disability or some deformation. So he told me to have the abortion.

Q: It wasn't the doctor who told you to do it, it was your dad?

ZH: Right.

Q: Your worry was legitimate. Your dad said that you only had the baby recently. How is the baby?

ZH: She is pretty healthy and a little over 6 months now. If you don't give her the bottle, she will fuss and kick. When she was in my tummy, she was like that already.

Q: Do you get up at night to feed her now?

ZH: I do. I'll get up at 2 a.m. to feed her some milk and water, then rock her a little before going back to sleep myself.

Q: It must be very tiring when you do this every day.

ZH: I don't really mind because it makes me happy. Every parent goes through this. My dad said to me, "Now that you are a mom yourself, you can understand how your mom felt when she was bringing you up."

Q: So do you feel both tired and happy?

ZH: I feel that it's a lot of work having a baby. For example, you have to take her for vaccinations each month, otherwise she might get infected with something when you take her out. Kids nowadays have a lot of infectious diseases.

Q: Does your husband know how to take care of the baby?

ZH: No, he knows nothing. On my days off, I will take care of the baby. When I go to work, my mother-in-law takes care of her.

My husband and I don't make a lot of money, just over 5,000 yuan a month between the two of us. Buying formula and diapers for the baby costs several hundred yuan a month. Our pay is really too low and not enough to afford a baby. Grown-ups can skip on certain things but you want to make sure that the baby is healthy. People like us didn't do well at school, and once we go to work, we are looked down upon and bullied.

Q: So your husband doesn't take care of the baby for you or cook?

ZH: When he has time off and is in a good mood, he will take care of the baby for me. When he is having a bad day, he will just say, "Forget about it, I am not doing it." It's like that.

Important People

Q: We talked to your dad last time and felt that he is quite somebody. He was even on the radio. What do you think of him?

ZH: None of my dad's siblings have any disabilities, but he has problems with his arm and leg. What I am happiest about is that he won many awards. I should have learnt from him, but I have not made him proud. He brought me up telling me to study harder, but I just couldn't. I just wanted to play.

Q: What did you want to play?

ZH: I wanted to watch TV, play games and hang out at Internet bars. I didn't want anything else.

Q: Did your dad get mad at you if you couldn't focus on studies and just wanted to play all the time?

ZH: He did. He said, "If you don't study harder, you will end up like those boys on the block when you grow up."

Q: What were the boys on the block like?

ZH: They would throw cigarettes around and their hands would be like this. (Mimicking throwing a cigarette onto the roadside.)

Q: So your dad was pretty strict?

ZH: Yeah. He spoiled me sometimes and was very strict other times.

Q: I remember your dad saying that he would check your homework and that you would get to go to bed if you did well and have to redo everything the next morning if you didn't do well.

ZH: Yeah, that's what happened.

Q: How are you getting along with your mom?

ZH: I am very nice to my mom, because she was born with some intellectual disability. My grandmother took medication and had my mom, which was why my mom was born that way.

Q: How do you interact with your mom?

ZH: I get along very well with my mom and communicate with her very well. My mom talks with some difficulty, not like when you talk to me and every sentence you say is very coherent. I'll talk to my mom, and have trouble understanding what she is saying, and she won't understand what I say.

Q: So do you communicate with your dad more?

ZH: Yeah.

Q: Did your parents take you out on the weekends when you were young?

ZH: No. If I was in the mood, I would beg my dad to take me out and he would say, "Don't bother me. Go ask your mom. Do you really just want to get some money from me?" And I would say, "No, that's not what I want." If we were to go out, I would want both parents to go out with me. If my mom and I went somewhere without my dad and I saw other families of three out and about, I would feel very sad.

Q: Did you ever go anywhere with both of them?

ZH: I did.

Q: Where did you go?

ZH: We went to Nanjing Road, the Bund, then... then... Suzhou and Hangzhou. My dad invited his old classmate's family and we went with the three of them.

Q: So the two families went together?

ZH: Right.

Q: Was that when you were young?

ZH: When I was 16... 15 or 16.

Q: Do you travel by yourself now? Or with your husband or friends?

ZH: I did. That was in May after the baby was born. I went with my husband to Beijing. We went to the Imperial Palace where the emperors used to live, then we went to the Great Wall. I couldn't climb very high on the Great Wall. You have to go up a slope with handrails and I said I couldn't do it because my feet were shaking already, and I was afraid to go up. My husband said, "Fine, just go up in the cable car."

Q: That sounds fun. You wanted to go to Beijing because you saw the Imperial Palace and the Great Wall on TV, right?

ZH: My husband had wanted to go to Beijing, and me too. I had never been when I was young. My parents went by themselves. Once I grew up, I had to make the trip myself.

Q: Your dad mentioned that you have a best friend called C, is that true?

ZH: Yes, because she was good at everything including math and Chinese.

Q: How did you meet her?

ZH: I met her when I entered Changning Primary Vocational School.

Q: Did she help you with schoolwork back then?

ZH: Normally she only helped me with math, not with Chinese.

Q: Are you still in contact now?

ZH: Yeah, we are.

Her grandma passed away several days ago, and she is in a sad mood. Her dad is in his sixties and he thinks everything his daughter does every day is wrong and has never been right. She can't really tell her dad what she thinks, so she tells me over the phone. And I would tell her, "Once I get paid and have money, you can come and eat at my store and it will be my treat. If you have anything to tell me, we can just sit down and talk." She wants someone to talk to but there's no one around. She wants to talk to her dad and he just ignores her. And both her grandparents passed away, so she can only come to me and not to anyone else.

Q: Where does C work now?

ZH: At a KFC in Pudong.

Q: Does she do pretty much the same thing as you? Like making food?

ZH: Right.

Q: Do you go out with her sometimes?

ZH: She seldom goes out. When her grandparents were still around, I would buy some fruit and other things that elderly people eat and bring them to them when I visited.

Q: So you basically went to your friend's place to meet her.

ZH: Right.

Observation of ZH at Work

Observation date: 12:30–19:30, October 28, 2016

Observation place: Restaurant where ZH works

Observer and writer: Chenyi Tang

Time	What ZH did	Remarks
12:30	One-hour lunch break	Went out for lunch, chatted with co-workers, read on the cell phone, looking relaxed
13:30	Went to the room behind the kitchen to help the manager with reports on the amount of food already sold	According to ZH (during the interview with her), she has always been the one helping the manager with this work. The observer wasn't allowed access to the room behind the kitchen, so no observation was possible
15:00	Came out of the room for the interview	
16:00	Went to the kitchen, put on an apron, and got ready to make food	
16:10	Walked around in the kitchen area to get ready since there were not many customers yet	
16:20	Walked around, cleaning and organizing things	
16:30	Went to the freezer in the kitchen to fetch things	
16:40	Reappeared in the kitchen area and started making appetizers next to the oven	
16:50	Made desserts	
16:55	Made desserts	
17:00	Made appetizers including chicken wings and potato chips	
17:05	Made appetizers including chicken wings and potato chips	
17:15	A large takeout order came in and the delivery person wanted it fast. The entire kitchen, including ZH, got busy preparing the order	
17:25	Got busy next to the oven, took the baked appetizers out of the oven, and put them in the takeout boxes	
17:35	Prepared appetizers and desserts	
17:45	Prepared appetizers and desserts	

(continued)

(continued)

Time	What ZH did	Remarks
17:55	Prepared appetizers and desserts	
18:05	Cleaned up in the kitchen after the large order was completed	
18:15	Continued to make desserts and appetizers as more customers came in for dinner	
18:25	Made appetizers and desserts	
18:35	Went to the window, placed food on plates according to the orders and delivered the plates through the window	
18:45	Placed food on plates at the window and made milk tea	
18:55	Consulted a manager on work and continued to deliver food through the window	
19:05	Left the window to fetch things from the freezer	
19:15	Went to the pizza dough station and started making pizza dough	
19:18	Made pizza dough	
19:22	Took pizza dough from the oven	
19:26	Made pizza dough	
19:30	Made pizza dough	

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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Disability Certificate Acquired as an Adult



Qianyu Lu and Mengyuan Yu

Interview with Mr. L's Mother

L, male, born in 1989. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a regular school (Shanghai Environmental Science School) in 2008. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in November 2013.

Interviewee: L's mother

Interviewers: Qianyu Lu and Mengyuan Yu

Writer: Qianyu Lu

Interview dates: September 13, 2016 and July 8, 2017

Interview place: L's home

Major Complications from Dystocia

Q: Hello ma'am. Shall we start with the birth of L?

L's mother: His dad and I were co-workers. We met when we were 22, but didn't get married until we were 27 or 28 (laughing).

The pregnancy went well in the beginning and I was thinking that I would have a very smart son (laughing). But when I was 7 or 8 months pregnant, I had a burning fever for 10 days. I saw the doctor but there was no medication I could take. He said I had a urinary infection, but I couldn't figure out how I got it. It was all a mystery.

I had another check-up and my hemoglobin level was low. But again, there was no medication and no shots to take, so I left it at that. I had high blood pressure to begin with, which got worse during my pregnancy. I was hospitalized on August 3

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and given shots later. L arrived on August 8, prematurely, and was pulled out with forceps. The pain was killing me!

I had dystocia—forceps wouldn't be used like that these days. I would have had a C-section instead. Why? Because forceps hurt the baby. The baby goes blind if the forceps touch the eyes. The limbs get damaged if the forceps touch some nerves. And the brain gets damaged if the forceps touch the head. But back then, we didn't have any connections at the hospital and hospitals only allowed so many C-sections per day.

So the forceps poked here and there before they grabbed L. His head is lopsided, so is his face if you look at it carefully. Babies have soft bones, and L's head was pulled very long by the forceps.

There could have been other complications, so when L reacts slowly sometimes, I normally don't get mad at him. He didn't cause his intellectual disability and he didn't ask for it either, did he? It's not as if he was smart and just didn't want to do certain things. He wants to do a lot of things but just can't. And it's not genetic either, because there's no family history of intellectual disability and everyone in our family is very smart (laughing). So I figured that he is the way he is because at birth, he swallowed the amniotic fluid and his head was squeezed. But of course, the doctor would not have admitted that.

Ever since he was born, he has been slow in his reactions and one step behind in everything. Things that other babies could do at 3 or 4 months, he couldn't do till later. Other babies would drink milk, but he wouldn't. Instead, he was sleeping most of the time with his head drooping. His head was very big while his body was very small. His grandpa said that it's good for boys to have a big head because it means they'll be future leaders, but I believed there was something wrong with him. When he was 8 months old, I took him to the children's hospital and the doctor suspected hydrocephalus, which would have affected his IQ. So a CT scan was done but no hydrocephalus was found.

Doctors back then didn't seem to have the same work ethics as today's doctors. I told him about my pregnancy, including the fact that his due date was August 26 but that I had him on August 8 with the help of forceps. The doctor said it might have had some effect, but he didn't recommend any treatment and we naturally didn't even realize he might have needed treatment.

Then he started talking okay, even though he didn't say much. We just figured that he preferred to keep to himself and weren't alarmed when he didn't talk as smoothly as other kids. He had a good memory because he remembered the Chinese poems we taught him. Telephones weren't popular back then, right? He could remember all of the phone numbers.

Q: Did the grandparents help take care of him?

L's mother: His grandpa wasn't much help. My mother-in-law passed away when my husband was 18. By the time we got married, my father-in-law had remarried. So it was just the two of us with L and there were no grandparents to help with childcare. And we lived separately from our siblings.

My husband and I used to be co-workers at Xinhua Radio Factory, which was state owned. We had graduated from a vocational school and were given technical

jobs at the factory. Then I changed jobs to a store on Nanjing Road, which was closer to home, so it was easier for me to take care of L. Then my husband got a job at Bell, which wasn't at Jinqiao and was closer to home at that stage, so we could both work and take care of L. It wasn't until later that we were relocated by the government to where we live now.

Huge Challenge in Regular School

L's mother: We were very worried that he wouldn't do well at preschool or elementary school. He wasn't as bubbly as other kids when we took him out.

When he was in preschool, whatever the teacher taught him, he wouldn't respond. So I had to tell the teacher about his condition.

So he would go to preschool in the morning and come home around noon. There was this kid who was always bullying him, like pulling his ear till it bled, taking his handkerchief, and pinching all the meat from his lunch. L would never defend himself. I said to him, "You are being bullied and hit all the time, I don't like it at all! You need to fight back next time."

He would never tell us about what happened to him at school. But then, if he had, it would have meant that he was smarter than he really is. I would stop by and check on him at lunchtime and see that he had no sausage in his lunch. When I asked the teacher for an explanation, the teacher would say some other kid ate it. So she would yell at that kid and take sausage from another kid's lunch and give it to L. I told the teacher that she had to do something about L always being bullied. She said that she had talked to that kid's parents but they were not people you could reason with. In the old times, movie reels had to be transferred from theater to theater, and that's what that kid's dad did, so the dad had no time for the kid. That kid bullied not only L but also other kids, so the teacher banished him to where the blankets were stored during class naptime.

Other kids could learn everything the teacher taught, but not L. He could never remember anything the teacher taught them. Other kids would come home and tell their parents what they had learnt, right? But L never did.

He was in good shape when he graduated from preschool. The teacher said that she hadn't expected much from him in the beginning, but then she saw the progress he made and what a good kid he was, so she put in more effort to teach him. We went to the parent-teacher meeting and saw that he did very well at physical exercises.

Then it was time to go to elementary school and I panicked. There was an entrance exam to get into the elementary school, but L knew nothing about math. The teacher said that he could never solve any of the problems in his homework. His dad panicked too, because L really needed to go to elementary school and had nowhere else to go otherwise. He'd already graduated from preschool, and if he couldn't continue schooling, he would have to stay home. We were living in Jing'an District then. He went to Xinza Road Preschool and our home school was Jing'an District No. 3 Elementary School, both of which are good schools. So I told L, "I am going to

teach you how to solve this problem. When the teacher asks at the entrance exam, just repeat what I teach you. If you do that, I will buy you a remote-control car.”

We often took him to People’s Park, which was close to home, and at the park, he saw other people playing remote-control cars. But he didn’t feel comfortable approaching or talking to anyone and mostly just kept to himself. Other kids would run off and the parents would have to chase them down. He would never wander too far and I would never have to run after him. I believed it was his personality, and his dad often took him traveling and seeing the world. During the summer vacation when he was in third or fourth grade, we took him to Xiamen. He has also been to Qiandao Lake and Putuo Mountain. My co-workers were always telling me to take him out. We have a lot of pictures taken on our trips. These are from when he was young, he looked okay in them. You couldn’t tell that he has an intellectual disability—he just looked a little slow, so we never imagined anything was seriously wrong.

To everyone’s surprise, he solved all of the problems on the elementary school entrance exam, so he got accepted into the school. Once he was in, schoolwork became too much for him. He couldn’t do the homework, especially math homework since that was his weakest subject. He wasn’t good at writing either, and his dad and I had to teach him every day. We would teach him something one day and he would forget all about it the next. He was bad at arts and crafts too. But we had no choice but to help him one baby step at a time, because we didn’t want him to repeat any grades. He kept to himself all the time and hardly had any friends. He was very lonely and didn’t participate in any group activities, so he can’t have been happy at school.

So we helped him through fifth grade to graduation, and Yucai Middle School was our home school. Because of where his birth was registered, L was able to go to very good schools whereas a lot of other kids had to pay sponsorship fees to go to the same schools. And the schools were close to home. The elementary school was just across the street. The middle school was right next to us on Datian Road, and we didn’t even have to cross any streets to get there.

At the middle school, the homeroom teacher would tell me which kid bullied L and I would tell the teacher that L didn’t know how to defend himself. L really has a big heart. He was never late for school and never left school early.

Back then, the kids were into playing with cigarette packaging labels, and other kids would sell L extra labels they had and then tell him that he owed them money. I seldom gave him pocket money back then. So one day he suddenly asked me for 2 yuan and I asked what it was for. I figured that it was for buying snacks. He said, “Mom, I owe them money.” I asked him what he owed money for and he said he owed money for cigarette packaging labels. So I confronted that kid and said, “Do you know what you are doing? And do you realize you are too young to do this kind of thing?”

We couldn’t always watch him once he was home from school and there were misbehaving kids literally all around him. L would keep his distance if he realized that he was no match for certain kids he played with. He figured that if he could communicate with someone, he would, otherwise he would just avoid that person. He was on his own most of the time and very lonely.

As far as schoolwork went, in the first year of middle school, the homeroom teacher said that he couldn't keep up and would drag the whole class down. We had been teaching him at home all the time, but he almost always failed the tests. He didn't seem bothered by that, but we were. The middle school curriculum wasn't much different from that of today. He was doing relatively better at Chinese and could barely pass the tests. He might not have been good at studies, but he listened well and started on his homework as soon as he got home. But he couldn't finish any homework without help from his dad and would be doing it till past 9 p.m. on an average day. His dad was the one helping him with his studies. I didn't help much because of my work, so his dad should be credited with his passing the entrance exam to the vocational school later. We also tried private lessons with the teacher, with several other kids, but he couldn't keep up and we had to stop after several lessons.

Both his dad and I did very well at school, and I had expected L to be the same, so I wasn't too happy (when it turned out not to be the case). I graduated in 1979. I went straight to the high school affiliated with Fudan University after elementary school and spent 4 years there, 2 years in junior high and another 2 years in senior high, which was the system back then. His dad graduated from Yucai Middle School. I fell short by just several points on the college entrance exam. Because I was graduating from the high school affiliated with Fudan University, I could have gone to Fudan University by agreeing to pay my own tuition and fees even though I was several points short. But I heard that the government would not assign self-paying students jobs after graduation, and my family couldn't exactly afford the tuition and fees, so I didn't take the offer. I regretted the decision later. Then I got into a vocational school and was sent to work at Xinhua Radio Factory upon graduation.

In L's second year in the middle school, his homeroom teacher said to me, "Your son is so far behind everyone. Why don't you send him to special education school?" The special education school the teacher had in mind was for kids failing regular schools or delinquent kids. L would be bullied there since he didn't know how to defend himself. His teacher's reasoning was that he could learn some skills at that school and be able to support himself later. I said, "No. Please keep him in the class with you. You can just ignore him, and if he has to, he will repeat a grade, which is better than going to that special education school." The teacher said, "If that's what you want, I won't give him any tests from now on." Giving him tests would lower the whole class's passing rate. He wasn't distracting other kids in class, and whatever he learnt or didn't learn in class, we taught him at home. I insisted on not sending him to the special education school, and the backup plan was to have him repeat a grade. For me, sending him to the special education school would have ruined him.

He seemed to be getting the hang of it by the third year of middle school, even though he was still half a step behind other kids. He was able to graduate without any problem and get into Shanghai Environmental Science School, which is a vocational school. The minimum score required on the entrance exam to that school was 360 and he had several points to spare, so he got in. He spent 4 years at the vocational school, 2 years of which was on Longwu Road and the other 2 years was on Shangcheng Road in Pudong.

Q: Did he commute every day when he was going to school in Pudong?

L's mother: He did. In the morning, I would take the bus with him, and then took the subway to get to Pudong, since there weren't many subway lines back then, and we would switch to another bus in Pudong.

Q: Did you have to drop him off in Pudong and pick him up all the time?

L's mother: I dropped him off at the beginning, then I stopped and he commuted on his own. I told him how to get around—he has a very good memory.

Q: He sounds very capable—he could commute on his own every day.

L's mother: He did it all on his own. At home, we asked him to help with household chores as much as he could, like washing.

Q: Can you tell us more about what happened at the vocational school?

L's mother: At the vocational school, majors were assigned based on entrance exam scores. L didn't score very high, so he was assigned to learn automobile repair, but he ended up not being able to repair anything. He spent 4 years studying really hard, but could never pass any test, and at first, he couldn't even get a graduation certificate. I asked the teacher to make an exception for him and tried to grease some palms, but the teacher wouldn't budge. So I had to tell her about L's condition without holding back. Then she said, "Why don't you have him take a test in some specialty area, like computing." A specialty certificate would count for test scores and a lot of his classmates tested for such certificates, but L didn't know about it. I figured that L knew something about computers, so I took him for the test on a scorching day. I thought it would be an easy test, but as it turned out, everyone had prepared extensively for it, including the scope and contents of the test. But neither L nor I knew anything about it. We just showed up for the test—not surprisingly, he failed the test and didn't get any certificate.

So I had no choice but to talk to the teacher again. The teacher said, "Your child is a really nice and good child." So she asked him to go to her office by himself and gave him what she called a "makeup test". She basically taught him in the office how to complete the test. He should have got his graduation certificate after the makeup test, but on the day the graduation certificates were issued, everyone gathered in the classroom and the teacher told him not to go, because he hadn't exactly graduated yet.

It hurt his self-esteem that he was the only one not picking up the graduation certificate that day. The teacher said, "Give it a couple of days. After everyone has got their certificates, you can come to school and pick up yours." He was doing very well in everything else, but studies were really not for him. But I never said anything about it. Instead, I kept encouraging him and telling him that he is the best.

Difficult Time Looking for a Job

L's mother: Upon graduation from the vocational school, the school referred the kids to workplaces. He was referred, together with nine other kids, to the Environmental Protection Bureau to repair cars, but he was the only one not hired because he didn't

know how to repair anything. And he could hardly communicate with anyone, since he couldn't even speak complete sentences. If people looked at him, he would be at a loss for words. So he could never be sent out there to interact with people. But he knows and understands everything, like playing on the computer. We had our first computer at home when he was in elementary school and his dad taught him how to use it. He got it immediately. He was also one of the kids in his class who typed well because he has nimble fingers. One time I saw him using the five-stroke method to type—he must have figured it out by himself.

Back then we didn't think about applying for a disability certificate for him because we didn't want to go down that road, you know. If you didn't get hired by a workplace the school referred you to, the school would wash its hands of you, and you would have to look for jobs on your own.

The Community Affairs Committee mentored him on job interviews. He interviewed with Volkswagen and was rejected immediately. He tried working in security and was sent home after several days. My old classmates got him a job doing inspection at Kyocera, which is a Japanese company, in Waigaoqiao. After about 3 months, I was told, "Your son can't work here anymore, he will cost us our jobs." China inspection is a tough job and the china is easily broken. When the Japanese came to do an on-site inspection, L didn't exactly put up the best show. The Japanese have very high standards and didn't think L was qualified to work there, so he had to leave the company. He tried working at a telecommunications company, but it was no good. How could he have handled any customer complaints if he doesn't know how to communicate? He tried working at the warehouse on Shangda Road. He also worked at Carrefour. He was bullied there, because he was given the toughest job, going to work early every day to move and organize merchandise. After about 20 days he had to quit. It's not that he wanted to quit, the workplaces just didn't want him because he reacts slowly. So he was rejected here and there.

He seemed okay at typing things for other people on the computer, so I told him to look for a typist or clerical job, but he said that those jobs are for women and not for men (laughing). I asked my old classmates if they needed someone to type documents in their offices, because he could work at such a job where he wouldn't need to communicate with anyone. I would never have imagined a sales job in the field for him. I realized that he could learn certain things really well but would totally fail at other things. But the job I had in mind for him wasn't easy to come by and required interviews too.

All the doors were closed on him, and not even the Community Affairs Committee could help. It went on like that for 2 years, with no one arranging any jobs for him and him turning 23. His dad passed away when he was 20. And it was in 2009 that he graduated from the vocational school. What was I going to do with him when I was just by myself? I wouldn't have worried as much if he wasn't different, would I? I pulled a lot of strings, including with my current husband who happened to be my old classmate, and a lot of my other old classmates tried to get him a job, but nothing worked out. And I couldn't exactly keep asking for favors.

My friend suggested applying for a disability certificate for him. It was actually already too late at that time. Who would want to label a child that way, unless the

child is born with very apparent disability, in which case the certificate might come in handy if the child has difficulties with daily life.

When L was in elementary school, the teacher asked me to take him for an IQ test. I didn't because I didn't think he was slow and didn't see the need for the test. When he was in middle school, the teacher suggested that I send him to the special education school, so I took him to the children's hospital located near Beijing Road and Changde Road. I asked the doctor if he was autistic, because he reacts slowly and keeps to himself. He was in a room by himself, doing a paper test and answering questions. The test results showed that he's on the borderline, so what do you think I should have done? We decided to leave it at that and to live with his reacting slowly. He had low self-esteem and always imagined us saying that he wasn't good enough. So we kept encouraging him, "It's okay, you just have to try harder than other people. If they can do something in one try, you can give it two tries." I believed that he had to go to school to learn, because he would have to be independent in the future. He's 28 now, and the average 18-year-old is smarter than he is. But he really has a big heart.

I have never considered sending him to the Sunshine Home. Applying for the disability certificate was to help him get a job, because I definitely could not have him stay home. Since the Community Affairs Committee was no help, I had to take him to be tested, telling him, "It's just for you to get a job." That's how I made him feel better about it. Once he got the certificate, the Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF) would arrange a job for him. We had been looking on our own for so long—no one wanted him and he was always rejected right after the first interview.

Q: What's the grade of disability specified on his certificate?

L's mother: Grade IV. Had it been Grade III, he wouldn't need to work. The only thing with him is that he reacts slowly. He doesn't look slow like some other kids with ID do.

A Rare and Cherished Opportunity

He joined Papa John's with the help of the DPF. When he first joined, I told the store, "This kid isn't good at communication, but he is good with his hands, so just be a little more patient with him when explaining things to him." He is pretty smart at what he likes, but is really bad at communicating with people. Maybe the intellectual disability has affected his verbal skills. I often tell him, "You must finish the work you're assigned. Try to learn as much as you can, put up with as much as you can and communicate with your co-workers as much as you can."

His co-workers only have good things to say about him. Whatever new products the store introduces, he will write down the ingredients in his little book. Look at this picture of him taken at work (showing the picture). L looks very decent, and he's 1.82 m tall. Someone took this picture of him when he was eating.

He is never late for work. He gets up very early and comes home at 11 p.m. or midnight. He was never late for school either. Whenever I went to the parent-teacher

meetings, the teacher always commented on how he had never been late for school even though the school is far away in Pudong. He has a very strong sense of time and I told him, “You take after Mommy in that.” And I also told him, “No matter what, you have to have a good sense of time. You would rather arrive early for work than make others wait. If there’s anything you can’t do, take your time, watch how it is done and that’s how you will learn.” I need to constantly remind him. At home, I ask him to do the dishes for me, because training hands-on ability helps develop the brain. So I often ask him to help around the house, and he washes his own work clothes.

He is very simple-minded, not calculating at all like some other people. Whatever people say to him, he never objects. On some of his days off, he would get a call to work overtime and he would go immediately. Some other people might have complained about having to work on their day off, but not him. He would put on his clothes and leave for work right away. A couple of days ago, he was hanging out with someone and I was home. Then I received a message from him saying, “Mom, I’m coming home now.” I asked why, and he said, “They don’t have enough people at the store and have asked me to go help.” He was having a great time out there, but he came back home just to change for work. He is very dedicated to his work, so the manager really likes him.

You would have expected the store to take it easier on him because of his intellectual disability, but he was assigned the delivery job. One time he fell. It was raining and there was no one to deliver, so he was given the job. I talked to the manager later and asked him not to assign L this kind of work. His reactions are normally slower than other people’s, so people without disabilities should be a little more considerate towards him.

He is doing okay at Papa John’s. He gets things done and knows how to deliver. He has never made any wrong deliveries as long as everything was explained clearly to him in advance, otherwise the manager would not have felt comfortable giving him this job. Sometimes he would be asked to drive his electric bike to some place far away to pick something up. You should ask the manager exactly what he does at work, because he spends more time at the store than at home. I don’t see him a lot at home. I want to know more about what he does at work. Maybe his co-workers can give me answers if I ask some subtle questions.

He seems to work two shifts with a break in between. He probably takes a break of 1 or 2 h around 3:30 p.m., then goes back to work and doesn’t clock out till 9:30 or 10 p.m. He goes to work at 10:30 a.m. sometimes, but also at 11:30 or 9:30 a.m., depending on what the store wants. Today he works the night shift. I asked him whether it’s a tough job for him and he said it’s not. He really cherishes this job (see Fig. 1).

According to L, the store isn’t giving people with disabilities as many work hours as they want, so a lot of them switched jobs to work in steakhouses on Hongqiao Road to make more money. I told him not to follow suit and he said he wouldn’t. A lot of his co-workers at the store are from outside Shanghai, so I said, “They have a family to raise, whereas you are still young, so you only need to work a steady job to support yourself. I don’t want you to work two jobs. Just stay put where you are.”



Fig. 1 Mr. L at work

My reasoning is that L got this job with help from the DPF, but his co-workers left their hometowns to work in Shanghai and they have to pay rent and raise kids, so they naturally need to make more money, right? I told him to take it easy and not to work so hard. My real goal is for him to stay put at the store and make this job a long-term one since the store is close to where we live.

They don't have a lot of time off to begin with. And starting this year, he hardly stays home on his days off. Like he had yesterday off and he wasn't home. He never has Saturday or Sunday off and only comes home to sleep, so we don't see him on those days. When holidays come around, he knows that there's triple pay for working overtime on holidays, so he would ask for that. For Mid-Autumn Festival which has just passed, I asked him to come home for dinner, and he said he couldn't because he had to work OT. His workplace is different from ours. We get a break on our days off, but they are still busy when we get a break.

I told him to cherish his job because jobs are not easy to come by, especially for people like him. He said he understood. We don't really care that much about pay. I said, "I don't need your money, you just need to make enough to support yourself. So you have to know what's best for you."

At the meeting last time, there were a lot of parents who were so worried about their kids, but the kids all know what to do and to cherish the jobs they have, because

it's not easy for them to find jobs, is it? The parents said that the kids lack street smarts. A kid went traveling with his parents for 20 days and came back to tell his co-workers, "Just leave it to me, I will get everything done." And the mom said, "I felt bad for him—we don't even ask him to do anything around the house." So all of us asked the store to take it easy on kids like L, because they are, after all, a disadvantaged group. They should not be given the same amount of work as people without disabilities since they don't get paid much.

He puts in the effort but the return isn't high. His pay is actually very low. We receive text messages on how much he gets paid, just the hours worked multiplied by the rate which I already know. But there's no pay slip. Workplaces normally issue pay slips specifying base pay and bonus. I would ask L for details about his pay but he has no idea. He only knows the take-home amount. When he first joined Papa John's, the impression I was given was that the pay was decent, although I didn't get any specific numbers. For Chinese New Year last year, I asked if he got any bonus. He said he didn't. How could he not have received a bonus for Chinese New Year? It's probably in the lump sum that he got paid.

I normally don't go to the store and don't ask about his pay. Why? I figured that if I stop by all the time, the store would think I am not comfortable having my kid work there, which would reflect badly on him. So I try not to go and instead let him handle things on his own. And since the store is a formally run workplace, I don't think it will shortchange L. I believe L is paid the same as everyone else, right? I don't concern myself too much with money, and I used to tell my old classmates, "If you can find him a job, he will take it even if it's nonpaying." I just wanted some place to accept him, to give him a chance to show what he is capable of, and to expose him to society. So money was not really an issue, you know, which was what I thought back then. Now that he has got the job with Papa John's, I just want the store to keep him, so I never ask how much he's paid.

He used to give me part of his pay to put into a savings account. I didn't ask how he used the rest of the money and he never asked me for any, so he must have had enough to use and wasn't being extravagant. Now he keeps all his pay. He does buy things for himself but nothing expensive. When he first started working, he bought me something small in gold. I said, "Son, now that you are working, you can buy some things for me." He said he would. But he would never take the initiative to buy me anything. It's more like I would mention something that I couldn't quite spare the money for, and then he would buy it for me with no questions asked.

Q: Have you ever stopped by the store while he was working?

L's mother: I did before, but I don't do it often now. When he first started, I did try to smooth the way for him with his co-workers and they said, "Don't worry, L will be fine." Sometimes I would make a special trip to the store to eat and bring my husband along to check on him. He would serve us and he is very good at what he does.

He has been at this job for more than 3 years. I remember taking him to the interview at the company headquarters on Huaihai Road, and someone in charge there, who might have retired since, liked L and told him to do his best at the job. So

L just learnt on the job and he seems to be doing well. Why? He's been rejected too many times, so he really cherishes this job and tries his best to learn.

At the jobs he's worked at before, he knew nothing about anything when he first started, and he didn't care since I found those jobs for him through my connections. I had told him, "Just try the best you can. My old classmate got this job for you, and as long as you try hard, you should be fine." When he was rejected, he asked, "Didn't you say I would be fine?" And I had to say, "But you still needed to communicate with other people and to not get any orders wrong. You can't expect to be paid for just sitting there." So I told him again regarding the Papa John's job, "Do your best—it's not easy to get a job now." You should go and ask around at Papa John's. The manager will have good things to say about him.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers?

L's mother: He gets along well with his co-workers. He almost always goes out for fun on his days off now, and I don't try to control him. I am not sure what's fun for him, but I know for sure he won't get into trouble, and it's a good thing that he can hang out with co-workers. I actually encourage him to go out more so he is exposed more to society.

Before he went out with his co-workers, I told him, "Don't be stingy, just spend what you should spend. But don't let anyone take advantage of you. You shouldn't be paying for everyone, you know? If you go out to eat, you should split the bill. Mommy likes to see you having fun like singing karaoke with your old classmates, friends, and co-workers."

Because he really could use more friends. Before, when he went out, I would call him to check up on him. Now I don't do that as long as he comes back on time. If I called him too many times, his co-workers would think I was trying to track his movements. I don't often ask him about what happens at work either. He isn't as talkative as other kids, but I am not too worried about him or about anything serious happening to him.

I tell him, "You have grown up and Mommy can't watch over you all the time, so you have to know and to understand yourself." I am always telling him, "When you go out, I'm not worried about you getting into trouble. I worry that people will bully you or make a fool of you. You only need to deal with that kind of person once to know to stay away from them, it's called learning from your mistakes." How else can I teach him? I can't keep him locked up at home, can I? I always try to push him out there. I can't do everything for him. Instead, he needs to do things on his own and to suffer when necessary. If he falls, he should get up himself and try not to fall again. That's how he matures, little by little.

Q: Is he still in touch with old classmates?

L's mother: Hardly. Now he mostly hangs out with co-workers from the store.

Q: Was he a loner throughout elementary school and middle school?

L's mother: Yeah, because people wouldn't bother with him. In middle school, he had friends from our old neighborhood and is connected with them on WeChat now. At the vocational school, he was very close to this kid who liked to order people around. And L didn't object to being ordered to do this and that. That kid did well at school and found a good job later, and has kept in contact with L. L used to visit

him at his place and he used to come to our place too, but they seldom do it now. L has a job, and that friend has his own life. And they are at this age where that friend will probably date and get married. I was happy when he came to hang out at our place and I encouraged them to go out and have fun together. So this old classmate is probably the only close friend L has.

Encouragement to Boost Self-Confidence

L's mother: Ever since he was young, he has always looked up to his parents, since we helped him with all his schoolwork. His dad would be teaching him, and if there's anything he didn't get, I would teach him before he taught L. So we basically taught L everything he knows, otherwise how could he have passed any school entrance exam? He had to finish some kind of school, right? So from an early age, he has always looked up to us. I would tell him, "We are not as smart as you think, and we are getting old. You are actually smarter. Don't ever underestimate yourself, you are actually very smart."

Like how he learnt to ride the bike. He had already started vocational school and his dad was still around. On one of our days off, I told him to try riding the bike, because I figured it would help his physical coordination. He was very awkward on the bike at the beginning, but I told him to keep trying. I held the bike in the back without him noticing it, and he got the hang of it very soon and declared, "I know how to ride now." And I said, "You are so smart! Mommy can't even ride a bike." That's how he gained confidence. There was a time when he worked at Carrefour, and I realized it was more convenient for him to ride the bike to work than take the bus. So he commuted to work by bike.

It's the same with his learning to ride the electric bike. After he graduated from the vocational school, he got a job on Shangda Road, and it wasn't easy to take the bus to go to work. His dad would pick him up on his electric bike, but then his dad got sick. After his dad passed away, I told him to try riding the electric bike. He said it was easy. I said, "Oh, Mommy is really slow and doesn't know how to ride it." He said, "How come I can and you can't?" And I said it's because he is smarter than I am. Now, whenever I talk about buying an electric bike for myself, he'll say, "Don't bother. You can't even ride a bike, why do you want to ride an electric bike?" You can tell that he speaks differently. So I realized that for kids like him, you have to give him confidence. Once you've helped boost his confidence, he will try harder himself. Otherwise he will have zero confidence and feel that everyone looks down on him. He'll be resigned to the way he is and never improve.

Previously, whenever we went out, I would tell him directions. Now, I'll say instead, "L, can you look up how we can get there?" And he does it for me all the time. I would ask him to do everything for me and he would feel very empowered.

He is much better than before. Maybe because he is being exposed to society little by little and interacting with more people—his mind is slowly being developed. He can't vocalize well and he stutters, but he writes well and types well on the computer,

so you can't tell that he has an intellectual disability if he doesn't speak. He feels bad about himself and I would tell him, "Don't, because you are very smart in certain ways." I never have to tell him when to go to work. He is very good at keeping track of time, changing for work, and going to work on his electric bike, so I am really happy with all of that.

He isn't as slow as some of the other people with ID, otherwise he wouldn't have been hired in the first place. One time I stopped by the restaurant and there was a guy there who kept giving me flyers. It looked like L was showing him the ropes and I overheard him telling his co-worker, "He just doesn't get it and I don't know what to do now." I asked, "So you are mentoring someone now?" He said, "He doesn't get anything, not even which days to come to work." I said, "Son, that's all the more reason you should help him, because you went through the same thing and you were sent home by some of the places you worked at. So his parents must really hope that he gets to stay and work here." He said, "I am helping him, but he would be counting things and forget how many he has counted." He was referring to doing the inventory. That guy also had no clue about which days were workdays and would show up for work on his day off if someone hadn't reminded him beforehand. L said, "Mom, I am trying hard to teach him, but it doesn't seem to be working." I told him to be more patient, and he said that he was being very patient but that guy was hopeless. So the store sent that guy home after just 1 week on the job. What I am trying to say is that L sees himself as very capable and he does his share at the store.

He was also named a Star Employee, which made him very happy. He has put the picture up on the wall. That helped boost his confidence. From the perspective of the manager, L is an employee being cared for (laughing), but he can do almost everything, which can't have been easy for him. So the manager likes that about him, and I am not complaining. There are many kids out there who have difficulty acquiring hands-on skills.

So if he likes something, his brain goes into overdrive about it. But if he doesn't like something, he doesn't bother applying hands-on skills. Take cooking, for example. I have the feeling that he likes it. Why? He used to watch a lot of cooking shows in his free time—I would have sent him to a culinary school if I had realized that about him earlier.

Q: Does he cook at home?

L's mother: (Laughing) Not really. He prefers to see others cook. I asked him if he could do everything at the store and he said, "Yes." He does make pizza, appetizers, and whatnot in the kitchen area. He knows how to cook at home, but I don't ask him to do it.

He did cook last time. Actually, I am not sure if he did the cooking or asked a co-worker to come over and cook. He posted pictures on WeChat of the dishes, including shredded potato. I wasn't home. He said he did the cooking (laughing), so maybe he did, more or less.

Q: Does he have a girlfriend now?

L's mother: I am not sure about a girlfriend. There was a female co-worker who was pretty close to him and they talked quite a bit. You can go ask around at the store. I asked what the girl sees in him, and L said that the girl seems to have a disability

certificate too. I don't exactly know what is going on and have never met the girl. But last time when we had that meeting, the girl's mom went too. I asked L what disability the girl has, and he said she got the disability certificate almost as a joke, so I couldn't pursue the topic with the girl's mom, could I? That's why I said maybe you can find out more about it for me (laughing).

Q: Did the girl's mom say that they are dating?

L's mother: No, she didn't. At the meeting, all of the parents were asked to introduce themselves, so I said I am L's mom and L is from D store, and she said her kid is from D store, too. People then assumed that we knew each other since our kids both worked at D store, and I had to tell them that I didn't know her. When he came back, he said that I had met that girl's mom. I said, "How come she has a disability certificate too?" And he said she has no real disability and the certificate isn't for real. So I don't know... the priority is to do a good job at work.

It's not that I am against him going out with that girl. If they like each other, I won't stop them from being together. They both have disabilities, and it's perfectly normal for them to hang out and have fun. I said, "Mommy wants you to be happy and hopes that you can find someone you really click with, someone who is smarter than you are and who knows how to live a good life with you. Otherwise I would worry." He doesn't have a dad anymore, so he needs someone who is real family, right?

I have always hoped that he can be good and live a good life. It's not my choice to have a child like him. But I am lucky, because there are other kids who are smart but who get into so much trouble out there. They are rebellious and seldom home, and the parents end up paying back money they owe other people. I would rather have L than those kids. He knows what he is doing, so I have peace of mind every day. He never asks for a penny from us and can support himself, so that's good enough, right? What more can I expect of him?

Q: Does he have any friends he interacts with online?

L's mother: He doesn't use the computer much at home. He leaves his laptop at the store so he can play on it when he is on break. He is very good on the computer and plays games on it too, but not very often. He chats on his cell phone most of the time—he's good at chatting. By that, I mean typing into the phone, and he has absolutely no problem talking about this or that.

Q: Does he have any other interests?

L's mother: There's nothing he is really good at, and he doesn't have many interests. When he comes home from work, there isn't much for him to do, so he is on the phone a lot. Or maybe the computer is something he is really good at.

He is turning 30 soon, and there are certain things that other 30-year-olds can do but he can't. But he is a good person and can take good care of himself. I don't have to worry about him, so I am pretty happy about that.

That's probably all I can say about him. You can check with the store to see how he is doing at work. We have done our best helping him one baby step at a time, ever since he was young. We had no choice but to spend more time on him than parents would have spent on a kid without disability.

Interview with L's Co-Worker

Interviewee: Ms. W

Interviewers: Qianyu Lu and Mengyuan Yu

Writer: Mengyuan Yu

Interview date: December 9, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where L works

Q: Hello ma'am. How long have you worked here? Have you known L ever since each of you joined the store?

W: I have worked here for more than 4 years. L has been here for more than 3 years, which means that he joined after I had been here for more than 12 months. On his first day here, he stayed with me to learn making drinks. He worked alongside T. T got off at 4 p.m. but my shift was longer. So at a little after 5 p.m., I tested L on what he could do. He was also shown some materials that day, and he could answer almost all of the questions I asked. So I felt that he is pretty smart and has a good memory. And I told him, "Young man, you have a good brain."

Q: What about later? Did he continue apprenticing under you?

W: I wouldn't call it apprenticing. He just worked with me making drinks. Besides making drinks, he was picking up other skills. Take, for example, kneading and tossing pizza dough. No one exactly taught him. He just watched and gradually got the hang of it. He is very smart. Everything we do at the store, he learned to do it within several months. He can make drinks, appetizers, and pizza dough, he can also work at the service station. He fits into whatever workstation is open, and he works both inside and outside the kitchen area. Some lady quit several days ago and everyone takes turns filling in for her, so L was the one doing the dishes last Saturday and Sunday.

Q: So you have been working with L for a long time. Besides you, are there any other co-workers that L likes talking to?

W: A lot of us have been working here for a long time. I am actually relatively new, compared with those who have been here for 6 or 7 years. L was very quiet when he first joined and looked more like an introvert. After he had been here for a while and got to know everyone better, he would talk and joke when we are all taking a break. We all like him. He doesn't look talkative, but if you talk to him, he will open up.

L is good with computers. He used to work at a telecommunications company selling service packages. I've done that before and know that selling service packages requires a very good memory, because it's very troublesome to correct mistakes made. The first impression he gives people is that he can't speak clearly, but he is actually very smart.

Q: What do you normally chat about?

W: We don't chat much about our lives, because young people have their own lives. We sometimes talk about our parents. Last time we asked him, "L, what do you do at home on the weekend?" And he would tell us about cooking at home and

helping around the house. I said, “You are a good guy and whoever marries you is the lucky one.” (laughing) I say what I think, so I hope you don’t mind.

Q: Besides chatting when you are all taking a break, do you go out together to have fun on your days off?

W: We don’t have the time to go out for fun. We eat at different hours at the store. I normally eat at 2:30 p.m., he eats at 2:30 p.m. sometimes and 3 p.m. other times. After lunch, we would take a walk outside or rest a little before having to get back to work. So we don’t have the time to go out together for fun.

We had a manager before whom we called Big Cai. He took all of us out to eat a couple of times and to karaoke as well. L went to the karaoke, too, but I left early because I live quite far, so I didn’t hear him sing. But everyone had a good time, including L.

Q: Is that so? At this store, is L the only employee being cared for?

W: There’s another employee being cared for and his name is Y. He was sitting in the kitchen. He is mute, but very smart too. There was a competition for kneading and tossing pizza dough, and he won a prize. L doesn’t specialize in kneading and tossing pizza dough, so he didn’t compete. The two of them get along very well.

Q: We heard that there was a female employee being cared for working here before and that she is L’s girlfriend. Is that true?

W: So you heard about that. It’s like fate for the two of them. Before they became a couple, we were joking and saying that it would be great if the two of them could get together. L was still saying back then that it was impossible. So they ended up together and it’s predestined. That girl is very nice to him, and he is nice to her. They look very loving together (laughing), and they are a really good couple.

When they used to work together, because L is older than that girl, that girl would call him “elder brother.” She talked a lot and often said, “Elder brother, I have this and that going on.” Because of her, L started talking more. So they are meant to be together and I am sure they will last.

That girl is a good person and knows what she is doing. If they needed someone in the dining area, she would be there. Sometimes she would work the whole day from when the store opened to late at night. I used to worry that employees being cared for might be difficult, but in reality, both of the employees being cared for at our store are very good. For example, when customers come in, employees being cared for can do as good a job as any other employee telling the customers about our new products and things like that.

Q: What does L mainly do at the store?

W: There’s no specific work assigned to him at the store right now. For example, when it gets busy on Sunday, he will help at the service station where food baked in the oven is sent out. There’s someone kneading and tossing pizza dough who gets off at 4 p.m., so if an extra hand is needed at night, L will knead and toss pizza dough. Wherever he is needed, he will go. He does delivery too. But he can’t see well at night and has difficulty getting around. But he is willing to do delivery.

Q: Has any customer ever given him a hard time, or complimented him on a job well done?

W: He seldom comes to the dining area if there are a lot of customers. He mostly works in the kitchen because a lot needs to be done there since that's where the customer orders are filled. He works where the ovens are and pizzas are all baked in the ovens, right? He will make occasional mistakes, but no one is perfect, so it's very normal and overall, he is a very good worker.

Q: Do you have anything to say to L or to him and his girlfriend?

W: Get married soon. That will make parents on both sides happy. That girl is very easygoing, too, and seldom gets upset about anything. So they are a good couple.

Q: It's great that everyone can be happy. Thank you for the interview today.

W: You are welcome.

Interview with Mr. L

Interviewee: Mr. L

Interviewers: Qianyu Lu and Mengyuan Yu

Writer: Qianyu Lu

Interview date: December 9, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where L works

Q: Which school did you graduate from?

L: Elementary school or middle school?

Q: The most recent one.

L: The most recent one... For middle school, I went to Shanghai Yucai Middle school (telling the interviewers how to spell the school's name) After middle school, I went to a vocational school where... Xietu Road crosses Dong'an Road, in Xuhui District.

Q: What was your major at the vocational school?

L: Business administration.

Q: How old were you when you started vocational school?

L: Vocational school... I was only 21 or 22. I was at the school for 3 years.

Q: Was the vocational school very far from where you lived?

L: Not too far. I commuted on the subway every day and it was pretty fast.

Q: How long did it take you one way?

L: One way... about 20 min.

Q: Do you remember anything from school?

L: Not really (laughing).

Q: Was there anything that was memorable?

L: Ah... no.

Q: For business administration, what classes did you take?

L: The most basic ones, like Chinese, math, and English. There were also computer classes.

Q: Did the school organize any activities?

L: Activities... not really. Just... some physical exercises.

Q: Were there any field trips?

L: There were a lot of field trips in spring and fall, from elementary school to middle school to the vocational school.

Q: Do you remember where you went on those trips?

L: There was... Shanghai Wild Animal Park, and Dongfang Oasis. There was also... also...

Q: It's okay if you can't recall. Do you remember having any friends back then who were close?

L: Close friends... there was... just one. We are still in contact. From vocational school.

Q: What did you guys do together? Did you play games or go out for fun?

L: We went out for fun most of the time.

Q: Where does he work now?

L: He works in wastewater management, in Pudong.

Q: So you started working right after graduation. Where was your first job?

L: At a supermarket, Carrefour.

Q: How did you go to work back then?

L: I rode the electric bike. It's easy going there along Xincun Road.

Q: How long did it take approximately?

L: It was fast on the electric bike, about 10 min.

Q: Your mom said that you have always been very interested in computers. Are you very good with the computer?

L: I am not that good with the computer (laughing). I just type fast.

Q: When you are on the computer, do you normally play games or watch TV shows?

L: I do everything, like watching TV shows, chatting, and playing games.

Q: What do you like to watch?

L: Period shows and kung fu shows.

Q: Do you have any favorite movies or TV shows?

L: Favorite... I like everything that is dramatic.

Q: What have you watched recently?

L: Recently... I was watching... that one starring Liying Zhao on www.iqiyi.com.

Q: Do you go out with friends to watch movies?

L: I used to do that a lot, but hardly do it now.

Q: Is it because you're busy with work?

L: I am busy with work, so I don't have a lot of time to go watch movies.

Q: What do you do when you get back home from work?

L: At home... I sweep the floor and help around the house.

Q: How many days do you have off every week?

L: One day a week when it's busy at the store, 2 days a week when it's not busy.

Q: You do pretty much everything in the kitchen now. What do you do best at?

L: Do best at... I wouldn't call it "best." It's more like... I started with the simplest, which is drinks. So I started with making drinks, then moved on to making appetizers, and then to pizza.

Q: Which one do you like making most?

L: Like most... I like making pizza most.

Q: How long does it take for you to make one pizza?

L: About 4 or 5 min.

Q: That's very fast. Do you cook at home sometimes?

L: I do, both rice and some kind of dish.

Q: We heard that you have a girlfriend now. Do you mind us asking about this?

L: I do, and I don't mind.

Q: You met her at this store, did you? How did you get together with her?

L: We got along well...

Q: What do you like about her?

L: Like about her... She is kind, generous, and treats her parents well.

Q: Did she work in the kitchen too?

L: She actually worked both in the kitchen and dining area, and wherever they needed an extra hand (laughing).

Q: Did she join this store later than you?

L: She joined earlier than I did... by 2 years.

Q: So she is around your age?

L: Two years younger. She was born in 1991.

Q: So you have known each other for a long time.

L: We have, but we have been dating for just a little over 1 year.

Q: Has your mom met this girl?

L: She has, but they don't meet often. We just eat out together and go shopping afterwards.

Q: Have you met this girl's parents?

L: Her parents... yes.

Q: You ate out together too?

L: Right.

Q: Have the parents on both sides met?

L: Not yet.

Q: Do you plan to continue with her and eventually get married?

L: I do.

Q: She isn't working at this store right now, is she?

L: No. She was transferred to another store.

Q: Why was she transferred?

L: Why (laughing)... She had an argument with the store manager and got transferred.

Q: How do you see each other now? And how do you contact her?

L: We usually use WeChat. And if I get off work early, I would go to her place.

Q: It's nice that you can go to her place.

L: Yeah.

Q: What do you do when you are together?

L: Watch TV and movies... She doesn't play a lot of computer games, only those that are good for the brain and good for relaxation.

Q: You are already thinking about marriage. Do you have any expectations or plans for the future?

L: Expectations... not yet.
 Q: But you will continue to work here?
 L: Yes.
 Q: That’s pretty much it. Thank you! You should probably get back to work?
 L: Yeah, no worries.

Observation of L at Work¹

Observation date: 12:00–22:20, December 9, 2016
 Observation place: Restaurant where L works
 Observer and writer: Qianyu Lu

Time	What L did	Remarks
12:00–13:00	Made pizza and baked rice in the kitchen	Focused and skillful at work
13:00–13:30	Rested in the break room as there was no work to do for a while	While the observer was interviewing a co-worker, he came out of the kitchens and watched from a distance
13:30–13:45	Organized unused food ingredients, dinnerware, and takeout orders in the kitchen	After he was done with the organizing, he came out of the kitchen again to watch the observer’s interview
13:45–14:10	Returned to the kitchen to give the packed food to the delivery person. New customers arrived and he started making cheese sticks, pizza, and chicken wings	
14:10–14:25	Boiled a large pot of noodles to prepare for the evening	
14:25–15:05	Made spaghetti	Was quiet for most of the time and talked with co-workers only occasionally
15:05–16:30	Returned to the break room	Has a 90-min break every day
16:30–16:45	Returned to the kitchen to make preparations, made pizza shells that were subsequently put in the oven	Was very fast at making pizza. While his co-workers would talk, he was very focused and quiet
16:45–18:10	Customers started arriving in the dining area. L made pizza and appetizers in the kitchen. The store was busy during dinner hours	Seemed a little lost when there was temporarily nothing to do. Would just look at the co-workers

(continued)

¹On weekdays, L doesn’t have a fixed workstation. Instead, he works wherever help is needed. On weekends, he kneads and tosses pizza dough and makes appetizers. According to the manager, he isn’t different from other employees except that he doesn’t talk much to those he doesn’t know well and keeps to himself a lot. There’s nothing wrong with his mind, he knows a lot about computers and will open up after some time. He is serious about what he does, and doesn’t despair about life or suffer low self-esteem. By talking to him and watching him, the observer feels that L isn’t much different from people without disabilities. He is more of an introvert, but he speaks clearly and has no difficulty expressing himself. He often gives a shy smile after he has spent some time in someone’s company.

(continued)

Time	What L did	Remarks
18:10	In the dining area, moved rubber boxes used to transport dinnerware	
19:00–19:55	Things quieted down after the peak dining hours. In the kitchen, L cleaned up and refilled ingredients, and filled orders as they came in	Chatted with co-workers when approached
19:55	Co-worker asked for L's help in baking chicken wings	
20:00	Started cleaning up ingredients and organizing dinnerware before sending it to the washing room. Wiped down the work counters and shelves in the ovens	
20:10	Co-workers in the kitchen who were clocking off reminded L of what he needed to wrap up, which ingredients needed to be refilled and which had already been refilled. L continued to organize and gather sauces	
20:14–20:50	Made pizza for a takeout order. Cleaned up the work counter and refilled ingredients needed for the next day	
21:00	Wrapped up and helped transport food needed for the next day	Worked hard and hardly talked to any co-worker
22:20	Cleaned up own belongings in the break room and punched out	

Translated by Cissy Zhao

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

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Hope to Visit Co-Worker's Hometown



Qi Lin and Yi Zhang

Interview with Mr. H's Family

H, male, born in 1991. The only child in the family. Mild intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school—Shanghai Zhonghua Primary Vocational and Technical School in 2009 and started working at Shanghai Papa John's in the same year.

Interviewees: H's parents

Interviewers and writers: Qi Lin, Yi Zhang

Interview date: August 18, 2016

Interview place: H's home

Poor Health After Choking on Amniotic Fluid

Q: Did you two meet while working at Shanghai No. 2 Socks Factory?

H's father: We did.

Q: When did you get married?

H's parents: On May 20, 1990.

Q: How long after that did you have your first child?

H's mother: We only have one child. We got married in 1990, I was pregnant 3 months later and had H in 1991.

Q: When did you find out that the child was in poor health?

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H's father: He choked on amniotic fluid when he was born. The original plan was a C-section which would not have caused him any harm. Then the doctor wanted to manually break the water. She had hypertension throughout the pregnancy, and 2 weeks before the due date, the doctor had her hospitalized. Once she was stabilized, the doctor wanted a natural birth. The doctor we had been seeing was off duty and another one was in charge who said that she was young enough to have a natural birth. On the day the baby was born, her blood pressure was normal, so the doctor decided to manually break the water for a natural birth. When she was 10 cm open and ready for birth under normal circumstances, her blood pressure suddenly shot up and the doctor realized that C-section was still the way to go. So, she had a C-section. Because of the long delay, the amniotic fluid went into the baby's lungs. It wasn't too bad, and we didn't see anything wrong with the baby when he was first born. She was discharged first and the baby stayed another 2 weeks in the hospital.

Q: Was H in poor health when he was young?

H's mother: He always had asthma.

Q: He did?

H's father: Yeah, ever since he was young. He has outgrown it now. He had it because of having choked on amniotic fluid. He was on medication for a long time when he was young.

H's mother: We took him to the hospital a lot.

H's father: He saw countless doctors. Because of his having choked on amniotic fluid, we never gave him anything cold to eat or any seafood, and we took him to see doctors everywhere.

Q: Which hospitals did you take him to?

H's father: I can't even remember them all. He has seen both traditional Chinese doctors and Western-style doctors, and has been to No. 6 People's Hospital on South Zhongshan Road. We used to live with my mother-in-law and there were many hospitals around where she lived. We also took him to see experienced doctors on Huaihai Road and traditional Chinese doctors at Ruijin Hospital. He has seen so many doctors. Because he choked on amniotic fluid, his lungs were always sub-healthy and he suffered from really bad coughing whenever he had a cold.

H's mother: We were living in Putuo District then, and neighbors in the old-style public housing all knew that he had choked on amniotic fluid when he was born and that we were taking him to see doctors everywhere. My husband and I had a tough time when he was young and we were literally hospital hopping. As soon as we heard good things said about some hospital, we would rush him there. Fortunately, his asthma was gradually cured and once he started school, he seldom had tracheitis or anything like that.

H's father: He was on white fish oil ever since he was born, until...

H's mother: ...until it wasn't available anymore.

H's father: He was on it till he turned 18 or 19.

H's mother: Right, till he was almost grown up.

Q: So, he always had supplements when he was young?

H's father: We gave him whatever supplements there were available when he was young.

H's mother: Back then, the white fish oil was a really good supplement, but they don't make it anymore in China. That was a really good thing and I am not trying to sell it. H was on it till he was almost 20, and then it was not available anymore. I wish I could still give it to him now.

H's father: It was good for the eyes and for physical growth.

Q: Who recommended that supplement to you?

H's father: We were living in the old-style housing then. Someone told me that his kid had a poor immune system but had been in good health because he had always taken white fish oil. It was in fact Jiang who told me that. He had an operation on his abdomen and his kid was a middle school graduate, too. He had always given him white fish oil to boost his immune system. So, I started giving H the supplement after talking to that guy.

H's mother: White fish oil tasted awful (laughing).

H's father: It smelt very fishy.

H's mother: Very, very fishy. Most of the kids wouldn't want to take it after they had gone through just one bottle.

H's father: But we forced H to take it.

H's mother: Our child listened to us well. We told him the fish oil was for his own good. We said, "You will have to take medicines for treatment and medicines are no fun to take. Just see this as a medicine—it's better than getting shots which could be painful."

Q: Did he take any other supplements?

H's mother: Not really...Oude Brain Booster!

H's father: Oude Brain Booster and there's another one...We gave him quite a few.

Q: What did that one do?

H's mother: It treated the brain.

H's father: It was good for brain development.

Q: Who recommended the brain booster?

H's mother: No one exactly recommended it. A co-worker of mine said that her kid took it, and I figured that since my kid wasn't the smartest...

H's father: There's another one, *Tiantian Xiangshang*.

H's mother: Right, *Tiantian Xiangshang*.

Q: What was it? An oral solution or a pill?

H's father: Pill.

Q: Was it recommended by a co-worker too?

H's mother: We heard about all of them from other people, and we would give H what other people said was good. He wasn't on this one long-term. We heard about it and tried a treatment course with him which we didn't think was effective. So, we would just give it to him before exams to stimulate his brain.

H's father: A neighbor told us about Oude Brain Booster.

H's mother: An old neighbor of ours mentioned it, so we tried it with H. But we didn't keep up with it and eventually stopped. So H took Oude Brain Booster and *Tiantian Xiangshang*, but mostly the white fish oil.

Q: Does he still take supplements now?

H's father: Not really.

H's mother: He doesn't take any supplements now. Just regular meals, three times a day.

Q: When did his health start to improve?

H's father: When he was young... his health improved once he started school. When he was about five or six and in preschool, his health started to improve.

Tagging Along in Third Grade

Q: How did you find out about his intellectual disability later?

H's father: We could tell nothing when he was in preschool and the teachers all said that he was doing okay. In first grade, he did well at academics and came in second in the mental math competition. He was good at calculations. Then he started falling behind in second grade, and we realized that something was wrong during the second half of the school year.

H's mother: He was doing okay in first grade.

Q: Were you worried about what would happen as he got to higher grades? What went through your mind?

H's father: I didn't know what to think when he started falling behind in second grade.

Q: Which subjects was he falling behind in?

H's father: Chinese. Actually math, too, when he was in second grade. The homeroom teacher asked us to take him for an IQ test.

Q: So it was the teacher who asked you to take him for an IQ test? Where did you take him for that?

H's mother: We took him to No. 1 People's Maternity and Infant Hospital, on Renmin Road, which was the designated place.

Q: And what were the results?

H's father: The results were bad.

H's mother: He scored a little over 40. The average was 70, but our kid only scored 45.

Q: How did you react?

H's father: There was nothing we could do about it. We knew that he choked on amniotic fluid when he was born which must have affected him. So, starting third grade, he was just doing the LRC (learning in regular classroom).

Q: Doing the LRC?

H's father: What happened was that the teacher felt that our kid was dragging the whole class down. There was competition among teachers, and our kid was lowering the average grades of the class.

H's mother: So, the teacher talked to us and we agreed in writing to have H just do the LRC. He would attend classes and take exams as usual, but his grades would not count towards the average grades of the class. Since the teacher talked to us nicely, we figured we should not let H drag the whole class down.

H's father: When he was at school, he liked chatting with other kids. The teacher didn't do a good job arranging his seat in the class. If he had no chance to talk to anyone in class, he would have paid more attention to the teaching, instead of always turning back to chat with other kids.

From first grade to third grade, it was almost as if I was going to school with him because I watched him so closely. When he was young, we seldom let him out of the house, because if we didn't maintain a close watch, he would fall behind at school. If we hadn't had to work and had spent more time on him, he could have kept up somehow. When he was in third grade, I went back to work every other day. So, I could watch him one day and couldn't the next day. When I wasn't watching, he wouldn't study. The teacher said that he was hyperactive. In a low-income family like ours, we had to work. We needed to spend time on him, but we also needed to feed ourselves.

H's mother: He had no self-discipline.

H's father: If you didn't watch him, he wouldn't do his homework. If you watched him, he would do a little.

The best way was to have someone go to school with him to keep a watch on him.

H's mother: I did that, till third grade.

H's father: But I didn't think it would have worked in the long term.

Q: Did the teacher ask you to go to school with him, or did you propose it yourself?

H's father: It was our own idea. The teacher didn't want any parent to go to school with the kid.

H's mother: I had no choice. When he was going to Yongmou Road Elementary School, his homeroom teacher was close to me. Once I sat in for one of the classes. And I told the teacher to teach me first if H failed to learn and that I would teach him once we got back home.

Q: So, you did go to school with him?

H's mother: Not all the time. Just occasionally, when there were seats available in the classroom.

H's father: The teacher would keep him behind after class and teach him again.

Q: Has H been transferred between schools?

H's mother: He has been to only two elementary schools, the other one being Anmou Road Elementary School.

H's father: Anmou Road Elementary School was later merged into Yongmou Road Elementary School and H went there till fourth grade. Then we were relocated to where we live now from the old housing near Old Ximen, in 2002.

H's mother: He was in fifth grade when we moved here. He went to Shangnan Special Education School for fifth grade and had another IQ test.

H's father: Teachers here said that everything was normal with him.

Q: Why did you move him to a special education school? Did some teacher suggest it?

H's father: After we moved here, we tried to transfer him to Youyou Elementary School so that we could drop him off and pick him up every day while still keeping our jobs. The principal of Youyou Elementary School didn't want him, not even for LRC.

Q: Why didn't he want H?

H's father: Because H would drag the whole class down. So the principal didn't want him and referred him to the special education school.

H's mother: He had to continue going to school. He definitely couldn't drop out and stay home.

Q: Do you remember exactly how he got into that school?

H's father: With a referral from the principal.

H's mother: My mom and I took H there. We were asked where H had gone to school before, and I said, "Yongmou Road Elementary School. We were relocated by the government, and the kid has to have a place to go. Yongmou Road Elementary School has tried to keep him, but it's too far and my husband and I have to work and can't drop him off and pick him up from that school every day. Staying at that school just won't work."

Q: So you dropped him off and picked him up from school all the time when he was young?

H's father: Everyday.

H's mother: I was the one picking him up. I was staying home and not working back then.

Q: Besides falling behind in academics, did the teachers say anything negative about him?

H's father: The teachers had no problem with him in anything else. The main issue was that his grades were dragging the whole class down.

Q: How did he get along with other kids at elementary school?

H's father: So-so. Because he wasn't very smart, the other kids didn't like playing with him.

H's mother: The other kids all discriminated against him.

Q: Was he outgoing when he was young?

H's father: He was pretty outgoing.

H's mother: Right, he has always had a good personality.

Q: Would he come home upset about things at school?

H's father: Not exactly. He was really naughty and we had always believed that there were things he just couldn't get. So, we would keep telling him to try hard at school and he was good at acknowledging that.

A Student Leader at Special Education School

Q: Did H change once he was in the special education school?

H's father: He became a student leader at the new school, because the other kids had disabilities more severe than his. At the school, he picked up a lot of things even without being taught.

H's mother: A lot of the things he had learnt at the regular schools before.

Q: Was the curriculum the same at the special education school as at regular schools?

H's father: It was simpler at the special education school. Actually, H found it too simple. Because he had a relatively solid foundation, his grades were very good at the new school. The teacher liked to give him responsibilities. He would tutor other kids sometimes and the teacher said he was acting like a young teacher. When the teacher was absent, he would be teaching the other kids.

H's mother: Actually, the special education school only covered the curriculum from first grade through third grade, which he had already learnt at the regular schools.

H's father: That's why the teacher said that H should have been attending a regular school.

H's mother: But the regular school didn't want him! Yongmou Road Elementary School told me that H could stay there if he was rejected by Youyou Elementary School, but I figured that if he had stayed at the original school, we would have no way of dropping him off and picking him up every day and we wouldn't feel comfortable having him go to Puxi for school himself which was very far. So we preferred a school that was closer by. And he had another IQ test while going to the special education school.

Q: In which year was that?

H's father: In 2006.

H: The test seemed to be simpler the second time round. I looked at the math problems and was asked if I could solve them. I connected some lines and scored 64. It went better the second time and I was pretty happy with it.

H's mother: Right, he scored above 60. The first time he scored only 45 when he was going to Yongmou Road Elementary School. It was a very low score which implied that his disability wasn't that mild. After we moved here, we took him for another assessment.

Q: How did you feel about the score going up from around 40 to above 60?

H's father: The primary feeling was that our kid wouldn't be able to keep up with other kids. I can't exactly describe it. But what's there to do? He choked on amniotic fluid which must have affected him. And to put it bluntly, what will he do when we get old? He was going to school then and we just hoped that he would get a decent education. When he scored above 60 on the IQ test, we felt better because we figured that it meant he would be better at self-dependence.

Q: What subjects did H like better when he was going to school?

H: Math, English, and PE too.

H's mother: PE? You weren't good at PE.

H's father: He did well in PE at the special education school. He won many prizes and a dozen or so certificates of merit. He had never won any of those at the regular schools.

Q: What were the certificates of merit for?

H's father: For sports meets and reading.

H's mother: As parents, we were happy to see the kid's certificates of merit. They meant something, so we have saved all of them just in case we need to show them someday.

Q: Which events did H excel at in PE?

H: Tug of war, jump rope, and basketball.

Q: Were you on the school team?

H: No.

Q: Which sports do you like to do now?

H: Running.

Q: Is it a habit?

H: I ran all the time at school and competed too.

Q: Has H participated in any Special Olympics activities?

H's father: No.

Q: Were there any schoolmates or good friends who participated in Special Olympics activities?

H's mother: When he was going to Shangnan Special Education School, there was a kid with the last name Xu. He was 1 year above H and very famous. He was of a stronger build.

Q: Was he famous for participation in Special Olympics activities?

H's mother: He was well known and even went abroad. He met with the Prime Minister of Britain, an elderly lady.

Q: Did he and H know each other?

H's mother: Not well.

Q: Did he have good friends at the special education school?

H's mother: He did. The friend calls him often, even now.

H's father: Our son was probably the best student at the special education school. There's a kid whose disability was slightly more severe than H's. His mom worked at a textile factory. We talked when her son called. His last name is Chen.

Q: Are the two of them close?

H's father: They are. His mom is a manager at the factory and always says that H is very capable and understands everything.

H's father: He called quite often for a while. Now he seems to be working...

H's mother: He seems to have a job too, managing a warehouse.

H's father: His mom is a manager, so she got him that job. What she seemed to be telling me was that he wasn't doing as well as H. She said herself, "Chen is always talking about H, saying that H helped him with schoolwork and taught him this and that."

H's mother: He is a nice kid, very courteous.

H's father: He is indeed nice. Because he was taller and stronger than H, he would beat up anyone else who was taller and stronger than H and who wanted to bully him.

H's mother: He told me over the phone that he would protect H.

Q: After leaving the special education school, would H and Chen go out with other schoolmates on weekends?

H's father: Not really, because H was the only one from the special education school who got into the primary vocational school. The special education school offered 9 years' free education. H was there for 4 years. After graduation, he got admitted into the primary vocational school because he had some smarts.

A Car Accident

Q: Was the special education school far from home?

H's mother: He needed to be dropped off, too. At first I dropped him off at school, then I dropped him off at the bus station. I would watch him get on Line 782 at South Yanggao Road stop.

Q: How long did it take to get to school?

H's mother: It took us 20 min just to get to the bus station. So it would take at least 40 min one way.

Q: H has no problem taking care of himself in daily life, right? Like knowing his way around and interacting with others.

H's father: He has no problem. He had a car accident on his way home one day. He was hit by a car...

Q: When was that?

H's father: It was either in 2003 or 2002...

H's mother: It was in 2002, the year we moved here. Let me tell the story. I recall it happened on May 8, 2002.

He started at the school in February and I had been dropping him off and picking him up for the ensuing 3 months. In May, I figured that he was old enough for me to just drop him off at the bus station and pick him up there in the evening. So I talked to the teacher who agreed to escort him to the bus station across from the school for him to get on the bus. It worked out for me since I wouldn't have to commute so far everyday myself and could save on bus fare. School was out at 4 p.m., so I would wait at the bus station before 4 p.m. and could normally pick him up pretty soon.

On May 8, I waited at the bus station and saw all the other kids come back except for H. The kids couldn't exactly tell me what happened except that my son had been taken away by the police. I couldn't figure out why. School had just resumed after the May 1st long holiday. I was starting to panic while still waiting in vain. Then another kid arrived who was better at telling me what happened.

The teacher did escort the kids to the bus station across from the school. On May 8, however, she got a little lazy because she was pregnant. Or maybe she wasn't being lazy. She just figured that kids crossing the street in a group should be okay. The teacher later apologized to me saying that she had been taking H across the street herself every time except for that one time. Since the teacher wasn't there, H and another kid ran into the street and a jeep carrying people from Beijing to a meeting in Shanghai hit him and he went flying.

H's father: And had a bone broken.

H's mother: The teacher immediately took him to Punan Hospital. By the time I knew about it, it was almost 5 p.m. I had not a penny on me when I was waiting at the bus station, so I went home first. By the time I got home, the school had already called. My husband was at work and not home. H's grandma was still alive then, but she was getting confused and couldn't understand much about the phone call except that it seemed to be from the teacher and that H had been taken to Punan Hospital.

My husband came back then and we went to Punan Hospital together. H was already there for treatment.

The traffic police said that the jeep from Beijing and the school were trying to blame each other for the accident and that it went on for a long time. According to people in the jeep, my son was running wild in the street, and the teacher escorting the kids to the bus station turned back to school even before the kids had reached the other side of the street.

Q: Was H badly injured?

H's mother: Very much so and he still has the scar from the accident. (Pointing to H's leg) A steel plate was placed there and wasn't removed till a year later.

Q: Where else was he hurt?

H's mother: Nothing serious elsewhere. People said that he actually got lucky, because the car that hit him was a good performance one. Had it been a crappy car, H might have sustained even worse injuries.

H's father: He got one of his teeth knocked out, too.

H's mother: When we saw him at the hospital, he had blood all over his face and I was so scared. I didn't know what was going to happen, seeing his broken leg dangling there. His schoolmate only had some scrapes. H was the one with the real injuries. And it was a pretty major accident.

H's father: Yes, a major accident. People in the jeep from Beijing wouldn't take responsibility and wanted to drive off, and Shanghai No. 7 Traffic Corps held the car on Yuntai Road. Then we sued them and won, and got them to come to apologize.

H's mother: They came to our place to check on H.

H's father: That was several months later.

H's mother: Yes, several months had passed. We wrote a letter to appeal.

Q: You wrote a letter to appeal? Who did you address the letter to?

H's mother: To the workplace where the jeep belonged.

H's father: It was their fault hitting H with the car and they should take full responsibility. We wrote to the workplace. They received our letter, replied and sent people to visit us to apologize later.

Q: In which month did the reply come?

H's mother: It was already hot. He had the accident in May, so the reply probably came in August.

H's father: I still have the letter in a drawer.

Q: Was H hospitalized?

H's father: He was, for a long time, more than a month. After he was discharged from the hospital, he rested for several months at home and couldn't go to school. The steel plate was removed 1 year later and he was hospitalized for close to a month for that.

H's mother: The doctor said that he had recovered well upon removal of the steel plate. We were worried that his legs would be of uneven lengths as a result of the accident, so we minimized his movements when he had the steel plate on. His leg turned out to be okay and doesn't affect his work or anything else at all.

Q: How many months did he take off after the accident?

H's mother: He had the accident in May and school was out in July. After the summer vacation, he went back to school on September 1st.

Q: So, he went back to school as soon as the school year started?

H's mother: Right, and the teacher took good care of him, always telling him to be careful and try not to have anyone bump into him. He still had the steel plate in, so it could have been dangerous if someone pushed him. The school was actually responsible for the accident to a certain degree. If the teacher had taken the kids across the street, whatever happened to the kids after that would have had nothing to do with the school.

Q: Once he returned to school after the accident, did the teacher escort him to the bus station like before? And did you continue to pick him up at the bus station?

H's mother: I still dropped him off at the bus station every morning for him to go to school himself.

Q: So nothing else happened after that, right?

H's mother: Nothing else.

Q: The hospital stay must have been costly. Were you stressed out financially?

H's father: We were both working back then, and we didn't get too much in compensation.

Q: What about the medical expenses?

H's mother: We paid for everything. What else could we have done? We had to get treatment for H. Someone at the hospital told us to wait for those people from Beijing to pay. But we couldn't afford to wait because H's broken leg was literally dangling there. The doctor said that before H could be treated, the hospital had to receive some payment upfront, wherever that payment came from. We just wanted H to get treated as soon as possible, and as for the medical expenses, we would cover it ourselves if we had to, even if we had to borrow money.

H's father: We received some compensation.

H's mother: Those people from Beijing came to our street as some kind of token gesture. Our family had financial hardship since I had been laid off in as early as 1996.

H's father: I was laid off in 2000 and signed an agreement on insurances after retirement.

H's mother: I was a contracted worker. Once the contract was terminated, I receive no pension.

H's father: Our factory was shut down and no one had a job and we were all sent out there to fare for ourselves. Because our family had financial hardship to start with and was receiving low-income subsidies, the Community Affairs Committee referred me to work as a helper for people with disabilities¹ and she went to work in home care.

Q: When did you start working as a helper for people with disabilities?

¹Helper for the disabled: Officially known as "Assistant to Community Works for the Disabled People." It's one of the practical projects of the Shanghai Municipal Government in 2004. Mainly males under 50 and females under 45 were recruited for this job, who are unemployed certified disabled people with mild physical disabilities or low vision, unemployed direct family members living with a disabled person or manpower in rural area from a family with financial difficulties..

H's father: I started in 2005.

H's mother: So it's been more than 10 years.

Q: What do helpers like you normally do?

H's father: I mainly manage things for people with disabilities.

H's mother: He means that he works for the Community Affairs Committee.

H's father: Yes, I do. We mainly service people with disabilities. The Community Affairs Committee needed someone to issue disability certificates and update information as well as communicate with people.

Q: And you started working in home care after H's accident?

H's mother: That came much later. H had the accident in 2002 and I still had a job then. I was selling books. It was in 2004 that I switched to home care.

Learning to Make Appetizers After Getting into a Vocational School

Q: After graduating from the special education school, how did H decide to take the entrance exam for the primary vocational school?

H's father: The teacher said that he was good with his hands and with his mind as well and recommended that he go to a vocational school. But we were advised to hold him back a year because he was still too young then. Then another teacher, of the last name Zhu, said H should be fine. So we didn't wait a year and had him take the exam right away.

Q: What was the exam like?

H's mother: I went with him for the exam. He was asked to lift a huge wok, but since he had never done anything like that at home, he couldn't lift it up. The teacher said his arms were not strong enough. I said that given time, he could learn to make appetizers. I actually begged that teacher to give my child the opportunity of several more years' schooling so that he could be self-dependent and feed himself.

Q: So he was not tested on book knowledge?

H's father: No... Actually, he was tested on book knowledge at the same time.

Q: How did he do on that? Do you still remember?

H's father: He did very well.

H: It was pretty simple.

H's mother: Since his arms were not strong enough, he couldn't cook on the stovetop. So he was taught to make appetizers like pancakes and buns, and he made them at home, too.

Q: Which primary vocational school did he go to?

H's father: Zhonghua Primary Vocational School, on Pusan Road.

Q: Did the primary vocational school organize any activities?

H: It did, including field trips.

H's mother: We let him go on all of the trips. We encouraged him to participate in everything the school organized so that he could socialize with other kids.

Q: Was he happy at the primary vocational school learning to make appetizers?

H's mother: He was very happy. We wanted him to go to school and acquire some skills so that he could feed himself later. If he didn't go to school and stayed home instead, there's nothing we could do for him.

Q: When you were going to the primary vocational school, did you think about what you would do later in life?

H: I just wanted to make appetizers.

Q: So you were really interested in that and knew that you wanted to do that?

H's mother: He could also make steamed buns. We also made him do it at home for practice. He and his dad would lay out everything on the table. I had no idea what they were doing, and they got flour everywhere.

Q: So when H was going to the primary vocational school, his dad would find all kinds of opportunities for him to practice what he had learnt. What did H make best?

H: Matching dumplings.

Q: What's more difficult for you?

H: The bun with sticky rice inside.

Q: Why was that difficult to make?

H: Because the wrapping needed to be rolled and stretched, which wasn't easy.

H's mother: He could still make it but it would have taken more time. After he graduated from Zhonghua, he went directly to Papa John's.

H: I actually went to Novotel first.

H's mother: That was a 6-month internship at Novotel.

Q: Did the primary vocational school arrange that?

H's mother: They did. The school sent him to Novotel for a 6-month internship. After 6 months, he couldn't work there anymore and was sent back to us. As soon as he was done there, his teacher called us saying that Papa John's was hiring on campus and that we should dress him neat the next day so that he could be hired, as the school had a very limited number of referrals. It seemed that only a limited number was given to each school. The teacher said that she would recommend H. We are very grateful to Ms. Zhu, the teacher at the primary vocational school. She was very nice and very caring towards us.

Q: In which month was that?

H's mother: In June. And on June 30, he was hired by Papa John's.

Q: Let me ask a more specific question. Do you remember what he wore to the interview that day?

H: White T-shirt and jeans.

Q: Do you remember what you were tested on?

H: Making pizza and things like that.

Q: Where was the test held?

H: At school.

Q: What else was in the test?

H: I was asked several questions like whether I could toss pizza dough. The company headquarters used to be on Changshou Road, close to subway Line 7.

H's mother: He remembers much better than I do.

H: The address was 999 Changshou Road.

H's mother: We went with him to the headquarters but told him not to tell the trainer that, because we didn't want anyone to have the misunderstanding that he couldn't even be self-dependent enough to go to work on his own and had to be dropped off by his parents.

H's father: After the interview at the school, he was given a piece of paper on which to choose which store he preferred to go to. There were many stores including the one in Yaohan and another one on Chenshan Road. I figured that we should pick a good store. The one in Yaohan was very nice because of the location, so we picked that one and H worked there for many years.

H: It was inside Huachen Building on Zhangyang Road.

H's mother: After Yaohan was shut down, he was transferred to a store on Ershan Road which was close to the old Yaohan.

Q: When was he transferred to the store on Ershan Road?

H: It has been 2 years.

Q: Does he help around the house?

H's father: He is the only child and doesn't help around the house.

H's mother: We get everything done ourselves (laughing). When he was going to school, we wanted him to just focus on studies. He seldom helps around the house. It's not that he doesn't know how, we just don't let him. Now that he is working, he gets tired after work, which is all the more reason we don't let him help around the house. The thing is that I work in the neighborhood, going to elderly people's places to clean up and keep them company. So we are okay doing household work ourselves.

Two of my co-workers and some neighbors told me that I should let H cook for us, because he might have to do it one day when we are too old to cook ourselves. I said that we didn't feel like having him do it now and preferred to wait till later. My reasoning was that growing up, I didn't help around the house, but I can do everything now.

Hardworking and Outgoing

Q: H's job position is a little different, right? Is he called an employee being cared for?

H: That's what the company calls me.

H's mother: Joint ventures like Papa John's pick good students from vocational schools, which was why H was picked. He has a disability certificate and his intellectual disability is mild. Had it not been mild, for example, had it been Grade II intellectual disability, he wouldn't have been able to get a job. His is Grade IV, the mildest, which is why he can work. My husband manages things like that.

H's father: There are a total of four levels of intellectual disability. People with Grade III can get jobs, too. Grade II is considered severe disability, while Grade IV is the mildest.

H's mother: With only a mild disability, he can go to work. The school said that Papa John's wanted to hire kids like him and there were not many openings, because every school wanted to refer its own students. The teacher said to dress H up to make a good impression and, if he was hired, it would be free publicity for the school showing that its students could get jobs. So he ended up working at Papa John's.

Q: What did he do when he first joined the Papa John's store in Yaohan?

H: I worked at everything, in the kitchen and dining area, delivery and cashier. It was hard work at that store in Yaohan. I worked till very late every day, sometimes as late as 11 p.m.

H's mother: He looked exhausted when he came home. He would leave for work very early and come back very late. The neighbors all commented on how hard he worked, how early he left the house and how late he came back. It was indeed hard work.

Q: Do you like your job?

H: I do.

Q: So, you have liked it from the very beginning and didn't need time to get used to it right after graduation?

H: I didn't need time to get used to it because I liked making appetizers to begin with.

Q: Have you changed job positions?

H: Job positions... I make dough and things like that (see Fig. 1) .



Fig. 1 Mr. H at work

H's mother: He has always been at this job. He works a lot and there was a time when he almost worked every day, 365 days a year.

Q: Why?

H: Because there weren't enough employees.

Q: How many employees are there at the store?

H: Seven or eight employees, plus delivery people. So, a total of around ten. I used to work every day, now I work 1 day and get off earlier the next day.

Q: When do you normally go to work and get off work?

H: I normally go to work at 9 a.m. and get off at 10 p.m.

Q: Those are long hours. Do you get a lunch break?

H: I do, 1 h's break.

H's mother: If he works all-day shift, he will get to the store at 9 a.m. and punch out at 10 p.m., which is as late as he will work now. He worked all-day shift yesterday, today he got home earlier after a half-day shift, and tomorrow he will work all-day shift again.

H: Half-day shift is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

H's mother: He brings lunch every day now, because Papa John's doesn't provide lunch. They have no fixed work hours and start earlier some days and later other days. I prepare his breakfast every day and pack some snacks and a meal for him for lunch, because he won't eat two meals. I also pack apples for him. He has always liked apples of all the fruits.

Q: Have you ever been frustrated or unhappy at work?

H: No.

Q: So, you have always been happy at work?

H's mother: He always comes home smiling.

H's father: His managers all like him.

H: This store is nice and the store manager brought me here with him. It's not as busy at this store.

Q: Your store manager brought you here with him?

H: Yes, the manager from the general store.

Q: Why did he bring you here with him?

H: He thought I was doing well and was happy with my job. His last name is Wang.

H's mother: Both managers are very nice. The other one has the last name Zhang. They both care a lot about him.

H's father: They do care about him.

Q: How are you getting along with your co-workers?

H: I get along well. At the store, I am close to an older guy and close to the store manager, too.

H's mother: Everyone says that he works hard. Whenever the manager calls, we will hear good things about H including that he is always available whenever he is needed at work. Like the other day, he was supposed to be off, but the store was short on one person for a shift, so he was asked to fill in. I tell him to go whenever the manager asks him to, since he will just play on the computer if he stays home,

and going to work is better than that. He is still young, so he should make money whenever possible.

Q: How does H get along with customers at the store?

H: Not bad.

Q: Is there communication with them at work?

H: There is if I make deliveries. I will deliver to the door and knock. We actually have nine steps for delivery.

Q: You mean standardized processes?

H's mother: What are those steps?

H: First, I will ring the bell or knock on the door. Second, I will tell the customer my name. Then I will pass him the order, tell him that it's hot, introduce promotions running at the time, give him change, thank him and ask whether he wants me to take any trash out.

H's mother (laughing): You will ask to take out other people's trash?

H: I don't ask that anymore. I did at first. Those are the nine steps for delivery people to follow.

H's mother: Asking to take out other people's trash is a courtesy and probably an invitation for the customer to order Papa John's pizzas again. His sense of providing service is pretty sharp.

Q: What did you do with your first month's pay? Were you happy when you got it?

H: I was very happy and saved the money.

H's father: We are saving his money for him, under his name. We are still feeding him as of now. Down the road... We have told him that every penny he makes belongs to him. He can still live off us, so he can put aside his own money.

H's mother: He uses some of it for pocket money. What I mean is that after he started working, we stopped giving him allowances. He will take some pocket money from his pay and give the rest to us. Once we have 10,000 yuan from him, we will put it in the bank for him under his name and show him the deposit slip. We agreed that all of the savings will be given to him later. He needs to be able to survive when he finds himself on his own one day.

Q: Has H changed over the years since he started working?

H's father: I feel that he is more outgoing after he started working. Except that when he was going to school, he was eager to greet everyone. Now he doesn't go out of his way to do that.

H's mother: I am always on him about that. Our neighbor, an elderly lady, said that my son is aloof now and when someone calls his name, he won't acknowledge it but will just walk by and keep playing on his cell phone.

H's father: I used to work at the Community Affairs Committee and people there said to me, "Your son makes pizzas now. One time he delivered a pizza to us and acted really outgoing. After the delivery, he kept telling us about other products. He sure can talk." I used to take him to the workplace when he was younger and everyone knew that he wasn't talkative. Now he talks a lot.

H: They actually came to eat at the store.

H's mother: He is much better than before. After all, he has been working for 7 years, from 2009 till now.

H's father: Now that he is exposed to society and interacting with other people, he's got to have improved in every aspect.

H: I am happy making deliveries or interacting with customers. I am happy making deliveries. Making pizzas in the kitchen is tougher, what with all the tossing.

H's mother: He always comes home happy and has never been grumpy.

Entertainment Needs and Multiple Interests

Q: After work, what do you do for fun? For example, what social networking tools do you normally use?

H: QQ! QQ, WeChat, and Sina Microblog.

H's father: He is on WeChat a lot and won't show us what he does on it, so we just leave him alone.

Q: Are there any celebrities that you like?

H: Not a lot, but I occasionally follow some of the online hosts.

H's mother: He got it from me. He will take a shower once he gets home and play on the computer whenever he has time. Or he will just sleep when he isn't working. Other than that, he does nothing.

Q: Which sites do you visit to follow the hosts?

H's mother: I was told not to follow any hosts because it could cost a lot.

H's father: He follows them all the time, especially the good-looking ones.

H: I mainly follow Venice and Chinatown, not anything else. I chat with people.

H's mother: I keep telling him not to get mixed up with certain kinds of people and not to just follow anything.

H: It's a kind of socializing, talking to other people. I also like watching movies. I get along well with the girls at work and we all like watching movies.

Q: What kind of movies do you like?

H: Horror movies and love stories, like those you find on iqiyi.com on the computer.

Q: Do you not go to the theater?

H: Not really, because I will have to pay for tickets.

H's mother: We are not big spenders. As parents, we are conscientious about saving.

H: Occasionally I will go to sing. The store will organize activities like going to sing at Holiday KTV.

H's mother: It's a karaoke place.

Q: Karaoke. So, are you good on the microphone?

H: I sing okay. (Laughing) Maybe just average. My co-workers tell me I sing well, and I kind of agree.

Q: Which songs do you like to sing?

H: Those by Adu.

Q: What kind of games do you play?

H: I play some, like Chinese Poker.

Q: What about online games?

H: I don't play a lot of those. I also play Chehang.

H's father: A driving game.

H: Yes, it's a game.

Q: Is there any place you want to go in the future?

H's mother: He works so much and has no time.

H: I have to work and there's no time. There are places I want to go but I have no time to go.

Q: If you had time, where would you like to go?

H: I would like to go to Henan, because it's beautiful there.

H's mother: He heard all about it from his co-workers.

H: Several of my co-workers are from Henan, and Hubei, too. Some are from places even farther like Chongqing. I heard that it's good for your body to climb mountains.

Cherishing the Present and Envisioning the Future

Q: When he was a kid and it became known that there's some gap between his intellectual disability and that of similar-aged kids, how did the neighbors and friends react?

H's father: All of our relatives and friends knew that he choked on amniotic fluid when he was born and was not the smartest in anything... We don't know how to bring it up with other people. We couldn't help but feel sad when other people talked about how their kids were excelling at school. And we suffered some kind of low self-esteem when we thought about other people's kids getting into colleges whereas our own had always had poor grades. We didn't like talking about kids or commenting on other kids.

H's mother: Not everyone is curious.

H's father: Half of the people won't ask anything. At the old housing, no one asked anything. And at new apartment buildings, the neighbors have nothing to do with each other anyway.

H's mother: People don't ask questions. Only our next-door neighbors know.

H's father: And you can't tell just by looking at him.

H's mother: No one notices when he leaves for work or comes back home, and we will never tell anyone that he has a disability certificate. If asked, we will just say that he is working at Papa John's now, making pizzas.

H's father: Someone asked me and my wife why we let H make pizzas for a living because it's hard work and how come we didn't get him an easier job, especially since I work at the Community Affairs Committee myself. But I can't exactly reply by saying that my kid's ability is not quite there. So I just let it go whatever other

people say, even though I want the best for my kid. People will ask why we let H work at Papa John's where he has to work really hard. But what options do we have?

H's mother: Some neighbors will ask why we don't give H a chance for more schooling, because he might land a better job with more education. We won't tell them anything, and we can't anyway, otherwise H will be upset.

H's father: Kids have self-esteem, too.

H's mother: Why bother telling anyone? We don't know the neighbors well and don't feel like confiding in them, especially since you can't tell that H has any disability just by looking at him.

Q: Do community organizations for people with disabilities organize any activities?

H's father: Not a lot right now.

H's mother: Now that he is working, H doesn't go to those activities often. If he wasn't working, he would. Our Youyou Community in Pudong now does a good job in that regard.

H's father: We have the Sunshine Home and Sunshine Base here.

Q: Has H ever been to those places?

H's mother: He was in school all the time and got a job right after school, so he never had time to go to those places. Had his disability not been mild, he would have gone to the Sunshine Home. If his IQ test score had remained at 40 or something like the first time he took the test, he wouldn't have been able to get a job and would have been sent to the Sunshine Home instead where he would have...

H's father: He wouldn't be working now.

Q: Does the community give you any special help or subsidies?

H's mother: H and I received low-income subsidies. My husband signed a contract to receive 100 yuan instead of the low-income subsidy.

H's father: The two of them started receiving low-income subsidies when H had the broken leg from the car accident which could have prevented him from working. There's no help for our financial hardship per say. The low-income subsidy was a little over 200 yuan.

H's mother: The subsidy wasn't much. I started working in 2004. The Community Affairs Committee helped me land the job. What I do is go to elderly people's places to take care of them and do the chores, and I get paid by the government, not the elderly people. Once I got the job, I was removed from the list of low-income subsidy recipients because the government didn't want me to be there if it could help it. Instead, it wanted me to work to support my son till he got a job himself. Once H started working, his low-income subsidy stopped, too.

Q: Did anything really enjoyable or really difficult happen during all these years?

H's father: Nothing really difficult or really enjoyable. We are happy that he is working now.

H's mother: We are pretty happy that he is working, because we are relieved that there's some security for him now. To be honest, we are very happy about it. Getting a job for him had always weighed heavily on our minds.

We keep reminding him to work hard, because it would be very difficult for him to get another job if he loses this one. It was hard for us to get jobs, so it would be much

harder for him because not many workplaces will hire people like him. Papa John's is a joint-venture and the government requires that joint-ventures carry some of the burden, which is why they hire people like H. If H doesn't cherish the opportunity, we wouldn't know what to do with him if he was sent back home.

H's father: Now that he has this job, we don't need any other help. It's not easy to get a job right now, so as long as he keeps this job, we won't expect anything else.

H's mother: We have no other expectations except that he keeps this job at Papa John's. I think it's a nice place to have kept him for so long. The contract he signed this time is valid till 2017 which is next year. He went to the company headquarters to sign contracts. I just hope this can turn out to be a long-term job for him so that he can support himself.

H's father: We will be able to rest easy when we can't work ourselves one day and when we pass away. If he didn't have a job, we wouldn't even be able to die in peace. So, when you asked about anything enjoyable happening to us, we are happy as long as he has a job.

Q: Did you ever think about having another child?

H's mother: No.

H's father: No, no.

H's mother: Our priority was to do a good job raising this one.

H's father: He even asked us if we could have his disability certificate cancelled. I told him that once it had been issued, there's no way to cancel it. I said that with the disability certificate, he will receive help from society and he can't just get rid of it.

H's mother: If he got rid of the disability certificate, things could get tough for him without the government taking care of him. He doesn't have a good education. Even for those with advanced educations, like college graduates, it's not always easy to get jobs...

Q: When did he start having this thought?

H: After I started working on Ershan Road.

Q: Why?

H: It's not something I'm proud of.

H's father: What's there not to be proud of?

H's mother: He is worried that girls won't want him for that.

H: I don't have a good education, in which case it's not good to get rid of the disability certificate.

H's father: He once jokingly said that he won't let the girl know about it if he gets to date one. And I said he can't do that.

Q: This may be none of our business, but has H ever dated?

H and H's parents: No.

H's father: He asked me if it's okay that he doesn't tell the girl about the disability certificate. I said he will have to tell her upfront, otherwise the girl will think she has been tricked into the relationship. The disability certificate shouldn't really matter.

H's mother: But he struggles with it because he doesn't feel proud of it.

H's father: I told him it's not something to not be proud of. There are smart people and people who are not so smart, and no one is perfect. Even in the same person, he

can be both very smart and very dumb. We keep telling him this at home and telling him that no one is perfect.

Q: Now that H is getting older, have you thought about him having a family of his own?

H's father: Of course we would like him to have a family of his own. The girl doesn't have to have money, she just needs to be down-to-earth and know her way around the house. We will help whenever we can, but if we can't, so be it.

Q: So you hope to see it happen naturally.

H's father: That would be ideal.

H's mother: If he does get a date, I hope the two of them can get something good going. We won't ask for much except that the girl is nice, doesn't mind working and can work, although it won't matter how much she makes. For us, how much we spend has always depended on how much we make.

H: I make a little less than 4,000 yuan.

H's mother: He said his pay for the last 2 months has increased.

H's father: If he does have a family of his own, we will be supportive if they are committed to having a life together. Otherwise we will object.

Interview with H's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Female store manager

Interviewer: Qi Lin

Writer: Yi Zhang

Interview date: October 28, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where H works

Q: You are the store manager, right?

Store manager: I am.

Q: Have you always worked at this store?

Store manager: No, I joined at the end of last year.

Q: Before you came, did anyone from this store brief you on how H was at work?

Store manager: Kind of, so I knew something about him.

Q: What was your impression of him when you first came?

Store manager: He has always done well in everything. He knows what he is doing, and he has all-around skills and can do pretty much everything.

Q: What distinguishes him at work?

Store manager: Compared with others, he is dependable and willing to work hard.

Q: Can you give me an example?

Store manager: For example, after getting his own job done, he will help his co-workers. He works in the kitchen, and because our store does mostly takeout and there are no servers in the dining area, he will take the initiative to clean up the tables.

Q: Does he face customers normally?

Store manager: He does.

Q: Will he interact with them?

Store manager: He will, and it will go pretty well.

Q: Have you received any customer feedback about him?

Store manager: The feedback is basically that you can't really tell that he has an intellectual disability.

Q: What do you think of his personality?

Store manager: He has a nice personality. He is easygoing instead of being a shut-in. I think he is nice.

Q: I saw that the employees would chat among themselves when it's quiet in the store. What would everyone chat to him about?

Store manager: Just small talk about everything.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers?

Store manager: He gets along well.

Q: Outside work, do you get any chance to interact with him? For example, at activities organized by the store.

Store manager: I do, like when we go out together to eat during townhalls, or when we go to sing after the group meal. We do a lot of that.

Q: So he will join. Do you remember the last time you had a group activity like eating out or singing?

Store manager: We basically do it once a month.

Q: Is once a month a fixed thing?

Store manager: No, no.

Q: So it's random?

Store manager: Right, because we can't leave the store during work hours, so we will have to wait till we are done for that day, like after 10 p.m., before we can eat together and have some other activity.

Q: Do you remember where you got together last time?

Store manager: Sometimes we get together at the store and other times we eat out together. Last time we ate together at the store.

Q: Did everyone bring food?

Store manager: We bought from outside the store.

Q: Is there anything else you can tell us about H?

Store manager: I really think he is a very nice kid, willing to work hard and to follow instructions. He gets whatever you teach him and I don't think he looks different from anyone.

Q: So, you don't see him as different from other people.

Store manager: Right. Once you are used to him, you don't see him as different. I think he is very nice and has a mild temperament and personality.

Q: So everyone likes him?

Store manager: Right. Compared with others, he reacts at a slower pace. He will for sure do whatever you ask him to, but he doesn't always look for things to do, so he isn't as good at taking initiative. For example, if the floor needs to be swept, you will have to remind him for him to do it.

Q: I see. Thank you.

Interview with H's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Female co-worker

Interviewer: Qi Lin

Writer: Yi Zhang

Interview date: October 28, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where H works

Q: When did you join this store?

Female co-worker: I joined in April 2014.

Q: So it has been a while.

Female co-worker: Right, more than 2 years.

Q: You met H when you joined the store?

Female co-worker: No, he wasn't at this store first and was transferred here later, so there's a gap there.

Q: Do you remember your first impression of him?

Female co-worker: First impression... let me think, because it has been more than a year. He looked pretty neat to me.

Q: You mean he dressed neat?

Female co-worker: Right, and he looked young to me and I was surprised that he would be working at such a young age. It wasn't until later that I learnt he is older than I am (laughing).

Q: In which year were you born?

Female co-worker: 1995.

Q: You are so young! What do you think distinguishes him at work?

Female co-worker: At work, he is warm-hearted and ready to help. He doesn't slack off and is serious about what he is given to do. So he is very good.

Q: Can you give me an example of his readiness to help?

Female co-worker: For example, when we get busy at the store, he will be working at his own station, but since there's only one person working in the dining area and it can get overwhelming there, like you witnessed today, he will go to the dining area to help clean up the tables and set up the dishes when he has free time. Just like that, if he sees that you have too much to do, he will come over and help you.

Q: Does he mostly work in the kitchen?

Female co-worker: Right.

Q: What about you?

Female co-worker: I mostly work in the dining area.

Q: Can H get his own job done well?

Female co-worker: Yes! He does a very good job.

Q: Did anything happen at the store that you remember really well?

Female co-worker: What I remember well is that on his own, he could make all the deliveries and all the dough within just 2 h. There are only four of us working in the kitchen and the dining area and we can get super busy. He is not very tall and is actually very skinny and lighter than I am, weighing less than 90 lb. I found it incredible that

he could do what he did. Had it been me, I would have been overwhelmed. So I think he is doing well, at least for an employee being cared for.

Q: When did you learn that he is an employee being cared for?

Female co-worker: I didn't know till 2 months later.

Q: How did you find out?

Female co-worker: Someone told me. Some co-worker mentioned it when talking about his family situation. Also, he speaks funny and I feel that he has no logic when he speaks.

Q: Can you give me an example?

Female co-worker (laughing): I'd rather not.

Q: How did you feel when you first learnt that he is an employee being cared for?

Female co-worker: I felt that even though he is an employee being cared for, there's not much difference between the way he does things compared to other people. When I first got to know him, I never imagined him to be any different. After someone told me about his condition, I started to get it and to realize that he is a little off on certain things.

Q: So will you help him more or be more understanding towards him?

Female co-worker: More understanding.

Q: For example, if there's something that he doesn't get sometimes, will you explain it to him?

Female co-worker: When he makes deliveries and cannot understand the customers' requirements written on the orders, he will need help.

Q: What are the requirements usually?

Female co-worker: Just something extra added to the orders, for example, there are certain items a customer won't need or the delivery person should call the customer once he gets to the delivery address. H doesn't get some of the requirements sometimes, so he will get confused, like not being able to find the customer once he gets to the customer's place. If that happens, he will call us at the store and we will handle it for him. That's all.

Q: What do you think of his personality?

Female co-worker: He is funny.

Q: Does he tell jokes to make you laugh? Or do you mean he is outgoing?

Female co-worker: He is outgoing. If you talk down to some regular employee, he might feel bad and not want to have anything to do with you for several days. It takes H only several minutes to get over it.

Q: So he can switch back pretty fast?

Female co-worker: Right.

Q: Does he often chat with you during the lunch break? What do you chat about?

Female co-worker: He seldom hangs out with us during the lunch break. He likes to be with same-age male co-workers because they have more in common like games and other entertainment. He won't have much to talk about with girls, because girls only talk about shopping and eating.

Q: Do you contact each other on your days off?

Female co-worker: Hardly, unless it's on occasions like the townhall. We see each other at work every day, so we normally don't contact each other on our days off. And he works when we are off, because he takes a half day off every other day.

Q: Do you work all-day shift every day?

Female co-worker: We work 6 days with 1 day off or 5 days with 2 days off.

Q: And it depends on which shift you work?

Female co-worker: Right.

Q: So he might be closer to male co-workers around his own age.

Female co-worker: Right.

Q: Like who?

Female co-worker: There are two around his age, one isn't working today and the other one has the last name Yan. There's also an older guy with the last name Xie. He is actually closer to the older guy. Yan only joined last month and might be able to talk games with H, but when it's about everyday life, H prefers to talk to the older guy.

Q: Where are you from originally?

Female co-worker: I am from Sichuan.

Q: Okay, thank you.

Interview with H's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: Male co-worker

Interviewer: Qi Lin

Writer: Yi Zhang

Interview date: October 28, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where H works

Q: When did you start working here?

Male co-worker: Two or 3 years ago.

Q: Who came first, you or H?

Male co-worker: I came first. He used to work at the store in Huacheng then he got transferred here.

Q: When he first joined, did you know that he was an employee being cared for?

Male co-worker: We all knew when he joined.

Q: What do you think of him? What kind of personality does he have?

Male co-worker: He is outgoing, but his mind is a little different from that of other people. He doesn't know what he is supposed to do at work. If you ask him to do something, he will get it done, but he doesn't know where to find things to do.

Q: How is his attitude at work?

Male co-worker: He has a positive attitude.

Q: What do you mainly do?

Male co-worker: I mainly make deliveries.

Q: It seems that he makes deliveries too.

Male co-worker: He likes to do that, because he can make an extra 200 yuan doing that.

Q: Do you normally have a lot of deliveries? Like how many per day?

Male co-worker: Between eight and ten a day.

Q: Can you handle them all? Or will you send him sometimes?

Male co-worker: There are several of us making deliveries.

Q: Do you usually deliver within this park?

Male co-worker: We deliver to several apartment complexes in the neighborhood.

Q: I just heard from a female co-worker that when he makes deliveries sometimes, he won't understand the special requirements of the customers and will call the store for help. Is that true?

Male co-worker: It is.

Q: What are the special requirements normally?

Male co-worker: Most of the time the customers just want you to bring some extra pepper or extra sauce.

Q: What if H forgets?

Male co-worker: He will just call to have someone else bring it over. If we happen to have another person on the same delivery route, that person will just bring it over.

Q: Does this happen often or just occasionally?

Male co-worker: Occasionally.

Q: You chat with each other during lunch break. What do you chat with H about?

Male co-worker: It's all random (laughing), we talk about everything but nothing serious.

Q: So it's just small talk. In your opinion, how does he get along with co-workers?

Male co-worker: Not bad, not bad. He never throws tantrums at anyone.

Q: He never throws tantrums. So he is very mild.

Male co-worker: Right.

Male co-worker: Was there anything related to him that you remember well, like something funny?

Male co-worker: I can't recall anything right now.

Q: Where are you from originally?

Male co-worker: Henan.

Q: When he was interviewed earlier, he said he wants to visit Henan because he heard from a co-worker that it's beautiful there. That co-worker must have been you. How old are you if I may ask?

Male co-worker: I am 54.

Q: You have been here for 2 or 3 years. So you probably came in 2014?

Male co-worker: Right.

Q: Okay, thank you.

Interview with H's Co-Worker (IV)

Interviewee: New store manager

Interviewer and writer: Yi Zhang

Interview date: October 26, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where H works

Q: Could you please tell me how long you have been working here?

Store manager: I came in February of this year. I used to work on Longyang Road.

Q: When you came, did you know that H is an employee being cared for?

Store manager: I did.

Q: At the beginning, could you see anything different about him?

Store manager: There's nothing different about him and I actually see him as the same as other people, because I have met a lot of employees being cared for at Papa John's and some of them were very cute precisely because of their disabilities. As for H, he can pass off as the average Joe. You can't tell that he has a disability just by looking at him. But as you talk to him, he will trail off and not know what to say towards the end. Under normal circumstances, he is actually pretty smart.

Q: He is physically small. How is he at work?

Store manager: He is actually pretty fast at what he does. Most of the employees being cared for will do whatever they are asked to do and will never cross any lines. If I tell them that something has to be done a certain way, they will stick to it and never change. And if someone asks them to do it another way, they will reply that the store manager has instructed otherwise and they have to listen to the manager. H is different. Sometimes without anyone teaching him, he will figure out a fast way to get things done and he will choose that way. Sometimes I will tease him (laughing), asking why he does things a certain way and he will say that it is faster that way.

Q: As far as I can tell, he works very hard, and he has made dough for 20 pizzas so far today. Is that his normal workload?

Store manager: Twenty pizzas per day is nothing. The minimum number for Saturdays and Sundays is 100, without exaggeration. He will only make the dough and other people will finish making the pizzas.

Q: When I interviewed him last time, he worked both in the kitchen and the dining area. Now it seems that he doesn't have to make deliveries outside the store.

Store manager: Because it's different now. Now all of the deliveries are outsourced to teams and we don't do it anymore ourselves.

Q: Teams? You mean teams from Meituan and ele.me?

Store manager: Right, Meituan, ele.me and Baidu. They come to the store to pick up. Under last year's model, we were still making deliveries ourselves. The deliveries are outsourced this year to minimize risks for one thing and to enhance delivery efficiency for another thing.

Q: So H won't have to go out for deliveries anymore.

Store manager: Right, he won't have to and he can stay in the kitchen all the time. That's better, because delivery is a tough job. For example, when it rains, you still

had to go out whenever orders come in and the rain is no excuse for not delivering. And third-party delivery teams are more professional.

Q: I just saw that they moved all the cabinets. They must have been doing a thorough cleanup. Do they do it every day?

Store manager: We clean up every day, but thorough cleanup is not a daily thing. Everyone is responsible for cleaning up after himself or herself, and every week we will find time around noon for a thorough cleanup.

Q: I saw that he gets along very well with his co-workers.

Store manager: They don't bully each other. I am the only one here who can bully H (laughing). I have always believed that they don't willingly make mistakes. If they had known that something was wrong, they wouldn't have done it.

Q: Do you eat together often?

Store manager: I will hold a town hall every month to review performance with them, and we will eat together afterwards.

Q: Can you tell me how his work schedule and time off are arranged?

Store manager: He can take time off as soon as he has worked 168 h every month.

Store manager: Does he take sick leave?

Store manager: Seldom. He actually enjoys better health than I do, as I have a cold right now. Usually he doesn't ask for time off himself. His parents will call me to do that, explaining why he wants time off.

Q: Do the employees being cared for have pension after retirement?

Store manager: They do, and I have always wondered where they will go after retirement. Maybe they can only go to nursing homes. They probably won't get married or have kids, and by the time they retire, their parents will have left them and they will have absolutely no one to take care of them. So they have their struggles.

Interview with Mr. H (I)

Interviewee: Mr. H

Interviewer: Qi Lin

Writer: Yi Zhang

Interview date: August 18, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where H works

Q: You often got sick when you were young. Do you remember your parents taking you to see the doctor?

H: I do. I had asthma when I was young. I had asthma really bad, that's why I never smoke now. My mom took care of me when I was young, and I had asthma all the time. My health had been poor ever since I was born, and I didn't get better till I was seven.

Q: Was there anything that you remember really well?

H: Yes. We used to live in Dahua community on Langao Road. I visited the hospital a lot, and my grandma and her side of the family often took me. I was about four

or five and was a lot of work. Whenever I started coughing, I needed two people to take care of me. I was on a lot of medication. Actually, I took everything that was available for treating the cough.

Q: Do you remember anything from preschool?

H: I received certificates of merit at preschool and there are three or four kept in the house that I can show you. The teachers were all nice as far as I can remember.

Q: Are there any classmates or teachers that you remember particularly well?

H: There's a homeroom teacher with the last name Wang.

Q: Why do you remember her well?

H: She was nice to me. She didn't wear glasses, which I liked. I got along well with everyone.

Q: Did Ms Wang show special care to you in anything in particular?

H: In drawing. I didn't draw well, so she would allow me to do it again. I always had trouble with three subjects: drawing, English, and math. It was English that dragged me down. I was doing okay in math. Ms. Wang was gentler.

Q: Did you ever not get along with anyone at school?

H: Everything was okay in first grade and second grade. In third grade, my parents didn't have much time to help me, so my grades dropped to 59 or 58. So the classmates who used to be close started staying away from me because my grades were too bad and dragging down the average grades and they weren't proud of it. We used to be close, but because my grades dropped too low, they figured that I wasn't that brainy, and those with good grades started keeping their distance. I was too slow and couldn't keep up with them. I was pretty upset about it at first, but I just couldn't get my grades up. The teacher tried to help by keeping me after class, but it was exhausting for me. My mom went back to work which made it even harder for me to catch up. Back then, the teacher would keep me in her office to work on problems till 6 or 7 p.m. each time.

Q: When was school out normally?

H: Normally at 4 p.m.

Q: Did you ever ask them why they started staying away from you?

H: I did, and they told me that my grades were dropping too fast. They were all scoring above 70 or 60 at least. I was scoring 59 and sometimes just over 40 towards the end, because I just couldn't keep up in math. The teachers gave up on me too because they thought my reactions were too slow. They would only teach once but I couldn't get it. My grades were too bad and my classmates didn't feel like hanging out with me anymore. They were okay with me previously, like in first grade and second grade. Then the curriculum became overwhelming in third grade. There was so much to learn in English, for example, so I just couldn't take everything in.

Q: Did you tell your parents about it?

H: My mom would help me at first, but then she had no time for me when she went back to work. My dad wasn't much help either.

Q: Growing up, did you ever have any physical fights with classmates?

H: No. I had several classmates who were close to me, and I got along particularly well with girls.

Q: Why?

H: They were all nice to me from the very beginning. One of them even had a crush on me and everyone said she was my puppy love.

Q: Can you tell me more about it?

H: She was my puppy love in first grade and second grade. And by the time we were in third grade, she realized that I was really not smart since my grades were awful. At that time, the teacher was trying really hard to help me and yelling at me all the time. But then it was no use, and fourth grade was just impossible for me. The math teacher was scary, and when I couldn't keep up, they just sent me to the back of the classroom. The girl was close to me all through first grade and second grade, and in the second half of third grade, she would still try to be there for me at the beginning, but towards the end, she went back to just being a classmate. Everyone saw her as my puppy love.

Q: Are you still in contact with her?

H: I am, through WeChat.

Q: Oh, what's she doing now?

H: She is doing great, working in a company.

Q: How did the teachers treat you at elementary school?

H: One of the third-grade teachers was too scary and too much. She taught math, I still remember. I couldn't understand anything she said because she spoke very fast, and she would yell at me and look down on me, saying that I couldn't keep up at all and was dragging everyone down. No matter how high everyone else scored on a test, I would single-handedly lower the average grade within my grade.

Q: Would you get upset when she said those things to you?

H: I would go out and cry when no one was watching, on the blacktop. I had a very good PE teacher then. At the special education school, the PE teachers were not that good. The PE teacher at the regular school was actually better. He would take me to his office and take his time communicating with me, because I was upset over not keeping my grades up and the math teacher saying that I was dumb.

Q: So the PE teacher would try to comfort you.

H: Right, the PE teacher was nicer. The PE teacher, Chinese teacher, and home-room teacher were nicer. The math teacher and English teacher were like drill sergeants.

Q: Do you remember the PE teacher's last name?

H: Zhao.

Q: Male or female?

H: Male.

Q: Do you remember how he tried to comfort you?

H: He would tell me every time, "You can keep up—ask your parents to help you." My mom was really busy then, getting home from work at 10 p.m. every day, by which time I was already in bed. I would start on my homework at 7 p.m., and if I had difficulty with it, I would just stop and go to bed. My mom said that anything that the teachers taught only once at school, I would have to be taught three times at home. The teachers would go over everything only once, and it was too fast for me. I couldn't catch all of it and by the time I did the homework after school, I had forgotten everything. My mom would drag me out of bed at midnight sometimes. At

first it worked, till the first half of third grade. Then the studies became too heavy in the second half of third grade, and there was so much to learn and to do in English, so my mind just stalled. My mom started to despair. She and my dad would still try to help, even though they both had to work, but I couldn't comprehend a lot of things. It was just getting more and more difficult, and my parents had to work selling books, so there was not much that could be done.

Q: Would you ask the teachers for help yourself?

H: I was too afraid to do that, because I felt bad about myself and about failing the tests. So, I would just cry and the PE teacher would just take me to his office.

Q: How did you feel when you took the IQ test for the first time?

H: I didn't know what to think because the teacher requested it.

Q: Did your mom think it was your fault? Or did she tell you directly that you were going to take the test?

H: She told me directly.

Q: And you knew the test results.

H: For the test the first time round, someone asked me questions like squares and multiplications which I had no idea about. I just looked at him and he just wrote a score for me which was 46.

Q: How did you feel after the test?

H: I didn't understand anything the first time and didn't understand anything he said. He opened up a puzzle and asked me to do it. I was too young to understand everything, so I did the puzzle wrong.

Q: How old were you then?

H: I was in my teens back then, because we hadn't moved to the new place yet.

Q: If I recall correctly, you were a student leader at the special education school?

H: I wasn't exactly a student leader. I just did most of everything at school. I was more of a class president than student leader, and my teacher recommended me for that position.

Q: What did you do most of the time?

H: I checked homework for the teacher. Sometimes the homeroom teacher would take a break in her office, so I would check homework for her. It was pretty simple work.

Q: It was simple for you. What else did you do?

H: I was in charge of cleaning up. We did all the cleaning up ourselves back then and everyone had to help.

Q: So you would assign jobs to everyone?

H: Right, I would assign jobs.

Q: How did you do it?

H: I gave each person a different job.

Q: Did they all follow instructions?

H: Some of them didn't.

Q: What did you do when they didn't?

H: I would tell the teacher.

Q: Did you have a favorite teacher at the special education school?

H: I did, the homeroom teacher.

Q: What's the teacher's last name?

H: Zhu, and it's a female teacher. Ms. Zhu was actually in the same class as my mom in elementary school.

Q: What did you like about her?

H: She was nice to me and made me class president, and she left me in charge of everything.

Q: Were you the class president at the primary vocational school too?

H: I was for 2 years. I wasn't in the third year because I left for Papa John's.

Q: What were your responsibilities as the class president?

H: I was in charge of having everyone make cakes every day. We learnt making appetizers like matching dumplings and steamed buns. The processes were all pretty simple. You just wrapped everything up and squeezed it tight.

Q: When did you start working here?

H: I came in 2014, more than 2 years ago.

Q: I saw just now that you work both in the kitchen and dining area, is that right?

H: Right, I work in both areas.

Q: How many deliveries have you made today?

H: Three.

Q: Were they far?

H: Not far. They were all close to South Punan Road.

Q: How long did it take for you to get back?

H: About half an hour.

Q: Were the customers nice?

H: I think so.

Q: Have you ever encountered any difficult customers?

H: I have, but not often.

Q: Can you give me some examples?

H: Some of them were picky, like a lady at a company ordering deliveries. On the whole, the customers are pretty nice. Sometimes they will have something to say when I am late. Like one day when it was raining, I couldn't drive very fast and had to wait at all the traffic lights. Some picky customers will complain if they are kept waiting for just a couple of minutes. But overall, they are nice.

Q: Would you get upset? Like when you made a delivery on a rainy day and the customer still complained.

H: I am okay with that, because the store manager is always reminding us to be courteous towards the customers. The store manager will call whoever complains.

Q: Will the store manager get mad at you if some customer complains?

H: Not really.

Q: Besides making deliveries, you also work in the kitchen, right?

H: Besides making deliveries, I work in the kitchen making dough. I can also work as a cashier. I can work in both the kitchen and the dining area.

Q: You can make a pizza from beginning to end. Can you tell me which steps are involved?

H: I will make the dough first, then cut the dough, then sprinkle some corn starch.

Q: Why do you need to sprinkle corn starch?

H: Because I don't want the dough to get sticky. Then I will press it.

Q: What's next?

H: I will knead and toss the dough. Then I will spread ketchup and other sauces before putting it in the oven.

Q: Do you set up the oven too? Or is there someone designated to that?

H: The oven is right next to me, so I will just stick the pizza in.

Q: Basically you make the pizzas all on your own. Do you keep count of the number of pizzas you make on an average day?

H: Seventeen or 18. I don't make too many in the morning because lunch hours are mainly from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Q: What else did you do today besides making pizzas?

H: I did everything including making appetizers.

Q: What appetizers did you make?

H: I boiled spaghetti. Our appetizers are mainly spaghetti, rice, and baked chicken wings.

Q: And you know how to make all of them?

H: I know how to make almost everything here.

Q: How do you make baked rice, for example?

H: I use rice that's already cooked and add ingredients ordered by the customers.

Q: So the rice is cooked fresh every morning?

H: Right, cooked fresh.

Q: You said that you can do everything here in the store. What do you think you are best at?

H: I mainly make dough. Making appetizers is almost like a side job.

Q: Who else makes dough besides you?

H: The older guy.

Q: Does it make you tired? You were busy throughout the lunch rush.

H: It gets a little tiring during busy lunch hours. Things are not too bad when the store manager is here, because we have a good manager.

Q: What's good about him? Can you give me an example?

H: He trusts me on a lot of things, which is good. And the older guy will help me when he is here.

Q: How does he help you?

H: He helps me make dough. He will ask me to take a break when I get tired making dough. Both the manager and the older guy know how to make dough. That girl you just saw, she knows how to do it, too.

Q: I saw you guys taking your lunch break. Did you bring your own lunch? Did your mom make it for you? What did you have today?

H: I had meat today, braised duck.

Q: What else?

H: Veg, leafy veg. Also rice and fried dumplings. Sometimes it gets so busy at night that I won't punch out till 10 p.m. Like tomorrow, I will have to work till 10 p.m., and I will get hungry at that time and eat what I have brought in the morning.

Q: If you start working at 9 a.m., will you arrive early?

H: I always do.

Q: How early will you be?

H: I will arrive 5 or 6 min early and never be late.

Q: How long does it take for you to commute to work?

H: I take the bus and the ride takes about 30 min. So, if I leave at 8:20 a.m., I can get to work at around 8:50 a.m.

Q: Which bus line do you take?

H: Line 970 and line 583. I go to the bus station myself now.

Q: Once you get to the store, how do you get set up for the day's work?

H: I will punch in first since there has to be a record of me working. Then I will change into my uniform before preparing the ingredients. I have to have everything taken out and laid out first thing in the morning.

Q: How long does that process take?

H: About 30 min in the morning. If the store manager is here, I will also go to the bank to deposit money.

Q: Do you do that every day?

H: I do it when I work all-day shift.

Q: Do you go by yourself or with the store manager?

H: The store manager doesn't go.

Q: So one of your responsibilities in the morning is to deposit money at the bank.

H: Yes, I will deposit money from the night before, at China Merchants' Bank. I do it every other day. If I am here for morning shift, I will do it. Otherwise I won't.

Q: When will you get back to the store if you go to deposit money at the bank?

H: I will get to the store at 9 a.m., go to the bank at 9:10 a.m., and get back at 9:25 or 9:30 a.m. It takes 20 min because there's a line sometimes. I will get back sooner when there is no line. Once I am back, I will push all the delivery vehicles outside.

Q: The vehicles will have been pushed inside the night before?

H: I will do it if I am here for evening shift, but the delivery people will do it as well.

Q: How many vehicles are there?

H: Four.

Q: Do you do that together or do you do it yourself?

H: In the morning, I will do it myself. At night, the delivery people will do it.

Q: You have been working for a long time, from 2009 till now. Does the company have some kind of internal assessment?

H: No, except that there's a "five-star rating" every month.

Q: Have you ever got it?

H: The five-star rating is given to those working in both the kitchen and dining area and I got it before, when I was working at the store in Yaohan making dough. (Mimicking making dough) I am very good at making dough. The rating isn't given at the store on Ershan Road.

Q: How did you get picked for the rating?

H: I was given a star.

Q: Was there any extra bonus for getting the rating?

H: I just got a star.

Q: Has anything memorable happened at work here?

H: When I was making deliveries, sometimes the customer would ask for a receipt and complain when I couldn't produce one. It was a headache, because I had to go back to the store to get it.

Q: How many times did that happen?

H: Two or three times.

Q: Okay, thank you. That's all for today.

Interview with Mr. H (II)

Interviewee: Mr. H

Interviewer and writer: Yi Zhang

Interview date: October 26, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where H work

Q: I heard from the store manager that you can take time off every month after you have worked a certain number of hours. So how do you arrange your schedule? Do you wait till you have fulfilled the hours before taking time off, or do you take some time off every week?

H: I take 1 or 2 days off every week.

Q: You used to make deliveries. Now it looks like the store doesn't have to make deliveries itself.

H: Deliveries have been outsourced to third parties like ele.me, Meituan, and Baidu. We don't deliver anymore ourselves unless the customers pay with a credit card.

Q: How long have the deliveries been outsourced?

H: For a long time. We are only responsible for making the food, and the third parties are responsible for delivering and they are very fast. It gets busy on Saturdays and Sundays.

Q: So you don't have to leave the store now?

H: I still do. I have to go to the bank to deposit money in the morning.

Q: Do you like it better when they make the deliveries or when you did it?

H: It's better that they do it. That way I don't have to go out, because it's cold out there, especially in winter.

Q: I just counted and you probably made dough for 20 pizzas. Were you tired from that much work?

H: I am used to it. It wasn't that bad today, because I make even more dough when it gets busier. We don't get busy when there are no group activities. When someone organizes something, then we will get a lot of orders.

Q: Will you know about the activities?

H: They are specified in the orders because volume discounts could apply.

Q: I see that you got a cut on your hand. Making dough can hurt your hand?

H: I got it opening the ketchup. The cap was very, very sharp.

Q: Did you get stitches?

H: No, no. It was nothing serious and I took a break for several days.

Q: I saw that you could make all the pizzas that were ordered. You alone carry half of the workload in the kitchen. You know how to do everything, don't you?

H: I know how to do everything, since I have been working for 8 years. I was transferred from the store in Yaohan where I did everything. My job here is actually easier. Work at the store in Yaohan was so heavy and there was just so much to do. And when you got busy, you made more mistakes. I feel that the workload here is lighter and I don't have too many responsibilities.

Q: So, you find it easier to work here?

H: Right, because we are located close to the software park. A lot more needed to be done at the previous store. That's our signature dried pork pizza (pointing at the advertisement on the front door of the store).

Q: Is it difficult to make that pizza?

H: It's the hardest to make. The pizza itself is the same as others, but once it's out of the oven, you will have to sprinkle dried pork on it.

Q: I saw that when you were making pizza, you laid out the ingredients on top of the dough. Did you learn that at school or here?

H: I learnt it all here.

Q: How do you learn how to make new products? Will you get any training?

H: I will. The trainer will demonstrate and everyone will follow along.

Q: Will you go somewhere for the training or will the trainer come onsite?

H: The store manager will go for the training. The current store manager is very nice, not giving me too many things to do.

Q: Since you have to make so many pizzas on the weekends, will any co-workers help you?

H: They do help me, even on weekdays.

Q: I saw you guys doing a thorough cleanup today. Is that a weekly thing?

H: We do it twice every 2 weeks, which means three or four times per month.

Q: Do you bring your own lunch?

H: I do.

Q: Is it prepared in the morning?

H: It's prepared the night before and saved in the fridge. I will take it with me the next morning. There's no time to prepare it in the morning. We are not provided lunch here, so we bring our own.

Q: When do you close at night?

H: At 11:50 p.m. Whoever works evening shift will have to clean up.

Q: You get off work at close to midnight if you are on evening shift. How do you get home then?

H: I ride a yellow rental bike. I pay the deposit, scan the code and ride the yellow bike home. But I do need to secure one at 11:30 p.m. and bring it to outside the store, as it might be difficult to get one on the street if I wait till 12 a.m.

Q: Do you have to take public transportation after the ride on the yellow bike?

H: No.

Q: So you can ride the bike straight home.

H: Right, I can make it home in 20 min if I ride fast.

Q: You were on the evening shift yesterday. When did you get home?

H: I got home after 1 a.m. after the evening shift and went to bed at 1:40 a.m. Sometimes I get home as late as 2 a.m. If I work evening shift, I normally get home in the middle of the night and will still have to work the next day. And it's pretty tiring making dough.

Q: Do you get scared riding the bike all by yourself so late at night?

H: I am used to working evening shift and this has been adjusted to make it easier for me. Evening shift is tiring because you work so late and need to help clean up afterwards, like wiping the tables and lifting the chairs to on top of the tables. But the store manager is very nice and gives me decent shifts to work.

Observation of H at Work

Observation date: 9:00–17:00, October 26, 2017

Observation place: Restaurant where H works

Observer and writer: Yi Zhang

Time	What H did	Remarks
9:15	Entered the store, went to the kitchen to punch card	Ate while entering the store
9:17	Went to the dressing room to change into uniform and put on hat	Greeted co-workers while changing clothes
9:22	Organized ingredients	Used a cart to transport ingredients, laid out all the ingredients that would be needed in a neat fashion
9:26	Put on apron	
9:35	Organized tools needed for work	Made preparations on his own while co-workers chatted
9:45	Walked back and forth to wipe and organize	Completed preparations
10:08	Went to the storage room for to-go boxes	Was quick at moving boxes around, and put everything back in place after taking what he needed
10:12	Folded to-go boxes	Was quick at folding boxes and put the folded boxes neatly on the shelf
10:22	Followed the reminders on the screen hanging from the ceiling of the kitchen, kneaded and tossed dough, spread sauce and added ingredients	Did an even job spreading the ingredients
10:28	Finished one pizza, handed it over to another person and washed hands	

(continued)

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Time	What H did	Remarks
10:30	Chatted with co-workers	Checked that everything was in place while chatting
10:52	Made 2nd pizza	
10:56	Made 3rd pizza	
11:00	Made 4th pizza	
11:06	Made 5th pizza	Customers started arriving for lunch, and H continued to make appetizers
11:10	Made 6th pizza	
11:22	Made 7th pizza and helped co-workers pack takeout orders	
11:24	Made 8th pizza	
11:41	Made 9th pizza	
11:45	Made 10th pizza	
11:47	Washed and wiped hands, and chatted	
11:52	Made 11th pizza	
11:56	Chatted	More customers arrived for lunch
12:00	Made 12th pizza	
12:03	Made 13th pizza	
12:09	Made 14th pizza	
12:13	Made 15th pizza	
12:19	Made 16th pizza	
12:23	Made 17th pizza	
12:33	Made 18th pizza	
12:38	Washed hands	
12:41	Cleaned up a big plate	Chatted with co-workers while working
12:45	Took a break	
12:49	Made 19th pizza	
13:00	Made 20th pizza	
13:10	Hung up apron and sat down to rest	
13:25	Dragged out the cabinet holding ingredients and swept behind the cabinet	Thorough cleanup of the kitchen
13:35	Left the store with his phone to buy a drink	Lunch break started
13:40	Returned to the kitchen and microwaved packed lunch	
13:43	Put lunch on the counter and ate with a co-worker while finishing his drink	H's lunch included rice, meat, and veg. He ate with gusto while drinking
14:07	Finished lunch, put the lid back on and put the lunch box back in the bag	

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Time	What H did	Remarks
14:10	Left the kitchen to be interviewed	
15:55	Entered the kitchen, put on apron and got ready to make food following orders	Lunch break ended
16:00	Made two pizzas for a takeout order	
16:05	Boxed the baked pizzas and put them in a bag	
16:18	New orders came in, so H kneaded and tossed dough and added ingredients	
16:24	Boxed the baked pizzas and put them in a bag	
16:35	Walked back and forth to wipe and organize	
16:45	Organized work area	
16:55	Removed apron and entered the dressing room to change	
17:00	Punched out and left the kitchen	Was done for the day

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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Never Treat the Child as Someone with a Disability



Zhen Wei

Interview with Ms. LJ's Mother

LJ, female, born in 1991. The only child in the family. Grade III intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school in 2008. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2010.

Interviewee: LJ's mother

Interviewer and writer: Zhen Wei.

Interview dates: November 21, 2016 and April 19, 2017

Interview place: LJ's home

Note on the interview: During the interview, LJ's mother sat by the window with the interviewer while LJ played computer games in another room, separated by a curtain. We could hear each other

Fate Changed by a High Fever

Q: How did you meet your husband?

LJ's mother: Someone introduced me to him, and we got married after dating for a year. I was 23 and he was 24. The legal age for getting a marriage certificate was 22.

Q: People have expectations for life after marriage. What were your expectations?

LJ's mother: I didn't really dwell on that. Getting married just meant having a life and a child together.

Q: LJ has a very beautiful name. Did you come up with the name?

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LJ's mother: The name "Wen" was very popular back then, so I just followed the trend. I figured that it was a good name for girls as it sounded nice and implied a quiet personality.

Q: Was LJ normal when she was born?

LJ's mother: Yes, she was. Like in Shanghai, babies on our farm got monthly check-ups that included vaccinations and checking the babies' development. LJ was fine.

If you don't mind my saying this, my daughter wasn't born with any intellectual disability. It was caused by a high fever. We were young and didn't know much. I actually blame the hospital for the way she is now.

She started getting a fever in the afternoon and we didn't give her any medication. The hospital was far away and we had to take a bus to get there. So her dad waited till after work to take her there. By the time they got there, the pediatrician was off and the physician who treated LJ didn't really know what he was doing. So the fever continued for another night. The hospital in the town we lived in was small and the doctor didn't refer us to another one. So LJ was throwing up the whole night while she had the fever, and eventually passed out. By 4 a.m., she had no response no matter how hard we tried to wake her up. So we knocked on the pediatrician's door even though he was off duty, and he realized that something was wrong. So you see, it was the hospital that delayed the treatment. LJ was born normal and was actually very smart at that time, when she was almost 10 months old.

Q: So she had her high fever at 10 months old?

LJ's mother: Right. Before she was 10 months old, she was really smart and energetic. Just looking at her eyes you would know that she was smart and understood everything.

Q: When did LJ learn to talk and walk?

LJ's mother: She learned to talk really early, at 1 year old. But she started walking late, at 14 months. She learned to talk before she could walk.

Q: Can you elaborate on how she was funny and naughty?

LJ's mother: She was really naughty when she was young. We were living in the Chongming countryside and she just played all the time. We bought her a small bicycle and she would be on it all day long. She was a little daredevil too. Let me show you some pictures of when she was young.

(Getting up to bring pictures from a drawer.)

I laminated pictures of when she was young and put them in albums. So the majority of what I have now are from that period of time. (Picking up one album) Not in this one. (Going to another drawer for other albums) Our life back then wasn't so bad... We were living in the Chongming countryside and I took many pictures of her.

These pictures date all the way back, some are from when she was born. This one was from when she couldn't walk yet, (pointing at the picture for the interviewer). This one, too. She was a tomboy back then, very naughty.

(Flipping through the pictures) This seemed to be from her 1-year birthday party. In the countryside, we celebrated before the baby actually turned one, so she was probably only 11 months in the picture. I am not really sure.

(Pointing at a picture) This was from when she was three. (Flipping through the pictures) This was taken in a park when she was in first grade.

She was doing fine at the beginning, but as she grew older, she started failing school. She was okay in first grade and second grade, but third grade proved too hard for her, and it got worse from there on...

(Flipping through the pictures) This was taken at the Oriental Pearl.

Her disability wasn't apparent back then... It's just that she seemed to lag behind in intellectual development.

Preferring Play to Study

Q: How did the family take care of her before and after she started preschool? Did you go to any bonding activities or intellectual development programs?

LJ's mother: Intellectual development programs, no. We were very busy at work and had no time to teach her anything, so we let her play on her own.

We seldom taught her anything except for really simple things like one-digit addition and subtraction. But she didn't seem to learn much. At first we weren't paying attention. She didn't learn much at preschool and I figured that she would do better once she started first grade, since the teacher would teach more. She never showed much interest in the things we taught her back then, like kids' songs. She was only interested in playing.

Q: What did she play?

LJ's mother: She played with toys or other kids outside. The things she was interested in had nothing to do with studying. I asked her to study and she couldn't focus because she just wanted to play. After sitting there for 10 min, she was done and couldn't sit or study any longer.

Q: Since both you and your husband had to work, who watched her back then?

LJ's mother: My mom took care of her. She needed to be dropped off and picked up from preschool, so sometimes I would do the dropping off and my mom would do the picking up. My daughter was quite capable. Some days I would drop her off and she would come home by herself without my mom.

Q: She could go home by herself?

LJ's mother: Yeah, she could find her way home. One time I forgot to tell my mom to pick her up and thought she knew, and she thought I would do the picking up, so LJ came home by herself.

The preschool she went to was a regular one, the kind that was affiliated with state-owned companies. We didn't check out any special education preschool or organization.

Q: LJ started with a regular elementary school and followed the same curriculum as other kids, right?

LJ's mother: Right, she was taught everything they were taught. She was very naughty when she was young, so we didn't pay attention to her intellectual ability. At preschool and in first grade, there was always something going on in her head

and she just wanted to play all day long. She was able to keep up in first grade and second grade, but started lagging behind in third grade, because third grade is a turning point where everything becomes more difficult and a lot of repetition and rote memory is involved, like in *pinyin*. She doesn't have a good memory. She would study and then forget about it. People who suffer from memory loss tend not to do well academically. I figured that it also had to do with the high fever she had which had damaged her brain.

Q: Which classes did she like?

LJ's mother: She didn't like any or have any interest or the desire to learn. I asked her to study Chinese and math and she wasn't interested. She had no interest whatsoever in academics.

Q: What about music, drawing, PE, and crafts?

LJ's mother: She liked PE which was just playing outside, jumping and running. That's exactly what she liked, so she seldom got sick when she was young.

Q: At the regular school, did she like the teachers?

LJ's mother: She was a little scared of the teachers, some of whom were really strict. The teachers sometimes didn't know how to control her. But she wasn't scared of young teachers and her mind would wander off in their classes.

Q: Did the teachers give her any special treatment?

LJ's mother: The teachers would keep her after school to catch up on homework or tutor her on homework. She wasn't learning well or doing well on tests, so we would be summoned to the office. She managed to pass the tests in first grade, but failed in second grade and third grade. The third-grade curriculum was too difficult for her.

Q: What did you think of the teachers or the teachers' attitudes?

LJ's mother: I didn't give it too much thought. The teachers did their job teaching, and it was my daughter who wasn't into learning and was failing, so it wasn't the teachers' fault, was it?

Q: You mentioned just now that the teachers would keep her after school to catch up on the curriculum. Did she still have to do homework when she got home from school?

LJ's mother: Yes, she still had to do homework. She would do it but forgot about it by the time she took the tests. She was the kind of child with a bad memory. Sometimes you would teach her something and she would forget whatever she had learnt a while back, so you had to teach her repeatedly. (Laughing)

She seemed to remember when you first taught her, but would forget after some time. At the end of the semester, you are supposed to integrate everything you have learnt the whole semester, right? But she couldn't do that, she would just forget.

Q: Can you elaborate on how you tutored her with her homework?

LJ's mother: I didn't exactly tutor her. I just let her do it on her own and I would only teach her if there was anything she couldn't do.

She wouldn't say anything if there were things she couldn't do. She would just leave it blank. On the Chinese sample tests, sometimes she needed to fill in a lot of blanks but she couldn't do any, because she had to understand the Chinese text first.

She understood nothing, so of course she couldn't fill in the blanks. At those times, I would teach her by explaining the text to her.

Q: So you didn't realize LJ's disability until she was in elementary school?

LJ's mother: Right. She was going to Bei Xing Jin Elementary School. She was born in 1991, so it must have been the year 2000 when she was at that school and we had already moved here. She couldn't keep up at school and there were disruptions in her schooling. She had to repeat second grade and third grade as well, and was dragging down the average scores of her class. So the teacher asked us to take her for an IQ test. I took her to Zhidan Road for the test and the score was bad.

Q: Did you take her to any hospital for diagnosis after the test?

LJ's mother: We didn't go to any hospital. We went to a special organization for IQ tests. An assessment was required to get a disability certificate, and that organization did the assessment.

Based on the IQ test, she had intellectual disability, so the schoolteacher suggested that she quit the regular school. She had been there several years, couldn't keep up and had to repeat the grades, so the school asked me to look into special education schools.

Q: So LJ only took the test once on Zhidan Road? You didn't double check with other organizations?

LJ's mother: She tested twice and both were on Zhidan Road. I didn't think of getting a second opinion at other organizations. For the tests, she was required to solve some problems but I'm not sure what problems.

Q: How did LJ get along with her classmates at elementary school?

LJ's mother: She got along well.

Q: Would she ask to play with them?

LJ's mother: Yes, they would play together. She played really well with her classmates, and now that she is working, she gets along really well and has no problem communicating.

Q: How did LJ go to school when she was in elementary school?

LJ's mother: When we were still living in Chongming, the school was down the block from us, so she would walk to school by herself sometimes. After we moved to Shanghai, we had to cross a major road to go to school, so I took her to school every day to be safe.

Non-Challenging Curriculum at Special Education School

Q: Did you have misgivings about her going to the special education school after third grade?

LJ's mother: How could I not? I figured that once she was there, she would be different from the average kid, because she would be labeled as having a disability and be inferior. At that time, teachers at the regular schools were not really fond of kids like her because she wasn't doing well academically and often dragged down

the average test scores of the class. We had no choice but to send her to a special education school.

She attended regular schools till third grade before going to the special education school. She was with kids who were not smart or had disabilities till she graduated. Academic-wise, she didn't learn much. Because of her years at regular schools, she could do everything at the special education school.

Q: You are referring to knowledge?

LJ's mother: Yes, knowledge-wise. She didn't learn much, she was wasted in there. We tried to train her to be independent and not to hang out with kids from the special education school. I was told that she shouldn't seek the company of people with intellectual disabilities. For the sake of her own intellectual development, she should get to know and interact with ordinary people in the real world.

Q: What exactly did she learn at the special education school?

LJ's mother: They were taught some hands-on things. Those kids couldn't really learn much, so the teachers didn't teach a lot. My impression was that no matter what was taught, it was very simple. Their Chinese texts were simple too—too simple for LJ, actually. So whatever was taught, hands-on things or knowledge, the audience was mainly the other kids, because LJ already knew everything and could do everything. At that time, if there were things that needed to be organized or done in the class, the teacher would have my daughter handle it all by herself.

Q: So LJ was asked to handle a lot of things? Was she given some kind of title in the class?

LJ's mother: There weren't exactly any titles, because the class only had a dozen or so kids, and since the kids all had some kind of problem, the teacher didn't bother with titles. There was no class president or academic student leader. The kids were all grouped together and helping each other out. That's the way the class was.

Some kids were okay, but some even had difficulty walking and needed constant help. So my daughter would help them sometimes. In her class, there were kids with lower IQs than her and some couldn't even tie their shoes, which means that their IQ was really low. They understood next to nothing, so my daughter would help them.

Q: She must have had some extracurricular activities at the special education school? Do you still remember some?

LJ's mother: There weren't many extracurricular activities. Some kids had difficulty walking and some had difficulty talking. They did go outside with the teacher for some activities like playing with balls, but there was always the worry that some kids would fall.

The school would organize some artistic performances. My daughter was pretty chubby then, and being chubby, she didn't want to participate in the performances. She could learn dance moves really fast, like for a performance or for International Children's Day, whereas other kids couldn't learn as fast. But she was overweight and didn't like that kind of activity.

Or they would go somewhere for a competition. Special education schools do this too, like going to outside schools for performances or competitions. She would participate but wasn't really into it.

Q: So she didn't like being in performances, did she?

LJ's mother: She was overweight and self-conscious about it. Even now she doesn't like it because of being overweight.

Q: Did she like that special education school?

LJ's mother: Not particularly. Maybe she didn't understand much. School was fun, she didn't have to study a lot and was playing all day long. My impression was that she didn't learn much, not much was going on in class or being taught, and she had a lot of freedom there.

Q: Did anything happen at the special education school that was memorable?

LJ's mother: Not really. Everything was normal and not in the least exciting. I told her that she spent so much time there that it was like a babysitting service, with not much going on.

I didn't drop her off then. And when school ended, she would go home by herself. It was like sending her to a babysitter, she didn't learn much there and at the end of the day, she just took the bus home.

Q: When did you stop dropping her off at school?

LJ's mother: When she started at the special education school. She was 13 or 14 years old by that time and supposedly fourth or fifth grade level.

Q: So you mean that starting with fourth or fifth grade, LJ went to school and went home by herself?

LJ's mother: Right, by herself. I took her to school the first day, told her the directions and she remembered. Since then, she went to school by herself and took the bus home by herself after school.

Q: Were you not worried about her safety?

LJ's mother: (Laughing) Not really. She was okay, she wasn't scared. When she was going to preschool in the Chongming countryside, sometimes my mom and I would forget to pick her up, and she was able to get home by herself.

Q: That's really good. So how long did she stay at the special education school?

LJ's mother: Four or 5 years, till she graduated. She was there from fourth grade through ninth.

Q: In Shanghai, as far as we know, special education school would be followed by 2 years' preliminary vocational school. Did L have those 2 years of preliminary vocational school?

LJ's mother: No. She stayed at the special education school through ninth grade.

Q: Through ninth grade?

LJ's mother: Yes. Back then, they stayed through ninth grade, followed by 2 years' extension, so she stayed for another 2 years. She was 16 in ninth grade and couldn't get a job, because she had to wait till she turned 18 to get a work permit. Once they turned 18, they were given jobs outside school like moving things and selling things in supermarkets.

Q: During those 2 years' extension, the school should have offered some sort of curriculum, right? Was it any different from before?

LJ's mother: I didn't see much difference. During those 2 years, the school would often arrange internships for them like at supermarkets opened by the Sunshine Home, an organization in Putuo District for people with disabilities.

There are shelves in supermarkets, right? So they were taught to organize the shelves or greet the customers. How to welcome customers when you see them coming in, how to restock the shelves, how to check for expiration dates of items on the shelves... all of these were taught at the special education school. She got paid for those supermarket internships, but it was a minimum wage.

Q: Paid internships?

LJ's mother: Right. My daughter said back then, "Wow, I am getting paid now." The pay wasn't much, but it made her very happy, because it was the first time she got paid for making an effort.

Q: Did she get tested on what she learnt at the special education school?

LJ's mother: She did but the tests were too easy. She knew everything on the tests. She had learnt quite a bit at the regular schools and the special education school didn't teach anything difficult, so the tests were simple.

Q: Can you be more specific?

LJ's mother: The tests were on addition and subtraction below 100, so who would fail that? For Chinese, it was writing characters based on the *pinyin* given and the characters were all simple ones. Do you know how many Chinese characters are taught at regular schools from first to third grade? Special education schools don't really teach that many. For her, she had read the same texts before and already knew all the characters, so she had no problem with the tests at all.

Q: Did she talk to you or your husband about what she learnt at school?

LJ's mother: Not really. What she did say sometimes was that what she learnt at the special education school was too simple and she already knew all of it, which was true.

Q: Did the special education school teach hands-on skills?

LJ's mother: It did, and she could do everything.

Q: Was there any teacher at the special education school that she liked?

LJ's mother: There was a teacher, Ms. Zhang. She used to be head of academics and lived in the building next to us. She was really young. Then we moved and heard about her promotion to principal.

You should ask my daughter about Ms. Zhang. She will remember better because the two of them got along pretty well. Ms. Zhang liked my daughter. If something needed to be done at school or there was some issue, she often asked for my daughter's help, and my daughter liked her. I saw her hanging out with Ms. Zhang, sometimes even on Saturday or Sunday.

Q: There was no school on Saturday or Sunday, was there?

LJ's mother: No school. She would go out with Ms. Zhang sometimes for activities or to get some things done. Or she would go to her place. She lived next to us before we moved.

Ms. Zhang really cared about her. Before we moved, we would run into her within the apartment complex and she would ask LJ how she was doing and they would end up chatting.

Q: Is she still in touch with Ms. Zhang?

LJ's mother: We moved and live far from her now, so we are not in touch. I am not sure if my daughter has kept in touch with Ms. Zhang or has her phone number.

Q: How did other teachers at the special education school treat LJ?

LJ's mother: They were nice, because LJ didn't bother anyone. In fact, the teachers didn't have to do much for her, so she was easier for them than some of the other kids. She could do everything by herself and didn't need much supervision, and she always helped the teachers. So the teachers were nice to her.

Q: How did the other students treat LJ?

LJ's mother: They were okay. Sometimes she would tease them. She wasn't being mean. She was just naughty and would play tricks on the other kids. And when she was unhappy, she would just ignore them and not help them.

Q: Did she make any good friends at the special education school?

LJ's mother: There was one who hasn't quite kept in touch. There was a girl named J, and another named G. I know that G has kept in touch and they have remained good friends and often hang out together.

J worked doing the same supermarket internship with my daughter after graduation. They used to hang out and go out together. But now LJ can't find her phone number and just lost contact.

Q: As she grows older, did you see any dramatic change during a certain period of time?

LJ's mother: Not in particular, except for maybe the rebellious teenage years. Now that I think about it, she wouldn't listen to me at all when she was going from 12 to 13. Must have been teenage rebellion. Whatever I said, she would contradict me and do the opposite thing. She refused to listen to us and couldn't take in what we said. Nothing I said seemed to make sense to her. But it was over after a while, so I guess it was just a short-lived rebellion.

Q: How long did it last?

LJ's mother: That rebellious phase lasted 1 to 2 years, now that I think about it.

Q: She should still be at school at age 12 or 13. Would she have talked to her teachers or classmates?

LJ's mother: Yes, she was still at school. She didn't talk much back then. She would talk to people she got along with, but she didn't communicate much with the teachers. At the special education school, you know... She could talk to just a couple of girls whereas the other kids were not easy to communicate with. After her teenage years, she got better, much better.

Overall, I feel that she was quite normal growing up and didn't cause me too much trouble.

Now that she has grown up and started working, I do feel that she is slightly different from before. We don't have to worry about her now. I used to always worry if she went out, now I am taking it much easier. I let her go out and deal with people on her own, and I don't worry about how she talks, makes friends, or spends money.

Gratifying Supermarket Job

Q: Did you think about what she should do after graduating from the special education school?

LJ's mother: Her dad wanted her to learn driving but I didn't think it would work, because driving needs brains for making judgment and she didn't have the brains. Another option was to do sales, but being a cashier wouldn't work either, because calculation is involved and what if she gave the wrong change? So I said no when someone asked her to work as cashier because I didn't want to cover any losses caused by her giving the wrong change.

Then I asked her to get a work permit because my niece said she could sell clothes. She didn't end up doing the job selling clothes and never had to use the work permit.

Q: Did she take the test for the work permit herself?

LJ's mother: Yes, she did. She was looking for a job and a work permit could come in handy. Sometimes you couldn't work without the permit, but once you got the permit, it didn't seem to be of much use.

Q: So she started working after the 2-year extension program. Was there any job that LJ liked at the beginning?

LJ's mother: She didn't give it much thought. She stayed home, then worked for a while at a supermarket, then lost her job when the supermarket was closed.

Q: Why was it closed?

LJ's mother: That supermarket wasn't making money, so the store was leased to another party. Someone at the top made the decision, not those running the store. No profit, no supermarket.

I was happy when the school got her the job at the supermarket and I had wanted it to be long term, but then the supermarket was closed. I figured that she would need a stable job sooner or later, and the Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF) didn't really give me many leads. It just sent me a notice asking if I wanted subsidy or insurance payment, and I picked the latter of course.

Q: Can you elaborate on the insurance payment?

LJ's mother: If you choose subsidy, you won't get any insurance payments. Her disability certificate specifies that she has medium disability which qualifies her for a monthly subsidy or monthly insurance payment. I said I didn't want subsidy and wanted insurance payments instead. I was thinking about her life in the long run. I wanted her to go out there and get a job. The DPF pays into her pension and health insurance, and her workplace has been doing the same.

Q: How long did she work at the supermarket?

LJ's mother: Not very long, about a year and a half. She got paid every month, and the supermarket paid into her social insurances too.

Q: What exactly did she do at the supermarket?

LJ's mother: Restocking, organizing shelves, and checking expiration dates and removing items that had expired. She wasn't working as a cashier. She was just organizing shelves.

Q: Did she like the job?

LJ's mother: She liked it a lot. She went straight from school to the supermarket and had a great time.

Q: You mean she went to work at that supermarket right after graduating from the special education school?

LJ's mother: Right, that's what happened. She was very happy, because she got paid every month and was doing a good job organizing and restocking shelves. The teachers at the supermarket were very nice and taught her to check and restock the merchandise.

Q: There were teachers teaching them at the supermarket?

LJ's mother: We called them teachers, but they were just older employees at the supermarket. Since they were older than LJ and would be teaching her, we tried to be courteous by calling them "teachers."

Q: Was she happy when she got paid?

LJ's mother: Of course. It was the first time she made money. None of us were paid a lot back then and she made less than we did, but she was very happy because she was the one who made the money.

I told her to save her money and she said she would use it to buy me groceries. I refused, saying that she should keep the money for herself. She was thinking about me, thinking about using the money to buy me or her grandma something. I told her she didn't have to buy grandma anything, as long as I knew, and grandma knew, that she had such generous thoughts. She got paid for the first time in her life, and she was thinking about...

Q: About her family?

LJ's mother: Yes, about her family. She knows to give back.

Q: Does she keep her own money now or do you keep it for her?

LJ's mother: She keeps it herself. She has been doing it for the last 2 years. Before, I had been keeping it for her for several years, now she'll ask why she should let me keep her money for her. I figured she was right, so I gave the bankcard back to her and let her keep her own money.

Q: Does she spend the money?

LJ's mother: She does. She shops, like food, clothes, and whatnot. Sometimes she buys clothes she needs, and other times she doesn't really wear what she buys. She likes to eat, so she buys snacks. She spends on food, clothes, and things she uses.

Q: There were other employees at the supermarket. How many were there, do you remember?

LJ's mother: There weren't many employees. Besides LJ and her friend J who had just graduated from school, there were two or three employees who were in charge, and they worked shifts.

Q: How did LJ get along with her co-workers?

LJ's mother: She got along really well. It was good for her working at the supermarket and people there were pretty nice. She really liked that job. Too bad the place closed.

Those two teachers were nice and told me that LJ shouldn't hang out with people who are not very smart, because it wouldn't help with her own intellectual development, and that she should interact more with ordinary people in the real world.

Frequent exposure to customers at the supermarket was good for training her abilities. The fact is that her thinking is definitely slower than ours and she doesn't react as fast as we do, and when there are problems to be solved, she can't cover every angle the way we can.

The two teachers also took my daughter out. They often went to Suzhou, so they took her along. My daughter doesn't look like someone who is really slow, you know, so back then, she often traveled and went out with those two teachers and other ordinary people.

Q: LJ worked shifts at the supermarket. What did she do on her days off?

LJ's mother: It depends... computer (LJ was playing computer games). She didn't go out much, she just stayed home with the computer.

Q: So she was kind of a homebody?

LJ's mother: Right, she didn't go out much. She stayed home to play games on the computer.

Q: What kind of games?

LJ's mother: I don't know what games. The computer at home is getting old and I don't know how to play games. The game that she was playing had different levels that you could get to, but I don't know what it was. What game were you playing? (Asking LJ.)

LJ: Warcraft.

LJ's mother: Warcraft. She plays computer games, watches kids' TV shows, and really clicks with my niece's husband. He is in his thirties but still watches kids' TV shows, those with endless episodes. (Laughing)

Q: The anime that kids watch?

LJ's mother: Japanese anime. My niece is young, just over 30, and she watches anime too. My nephew, too. They share the same language. We would go for dinner at my niece's place and they would talk about computer games, TV shows, and anime at dinner. I don't understand anything. They would be talking and I wouldn't be able to get a word in because I don't watch what they watch.

A Precious Daughter

Q: When LJ was growing up, did you and your husband disagree on how to educate her?

LJ's mother: Education is never easy. I wanted one thing sometimes and he wanted another, the two of us...

Q: What did you want?

LJ's mother: I said that since she wasn't doing well academically, we should just let her do her own thing. He said we should push her. But it's no use since she really wasn't into studies.

Q: So your husband wanted her to study harder?

LJ's mother: Yes. I said that no matter how hard you pushed her, she would forget what she had learned before and rote memory wouldn't work. It's not that I didn't want to teach her. He said that I didn't do a good job teaching her and pushing her.

Q: Your husband said that you didn't do a good job teaching her?

LJ's mother: Yes, he said that I didn't teach her well, but if she didn't want to learn, she didn't want to learn. I wanted her to find her own way.

Q: Did your husband teach her?

LJ's mother: Never. He didn't have the time or the ability because he didn't know how. He just asked me to do it while he did nothing himself.

He can't even speak Mandarin, really. He speaks Mandarin with an accent and doesn't even know *pinyin*, so how could he teach her? He couldn't.

Q: Did he interact a lot with LJ? Did he take her out?

LJ's mother: Not a lot. Most of the time I was the one taking her out. He is a taxi driver and takes every other day off, and he needs to rest. When he works, he drives the taxi for 24 h non-stop, so on his days off, he sleeps and seldom has time to take her out. So I have always been the one taking her out.

Q: Did the grandparents on either side help out?

LJ's mother: Occasionally. Once we moved to Shanghai, they hardly helped. I was the sole caregiver.

She grew up in the Chongming countryside till third grade. In the countryside, I was the one with her most of the time. Before she went to preschool, the grandparents on her dad's side would play with her. Once she was older and started school, they stopped and she didn't want to play with them anyway.

Q: Since you were the one with her most of the time, where did you take her on weekends?

LJ's mother: We didn't go to many places because there were not many places to go to in the countryside, unlike in Shanghai where there are so many parks. So we would play in the communal area of the apartment complex. Once we moved to Shanghai, there were many more places to go to like parks and arcades. We didn't have those in the countryside.

Q: Once you moved here after LJ finished third grade, did she get to go out a lot?

LJ's mother: She got to go out more often. She had been to most of the parks since she could play there, unlike in the countryside.

Q: And you were still the one taking her?

LJ's mother: Yes, I was. We would row a boat and do almost everything.

Q: After you had LJ, did you and your husband consider having a second child?

LJ's mother: We didn't. It was so many years ago and we didn't know. We were told later that we were allowed to have a second child since the first one had an intellectual disability. But I didn't want to have a second child, even though we could.

Q: What about after you got LJ the disability certificate?

LJ's mother: After I got her the certificate, we were allowed to have a second child, even though I didn't know until someone told me several years later. I am old now, so why would I want to have another child? I have never seriously considered having another one, and I have never seen LJ as someone who is different.

Q: Your husband has never discussed this with you?

LJ's mother: He has never really considered it either. We were indeed allowed to have a second child back then, but we decided against it since we have never seen LJ as someone with a disability, so there's no need to have another child, right?

Q: Have you ever had any pressure taking her out? For example, were you worried about how people would see her?

LJ's mother: Never. She has always been most precious to me. I would never say, like I am supposed to say, that she has a disability. I have never seen my daughter as inferior to anyone. She is the best as far as I am concerned.

Ever since she was born, my daughter has always been able to do everything. She is just a little overweight, and when she is overweight, she doesn't appear very smart or agile.

Q: What about your husband? Has he ever had any pressure or worries?

LJ's mother: Not exactly. He just wished that she could do better academically, and it kind of bothered him that she was failing with her studies. So what's the big deal? She is independent now and making her own money. Even though her IQ is slightly lower, it doesn't matter. That's no reason to look down on your own child!

I hate it most when people say that you are a "gang du" or have a disability. Some people will make a big deal of saying that you went to a special education school and I don't like that.

Q: "Gang du"?

LJ's mother: It's Shanghainese meaning "dumb" in Mandarin. Some people think that if you went to a special education school, you are dumb. I see many people with disabilities out there, some have intellectual disabilities and are not smart, but not all of them are like that. I see everyone the same, because my child is the same as every other child, right? I hate it most when people say, "This one has problems and is dumb." But I won't argue if I hear it. No one knows that my daughter has a disability certificate. No one knows.

Q: Because no one can tell, right?

LJ's mother: I have never told anyone, and not even the neighbors know. Why would I tell them? Some will understand, but others won't and will look at her differently. My daughter is no different from ordinary people except that she is a little overweight.

Q: What about the grandparents? Do they somehow see LJ differently?

LJ's mother: The grandparents on her dad's side don't see her differently. They see her more in the light of a girl, and in the countryside, people value boys more than girls, so we are not close to them. They wanted a grandson and ended up with a granddaughter, so that's what they are unhappy with, you know.

Q: So the issue is more about the gender of their grandchild?

LJ's mother: Right, they had a problem with her being a girl, and her grandpa on her dad's side had a problem with her not doing well academically. They knew about her getting a disability certificate and were actually okay with it.

Q: Are there any other family members? For example, uncles, aunts, older brothers, or sisters?

LJ's mother: Her dad has an elder sister and a younger sister.

Q: How do the two aunts treat LJ?

LJ's mother: They are okay, but I don't think they like LJ much. We don't see them often. They have their lives and we have ours, and we don't live close. They live near Beixinjin in Changning District and we live here.

My daughter didn't do well academically and has no degree, so the aunts were always on her about it. They also told her to lose weight and to make herself more presentable. They don't seem to like my daughter much.

My own elder brother seems to like LJ a lot. He has one girl who is older than LJ and already married. She and LJ are very close and we often go to her place. She likes to hang out with my daughter and has never looked down on her. She is really nice.

Reluctant about Going to the Sunshine Home

Q: What was your plan for her after the supermarket was closed?

LJ's mother: After the supermarket was closed, she was told to go to the Sunshine Home and to work at the Sunshine Workshop. She went for several days and then refused to go anymore, because she said that people over there were really not smart. She had no one to talk to there because everyone was really slow.

Q: So she had no one to play with at the Sunshine Home?

LJ's mother: She could do all the crafts like making paper boxes, and it was no fun for her, so she didn't want to go anymore. She didn't want that kind of job, you know.

Q: Where was the Sunshine Home that LJ went to?

LJ's mother: It was on Tongchuan Road. She went for 1 month and then stopped.

Q: What did she do at the Sunshine Home?

LJ's mother: She took some lessons and after the lessons, she worked, like processing small things for third parties and pasting paper. Things you normally do at a workshop. And it was paid work. She was reluctant to go and didn't really go for many days.

Q: So she took lessons there?

LJ's mother: Just lessons on how to make simple things.

Q: Anything she liked to do there?

LJ's mother: Nothing she really liked. She was bored staying there all day and since the people there were really slow, she couldn't talk to them and had problems communicating with them. Previously, she mainly interacted with ordinary people. So when she went to the Sunshine Home, she found it difficult to interact with anyone there, so she didn't want to be with them and didn't want to go there. I figured that she should go there because she got paid and the Sunshine Home also paid into her social insurances. I told her about that, but she still refused to go.

Q: Even after you told her what she could get out of going to the Sunshine Home, she still didn't want to go there?

LJ's mother: Right. She refused to go because it was no fun for her.

Q: She stayed at the Sunshine Home for a while. Have you ever visited there? What's your impression?

LJ's mother: I went there once to take a look. (Laughing)

My impression was that people taking lessons there were much older. All of them were put into the same class instead of being separated into different classes. They could have made up two classes as far as I could tell. The teacher just gave some lessons. There wasn't exactly any curriculum. The teacher just talked about how to do things or how to behave, nothing serious.

Q: From your perspective, is there anything that the Sunshine Home should improve?

LJ's mother: From my perspective, I suggest that special education schools and the Sunshine Home teach more. I think the kids should learn more from books, because some of the kids are quite receptive to knowledge. But of course there are kids who don't learn well, especially if they are already of a certain age.

The kids should learn things they eventually will have to learn in life. For example, if you have learned certain Chinese characters, you will know how to take the bus and which stop to get off. Like my daughter, at least she knows which bus to take to which stop. If you don't know Chinese characters, you won't know where to go or where to get off. So learning Chinese characters is very important.

Q: So the kids should acquire more knowledge that is related to real life?

LJ's mother: Right, they have to because they will need the knowledge in real life. Math too. Calculations below 100 should be taught because they will need them in real life. For example, if you go grocery shopping, you should know how to buy and how to pay. You have to be able to do that. Like my daughter, she couldn't do it before. So I often gave her money and told her to go and buy groceries herself. How much does this cost and how much change should you get back? She learnt by constantly doing it.

Now I need to teach her how to calculate payment, like calculating how much to pay for vegetables of a certain price and certain weight. Now she only knows how to pay whatever the vendor tells her to pay, and she never thinks about how to calculate whether it's the right amount or not. It's easier for her to do what the vendor says, because it's more difficult for her than for us, you know, to do the calculation. In this regard, she is different from us. Calculations like this are not easy for her.

Q: So you mean that when she buys things, she pays whatever the vendor tells her to pay and brings back the change, but she doesn't know how to do the calculations?

LJ's mother: She knows how much change she is supposed to bring back, but she doesn't know how to calculate the amount she should pay based on the price and weight of a vegetable. She doesn't have that skill.

Q: You believe that she should be taught this kind of thing both at school and at home, right?

LJ's mother: Right, because the most basic skill is how to use money, don't you agree? The school didn't teach her that, like how to calculate how much to pay for a vegetable of a certain price and certain weight and how much change you should back. It might be too complicated to be taught anyway.

Q: Our understanding is that the Sunshine Workshop pays into social insurances, not the Sunshine Home. So we want to confirm whether it was the Sunshine Home or the Sunshine Workshop LJ went to.

LJ's mother: Should be the Sunshine Home. As far as I can remember... right, there were no payments into her insurances when she was going there. Yes, the payments stopped. She went there after the supermarket was closed. It's located within an apartment complex with an entrance on Tongchuan Road. If you ask around, people in that neighborhood all know about it. Should be the Sunshine Home.

Q: Did the payments stop after LJ refused to go there, or were there no payments to begin with?

LJ's mother: There had never been any payments from the Sunshine Home.

Good Rapport with Co-Workers

Q: How did LJ end up working at Papa John's?

LJ's mother: I was worried about her being unemployed, so I asked a good friend for help. I said that my daughter had no job and just stayed at home. I didn't want to hide it from her, right? LJ is the kind of person who didn't do well academically, so I asked my friend to watch out for a job that might fit her. My friend said that she would do that.

It just so happened that Papa John's was hiring and my friend told me to take LJ for an interview, so I did. The store tested how good she was at kneading and tossing dough, and a couple of days later notified her to report for an internship.

Q: Did she start at D store? When did she sign the contract?

LJ's mother: She started at M store. Before 2010, there was a Special Olympics World Games and Papa John's was hiring. If I remember correctly, she was hired in 2010. Before 2010, there was a Special Olympics World Games in 2008.¹ She participated with schoolteachers in a performance which was later made into a VCD.

Q: LJ participated in the Special Olympics World Games?

LJ's mother: She did, in a dance performance.

LJ's mother (asking LJ): What did you perform?

LJ (answering): Some artistic number, dancing actually. There were a lot of reporters.

LJ's mother: Oh, there were a lot of reporters. So she must still have been at school. I don't quite remember.

LJ: There were also a lot of celebrities.

LJ's mother: A lot of celebrities, is that right? So, she must still have been at school and not yet at Papa John's.

LJ's mother (asking LJ): When you joined Papa John's, did you sign the contract in 2008 or 2010?

LJ (replying): 2010. The first one I signed was for the internship.

¹In 2007, Shanghai hosted the Special Olympics World Summer Games.

LJ's mother: The contract was signed in 2010. Upon hiring, she signed a 3-month internship, followed by a 1-year contract. She has been working for a long time at Papa John's.

Q: During the internship, was there anyone teaching LJ?

LJ's mother: Someone had to teach her during the internship. Someone taught her how to knead and toss dough.

LJ's mother (asking LJ): When you first joined, you must have had someone teaching you, right?

LJ: Yeah, someone was teaching me.

Q: So how did that person treat her?

LJ's mother: Very nice. They all treated her nice at M store, including the employees, store manager, and shift manager.

They saw her as a very cute little girl. My daughter was very social when she joined, she wasn't the mature kind. She was young, 19 going on 20, very naughty, and very cute, still like a little girl.

They all liked her, called her "little chubby" and treated her really nice. She did whatever they asked her to do and goofed around with them like a child. Sometimes a co-worker would ask her to work overtime and she would say, "Buy me a soda and I will do it." It was funny.

Q: So she knew how to bargain?

LJ's mother: Right. She would say, "Buy me a soda and I will work two extra hours." The co-worker was really nice and bought her a soda. It's very cute, I buy you food and you do things for me. She did well, getting along really well with people and with co-workers. She would buy food for others and share her food with them. She would say, "Let me buy you some drink." My daughter was really happy then, so was I.

At the end of the year, they would go out to eat to celebrate and sing karaoke. They would invite her to all the group activities, and she was happy, without a worry in the world. The two managers at M store were very nice to her and are still in contact even now. After that store was shut down, the two managers left Papa John's but are still close with LJ.

Q: You mean the two managers from M store?

LJ's mother: Yes, those two managers. They have remained friends with LJ and often take her out. After M store was shut down, one of the managers got a job at a coffee shop in Xujiahui. She runs the store and asked my daughter to go work there. I knew nothing about the store, so I didn't let her go. I was worried that the store was too far, being in Xujiahui. Now that I think about it, she should probably have gone to work in the coffee shop.

I figured back then that the job with Papa John's was relatively stable, so I didn't let LJ quit. She was still young and listened to me about not changing jobs. Now she definitely wouldn't agree with me! (Laughing)

That coffee shop stopped hiring later on, so LJ couldn't go there even if she wanted to. The pay was good there. I thought maybe the coffee shop job wouldn't be as stable, you know. But when I changed my mind, there were no openings anymore.

Q: What exactly does LJ do at Papa John's?

LJ's mother: When she first joined, she was kneading and tossing dough. The pizza dough at Papa John's is all handmade. At first she didn't know what to do, so she received training and was also trained in laying the ingredients. After some time, after she had mastered the dough and the ingredients, she started learning about appetizers and now she can make everything. No one taught her later on. She was on her own, learning while watching how everything was done. It's a tough job kneading and tossing dough because it requires a lot of strength in your hands (See Fig. 1).

Q: So it requires a lot of elbow grease?

LJ's mother: Yes, it's really strenuous, because you have to put a lot of strength into your hands. So she joined and learnt a bit of this and a bit of that and ended up knowing everything.

Q: How long did she work at M store?

LJ's mother: Four years, which were four very happy years for her. Then she was transferred to D store where interpersonal relationships were more complicated and tough. Even before her transfer, the store was known for that.

After M store was shut down, the manager asked us to pick a store to transfer to. I wanted her to be somewhere close, so I didn't pick C store. I should have picked C store because it would have been easier to get along there.

Q: At Papa John's, how does she get along with her co-workers?

LJ's mother: She gets along okay. The managers at M store were so nice. After she got transferred to D store, there was an intern manager who was new. He was really young and seemed to look at people like LJ differently. He was always referring to them as "special". And LJ might think, "So what if I am special. That's no reason for you to always call me that." It just didn't sound nice.

The fact is that my daughter is just half a beat slower than ordinary people. She just couldn't do well academically, but she can learn everything else. She is a little overweight. But she isn't inferior in anything and she can do everything. Failing school has indeed affected her. If she had done better academically, she would be working at a less physically demanding job. There's nothing to do now without a degree. So she had a fight at D store.

Q: Fight? Fight with LJ?

LJ's mother: Didn't I tell you before? She had an incident at the store. Had a fight with them at the store, you know.

Q: For what reason?

LJ's mother: There was a time when they probably had some issue with her, because... I actually don't know what it was over.

She is very capable at work. My daughter isn't the subservient kind and she talks back if you say things that are not appropriate. She is in a position to do so, because whatever you ask her to do, be it in the dining area or in the kitchen area, she can do it. If the manager picks on her, she will talk back. I told her that she must have been driving the manager crazy.

If someone picks on her, with or without a good reason, she won't take it sometimes. There were people at the store who were condescending because they were some sort of manager. Like that time when the shift manager asked her to move things around. She did it the first time, and when she was asked to do it a second



Fig. 1 Ms. LJ at work

time, she said, “Wait, I will do it later.” My guess was that she didn’t say it in a nice way.

Q: Because she was in the middle of something?

LJ’s mother: Well, it was because she already did what she was asked to the first time. There were other people around with nothing to do, but she was the one being

ordered to move things. After she complied the first time, she was ordered a second time. Moving things was not part of her job, so she didn't like it that she was being asked to do it a second time. She should have said, "Wait till I am done with the silverware I am wiping." Instead she told the manager to wait, and the manager didn't like it, thinking that she refused to follow orders.

So the shift manager told the store manager that LJ refused to listen to him, and without investigating into the matter, the store manager gave my daughter a tongue lashing. My daughter told me about it on the phone later. I asked her if she moved things like she was told to, and she said she ended up still doing it, you know.

The store manager told her that the shift manager was her leader and she must do whatever he told her to do. She asked for a chance to defend herself and the store manager told her to save it. That kind of attitude was very frustrating and made things worse, right?

Before the incident, the shift manager had always looked down on LJ. He treated her differently and called her "special". The store manager asked him to apologize for using this word, and LJ said she didn't need the apology but just hoped that he wouldn't call her that anymore because it didn't sound nice.

Q: LJ was told to apologize to him?

LJ's mother: No. After the fight, because the shift manager called her "special," the store manager didn't think it was appropriate, so he asked him to apologize to my daughter. My daughter said something like, "You don't need to apologize, just don't call me that anymore."

Q: So he was told to apologize to LJ?

LJ's mother: Right, because he had been calling her "special." My daughter said, "You don't have to apologize to me. Next time you see me, just don't call me that." Just don't use the word "special" because people know that if you are "special," you have a disability certificate, you know.

Q: The shift manager called her "special" implying that she has some kind of disability, and calling her "special" shows sympathy, right?

LJ's mother: No. By calling her "special," he was looking down on her. "Special" means having a disability certificate and someone who isn't normal and is inferior. You call ordinary people by their names. You don't just call someone "special."

Q: So he just called her "special" bluntly instead of addressing her by her name?

LJ's mother: Right. Calling someone "special" is very hurtful, because it's a word used for someone with a disability certificate. Society wants to show care for this group by calling them "special" but everyone knows what it really means. No one likes to hear it. Even if I do have a disability certificate, I wouldn't be happy if you kept calling me "special."

So the store manager called the district manager and the district manager suspended her job. The fight happened at work on October 2, and she was told the next day not to report to work anymore. I didn't know exactly what happened except that her job was suspended. I figured so what. There wasn't a resolution until the end of October, then she was transferred to W store on November 1.

Q: So she isn't at D store now?

LJ's mother: No. She is at W store now.

Q: Did LJ ask for the transfer herself or was it arranged by management?

LJ's mother: Management transferred her to W store, and the district manager was actually the one handling transfers. The district manager for D store was in a dilemma not knowing whether he should let LJ stay or leave. I could have had LJ stay back then, but it wasn't necessary, because after the fight, it wasn't fun for her to stay there anymore. I mean we could have insisted on not leaving, but that would have put the district manager in a difficult position.

The store manager should have been the one to get transferred. If I had refused to budge, the store manager would have had a hard time, you know. But I compromised once the district manager got involved, and it was an easy out for everyone involved.

Q: How long did LJ work at D store?

LJ's mother: She worked at D store for 3 years and at Papa John's for a total of 7 years. She got transferred from M store to D store in 2013 and stayed till 2016, so 3 years it was.

W store is pretty far now and she spends more than an hour commuting. When she was working at D store, she could bike to work. Now she needs to take two subway lines and one bus, which costs more. Closer is always better, because it's more convenient.

After she got transferred to W store, she has to leave for work really early in the morning in winter to catch the subway. You have no idea how crowded Line 7 is at 8:30 a.m., and Line 2 is no better. So she has to leave for work early and doesn't get home till pretty late. It takes time to change out of her work clothes, and there's a delay of 10 min changing from one subway line to another and a total of 20 min or so waiting for the transportation. So it takes a long time to commute to W store, and she can't work overtime for more than 30 min.

Q: Does she work morning shift or evening shift?

LJ's mother: She works mostly afternoon shift, which starts at either 10:30 or 11 a.m. and lasts till 8 p.m. When they get busy sometimes, the shift extends to 9 p.m. She can't work any later than that because there will be no bus. It would have been better if she just needed to take one subway or one bus. It's too much trouble transferring from one to another. So I don't want her to work too late because we live far from work and I would worry about her getting home very late at night.

Q: Have you ever visited her at work after she got transferred to W store?

LJ's mother: I went with her when she first reported for work.

Q: What's her work schedule like now? How many workdays and how many off days?

LJ's mother: She works 5 days a week and gets 2 days off. The policy of the store is that she can take days off between Monday through Friday when the store isn't busy so that she is guaranteed 2 days off. Sometimes she takes Monday off, sometimes Tuesday off, and she normally doesn't get two consecutive days off. For example, she will take today off and then another day off after a day or several days.

Her job is actually very arduous and she puts a lot into it. Not many people know about it, but the store has been lowering the pay without really announcing it. During Chinese New Year last year, she worked overtime for 7 days straight, starting with New Year's Day. I asked her how much she got paid for the overtime and she said

not much. She was promised overtime pay but the take-home amount was pathetic. I don't know how the store calculated this. She has never taken time off during Chinese New Year. Employees of the store who are from other provinces went back to their hometowns, and she stayed behind to work. Last year, she worked so hard during Chinese New Year. She went to work every single day. But now the pay is dwindling.

Q: Dwindling?

LJ's mother: Right. Isn't there supposed to be a pay raise every year? But her pay just remains the same. We get a pay raise every year, but at her workplace, her pay hovers around 2,100 or 2,200 yuan. We get at least 2,500 yuan every month, how come she gets less than I do? The pay isn't enough, and I keep thinking that she should be given the opportunity to work more and to get paid more, because what can she do with so little money?

Q: Have you ever looked into why it is like this?

LJ's mother: Papa John's looks okay for those not in the know, but it has its own books to keep. Some stores don't make money, so the company has to balance everything. Once she has worked a certain number of hours every month, she won't be allowed to work anymore, which is kind of mean. The store counts her work hours as six per day. There is a long break during the day, but she can't very well go home and has to stay at the store. She should be working 8 h a day but is allowed only 6 or 7 h. I ask her whether she has worked the hours she is supposed to work, otherwise the store will deduct from her pay. I just think she should be allowed to work more hours, otherwise she will have to make do with minimum pay.

I don't know how her pay is calculated now. Under the contract, it was 1,800 yuan which was increased to 2,000 and then 2,200 yuan later. Nothing happened this year, even though there should be a pay raise every year. I don't know if her workplace follows this practice. I am not talking about my own workplace. Workplaces like hers normally pay three social insurances for the employees, but her workplace only pays two insurances. The money is really next to nothing. She should be allowed to work more. She is young and can work more, right? So she should have the chance to work more.

Q: Work more?

LJ's mother: Work more for more pay. She gets paid too little and doesn't have enough to spend. She wants to work more and make more money. Now she is only allowed to work so many hours but still has to go to work 5 days a week. On those 2 days off, she can't exactly work another job. The best she can do is some temp work paying 18 yuan an hour, which she tried for a while.

Q: LJ did temp work?

LJ's mother: Yes, she did, on that street over there with lots of restaurants. I told her back then to work hard and she said she knew and she would work hard.

Q: What did she do for the temp work?

LJ's mother: It was restaurant work and there are all sorts of things to do at restaurants. Because she knows how to make appetizers, she found a job doing this and it came with good pay. But I wasn't sure whether it could turn into a long-term job and what if she quit Papa John's and ended up with a place that didn't pay social

insurances. That would not have been good, you know. You shouldn't just quit a job without knowing what you are getting into.

I don't know how to raise this with Papa John's. She would like to work more hours and make more money. She is actually already busy as is and the job gets tiring. Friday, Saturday, and Wednesday are the three busiest days. There are endless customers and endless things to do at the store, and no one can take any break.

Q: No break?

LJ's mother: No break during peak hours. The only break is for her to eat. People like her work really hard and don't get much of a pay raise, unlike at other workplaces. She gets paid 2,000, 2,100, 2,200 yuan, and I don't know how she is going to be able to live on that. Everything is so expensive now and prices keep going up. Once we are too old to help, I don't know who she can depend on for a living.

Q: While I was observing her at work at W store, I felt that she gets along very well with her co-workers. LJ is a conscientious worker, and she jokes with other employees in the store. Does she come back and share with you what happens at W store?

LJ's mother: Not a lot, because she comes home late, between 9:30 and 10 p.m. on most nights. But she does share sometimes, like it got so busy at the store, there's an older co-worker whom she can bond with, or the store got a new manager who is nice, isn't condescending like some other people and doesn't look down on her.

Even though she has a disability certificate, co-workers at this store do not look at her differently, and that's what's making her happiest.

Q: Did anything happen that impressed you most after LJ started working? I mean something that is very memorable, or a little surprising or touching?

LJ's mother: After she started working, as she grows older, she has become more caring, especially over the last several years, really. I am getting older, so when she sees me tired from work or not feeling well, she takes good care of me. When I got sick or hospitalized or had to get IV treatment, she was at my bedside caring for me. She is a very good kid, really good kid.

Q: She does things for you?

LJ's mother: Yes, she does. When I have a headache sometimes, she would cook me porridge and tell me, "Mom, I know you have a headache. Let me put a hot towel on your forehead, and let's not take any medicine." She would search on the computer for information on headaches.

Q: She does that?

LJ's mother: Yes. She told me not to take medication. When I have a headache, I can usually relieve it by putting a hot towel on my forehead. That's what she told me. I suffer really bad from headaches sometimes and would throw up. She would clean up after me and cook porridge for me. She is really good and takes good care of me.

Q: Did you see any changes in her after she started working?

LJ's mother: She has become more open. She had no job for a while. You know, after the supermarket was closed, she stayed home for 6 months and seldom went out. Just stayed home playing computer games and didn't talk much to anyone. After she joined Papa John's, she has changed a lot. Because she interacts with a lot of

people, she has become more open and gets along very well with everyone. She finds herself in all sorts of situations, which helps her handle things. After all, she works in the service industry, so she has to be able to interact with people, to face issues and to vocalize.

Dependence on Mom

Q: Can you talk about LJ in everyday life? Does she lend you a hand around the house?

LJ's mother: She gets lazy at home and isn't eager to help.

Q: But based on my observation, she is a conscientious employee.

LJ's mother: I think she just doesn't want to do anything at home. She gets super lazy and just lies around the house asking me to do everything for her.

Q: Does she clean the house or cook?

LJ's mother: She knows how to do it, but she is really lazy and won't do it. On her 2 days off, she has nothing to do. With me around, she is too lazy to do anything, because she knows that Mom will cook for her and she won't have to do it herself, you know.

The fact is that she can do all of those things, but she won't do any of it. She just wants to play on the computer, as you can see for yourself, even though she keeps telling me to go out and have fun for myself. If you ask her to cook, do laundry, or clean the house, she can do all of it. But she likes to depend on other people and prefers that someone do it for her, like laundry and cooking. I figure that her job is tough, from morning till night, so I spoil her by doing most things for her. I ask her what will happen when I can't do anything for her anymore, and she says she will figure it out when the time comes.

Q: She has the ability to help around the house, but she won't do it because she prefers to depend on her parents, right?

LJ's mother: Right, she wants me to do everything and hand it to her while she lies there resting. She likes to depend on me even though she knows how to do everything. I see her already overweight and gaining more weight, and she won't do anything to keep the weight off. But I can't make her do things she is unwilling to do. Girls nowadays are like that. My co-worker's daughter is the same. I asked her if her daughter helps around the house and she said that her daughter doesn't lift a finger. I said, "Same here. I have to do everything like cooking. I get so busy, but my daughter hardly ever helps."

But sometimes she does deposit money into my bankcard and pay my credit card bills. And sometimes she would do laundry and wipe the floor. Occasionally she would cook.

Q: What does she cook?

LJ's mother: Simple dishes, and all vegetarian. Tomatoes with eggs, shredded potatoes, simple ones. She can't cook meat yet. She cooked fish once and didn't like

what she cooked, and she didn't cook meat well either. If she is alone at home, she won't starve herself.

Q: Has she ever done anything in everyday life that surprised you? Something you didn't think she could do but she ended up doing very well.

LJ's mother: Nothing she did was unusual and I didn't think much of anything. When she was young, one time she washed her sneakers really thoroughly. I couldn't have washed them so clean myself. I looked at the sneakers and was amazed at how clean they were, and she was still going to school back then.

She is actually quite capable herself. She is very neat and has to wash her own clothes and work clothes separately. She never mixes them together. Every day when she comes home, she will put her work clothes in the washer.

Q: She comes home late, so you will have dinner ready for her. After she is done eating, will she help you clean up?

LJ's mother: She won't if she is tired. Actually, she doesn't eat much rice for dinner. She would pick from the dishes that I have cooked followed by some fruit. If she is really hungry, she will have some rice, or if the dishes are very good, she will eat rice to go with them. After she is done eating, she won't wash the dishes. She will just change, take a shower or wash her feet. She gets really tired sometimes.

She works in the kitchen area all the time now and it gets really hot with all the ovens on. Like the last couple of days, the sweat kept dripping down and she had to keep wiping it off with a towel. I told her to keep hydrated. She comes home tired, so she needs to rest a little before showering. Sometimes she is too tired to shower.

Q: Does LJ talk to you or your husband often? What does she talk about?

LJ's mother: She does talk, about work, about friends, about everything. We all get busy, so we only talk occasionally. She gets home from work late, 9 or 10 p.m., so there isn't much time to talk. I work too, and my hours are different from hers. And we eat at different hours. It's not often that we are all home together and can sit down to eat together. So she doesn't have a lot of time to talk or communicate with me.

She sleeps late every morning and usually gets up at 10 a.m. I get up early and fix her breakfast. She eats the breakfast and immediately leaves for work. If I have a morning shift myself, I will have to leave for work at 6 a.m. and won't get off till 6 p.m. I will have finished dinner before she comes home. That's how it is.

Q: What about the weekend? She should be able to spend more time at home over the weekend.

LJ's mother: We take different days off. I work 2 days and take the next 2 days off. On some of her days off, I have to work. And on some of my days off, she has to work. We may not always be able to spend time together.

Ordinary People for Friends

Q: Did LJ like to interact with strangers when she was young? Like playing with kids she didn't know.

LJ's mother: She seldom interacted with kids she didn't know and only played with those she knew. She needed some time to get to know strangers before playing with them.

Q: What about now? Will she say "hi" to people first?

LJ's mother: It depends. At the new workplace, she will go up to people and say "hi." And she knows how to handle interpersonal relationships.

Q: So you see her changing as she grows older, right?

LJ's mother: Right. She was different when she was young. When she was young, she seldom played with kids she didn't know. As she grows older, she has become more open and more mature intellectually, right? Because she is older, she thinks more than when she was young. She has been working for many years in the real world, I think 6 or 7 years. She has gained a lot of social experience and has certain social savvy now, unlike when she was staying home all day.

Q: Of her co-workers and friends, some are like her and some are ordinary people without disability, right?

LJ's mother: Right. Most of the people she interacts with are ordinary people. She doesn't really hang out with people with disability certificates. Some people she knows are college students with really high IQs. When she goes out with friends, it is with ordinary people too.

Q: So she doesn't interact with people with ID?

LJ's mother: Very seldom. After graduation, the kids went their separate ways. There were two best friends, but she lost their phone numbers and couldn't get in touch anymore.

You don't see many people like her out there now. And even at Papa John's stores, there are not many of them. I believe there is a mute employee, and another one... well, just two or three of them. She works alongside them, but seldom goes out with them. Working and hanging out are separate.

Q: How did LJ meet those friends from the real world?

LJ's mother: Some of them are college students who interned at the store, and the others are friends of friends from the store. They went out together and got to know each other.

Q: Does LJ make friends online?

LJ's mother: Not online, she doesn't try to make friends online. She only makes friends with people she knows, not with strangers.

Q: Does she ask friends out?

LJ's mother: She does invite friends to eat out or shop. She likes to go out with friends whenever she has time off. As you can see, I don't bother her and I hardly ever go shopping with her, because she has her own circle. Her friends are all married. She knows how to have fun, and only stays home now because of the problem with her leg.

Q: So she goes out a lot with friends?

LJ's mother: Definitely. She goes out a lot with friends. Last time she went with friends to Huang Mountain in Anhui. On the day she left, she was supposed to take the 8:20 a.m. high-speed train. I asked her if she knew how to get to South Train Station and she said she knew. She packed her own suitcase and organized clothes

and toiletry. I took her to the train station and asked her if she had got her train ticket. She said she had and told me where she should wait for the train. It was close to ticket inspection time and 8 min till boarding, and she listed to me all the things she was supposed to do. Then she boarded, and everything looked good.

She likes to travel too. Last year she went to Hangzhou for 5 days, and this time she took 5 days off just to travel. She spends a lot of my money every time. When she went to Huang Mountain, she said she didn't have enough money, so I gave her 2,000 yuan. When she came back, I asked her how much she had spent and she said over 1,000, actually over 1,800 yuan. And I said, "As long as you had fun."

At that time, there was a manager she was pretty close to. The manager had money and offered to pay for her. I told LJ not to let her do it and she said she knew and that she wouldn't let another person pay for her travel. It's okay to let another person pay for small things like snacks, but you shouldn't ask anyone to cover your travel expenses, however rich that person is. You should pay your share no matter how much it is, and having fun is the most important thing.

My daughter likes to buy things and the manager bought things sometimes and would offer to pay for her. I told LJ, "Wherever you go, just pay whatever you need to pay." The train ticket was bought online. They joined a local tour group upon arrival and paid entrance fees at the tourist spots. They went Dutch all the time, including meals.

Q: Do you remember the first time she went traveling without you?

LJ's mother: It was the year before last. Before that, she had never been out without me. The year before last, she went out with friends, not on her own, to Qibao, for a beauty bath on Old Street. They knew each other well and used to hang out a lot. They spent one night in Qibao.

Q: The Qibao trip was, after all, the first time she went out with friends. Were you worried?

LJ's mother: I was a little worried, because she was spending the night away from home. And she is a girl. I had asked her who she was going out with. But she wouldn't go out with guys and would only spend the night with girls. But I didn't over think. She did come back okay and she came back on her own.

She normally goes out with people who have decent jobs, like she went out twice with the managers of the store. Or she goes out with young people like college students. She only goes out with people she has known for a while, never with strangers.

Q: When she goes out, will you call her and ask how everything is?

LJ's mother: I don't call. We just message each other.

Q: When she goes out, will she update you on her whereabouts?

LJ's mother: She will. WeChat has voicemail function, right? So we use that. She has been using WeChat, cell phone, and computer for a long time. We had a laptop around the time she graduated, then we bought a desktop which cost more than 4,000 yuan. She learnt to use the desktop a long time ago. As for the cell phone, I bought it for her when she was working at the supermarket. I didn't buy her a phone when she was still going to school. After she started working, I bought one for her and she

immediately learned how to use it. Cell phones are no big deal, just something for her to play with, right?

Q: Do you still travel as a family now?

LJ's mother: Not now. She doesn't travel much with us. Before, I took her traveling all the time, and as recent as 2 years ago, she still went with me to Hangzhou and Suzhou, and we traveled with tour groups too. Now she just travels with friends, not me.

My daughter has no problem socializing. The only thing is that she wasn't good academically and is actually slow, definitely slower than ordinary people like us, and there's nothing I can do about that. And she can't cover every angle when handling problems, and when she talks, she isn't politically correct like some other people. Those people know how to talk to make you feel good.

People like her are straight shooters. Her temperament is such that when she is unhappy, she will vent. What can I do? That's just her way. People like her are simple and straightforward when speaking or doing things. They don't beat around the bush or act sneaky. She shows it whether she is happy or unhappy. The conventional wisdom is that you should keep something to yourself, but she doesn't because people like her can't keep anything to themselves. So when she is with friends, their interactions are very simple.

Bittersweet Emotional Life

Q: Now that LJ has grown up, has marriage ever come up in any discussions?

LJ's mother: It has. I figure that she isn't getting any younger, so it would be ideal for her to have her own life and be independent.

It would be nice if she could have her own family and someone to take care of her. I would feel much better. We are getting old and can't be with her forever. I will have peace of mind if she gets married, otherwise I will keep worrying about it.

Q: Has anyone tried matchmaking for her?

LJ's mother: She has a friend, a girl who is pretty close to her. She introduced someone to her a while back. That guy doesn't have any disabilities. They went out for a while but it didn't lead anywhere.

Q: How long were they together?

LJ's mother: Pretty long. More than 6 months.

LJ's mother (asking LJ): The one you dated before, how long were you together? The one who worked at VW.

LJ: One year.

LJ's mother: So they dated for about a year.

Q: One year is kind of long. When they were together, did you ever observe his attitude towards LJ?

LJ's mother: Looking back, I think he treated her nice. But he wasn't committed. He was probably looking for someone better, you know.

Q: He thinks because he doesn't have any disabilities, he should look for someone better?

LJ's mother: It's not that. He didn't know about my daughter's disability. He is from Shanghai and a decent family, so he was probably looking for someone with a better background. As soon as I learnt that one of his parents is a doctor and the other is a teacher, I figured that our own family background didn't exactly match his. There seemed to be a little gap since his family isn't blue collar. I didn't really mind it and decided just to let things run their own course. But later on, behind my daughter's back, that guy found another date, you know. He was meeting with another girl, and my daughter happened to see it with her own eyes. She was shopping with her co-worker and in the same restaurant, she saw him eating with another girl.

My daughter was serious about the relationship, but he didn't seem to be. So you can imagine how maddening it was. After a while, that guy wanted to get back with her and she didn't agree. I was kept in the dark for a while. She told me some time later when I asked her about it.

Q: So she didn't tell you about it when it first happened?

LJ's mother: Right. After a while, after she had calmed down, she told me bit by bit. She needed time to lick her wounds and to recover. She was hurt and she took it upon herself to heal. It didn't take very long and I didn't exactly keep track. I didn't know that kind of thing had happened between them, because what's the point of always checking. They had seemed to be fine. Then I asked her one day how everything was, and that's when she told me.

Q: While she was dating, she was also working. How did she balance work and dating?

LJ's mother: Right, she was working then. Work is work and she was doing well at work, because dating can't be allowed to affect work. They only went out on her days off. Sometimes she would get off work at 10 or 11 p.m., and he would pick her up and bring her back. Young people like to eat out late and she is no exception, so they would go out to eat very late at night. That guy was okay, according to my daughter. I have never met him myself. I just heard about him from my daughter. They had just started dating and I couldn't very well ask to meet him. I would have asked to meet him if the relationship had become serious. That's why I never got the chance to meet him. And I never dealt with his family either. There was no need, was there?

Q: Have you and your husband ever thought about what kind of plan you have for LJ since you are getting old yourselves?

LJ's mother: We just want her to find a good boyfriend so that she can have the other half to take care of her. The guy doesn't have to come from a fancy family. Average is good enough because that's what our family is. The important thing is that the two of them can talk and can take care of each other.

She has to find someone, right? Because we are getting old and fragile and won't be able to take care of her in the future. So we hope that there will be someone to marry her and they can take care of each other.

Q: Does the guy have to be someone without disabilities?

LJ's mother: That would be ideal. It doesn't matter if he is lacking in some other areas, but it would be best if he doesn't have disabilities.

Q: Does he have to be from Shanghai?

LJ's mother: He should be from Shanghai or at least have an apartment in Shanghai. They won't be able to buy anything, so if they can get married with a place to stay already, that would be nice. I don't want them to have kids, because what if the kids have problems? So I think it's better for them not to have kids. They should just take care of each other, that's the best way.

(At the time of the first interview with LJ's mother, LJ wasn't exactly in a relationship. By the time of the second interview, LJ was already dating.)

Q: When I interviewed LJ at Papa John's the other day, she had takeout for lunch and said that her boyfriend ordered the takeout for her the night before. Do you know her current boyfriend?

LJ's mother: Yes, I know him. He probably ordered the takeout ahead of time and had it delivered on the day. I have met with the guy. He doesn't talk much and isn't the bubbly kind. They were co-workers at D store and had known each other well before dating.

Q: You mean the store that LJ left?

LJ's mother: Yes, D store that LJ used to work at. They worked together there, then LJ got transferred to W store and he stayed on at D store. They knew each other from working together, then the guy probably approached her, then they started dating.

Q: So LJ met her current boyfriend at D store and started dating him back then?

LJ's mother: Yes, they met and started dating when they both worked at D store.

Q: Did LJ get transferred to W store because of the relationship?

LJ's mother: No, it wasn't because of that. The transfer was work-related. That store was giving my daughter a hard time at work and had never really liked her. Even though my daughter has a disability certificate, she isn't one to be easily bullied.

Q: How does LJ's current boyfriend impress you, the way he does things? You just mentioned that he isn't bubbly or talkative, so what's he like in his actions?

LJ's mother: In his actions, I don't think he is a very proactive person. He will do whatever you tell him. He doesn't like to talk, but he knows.

Q: Have the two families met yet?

LJ's mother: Not yet. In fact, the two kids have been to each other's place and met with parents on the other side. But we haven't met with his parents, because that would have implied discussions of marriage. We are not there yet.

Q: Do you have any expectations in that regard?

LJ's mother: I did ask them once, and they said that they would start discussing it after Chinese New Year and that parents on both sides should get involved in the wedding planning. Now I am not sure what's going on. They won't tell me and I can't very well ask.

My daughter is already 27 and not young anymore. She can hardly afford to wait one or two more years. I prefer it simple and won't really ask much from the guy's side. Just plan a decent wedding and I will pay my share. If the guy's family has money issues, we will just keep it simple and not do what other families do. It won't

be necessary and I actually prefer not to have a fancy wedding. As long as the two kids are okay with the plan and can live happily ever after, I have no complaints.

The guy is 3 years older than my daughter. Even though he is quiet, he is a nice person. Sometimes when my daughter isn't feeling well, he will take her to the doctor and take care of her. You won't have to tell him to do that. He will do it himself, so that's what I like about him.

Q: Do they spend a lot of time together?

LJ's mother: They hardly ever have the same days off and it's not easy for them to get together. Right now, if he works evening shift and my daughter has that day off, they can meet for dinner. If he works morning shift and gets off at 4:30 p.m. while my daughter gets off work late, then they won't be able to meet. Her shift starts at 11 a.m., so she leaves for work at 8:30 or 9 a.m. and gets back at 9 or 10 p.m. As you can see, she hardly has time for anything outside work. On her days off, she wants to go out and shop. So the two of them don't get to meet unless the guy works morning or evening shift on my daughter's day off.

Q: So basically they can meet once or twice a week, right?

LJ's mother: Yes, they can. He lives close by, on Xingzhi Road, so it's convenient.

Expectations for a Better Life

Q: After LJ got the disability certificate, what kind of benefits has she been receiving?

LJ's mother: The district DPF used to sponsor an annual physical. She got a physical at a hospital twice, but there's no such benefit anymore.

Q: Is there any subsidy?

LJ's mother: Minimum. Last time the DPF was giving out some money and I picked it up, 400 yuan if I remember correctly. So that's one time. They won't tell us what the money is for. They just notify us to go pick it up, and it's not a lot, about 200 or 300 yuan every year.

Q: The DPF seems to subsidize those with disability certificates each year. You've only received a subsidy several times?

LJ's mother: There's no subsidy for people like LJ who receive payments into social insurances. There's a certain amount of subsidy for those who have applied to receive 500 yuan per month.

After I got LJ the disability certificate at the district DPF, I was given two options. One was to receive subsidy each month and the other was to have the district DPF pay into LJ's health insurance and pension. I was thinking long term. A monthly 500 yuan might help in the short run, but what about the future, so I didn't apply for that money. I chose the insurance payments for her own sake. I wanted her to go out to work instead of staying home and waiting for this money every month. I couldn't allow her to think that she wouldn't have to go out to work since she had this money.

Q: What other expectations do you have for LJ?

LJ's mother: I just want her to live independently. I want her to handle her own issues whether they are social or individual, instead of asking me to handle them for

her. She needs to face them herself and to find solutions. I also hope that she can find someone she can talk to and get married soon. It would be ideal when they can be together to take care of each other.

Q: Based on the interviews, I understand that LJ can handle things herself at work, which means that she can complete a day's work on her own. She goes out with friends on her days off and has her own social circle. Does she arrange her own daily life like what to eat and what to wear? How capable is she of living independently?

LJ's mother: She is just lazy. She wants to sleep late in the morning. She starts work at 10 a.m. and she will sleep till 9 a.m. And she stays up late at night. I told her to go to bed earlier, you know, and she isn't good about this.

She decides what to eat and what to wear most of the time. At home, she just eats whatever I cook. When she goes out, she decides what to buy to eat and to wear.

Q: What expectations do you have for your family's future?

LJ's mother: I just expect a normal life for the family. Of course, I hope for a better life and a higher level of living, and hope that my kid will do well. No big dreams. Another hope I have is that she can get to work more. Ordinary salary workers like us have no fancy aspirations. I just want her to have a stable job.

Q: Do you have any expectations for society as a whole?

LJ's mother: If you ask about society, I just hope that she can get a better job. I do have this idea about her switching to another place with better compensation, but I am not sure how workplaces will look at people like her. I am talking about a workplace which pays its employees better and offers jobs that she can do. With her disability certificate, I am not sure if her employment record is the same as ours.

If her employment record is different, once she hands it in, I am not sure if the workplace will take her, you know. It could become an issue, so I can't just let her switch jobs. I just hope that more workplaces will hire people like her. She is actually quite capable, so I hope there's a workplace that won't discriminate against her and will hire her. Our expectations are very low. We just hope that the workplace will pay her social insurances.

Q: She doesn't receive insurance payments now?

LJ's mother: Right now, she receives payments into pension and health insurance. I am not sure about unemployment insurance. The norm is to pay into four insurances, so paying into two insurances is the bare minimum. I didn't check with her workplace whether it is paying into unemployment insurance. I know for sure it is paying into pension and health insurance as it is the law. Everyone gets sick, and I know that there's deposit into the insurance card every month and every year. I know how much deposit there is into the pension too since I receive annual statements. I just don't know whether her workplace pays into unemployment insurance.

I hope that people like LJ are treated better, and that other companies in the real world won't look at them with different eyes. If she has the ability, let her show it, right? People always aspire for better. If you have the ability to make more money, who doesn't want to do it, because it makes your life better and happier.

...If she has to hand in the employment record, what I worry most about is what the hiring managers or workplaces will think if they see on the record that she has a disability certificate.

Q: So you are worried that the hiring managers or workplaces won't accept LJ?

LJ's mother: Right, I am worried that they won't accept people like LJ. The fact is that she can do everything and is a conscientious worker. So I hope that more companies will accept people like her who do have the abilities.

Q: As far as we know, since LJ signed a contract with Papa John's, she is a full-time employee eligible for the same benefits as all other employees. Papa John's is required by law to pay into five social insurances. You mentioned health insurance, pension and unemployment insurance. There are also maternity insurance and work-related injury insurance. Housing fund is optional. So I wonder if you have checked with Papa John's on this?

LJ's mother: She should receive the same benefits as other employees. I remember her getting paid for three insurances which are health insurance, pension and probably unemployment insurance, but I have never really checked with anyone.

She doesn't receive housing fund statements and has never told me that she has those. For pension, she does get statements. And I am positive about payments into health insurance and pension. I am not sure about unemployment insurance, and I haven't heard anything about maternity insurance or work-related injury insurance.

Under the law, people who get minimum insurance coverage are women aged 40 and older and men aged 50 and older who have lost their jobs, and even those people receive payments into three insurances. So the minimum for LJ should be three insurances. As for the housing fund, I know it's supposed to be optional, but most workplaces pay into it now. I just don't know what the deal is with her workplace, and I can't really tell from the contract. The three insurances are required by the state, but I doubt her workplace will pay into the housing fund. I will look into it when I have the time and see if I can get some answers.

Interview with LJ's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Manager Li (LJ's co-worker)

Interviewer and writer: Zhen Wei

Interview date: March 18, 2017

Interview place: Second floor dining area at the restaurant where LJ works

Notes on the interview: Manager Li supervised the kitchen and dining area and had been busy because it was the weekend. During the morning break, he had to go out and was unavailable for an interview. Customer traffic was getting heavier in the afternoon and Manager Li had been kept busy. As the interviewer had to leave at 8:30 p.m. and he had to work till 10 p.m., Manager Li decided to squeeze in the interview in the afternoon during a lull in customer traffic, which the interviewer really appreciated. Also, since LJ got transferred to W store only a short while ago and just came back from 1 month's sick leave due to sickness and a leg injury, Manager Li and other employees of the store had actually been interacting with LJ for only about 3 months.

Q: Hello Manager Li, thank you very much for accepting my interview. I mainly want to know what LJ is like at work. What exactly are her job responsibilities at the restaurant?

Manager Li: Even though she is an employee being cared for, she is quite capable at work. She is a bit slow, but I think that's to be expected of all employees being cared for. You must have seen for yourself today, she has quite a few responsibilities, which isn't easy for an employee being cared for. She knows her way around the kitchen and can work at any vacant position there.

Q: Yes, that's what I have witnessed. How would you characterize her at work?

Manager Li: She is like a child at work. You saw for yourself that she would do some things out of context like talking to herself or trying to get attention like a little girl, but none of that affects her work.

Q: You just mentioned that LJ does a good job in the kitchen. Does she have the chance to interact with customers on a daily basis?

Manager Li: She interacted with customers at the other store. But you can see for yourself, her weight... Working in our dining area requires going up and down the stairs, otherwise she could have been interacting with the customers.

Q: You mean she can interact with customers, but out of consideration for her current physical condition, she works mainly in the kitchen, right?

Manager Li: Right, she had a leg injury a while back.

Q: When she fell?

Manager Li: Right, and she took about a month off. So I would rather not have her... the dining area isn't really that roomy.

Q: Have you ever seen her interact with customers? Will she approach the customers herself?

Manager Li: She doesn't take the initiative to communicate with them, but she can handle regular service processes.

Q: By regular processes, you mean that when customers come, she can take orders?

Manager Li: Right, she will go to take orders and ask what the customers might need. She can do things like that.

Q: What kind of personality do you think she has?

Manager Li: Personality wise, I feel that her mind is of a smaller capacity than that of ordinary people.

Q: Smaller capacity?

Manager Li: Well, not exactly that. I just feel that when she does things, she is like a child sometimes. But she isn't like that when interacting with people. She is actually pretty smart in that regard, just like ordinary people like us.

Q: How does LJ get along with her co-workers?

Manager Li: She gets along very well with everyone. We call her nicknames meaning little girl. She is pretty cute and everyone likes her because she is like a child.

Q: I know that she only joined the store recently. After work, is there any interaction with her?

Manager Li: You mean between LJ and us?

Q: Right, among the co-workers.

Manager Li: In my own case, I don't interact with the store after work. I just want to keep work separate. I am not sure about her. But she normally gets off work earlier than I do, so I have seen her chatting on the phone with co-workers.

Q: Great. Thank you for squeezing in this interview and giving us so much information.

Manager Li: You are welcome.

Interview with LJ's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Mr. Jiang (LJ's co-worker)

Interviewer and writer: Zhen Wei

Interview date: March 18, 2017

Interview place: Second floor kitchen area at the restaurant where LJ works.

Note on the interview: The interviewer was observing the kitchen area, which wasn't busy as there were not many customers. Mr. Jiang worked afternoon shift partnering with LJ. He kneaded and tossed pizza dough while LJ spread the ketchup and ingredients. They worked well together making pizza. Seeing a break, the interviewer asked Mr. Jiang if he was willing to be interviewed. He asked how long it would take and the interviewer said it would just be small talk, so he happily agreed. We thank Mr. Jiang for the interview.

Q: What kind of girl do you think LJ is?

Mr. Jiang: I think she is very kind and very mild. (Laughing)

Q: Can you give me an example?

Mr. Jiang: She is very nice to co-workers and dedicated to her work. After she has done her own job, she will take on something extra.

Q: How does she get along with you and everyone else?

Mr. Jiang: Very well.

Q: What makes you say so?

Mr. Jiang: You are referring to getting along or not?

(Interviewer nodding)

Mr. Jiang: She does get along very well with co-workers and has never fought with anyone. Never. She is always smiling and looks very mild. And everyone feels comfortable joking with her, so all is good.

Q: Yes, she does smile a lot. Thank you, Mr. Jiang.

Mr. Jiang: You are welcome.

Interview with Ms. LJ

Interviewee: Ms. LJ

Interviewer and writer: Zhen Wei

Interview date: March 18, 2017

Interview place: Second floor dining area at the restaurant where LJ works

Note on the interview: This interview was conducted after LJ had her lunch. She was supposed to take a break after lunch, but happily agreed to the interview once the interviewer explained to her what the interview was for. Her work had been strenuous in the morning, but she cooperated well during the interview. After the interview, she only had 10 min left of her break, so she took a catnap with her elbows on the table before getting up to prepare for afternoon work. We thank LJ for the interview.

Q: Which school did you graduate from?

LJ: Graduated from? It's a vocational school.

Q: Do you remember the name of the school?

LJ: It's called Gan Ning.

Q: Was the school far from where you lived?

LJ: No, I could bike there.

Q: So you biked to school?

LJ: Right.

Q: Do you remember how long it has been since you graduated?

LJ: Maybe 3 years. It's been 2 or 3 years since I graduated.

Q: Do you remember anything from school?

LJ: Not really.

Q: When I interviewed your mom earlier, she said that you really liked Ms. Zhang. Is that true?

LJ: Yes, the Ms. Zhang who used to live next to us. But we are not in touch now, because I lost my phone and couldn't find her number. If I run into her on my way to work or back home, I would say "hi" to her and she would ask me how everything is and I would tell her that things are going well.

Q: That's very good. Do you remember if your school ever organized any activities? Was there anything that you found fun?

LJ: There were some activities, I don't remember clearly. We did go out for some activities like the Olympics.

Q: You went to Special Olympics?

LJ: I went to Special Olympics and something else which I forget.

Q: So you are not sure now, right? I heard from your mom that you participated in an artistic performance.

LJ: Right, there was an artistic performance.

Q: You danced?

LJ: Yes, I danced and played piano.

Q: You played piano?

LJ: Yeah.

Q: Wow, that's awesome. What did you play?

LJ: Just one song, the twinkle little star one.

Q: *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, right?

LJ: Yeah.

Q: That's amazing. Did the schoolteacher teach you that?

LJ: Yup.

Q: It's great that you can play piano. Do you remember any friends you used to hang out with at school?

LJ: There's only one close friend, G.

Q: I heard about G from your mom. Anyone else?

LJ: Another friend whose last name was Ji. Just the two of them.

Q: Are you still in touch with G?

LJ: I lost my cell phone and her contact.

Q: Did you hang out at school?

LJ: Yeah, and we went out together too, like shopping. But I lost all of the information with my phone, so I can't find her and she can't find me.

Q: That's too bad.

LJ: Yeah. I don't remember where she lives. She used to live close by, but I don't know whether she still lives there or has moved. I've moved.

Q: Your mom said that you would help teachers do things at school, do you still remember?

LJ: Yes, I do.

Q: What did you help the teachers with?

LJ: I helped them organize what they needed for class before class started. Whatever they needed, I would get it ready. And once class started, they would just tell me what I needed to lay out on the desk or hand out to the students.

Q: Your mom also said that you often helped other kids, right?

LJ: Right.

Q: What did you help them with?

LJ: If there was anything they didn't understand, I would help them, like doing something, or reading, or writing. I was pretty popular.

Q: You got along well with them?

LJ: I did.

Q: If they had problems they didn't know how to solve, you would teach them, right?

LJ: Yup.

Q: They would ask you if there were things they couldn't do, and you would teach them too?

LJ: Right.

Q: It's very nice of you to offer to help. You were academic student leader. Did you have any other titles?

LJ: Right, I helped them with academics.

Q: Okay. So let's talk about your working at Papa John's. How long have you been with Papa John's?

LJ: Three or 4 years.

Q: Three or 4 years. Which store did you start with?

LJ: I started with M store.

Q: Did you have any troubles or difficulties there?

LJ: No, I never had any difficulties there. People there were very nice and not discriminative. For example, because I have that certificate, some people would look at me differently, but people at that store didn't as far as I could tell.

Q: When you worked at M store, was there any co-worker you liked to hang out with?

LJ: There was. She was a manager, Ms. Lin. Sometimes I would meet up with her on my way to work and walk with her on my way back home. She lived pretty close, on Jintang Road, so it's right on my way home. Sometimes she worked morning shift and I did too, so I would meet up with her on my way to work. I lost my phone and her number, but I have her contact on WeChat. Since that store was shut down, I hadn't contacted her for a long time. And I am busy working at W store, so I don't really have much time to look her up. We have been in touch again recently and go out for dinner or shopping occasionally. Before that, we hadn't been in touch for a long time.

Q: So you got in touch with her again?

LJ: Yeah, because she is a nice person.

Q: That's good. You must be a nice person, too, otherwise she wouldn't get along with you so well, right?

LJ: Yeah.

Q: What do you do most of the time at Papa John's?

LJ: I work mostly in the kitchen, like kneading and tossing dough and adding ingredients. If someone takes a break, like at the appetizer counter, I will step in.

Q: You make appetizers too?

LJ: Yeah, I do. If someone takes a break from kneading and tossing dough, I will take over. When it's my turn to rest, they will knead and toss the dough.

Q: So everyone takes turns doing everything?

LJ: Yes, we rotate.

Q: You do everything and step in wherever someone is needed?

LJ: Right.

Q: What kind of appetizers do you make?

LJ: Salad, baked chicken wings. I also make noodles and rice. But if it gets busy, one person will be overwhelmed and will need another person to help, because however fast you work in the kitchen, they take orders faster in the dining area.

Q: I agree. So of all the things you can do, which one do you think you are best at?

LJ: I think kneading and tossing dough.

Q: I saw you doing that just now and you are really good at it. I wonder how you do it.

LJ: You press down on the edge of the dough before kneading and tossing it. The dough is ready made, as you can see. You just take it from the freezer and roll it in dry flour before kneading and tossing it to make it easier for you, then you spread the sauce and sprinkle the ingredients.

Q: I see. Do you also need to get the ingredients ready?

LJ: Yes, I do. The ingredients always get used up. If you look at the counter there, I will need to refill, to chop, and to clean up, like what I just did. And the counter needs to be kept clean. Bottom line is that you should do everything you are supposed to do and shouldn't give anyone the chance to call you by name and say, "Come over here and get this done." If you see something that needs to be done, just do it, and when people see you like that, they will feel good, right? If they have to ask you to do something, even if you get it done, they won't feel good, right?

Q: Right. I saw how you worked and it was pretty smooth. You were wiping and cleaning, and it looked easy for you.

LJ: I am a neat person, you know. As soon as I see a slightly dirty cloth, I will wash it. As soon as I see some food dropped, I will dump it into the storage box, because I feel yucky if I see dirty stuff on the kitchen counters.

Q: Yeah, you are neat and organized. Your job actually looks tough. When you are not working, what do you do for fun?

LJ: I sleep. I stay up a bit late at night and sleep in in the morning. Then I go out shopping, or eat out, or catch a movie. I get tired after a day's work, and once I am home, I will do laundry and change into clean clothes. Clothes I wear at the store cannot be mixed with clothes I keep at home. I won't like it, because there's a greasy smell at the store. So when I go out, I wear clothes that don't smell. I wash my hair when I get home too. I can't sleep until I have washed everything clean. I don't want to go to bed with a greasy smell.

Q: You won't be able to fall asleep with that smell?

LJ: Right. I keep pants separate from other clothes, and work clothes separate from clothes I wear to go out.

Q: That's a very good habit. Do you travel?

LJ: I do. I traveled with my former co-workers. We went to Huang Mountain for the spa, for 5 days.

Q: Oh, Huang Mountain in Anhui. Do you remember where you went most recently? And how did you like it?

LJ: It was Huang Mountain, and I haven't been anywhere after that.

Q: How did you get to Huang Mountain? Did you make the travel plans yourself or did you make it as a group?

LJ: We made the plans together and booked tickets online together. I think I just filled out the ID and other information online. Then we went to the train station and scanned the barcode with our phones.

Q: It's awesome, that you can buy tickets online on your own.

LJ: Right. The rest of the expenses, I just paid one place at a time. It was a package deal.

Q: You were with a tour group?

LJ: Yes, and we paid separately for each place we visited. Like when we went to the spa, we just gave the entrance fee to the person collecting it. Different places charged different fees, you know.

Q: What about a hotel? Did you share a room with friends?

LJ: We shared.

Q: How many people went that time?

LJ: Hmm, ten people.

Q: All females?

LJ: Right.

Q: Were you exhausted when you reached the top of Huang Mountain? It's a pretty high mountain.

LJ: I was really exhausted and the mountain is really high. The steps going up were pretty steep and I didn't know that I should have taken a walking stick. So I fell from time to time climbing the steep steps.

Q: You fell?

LJ: Yeah, and I scraped my knees. I couldn't see the step clearly before setting foot on it, so I missed and fell. Just scraped knees, no big deal. But the higher I climbed, the fresher the air felt, it was really nice. But it was freezing when I went.

Q: Yes, it's cold up on the mountains and you should have taken winter clothes.

LJ: I didn't expect it to be too cold, so I didn't take thick clothes. Once I was on the mountain, I felt so cold and my feet were all frozen. After we climbed the mountain, we went for the spa the next day. Since the spa was open even at night, we went there because we felt cold. It felt very comfortable soaking in the spa despite the cold.

Q: Did you watch the sunrise? Sunrise on Huang Mountain is beautiful.

LJ: I did, but didn't take many pictures.

Q: You can always go another time.

LJ: Right.

Q: You got transferred to W store only a short while ago. How are you adapting?

LJ: I have adapted well.

Q: Today I saw that your work is pretty tough. I also saw that you get along very well with co-workers who are older and you even joked with them sometimes. I remember one older co-worker saying that you really like to joke with her.

LJ: Right, that co-worker, because we get along well.

Q: Do you have other friends besides your co-workers?

LJ: No.

Q: So basically you just hang out with co-workers?

LJ: Right, mostly with them. I had some friends but we are hardly ever in touch now, so I don't know what's going on with them.

Q: You don't quite keep in touch so you drift apart. Your boyfriend ordered you takeout for lunch?

LJ: Yes, he ordered the takeout for me. He was checking what to get last night, and once I made up my mind, he ordered for me.

Q: That's very sweet of him. How long have you known each other?

LJ: More than 6 months.

Q: Does your mom know him?

LJ: She does.

Q: Your mom knows him?

LJ: Right. He has been to my house.

Q: Oh, he has been to your house?

LJ: Yeah.

Q: That’s great. Last time I went to your house for an interview, your mom hadn’t mentioned it.

LJ: It was around Chinese New Year...

Q: That the relationship got serious?

LJ: Right, then I went to his house too.

Q: What do you think of him?

LJ: He is a decent guy.

Q: He takes good care of you, right?

LJ: Yeah.

Q: That’s great. I am very happy to see you so happy. Okay, I think we are done here. Thank you very much.

LJ: You are welcome.

Observation of LJ at Work

Observation date: 11:30–20:30, March 18, 2017

Observation place: Restaurant where LJ works

Observer and writer: Zhen Wei

Note: Some of LJ’s co-workers were included in the observation. They were Mr. S (who is an employee being cared for), Ms. Li, and Mr. Jiang.

Time	What LJ did	Remarks
11:20	Changed into work clothes, put on apron, washed hands, and got ready for work	Talked and laughed with co-workers. Looked relaxed and happy
11:25	Put a big bag of potato wedges in the fridge	
11:30	S was next to her and making appetizers. LJ got the tuna spaghetti for him, put it in a container and warmed it up in the microwave	Told S, “The spaghetti needs to be warmed up a little in the microwave.”

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
11:35–11:50	Took two big bags of stringed squid from the fridge. Put on disposable gloves before grabbing a fistful of the squid from the bag and putting it in a Ziplock bag to be weighed on an electronic scale. Checked the weight. If it weighed more than 120 g, transferred some from the Ziplock bag back to the big bag. And added more if it weighed less than 120 g. Made sure that every Ziplock bag weighed around 120 g (or 118 g or 122 g). Sealed the Ziplock bags. Wiped the work counter once in the middle of weighing the squid	She was good at what she did and told the observer that she was doing this for the sake of convenience, because once the customer placed the order, she could just take a small bag to bake
11:52	Prepared a 200-g baked rice with chicken. Put cooked rice in the box and added eight pieces of chicken and shredded cheese. Spread the ingredients evenly before putting the box in the oven	
11:54	S was still next to her and making a chef's sampler plate. LJ took the plate from him and flipped the chicken wings over before putting the plate in the oven	Told S, "Can you flip the chicken wings over?"
11:55	Put the small bags of stringed squid that she had just weighed into a big bag before putting the big bag in the fridge	
11:58–12:15	Weighed potato wedges. Took a big bag of potato wedges from the fridge. Put on disposable gloves before grabbing a fistful of the potato wedges from the bag and putting it in a Ziplock bag to be weighed. If it weighed more than 100 g, transferred some from the Ziplock bag back to the big bag. And added more if it weighed less than 100 g. Made sure that every Ziplock bag weighed around 100 g (98–102 g). Sealed the Ziplock bags. Asked S to hand her Ziplock bags while weighing the potato wedges	Chatted with S. S said to LJ, "It was so busy yesterday. No one helped me but I was able to handle everything on my own." LJ told observer, "We help each other. I was worried that S would be overwhelmed." S told the observer, "It's easier when LJ is here. We can help each other."
12:06	A co-worker making pizza asked to borrow LJ's scissors and LJ handed them to her	

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
12:12 12:18	Stopped the weighing job and prepared Italian-style baked rice with beef. S put the rice in and LJ added chicken, walnut and cheese before putting everything in the oven. Put the small bags of potato wedges she had finished weighing into a big bag and put the big bag into the fridge. Cleaned up the work counter, moved the electronic scale aside, and mopped the counter	Told S to go to the service counter to make sure there was enough beef stew and reminded him to put beef sauce in the thermo box to keep it from drying up, otherwise the customers might complain
12:21	Made pizza. Li kneaded and tossed the dough and placed it on the counter. LJ spread ketchup on it and added and spread multiple ingredients evenly before putting the pizza in the oven	She was smooth at what she did and knew the right amount of ingredients to add. She told the observer that cheese was used in different amounts, such as a full cup, half a cup, or two thirds of a cup
12:23	Took over a pizza with ingredients already added, spread cheese on top and put the pizza in the oven	
12:24	Took over the spaghetti that S had made, added cheese and decoration (Dutch celery), and delivered it to the service counter	
12:26	Washed the cloth and put the clean mop on the work counter for making pizza	Chatted with an older co-worker while washing the cloth. Looked relaxed and happy
12:28	Made three cheese sausages, laid them out on the baking pan and put the pan in the oven	
12:29	Made a 6-inch pizza. Spread sauce on the dough that had been kneaded and tossed, added ingredients and put everything in the oven	Wrote "big" and "make smaller" to tell the co-worker kneading and tossing the dough (who is deaf and mute) that the dough he had just made was too big and should be smaller
12:31	Made a 9-inch pizza	Told the observer the name of each ingredient
12:33	Made a 12-inch pizza	Told the observer that the cheese cup had two different measurements. One side measured a full cup and the other side measured half a cup
12:35	Made a 9-inch pizza	Told the observer that this pizza was thin-crust
12:37	Made a 9-inch pizza	
12:39	Made a 9-inch pizza	Asked a co-worker to get her some sliced ham

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
12:41	Made a 9-inch pizza	Manager Li asked LJ, "Is that how you spread the pepperoni?" LJ reorganized the pepperoni
12:43	Washed hands and wiped the work counter	
12:45	Made a 9-inch pizza	
12:47	Made a 9-inch pizza	
12:50–12:55	Made a 12-inch pizza	Told the observer that she was making combo pizza which was more complicated than making other kinds of pizza
12:56	Made a 9-inch half–half pizza	
12:58	Prepared ham. Took a big bag of sliced ham from the fridge, cut the bag open and emptied the ham into a storage box to be used later	
12:59	Made pizza	Li gave the dough she had just kneaded and tossed to LJ and said, "Here you go, girl."
13:01	Cleaned up the work counter. Dumped the cheese that had fallen onto the plate when she was spreading ingredients into the cheese storage box	
13:03	Took the pizza dough from LJ to spread the durian sauce. Saw that the storage box was misplaced and asked Li to come over and put it in the right place	LJ pointed at the storage box and said, "Ms. Li, can you please come and put this back?"
13:05	While wiping the work counter, swept cheese that had been dropped on the counter into a pile and dumped it into the trash can next to the counter	
13:07	Took the cheese and emptied it into the storage box	
13:10	Organized pizza nets, stacked them according to size and placed them on the shelf	
13:12	Made pizza	Chatted with Li. Li said it was hot, so LJ asked Li to go drink water Talked with a new co-worker about the dough he kneaded and tossed

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
13:15	Made pizza	Continued to talk about the dough kneaded and tossed by the new co-worker. The new co-worker said, "LJ is so good at kneading and tossing dough. We should learn from her. She knows everything."
13:18	Cleaned up the work counter and wiped the plates	
13:23	Took appetizers out of the oven and delivered them to the service counter	
13:26	Made pizza	
13:27	Washed a storage box	
13:29	Took precut tomatoes from the cabinet and put them in the storage box. Washed a storage box	
13:31	Made pizza	Asked Li, "Is there red pepper in this pizza?" Li said "No." LJ then remembered that this was a veggie pizza that should not have red pepper, so she took off the red pepper she had put on
13:38	Made pizza with curled crust	Talked with Li about a handsome guy who had started working in the dining area. LJ told the observer that the guy was Manager Sun's son. Looked relaxed and happy
13:42	Made sampler plate	
13:44	Made pizza	LJ asked another older co-worker to get her a bag of sliced mushrooms
13:46	Put the bagged, sliced mushrooms into the storage box	
13:47-13:53	Made pizza (Made four without stopping.)	Li reminded her, "Double-check the ordering machine, girl."
13:55	Fixed the dough. The new co-worker made a hole in the dough when he tossed it. LJ was responsible for fixing it by tossing and squeezing the dough	Told the new co-worker, "Have you ever played with Play-Doh? This is like playing with Play-Doh."
13:57	Made pizza	
13:59	Kneaded and tossed dough	
14:01	Took dough from the freezer and put it on the work counter. Stacked the storage box with dough inside underneath the storage box without dough inside	Asked a co-worker to let her pass, saying, "Let me squeeze by you."

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
14:03–14:08	Kneaded and tossed dough	LJ was responsible for kneading and tossing dough while two older co-workers added ingredients. They worked together on making pizzas. Reminded one of the co-workers to spread ketchup.
14:09	Cleaned up the counter she had just worked at. Washed hands	Chatted with Li, who was having lunch, about the TV show <i>Three Lifetimes among Plum Flowers</i> .
14:12	Returned to the work counter and together with an older co-worker, emptied sliced mushrooms and cheese sticks into the storage boxes	Chatted with the co-worker and looked relaxed and happy. Put her hand on the co-worker's shoulder. The co-worker gently slapped her hand and joked, "As if I am not already exhausted." LJ smiled and took her hand down.
14:16–14:20	Washed dishes and the cloth, wiped the work counter, and put trash in the trash can	
14:21	Kneaded and tossed dough. Made pizza	Made a 9-inch pizza with curled crust all on her own.
14:24	Taught a new co-worker how to knead and toss dough and helped spread the dough wider	The manager asked the new co-worker to practice more, and LJ took it upon herself to teach him.
14:26	Used tools to take a baked pizza from the oven, sliced it in four and delivered it to the service counter	
14:30–14:38	Kneaded and tossed dough	Also made a sauerkraut and pork pizza. While spreading the sauce, asked an older co-worker next to her whether there was any sauerkraut left.
14:40	Went to the freezer to get dough	
14:41	Made pizza	
14:43	Went to the freezer to get sliced sausages	
14:48	Emptied onion and green pepper into the storage boxes	
14:50–14:58	Cut meat slices. Stacked two slices together before cutting them in half	
15:00–15:03	Made pizza	LJ got cheese sticks for an older co-worker and then asked her to grab some diced pork for her.

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
15:00–16:00	Break. Lunch	LJ had takeout for lunch, which was followed by our interview. Then she played a little on her cell phone before resting with her elbows on the table
16:00	Put on apron, washed hands, and put on disposable gloves	Got ready for work
16:10	Put onion rings and star-shaped potatoes on the baking pan and put the pan in the oven	
16:15	Made appetizers including sampler plate	
16:17	Worked with Li on making a combo pizza. Was responsible for rolling meat slices and squeezing garlic sauce	
16:25–16:55	Was responsible for taking baked pizzas or appetizers from the pans, slicing the pizzas, arranging the plates, and boxing to-go pizzas and appetizers	She boxed to-go orders and made time to go to the ordering machine to print orders. During afternoon peak hour, she had to box one to-go order almost every 2 min
17:00–17:05	Made pizzas	Made a total of three pizzas
17:06	Boxed a to-go pizza and delivered it to the service counter	
17:08	Emptied chicken into the storage box	
17:09	Cooked rice: Put rice in the inner pan of the rice cooker, rinsed the rice, added sauces, stirred it evenly before adding water, put the pan back in the rice cooker and turned on the rice cooker	Manager Li came over and checked on what LJ was doing
17:12–17:20	Made pizzas	Made a total of four pizzas
17:22	Prepared cheese powder and diced pork and emptied them into the storage boxes	
17:24–17:28	Made pizzas	
17:30	Bagged cherry tomatoes	
17:32–17:55	Made pizzas	Made one pizza every 2 min on average
17:56–18:06	Rolled bacon	
18:08–18:35	Made pizzas	
18:37	Prepared cheese sticks	
18:40	Used microwave to heat ingredients	

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Time	What LJ did	Remarks
18:42–19:20	Made pizzas	Jiang was responsible for kneading and tossing dough and LJ was responsible for the rest of the work. Made one pizza every 2 min on average
19:25–19:38	Organized disposable cups	
19:50	Kneaded and tossed dough. Made pizzas	
20:00	Used cloth to clean up the work counter	
20:10	Kneaded and tossed dough. Made pizzas	
20:15–20:20	Made pizzas	Jiang was responsible for kneading and tossing dough and LJ was responsible for the rest of the work
20:25	Delivered a sliced pizza to the service counter	
20:30	Punched card, washed hands, took off work clothes, and got ready to go home	Chatted with co-workers. Said “bye” to the observer

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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Be Content and Cherish the Present



Zhuojun Zhang and Xiangmeng Huang

Interview with Ms. C's Parents

C, female, born in 1992. The only child in the family. Grade III intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2014

Interviewees: C's mother and father

Interviewers and writers: Zhuojun Zhang and Xiangmeng Huang

Interview dates: July 12 and August 24, 2016

Interview place: C's home

A Lovely Newborn

Q: Are you two from Shanghai? How did you get to know each other?

Parents: Yes, yes, we both are. We were introduced to each other by someone.

C's mother: We dated for more than a year. We were both above the average marriage age. I'm one of the "educated urban youth."¹ I went to rural areas, and later returned to Shanghai by taking over my father's job. We married in 1986, when I was already 35, and he was 43.

¹Educated urban youth: To relieve urban unemployment and improve the backwardness of agricultural production, from the 1950s through the 1970s, young people were voluntarily or involuntarily relocated from cities and towns to the countryside or agricultural reclamation corps for farming jobs. They were referred to as "educated urban youth," and the majority of them were relocated during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Most of them had barely finished middle school or high school, and only a small number held a Bachelor's or higher degree.

Z. Zhang (✉) · X. Huang
Fudan University, 220 Handan Ro., Shanghai 200433, China

Q: What was your dream for your life when you just got married? For example, how did you plan your life? Where did you want to buy your apartment?

C's mother: We didn't really have a plan. That was before the implementation of the "Reform and Opening-up Policy," so people didn't have the concept of "buying an apartment." At that time, people like us were already pretty happy just to have a job. As "educated urban youth," we entered state-owned enterprises when we were back in Shanghai, and were quite content about our "iron rice bowl."

Q: How many siblings do you each have?

C's mother: I have two elder brothers and one younger brother.

C's father: And I have four younger sisters and three younger brothers.

Parents: We both have quite good relations with our siblings.

C's mother: We kept in frequent contact before getting married. Once married, everyone is busy. When you have kids, there would be more things to handle, then you would focus more on your own family. Mostly we just gather together during holidays or festivals now.

Q: When was your child born?

Parents: In 1992.

Q: There was quite some time between getting married and having the child.

C's mother: Yes, we had her more than 5 years after we got married.

Q: Was it because you didn't want to have a kid, or...?

Parents: No particular reason. It just happened that way.

Q: How did you feel when she was just born? What expectations did you have for her?

Parents: Of course, we were very happy.

C's father: (Laughing) You have your next generation! Every parent will have expectations for their child. At that time, we hoped that she would grow up well, be healthy, study well in the future, go to university, and later make contributions to the country... It's the same hope as any parent.

Q: Is her problem congenital or acquired?

C's father: Probably acquired.

C's mother: We don't know very well. During my pregnancy, I was told every time I had a check-up that things were fine, no problems. And we didn't have any family history of it.

C's father: My wife had reached a relatively advanced maternal age when she got pregnant. Her blood pressure was probably a bit high, gestational hypertension, or something like that...

C's mother: When did I have hypertension? My blood pressure wasn't high, but I did suffer from heatstroke right before giving birth. At that time the hospital facilities were not as advanced as now. There was no air-con and it was extremely hot. During the last days when I was in hospital waiting for the delivery, it was so hot that I couldn't sleep all day and all night. I just kept on flapping a fan. After getting the heatstroke, I had a fever. That was dangerous. The doctor put me on IV therapy immediately, then the fever went down.

C's father: I rushed to the hospital when she got the heatstroke. The doctor explained the situation and asked me if I preferred to keep the mom or the kid if I had to choose. And I said that I want to keep both of them.

C's mother: For sure you should keep the mom.

C's father: I said that I want to keep both. Was I right? Why? She was not that young anymore, and neither was I. It was not easy to have a kid. That was why I said that I wanted to keep both of them. The doctor said, "We will just try our best." I waited at the hospital for 2 days. Later she got a bit better. During the delivery, I was outside the delivery room. I went to check with the doctor every 1 or 2 h, "How are the mom and the kid now?" When she was born, the doctor told me, "Mom is fine, but your kid's fetal heartbeat was a bit fast."

But nothing else was found at that time. When the baby was born, they also said that she was fine. You see, in this case, we are both ordinary people, and medicine isn't our forte. Actually, even if you did study medicine, you might not necessarily know everything about gynecology or obstetrics. The OB doctors probably felt that the problem was solved once the child was born. When Mom got better and the baby's heartbeat was also better, they were discharged from the hospital. Nobody explained what caused the fast fetal heartbeat.

Q: How long was Mom's maternity leave after delivery?

C's father: She took the leave according to the government's regulation.

C's mother: I went back to work immediately after my maternity leave. That was 105 days after the childbirth.

Q: Then who took care of the baby?

C's mother: My mom and dad took care of her. When my daughter was about three, my dad, her grandpa, passed away due to a sudden asthma attack. My mom had already had a stroke before that and was not so fit, so nobody could care for my daughter anymore. Then we sent her to daycare. But she was not used to it and was ill with a high fever. Then we had to send her to my mother-in-law. Our factories had started to give 2 days' leave per week, so every week I took care of the child for 2 days, Dad for 2 days, and the other 3 days were covered by my mother-in-law.

Q: When did she learn to talk?

C's mother: She began to say simple words around the same time as her peers.

C's father: She was about 1 year old when she started to say "daddy" and "mommy."

C's mother: Walking was also pretty early. She started to walk when she was 14 months old. Nothing strange could be found at that time.

Q: Mom and Dad, do you still remember some lovely details when she was little?

C's father: She was extremely cute. When she was around 2 or 3 years old, we walked on the street holding her in our arms. She would smile to others. People would always give compliments about how lovely she was.

C's mother: She didn't just smile for nothing. She smiled to people if she saw a nice-looking person. She could distinguish if others were pretty or not. Once she had a high fever. We took her to the hospital on Huanghe Road, which was famous for its pediatrics. The doctor said to us, "Wow, what a pretty kid! A gift from heaven! Lucky you!" She was very pretty when she was little. No exaggeration—her skin

was white and bright, and her eyes were big. Now she has put on some weight, and the eyes have become smaller. But now she also wants to be pretty. For dinner she will only eat some vegetables in order to lose weight.

Q: What did she play with when she was little?

C's mother: We bought building blocks for her, as well as building pieces and intelligence toys. We live close by the Bund, so we would walk around there on our days off. She liked singing. At that time the TV series *Sinful Debt* was broadcasting.² If I started singing, she would follow and sing along its theme song. She could also sing the song *Mom Is the Best in the World*.³ "Mom is the best in the world. A child with Mom is like treasure." These she could all sing when she was little. I might even have kept the cassette recording of her singing. Now she still likes listening to music. Sometimes she'll use music apps on her mobile. She likes the current popular songs. People of our generation don't really like them. We prefer sentimental songs. When she was little, I also taught her to read children's rhymes. She could follow me to read. And she could recite poems when she was little. I don't know why, but she had a very good memory.

C's father: Later when she was in third grade at elementary school, there was a time when the teacher asked them to recite poems from the Tang Dynasty during self-study time in the morning. She could do it. If you asked her now to recite some Tang poems which she had learned before, with a little help, she could still do it.

Q: You two really paid a lot of attention on her early education.

C's mother: Yes. I even took early retirement for her. I could actually have worked several more years. So now my pension is also a bit lower than others. But I didn't have any other choice.

Showing Signs of Intellectual Disability

Q: How old was she when Mom retired?

C's mother: She was at the age to go to nursery school when I retired. We noticed at that time that she was rather introverted. She was quite interested in participating in dancing or doing morning exercises, and she could follow the rhythm. I always stayed outside to watch her after bringing her there. She did it pretty well. But she didn't talk much.

C's father: She was quite introverted and didn't talk a lot. When she was about 2 years old, she had a fever. We took her to the pediatrics department and said to the doctor, "Our daughter hasn't started to speak." The doctor said, "That doesn't matter. Children start to talk at different times. And the ones who speak later are usually smarter." Even the pediatric doctor said this, so then we didn't pay much attention anymore.

²*Sinful Debt*: A popular TV drama in the 1990s about the life of the "educated urban youth" and their abandoned kids.

³*Mom Is the Best in the World*: a popular children's song.

When she was bigger, she went to nursery school. At first little was noticed. The teacher only commented that she was a well-behaved girl who was not talkative. But later the teacher told us that she was quite introverted and didn't mingle with the group. She always stayed alone. One day the teacher missed her in the class, so the teacher went to look for her. She searched and searched, and found her playing alone with water. She put on soap then rinsed it off with water, and then put on soap again and rinsed it off again... Even when she did sit together with other kids, she would still look around. Later the school principal suspected that she might have autism and suggested that we take her to hospital for a check-up. We took her to see a specialist at the Children's Hospital on Beijing Road. The doctor said nothing but that we should "strengthen education."

C's mother: Strengthen education and communicate more with her. She was pretty quick at completing puzzles during the exam. So they said that she had pretty good logical thinking. But we didn't receive any diagnosis.

If she really had autism, she wouldn't be able to learn different things. But she did quite well in morning exercise and dancing. We had quite good relations with Ms. Sun, the teacher at nursery school. She would tell us what had been taught in class every day. Then we would review it with her every evening. It took us quite some energy. This way she could keep up, and sometimes she could even do a bit better than other kids. But we underestimated the problem at that time.

Then she went to elementary school. Even in first grade, problems already emerged. She couldn't keep up anymore. She was slow. We parents went through a tough time. She was so slow that we finished almost every night around 10 p.m.

The students were supposed to write down the homework list. She was too slow so other kids would write it down for her. We would then monitor her to finish it according to that list. At first, she needed to copy *pinyin* and new Chinese characters. For math, at first she just needed to copy the numbers. She was just slow. To write from memory, she might be able to do it if it was taught the same day. But if it was taught several days before, then she couldn't. She had very poor memory, and that made the study difficult. So we kept on repeating to enhance her memory. On one hand she had to finish the homework of the day. Then we would still guide her to read the new characters, and then make her write from memory. On the other hand, we also needed to enhance the things she had learned previously. It took her much more time than others. It was quite strict at elementary school at that time. You had to finish your homework of the day and the next day you would have dictation. The problem was obvious. She just couldn't keep up.

Q: Wasn't she doing quite well in math when she was at nursery school?

C's mother: No, not really. At nursery school she could recognize the numbers quite well. As soon as she went to elementary school, it became difficult for her.

C's father: When she had to do addition and subtraction and so on, she was not sensitive to numbers. And she had a really short memory.

C's mother: Poor memory. Actually, smart kids all have a good memory. They are savvy.

Q: How about her concentration?

C's mother: She has less concentration than some kids.

C's father: She would concentrate if she could understand or was interested in the topic. Otherwise she couldn't stay focused.

C's mother: That was a painful period for us. Our kid didn't do well in study. But the teacher would announce everyone's scores. When her score was announced, some smart boys would... I used to bring her back to school after lunch and I would hear others calling her "blockhead." My tears... my heart was aching. Though she did have problems, she shouldn't be treated like that. She is also a human being, isn't she? Other kids at school were also just first graders and they didn't know better, so I couldn't really blame them. Our experience of raising her was... Now we are really satisfied with her current situation and her job. But in fact we've really gone through all kinds of hardships. What a path we've followed, full of twists and turns!

C's father: It was also tough for her.

C's mother: She also had a hard time. We kept on pushing her, with no result. That was really painful. Some teachers could understand and they would be reasonable with us. But some teachers couldn't understand and they even... It was indeed unbearable...

Q: Could most teachers somehow understand, or not?

C's mother: Most of them couldn't understand. Especially when she just started in first grade. The teacher would even give negative comments. At that time, the upgrading ratio of each class was linked to the students' scores of exams. Your bad score would affect the performance of the whole class, as well as the teacher's performance.

Q: Did the teacher criticize her in front of the whole class?

C's mother: It might have happened sometimes.

C's father: We don't really know.

Q: Has your daughter mentioned it when she came back?

C's mother: She just said, "Mom, I don't want to go to school. I don't want to."

Q: That indicated that she was not happy at school.

C's mother: Yes. She would lose her temper as soon as she got home. She was very moody. Nobody talked to her the whole day. It was tough for her.

C's father: At home, sometimes she would lose her temper for no reason. That was a way to vent her emotions.

C's mother: Yes, she was venting her emotions. A general school gave her too much pressure. It was not that she didn't want to perform. But she has her limits. She couldn't help it.

Q: What was it like when she lost her temper?

C's mother: She wouldn't tell us what happened, she would just have a tantrum. When she was at nursery school, she would cry and lose her temper at home in the evening. After entering elementary school, her self-esteem also developed. So whenever she was treated badly at school, she would come home and say, "I don't want to go to school! I don't want to go to school!" We couldn't bear it anymore. It seemed that she could no longer continue at that school. The school suggested that we have her IQ tested somewhere. We couldn't reach an agreement in a pleasant way.

Q: How did you feel when you heard this?

C's father: At that time, we didn't have the idea that "my kid might suffer from ID."

C's mother: It was not talked about much, not like nowadays.

Q: People were not educated about the concept of ID.

C's father: No, it was not known. And actually even the doctors at the Children's Hospital have also only just been exposed to that.

C's mother: Yes, it has just started. We didn't know much about it in the beginning either. We were worried but we knew nothing about how to guide the kid and how to educate her. So we were just worried but couldn't find any solution.

The Tough Treatment

Q: When was it diagnosed?

C's mother: That was at the time when she couldn't keep up in first grade and the school suggested an IQ test. Basically, they didn't want to have her anymore. The test result was a bit lower than the normal score of 60. But the doctor said that she was pretty good at logical thinking and that she completed puzzles quite well. She is very timid and introverted and is afraid of strangers. Therefore, the IQ test might not reflect her true situation.

Q: So, at that time, did you want to transfer her to another school, or did you want to have her treated?

C's mother: We sent her to see the psychiatrist at the Central Hospital of Xuhui District. It cost us a lot of money.

Q: Did you make her see the psychiatrist because you thought she had autism?

C's mother: We would take any suggestions which might help her. We took her to see the psychiatrist, and took her to do physical exercise. That was also in a hospital in Xuhui District. It cost dozens of yuan each time. It was said that this kind of physical exercise could help improve her intelligence. For example, she would walk on the balance beam, glide down from a very high place, and jump on a trampoline, and things like that. We took her there once or twice a week. And we also took her to another place for activities like storytelling and number guessing in order to develop her intelligence. So we took her to various activities and bought whatever medicine that was supposed to help her. During summer and winter vacations, we would make her take shots that could nourish the brain. But all these seemed to deliver no concrete results. We spent a lot of money on all these, in the hope that she would eventually get better. But the reality was a bit far from our expectations.

C's father: It was a lot of effort.

C's mother: True, effort and money. It was really tough, really.

Q: Did you both accompany her every time?

C's mother: Yes, we both went together with her.

Q: Some parents might think of abandoning their kids once they find out that the kid has ID. Have you ever had similar thoughts?

C's mother: No, we haven't. We want to take extra good care of her because of her condition. Why do we say this? They say that you are chosen to have this kind of kids because you have a loving heart. Traditionally people believe in this. The more defective she is, the more we should love her, shouldn't we? Recently I wasn't feeling well and had a fever. At night I wanted to drink, and she would get up and get water for me. I was quite touched.

Q: When you first found out about her intelligence problem, what was your initial reaction? Did you want to hide the fact from others, or did you want to ask for help from relatives and friends?

C's mother: We didn't try to hide it. My mother-in-law is a frank and straightforward person, so all relatives in our family know about it. Actually, I would have preferred to keep it a secret. I didn't really want others to know my kid's condition.

Q: What was your thinking?

C's mother: I just wanted to protect her. Even now I still don't really want to talk about it. I also had hesitation about this interview. I feel like I should protect her and don't want to let others know about her condition. I gave birth to her to be like this. Really, I feel very guilty (holding back tears). I also wish that she could just be like you. At that time I could hardly accept this fact. I thought what bad luck I had. I'm always willing to help others and I'm kind. What did I do to deserve this? Even now I still don't really want to talk about it with others... Then Dad went to the orientation. And you said that we could use aliases and the photos would only show her profile and her back. Then I decided to cooperate and accept this interview. I believe that each family with such a kid (holding back tears again) would share my concerns. That is pretty normal. There's nothing I can do now. So I can only hope that she can be happy and that I can protect her well. I wouldn't ask for anything more than that, nothing else at all.

C's father: In fact, as parents, we just hope that these kids can be understood in society and that people can show respect to them. We hope that we can protect them. But this won't be realized if we are alone. We need help from society. Everybody should understand that.

C's mother: We really hope that everyone in society can understand us.

The Lonely Journey of LRC

C's mother: Our daughter didn't even finish first grade. She quit in May, during the second term. We couldn't stand it. We figured out that the environment was really not favorable for her. We wanted to switch her to a school with a better environment and with teachers who would be kind to her. It might have been favorable to her development both physically and psychologically. So we asked for help from our matchmaker, a teacher at Shanghai Normal University, to transfer my daughter to another school. In September, we registered at the new school and she started first grade all over again. The new school was in Xuhui District while we lived in Hongkou

District.⁴ For her study, we had to rent a place to stay. Because she entered this school via an acquaintance, the environment around her was a bit better.

C's father: Later on, the Education Bureau issued the "LRC Policy,"⁵ meaning children with ID study in regular classes together with normal children. But the requirements for children with ID are different from the ones for the normal children. It was hoped that children with ID could develop healthily in a regular environment. If you still couldn't fit in such a situation, you could be transferred to a special school.

C's mother: So she was studying in a regular class like this. She made slow progress, while other kids made fast progress. Her exams were also a bit easier. She went to the after-school nursery class when she was studying at this school, so that she could do her homework together with other kids. But her tempo was slow, so she still had to do more when she was home.

C's father: She went to this regular school together with normal classmates, from first to fourth grade. She did have pressure from this LRC. Why was that? She had problems. Her classmates were all normal, and they didn't have much contact with my daughter. She was left aside on her own and was very lonely. When she was studying at the second school, I once went to pick her up after school. It was in winter and they were having an outdoor activity lesson. All kids were playing the "Chicken against Eagle" game, except for her—she was running on her own behind them.⁶

C's mother: Partially maybe because these kids were still very young. An adult in this situation might help her. But the kids didn't understand. If people like you saw a similar situation, you would definitely want to help her mingle with the group. So we couldn't really blame those kids, could we?

Q: How was the environment at the second school compared to the first one?

C's father: It was a bit improved. She was not the only LRC student at school. There were more in other classes as well.

C's mother: It was for sure better than the first school. Nobody would insult her directly anymore.

Q: Did she continue all the way at the second school?

C's father: She continued until fourth grade, when she really couldn't keep up with the class anymore. The class teacher suggested that we'd better transfer her to a special school. The teacher simply said, "It doesn't make sense to keep her here any longer. It's also very painful for her. As teachers we can't do much. I'm sure you can understand the situation—there are so many students in the class that it's impossible for me to tutor her alone. I have to take the majority of the students into consideration. Remaining is really not to her benefit. If you insist, I could pretend

⁴These two districts are located at the west and east of Shanghai City respectively and are regarded as quite far when traveling by bus.

⁵Learning in regular classroom.

⁶"Chicken against Eagle": A traditional Chinese game for children. One child acts as the mother hen, standing in front of a queue of children acting as chicks, with his/her arms extended, in order to protect the chicks from being caught by the eagle, which is acted by another child.

and let her go to fifth grade, but that wouldn't be responsible for you parents and for the child.”

One day I happened to be at school when the bell rang at the end of a lesson. I stood at the classroom door, and saw that C was napping with her head resting on the desk. Because she couldn't understand, she found it boring to listen. And every night she would do her homework until very late. So she was tired. The Chinese teacher just let her sleep and didn't bother to wake her up. If she was woken up, she couldn't understand what was being said anyway. So C also didn't have a choice.

A Smooth Path at Special School

C's father: Then we decided to let her go to a special school, where special education methods were adopted. She started there in 2006. For entrance, each kid would be assessed in hospitals at a designated time every year. When we went for the assessment, we missed one document. So we couldn't proceed with the assessment while all other kids completed it. The next year, we took her to No. 6 People's Hospital for an intelligence test. Her intellectual disability was then confirmed. And later we also applied for an ID certificate for her, right before her graduation from this school. If she didn't have the certificate, people would set higher requirements on her, just like normal people, and we needed it if she wanted to continue studying at JiXun School, or if she wanted to work.

Q: In which period did she have a better mood, at regular school or special school?

C's mother: At special school, for sure. Because everyone was in a similar situation. Nobody would laugh at others or look down upon others. The teachers there are more professional. They have studied Special Education, so they know how to treat these kids. The teachers teach at a slow tempo. Imparting knowledge is no longer the key issue. The main purpose is to develop the hands-on and self-care abilities of the kids.

Q: What are the subjects at special school?

C's father: The subjects included Chinese, math, music, and fine arts. They also had Social Practice Lessons, in which they were taken out of the school to visit supermarkets, shops, and the neighborhood to get in touch with society. There was one more lesson which you couldn't find at a regular school: cooking. They were taught how to cut food up and cook. At that time, she would also cook some dishes at home, such as fried eggs with tomatoes and Gong Bao chicken,⁷ and so on. Those were her assignments from school.

Q: The subjects were quite interesting.

C's father: Yes, they were. And most importantly, the kids experienced a sense of achievement after learning all those things.

C's mother: You probably wouldn't expect it, but actually these kids also have pretty strong self-esteem.

⁷Fried eggs with tomatoes and Gong Bao chicken: Typical dishes of Chinese cuisine.

C's father: The intelligence levels of her peers at the special school differed. Since she had been studying at regular schools, it seemed that she performed even better than others at special school (laughing).

Q: Did they have any extra-curricular programs at school?

C's mother: In 2007, the International Special Olympic Games were held in Shanghai. C was in fifth or sixth grade. Her whole class went to rehearse, preparing for the Group Calisthenics at the Closing Ceremony. During the games, the school offered plenty of activities for the students outside the school.

C's father: Apart from the performance in the Special Olympics Games, they also went to Nanjing Road, to perform in public. They also performed at the Metro Plaza.⁸ I was there during both performances. They were singing *Grateful Hearts*. She acted quite naturally, and was not shy. She was quite pleased whenever there was an activity like this. Though she didn't say it, we could still notice it on her smiling face when she was home after her activities.

The school organized activities frequently at that time. After the end-of-term exams, the whole school went for an outing in a rented bus. They went to have Western food and watched a movie. They had a variety of activities. They went to the Safari Park, which even I have never been to. The special school has many sponsors. Some of them support in the form of money or donations, while others contribute with materials.

C's mother: In this sense she has experienced quite a lot. The teachers of this school always emphasized that they should connect more with society.

Q: Among all these subjects and activities, what was her favorite?

C's father: She has never told me which her favorite was. Has she mentioned it to you?

C's mother: No, she hasn't.

Q: She is a rather introverted person.

C's mother: In fact, her character is like mine. When I was young, I was also an introvert. Now that I've gotten older, I talk more.

Q: How was her grade determined at special school?

C's father: She was supposed to be in fifth grade when she started at special school, but the principal discussed with me about putting her in sixth grade. There are in total nine grades at special school. So, she has studied there for 4 years. After that, she passed the entrance exams for the vocational school.

Q: So there are also entrance exams for the vocational school?

C's parents: Yes, there are.

C's father: And that is JiXun School.

Q: What were the entrance exams like?

C's father: We first signed her up at school. Then all students gathered in one classroom. Parents stayed outside. The students filled in an application form, with their names, genders, and addresses and so on. That was pretty simple. After that, they went to different testing rooms. It seemed that she was asked to finish an assignment. The door closed so I couldn't see much. Mainly she was tested about her hands-on

⁸Both Nanjing Rd. and Metro Plaza are busy downtown shopping areas.

abilities. There were no separate written exams. Filling in the forms were already the written exam. Some of them couldn't complete that task. One of her ex-classmates couldn't write a single word on the form, and she was not accepted.

Q: Now she works at the restaurant. Did she study cooking at school?

C's mother: No, she studied Supermarket Merchandising.

Q: Did someone choose that major for her or did she want to learn it?

C's mother: It was designated by school.

Q: Did she talk about what she has learned in detail?

C's father: Yes, she did. Sometimes she would ask me to accompany her in the evening while she was doing her homework. She got a lot of studying materials, such as Food Safety, how to place products onto the shelves, how to sort, for example how to place dry products, and how to check the date of perishable food, and put products with shorter expiry dates to the front and the ones with longer expiry to the back. Most of these things needed to be memorized by heart. A lot of details. In addition to this subject, she also had Chinese, singing, and PE. Also, for the assignments for these lessons I accompanied her to finish.

Q: How would they be tested during exams? Would there be a ranking of scores?

C's mother: There was no ranking. Those kids all had ID, so the emphasis was on their hands-on and self-care abilities. They were taught by the teachers to be "strong and independent." This was frequently emphasized. "I want to work" and "I can" were ideas taught to them. They did have mid-term and end-of-term exams on subjects like Chinese, math, ideological and moral education, and physiological health. They also had practice exams, in which they were asked to cook a dish. We also received performance reports after exams, and we attended parents' conferences as well, when the teachers would then communicate with you about your kid's performance.

C's father: She has been in the vocational school for 2 years. Actually, she has had lessons for about 1.5 years. During the last 6 months, there were various employers coming to their school for recruitment. And then they were waiting at home for notice. C didn't get a job in the first year. So, she stayed at home for an extra year, in total 1.5 years.

Q: How did she spend that year while she was waiting for a job?

C's mother: We taught her at home how to take care of herself in daily life. We took her to the open market to buy fresh food, to do housework like washing vegetables. We mainly focused on enhancing her ability in this area. The rest of the time, she would work on her handwriting, do some homework and review her previous learning materials from school. She did some math assignments and learned to write new characters.

Q: Does she do well in recognizing characters now?

C's mother: I feel like she is much better than before. Now she will key in the text by handwriting when she chats with her colleagues on WeChat.

C's father: She is not so good at keying in by *pinyin*. But she can write the characters well.

C's mother: She wouldn't let us see her WeChat. She said that it's her privacy.

C's father: She does get upset if we touch her mobile (laughing).

C's mother: Let's show them C's photos on our mobiles. You couldn't see her problem from her appearance at all. She's quite capable. Why do we say so? When she was studying at vocational school, which was quite far from our current home, she commuted on Bus No. 50. Starting from the bus stop of No. 50 close by, she would travel all the way to the bus terminal at the crossing of South Zhongshan Road and Dong'an Road. One time the bus broke down and couldn't move anymore. When she was home, she told us that the bus she took was out of order. Dad asked her, "Then what did you do?" "I just waited for the next bus and then got in again, of course, together with all the other passengers." That happened when she was still at school. We were quite relieved when we heard that!

Hardworking and Kind-Hearted

Q: Did she apply at Papa John's because she wanted to be a cook?

C's mother: Not really. Not every student got a job after graduation from JiXun School. There were more than a dozen students in her class. Only four were chosen by recruiting parties. She didn't get a job, so she waited at home, without a job for more than a year.

Talking about Papa John's, they happened to be recruiting this group of kids in other districts. Enquiring at the company, we were told that there were job vacancies and that we could hurry to an examination venue on Wuning Road. We took her there and she was immediately called in for an interview. Afterwards, the examiner told her that she would be tested for making a crust and that she should practice at home the proper movement of her hands. The next day she was asked to make a pizza crust, and she completed the assignment.

C's father: When we were still on our way home, we got a phone call from the proctor asking when she could register at the company.

Q: Did you get this recruiting information from school?

Parents: No, we didn't. We went to enquire at Papa John's on our own.

C's mother: We have heard of Papa John's because they came to her school to recruit among graduating students a year prior to her graduation. But when C graduated, they didn't come for recruiting. We thought that this company must be a place with love since they accepted these special kids, so we took her to the company and enquired with the manager.

Q: She prepares snacks at the restaurant. What kind of snacks?

C's father: Like chicken wings and pasta and things like that (See Fig. 1).

Q: She's like a cook.

Parents: Yes, she is a cook.

Q: After she started working, was there anything especially impressive to you?

C's mother: When she started working, one day the bus didn't take the usual route. She noticed that was not the bus stop where she normally got off. The weather was hot and she was worried to death. She got off the bus and asked people, "Where is South Shanghai Station?" People showed her the way. At that time, the restaurant



Fig. 1 Ms. C at work

called us and asked, “Will C come to work today?” We also got very worried. She set out very early. How come she still hasn’t arrived? Just at that moment, I heard over the phone that she arrived. She was supposed to start at 11 a.m., and she arrived just 1 or 2 min before that time, covered in sweat. Later she told us that the bus didn’t take the normal route. She noticed it when she got off and asked for directions. That

happened not long after she started with this job. She knows the way better than I do. When she worked at Tian Lin Branch, she also once took the wrong bus. She should have taken Bus No. 131, but she didn't see clearly and took No. 731 instead. She noticed the mistake after one stop. She didn't want to be late for her work, so she took a taxi. I found her quite resourceful.

Parents: Some kids might not react so quickly. I will be late for work... What shall I do?

Q: And she is very responsible. She hurried to the restaurant in order not to be late.

C's mother: And now she is still like that. Her work starts at 10 a.m. now. She would set off around 8:40 or 8:50, so she arrives a little later than 9 a.m. Ever since she was little, she would not skip school, even when she was not well.

C's father: Our daughter has never been late, neither for school nor for her work. She also wouldn't play truant. She likes to go to school, and to her work. And she prefers to be there early. She doesn't want to be late.

C's mother: She arrives early. Her work starts at 10 o'clock, but she arrives immediately after 9 a.m.

C's father: She is quite disciplined.

C's mother: I feel that she has become much more open, ever since she had this job and started to get in touch with society. The restaurant where she works now is just like a big and loving family. The manager gets along with all the colleagues. She's happy and talks much more than when she was studying. Whatever happens at work, she will tell us when she's back. She has become more cheerful. Although she only gets the minimum wage, her life is secure, right? Actually, we as parents are also pretty satisfied. Quite a lot of her schoolmates at the vocational school don't have a job and stay at home. We don't ask much and we don't compare our daughter with others who are in a better situation. You'd better be content with the things you possess. There are still kids staying at home. They couldn't get into society and don't have a job. Those people must envy us. Whether your kid could have a job will have an impact on how the parents feel. Kids like them should be given the opportunity to get in contact with society. This way they can realize their values—I want to work and I can do it.

I encourage her frequently. It's important for her to hear me saying "Yes, you can." Several days ago, I made a digital album with an app named Xiaoniangao. The next morning before she went to work, I demonstrated it to her one more time and asked, "I'm making it now. Do you get it?" "No, not really, Mom." Later, during her lunch break, she managed to make the digital album and sent it to us. I suspect that she might have some talent on the computer. She's very quick in learning things related to computers, whereas we parents cannot even do it.

C's father: She plays with the mobile better than we do.

C's mother: She usually talks about things happening at the restaurant, like who is ill or who is on annual leave. "But they wouldn't travel during their annual leave," she told us, "their parents wouldn't take them out traveling."

All: (Laughing).

C's mother: Several days ago she told us, "Manager Sun said that you two could take me traveling during my annual leave." "We are planning on that. July is too hot. Let's go somewhere in October," I said.

C's father: They have 9 days' annual leave to be taken in two parts. She can take a few days off in the hottest season for some rest, and then spend the rest traveling when it gets cooler.

Q: Did she talk about what happened at school when she was studying?

C's parents: Not so much at the time. But now, on one hand she is older and her intelligence has developed further. On the other hand, after she got in touch with society, she sees more things and has more to share with us. When she was little, she would be busy having lessons the whole day and finishing her homework. There was not much time to talk about other subjects. She had so much homework that she could hardly finish it.

Q: How does she get along with her colleagues?

C's father: She said that her colleagues are all kind to her. Sometimes she will bring snacks to share with her colleagues, and they will do the same for her.

Q: Do you still remember how she spent her very first salary?

C's mother: Normally she receives her salary in her bank account. When she got her first paycheck, her grandma, my mother-in-law, was hospitalized. She bought Grandma something from Harbin Food Factory on Huaihai Road with her salary. Grandma was very pleased.⁹

C's father: (Laughing).

C's mother: Her school has always put emphasis on this. During her last school year, the teacher told them, "You must work hard. What should you do with your first salary? You could buy some nice food for your parents and the elders in your family." That's how she was taught.

C's father: She is a kind person, with a gentle heart.

C's mother: We have good relationships with our neighbors. If they travel somewhere, they would bring back something to us. My daughter said to me that we should also bring back things for our neighbors if we go traveling. I told her that I will remember to do so. She's good at keeping a good relationship with others.

C's father: I remember one more thing. When she was at JiXun School, she was studying Supermarket Merchandising. They got a sheet with a table to record down product names. One sheet for each student. You use pencil to write, so it can be erased and re-used. Some kids erased too hard and the sheet would rip. Sometimes she would also make mistakes on the sheet. So I made extra copies of the sheet and put them in her bag. She sometimes would give the copied sheets to her classmates if they damaged theirs.

C's mother: She is pretty generous.

C's father: She's big-hearted.

Q: Okay, she's like that. And does she take care of her salary by herself now?

⁹Harbin Food Factory: A local food factory with a long history, located in the central commercial shopping area. It specializes in traditional Chinese snacks as well as Western-style baked snacks, and frequently has customers queuing to purchase the popular items.

C's mother: We give her a certain amount of allowance. And we will buy the things she likes to eat. We basically don't touch her salary. Now she has a job, but what if she becomes jobless in the future? Nowadays you can only receive pension after retirement if you contribute a minimum of 15 years to the pension fund, right?¹⁰ So we don't use a cent of her salary. We just save it for her. In case she becomes jobless, she can still continue paying to the pension funds with that saving.

Q: What does she normally like to buy with her allowance?

C's father: She won't waste money.

C's mother: She sometimes will buy a lemonade when she's thirsty. And sometimes she'll bring back food to let us taste. She will also buy things other than food. She has a kitty umbrella. (The parents took out a pink Hello Kitty umbrella.) It cost dozens of yuan and she bought it by herself.

Q: So she loves cute pink things like this.

Parents: (Laughing).

C's mother: When it gets cold and her lips are dry, she will also buy herself a lip balm.

C's father: Once it was hot, she went to Daphne and bought a pair of sandals.¹¹

C's mother: That was during the first year when we started to give her allowance. The sandals were 168 yuan and she bought them by herself. She took them back one day after work. Now if she's hungry, she might go to McDonald's for some food. We give her several hundred yuan each month. She spends it carefully. She won't spend like crazy, so that's very good.

Simple Relationship and Family Trips

Q: Did she have contact with her classmates and friends when she was little? Did they come to play at your place?

C's mother: When she was in first grade, the neighborhood kids would come here to play. She wouldn't go out. Others came here.

Q: Did it happen when she was in the first elementary school?

C's mother: Yes. And it didn't happen anymore when she switched schools.

C's father: After she started at JiXun School, she had more in common with her classmates there. They shared the same interests, and they would come here by themselves. Our daughter would tell us that someone wanted to come to play. We told her that it was fine, and she would then ask her classmates to come. Her classmates took the initiative to play here. C didn't invite them by herself. But of course, she liked it if her classmates were willing to come.

¹⁰Pension Insurance: Normally one has to contribute a minimum of 15 years to the pension fund to be entitled to a monthly pension after retirement.

¹¹Daphne: A popular Chinese brand for women's shoes with many exclusive stores and counters.

C's mother: Now there's also a colleague at the restaurant who sometimes comes here. We are more than happy to have guests, as long as they are happy. I hope that she can become more cheerful with the friendship.

Q: Does the colleague friend who came to your place also have ID?

C's mother: Yes, she does. Some of those colleagues are older than she is.

C's father: Her social circle is not as wide as you normal people. They would just chat on WeChat or via telephone among classmates.

Q: How does she get along with colleagues without disability?

C's mother: The normal colleagues have never come here. Most of them are married and have become parents.

Q: Is there any change in her response to strangers nowadays compared to previously when she was little?

C's mother: She won't talk to strangers. We have specially warned her not to, especially strange men. I told her, "When Mom was at your age, I wouldn't talk to boys. What if the stranger is a bad guy and wants to take advantage of you? Girls have to keep their self-esteem and protect themselves. You must keep these two points in mind. Don't respond or talk to strange men." I keep on repeating it frequently, so she knows it. Recently she told me, "Mom, there was a man on the bus who kept on looking at his belly button. And the woman next to him kept on staring at him." I said to her, "This man either has some mental problems, or might be a bad guy and tried to seduce girls like you to watch him. What if he acts indecently?" "I didn't look at him and I don't want to. The woman next to me was watching, not me," she said. Things like this we have to warn her frequently, as an alarm. Actually, she must also have looked. Otherwise how could she know that the other woman was watching? I just didn't want to point it out. (Laughing).

C's father: When she was at special school, they also had a subject probably called "Society and Morality." Its study book also mentioned "no talking to strangers." They were taught so at school. They were taught to keep away if there's anything happening on the streets. That is because kids like them are naïve and might not be able to distinguish in most cases. So they have to learn what they can do and what they shouldn't do.

Q: When C was at school, did you take her out on weekends?

Parents: Yes, we did.

C's mother: When she was little, we took her to places like Shanghai Zoo, Safari Park and Aquarium. The admissions are not cheap. But we've taken her there.

C's father: We've also been to the Oriental Pearl.¹²

C's mother: We've taken her to Oriental Land Holiday Village as well. Sometimes we also went out of Shanghai. When she was at nursery school, we took her to Hangzhou. And we've also been to neighboring Tong Li Old Town and Suzhou.

Q: Did you also visit the Expo?¹³

¹²The Oriental Pearl Radio and TV Tower is one of the architectural landmarks in Shanghai. At 468 m in height, it used to be the tallest building in Shanghai in the 1990s, and is currently the third tallest.

¹³This refers to Expo 2010 Shanghai.

C's mother: Yes, we did. We went there three times. She was pretty big at the time of the Expo, so she can remember. We as parents would just do our best.

Q: Do you have family outings now when you have time?

Parents: Yes, we do. We've been to Zui Bai Pool in Song Jiang, and Pu Tuo Mountain. Last year we went to Feng Hua,¹⁴ the hometown of Chiang Kai Shek.

C's father: Last year when we were at Pu Tuo Mountain, she said that she didn't enjoy the place enough, and that she wants to go back again this year.

C's mother: She will have her annual leave for this year now. July is far too hot, so she can take a good rest and we will take her out in October, while both of us are still mobile. She's very happy if we take her traveling. Last year when we just returned from our trip, she already asked, "Mom, where are we going next year?" I said, "Let's decide then." And now it's the time, so she asked me, "Where are we going?" "For sure we will go somewhere," I said.

Deep Love and Worries over the Future

C's father: All the parents of the kids at special school share one common worry: One day we will be old, so what will happen to our kids when we pass away? We used to discuss this when we went to pick up our kids after school.

C's mother: What will happen to our child? This has always been our concern. I have been thinking about one possibility, to take her with us when we are dying. No other solutions.

C's father: Many parents have the same thought.

C's mother: Who can take care of her if she's left alone in this world? Nowadays people are not like previously... There are still people with loving hearts, but much less than before. And we don't necessarily have the luck to meet someone with loving hearts, do we? Therefore, I got this idea. Now that we are still around, we just take her out traveling, let her see more of the world and be happy. When our time comes, I would like to take her with us. Then I can rest in peace. That's my idea, and it's shared by lots of parents in the same situation. This is really an issue.

Q: Have you thought about letting her have her own family?

C's mother: No, we haven't. Honestly speaking, with our daughter's condition, it's still possible to find her a spouse, but we have concerns. If she gets married, she might be taken advantage of. Besides it takes quite some money. Even normal people have a high divorce rate. I'm afraid that it wouldn't work out for her. So, I've never taken this as an option. We two just hope that our health allows us to live longer, so that we can be with her happily, and take her out to see the world.

C's father: To show her the beauty of the world.

C's mother: China is beautiful, with magnificent scenery.

Q: Do you now still have that idea of taking her with you when you pass away?

Parents: Yes, we do.

¹⁴Feng Hua: Scenic areas in suburban Shanghai, the neighboring Zhejiang and Jiangsu Provinces.

Q: What if she gets settled well?

C's father: In the current society, even normal people can hardly settle well.

C's mother: Exactly. The younger generation cannot be compared with our generation. If we let her get married, we would spend a sum of money. We'd rather save that money for her to enjoy and to travel.

C's father: I just learned from the news that there were more than 3.8 million couples divorced last year in China. If she could meet a kind person who would take care of her, that would be the best. But people nowadays are very realistic. For example, if she gets married with someone with the help of a matchmaker, what might be his purpose? Would he just be kind to her or does he have a hidden agenda? Some people from provincial cities want to settle in Shanghai, and therefore they are willing to sacrifice and marry somebody inferior. We are just ordinary people, but if we were rich, people might marry her for the money, right? Many people have evil intentions. Nowadays good people are rare in society.

Besides we also have other concerns. This Papa John's restaurant has "loving" branches, where they accept this special group of kids. Before the Cultural Revolution, there were also many Welfare Factories under the National Civil Affairs Bureau.¹⁵ But these factories were all closed or unattended after the Reform and Opening Up. For example, at our work unit, there used to be factories under the same bureau where deaf people, dumb people, or people with hunchback and so on were accepted. They could accomplish some tasks requiring relatively simple techniques. But the state-owned enterprises won't recruit special groups of people like this anymore after the Reform and Opening Up.

C's mother: Yes. This is also our worry. Currently our child is doing well in Papa John's. But if this restaurant doesn't exist in the future, she will be jobless. After all, a family with a kid like this will always have worries. We as parents will always consider all different aspects. We are so worried. If society gets more prosperous, and people with disabilities can enjoy more welfare, like in foreign countries, that would be fine. I learned that in many foreign countries, people with disabilities are treated very well. If our economy could grow further, we wouldn't be so worried, right?

C's father: We have also seen reports about the living status and treatment of people with disabilities in foreign countries, as well as their policies for the treatment of people with disabilities. After reading these materials and comparing them with the situation in China, we still see a big gap.

Q: Where do you see the gap?

C's mother: To me, firstly, some people will look at these kids in an unfriendly light. Our daughter's problem is not so easy to be judged from her appearance. But for some kids, the look from others makes you very uncomfortable. It is mentioned in foreign newspapers that everyone is equal and nobody is weird. In this respect, it seems that people in China are less friendly. This might also be related to what quality of person they are.

¹⁵Welfare Factories: Government-run factories where people with physical or mental disabilities worked.

Q: And what are the differences in terms of policies?

C's father: The treatment in foreign countries would be better. Possibly it is due to the huge population in China. It's difficult to take care of so many people.

Q: Have you checked in detail what the policies are like in each country?

C's father: No, we haven't. The information mainly comes from the chatting of the parents when we were waiting outside the school to pick up the kids.

C's mother: We do hope that China can be stronger and better, and then social welfare will be improved and these kids can live more happily. Right?

Q: Have you ever received help from the community?

C's mother: Yes, we have. Honestly speaking, I'm very grateful to the country and the Party. As ordinary citizens and a special family, we are treated well. The Shanghai Municipal Government implemented a policy in 2008, to provide subsidies to one-child families who lost their only child or families like us, where the kid is disabled but the parents don't have a second child.

C's father: Yes. Because we only have one child and C has the Disability Certificate. So we are entitled to get the subsidy.

C's mother: C's salary is rather low. She just gets the minimum wage. But with the subsidy, it's much better.

Q: What was your consideration not to have a second child? In some families, they think that the second child might be able to take care of the first one.

C's mother: We just have never had this idea. Never.

C's father: Among the parents we know, some have considered having a second child. And some of them did have the second one, while the others didn't do it after consideration. Some think that in the future the younger child could help the elder one, while the others think that the elder one might become a burden for the younger one. It would be hard if the younger child gets married and still has to take care of the elder one. So they dropped the idea of having a second one. And for us, we just don't think about all these things. We just want to focus on this child and raise her up carefully.

C's mother: Imagine, no matter how your financial situation is, there are always some properties in a family. If two kids need to share, it would be hard to keep it fair. But if there's only one child, then it's all his or hers. That's how we look at it. So we've never thought about having a second one.

Q: Our interview is coming to an end. Parents, do you still have anything to add?

C's mother: We just hope that China can get stronger and more prosperous and that social security and other aspects could all be further improved. Then we don't have to worry and can feel a bit relieved. And we do hope that our daughter's job could be a long-term and stable one.

Interview with C's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Restaurant Manager

Interviewers and writers: Zhuojun Zhang and Xiangmeng Huang

Interview date: August 13, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where C works

Q: When did C start working here?

Manager: Ever since this branch opened. Previously she worked at the Tian Lin Branch. The exact starting year I would have to look up. She was under my supervision at that time as well. Later Tian Lin Branch was closed. Actually, C lives closer to another branch, but because I've always been her supervisor before, her parents hoped that she could still follow me. Then she came with me to this branch. This restaurant opened in December 2014.

Q: How long has she been working with you?

Manager: It should be more than 3 years.

Q: Do you still remember the situation of her first working day at the Tian Lin Branch?

Manager: That I really can't recall, because when they just joined, I was not their trainer. We have a dedicated trainer in the kitchen who's responsible for the orientation of the employees. It normally takes 2–3 days. There was a colleague guiding her at that time, who is no longer working here.

Q: Just now I noticed that they need to do various things which are quite complicated. Did they all learn these things by themselves?

Manager: Yes, they did. They began with simple tasks. For example, grilling chicken wings is relatively easy. You only need to put them on the grill for a while. Other tasks might be more complicated, like preparing pasta, you need to know what should be added to the chicken pasta. She would take the written materials home and memorize the procedures. She takes it very seriously. She might do it a bit slowly, but she basically won't make any mistakes.

Q: She has been working for quite some time. You were her supervisor from the beginning. How does she perform now compared to when she just started? Are there any changes or progress? Or is everything the same?

Manager: I must say that there are improvements. Now no matter how complicated the tasks are, or how many more tasks she gets, she will be able to deal with them. She will spend time to memorize and to master the skill. For sure she has been making progress. Also, she used to be reluctant to talk, and was rather introverted. But now she will take the initiative to greet people, and she will voluntarily start a chat by saying, "Is my dress pretty? My mom bought it for me."

Q: How many employees being cared for like her are there in this restaurant?

Manager: There are five.

Q: So many! How many are here today?

Manager: Today there are three. All staff you see now in the kitchen are employees being cared for. Their situations are like this: we have J, she has been working for a very long time and has been in my team since 2009. She is the trainer in the internal site. She is different from the rest of them. She is an employee being cared for because she got injured during her work previously. One of them you won't see today. She has problems with her hearing, but she is pregnant and is now on leave. The one you saw wearing a jade pendant is also intellectually disabled. She behaves like a

child. She will keep on talking to you and can be rather chatty. Sometimes, she lacks self-control.

Q: Is she the one who just came over to chat with us?

Manager: That must be her. She is just like a kid who talks a lot. She likes talking to everyone. She has also been to some restaurants nearby in the neighborhood and talked there as well. That's because she can hardly tell what is appropriate. Sometimes the staff from other restaurants would tell me, "The girl from your restaurant is bothering us again" (smiling). She is that type of girl. And there's one more you won't see. She is now on her annual leave. Normally she teams up with C to prepare snacks together. So that's them, five in total.

Q: I have been observing when they were working. They are relatively slow.

Manager: Comparatively speaking, C is rather slow. The rest of them are fine.

Q: Would the customers ask them to hurry up? Would you also urge them accordingly?

Manager: If customers place a big order with many items, our duty manager would coordinate and help, to make sure that all items will be served to the customers on time. Sometimes if an item is missed, we would explain to the customer that we are a caring restaurant and that our situation is like that, and that we didn't monitor it well enough. Most customers would understand once we explain to them. Normally there won't be any big issue.

Q: Do you impose the same requirements on the employees being cared for as you do on the normal ones?

Manager: The requirements for the employees being cared for would be relatively low. For example, if normal employees can prepare a portion of pasta in 1 min, they probably need 2 or 3 min. For sure there will be deficiency. To be exactly the same is not possible.

Q: In what situation would you criticize them?

Manager: Ah, for example for repetitive mistakes. If they keep on making the same mistakes, our Front Desk Manager will criticize them. And that would be quite serious criticism. We've also communicated with the parents about that. The other thing we might criticize would be a lack of punctuality when it comes to work time. But normally we hardly criticize them. After all this is a special store and we have quite a lot of employees being cared for. So the level of strictness can be moderated.

Q: And in what situation would you praise them?

Manager: Ah, praising would be much easier than criticizing. For example, sometimes after preparing a portion of spaghetti, C would tell me, "I'm finished preparing, and I've wiped the table." Then I would say, "Well done, you've been working hard!" In such a situation, we will give verbal praise. Just a sentence like this and a smile, and they will be really happy.

Q: Has C ever been unpunctual?

Manager: No, she hasn't. C's parents will bring her to the bus station and then she will take the bus on her own to the restaurant. Her parents will wait for her at the bus station there again after her work. On windy and rainy days, her father will come to the restaurant to get her home. C has probably never been late for work due

to a personal reason, in my impression not even once. She also seldom asks for sick leave.

Q: What are their working hours? From 11 a.m. until when in the evening?

Manager: The working hours are from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., with a 1-hour break in-between. Eight hours every day. This morning we had some activities here, so we've asked you to come a bit later. Actually, we started from 10 a.m.

Q: Did you have the same working hours in the previous branch?

Manager: Yes, we did. Oh no, in that branch we worked from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. But it was still 8 h a day. That's the same. It is busier in the morning at this branch, therefore we start earlier.

Q: Does C have more interaction with employees being cared for like herself, or with normal ones?

Manager: C works in the internal site, where there are more staff of her type. For example, you've seen W, who likes talking. C has more contact with her. Normally she will also talk quite a lot to me. She will come over and tell me that her mom has bought her a pair of new shoes, or a new bowtie. She probably won't take the initiative to talk to the other supervisors. After all, she has known me for a long time. As for the other colleagues, she has more communication with the staff in the internal site. That's not so much because they are of the same type, but more because they work in the same space. That might be the reason.

Q: Are you and C contacts on WeChat?

Manager: Yes, we are.

Q: Do you usually have interactions on WeChat Moments?

Manager: C seldom posts on Moments. Occasionally she will post several photos when she travels. During New Year or other festivals, when we all receive some messages with wishes, we might forward them to each other. Nothing more than that. Besides, we have a working team group on WeChat, where we would post notices to everyone. C will respond to that. Sometimes we perform well and the branch gets a reward, we will hand out Red Packets in the group chat, and will ask her to retrieve them.¹⁶

Q: What would be your overall comment on C as an employee here?

Manager: To me, she is a rather introverted employee. But that's not a problem for her work. Her performance in her work is very satisfactory.

Interview with C's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: J (co-worker from the kitchen)

Interviewers and Writers: Xiangmeng Hua and Zhuojun Zhang

Interview date: August 13, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where C works

¹⁶Red Packets: Bonuses wrapped in red envelopes. For WeChat, it refers to bonuses in digital form.

Q: How long have you been working together with C?

J: Should be 1 or 2 years. We were colleagues before the opening of this branch, when Tian Lin Branch was still open.

Q: Who started working there earlier, you or C?

J: I started earlier.

Q: Did you train her?

J: Yes, I did. But actually, she first started at Nan Zhan Branch, before she went to Tian Lin Branch. When she worked at Nan Zhan Branch, she had already been trained, and had learned some basic tasks. Whenever new items are launched, I will teach her and demonstrate it to her.

Q: In daily work, does she arrange the procedures by herself, or do you tell her about what to do first and what to do next, and then she follows your instruction?

J: Every time we will make the arrangement and then tell her. Normally she won't ask by herself. We will have to instruct her and then she will do it. For example, when we finish the tasks for one order, we should clean up the table. We normally need to ask her to do it, otherwise she won't do it.

Q: Do you usually have much contact with her in your private time?

J: Not much. C doesn't like talking and is timid and quiet. During meals we will just eat on our own. During working hours, we will talk about work-related issues. But in general we don't talk much. If you talk to her, she will respond. But she won't voluntarily start a conversation.

Q: If not for the work, what would you chat about?

J: We hardly chat. Another colleague talks more with her.

Interview with C's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: A co-worker from the dining area

Interviewers and writers: Xiangmeng Huang and Zhuojun Zhang

Interview date: August 13, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where C works

Q: We mainly would like to get a rough idea about your interaction with C.

Co-worker: Interaction with her in particular?

Q: Or you can talk about your interaction with the group of employees being cared for.

Co-worker: They are all quite similar. They work, eat, and rest according to the schedule. After eating, they will play with their mobiles. When rest time is up, they will go back to their respective posts.

Q: Does C normally communicate with you?

Co-worker: C is a timid kid who hardly talks.

Q: She is rather introverted and doesn't talk much?

Co-worker: Right, she doesn't talk much. How many employees being cared for are there at our branch? About four or five. Another one is rather strange. She talks

to people everywhere. And we have J. I'm not sure what her problem is. To me, J is the same as normal people. It is said that J is in a similar situation to C and others. But I can't tell. I feel like J is normal. Another one has poor hearing. She's pregnant and is now on leave. Apart from her hearing I think she must be pretty normal.

Q: Do you usually have much communication with staff from the internal site?

Co-worker: Do you mean with the employees being cared for?

Q: Yes.

Co-worker: Ah, these ones, we hardly talk to them if there's nothing in particular.

Q: Hardly any contact, right?

Co-worker: Right. And probably I have the least contact with C. We regard J as a normal person. And the other one with hearing problems, she can figure out what we say by reading our lips, though she couldn't hear clearly. C is normally timid but smiles a lot.

Q: So you don't have much contact with them in your private time, do you?

Co-worker: No, I don't. We all know about their situations and don't have much communication with them. But we won't look down on them. That won't happen in our branch. Discrimination doesn't exist here. Our branch is like that. We all respect each other.

Q: Did you know that there are employees being cared for here before you came to work at this branch?

Co-worker: No, I didn't. I only learned about it after I came here. Then I felt that it's actually quite nice here in Shanghai. If they were in my hometown, they might not be able to find a job. My hometown is in a rural area. They could probably only stay at home. And now they can work here. At least they can contribute to the pension fund, so they can have a secure life when they get old. This job is not super tiring. Sometimes we might also have some idle time.

Interview with Ms. C

Interviewee: Ms. C (accompanied by the Restaurant Manager)

Interviewers and writers: Xiangmeng Huang and Zhuojun Zhang

Interview date: August 13, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where C works

Q: Tell us how you spend your day every day. Approximately when do you normally get up every morning?

C: Around 6 o'clock. And then get breakfast ready.

Q: Do you mean prepare breakfast or eat breakfast?

C: Eat breakfast.

Q: Do you prepare breakfast for your parents when you are home?

C: No, I don't.

Q: What time do you usually leave home? When do you set off to catch the bus?

C: Around 8 o'clock.

Q: And about what time do you get to the restaurant?

C: Nine o'clock.

Q: You already arrive by 9 a.m.?

Manager: Normally she does arrive immediately after 9 a.m.

Q: We've heard from your parents that the bus sometimes might change the route and wouldn't bring you to the restaurant. Were you scared or nervous when that happened?

C: I was.

Q: Do you still remember how you coped with that situation?

C: I would then come by taxi.

Q: You have your breakfast so early, and will only have lunch during the break around 2 or 3 p.m. Will you feel very hungry when you are preparing snacks?

C: No, I won't.

Q: Okay. When is normally your busiest moment? Is it when you just start your day? Or do you get busier after a while?

(C didn't answer.)

Manager: Normally lunch time is our peak hour every day. They start working at 10 a.m. by doing some preparation jobs. C will cut some vegetables and wrap some bacon rolls or things like that. Between approximately 11:30 and 12:30, there will be an hour of really busy time. Around 1 p.m. onwards it will be a bit easier for her.

Q: Until when does she have free time?

Manager: The easy time after 1 p.m. doesn't mean that she has nothing to do. She will wipe the tables and wash the bowls and dishes on her post. By then it would be almost 2 p.m., time for them to eat. After eating she will get back to her post to do cleaning. We do cleaning every day. For example, today she will soon go to wash the cart. We take turns to wash the cart, once a week for everyone. The build-up of corn flour should all be washed away.

Q: Do you have your dinner in the restaurant or at home?

C: I always go home for dinner.

Q: When do you normally arrive home?

C: Usually at 7 o'clock.

Q: And when do you go to bed at night?

C: I go to bed after taking a shower.

Q: So around 10 or 11 o'clock?

(C didn't answer)

Manager: I guess it would be around 9 or 10 o'clock. She might not be so precise about time. I guess that she would be home at around eight, because she finishes her work at seven. Then she would eat and take a shower. She might watch some TV after dinner and then go to bed. So it should probably be around 9 or 10 o'clock, I think. You might get a precise answer if you ask her parents about this.

Q: On the first day of your work, did your parents accompany you here, or did you come here by yourself?

C: My parents brought me here.

Q: Okay, so your parents brought you here. How long have they been doing this?

C: That I don't remember.

Q: Were you nervous on your first working day?

C: No, I wasn't.

Q: Wow, you weren't nervous! Do you still remember which tasks you did that day? Did somebody teach you something? Or did they just ask you to prepare food right away for the customers out there?

C: They did teach me how to do things.

Q: I saw that today you have made many different types of snacks. Which one do you like to make?

C: I like Tasty Combo. (The word "tasty" was pronounced a bit unclearly.)

Q: So, you like preparing combo dishes. What kind of combo dish is that?

Manager: Tasty Combo is composed of chicken wings, potato wedges, and potato stars. It's also our best-selling combo dish.

Q: Why do you like preparing this one?

C: It's simple.

Q: Okay, and which one do you dislike to prepare most?

C: I don't dislike any of them.

Q: Haha!

Manager: There's something I'd like to add. C makes the best-looking pasta and rice dishes in our restaurant. It's true. They are the prettiest. Because she's very careful, so the ones she prepares look especially nice.

Q: For the combo dish C prepared just now, does C only need to put everything onto the board?

Manager: Yes, that one is Tasty Combo, with potato stars, potato wedges, and chicken wings. That one is prepared by C.

Q: Is she just responsible for the arrangement of ingredients on the board? Or is she also responsible for the frying?

Manager: We don't have deep-fried items. She just needs to put things onto the baking tray, and place the tray on the oven rack. For example, if an order for Tasty Combo comes, she only needs to put everything in according to the list.

Q: C, could you describe the detailed preparation procedure of a certain snack? For example, how to make chicken wraps?

Manager: Let's give it a try. C, could you tell them (pointed at the interviewers) how you make chicken wraps? So, you would first take two tortillas, and put what in them? And then what do you do? Lastly you put them into the oven. Let's try it. It doesn't matter. Come on, say it slowly. So first take two pieces of 6-inch tortilla, and then? You don't have to be nervous.

(C did not respond.)

Manager: Otherwise I could let her prepare one later, and then you could record down the procedures. Because if you ask her to say it, she probably gets very nervous.

Q: Oh no, it doesn't matter. We could record it down later when we observe her work. Don't make her specially prepare one for us. (Facing C) Sorry that we made you nervous. Please don't be nervous. It doesn't matter. We are just chatting.

(In order to let C relax, we changed the subject to traveling.)

Q: Have you had a trip recently?

C: Yes, I have.

Q: Where did you go?

C: We went to see lotus flowers.

Q: Where did you see lotus flowers? Somewhere in Shanghai?

C: I have photos.

Manager: You have photos. Good, then can you show them to us? Find your photos and let everybody have a look.

(C took out her mobile and searched for the photos. Everyone looked together.)

Manager (to C): Do you know where it is?

(C didn't answer.)

Q: Ah, where is this? Is it in Shanghai? Or in another city?

C: I don't know either.

Manager: Did you sit long in the car?

C: No, not so long.

Q: Did you go by train or by bus?

C: We went by bus.

Interviewers and Manager: Oh, by bus. Then it must be in Shanghai.

Manager: (Browsing the photos) These are all photos of her parents.

Q: Did you take all these photos?

C: My parents asked me to take all these photos.

(We finished browsing the photos, and C was about to put away her mobile.)

Q: How long was your trip? Was it within 1 day?

C: Yes, just 1 day.

Q: Okay, you went there and came back on the same day.

C: Yes, we did.

Q: Do you like traveling?

C: Yes, I do.

Q: Which do you prefer, staying at home or going out traveling?

C: Traveling.

Q: And do you like your work?

C: Yes, I do.

Q: Do you prefer staying at home or going to work?

C: I prefer going to work.

Q: So, you prefer going to work (laughing). Why do you like to work? Is it because at work you could make the things you want to make? Or is it because you would be happier with your colleagues?

C: Because I like making things.

Q: Do you think it's difficult to prepare dishes and snacks?

C: No, not difficult.

Q: Have you ever made a mess or made a mistake? Do you remember that? For example, when you just started with your job and you weren't yet familiar with it.

C: I don't remember.

Q: Have you ever been scolded by the Restaurant Manager?

C (answered briskly): No.

Q: Which snack do you think is the most complicated one to prepare? So complicated that every time you need to think over how you should make it. Which is the most difficult one?

Manager: Which item is the most difficult one for you to prepare? Which one takes the most time?

C: Brilliant Combo. (The word “brilliant” was pronounced a bit unclearly.)

Manager: Oh, our new product, called “Brilliant Combo.” And the other one “Luxury Combo” is even more complex, but doesn’t have many ingredients. “Brilliant Combo” includes many ingredients and is therefore rather complicated to put together.

Q: What is Brilliant Combo composed of?

Manager: Chicken pieces, uh, I don’t remember (laughed). Let me get the menu. (Manager came back with the menu.)

Manager: This is quite complex, especially this Phuket Tower.

Q: It includes a lot of items—one, two, three, and four.

Manager: These items are not difficult for her. But the new Phuket Tower is troublesome to make, the rest is easy for her. It took her a lot of effort to memorize all that.

Q: When you learn a new dish, how do you usually learn it? What are the procedures?

Manager: Like the new products we have this time, how did J train you? Explain to them (pointing at the interviewers).

(C didn’t answer.)

Manager: That day J made it one time to demonstrate, didn’t she? Did she let you make it once by yourself afterwards?

C: No.

Manager: And the next day she gave you the training again. She taught you one more time, right? Did she let you do it by yourself then?

C: No.

Manager: Also not. So, she demonstrated to you twice. The first day, did she give you materials for you to take home and to memorize? Did she do that?

(C didn’t answer.)

Manager: Normally a dedicated person would demonstrate to her. We first train J. She is the trainer. And then J can train them. One new product is taught each day. Then they would get a sheet with training material. They can take it home to memorize. C will always carry that sheet with her.

Q: With which colleagues do you have closer contact?

C: With W and J.

Q: What are the things you chat about?

C: We chat all about the snacks.

Q: And anything besides the work?

(C didn’t answer.)

Manager: What do you normally talk about with W and J besides work?

C: Normally W would tell me things about her family.

Manager: Then these topics we shouldn't share with them (pointing at the interviewers). We shouldn't tell them W's family affairs.

Q: Do you normally take initiative to chat with your colleagues?

C: No, I don't.

Q: Just now the Restaurant Manager told us that you would voluntarily tell her that today you are wearing a pretty dress. Things like that, would you also voluntarily tell other people?

C: No, I wouldn't.

Q: So you are more familiar with the Restaurant Manager, right?

C: Yes, more familiar.

Q: Let's then talk about things at your school. Do you still remember a lot from your school time? For example, there were many activities organized by JiXun School. Do you still remember?

C: Yes, I do.

Q: What are the activities that you still remember? Could you share some with us? Activities that you liked to participate in.

C: I liked the Haibao Exercise.¹⁷

Q: Was it during Expo?

C: Yes, it was.

Q: Was this Haibao Exercise a group exercise you practiced then?

C: Yes, it was.

Q: Then you performed in front of the audience? Or was it just for yourselves?

C: We performed it.

Q: Where have you performed?

C: At school.

Q: Did you go to other schools? Or was it at your school?

C: At our school.

Q: Okay, so you performed the Haibao Exercise at your school. Why did you like it?

C: The colors are pretty.

Q: Pretty colors. Did you all wear different colors of clothes?

C: We all wore blue clothes.

Q: Were there any other activities at school that you liked or you had an impression of? For example, did the school organize trips to suburban areas, or to the cinema and so on?

C: No.

Manager: She probably doesn't remember anymore.

Q: Do you remember the subjects you had at school? Which were your favorites?

C: Physical Education.

Q: So Physical Education was your favorite. Which sport were you good at?

C: Bouncing the ball.

Q: Is there any sport that you were not so good at? For example, you like all others, but this particular one is a bit difficult?

¹⁷Haibao: Meaning "jewel of the sea," was the mascot of Expo 2010, held in Shanghai, China.

C: No.

Q: No? So did you like going to school?

C: Yes, I did.

Q: Going to school and going to work, which one is more fun? Or both are almost equally fun?

C: Equally fun.

Q: Why did you like going to school? Was it because there were a lot of classmates? Or was it because there were subjects that you liked?

(C didn't answer.)

Manager: Don't know the reason, but liked it anyway. C is a rather simple kid.

Q: Were there teachers that you liked at school?

C: My Chinese teacher.

Q: Was that a male or a female teacher?

C: A female teacher.

Q: What were the things that you liked about her? Did you feel that her lessons were good, or did she take good care of you?

C: Her lessons were good.

Q: What was the content of her lessons? Did she tell interesting stories? Or did she teach you how to write?

C: She taught us how to write.

Q: Did you make some good friends at school?

C: Yes, I did.

Q: Do you now still keep contact with them?

C: Yes, I do.

Q: How do you get along with them? Do you take the initiative to chat with them? Or, do they come to you to chat?

C: Normally they come to me to chat.

Q: Have you invited classmates to your home to play?

C: Yes, I have.

Q: Apart from family members, colleagues and friends from before, do you have contact with other people? Do you play with others?

C: No, no other people.

Q: Is it because your mom has instructed you not to talk to strangers?

C: Yeah, she did tell me that.

Q: And do you want to have contact with people from the outside world?

C: I won't have contact with them.

Q: When you are at home, would you occasionally make some snacks you learned in the restaurant for your parents?

C: We don't have an oven at home.

Interviewers and Manager: Ah, no oven.

Manager: Normally we would hold a "Family Night" when a new branch opens. Then we would invite the staff and their parents to eat in our restaurant. The parents could have a look at the environment, and meet the supervisors. Then they would be more rest-assured when their kids start working here. So, the snacks couldn't be made at home.

Q: We have learned from your parents that at school, you were also taught how to make dishes, like fried eggs with tomatoes. Would you make them for your parents?

C: Yes, I would.

Q: Have you cooked for them recently?

C (Answered with absolute certainty): No.

Q: (Everyone laughing) So what would you usually do at home when you are free?

C: Play on the computer and watch TV.

Q: What do you do on the computer? Surf or playing games?

C: I usually watch TV series.

Q: So you watch TV series on the Internet. Which one are you watching lately?

C: *The Journey of Flower*.¹⁸

Q: Do you have any favorite actors or actresses?

C: I like Liying Zhao.¹⁹

Q: Ah, Liying Zhao. Do you think that she is very pretty?

C: Yes.

Q: Have you watched any Olympic events lately?

C: No, I haven't.

Q: Normally do you find the work here tiring?

C: No, I don't.

Q: Are you happy every day?

C: Yes, very happy.

Q: Let's make an assumption, just an assumption. The branch where you worked previously was closed, right? In case this branch would also be closed, what kind of other jobs do you want to do?

C: I've never thought about it.

Q: Do you want to keep on making snacks in this restaurant all the time?

C: Yes, I do.

Observation of C at Work

Observation date: 11:00–19:00, August 13, 2016

Observation place: Restaurant where C works

Observers and writers: Zhuojun Zhang and Xiangmeng Huang

¹⁸A popular love story between a master and his disciple, released in 2015.

¹⁹Liying Zhao: The lead actress in the TV series *The Journey of Flower*.

Time	What C did	Remarks
11:00	Observers enter the restaurant	The “Pizza Parenting Class” Event is held in the restaurant. Many families with kids are eating here
11:26	C peels off the foil around a surimi stick, cuts the sticks into small pieces, and places them into the designated container	This is a daily routine task of cutting and preparation
11:32	C puts the ingredient container with surimi sticks back in its designated position on the ingredient table, returns to the preparation table, sorts out and disposes the plastic foil from the surimi sticks	C is very careful, but acts relatively slow
11:38	C enters the freezer to get things	C greets the observers on her way back to her preparation table
11:42	C arranges semi-finished chicken wings on the baking tray and places the tray into the oven	
11:43	C takes out a bag of semi-finished chicken wings and refills the chicken wing container	
11:49	Duty Manager tells C to prepare three dishes on the order: lemon spaghetti, spaghetti bolognese and seafood baked rice	It seems that C doesn’t hear. She keeps on cleaning up the countertop of the preparation table
11:53	A colleague tells C that she is now expected to make lemon spaghetti. C collects ingredients needed at the ingredient table and goes into the freezer for a pack of sauce	Whenever the Manager or the colleagues expect C to prepare a certain dish, they will say, “C, please make this.”
12:07	When C was in the freezer, a colleague finished her half-done lemon spaghetti. So the colleague asks C to continue with spaghetti bolognese	
12:15	C receives another order request for three products: rice, noodles and two chicken wraps. C goes to the ingredient table, collects the ingredients and places chicken wraps into the oven	A colleague prepares the rice and noodles at the same time
12:25	C receives a new order request, prepares a portion of spaghetti and packs it into a takeaway box	
12:27	C collects ingredients at the ingredient table, and comes in and out of the freezer to collect more ingredients	It is a weekend, so there are just a few dine-in guests. Most orders are for takeaway. After 12:30, orders get less. C’s workload is less

(continued)

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Time	What C did	Remarks
12:29	C sorts out and cleans her preparation table, washes and brushes the used tools, pans and bowls	C completes the task together with colleagues
12:40	C looks at the order request, and prepares a portion of potato stars	
12:42	C continues with cleaning of the tools	
12:45	C is instructed to prepare a portion of potato wedges. C bakes them	
12:47	C continues with cleaning of the tools. After washing hands, C notices that there is not enough paper towel. C enters the warehouse, gets some paper towels out and refills the box	
12:50	C finishes the task and returns to her post waiting	
12:57	C bakes potato stars, and pours some semi-finished potato stars into the container	
13:00	C is waiting at her post	
13:15	C begins washing lids of various ingredient containers at her post, and closes the lids again after washing	Up to now the morning tasks are almost finished. Afterwards C still has to make several snacks, and then has the cleaning task to do
14:00	One-hour lunch break begins. C eats lunch and fruit, takes a rest and checks her mobile	C is rather introverted, and hardly talks to colleagues
15:00	Lunch break ends. C is interviewed by us	
16:00	C starts the weekly cleaning task to clean the dough cart	Weekly cleaning is scheduled for big devices. The cleaning tasks of each day are different, e.g., cleaning the fridge, or wiping stainless steel surfaces, etc. A shift schedule for the weekly cleaning hangs in the restaurant, with everyone's duty listed
17:30	C receives an order request. C makes potato stars, potato wedges, and chicken wings	
17:38	C cleans and wipes hands	
17:43	C is waiting	
17:52	C sorts out baking trays, refills ingredients, and bakes a portion of chicken wings	

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Time	What C did	Remarks
18:03	C makes grandma's pudding bread. C gets milk and bread cubes, stirs the sauce, arranges yellow potato paste on board, covers it with sauce, spreads dried raisins, and places the board in the oven	Duty Manager says that this is a rather complex dessert
18:13	C adds rice into a takeaway box, stirs sauce, pours it on the rice, spreads meat, goes to another ingredient table to sprinkle cheese, and places the dish in the oven	This one has a beautiful name: Casablanca grilled chicken rice
18:23	C looks at the order request, makes rice, and tears off the order request	
18:25	C makes chicken wraps and bakes chicken legs	
18:27	C washes tools	
18:32	C makes spaghetti and bakes potato wedges	
18:37	C washes tools, sorts out the preparation table, and cleans the lids of each ingredient container	
19:00	C finishes work	

Translated by Ding Ying

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

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Giving Is More Rewarding Than Taking



Buyun Chen

Interview with Mr. S's Mother

S, male, born in 1992. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a regular school (Shanghai Vocational School of Baoshan District). Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2015. Started working as a warehouse administrator at a 4S car shop in September 2017.

Interviewee: S's mother

Interviewer and writer: Buyun Chen

Interview dates: September 23 and December 10, 2016

Interview place: S's home

Where It All Started: Trying Time for a Loving Couple

Q: How and when did you and your husband meet and get married?

S's mother: We worked at the same place, that's how we knew each other. We got married in 1989.

Q: Did you work at Bao Steel?

S's mother: Yes, we worked at Bao Steel. Our bond was already very strong before we got married, and we got to know each other even better after we tied the knot. I often say that our emotional bond was key to bringing up and educating S. We were able to agree on how to educate him and what treatment to seek for him. That's one thing. Another thing is that even though we have been married for so many years, we have never had a fight. The conventional wisdom is that there are no husband and wife who don't fight, but it doesn't apply to us at all. We really don't fight. We would

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be mad at each other occasionally and not talk, but we never carry it overnight and always move on within 24 h.

Q: That's very rare.

S's mother: It is. And God has chosen to give me a child like S. He was by no means an easy child and we all suffered so much.

Q: How old were you and your husband when you got married?

S's mother: I am older. I was 36 when I got married, oh no, I was 35 when I got married.

Q: And your husband?

S's mother: He is 7 years younger. (Pausing) We couldn't conceive after we got married, and I figured it might be because of me. So I saw a lot of doctors and took a lot of medication. There was never any diagnosis. Then I got pregnant without knowing how it had happened. That was after we had been married for 3 years.

Diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy: A Crushing Blow

Q: So that was in 1992?

S's mother: Yes, in 1992. S was sick at birth, with pneumonia common in newborns. I had to go to great lengths to prevent premature birth. That in itself was not normal. And S has had poor health ever since he was born.

Q: What did you do to prevent premature birth?

S's mother: I took bed rest at home, and the doctor had to make house calls. I took all of the shots in bed, because I couldn't leave the bed at all. I was bleeding often and without bed rest, I would have miscarried. All of these could have had an effect on S's health. The doctor said that the fetus hadn't been developing well and miscarriage would have been a natural screening process. Because I went out of my way to keep the baby, something had to have gone wrong. It made some kind of sense.

As a baby, S seemed fine except that he had poor health and was always getting sick, but it was nothing alarming. When he was 7 months old, we took him to the hospital when he got sick. The doctor held him up and felt that even though he was already 7 months old, his feet had no strength whatsoever and his body sagged downwards like a bag of rice. The doctor told us there was something wrong with him and asked us to immediately take him to the children's hospital in the city. I asked what exactly was wrong, and the doctor said he couldn't tell but doctors at the children's hospital could, so I wasted no time in taking S to the children's hospital. The doctor saw that S's legs crisscrossed like scissors.

Q: Crisscrossed?

S's mother: Right, crisscrossed. S wouldn't be able to walk with such legs. The doctor said that as soon as he held S up, his legs crisscrossed showing that he had cerebral palsy. I had never heard of any child having cerebral palsy, so I had no idea what it was. But I blanked out at the words because they sounded so horrible. That day was beyond my worst nightmare.

We had had such high expectations for our child. We were doing pretty well ourselves, so we figured that our child should be healthy and smart, to say the very least. What would cerebral palsy mean to us? It was such a crushing blow. We had been a happy family, with the grandparents proud of having a beautiful grandson. It was... when I have time, I will show you pictures of S when he was young. He really had such good looks.

Q: Okay.

S's mother: We used to live close to Hongkou Park, in the house next to the old residence of Lu Xun. We would take S out for fresh air every day, and on the way to the park, passersby would comment on his looks. They would walk behind me and keep saying how beautiful S was. But the cerebral palsy destroyed everything that was beautiful.

I can't remember how I survived the first few days after learning the news. I just couldn't accept it. My husband was in a daze too. The grandparents took it the hardest and were so depressed. Grandpa was the saddest. Our neighbor had a child with disabilities, too—S would grow up to be like him. Raising such a child would be such a burden and so painful. But at the end of the day, I decided that my husband and I had to try our best to seek treatment for him. What happened then was that as soon as we heard about a good doctor or a good hospital, we would take S there.

Q: Had you ever considered having another child to make up for it all?

S's mother: Yeah, and I actually got pregnant again, but I had an abortion after struggling with it for a while. It was the most difficult time for us when I got pregnant, because we were spending so much on S's treatment. And even though he was the one getting the treatment, it was physically draining for us. We couldn't be at two places at the same time, so we had to hire help. I had severe reactions when I was pregnant with S and was constantly bleeding. When I was pregnant the second time around, my instinct was that the baby was very healthy and I wasn't feeling a thing, as if I wasn't even pregnant. So I felt that the baby must be a healthy one, because I remember the doctor telling me that miscarriage happens when the baby isn't developing well, and babies that are artificially kept alive in the womb will be born with this problem or that.

I was heart-broken over the abortion, but we really didn't have the time or the energy. After the abortion, all I had was a very small chicken. I said to my husband, "All you fed me was a chicken as small as a fist. That's it?" We didn't want to spare the money for anything better. I wish we had been in a better financial situation or our families had been able to chip in, but we had no choice. It's such a pity that I had to get rid of the second one.

Q: If he had been born, he might have been a great help to his brother later on in life.

S's mother: Right, right. But on the other hand, the second one would have had to take care of his brother, like I do. It might affect his life later on. For example, he would want to get married, and it would be no help when he has a brother to bring into the marriage. So we felt that we were dealing the second one an unfair hand even before he was born. Also, once he was born, we might shift attention away from S and be less willing to spend so much money on him, because we would need money

for the second one's education. So we went back and forth and eventually decided not to have the second one.

Forced to Move: To Make Matters Worse

S's mother: There was a *qigong* master who often went to People's Square and who said that that place was good for summoning the positive energy needed in *qigong*. We didn't exactly live close to People's Park, so we would get up very early in the morning to take S there, and people who knew *qigong* would give him massages. It must have helped, now that I think about it. After a while, the grandparents got mad and said we were too noisy.

Q: Too noisy?

S's mother: We had to get up very early to take S for the massages, and that affected the grandparents. They asked us to move out. They were very disappointed in us having a child like S, and having to spend money on treatment for him was one more thing that displeased them. So they decided that we should move out.

Back then, Bao Steel had a lot of apartments to assign to its employees. All we needed to do was to apply. But the company did ask, "You should have stayed in the city to seek treatment for your kid. Why would you move to Bao Steel? You have no place to stay in the city?" But it was really getting unpleasant living with the grandparents. Grandma was pulling a long face every day and giving so much pressure, so we ground our teeth and moved out. We spent only 1 month getting the apartment ready to move in. There wasn't even enough time to air it. As soon as the apartment was ready, we moved in. The walls still felt wet and there was a damp smell throughout the place. So it took us just 1 month, from getting the apartment to moving in.

Q: Which year was that?

S's mother: It was 1993 and S wasn't yet 12 months old. After we moved, it wasn't so easy to see doctors when S got sick, so we had a hard time adjusting. Healthcare services were very bad in Baoshan District. Less than 20 days after we moved there, S got sick and we had to take him to the hospital. Hospitals in our neighborhood were not as good as the children's hospital, but we had to live with that.

Also, kids like S couldn't go to preschool or anything else, so we had to keep him home, and if we couldn't handle it, we would have had to get a nanny. Just like that, our entire life was turned upside down by having a child like S.

And what followed was continuing to seek treatment for him which included physical therapy. It was really wearing us down.

We had to pay out of our pockets if we wanted to use the best drugs. Not a single penny would be reimbursed. Expenses covered by insurance weren't that high. The drugs we had to pay for ourselves were super expensive. I remember the doctor saying, "There's this drug, imported. Did you bring money? It's pretty expensive." And I would ask how expensive it was. What happened a lot of times was that we would get paid a lump sum, like several months' salary, and I would immediately

take all of the money to the hospital to get a certain drug. I don't even remember its name—it had a foreign name.

Q: What was the total amount of your medical expenses back then?

S's mother: Every time we saw the doctor, if it was just a check-up without any prescriptions to fill, we could totally afford that. What was draining us financially was when S had to take some imported drug and also physical therapy. When I had money, I would pay for physical therapy for him. When I didn't, I would stop it for a while. So there were many disruptions.

There was this drug... I can't recall the name... S was drooling before he took the drug and it got much better once we started him on that. We couldn't afford it for a long time, like 12 or 18 months, then I came into some money and bought a whole lot. It was taken twice a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. I asked the doctor if the drug would have any side effects if the dosage was increased. The doctor said it should be fine since S started taking it when he was already of a certain age. So I started giving him six pills a day. In retrospect, what kind of financial implication did that have? Six pills were probably equal to what I made per day... actually more than that. One pill equaled my salary per day. I had S take that drug for a long time, because I felt it worked the best.

S's mother: (Getting teary and pausing) It was such a hassle taking S for physical therapy. There was no light rail or elevated highways back then. We had to ride the bus which made so many stops, and it took us more than 5 h both ways. Because of his cerebral palsy, S couldn't walk well, so I had to carry him to take the bus. One time I passed out on the bus. It was in summer. S understood nothing, otherwise he would have tried standing on his own which he could do. It wasn't really about the money. I was literally putting my life on the line. (Crying and pausing) After I came to, I debated whether to go home or to continue onto the hospital. I decided that since we had already left the house, we might as well just go to the hospital.

Q: So you rode the bus?

S's mother: We took the bus. Sometimes we took the smaller bus for 5 yuan which was more than what the regular bus cost, but it made fewer stops and saved us some time. I didn't want to spend so much time on the bus since S needed to eat and to use the bathroom.

When we lived in the city, we only needed to take one bus to get to the hospital. After we moved to Baoshan, it became so inconvenient and tiring to go to the hospital. Since the physical therapy was only 1 h per day, S couldn't be admitted as an inpatient. So we had to bring him from Baoshan to West Beijing Road every day.

We had become such regulars at the hospital. One of the doctors was very nice and recommended enhanced external counterpulsation which worked wonders, according to him. He explained how the therapy worked, and as far as I understood, the patient was tied up from head to toe, the machine was turned on to apply pressure which pumped blood to the brain, and once the blood started flowing fast in the brain, the cerebral blood vessels would expand. So we prepaid for the therapy, like prepaying for public transportation. Money was deducted from our card after every visit.

Enhanced external counterpulsation was very painful and S would fuss and cry. If I couldn't take him to the therapy myself, I would pre-record a tape for him. I would

start by saying, “S, we are about to start your physical therapy.” I would keep talking to him on the tape, telling him stories and playing him a song. Because one session lasted an hour, I had to make up things to fill a 1-hour tape to help him through that session. The doctor said that S was very strong-willed and sometimes it took more than two doctors to hold him down. I kept the tapes for a while but had to get rid of them as old things started piling up.

Q: Parents weren’t allowed to stay for the therapy?

S’s mother: They could stay, but I couldn’t go sometimes myself. So I had to find someone to take him. It didn’t cost much to do that by today’s standards, just 30 yuan if I remember correctly. And we paid for transportation. But the person we found couldn’t hold him still for the therapy. S wouldn’t listen to him, he only listened to us. So we had to prepare the tapes and they had to be different every time. Even though it was costly in terms of money and energy, the therapy worked. But the hospital was just so far and we had difficulty getting help taking S there. The relatives found it a hassle. But then, if we had asked an elderly relative to help us, it probably would have been too much for him, so we didn’t continue.

Q: How long did the enhanced external counterpulsation last?

S’s mother: Three months. We prepaid for a 6-month regimen, but only used 3 months. We really had no choice. The hospital was too far, and we couldn’t find anyone to take him. Not everyone was willing to help. Once kids start making a racket, it got on people’s nerves, right?

Treatment and Therapy: Hope Means Not Giving up

S’s mother: S had been going to the children’s hospital for treatment from 7 months to 12 or 13 years old. Then the doctor said that he had outgrown the children’s hospital and had to seek treatment elsewhere. He referred us to a doctor specializing in mental development—he had his own treatment methods and was a very good doctor, too.

A lot of the doctors were really nice. I didn’t give up, and they would tell other parents that S’s parents were the best at not giving up, so S had improved the most. There was a parent who had the financial ability and his kid had been in better shape than S and had gone through physical therapy and speech therapy as well. But maybe the parent didn’t have the same energy as we did, since we were younger, so the kid didn’t improve as much as S did. A lot of parents with kids like S would call us back then, asking about S’s treatment and where he got it.

The treatment needed family support. It wasn’t convenient to go to the hospital and we had to pay out of our own pockets for so many items like physical exercises. The hospital charged an hourly rate for S to use its balance beam, slide, and other equipment. It was very advanced treatment and available only at Shanghai Children’s Hospital. So we tried to replicate it at home, to save money on one hand and to save us trips to the hospital on the other hand.

Q: How did you replicate the hospital’s therapy setup at home?

S's mother: We emptied one room of furniture except for carpet, and hung something from the ceiling. The most interesting thing we set up and I had kept for a long time was called the "single-legged stool." It had only one leg that was as thin as a 1-yuan coin, so you have to be really good at balancing to not fall over while sitting on it. Another thing was a board with an arc-shaped leg that could roll like a ball. You have to have good balance to stand on it. S would definitely fall if he stood there without anyone supporting him, and he was supposed to stand on it and bounce a ball. He couldn't do it, but we never gave up just because he couldn't do it. The two of us would exert ourselves to drag him onto the board. There was another funny device—it was a board with four wheels underneath it, and S was supposed to lie on top of it, face down, and to use his limbs to crawl along the floor, from left to right, like a turtle.

The most exhausting exercise was standing on his hands so that the blood would gush to his brain, which is good except for those with hypertension. I trained myself so well back then. S was no longer a kid and even his dad couldn't hold him straight upside down. I was the one who helped him.

Q: How did you help him stand on his hands?

S's mother: He couldn't understand verbal instructions, so I had to show him. At first I asked his dad to show him, but his dad said he was too old to do it. So I ended up teaching him. I was already in my forties then, but I did it, and I would stand on my hands too every time S did it. He couldn't hold himself up, so his dad had to support his legs. If I look at the positive side, I got a lot of exercise myself. If I dwell on the negative side, I get teary. I was no longer young and still jumping through hoops. Other people's kids seemed to have grown up on their own, whereas my kid had to go through so much. (Sobbing)

We took some pictures back then in which S was crying while laughing with tears covering his face. I was helping him with physical therapy, and some of the things I had to do caused great pain. His legs were deformed and twisted, so we had to straighten them out, otherwise he would walk bow-legged. He would cry from the pain, but would laugh too because we were teasing him to distract him from the crying. The pictures look awkward now, but they mean a lot.

We never stopped physical therapy for him. For example, one of his legs was skinnier than the other one, so he would walk with a limp. I just wrapped a sandbag around that leg and made sure he went to school with the sandbag on. It helped him balance his weight between two legs when he walked. Ever since first grade, he had carried his own school bag no matter how heavy it was. We never carried it for him and we never spoiled him in that way. In other areas, especially in seeking treatment, we spent more than any other parents. The two of us basically gave everything we had for his treatment. As soon as we came into some money, we would use it to see doctors even if the doctors were outside Shanghai.

Q: You even saw doctors outside Shanghai?

S's mother: Right, right, like in Suzhou and other places that are smaller than Shanghai. We really never spoiled him in any other way. For example, his middle school was pretty far from here, about two bus stops away, but we never dropped him off or picked him up. One time it rained really hard, and one of my co-workers

came over to talk to me about something. Afterwards this co-worker suggested that I pick S up because of the heavy rain, so we drove to pick him up. I let S do whatever he could do himself. Carrying his schoolbag was easy, doing well at school wasn't and that's something we had no control over.

Q: Physical therapy sounded so tough for him. Did he ever resist or want to quit?

S's mother: Not really. He would go through with it even while crying. Enhanced external counterpulsation was so painful and he cried during every session. But he laughed on his way to the hospital. So I believed that he could handle it all.

Q: So he understood.

S's mother: I couldn't really tell. Maybe he felt he had to go. For me, since I prepaid, I felt that we should go. S didn't exactly put up a fight about not going.

Helping Hand: Friends in Need, Friends Indeed

Q: Did you have financial difficulties at home back then?

S's mother: Yes, things were very tough for a while.

Q: Exactly how tough?

S's mother: We made everything ourselves. S had digestive problems and had to eat a lot of yogurt, so we would make the yogurt ourselves. We made our own bread too. He was slightly autistic, so we needed to take him out more like traveling. When we went on trips, we would bring our own food. Everything had two sides. We spent so much time making our own food and even brought the food with us when taking the train. But on the other hand, S became interested in cooking, which might have had an impact on how he got the current job later on.

Q: Because of your financial hardship, did you ever think about asking for help from relatives or friends?

S's mother: No, we never told anyone about our financial hardships. While we were living with the grandparents before we moved to Baoshan, my husband and I gave all our pay to them. We had to hire someone to help take care of S, and the cost was 90 yuan per month. It was in 1992 or 1991 and our pay was very low, just several hundred yuan per month. After we moved to Baoshan, we stopped giving our pay to Grandma. We had never asked for help from either Grandma or my own mom.

Q: Was it out of self-respect?

S's mother: We just felt that it was our own problem. If other people wanted to help, they would help. If we had to ask for help, we wouldn't feel comfortable even if we received help. My husband and I kept encouraging ourselves by saying that we should not rely on anyone else but ourselves.

Q: But there were still friends who helped, right?

S's mother: Right, right, a lot of friends. They didn't lend us money, but gave us a lot of mental support, like offering suggestions or looking for doctors for S. After all I've been through, I really appreciate society. I want to show appreciation whenever someone gives me even the slightest help. (Pausing and sobbing) We did receive a lot of help.

Q: Can you share with us how you received help?

S's mother: Sure, I will share some. The doctor told me that S had bad physical development and coordination, so sports would be good for him, but he couldn't do any sports. The doctor recommended swimming. We started off teaching him ourselves but failed, so we hired a private coach and that didn't work either.

Then a friend recommended a professional swimming school in Baoshan District. The coaching was excellent and the fee was 1,500 yuan per student. It was almost 20 years ago, so the fee was pretty high for us. But we figured it was both physical exercise and physical therapy, so we were willing to pay the fee. Once we took S there, the place saw that he was different and immediately returned the money to us, the reason being that there was no way S could be taught to swim. The 1,500 yuan covered ten lessons. The average kid would definitely be able to swim after ten lessons, but not our kid.

I had to disclose S's condition saying that the doctor recommended swimming for him. A coach overheard it and was very sympathetic, so he came up to me and said, "Take back your money, I will teach him for free—all you need to pay each time is the entrance fee." Later he said that it was very difficult to teach S and he didn't have all the time he needed during his work hours to teach him, so he mentioned this at a meeting for Communist Party members and enlisted everyone's help. He basically started the ball rolling and should be credited, before all other people, with S's being able to swim. I was really surprised to see S swimming faster than I do. He can do both breaststroke and freestyle and not even his dad can keep up with him now. I was so very touched.

Q: Did he learn alongside other kids?

S's mother: No, no. He had private lessons which were different from lessons for the other kids. One time the coach asked me to go watch. He felt bad for me and wanted to give me a pleasant surprise. So S was in the water and sinking. The coach used a very, very long pole and stretched it all the way across the pool to tap S under the tummy. As soon as he did that, S floated up and started swimming. That coach really knew how to teach and how to use the pole. I almost cried watching it, because I had never expected S to be able to swim.

Q: How long did it take for him to learn?

S's mother: A very long time. We went almost every day for about 2 or 3 months. It took the average kid eight or nine lessons, and the smart kids about five lessons, to learn to swim. I lost count of how many lessons S took. They went on from summer to winter. When he first started, it was very hot. By the time he completed all the lessons, it was very cold. We would go watch him, and my glasses would fog up when we entered the pool area.

Q: Was he willing to learn?

S's mother: He was very willing and he didn't care how hard it was or that he often choked on the pool water. He was very grateful that someone would teach him.

Q: So he was a very appreciative child.

S's mother: Right. He is very simple-minded and very kind-hearted. He may not always say the right things at the right times, but he really has a big heart and is willing to share. We have brought him up this way and ever since he was young, he

has been grateful for the help from society. (Getting teary) While he was growing up, he was discriminated against and a lot of kids bullied and hit him. But he was appreciative of even the smallest gesture of kindness. I have been with him since day one, so I feel the same as he does. (Crying hard)

Q: Can he show people that he is grateful?

S's mother: He can. There was this health teacher at middle school. S had bad physical coordination and was constantly falling, so he asked me what he should do when he fell. I said that there was a medical office at school and he should go to the health teacher there when he fell. So he was always going to the health teacher to fix him up whenever he fell.

The health teacher gave S a lot of help on a daily basis. On the occasion of the physical check-up for graduation, I visited him and talked to him. He said, "I am not his Chinese teacher or math teacher, so I can't tell how he is doing with schoolwork. All I see is a child seeking my help. He is the child with the best manners and the biggest heart."

Because of the kindness he had shown, S will visit him on every Teachers' Day.

In the Face of Bullying: I Could Only Change Him

S's mother: S is a very simple person, and simple people love and hate in simple ways. If he likes you, he will always remember you and try to make you happy. If he hates you, he won't hide it either.

Q: For example?

S's mother: For example, when he was in first grade, the homeroom teacher was a Chinese teacher. Maybe because he was a senior teacher, he had high expectations for his students. S was different from other kids—he wrote slowly and had other deficiencies. The teacher told me about it, and I had to tell him that S had some intellectual disability. The teacher said, "We are in a regular school here. I cannot make any exception for your child just because he has disability. You chose to send him to this school, so he must keep up with schoolwork." Maybe I had not been very effective in communicating with him, which was why I have been very careful in that respect ever since. I will never go to S's workplace to plead with his manager... (Pausing and sobbing)

That homeroom teacher started bullying S and was very malicious about it. One time, the school asked the kids to write about their own "happy family" after they had had a chance to watch something related to it on computer. S brought a disk to school and asked the teacher to make a copy for him. The teacher said, "What kind of happy family do you have? After your mom had you, your family stopped being a happy family." Even though S didn't completely understand it back then, it was very traumatizing for him. The teacher also said, "If you can't keep up with schoolwork, your dad will get laid off." S came back home and repeated to me what the teacher had said. He didn't know what "being laid off" meant, so he came home and told me that he cried hard at school because the teacher said his dad would be laid off. Even

though he didn't know what it exactly meant, he was scared and started crying in the classroom, and the teacher kicked him out.

S said later, "I hate him—I will kill him when I grow up." I was very shocked by what he said, because he had never said anything vicious before and I didn't understand why he would have this idea to kill anyone. What scared me even more was when he took a pair of scissors and cut the tablecloth. He continued to be so mad that he cut his own hair. I was very worried that he would end up with a distorted mind. It's okay if he is not as smart as some other people, but he cannot hate society. If he does harm to society or to our family, no one will be able to save him.

It hasn't been easy for me trying to nurture an outgoing personality in S. I gave him a lot of positive energy and made him believe that even though he isn't that smart, he has his own use and his self-confidence. My reasoning was that S's teachers and managers in the future could very well be kind-hearted people and they are not obligated to give S any special treatment because of his disability. I often tell S that he has to accept the fair or unfair ways other people treat him. It's not the smartest philosophy. I cannot change society, so I had to change him and make him mentally strong. If someone hits him, he should just put up with it. If S were not the way he is, I would have taught him to fight back whenever he is hit and not to put up with bullying. When he was in elementary school, there was this kid who would dump a trash can with trash inside onto S's head. There's nothing he wouldn't do to bully S, including slapping him on the face.

Q: Did S fight back?

S's mother: He didn't have the courage to, but he hated it. And I was scared of this hate, because it would affect him mentally on one hand, and on the other hand, it might make him a danger to society and to our family. Because I had the feeling that he would act out his hate somehow.

As a Student: Studying Hard to Make up for the Disability

Q: Did you ever consider sending him to a special education school?

S's mother: No.

Q: Did he start school at the normal age?

S's mother: He did, and it put a lot of pressure on him.

Q: On his first day of school, was the curriculum overwhelming for him?

S's mother: There wasn't much schoolwork during the first several days of school, but it was indeed overwhelming for him. He couldn't sit still or focus on what the teacher was saying like the other kids could. He just didn't seem to get it. It took him a long time to catch up, unlike in kindergarten where he could just keep up. School was indeed tough for him.

Q: Did you or his dad help him with his schoolwork?

S's mother: We did, especially when he was in first and second grade.

Q: How did you help him? Did you have difficulties helping him?

S's mother: No, there was no difficulty in elementary school. I remember one time when he was in the first semester of second grade. I was dropping him off at school and ran into the principal. The principal held me back to say, "S's mom, S's mom, S scored the highest on the test this time." I was so surprised that I couldn't move. I remember it being a math test and he answered all the questions correctly. I saw the test later. He actually made some minor mistakes, but the teacher didn't deduct any points, which was his way of encouraging S. And this kind of encouragement was, in my opinion, much more effective than scolding and yelling at him. For a while, he was in such a positive state of mind.

But he is different from other people, after all. He isn't as smart, so he had to do things repeatedly. Ever since he was young, he had to stay up very late to do homework. We managed his time pretty well and he did put in more effort than other kids. A teacher once asked me to go to school to give a presentation on how hard he studied. I didn't give up until later on when he just couldn't keep up. I figured that he couldn't exactly stay up all night to study, so if he couldn't do well at school, so be it.

He was doing well at physics and chemistry. There were two reasons for that. One, he had good teachers for those two subjects. Unlike the homeroom teacher, as long as you paid attention in class, the teachers would give you recognition. Another reason was that physics and chemistry were relatively simple when he first started middle school. Once they got difficult, he would struggle. Compared with people without disabilities, S tries harder. In simple things, he will do better as long as he tries hard. In difficult things, no matter how hard he tries, his intellectual ability will fail him.

One time I went to the parent-teacher meeting, and the teacher got mad at other parents, saying, "You all know that we have S in the class. Do you know how much S scored and how much your kids scored? Go home and check their scores." That's what the teacher said when I attended the parent-teacher meeting. So it's a kind of encouragement to S. But he started lagging behind as the schoolwork got more difficult.

Q: Approximately when was that?

S's mother: He failed the entrance exam to high school after graduating from middle school. He was failing in English, and Chinese too, because he didn't have good logic and couldn't write good essays. He might have got that from me, because I have bad logic and hated writing essays (laughing).

Q: He must have been staying up late for homework every day back then.

S's mother: Yes, he did stay up late. But I felt that he saw things getting too tough for him and started saying things like, "I really can't keep up."

Q: Did you ever try private tutoring for him?

S's mother: We did, we did, including a tutor from Fudan University. The tutor's last name is Wang and he's from Anhui. He liked S a lot. He came once a week and tutored two kids at the same time, and the other kid later went to school in Britain. I didn't expect him to think more highly of S than of the other kid. He said that even though S isn't that smart, he tried hard, whereas the other kid aimed higher than what he was capable of. Sometimes I wish things were different. Without the intellectual

disability, S would have been at least on par with everyone else. But fate has wanted it this way, as if to test how tough I am.

Exposure to the Outside World: A New Phase of Growth

Q: He must have made a lot of good friends at school.

S's mother: Right, he had a lot of good friends. Like the kid I just mentioned. They are of the same age and grew up together, even though they were going to different schools. That kid later went to Britain. He didn't mind the way S is, which I think was very kind of him. Also, S has a good mentality and can communicate with other people. He doesn't suffer low self-esteem like some other kids. When playing with other kids, he didn't feel that he was inferior. He knew that he was a little different, but not to such a degree that he couldn't be a part of everything.

There were also classmates from elementary school and middle school who lived nearby. One lived right across the street. He has graduated from college with a degree in computer science and has a good job now. Another kid lived in the same apartment complex as us and always hung out with S. He is graduating from college this year and will work as a physics teacher at Wusong High School. They were all good kids.

Kids like them were all nice and upbeat kids. Being with them was somehow inspiring for S and he learnt from them. I liked it because he could keep up with society through those kids. Sometimes he complained to me, "You won't let me watch this or that, and because of that, I have nothing to talk to other people about. I need to learn so that I can talk to people." I realized that he was so right, because he has to communicate with people without disabilities. If I forbid him from watching movies or going out, he wouldn't learn anything. So I support him to learn as much as he can.

Q: So he has had good exposure?

S's mother: He has.

Q: Did you and your husband create a lot of opportunities for him to gain exposure to the outside world?

S's mother: Yes, yes, we did. That's always been the way we've educated him. We believe that even though he wasn't doing well at school, he should be an outgoing and happy person. We have different expectations for our child than parents with healthy kids. As we are getting older ourselves, we don't want to see him having negative thoughts or holding grudges and feeling that people have treated him unfairly, because then he will live an unhappy life. He cannot change society, so it's better that he changes the way he lives and the way he thinks. He should take comfort in thinking, "I may not do well in this, but I can do well in other things."

Another thing we did was to nurture his interests so that he wouldn't idle away his time. I took him to learn dance and musical instruments. I also tried to get him to appreciate a lot of things. For example, I took him to the art museum and explained everything to him. We also took him to some historical sites. We would do our homework on those places first before we played tour guide to him. Even though he

was lacking in a lot of areas, I believe that he was on par with other kids in terms of interests and the ability to appreciate things.

For example, Shanghai Museum was giving a class on archeology and S was interested. One of his interests is history which we have helped him develop. We hoped that he could be exposed more to history, so we registered him for that class which included a trip to an out-of-town archeological site. He asked if we would allow him to go on this trip. People in the class were either adults or college students, whereas he was still a teenager and the only kid in the class. Still, he went on the trip with the class. He told me that they dug out a lot of things, but I forget exactly what they were. There was also a graduation certificate on completion of the class. It was a nice experience for him.

Another interest of his is opera. He likes pop music too, but he can appreciate things adults like us do, which has to do with the way we have brought him up.

I often tell him that because of his disability, if he does not dress neat and has body odor, people will shun away from him. His good friends are all college graduates with decent jobs. If he smells bad, they won't want to hang out with him. So he really pays attention to whether his clothes are clean. Doctors that we saw used to ask whether he was willing to shower or change clothes. S was happy to take showers and to change into clean clothes. The doctors wanted to make sure that S didn't have this affliction, because people with ID do not like to shower or change into clean clothes. Well, they don't exactly hate it, they just don't feel like doing it.

S would change into clean clothes without being asked to. Later on, I tried to figure out why and realized that it was because that's the way we are and the way we taught him. We always wash our hair or shower before we go out. If he gets out of bed with messy hair, I would ask him to wash it. He has to go to work on mornings lately, so I'm not asking him to wash his hair in the morning. He stays up late at night and is in a hurry getting up in the morning for work, so he doesn't have the time to wash his hair. I told him that unlike other people, he doesn't have ambition or the need to save his time for some difficult research. His life is about eating, sleeping, and going to work, so he has all the time to make himself presentable. That's how we have brought him up, because we want him to be able to settle down and to make himself presentable even when we are not with him.

Q: He needs to be presentable.

S's mother: Right, presentable. That's what we want for him, to have some quality of life.

Q: How old was he when he started taking care of himself, like brushing his teeth and dressing himself?

S's mother: Pretty early. He could brush his own teeth when he was about five or six. Before that, we had been doing it for him. He couldn't dress himself till much later.

Vocational School: Pursuing Knowledge and Struggling Along the Way

Q: You just mentioned that he failed the entrance exam to high school after graduating from middle school. What did he do then?

S's mother: He went to Baoshan District Vocational School and got into a cooking class. Originally, he didn't like that major which I had picked for him. He had wanted to study computer science. But I told him, "Computer science includes programming which is required for operating the computer. You will have to have an advanced degree, good English, and good logic, right? Otherwise your programming wouldn't make sense and no one will want you to do it. So I don't think you have the ability to even write the simplest program. Your best choice is cooking. You may end up not cooking as well as some other people and not being hired by any restaurant, but at least you will be able to cook at home, which is a set of skills, too."

At that school, he didn't do as well in cooking and baking as some other kids. But most of the kids there were struggling with schoolwork, so S outshone them there and even won scholarships. He had several good years at that school.

The only drawback with that school was that the kids there weren't exactly the best students and the overall culture wasn't ideal. S was always being bullied. We have taught him to be forgiving, to not harbor grudges or become confrontational. Once a classmate took his transportation card—the school was far from where we lived, so he had to walk more than 2 h home. Driving would take less than an hour. So he recalled the directions and walked home. I called his homeroom teacher about it afterwards.

Q: Did his classmates ever do anything really bad, like using violence?

S's mother: They didn't exactly hit him viciously. But they dumped a trash can over his head, took away his transportation card, took his glasses and threw them away, and did other similar things.

Q: How did he handle that?

S's mother: He wouldn't physically fight anyone.

Q: Would he seek help?

S's mother: No. He just walked home by himself. He wouldn't tell the teacher. If he had told the teacher, the teacher would have given him 2 yuan to take the bus home. But he wouldn't. I panicked that time he walked home, because he didn't have a cell phone. (Tearing up and not speaking.)

Q: And he wouldn't say anything either when he got home?

S's mother: I asked him when he got home, and he told me. Then I called the teacher.

Q: How old was he when he graduated from the vocational school?

S's mother: He was 20. He couldn't find a job after graduation. He worked at a supermarket for a while before being let go, because he had neither the physical strength nor the smarts to work there, according to the supermarket. So he worked there for less than a year.

Supporting Each Other in Despair

S's mother: For a while at home... my husband was sick for a while. Pressure had built up over time, and there were other contributing factors. So he suffered severe depression.

Q: What were his symptoms?

S's mother: He wouldn't talk or get out of bed. He believed that he had a terminal disease but that it was nothing mental. So he took all kinds of tests including EEG and ECG. He had himself checked everywhere and there was nothing wrong with him, but he just couldn't eat or sleep and was so depressed that he lost the will to live. He didn't exactly talk about taking his own life—he was thinking about it but wouldn't say it out loud. He couldn't work, which was scary. He was the chief engineer of a major project that was supposed to be exported once the design was finalized. The project was halfway through when he stopped going to work.

Q: He didn't take sick leave?

S's mother: He didn't. He just turned off his phone. People were looking for him, but he didn't want to talk to or see anyone. I was so scared back then. S had no job, I was retired already, and my husband was sick like that and not going to work. At that time... (sobbing), I was feeling almost as sad as when I first learned about S's cerebral palsy. I didn't think this family could survive... (sobbing and not able to continue). What made it worse was that I was disappointed at the government agencies.

Q: What do you mean?

S's mother: Things were getting so tough for our family, weren't they? I don't mean we were starving, but the whole family was unemployed, which wasn't normal. I had hoped that the Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF), or some other government agency, would do something for families like ours, with Dad not being able to work and Mom being retired. Someone should have stepped in and arranged a decent job for S as soon as possible.

We contacted the DPF and were told, "There are not many jobs available now and we can't just request that jobs be created just for you. We have so many people registered with us looking for a job and none of them have got one yet." I went to the office several times, and I didn't take rejection well. So after several times, I felt it was hopeless and just didn't feel brave enough to go again. The reception wasn't warm at all and I didn't feel good about it. Everyone pulled a long face at me and was icy cold towards me. Then I remembered someone telling me that the Women's Federation was nicer, so I visited that office immediately. I said that my husband had been suffering depression for many years without getting any better and had cancer later.

Q: Oh, when was that?

S's mother: In 2014. He had cancer, then surgery. I felt like the family was collapsing. My husband had been suffering depression for more than 10 years without getting any better. That was bad enough. Then he had cancer. S was the problem for him. He has a high IQ but low EQ, and he isn't very expressive. He can't see beyond

a certain point and has pressure at work too. I couldn't pinpoint the exact reasons. I asked him and he couldn't either. All he knew was that he was extremely unhappy.

So I went to the Women's Federation. There's a lady there who heard me out, but all she could say was that she couldn't get a job for S either. She suggested that I seek help from the radio station and maybe some caring companies would have the right job for him. (Sobbing and not being able to continue) I said that my son could work because his brain functions well, he can talk and he won't do silly things and that there had to be a suitable job for him. But she just said, "I really have no job for him." (Sobbing)

Q: So you sought help from many places?

S's mother: I did. (Crying non-stop)

Q: Did you try to get your husband to see a doctor for his depression?

S' mother: I didn't have to get him to see a doctor. Because of the depression, he couldn't go to work. I asked him if he was physically sick, and he said he was indeed sick and needed to have a check-up. So I didn't have to get him to see a doctor. At first, I went with him for all of the doctor visits. Later on, I would get his prescriptions refilled even without doctor visits.

Q: Things were getting impossible, and your husband was suffering depression to make it worse. Had you ever felt like you were going to have a mental breakdown?

S's mother: Yeah. I actually saw a doctor myself. Back then, I felt so bad about my family and asked myself why there was something wrong with everyone in the family. S has intellectual disability, his dad had depression, and I had to see a doctor myself. I was suicidal and for no reason at all, nothing meant anything to me. I had no way out. People say that there is always some way out, but I really had no way out. (Tearing up) So I saw a doctor under a pseudonym.

Q: Pseudonym?

S's mother: Right. I was worried about people saying, "Her whole family are nuts." Then everyone would stay away from us. That's what I thought back then.

Q: Like you said before, you want to be presentable.

S's mother: Right, right. Back then I wanted everything to be perfect and wanted things to improve, so I had pressure. I felt that however hard I tried, I couldn't change anything. So I was very discouraged. (Sobbing) Sometimes I was resentful towards society, because I felt that whichever government agency I talked to, no one would help me.

I told the Women's Federation that my husband had a terminal disease in addition to depression, and that the only thing that could save him was his son getting a job because that would give him hope and save him from driving himself into a corner. I was told that there's no workplace that would take S. I thought if only it would lend a helping hand, it would save my entire family. I didn't mention my suicidal thoughts. If I had, the government might have thought I was bluffing.

Q: How long were you suicidal?

S's mother: Not long.

Q: How did you get over it?

S's mother: I remember taking medication. I couldn't have gotten over it myself, however hard I tried. So you have to see a doctor for this kind of suffering. Don't avoid getting help. (Crying non-stop)

Q: How did you get over your resentment towards society? Did it ever come back?

S's mother: It would come back. I would take medication and try to get some more sleep. At that time, I was often exhausted and wondered if the exhaustion was caused by some disease. But what really happened was that I didn't sleep well and was unhealthy on the whole and my blood pressure was high. Then I started going out and talking to more people and taking medication, and I gradually got better.

What it really comes down to is this: If everything is okay with S and he is doing okay at work, I will feel peaceful. If one thing or another happens with him, I will get rattled and more anxious than he is. I try my best to control my emotions and not pass them on to him. My reasoning is that for anything wrong with my husband and me, we can take medication and try to get over it, but if something goes wrong with S, he will have a harder time getting over it, so we should try our best to train him to be resistant against frustrations.

Q: So you would never show any negative feelings in front of S?

S's mother: Never.

Q: How did you and your husband communicate and support each other if both of you felt like crashing?

S's mother: We communicate very well. It's very important for a couple to communicate. We think for each other, especially my husband. At first when he knew nothing about my mental struggles, he would tell me how he was not feeling well. Once he knew about my condition, he would downplay his own and not show his depression in front of me so as not to pass anything negative to me.

What really touched me was this: He was diagnosed with cancer twice. The night before his surgery, the two of us had a talk. He told me a lot of things including that he was prepared for the worst and had made plans for S's future. His cancer made his depression worse, but he behaved very strong. He comforted me by saying, "It's no big deal, and I will be okay as soon as this tumor is removed." He never showed any pain. I knew how much effort was involved, so I told him that I really appreciated what he was doing. (Sobbing uncontrollably) We survived. His follow-up check-ups were all good and the cancer didn't linger.

Q: So the early discovery helped.

S's mother: Yes, it did.

Q: That's very lucky. So your husband has gone back to work?

S's mother: He has. His work is lighter now and he seldom has to deal with customers. Bao Steel isn't doing very well.

Q: How is life for you and your husband now?

S's mother: It's a quiet life. We don't have a lot of expenses, and we don't touch S's money.

Giving up Free Money: One Can't Always Just Take

S's mother: (Sobbing) Sometimes I wonder if the government can issue more policies encouraging companies to hire people with disabilities. There are many kids with disabilities like S. There's a kid who goes to work every day at the senior housing and I heard that he works for no pay, because his parents realized that he shouldn't be unemployed and should have a place to attach himself to, so he needed a job but no salary. I think that S could have worked at the guardhouse of the senior housing, like receiving and distributing deliveries.

In my opinion, it would be really nice if the government could save some of those jobs for people with disabilities. I believe that there was some kind of movement in society for giving people with disabilities a chance to do what they can, but workplaces that can truly accept people with disabilities are rare. The common belief is that employees with disabilities are very troublesome, and workplaces would rather just pay them not to come to work. When I mentioned earlier "having a place to attach himself to," I meant registering with a workplace and receiving minimal pay and not having to go to work. Why would a workplace allow that? Because it receives certain subsidies and tax exemptions for hiring people with disabilities. What the workplace really thinks is, "I would have paid this much in taxes, but I would rather use the money to help people with disabilities than pay it in taxes to the government. But I would prefer that people with disabilities do not really come to work."¹

Q: How come S didn't have the choice of attaching himself to a workplace?

S's mother: We did have this choice. When our family was having a really tough time, I had a friend who helped us find a place doing research for his company. He said, "As long as I am working and in charge, I will have S attached to us." That was a paying job with social insurances.

But we talked it over at home and didn't feel comfortable just taking. S totally has the ability to work. Attaching himself to a workplace will give him the wrong idea that he doesn't need to work and can be paid for not doing anything, and he will become someone who only takes. If he only knows how to take, what will he do once the government stops helping him? I was seeking help everywhere and when I couldn't get any, I was heartbroken. What if the same thing happens to him? He would be so helpless. So we felt that working for pay is better than being paid for not working, and that S shouldn't expect free money. What will he do if the free money stops one day? Who will he turn to then, the government? So we decided that he should go out there and get a real job.

¹The regulations of the Shanghai Government state that all state organs, social groups, enterprises, public institutions, and private non-enterprises shall arrange for the employment of disabled people according to 1.5% of the average number of in-service employees of the employer in the previous year. If any employer fails to meet this required proportion, the employer must pay for disabled people's employment security fund. If disabled people are "attached" to an employer, the disabled people's employment security fund is exempted, and the employer can even enjoy other incentives. Therefore "attaching" has been once very widely applied. Currently, SDPF advocates discarding the practice of "attaching" in order to advance actual employment of disabled people.

So S did attach himself to a workplace and the pay and the benefits were great. But you have to have personal connections in order to do that. And we really owed that friend big time for having arranged that for S.

Work Experience: Opportunities and Struggles

Q: S started working at Papa John's in 2015, right?

S's mother: Right, right, he has been working there for more than 1 year now. A friend told us that a kid like S worked at Jinqiao Papa John's and was doing great, and he recommended that S try it too. So we contacted the headquarters of Papa John's, and a young supervisor there was very nice. He arranged for S to interview and later called us to have S start working close to Gonghexing Road. I asked for a closer store but there wasn't any opening. So S has been working at that store that is pretty far from where we live (See Fig. 1).

Q: Was there any test before S was hired?

S's mother: There was a trial period of 1 month. After 1 month, he was accepted and I received a call telling me that a formal contract would be signed after 6 months.

Q: What did he do once he started working there?

S's mother: He started off working in the dining area. The store is divided into the kitchen, where food including spaghetti is made, and the dining area, where you greet customers, clean up, and serve drinks.

Q: Where you provide services.

S's mother: Yeah, where services are provided. When he first started, S worked in the dining area and the job was simple. He didn't do well and the store manager wasn't very happy. Then a new manager came and moved S to the kitchen to work. The manager expected much more of S and had him learn some things, which was nice. But S is different from other people. He gets nervous when there are high expectations of him and will fail at what he does, which will then lead to... (hesitating and pausing)

Q: What about the manager?

S's mother: Well, the manager doesn't like it that S is so slow. That really bothers me. Maybe the manager had never dealt with kids who have special needs, and kids who have special needs are different from each other. Some of them may not speak well but can do things well. The manager said, "S can talk, but he doesn't do things the normal way."

I don't think this is the right job for S, but I am afraid of telling anyone this, because then I might be told, "He can go back home if this is not the right job for him." What kind of job can society give S that's right for him? Society didn't exactly give us any choice. This was the only opportunity and we cherish it a lot. I can honestly say that S has a tougher time at work than any employee at any workplace. I worked and his dad worked and everyone around us worked, and no one worked the same way S does. He works 14 h a day, two of which he has to idle away as lunch break.

Q: He is out there working 14 h a day?



Fig. 1 Mr. S at work

S’s mother: Right. He leaves for work at a little after nine in the morning and comes home at a little before eleven at night. We have no choice, so even with such crazy work hours, we have never expressed any dissatisfaction.

Q: What did you mean by “idling away 2 h as lunch break”?

S’s mother: For example, we worked 8 h a day with 30 min for lunch. He is given 2 h for lunch which makes his workday 10 h. Of those 2 h, he only spends 20 min eating and the other hour and half he spends sitting there and waiting.

Q: Why is it that way?

S’s mother: That way S can work to cover both lunch and dinner at the restaurant. He goes to work at 11 a.m., and when customers come for lunch, he can work till after 1 p.m. He will then clean up before having his own lunch. There are no customers during the time right after S’s own lunch, so it’s counted as his own lunch break instead of work hour. He just has to kill that time. Then it gets busy around 5 p.m., so he is scheduled to work again till 9 p.m.

So his work hours are extended, aren't they? Even though he takes 2 h' lunch break, he stays out for a long time, so he doesn't have the time to eat properly. Ever since he started working, he has lost a lot of weight. He dropped more than 10 lb from 140 to 120.

Q: What about the other employees? Do they cover only lunch or only dinner?

S's mother: An older employee at the restaurant told me that she works longer hours than S but she gets paid for all hours. Most of them take 1 h for lunch break, and only a few take 1.5 h. Only S is given 2 h for lunch break.

What I don't like is that he is given too much time for lunch break, which overextends his workday. He really just needs 1 h for lunch so that he can clock out 1 h earlier. Coming home 1 h late causes a lot of problems. It deprives him of sleep and it's too late and too dark when he comes home from work. He said, "Mom, I don't feel comfortable taking the shortcut home, because there are no streetlights and I can't see clearly." And I said, "Why don't you take the detour and walk on the bigger streets? You don't want to fall because you can't see clearly." But of course, we can never bring ourselves to request a shorter lunch break for him.

Q: So you have never requested it?

S's mother: Never. When he first started working, sometimes the manager would allow him to take his lunch break 1 h earlier and get back to work 1 h earlier, once a week. But it doesn't happen now.

Q: Are S's co-workers nice to him?

S's mother: Yes, they are all very nice. The older employee I just mentioned watches out for him. She said, "I am a mom myself, and I will naturally take care of kids like him." So I asked her to mentor S. I don't expect her to do his job for him because he will never learn that way. I don't spoil S at all. I just hope that he can live a normal life. We only want him to keep this job and to improve his life as a result. We have no expectations except that he can stay on this job till he retires. That will make us happy. And we also wish that the working conditions could be a little better.

Q: Is the relationship between him and the manager rigid? Or maybe he can handle it?

S's mother: He can't handle it, he can't. Whenever the manager jokes with him like patting him, he will come back and tell me about it saying that the manager has said this or that. He is very sensitive about this. Because he's told me about this quite a few times, I couldn't help but say to the manager, "I probably haven't done a good job educating S. He had a physics teacher who encouraged him a lot." I didn't elaborate. I just said that there was a teacher who used positive education and whether we could follow suit. I just hoped that the manager could give S more acknowledgement. The manager said I was spoiling him, so I couldn't say any more. I guess everyone has his way of doing things and I can't force anyone's hands. I can only ask S to follow instructions, and that's basically my last resort. The manager is unhappy with him and already told him not to talk back (Sobbing non-stop).²

²Several months after the interview, the parents negotiated with the company and S was transferred to another location to work. The company had a talk with the manager about improving his way of working.

Q: How is the pay at Papa John's compared to when he was attached to a workplace?

S's mother: Exactly the same.

Q: You mean minimum pay at both places?

S's mother: Right. At first, he got paid less than when he was attached to a workplace. I had been asking for pay slips from Papa John's but never got any, and I had no idea why. He was paid a little over 1,000 yuan back then, whereas at the workplace where he was attached to, the monthly pay was 1,860 yuan, which is the government-mandated minimum, and he ended up getting paid 2,020 yuan as a matter of fact. But the pay at Papa John's was less than 2,000 yuan, and I didn't know what was going on. I asked S to ask for pay slips from the manager and he never got any, so I gave up.

There's something fishy here, because a workplace has to produce pay slips when asked for them, right? What if there's a labor dispute later on and I need the pay slips for my case? But the restaurant just wouldn't give them to me. We made inquiries afterwards at Papa John's headquarters and were told that the company doesn't send out physical pay slips but everything can be checked online. I have no idea about pay itemization and wonder if it is the same as stipulated under the contract. But it's fine, I don't want to know anymore.

Q: What does the contract say?

S's mother: The contract stipulates the signing of a new contract after S had worked for 6 months. Six months later, there was no new contract for him to sign. Six months earlier, I was told that this job position was paid this much and that job position was paid that much. But after S changed job position, we were never given a new contract to sign. All we have is still the original one.

Q: Have you tried filing a complaint?

S's mother: No, no. I asked around and was told that we should be happy with this job no matter what, because there are hardly any jobs available for people with disabilities. At Papa John's, at least the top management really cares about people with disabilities, and had it not been for that, S would still be unemployed. As for what kind of preferential treatment the company receives in return for hiring people with disabilities, I have no idea and I don't really care. Bottom line is that S has a job now, right? We wanted a job and Papa John's provided the right opportunity, so we should cherish it. There's a lot of room for improvement, but we shouldn't complain.

Dating and Marriage: Let Them Be

Q: Is S in his twenties?

S's mother: Yes, he's 25.

Q: Has he ever dated?

S's mother: He has. A classmate from school dated him. She is healthy without any ID.

Q: Which school?

S's mother: The vocational school. They dated for quite a while, more than 6 months actually. They met at the school. After graduation, she got a job and he didn't, but they went out for quite some time.

Q: What exactly did they do when they were dating?

S's mother: (Laughing) They were young and didn't know what they were doing. Sometimes S would tell me that she's a good girl. I asked if they were dating for real and he said that they were and that he would kiss her goodbye after their dates. I asked whether they had learnt it from watching TV. He is slow when it comes to matters of the heart. It was 4 years ago anyway, and he knew a little about dating but practically nothing about marriage. He would take her to the museum, to catch a movie, to drink coffee and to play with cats. I had the impression that they were happy together.

Q: It sounds very romantic.

S's mother: Right. He even brought her home. But he never went to the girl's place.

Q: Why not?

S's mother: I wouldn't let him. I told him, "When I am not home, you are not allowed to bring any girl home. And you can't for any reason go to the girl's place. If you go and there's no one else home, her parents will be mad when they come home to see you there. You have to remember this."

Q: Did he understand why you said that?

S's mother: He did. Nowadays kids are exposed to so much online and they can understand some of the things. He has some sense even though he doesn't understand everything all the time. Sometimes I would tell him, "I can't really explain this to you in so many words." And he would say, "I get it, I get it," which means that he does have some sense.

Q: Why did they break up then?

S's mother: He said that she was no fun.

Q: He said that?

S's mother: Right, he said that she was no fun and knew nothing. She didn't know how to have fun, so he had to teach her all the time which was no fun for him. One time he said, "If I avoid her and don't do things with her for fun, she might cry. What would I do then?" As he was saying that, he was tearing up himself. I felt at that moment that he does understand certain things. I had never felt that way before, but at least with regards to that matter, he did have some sense. He said, "I will be very upset if she cries, but she is really no fun to be with." He also said, "She is so mean sometimes and yells at me. I hate people who are mean. Say it nicely and I will do it."

Q: So he knows what true love should be like.

S's mother: Right.

Q: Does his intellectual disability get in the way of his finding love?

S's mother: Definitely. For example, when he hangs out with kids without disabilities, things would go well at first, because he expresses himself well. But after a while, the other kids would realize that he doesn't know how to handle things and would then stay away from him. He did hang out with several girls and it's funny

that it would look like they were dating. I asked him how he got the girl to date him so easy, and he said, "She is calling me intimate names already." But those girls soon stopped hanging out with him, because of his intellectual disability. He has very low EQ and doesn't know how to handle things.

Q: I just saw his picture. He is very good-looking.

S's mother: Yeah, he is. (Laughing)

Q: Are you making plans for him to get married?

S's mother: About that... (hesitating) I actually go back and forth. I want him to get married more than his dad does, because I am very selfish. I hope he will find someone without ID. Even someone with physical disabilities would be preferable. If the girl has a good brain, they can complement each other. There will be someone to manage the family because it wouldn't work to have two muddled heads in the house. But his dad is of the opinion that people nowadays are just getting married and then divorced, and the two of us would have a tough time if S does the same thing (laughing).

We tell our friends that we neither support nor oppose him getting married. We won't play matchmaker ourselves. If he finds the right girl, we will support him. Some friend suggested finding a countryside girl whose family has financial hardship and who might be willing to move to Shanghai if the family is paid a certain amount of money, but I am really afraid of this kind of marriage that is so orchestrated. The hypothetical girl has no feelings for S to start with, so how can the two of them live together if she develops negative feelings towards him? What if they start fighting and want a divorce?

Q: But do you still hope he finds a wife to take care of his daily life?

S's mother: That's too much to hope for. I would have loved it but it's too difficult. That's what's killing me. I figure that even if he had a short marriage, at least he would have got to experience it. But we are worried that he might marry the wrong person. We wouldn't exactly call that person a bad person, but why would she marry someone with ID? She must need something in exchange, and I cannot afford to give her what she wants. For example, her parents might say, "My daughter will marry your son, as long as she has co-ownership of their place and can take half of what it's worth in case of a divorce." I wouldn't be able to accept that, so there would be no agreement. Maybe we over think, but we are really bothered by such thoughts. And we feel bad for him because he may never get married.

Q: Do you hope that he will carry on the family name?

S's mother: No, no.

Q: So you really don't put too much pressure on him.

S's mother: Exactly. Everything has to happen by itself, and it would be ideal if the right girl can eventually come along.

Expectations for Society: Practical Help

Q: What kind of expectations do you have of the government for society?

S's mother: I have some personal wishes. A friend of mine has a kid with ID too. They live in Canada where the mom takes care of the kid and the government gives them subsidies. The government even subsidizes housing for families with real financial hardships.

That's probably not going to happen in China. So I just wish that there would be more jobs available for people with disabilities. People like S do things slowly, so fast food restaurants are not the place for them. I just wish there were other jobs. With regards to pay, even though it is supposed to be equal pay for equal labor, the reality is far from that. So I hope that the government can give people like them practical help so that they can have a decent life. S receives minimum pay now which is 2,100 yuan, and that doesn't even cover his personal expenses. If he gets married one day, he just won't have enough money. I hope that the government can step up efforts and provide people like us with real help so that S can be guaranteed at least a basic living. What we have been through is unimaginable for people who have never experienced it. (Sobbing)

As a matter of fact, we will be very grateful if the government just puts in a little bit more effort. We are just invisible and no one cares about us. When we were literally dying out there, no one offered a helping hand. No one. We powered through all on our own, because the only other choice was to die. I know only people with depression will constantly think about death, but both my husband and I suffered depression. (Sobbing uncontrollably) We had our resentment, especially when we couldn't get the help we asked for. This society is so unfair.

Q: Have you been staying at home ever since you retired?

S's mother: No. I work as a volunteer now. I am a community correctional volunteer helping disadvantaged groups. There are people who have committed minor crimes like drug use and fighting in public. They should have been sent to some correctional facility, but there's no such facility now. They need to get back into society, and community correctional centers are there to help them do that, finding jobs for them if they are unemployed and giving them monthly allowances if they have no money. They are people that society cannot give up on.

People like them can become liabilities to society, so we need to help them settle down by telling them, "If you have difficulties, let society know instead of doing harm to society." I like this volunteer job because I can help bring peace of mind to them. On the other hand, I feel even more strongly that society should care about disadvantaged groups like people with ID. They are not as radical as the small-time criminals, but they are in a worse situation. Let me put it this way: if you commit a crime, the Communist Party and the government will try to save you. If your only crime is having ID, the Party and the government won't do anything for you. Now that I have this volunteer job, I see this contrast more clearly and it breaks my heart. (Tearing up and not able to continue.)

Q: Does it help your own state of mind when you mentor those people?

S's mother: It doesn't really help my own state of mind, but I am happy and willing to do my job. Giving is more rewarding than taking. If someone needs to accept help from other people, he must be in pain. Just like S, he is in a lot of pain. Since I can help other people, I see it as my happiness. And I realize that there are people around us, including doctors, teachers and coaches, who helped us when we hit a rough patch. I have met so many good people, so I should give back to society. I hope for a stable society, so I will do my part to stop would-be criminals from doing harm to society.

We visit the jail at Tilanqiao. After every visit, there will be peace in the jail for a month, because the inmates will be calmer and not inclined to fight. I do what I can to help, and there must be people out there who will realize that people with disabilities like S need help, too, and who will do what they can to help. I have very limited abilities—government agencies could do so much more to help if only they'd want to. (Sobbing non-stop)

Q: There will be help. There will definitely be help.

Interview with S's Co-Worker

Interviewee: Mr. C

Interviewer and writer: Buyun Chen

Interview date: December 6, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where S worked

Q: How's S at work?

C: Him? At work? There's not much to say about that, to be honest.

Q: What does that mean? So-so?

C: He is okay. Other people might have expected more of him. I like him a lot. When I first joined, he was working in the dining area. It turned out not to be the right job for him, so he was moved to the kitchen.

Q: Why wasn't it the right job for him?

C: He sometimes dropped the plates he was serving, you know. In the dining area, every table has a number and I sometimes mix up the numbers myself. For example, someone would write down a table as No. 17 but another person would write down the same table as No. 19. If you didn't take an order yourself, you will never remember which table and sometimes you serve to the wrong table. It gets confusing in the dining area and it's easy to make mistakes. So he might have made a lot of mistakes. With him working in the kitchen, there would be fewer mistakes. Anyway, I like him a lot. I see him every day and I feel happy to have Cute S³ around.

Q: So how is he doing after being moved to the kitchen?

C: He does okay. At least he does whatever you ask him to do. When you ask him to do something, he will never say that he doesn't have time. He will always

³Cute S: Nickname Mr. C has given S.

acknowledge the request. It's a different story, of course, whether he does the job well. But at least he has a positive attitude, so I have no problem with him.

Sometimes he will make something and when it's done, we will realize that an ingredient is missing. When we are not busy, we are okay with that and will just ask him to bake it again. But it's a hassle when we get busy. When we are not busy, we make one thing at a time before packing it. When we are busy, seven or eight items would be ready at the same time. The person packing them already has a hard time telling which is which and will find it overwhelming if something is missing. So to have S work on weekends is probably not ideal. Even employees without disabilities find it challenging to work on weekends, let alone S. But of course we need to be considerate. He is an employee being cared for, after all, and we shouldn't expect too much of him. If he can get something done, great. If not, we will just help him out when we have the time.

From Monday through Friday, he does a good job. Sometimes I will work in the kitchen. Because I don't work there often, I have to consult him. He has good rote memory which I really admire him for. He has memorized all the materials we have for making pizza dough. The manager once asked him to memorize ingredients for the appetizers we were launching. It's not easy. There are different quantities required for different ingredients. Sometimes seven are needed and sometimes eight are needed, and all those numbers are arbitrary. He remembered them all while I found it impossible. There are more than a dozen platters and I have a headache trying to memorize them. And it's so weird sometimes. For the same platter with the same name, the ingredients are different for dine-in and takeout orders. I would get everything mixed up whereas he would memorize everything.

Q: What are the work processes for S?

C: We will take orders in the dining area and the orders will show up on the computer in the kitchen. He will just make food according to the orders, whether they are takeout or dine-in. He mainly makes appetizers. He hasn't been in the kitchen that long, only about 6 months.

Q: How does he get along with the co-workers?

C: Speaking for myself, I like him a lot. I feel happy seeing him every day. I often joke with him and he is okay with that, and we just mess around with each other.

But he is an employee being cared for, after all. When he communicates verbally, his mind may not be able to follow. For example, we will be talking and he will wander off in his mind. His thoughts would be all over the place and he'll say something totally unrelated. The rest of us won't know how to continue and everyone will end up staring at him. It's not that we try to avoid talking to him. We do talk to him, but when he talks without sequence, we won't know what to say. But he's really nice. I see him working in the kitchen and smiling at me, and he is good-looking, so every day is a fun day for me. I like people smiling because it's preferable to coming to work with a frown.

Q: How is S's personality?

C: How should I put it? I personally think he is a little depressed. Sometimes he will come to talk to me but will run out of things to say after a while. I do believe he is a little depressed because after all, there are not many people who understand

him. Even though we are not prejudiced against him, he may not feel so good about himself. He never talks about going out for fun anywhere, so I fear that he is suffering in silence which is not good for him.

Q: Does he have a good temperament?

C: Look at how cute he is. Can you imagine him throwing tantrums? He has no temper. I have never seen him get mad. Sometimes I would say, “Had it been me with my personality, I would have raised hell.” He really has such a nice personality. When people get mad at him, he won’t talk back. That’s when I feel his depression. Other times I think he’s okay. It’s actually quite depressing working in this restaurant. Look at what happened today—when the manager was around, he didn’t utter a single sound. Once the manager was gone, he came alive.

Q: Does he not get along with the manager?

C: It’s not exactly that. The manager has a huge responsibility. S is an employee being cared for, after all, and the chances of him making mistakes are very high, and the manager is held liable for those mistakes. And the manager we have now is still on trial period and not official yet. Every time mistakes are made, his official appointment will be pushed back. In that sense, an employee being cared for is a huge burden on him, so he is very tough with the employees being cared for. We don’t mind it as much. On weekdays, we kill time here at work, but on weekends we just go full throttle. Sometimes I will bring S with me for deliveries just to get away for however long we can. Things are okay except when there’s any run-ins with the manager.

Q: Does the manager give him a telling off?

C: Getting told off is all in a day’s work. Some older co-workers will also get mad at him—even I have a word or two for him sometimes. For example, when it comes to playing on the phone, it’s normal to do it and we do it too when we have nothing else occupying us. But you shouldn’t play when we are crazy busy during dining hours. Sometimes he will have no order for appetizers while we are overwhelmed, and we will be mad seeing him playing on his phone. If the manager sees that, it would be much worse.

Q: What would happen?

C: He would have a talk with S. I can’t reveal the details, but I am sure you can imagine for yourself. (Laughing)

Q: What goes through your mind when the manager is having a talk with S?

C: I don’t over think. You have never worked in the kitchen of a restaurant and have no idea how hectic it can be back there. If I take an order for something that’s very complicated to make, those in the kitchen will yell at me.

Sometimes I wanted to take him out and asked him if he wanted to come with me. He said he did, but the manager wouldn’t give him time off. Other employees can get time off, but he can’t.

Interview with Mr. S

Interviewee: Mr. S

Interviewer and writer: Buyun Chen

Interview date: December 6, 2016

Interview place: Restaurant where S worked

Childhood

Q: Let's start with your childhood. Do you remember doing physical therapy when you were young?

S: I don't remember as clearly now. Just that it wasn't pleasant.

Q: It's okay. How much can you recall?

S: I remember only a little. I was crying and refusing to go to the enhanced external counterpulsation, and my dad had to drag me there.

Q: Was it very uncomfortable doing that?

S: Yeah. You had to be tied up for it, and being tied up was uncomfortable.

Q: How long did you have to stay tied up?

S: Either 15 or 20 min. I can't recall. It's been so long.

Q: It's okay, you survived it. Do you remember anything about elementary school? Was the curriculum difficult?

S: I was doing very well in elementary school for a while. When I was in fourth grade, my grades were among the top 20 in the class. Then my grades just started dropping, I don't know why. (Laughing)

Q: Did you have to study really hard?

S: Yeah.

Q: Were your parents with you when you studied at home?

S: They were.

Q: Do you remember how late you had to stay up to study at home?

S: Pretty late. After homework, I had to do some extra questions.

Q: How did you get along with your classmates back then?

S: I got along well with some and didn't get along at all with others. There's someone from elementary school I hang out with even now, which means we have been friends for more than 10 years. His dad was my mom's co-worker, so the two of us have always been close. At elementary school... something happened, do you want to know what it was?

Q: Sure!

S: It was when I was in sixth grade, right before graduation. My dad had back problems and was resting at home after surgery. He fell off the bed one day when I was at school. My mom took him to the hospital and forgot about me and didn't realize I was still at school. I had no choice but to spend the night with the friend I

just told you about. It wasn't until the next morning that my mom thought about me and she had such a bad scare. (Laughing)

Q: Were you very scared?

S: I was. But I knew that classmate well and often went to eat at his place. My parents knew that, maybe that's why they didn't pick me up from school that day.

Q: Did you normally wait for your parents to pick you up after school?

S: Not after fourth grade. Our elementary school was across the street from home, so I just needed to walk one block to get home.

Q: So you went home by yourself?

S: Yeah. My mom would take time off in the afternoon to come home. Because I got out of school early, my mom was allowed to leave work at probably 3 p.m. so that I wouldn't need to bring a house key with me.

Q: So on that day, you got home, knocked on the door and no one answered.

S: Right.

Q: Then you went looking for your classmate.

S: Yeah.

Q: Did he live close to you?

S: One block away too. He lived right next to school.

Q: That's nice. Where is he now?

S: He works for the design department of a game company. The company is a Japanese one with a subsidiary in Shanghai. He makes more than 4,000 yuan a month.

Middle School

Q: Was the curriculum difficult for you in middle school?

S: A little. I could manage eighth grade, but ninth grade was too much for me, and I failed the entrance exam to high school. When I was in ninth grade, my grandpa got sick, so my parents had no time for me.

Q: What about the teachers?

S: The teacher who was nicest to me was the homeroom teacher in middle school. He's in poor health now and I can't find time to visit him. He is a middle school principal now.

Q: What did he do to make you feel that he was the nicest teacher?

S: He tutored me for free.

Q: Oh, what did he teach?

S: He taught math, so in the class, in chemistry, math, and physics, I was basically...

Q: Among the top ones?

S: Among the top ones. But I was lagging behind in Chinese and English. I didn't know how to write essays in Chinese, and I was just naturally not smart in English. I couldn't remember the words and always forgot them.

Q: What time did he use to tutor you?

S: After class hours. In ninth grade, we had to prepare for the high school entrance exam and got really busy. We all wanted to get into a good high school, so we would stay back voluntarily to be tutored. We would stay at school till 6 or even 7 p.m. sometimes, and we still had a lot of homework to do once we got home. I actually did pretty well in physics and chemistry on the high school entrance exam, but my Chinese and English dragged the overall score down.

Q: Do you remember your score?

S: I was short by... about 60 points, otherwise I could have got into a high school. My parents had no time for me, so I played like crazy, and I regretted it later. (Laughing)

Q: What did you play? Like hanging out with classmates?

S: I hung out with classmates and we played basketball and did things like that.

Q: Oh, you like playing basketball?

S: Or we would play games at a classmate's place. If I had tried harder, I could have got into a regular high school. I really regret wasting more than 3 months just playing.

Vocational School

Q: It's a good choice to go to a vocational school to acquire a skill set. I heard from your mom that you went to a culinary school?

S: I went to the culinary class at Baoshan Vocational School. There are many majors besides cooking at the school.

Q: I see. Why did you want to learn cooking?

S: ...

Q: Did you pick it yourself?

S: My mom picked it for me. I initially wanted to study computer science.

Q: Why did you want to study computer science?

S: Computer science would have been a little easier. I am pretty fast at typing on the computer.

Q: But you were okay learning cooking?

S: I didn't like it that much.

Q: Why not?

S: Because I was the worst in the class in chopping and stovetop cooking.

Q: I see. What exactly did you learn in the culinary class?

S: Chopping, for example. We chopped potatoes and ginger every day.

Q: Was it like that every day?

S: Yeah. We also stir fried on the stovetop. We had to prepare our own ingredients and chop them ourselves; the teachers wouldn't do that for us, which means...

Q: Oh, you had to chop the ingredients before you could use them.

S: Right, right.

Q: What else did you learn?

S: We also learnt making dim sum.

Q: What kind of dim sum?

S: Chinese dim sum, like steamed buns and pancakes.

Q: Did the teacher show you what to do in person?

S: There was only one demonstration. If you got it, you got it. If you didn't, then you didn't and it was too bad for you.

Q: Which subject do you think you did best at?

S: ...

Q: I mean, was there a subject that you really liked and that was easier to learn?

S: Making food with dough was easier to learn.

Q: You mean making bread and dim sum?

S: Making steamed buns and that, like I just mentioned.

Q: Do you also make dim sum at the restaurant now?

S: Here... not here. Here we make Western food including desserts, and I don't work in desserts.

Q: I see. How long were you in that culinary class?

S: Two and a half years, and the last 6 months were for internships.

Q: Where did you do the internships?

S: I didn't qualify for any restaurant internships, so I spent a year interning at a factory in Shanghai, working at the front desk and doing clerical work.

Q: What clerical work, like answering the phone?

S: No. I interned at the recreational center of the factory which was open only to employees. So I was in charge of swiping cards and making keys, and if people came over for swimming, I would tell them which lockers to use.

Q: So you mean you helped people store personal belongings.

S: Right, right. I gave people who came to swim keys with the number of the locker printed on them.

Q: So the job was relatively easy?

S: Yeah. But those who got to stay later had connections. I had no connections. But I was pretty happy working there.

Q: How did you get along with your co-workers?

S: We got along well because we were from the same school. I had two classmates who were later hired by that factory.

Q: You mean there were a number of your classmates who interned at that same factory?

S: Just two or three, because the best were grabbed by five-star places like Baolong and Marriott. The top four students.

Q: They were hired as chefs by those places?

S: Yeah, as chefs. One of them is getting married on January 1. He is the main chef in the bakery.

Q: Oh. Are you still in contact with your classmates?

S: Yes.

Q: Do you use WeChat or call them?

S: QQ.

Q: Do you often chat with them on QQ?

S: I do. I really envy those four, because they make so much money.

Q: You don't have to. You are doing very well yourself.

S: I am really good-tempered and very obedient. But the classmates at the vocational school were not very nice.

Q: How so?

S: They bullied me sometimes.

Q: Like how?

S: They asked me for money and hit me if I wouldn't give them any.

Q: Gosh. So what did you do when you were bullied?

S: I either told the teacher or I put up with it.

Q: Did you fight back when you were hit?

(S shaking his head.)

Q: Was it because you didn't want to or because your upbringing stopped you from fighting back?

S: I didn't want to. My closest friends all call me "Kitty", because I am as good-tempered as a kitten.

Q: Why were you unwilling to fight back?

S: I didn't want to make it worse for myself.

Q: Would you tell your parents about it?

S: I would.

Q: And what did they do?

S: They would call the teacher and the teacher would warn those classmates.

Q: Were you bullied often?

S: Quite often over those 3 years.

Employment with Papa John's

Q: When did you start working here?

S: Last year... After Chinese New Year last year, in early spring in March.

Q: Do you commute by public transportation?

S: I do.

Q: From Baoshan?

S: Yeah, it's a little far.

Q: Do you take the bus?

S: Yeah. I walk 15 min from home to the terminal and the bus ride takes more than 40 min.

Q: Oh... so you spend more than 1 h commuting every day.

S: Right, more than 2 h both ways.

Q: When do you have to leave for work every day?

S: Nine thirty. I usually get here at 10:45 but I am late sometimes.

Q: When do you get home at night?

S: I get home... it depends. On a good day, I get home at 10:10.

Q: What makes a bad day?

S: When there's traffic on the outer highway ring.

Q: So it mainly depends on traffic?

S: Right. Sometimes the bus doesn't run on time, then I will get home late.

Q: When do you usually get off work?

S: Nine at night.

Q: Nine at night is a fixed time?

S: Right, fixed time. Previously when we had another manager, I sometimes worked the evening shift in the dining area and the hours were longer.

Q: When did the evening shift end?

S: Ten at night.

Q: Oh. What do you normally do at work?

S: I work in appetizers. I make appetizers like chicken wings and spaghetti for the customers.

Q: How do you make appetizers?

S: Umm...

Q: For example, how do you make spaghetti?

S: Our spaghetti is put in boxes before being placed among the appetizers, and every box is pre-weighed. I would just take a pack of spaghetti, empty it into a bowl with the sauce, put it in microwave on high for 1 min and 20 s, take it out and stir it.

Q: Oh. Did you find it hard learning to make appetizers?

S: Because... how should I put it? I often stuff up the ingredients.

Q: For example?

S: For example, I might misread the orders and mix up the tables.

Q: Do you panic when that happens?

S: At first I did. But now, if that happens, I will just make another order.

Q: What will the manager do when that happens?

S: The manager will get mad.

Q: Is the manager normally strict?

S: Quite strict. Sometimes if I am slow or make mistakes, he will get impatient and say, "Hurry up, you need to hurry up." Sometimes there are too many orders and I can't read everything clearly and will bake the wrong food. The manager helps sometimes. When it gets too busy, he will help with distributing appetizers in the dining area.

Q: Have you thought about whether to stay long-term or to get a new job?

S: I don't know. I'm not sure.

Q: Right, it's better to live in the present.

(S getting up to get his own drink.)

Q: What's that?

S: Rose petal tea.

Q: Did you bring it from home in the morning?

S: I did.

Q: Did your mom make it for you?

S: I put in the tea myself.

Q: Oh. Do you bring food from home in the morning?

S: I do, I bring lunch. We don't get lunch here.

Q: When do you normally get busy here?

S: How should I put it... we get busy for lunch and dinner.

Q: So part of your job is to have everything set up before lunch, right?

S: I normally don't do the setup. Someone else will have had everything laid out by the time I start working at 11 a.m.

Q: How do you set up?

S: Laying out ingredients on the counters. There's a lot involved, and I don't understand it all.

Q: So what do you do first once you get here?

S: I clean up and replenish ingredients if they are running low.

Q: Is this restaurant open only for lunch and dinner?

S: It's open all day long, unlike some other restaurants.

Q: But it gets busier during lunch and dinner hours?

S: It depends. Like today, we got a little busy with dine-in which doesn't happen often.

Q: When do you take a lunch break?

S: Between three and five.

Q: What do you do during that time?

S: I have lunch and take a nap.

Q: There's no work during those hours?

S: No.

Q: Oh. How many days a week do you work here?

S: I work 5 days and take 2 days off. I normally have Tuesday and Thursday off. For this week, because you had planned to come on Tuesday, I took Monday off instead.

Q: What do you do on your 2 days off every week?

S: I chat with girls and shop online for clothes I like. If some girl asks me out, I will go out.

Budding Love

Q: Do girls often ask you out?

S: *Doctor Strange* was playing in theaters and I went to watch it with my girlfriend.

Q: That's nice. When did you start dating?

S: We have been dating for more than a year. She is leaving and she said she would introduce a girl to me before she leaves, which she did. That girl is really nice to me. Both girls are and I went out with the two of them yesterday.

Q: You just said that your girlfriend is leaving. Where is she going?

S: She is going to Japan. She is a Chinese-Japanese mix, with a Japanese mom. She had a very good upbringing.

Q: Is she moving back to Japan?

S: To go to school and to live there permanently.

Q: And she said she would introduce a new girlfriend to you?

S: Right. I met that girl yesterday.

Q: How do you feel?

S: Since we have been together for more than a year, we know what each other thinks. She knows that I am a very mild person, so the girl she introduced to me is unsophisticated.

Q: So you mean you like this new girl?

(S nodding.)

Q: Are you sad about parting ways with the girl you have been dating for more than a year?

S: A little sad. She said that when I visit Japan in the future, she will be my tour guide and that I have to remember to pay her for her services. (Laughing)

Q: Do you think you can handle a new girl becoming your girlfriend so soon?

S: It will take me at least a year to accept her. I mean we will just go out for now. If our personalities don't match, we will just break it off which won't hurt anyone.

Q: Right. Was that your first relationship?

(S nodding.)

Q: Oh. Where did you two usually go?

S: We would go shopping. I would look for clothes for myself and she would look for her own clothes.

Q: Did you tell your mom about you and her?

S: My mom knows, about both girls.

Q: Oh. Is she supportive?

S: She is okay as long as the girl has a good personality. The truth is that neither of the two girls have striking looks, but they both have such pleasant personalities.

Q: What kind of girl do you like?

S: Mild and willing to do things.

Q: Did the girlfriend help you in daily life?

(S nodding.)

Q: For example?

S: There was a time when I felt like quitting my job and I would spend time with her.

Q: To talk to her?

S: Right. You know what my girlfriend liked to do most? We would go to exhibitions, and when she got tired, she would sleep in my arms, which was really sweet.

Q: That's nice. So you found it sweet?

S: (Nodding) That's what made me happiest.

Q: How did you feel when she was in your arms?

S: It was very heart-warming as I realized that there's this girl who was really giving towards me and never doubted anything about me.

Q: Have you thought about having a family later on?

(S nodding.)

Q: What do you imagine the family to be like?

(S remaining silent.)

Interests and Friendships

Q: You must have a lot of good friends.

S: I do, because I like music, anime exhibitions, and opera. That means that I surround myself with good people.

Q: When did you start liking music and opera?

S: I was still young and watched *Phantom of the Opera* for the first time. Ever since then, I have been in love with classic opera, music, and orchestra. My two favorite musicians are both geniuses, Mozart and Mendelssohn.

Q: For classical music, do you buy CDs?

S: I have CDs. I also have it on my phone.

Q: So you like Japanese anime and go to anime exhibitions?

S: Right.

Q: What do you usually watch?

S: I usually watch the aesthetic kind with tragic endings. (Pausing as if pondering over something) You know my friends nicknamed me “Missy.”

Q: Why?

S: Because I am very mild, I speak with sincerity, my voice is very soft and soothing, and I like afternoon tea. I am like a young lady of noble blood. That’s why all my friends like me. I just have such a good temper, so much so that no one can ever get mad at me.

Q: Right. How come you have such a good temper?

S: ...

Q: So you never get mad?

S: (Shaking his head) That’s why I got this nickname. I made a lot of friends at an anime exhibition and that’s where the nickname was given.

Q: Oh. Are you often in contact with friends you made at anime exhibitions?

S: Yup.

Q: Do you go out with them?

S: I am not a homebody. The day after tomorrow, which is Thursday, they are going to afternoon tea and I said I would join them.

Q: Where do you usually go for afternoon tea?

S: They said they would go to a fancy place. I said they are setting me up because I just got paid but my pay doesn’t really cover my expenses. (Laughing)

Q: (Laughing) Will you pay for them?

S: We go Dutch. That’s the best way and no one will argue because it’s fair to everyone. Whenever we eat out and go to karaoke after an anime exhibition, we go Dutch. No one wants to leave after exhibitions, so a dozen of us who are closest will stay to sing and eat out.

Q: You seem to have a lot of activities.

S: Right. There’s another reason they call me “Missy,” because I often go to anime exhibitions in female costumes.

Q: Oh, you mean cosplay?⁴

⁴Cosplay: Role-playing. Fans of Japanese anime dress as roles they like at anime exhibitions.

(S nodding.)

Q: And you are often in female cos?⁵

S: Right. I am in male cos too but not as often.

Q: Why do you prefer female cos?

S: Because of my personality, which is too mild. And because of my voice. No one can tell whether it's male or female.

Q: Who applies makeup for you for the cosplay?

S: I always use the same makeup person.

Q: Oh. How did you meet this person?

S: We met at an anime exhibition. When I went to the anime exhibition for the first time, I let it be known that I was looking for a makeup person. The first one I got was new at it and ruined my makeup. Then my friend recommended the current one who is a girl. I couldn't take time off for the latest anime exhibition, so I didn't go. It was held on December 3, which was just several days ago.

Q: Interesting.

S: You know what? Several of my friends and I made a plan to spend New Year's Eve together and each of us will bring our girlfriend or boyfriend. What I mean is that we won't go home for the night. My mom has said that's okay. We won't go home till 3 p.m. on New Year's Day.

Q: Wow. So you will bring your girlfriend too?

S: Right. But my mom made me promise not to cross the line. (Laughing)

Q: (Laughing). Do you know what your mom meant?

S: Of course I do. (Laughing) Next time I will arrive earlier to help them cook.

Q: Oh right, you are the chef.

S: Just to lend a hand with the girls. Our chief said he will cook himself and I said I would help.

Q: That sounds great. Who is this chief?

S: He is the head of the anime association. He isn't someone you would want to mess with, because he is the national karate champion and champion of the college karate tournament. We sometimes put on commercial performances and get paid for them. So he will organize those performances and everyone gets a cut of the pay. We all have a great time. I don't have time to go. They have organized quite a few performances and the latest one was in Wuhan back in October. He said he was exhausted but he made a lot of money, more than 7,000 yuan over 2 days. This is actually his day job now.

Q: So what kind of organization is your anime association?

S: ...

Q: Did you meet at an anime exhibition and decide to establish the association?

S: Right, we all met at this or that anime exhibition. Sometimes we would go eat out together. Sometimes after an anime exhibition, seven or eight key members of the association would go out to eat and discuss work.

Q: Oh, what kind of work?

⁵Cos: Short for "cosplay."

S: Our work is the commercial performances. For example, someone can get paid 100 yuan a day to perform at an anime exhibition.

Q: Do you take this kind of work?

S: I am busy at the restaurant so I can't. If I was less busy, I would definitely have taken such work. It's easy and fun.

Observation of S at Work

Observation date: 10:30–21:00, December 6, 2016

Observation place: Restaurant where S worked

Observer and writer: Buyun Chen

Note: S worked in the kitchen of Papa John's Gongkang Store. The kitchen comprises three sections: the drink counter where drinks are made, the dough section where all the dough for baking is made, and the appetizer section where appetizers like baked chicken wings and spaghetti are made. S worked exclusively in the appetizer section and his main job was to make appetizers following orders taken in the dining area and printed at the appetizer counter, and to deliver them to the service window. Occasionally he would do some organization and cleaning. His work hours were 11:00–21:00 for 5 days a week. He normally takes Tuesday and Thursday off, but for this week, in order to make himself available for the observation, he took Monday off instead of Tuesday. He worked during both lunch and dinner hours, and took his lunch break between 15:00 and 17:00. S was later transferred out of this store and started working in the Jiangwan Store in January 2017.

Time	What S did	Remarks
10:42	Arrived at the store	
10:50	Changed into work clothes and made himself presentable	Work clothes included light green long-sleeved shirt, long brown pants, white apron with logo, and white cap with logo
10:56	Went to the kitchen and washed hands	Went to the farthest sink in the kitchen to wash hands. Got ready for work after washing hands
11:00	Punched card for work	
11:02	Checked and replenished ingredients	Checked level of contents in the ingredient boxes. Took new ingredients from the freezer, cut the bags open and poured the ingredients into matching boxes. Used a mop to clean up sauce spilled onto the counter or stuck to the box lids, and put the mop and scissors back

(continued)

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Time	What S did	Remarks
11:20–12:04	Was busy reading orders and making appetizers	Made appetizers following orders printed at the appetizer counter, cut and placed the appetizers on platters, and delivered the platters to the service window
12:06	Mopped floor in the kitchen	
12:13	Washed hands	
12:15–13:20	Was busy reading orders and making appetizers	
13:30–14:00	Checked and replenished ingredients	
14:10	Washed hands	
14:15–14:45	Wiped down the ingredients counter	There were hardly any customers and no work to do
15:00	Punched card for lunch break	
15:00–15:50	Interviewed with the observer	
15:50–16:20	Ate the lunch brought from home	S’s mom had made his lunch in the morning and packed it in a lunch box for S to bring to work. Today’s lunch included white rice, chicken soup, and mushrooms
16:30–17:00	Rested	Checked his phone and closed eyes for a rest
17:00	Punched card to return to work	
17:02	Washed hand	
17:05–17:23	Checked and replenished ingredients	
17:25	Washed pans and bowls	
17:36–18:30	Was busy reading orders and making appetizers	Made a chicken wing platter: took out a number of chicken wings from the freezer, sprinkled spices, put them in the oven, took them out after a number of minutes, arranged them on a wooden platter in a concentric flower pattern, and attached a plate of dipping sauce
18:32	Washed hands	
18:35	Mopped floor in the kitchen	
18:42	Cleaned up tables in the dining area	After the customers had left, S brought used silverware back to the kitchen to hand over to the lady washing dishes. He was skillful at this
18:59	Wiped the partition boards	
19:12	Wiped nets, put away ingredient boards, and wiped down the counter	

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Time	What S did	Remarks
19:20	Used phone to order takeout	
19:25–19:50	Cleaned up in the kitchen	Wiped down counters at a leisurely pace
19:51	Ate his takeout	A dessert (mango with black sticky rice)
20:00	Went to the dining area	Took off cap and apron
20:04–20:15	Collected trash	Poured trash in small bins placed all over the dining area into a big bin, and took the trash in the big bin to outside the store
20:17	Returned to the kitchen to mop the floor	
20:20	Washed hands	
20:22–20:56	Shut down for the day	Worked with the manager on duty to clean up ingredients and put them back in the freezer
21:00	Punched out	
21:02	Changed into own clothes	
21:07	Left the store	

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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I Treat Him as My Own Son



Jiaying Xiao

Interview with Mr. QB's Father

QB, male, born in 1994. The only child in the family. Grade IV intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school (Shanghai Primary Vocational and Technical School of Changning District) in 2012. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2013.

Interviewee: QB's father

Interviewer and writer: Jiaying Xiao

Interview dates: September 25, 2016 and March 4, 2017

Interview place: Shanghai Electric Power Hospital¹

Forced to Drop Out After Two Years of Regular School

Q: When did you marry QB's mom?

QB's father: It was the second marriage for both of us. We got married in 1999 when QB was six. He is 23 now.

Q: Did you know that QB had a disability when you got married?

QB's father: I didn't. He was pretty normal then, but maybe that's because he was still young and his disability wasn't showing yet. And he didn't exactly physically or verbally abuse anyone, nor did he have any physical disability. Everything seemed perfectly normal with him. His grandma would take him to preschool every day after

¹QB's father was taking care of his mother-in-law in the hospital. Therefore, the interviews were held in the hospital during pauses when he was doing his tasks.

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breakfast. We lived next to Zhongshan Park and he went to Yuyuan Road Preschool. After dropping him off, his grandma would walk around the park for exercise and pick him up later in the day. His mom and I both worked and we didn't have a lot of time for him.

He went to No. 2 West Yan'an Road Elementary School which was close to Zhaohua Road and close to where we lived. His disability hadn't been detected then because the curriculum was as simple as one, two, three. When he was in second grade, his teacher found that he couldn't keep up in English and math and couldn't do single-digit additions. You couldn't tell that he had intellectual disability just by looking at him, but the teacher suspected that he had it because he couldn't solve the most basic math problems. So he asked us to take him to Changning Psychiatric Disease Prevention Center for an IQ test.

The test results showed his IQ to be a little over 52 points, which is almost 5 points lower than that of average people. So we took him to the hospital to test his brain functions and his brain does function on a level lower than that of average people. No wonder he couldn't keep up at school.

So the school asked him to drop out and made it clear that it didn't want him, the reason being that the curriculum would get more difficult and anyone who couldn't keep up in intellectual ability would fall behind further. So he dropped out and went to the special education school of Changning District. There's a special education school in each district and the one in our district was close to Xianxia Road.

I don't know how he got the disability or what had happened. My wife has no disability. I am telling the truth since I have nothing to hide. When we got married, I heard from her relative that she isn't the biological daughter of the mom who is now hospitalized. She was adopted and her biological mom had some mental problems. But she has never seen her biological mom ever since she was adopted, neither have I. She was born in Malu in Jiading District and adopted by my current mother-in-law when she was two. Only my mother-in-law knows where the biological mom is, but my mother-in-law is still alive, so my wife can't very well reunite with her biological mom. I can't take her to look for her biological mom until the adopted mom has passed away. Her biological mom shouldn't be that old, since she is 46 this year. Having said that, I believe that genes were at play. Her biological mom passed it to her and she passed it to her son, from generation to generation, which is perfectly normal. I definitely don't have any problems myself, and he isn't my biological son anyway. (Laughing)

Since you came to talk to me, I won't hide anything from you and will tell you everything instead. My current mother-in-law isn't very nice to my wife. She often yells at her, and is very short-tempered and aggressive, insisting on everything being the way she wants it. Sometimes my wife will tell me that she knows she is from Jiading and would like to look for her biological mom, and I will say, "How can you do it now? And once you find her, which mom are you going to stick with? You will have to wait till your adopted mom has passed away before you go looking for your biological mom." I figure that her biological mom is only in her seventies. According to her relative, she also has an older brother and older sister from the biological mom.

A Top Student in Special Education School

Q: Did you struggle about it before switching his schools? Was he willing to go to another school?

QB's father: He didn't understand. How could he since he was only nine?

Q: So he switched schools because you switched it for him?

QB's father: Right. We dropped him off and picked him up every day. The school was where Tianshan Road crosses Xianxia Road and easy to get to from where we lived. There's a bus Line 127 with a stop close to where we lived, at the intersection of Yan'an Road and Dingxi Road. So we would take the bus to the terminal stop and the school was right across the street. We rode the bus to take him to school. Since there were three adults in the family, whoever had time would take him. When he was in fifth or sixth grade, he would ride the bus himself. We just let him do it, and he came home by himself, too, and never had any problem on the way.

The special education school offers 9 years of schooling. QB was in a combined class of first, second, and third grades, because there were not enough students to have three separate classes. But the curriculum was divided into first, second, and third grades even though there's only one teacher covering everything. So the three grades were in one classroom, and the higher grades were in other classrooms. After third grade, he moved to another class which was called middle grade. Basically, the 9 years were divided into low, middle, and high grades.

The school had its own textbooks. The teachers would compile some materials and distribute photocopies to the students. There were also Chinese books and math books purchased from the general market. Older students would be given some homework and learn some arts and crafts including drawing and paper cutting. The most basic things were taught, like simple Chinese characters and math. The teaching was tailored for individuals. If you were more like an average person, you were taught more difficult things. But if you had cerebral palsy, you wouldn't be able to learn anything anyway. But in QB's class, since there were not many kids, the kids were all grouped together and the teaching was only slightly differentiated.

Q: Did he have homework? Did you help him with his homework?

QB's father: He did have homework that had to be handed in and checked by the teacher, just like what happens at regular schools now. He had to do additions, subtractions, multiplications, and divisions, and there were parentheses, and the most difficult part seemed to be π which I had never learnt myself. (Laughing) I saw him working on that as part of the homework. He did well at academics and was able to keep up. There wasn't a lot of homework. He had to copy a text sometimes or a poem other times, to practice calligraphy. They weren't really expected to write any essay on their own.

We did tutor him at home. He would be allowed some rest first, then he was asked to take out his homework. Parents were required to sign off on the kids' completed homework every day. We would teach him if there was anything he didn't understand, but he understood pretty much everything, since he was taught only very simple things. He finished second grade at No. 2 West Yan'an Road Elementary

School and what he had learned there was more difficult than what was taught at the special education school, because kids at the special education school had ID and difficulties absorbing new things. Comparatively speaking, my son has a high IQ. But on the whole, what was taught at the special education school wasn't that different from what was taught at regular elementary schools.

Q: Were there tests at the special education school?

QB's father: There were, like there were tests at regular schools. The school also assigned homework for summer and winter vacations. There were both midterms and finals. To prepare for midterms, the teacher would give them sample questions and he would finish them at school instead of bringing them home. The scored tests had to be brought home to be signed by parents. He did well on the tests, scoring above 80 points and sometimes above 90 points.

The school organized activities too. Yao Ming came to teach them basketball. QB was on the school basketball team, so he got a set of No. 5 clothes from Yao Ming. Some popular singers also visited the school to interact with the students. Yao Ming visited special education schools a lot. At the primary vocational school that my son went to later, Yao Ming came too and would bring pens and notebooks for everyone sometimes. Their school often had celebrity visitors.

Every time he saw Yao Ming, QB was happy and excited and would tell us all about it, saying "I saw Yao Ming" or "Yao Ming came to our school today."

The school basketball team often had activities. There were either 16 or 18 kids on the team, and what happened was that if school ended earlier on a certain day, the PE teacher would give them some training. The training wouldn't be long, lasting 40 or 45 min and never more than 60 min. And he could just shower at home after the training. It was good for him. The school was a good one, because it tailored its teaching and activities to the kids' IQ and tried to train the kids to be self-dependent for when they became part of society later on.

Q: Did they have basketball games?

QB's father: At school, the kids would just play against each other in two teams. Sometimes they would play against teams from other schools, so they did have some games.

He liked basketball and would watch whatever basketball games showing on TV. He bought a lot of NBA posters and we had a lot of them at home. The posters were very expensive, costing more than 20 yuan each and featuring all the NBA stars.

Q: Would you talk to him about basketball?

QB's father: I don't understand basketball. He liked it and would watch games on TV by himself.

Q: Did the school organize any other activities?

QB's father: It's a 9-year school, and it did organize field trips. QB was young and didn't get to go on all of them. But at least he went on some trips, whereas kids with cerebral palsy couldn't be taken on any field trips at all. They went to so many places, including Shanghai Library, Century Park, the Oriental Pearl, Dongfang Oasis, and Shanghai Science and Technology Museum. Basically, the school took them to all of the places worth visiting in Shanghai, to try to develop their intellect and expose them to society. QB doesn't look so bad now, I will have to admit that. Maybe there's this

gene on his mom's side of the family, and my wife hasn't had many years' schooling herself.

Parents didn't go on the field trips because they would have had to pay for entrance. The teachers took the kids and entrance was free for them since activities by such schools were kind of sponsored by society. The field trips usually lasted a whole day and he would bring bread on the trips. Sometimes the school would provide bottled water and bread as lunch. They would leave in the morning and come back at night, the school would give us the schedule and we would wait in front of the school at night to pick up the kids. The school organized such trips quite often.

The kids were always happy on field trips. QB would come home and tell us what he did on the trips, like he would tell us what he saw at the Oriental Pearl.

After he graduated from the special education school, he moved on to the primary vocational school on Dingxi Road, which was specifically for kids like him. It's actually connected with the special education school, and students graduating from the special education school were transferred directly to that school.

He learnt about the restaurant business at the vocational school, like how to place glasses on the dining tables, how to fold napkins into ribbons, and how to place chopsticks. The school also taught simple cooking like spicy tofu and five-spice shredded pork so that the students could acquire some skills. He had to practice at home what he had learnt at school. Sometimes he would get some tofu or shred some pork to cook spicy tofu or fish-flavored pork at home. We tasted his cooking and it was decent. The teacher taught according to recipes and provided more ingredients than we had at home. He hasn't cooked after graduation. He works now and has no time to cook.

Q: Was it easier or tougher going to the vocational school than to the special education school?

QB's father: The vocational school was nice and easier than that 9-year school. There was no homework to bring home. There was an experience class followed by academic classes, and one of the academic classes was set aside for the students to do homework in class so they wouldn't need to bring any home. Even if they couldn't finish in that class, they still wouldn't have a lot to bring home.

There were a lot of activities at the vocational school too, including field trips to places like Shanghai Museum and activities with other schools. There was once a joint singing competition with a school from Jing'an District and a program to help kids at the school make friends with students from two schools in Yangpu District.

He liked everything the school organized and would come home and tell us all about it. I asked him if he was happy and the answer was always affirmative. As parents, we are happy whenever the kid is happy. What else can you expect of him? You can't be demanding with kids like him because he will have to disappoint you, right? What other choice is there?

Q: How was his interaction with schoolmates?

QB's father: It was good. The teachers liked him and he cooked well. In addition to spicy tofu and five-spice shredded pork, he could also make chive pancake, green onion pancake, and other pancakes. After the teacher had finished teaching and everyone had finished cooking, he was in charge of the kitchen key and wiping down

the counters. He got along well with everyone at school and the teachers all liked him.

Q: Does having the kitchen key mean that he was in charge of opening and closing the kitchen?

QB's father: What happened was that the teacher was done after finishing cooking and the students were responsible for cleaning up. Sometimes my son would ask a couple of classmates to use some dish detergent and a mop to wipe down the counters and to wash all the pots. Then he would put away the pots, lock up the kitchen and put the key in a safe place since he was in charge of the key. He was in charge of all the ingredients and kitchenware, and the teacher was very nice to him.

We lived close to the school, so I liked to stop by to talk to the teachers and ask how QB was doing. The teachers all said he was doing great and they all liked him. There was this teacher who even gave him a jacket on his birthday which cost more than 100 yuan. At Papa John's where he works now, the store manager and two other managers like him a lot and are always calling on him for help.

Q: Did QB have good friends at school?

QB's father: He had several and was close to two of them and is still connected with them by cell phone. One of them is called Y who was his classmate from elementary school. He lived closer to the school, near Yaohong Road at North Xingjing. They have always kept in touch and often check up on each other by phone. Y calls us at home too to ask whether QB is busy or doing well. It's nice to have such a friend whose disability seems to be of a lesser degree than QB's. They also went out together.

I believe he works at KFC which was arranged by the school too. At the school, there were four kids whose disabilities were not that bad. My son was one, there was Y, and another... I was the one who went to almost every parent-teacher conference. There was hardly any kid who could pass off as an average kid and quite a few kids with cerebral palsy.

Q: Did his friends ever visit him at home?

QB's father: No.

Q: Has he ever been to any of his friends' place?

QB's father: He has. He hadn't graduated yet and was either in seventh or eighth grade. After school, he just went to the friend's place and was nowhere to be found. Not seeing him at home, I called his school and was told that he had left school a while back. I was given the teacher's cell phone number and called the teacher. They said that he had gone back home but I said I didn't have him at home. The teacher panicked then and started asking around for me and called that other student's house. So what happened was that that student's dad came to pick him up and insisted that my son go to his place for dinner. QB just went without calling to tell us about it. We were panicking waiting for him to come home. It was dark already and past dinner time. The teacher called that student's house and found QB there. The teacher then called me and I asked for that student's address. I was getting ready to go there when my son came back.

Q: He knew his way back?

QB's father: He knew which bus to take to come home. That's the only time he went to a friend's place.

Q: Did he just not want to do it again or did you forbid him from doing it again?

QB's father: It's not us. We never did that. After he graduated from school, we have always supported him to go out and have fun instead of staying home all the time.

Only Appearance of the Biological Father in Eighteen Years

Q: Are you in contact with his biological father?

QB's father: Never. We have never been in contact with him since we got married, which was in 1999. It has been 18 years, and his biological father only showed up once. QB was still in the special education school and he took him out for a day.

Q: Did his biological father know about his intellectual disability?

QB's father: He didn't. There's a neighbor who might have been related to QB's dad or might have just been a neighbor. He has since moved to Xujing where all the low-rent housing is in Shanghai. He was the matchmaker for QB's parents. The dad liked to gamble and never took care of the family. QB's grandpa had liver cancer, cirrhosis in fact. He passed away 20 years ago. After he checked out of the hospital, he asked QB's mom to get a divorce saying that she shouldn't continue living with QB's dad because he was never home and was gambling somewhere all the time. So that's how it went down. Even while the grandpa was bedridden, QB's dad was dragged to the court for QB's mom to divorce him. After the baby was born, he only saw him once, and he didn't even visit the mom at the hospital recovering from the birth. He was out there gambling away. With someone like him who loved gambling, if he won, he could bring some money home, but if he lost, he would be in no mood to take care of the family or the kid. How could he take care of anyone or anything when he had no money in his pocket?

Q: So QB has no emotional bond with his biological father and no contact?

QB's father: No, no, no emotional bond. He was still in the special education school and the dad took him out to buy toys. Back then the popular toy was the scooter, with two wheels that you pushed with one foot. It's not popular anymore. So the dad bought that for him and ate with him. That's the only time. And he hasn't shown up again since.

Q: Did QB come back that day to talk about his biological father?

QB's father: What did he know? He knew nothing. Ever since my wife and I got married, he has been calling me "Dad." He didn't know that I am not his biological father.

Q: And he still doesn't know now?

QB's father: Now he knows. It was explained to him. He was still young back then, graduating from the special education school and about to transfer to the vocational school. His grandma told him. I treat him well and I have always taken care of him.

Q: Had you planned beforehand to wait for him to graduate to tell him?

QB's father: We hadn't planned. His grandma took it upon herself to tell him. I hadn't wanted to tell him, but his grandma told him. After her revelation, he seldom

calls me “Dad.” He knows and he is getting older. I had planned to wait till he was old enough to understand to tell him. But his biological father must have told him when he took him out that time, especially since he took him to where he lived.

Q: So he probably understood some of it back then?

QB’s father: He should have if he was really told back then.

Q: Had his grandma already told him when his biological father took him out that time?

QB’s father: No, not yet. His dad must have told him that he is his dad and introduced him to those in his family, since they went to his place. He lived on Luban Road, underneath Lupu Bridge, one of those old places. Ever since his grandma told him, he has almost never called me “Dad.”

Q: So you are not as close as you were before?

QB’s father: Right. He understands now since he is older.

Q: Does it bother you?

QB’s father: Not really. He isn’t my biological son anyway, so I am okay. I will still do what I am supposed to do, like I have always done. I will try to fulfill my responsibilities since I still see him as my own son.

A Stable Job and Close Co-Workers

QB’s father: After he graduated from school, he stayed home for close to 2 years. He would sleep in and get up and brush his teeth for lunch. There was no computer at home yet, so he would watch TV till 1 or 2 a.m. It was too late and not good for his brain. So I discussed with my wife and decided to find a job for him. It would be good for him since he would be able to support himself instead of lazing around at home. So we sought help from the school and found him this job of his.

Q: The school didn’t arrange any job for him upon his graduation?

QB’s father: No, the school didn’t arrange jobs for the students. It asked them to look for jobs themselves. If you couldn’t, then the school would give you some referrals. There were several designated teachers who would lobby for restaurant internships for the students at places like KFC and McDonald’s, and if the students did well at the internships and the managers liked them, they could be formally hired. The store would just tell the school that it would like to hire a particular student.

Like my son, he started with Papa John’s and has been with them ever since. There were some disruptions in between, but he has been at Papa John’s for a total of 5 years. He does well at his job and everyone at the store likes him. The truth is that he is not the violent kind who physically or verbally abuses others. He isn’t that kind. He listens well and does whatever the manager asks him to do, so everyone at the store likes him and orders him around.

We didn’t get him a disability certificate after he graduated from school. After 3 months on the job, Papa John’s asked him for the certificate saying that he couldn’t continue working there without it. So we went to Changning Psychiatric Health Center to apply for one and didn’t succeed. He was tested at the center and asked to

read characters from pictures and differentiate colors. His score was two points higher than the standard, so he didn't qualify for the certificate. He had to stay home and that lasted almost 12 months. Originally you were allowed to apply for the disability certificate twice a year, then it was reduced to once a year. That's why he had to stay home for almost a year between applications. During that year, Papa John's asked him to go back to work even without the certificate saying that it was willing to wait on it, so I asked him to go back to work. So he went back to work and didn't do particularly well and had to come back home after about 2 months. We were able to get him the disability certificate the second time we applied. After that, he went back to Papa John's and has been working there ever since.

Of course, without a disability certificate, he definitely couldn't have continued working at Papa John's. He is doing okay now. His IQ is indeed a little lower than that of average people. But look at him, he watches TV, plays on his cell phone, and gets on WeChat without anyone helping him. I don't know what to do with WeChat, but he knows. But maybe it's because he has been exposed to society and his social circle is different now. He hadn't known so many things when he was staying home.

Q: He didn't get a disability certificate when he was young?

QB's father: He was going to school and no one had thought of getting a disability certificate for him. Some kids at his school did get the certificate right before graduation. There were only a few kids from his school who went on to work after graduation. The majority just stayed home. Even a large percentage of the healthier ones couldn't get jobs, like those with ADHD who couldn't stay still for anything. There's a kid who couldn't stop for one single second all day long. There were also kids with cerebral palsy who couldn't take care of themselves, drooling all the time at school and having no control over bathroom needs. There were many kids like that at the school, and comparatively speaking, QB was normal.

Q: After he stopped working at Papa John's, what did he do at home?

QB's father: There's nothing to do at home. He would watch TV or take a walk when he was in the mood. He didn't cook or do laundry. We did all of the chores.

Q: Did you not ask him to help around the house?

QB's father: We didn't, and he didn't want to help anyway. He would pour cooking oil into the pan, and once the oil started boiling, he would throw the vegetables in while staying way back, and the oil ended up splashing everywhere on the counter. So we didn't want him to cook anymore. When he was staying home, we asked him to wash his own socks. He did it at first, then he didn't want to do it anymore no matter how we asked him, so we gave up and have been doing it for him since. Now it's even harder to ask him to do it, and he doesn't have time anyway since he works.

Q: Is there any other job your son wants for himself, and does he have any plan for his own future?

QB's father: No. He believes he is doing well at the current job. I asked him how he was doing and he said he was doing okay. I went to the store to ask the manager, too, and the manager said that everyone likes him. Both managers said that he is in good hands at the store. I came back home and asked him, "Do you really want to work there? If you do, you do. If not, don't force yourself because you won't be

happy, and you are still young. So are you sure you want to work there?” He said “Yes.” He really likes that job (see Fig. 1).

What does he do there? He works in the kitchen in the back. He makes pizza dough, at least I think that’s what it’s called. And he spreads ketchup on the dough and lays on some beef. If someone orders a fruit plate or drink, he will put a small



Fig. 1 Mr. QB at work

umbrella on the drink or a slice of lemon. That's what he does. He doesn't work in the dining area. He stays in the back as kitchen help.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers?

QB's father: He gets along well and everyone likes him a lot. He has no problem with any of the co-workers, according to the manager. I often chat with the manager and call her up sometimes. Her last name is Huang. The one before her was a guy whose last name is Liu. I talk to her often, texting her during Chinese New Year or calling her up sometimes and asking how my son has been doing recently. She always replies, "Everything is good. We all like him a lot. Don't worry, I will take care of him."

He was asked to work OT on almost every holiday including Chinese New Year. For the Chinese New Year this year, he worked OT all 3 days. He also worked OT on October 1 and New Year's Day. The manager told me, "Why would you have him stay home? If you let him come to work, he can earn 3 days' pay. That's pretty good, isn't it?" The manager takes good care of him, too. Sometimes he is asked to help with things that are not part of his job, and he is very eager and happy to help.

It's good that he is happy at what he does. The pay isn't high, but at least it's enough for him to support himself. Now he makes 2,500 or 2,600 yuan per month. The truth is that if he doesn't like this job and wants to quit, we will have a hard time finding him another job. Who would want to hire him the way he is? There's no way any of those regular workplaces, stores or restaurants would hire him. So I am grateful to the school for this job. The school knew that jobs don't come easy to people like him and it did its best to set things up for them, and workplaces that do hire people like him can enjoy some tax benefits.

The school had two designated teachers who lobbied for places to hire them. For example, there were a number of students graduating in a certain year, so the two teachers would visit workplaces and arrange for the students to interview with those cooperating workplaces to make it easier for the students to get jobs. It's still like that now. The school is still in existence. It's called Changning Primary Vocational School and is specifically for kids graduating from special education schools. It's located on Dingxi Road.

Q: What does he do after getting paid? Is he in charge of his own pay?

QB's father: The pay is deposited into the bankcard. We are in charge of his pay. Every month after he gets paid, we will give him 400 or 500 yuan, and he can use it to buy drinks on hot days.

He takes Tuesday and Wednesday off. On the days he works, we will cook for him. His mom doesn't cook in the morning. I do it, since I am retired. Before my mother-in-law was hospitalized, I did almost all the cooking including breakfast for him. The routine with him is that he eats at home from 9:30 to 10 a.m. We will get his food and clothes ready for him, and he will leave for work right after he finishes eating. He starts work at 11 a.m. and he prefers to leave at 10 a.m. He walks from home to Jiangsu Road where there's bus Line 01 and Line 02, both of which go to Caoyang Road. He knows where to get off to walk the shortest distance to the store. He normally arrives early and has never been late for work. He usually arrives at 10:40 or 10:45. If we have no packed lunch for him, he will eat out. There are a lot of

places to eat next to the store, like hot pot, fried wontons, and curry rice. If he feels he has no appetite for homemade food, he will eat out himself. We will have dinner ready for him when he comes back. It's like that every day. We do his laundry for him. He will watch a little TV after he gets home and then go to bed.

Q: Was there a big difference before and after he started working? Has he become more talkative?

QB's father: He has matured a lot. When he wasn't working, he seemed to be a little autistic and not inclined to talk. And he seems to have changed completely since he started working. After all, he is exposed to society and party of society. He sees a lot and his mentality has improved a lot. When he gets home, I will ask him, "How did it go today? Are you tired?" And he will say, "Not tired, I am okay." "Were you busy today?" "Nope." "What did you do today? What did you have for lunch?" We will carry on conversations like that. Sometimes he eats out when he doesn't bring food from home. So he has become more talkative. Whatever he sees or hears at the store including gossip, he will come back and tell us. There are employees coming and going at the store, and he will tell us about it including their names.

Q: So overall, having a job has been good for him.

QB's father: Of course, definitely. We used to not have a computer at home, so he spent all his time watching TV. He wouldn't go to bed till midnight and he would spend the morning catching up on lost sleep. He would skip breakfast and get up at noon. His schedule has become more regular since he started working. It used to be erratic when he was staying home, so I was determined to send him out there to work. I was looking for a job for him everywhere. I went to China Mobile, which is close to where we live, to a telecommunications company, to a bus company, to the subway company, and to Changning Cable TV where there were openings for repairmen for cable boxes. I took him to all kinds of interviews and it was no use, no one wanted him.

Q: So eventually he got this job with help from the school?

QB's father: Right. There were openings for subway security back then and I took him to the interview in Bashi Building close to Dapu Road. He wasn't hired, not even as a security guard.

Treated Better Than a Biological Son

QB's father: We make effort to talk to him, to take him out including eating out, because we want to help develop his intellect.

Before he started working, we would take him out for a walk after dinner on a hot day. Kids like him need to see the world instead of being locked up at home all day long. We would take him to the supermarket and ask him to check out what he liked, then we would give him money so he could pay for it. We often taught him how to interact when we took him out. I still had the car then, so we often drove when we went out. I used to drive the company car home and drive it to work.

We also encouraged him to watch TV. We have a small room measuring a little over eight square meters. He has that room to himself where he has his own TV. Now he also has his own computer there.

That's the best we can do. Neither his mom nor I are highly educated. I graduated in 1973, and you know what happened to those graduating around that time. The Cultural Revolution was still going on, and there was no school to go to. Whoever graduated was counted as having graduated from junior high school, even though some were just elementary school graduates, and it wasn't exactly advanced education.

Q: When did you buy him the computer?

QB's father: It has been a while, 6 years actually. He wanted one, so we bought him one. We had no idea what to do with the computer, so he figured it out himself.

Q: Did he install all the programs after you bought him the computer?

QB's father: He did it himself since we didn't know how. The computer cost 2,800 yuan. The battery died yesterday, and I haven't got around to buying a new one for him. I don't know where to get a new one. The brand is Lenovo, so I probably have to go to a Lenovo store, right? I may not even be able to get a replacement since the computer is really old. There's no power display now even when the computer is plugged in.

Q: Is his computer a desktop?

QB's father: It's a desktop. Oh no, it's a laptop.

Q: Six years is a long time.

QB's father: Right. Computers get outdated so fast nowadays. It's a laptop that came with a free bag.

Q: So basically, you give him whatever he wants?

QB's father: Basically. When he was going to school, he dressed and ate better than his schoolmates. I figured that because he is not my biological son, if I dressed him just so-so, the neighbors would think it's because I am not his real dad. So I usually bought fancier things for him. It's like that even now. He dresses better than the average person, and his shoes are all name brand ones like Nike and Adidas. The neighbors all tell me that my son has been wearing name brands ever since he was young. They all know I treat this son very well even though he is not my biological son. If I didn't treat him well people would judge me, especially since he is not my biological son. And how would his mom have felt? She would have felt that I didn't treat him well because he is not my biological son. I am sure she would have felt that way.

I make sure that he not only dresses well but also eats well. He doesn't eat leftovers now and is very picky about what he eats. His mom will cook braised water eel and pork for him. He will eat it at home and bring some to work. If he comes home at night and is still served the same dish, he will not eat much. If the dish is saved in the fridge till the next day, he won't even touch it, no matter how good it is. Now we only pack quality food for him to bring to work. The manager commented last time on how good his packed lunch was. There are some employees at the store who are not from Shanghai, and what do they eat? They have no time to cook themselves by the time they get home at nine or ten at night. And a lot of parents will just pack leftovers and put them in the fridge for lunch the next day. We cook fresh in the morning for

him to bring for lunch. We will buy groceries in the morning and cook for him. He will eat some at home and bring some to eat at the store, and he won't eat leftovers. We will have conversations like this: "QB, eat some of this." "No, I won't." "Why not?" "Because it's from yesterday." He only eats freshly cooked food.

Q: Where does he go when he goes out by himself?

QB's father: He is pretty adventurous. Changning Library is close to Furongjiang Road which is easy to get to. He can just take bus Line 71 which stops right in front of the library. He often goes there himself to read illustrated books.

Q: Does he check out the books to bring home?

QB's father: He does, but he won't read them at home. He used to borrow books from school and from Changning Library, too. He even has a library card. A couple of times he checked out science books on building model tanks and planes. He often buys model cars, planes, and tanks and assembles them at home and displays the models in his room. He is quite into that. Overall, he isn't doing bad. There are a lot of people doing worse than he is. He is okay, at least he's self-dependent. You can't have unrealistic expectations for him, can you?

He goes to Zhongshan Park and Chenghuang Temple sometimes. He can go to Disney himself, too. He just needs to take subway Line 11. I took him there for the first time. The park wasn't open yet, so we just spent a day wandering around outside the park, and he was so happy. He went on his own later, twice at least. It's easy to go there, just Line 11 all the way to the terminal. When we took him out, we took the subway all the time. We would ride to People's Square, then go to the pedestrians-only area or to the Bund. We would tell him the directions and he could remember them all. Now if we leave him out there somewhere, he can find his way home and we won't be worried about that at all.

We don't take him out as much now since he works. But he will go out himself. He has 2 days off, right? Tuesday and Wednesday. So he will go out whenever he is in the mood.

On his day off last week, he said it was boring staying home, so I asked him to go out for fun on his own. He said he wanted to go to the Oriental Pearl and I encouraged him to go. He said it costs more than 200 yuan to visit the topmost globe of that place. I have never been to that globe myself; I only visited the middle one. And he never went that high on any school trip. There's an aerospace cabin up there as well as an aerial restaurant, and he went to both places and spent a whole day there. That's what we do with him now. He spends the money he makes on himself and he can support himself. After pension deductions, he makes a little over 2,000 yuan, around 2,200 or 2,300 yuan which is enough to live on for him. That's life for him. It will be very difficult for him to find dates or get married. Him being the way he is, I don't know who will marry him unless she has a disability too.

Q: So he has no problem taking care of himself in daily life?

QB's father: Of course not. You know people in their twenties nowadays. How many of them can do laundry or cook? Not many. And we don't expect that of him anyway.

Q: How do the relatives see him?

QB's father: It doesn't matter how they see him. We have no choice anyway, having a kid like him. The relatives don't have much to say about it.

For his sake, I decided not to have a kid of my own. After I married his mom, she got pregnant, but we discussed it and she had an abortion more than 2 months into the pregnancy.

To tell you the truth, back then, I didn't want another kid myself. What would I do if the kid had the same IQ as QB? It would be fine if the kid was like me, but what if the kid was like my wife? That would have been the end of the world and given me so much more pressure. So I struggled about it and decided against having another kid.

I am still trying to justify my decision sometimes. I have six siblings. My oldest brother has a daughter, so does my second oldest brother. My third oldest brother has no kid because the wife can't have kids. My younger brother and my oldest sister have one daughter each. My second oldest sister has a son but he doesn't carry our family name. Most of the grandkids are girls, so why would I not want to have a kid? I wanted a son to carry on the family heritage which has now been discontinued. I was back and forth on this one and eventually decided against having a kid of my own, because I would have been done for if the kid had even worse disability than QB. What if the kid had cerebral palsy or deformed feet? That would have been disastrous and totally consuming for me. I thought about it and gave up the idea. If my wife had not had that abortion, the kid would be 16 or 17 now.

Sometimes I feel like I've picked the short straw in life. My two older brothers advised me to have a kid of my own and I couldn't exactly tell them my own reasoning. So I just resigned myself to raising my wife's son. Even though he is not my biological son, I have done my best with him and I am sure he knows that. It's up to him how he is going to treat me in the future. If he has a good heart, he will treat me nice. Otherwise I am okay too, because after all, he is not my biological son and it will be normal if he does not treat me nice. I take it really easy. I just want to live a good life myself and to see him happy. He can support himself now, so that's good enough for me.

What Happens When the Parents Grow Old?

Q: So he can live independently now?

QB's father: Kind of, except that we will still have to teach him laundry and cooking. Actually, he does know what to do but doesn't want to do it. Sometimes I would buy groceries including pork and tofu and ask him to cook one dish, but he would refuse to do it. I would say, "Let me teach you what to do. Cut the tofu into chunks and shred the pork. Marinate the pork, pour some oil into the pan and stir fry the pork first." He knows the procedures, but he just won't cook for you.

We can still take care of him now. We don't exactly live a luxurious life, but at least he is doing well at Papa John's. What happens down the road, however? I am already 62, so how do I take care of him when I can't even walk? I won't be able

to take care of him and that's my biggest worry now. I would like to find a wife for him, but the problem is that no good girl would want him. People like him have no hope of getting married. If you get someone for him whose IQ is the same as or even lower than his, the two of them will be done for. How can the two of them have any kind of family life? They won't know what to do at all. If one of them knows how to cook or do laundry, then maybe they can have some resemblance of a family life.

Someone told me not to worry about it at all. Once we get old, we can just move to a nursing home and wash our hands of him. Just leave him an apartment and some money, right? What else can we do? (Lost in thoughts) My original thinking was to hand him over to his biological father after we get old. Just ask that dad to take him home so we won't have to worry about anything.

Q: Do you talk to his schoolmates' parents, like his good friends' parents, about plans for the future?

QB's father: No, no. We only chatted sitting together at the parent-teacher conferences. We would never call each other up to chat outside the conferences or visit each other at home.

At both the 9-year-curriculum school and the vocational school, there were several parent-teacher conferences each year including at the beginning and end of the year. The teacher would review what's going on with the students, then make suggestions to the parents and explain expectations for the students, then ask the parents what suggestions they might have for the school. After all of that, the parents would have the freedom to talk to each other.

Q: Has he ever thought about having a family of his own?

QB's father: No, never. His mind probably hasn't progressed to that stage yet. He comes home from work now and all he does is computer and cell phone, consuming endless data. I paid more than 300 yuan for his data last month. He plays games non-stop and can use up more than 300 yuan in data per month. When he takes a break at work, he will just sit there and play games since he has nothing else to do. When he comes home, he plays games on his computer. Playing games is all he does.

Q: Do you talk to him about the future?

QB's father: No, we haven't, since he is still young. I had wanted to visit his teacher and see if there's any female schoolmate whose disability isn't that bad. Such a girl could have been a good match for him, since they were from the same school. It would be near impossible for him to find anyone out there and he would have had a slightly better shot at it at school. Out there in the real world, who would want him once his intellectual disability is known? Who would want someone like him with a disability certificate? You can't exactly hide it, because even if you succeed at it, eventually there will be fights which can even lead to divorce. So you have to tell people upfront, and people in their right mind will know, as soon as they see QB or talk to him, what kind of IQ he has. He isn't like us average people. It will be very difficult for him. That's why I figured that maybe the teacher could introduce some girl to him from the same grade at school with a similar IQ as his, granted that her parents agreed. What can I do? If only someone could tell me what to do with QB the way he is.

Q: To wrap up, what expectations do you have for the government?

QB's father: I have no expectations for the government. But I do hope that QB's job can be a stable one so that he can continue to support himself.

Interview with QB's Co-Worker

Interviewee: Restaurant manager

Interviewer and writer: Jiaying Xiao

Interview date: January 16, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where QB works

Q: How's QB at work? Is he a dedicated worker?

Manager: He is good. He listens well and does a good job, whatever you ask him to do.

Q: What does he do at work?

Manager: He makes appetizers and drinks, and he slices pizzas. He can do everything except for kneading and tossing dough, which needs training and might be technically too difficult for him.

Q: Can you be more specific about making appetizers?

Manager: All of the appetizers are already half-cooked, so he just needs to put them in the oven whenever orders come in. He doesn't have to add ingredients, so making appetizers is not a problem for him. He works in the kitchen and doesn't interact with customers.

Q: How does he get along with his co-workers?

Manager: He gets along very well. He has been working here for quite a few years. I joined more than 3 years ago, and he had worked here for more than a year when I joined.

Q: How's your personal relationship with him?

Manager: We only interact as far as work goes and hardly have any personal relationship. He has good relationships with his co-workers.

Q: What do you think of his personality?

Manager: He doesn't do well with strangers. When you meet him for the first time, he won't be able to express himself well. He doesn't communicate well with strangers, but with people he knows like us, he can communicate.

Q: What do you normally talk about with him?

Manager: We talk about eating out. He plays games, so he talks to his co-workers about cell phone games. He isn't allowed to take out his phone during work hours, so he will talk to them when he takes breaks about games he has played. Other than that, I haven't heard him talk about much else. He doesn't really stand out that much, because our company has a lot of employees like him. There is indeed some gap between them and people without disabilities, but if you really make the effort to teach them something, they will get it. I think he is great. He listens when I talk to him and does a good job and doesn't make mistakes. Overall, he is doing well at

work. I have no unrealistic expectations of him, and whatever I ask him to do now, he does it well.

Q: Did he acquire the skills here at the store or had he been trained at the school before coming here?

Manager: He learnt on the job. For example, there are formulas for the products we have, and employees learn about the formulas at the store. There's another employee being cared for at the store who works in the dining area. He is more outgoing and can strike up a conversation with anyone. And appearance-wise, there's almost no difference between him and people without disabilities. QB is more of an introvert.

Interview with Mr. QB

Interviewee: Mr. QB

Interviewer and writer: Jiaying Xiao

Interview date: January 16, 2017

Interview place: Restaurant where QB works

Q: What do you normally do at work?

QB: I work my shifts and clean up the place. I make appetizers by baking them on trays. I also make baked rice by adding the ingredients and baking everything in the oven and taking the rice out when it's done. I also make drinks, including Cola, Sprite, and lemon tea. I have to shake some of the drinks and use soda sometimes. I mix the drinks.

Q: What do you think of the co-workers here? Are you happy being with them? I heard from your manager that you will talk to them about games. What kind of games?

QB: I am happy being with them. The games are XXL, PVP, and Pokémon.

Q: Do you think you are doing well at work? Do you make mistakes?

QB: I am doing well. I make mistakes sometimes.

Q: What do you do when you make mistakes?

QB: The products that I make mistakes with can be sold at a discount. And I will just make sure I don't make the same mistakes again.

Q: Are you happier now at work or were you happier when you were going to school?

QB: I was happier when I was going to school. I would go to school and play on the cell phone when I wasn't in class.

Q: What's the biggest difference between when you were going to school and now?

QB: I had more freedom when I was going to school and life was easier. I am supervised at work.

Q: The teachers didn't supervise you at school?

QB: They did, of course.

Q: What were you taught in class?

QB: Math and Chinese. I don't remember exactly what.

Q: Were you naughty at school?

QB: I was sometimes, and the teacher would give me a talk.

Q: Did you play tricks on other kids?

QB: No. I always behaved.

Q: Did the school organize any activities that you still remember well now?

QB: School carnivals where every class had games or other fun going on.

Q: Do you remember which teacher was your favorite?

QB: I remember all the teachers. I have had three teachers and I liked Ms. Zhuang best. She danced in class and was really beautiful when she danced.

Q: How did you come to work today?

QB: I took the bus.

Q: Was it crowded on the bus?

QB: No, not at this hour and some of the buses had no passengers at all. If I leave home at a later time, the bus can get crowded sometimes.

Q: Have you ever been late for work?

QB: I was late before, but not anymore.

Q: Were you late when you first started working?

QB: No.

Q: When were you late then?

QB: (Thinking for a long time) I am seldom late.

Q: What do you normally do on your days off?

QB: I have Tuesday and Wednesday off. I stay home on my days off to play games on the computer, like Pokémon and Kaixin001.

Q: You will need friends to play Kaixin001. Are the friends online friends or friends in real life?

QB: Online friends.

Q: Do you go out for fun?

QB: Within Shanghai. I go to Zhongshan Park and Longemont Shopping Mall to buy things, food actually.

Q: What's your favorite food?

QB: I like drinks including milk tea.

Q: Have you been to Disney?

QB: I went during the trial phase.

Q: Was it fun?

QB: Not really. It was during the trial phase and the place wasn't officially open yet.

Q: Did you go into the theme park or just tour the outside?

QB: Just the outside. I went with my dad and the place wasn't officially open yet.

Q: Do you want to go again?

QB: Not really. It's too expensive.

Q: Have you ever traveled outside Shanghai?

QB: I have not been outside Shanghai. I have always stayed close to Shanghai.

Q: Do you have a favorite place to go to?

QB: Chenghuang Temple where there are a lot of people.

Q: So you like places with a lot of people? Do you feel happy being with a lot of people?

QB: Right.

Q: There are lit lanterns at Chenghuang Temple during every Lantern Festival. Have you ever seen those lanterns?

QB: No. Too many people to get around anywhere.

Q: What do you normally do during Chinese New Year? It's just around the corner.

QB: I stay home most of the time and go out sometimes.

Q: Do you visit relatives?

QB: No.

Q: Is it time to work now? Are you all set?

QB: Yeah, I already punched in.

Observation of QB at Work

Observation date: 11:00–20:00, January 16, 2017

Observation place: Restaurant where QB works

Observer and writer: Jiaying Xiao

Time	What QB did	Remarks
10:50	Cleaned up and got ready for work	
11:00	Started working	
11:08	Made spaghetti (added ingredients and put the spaghetti in the oven)	
11:11	Transferred cooked spaghetti to a plate	
11:18	Made spaghetti	
11:20	Made spaghetti	
11:27	Transferred cooked spaghetti to a plate	
11:33	Made appetizers (added ingredients and put the appetizers in the oven)	
11:48	Made pizza (put the pizza in the oven)	
11:55	Fetches takeout orders	
12:01	Made appetizers	
12:10	Made spaghetti	
12:21	Boxed takeout orders	
12:30	Made spaghetti	Talked with a co-worker while checking single food items being made
12:38	Made appetizers	

(continued)

(continued)

Time	What QB did	Remarks
12:43	Handed takeout orders to the manager	
12:52	Made spaghetti	
13:03	Made appetizers	
13:12	Made drinks	
13:19	Made spaghetti	
13:25	Refilled ingredients	
13:33	Organized work counters	
13:50	Made baked rice (added ingredients and put the rice in the oven)	
14:02	Fetches takeout bags	
14:15	Packaged takeout orders	
14:25	Made baked rice	
14:30	Made drinks	
14:36	Delivered coffee	
14:38	Delivered tea	
14:41	Delivered coffee and tea	
14:48	Made drinks	
15:00–17:00	Took a break	When he was on break, QB either played on the cell phone or talked to co-workers about cell phone games
17:16	Fetches takeout orders	
17:23	Made spaghetti	
17:32	Made spaghetti	
17:41	Made spaghetti	
17:50	Made baked rice	
17:56	Made appetizers	
18:04	Made drinks	
18:17	Made appetizers	
18:26	Made drinks	
18:35	Made spaghetti	
18:42	Made drinks	
18:45	Made spaghetti	
18:55	Made spaghetti	
19:03	Made spaghetti	
19:11	Made appetizers	Chatted with co-workers
19:26	Made spaghetti	Talked with a co-worker while checking single food items being made

(continued)

(continued)

Time	What QB did	Remarks
19:39	Cleaned up counters	
20:00	Left for the day	

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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Eager for but Fearful of Communication



Ting Song and Liting Mo

Interview with Ms. Y's Mother

Y, female, born in 1997. Has an elder sister. Grade II intellectual disability. Graduated from a special education school—Shanghai Primary Vocational and Technical School of Changning District. Started working at Shanghai Papa John's in 2015.

Interviewee: Y's mother

Interviewers and writers: Ting Song and Liting Mo

Interview date: July 19, 2016 and January 25, 2018

Interview place: Xingkong Café in Guanghua Building, Fudan University, and telephone interview

A Precious Baby Long Overdue

Q: Do you mind if we ask when you were born?

Y's mother: November 21, 1959.

Q: How did you meet Y's dad?

Y's mother: I used to live in the old public housing, a stone building with no flushable toilets. My parents moved there in the 1950s and I was born there. We lived on the second floor with a neighbor across the hallway. My husband was the co-worker of the youngest son of that neighbor, so he introduced him to me. We are about the same age. We both graduated in 1977 and I am several months older than

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he is. After he was discharged from the military, he got a job working in electronics at a factory, and I worked at a textile factory—we just stayed together.

Q: How old were you when you met him?

Y's mother: I was around 28, and I got married at 30.

Q: Was it considered late?

Y's mother: Almost everyone married late and had kids late back then. The legal age for marriage was 25, but a lot of people waited till they were 26 or 27. We were living far from each other and transportation was not as convenient as it is now, so we only got together once a week. We married in February 1988 and settled down in Changning District after that.

I missed my period the second month after getting married, because I got pregnant. But I had a miscarriage when I was a little over 70 days pregnant and I bled a lot. I didn't go out of my way to try again following that. Then 4 years later, in 1992, I adopted a newborn who is now my elder daughter. So, we had been raising my adopted daughter for 6 years before I got pregnant suddenly, but I had a miscarriage 40 days later. I got pregnant again soon after, and that was Y.

In 1997, even though I was past the prime age for childbearing, I didn't get a thorough physical. Had it been today, I would have had my amniotic fluid tested to see if the baby had Down syndrome. I skipped all of that. Y was moving around in my tummy the whole time, without a moment's rest. My own mom passed away when I was very young, so there was no one to advise me on pregnancy. I was working in communications then and had to commute to work every day on an electric bike. No one could tell I was pregnant even in my fifth month, and I didn't take maternity leave till I was 8 months along. One day I felt sick. I was feverish and throwing up, so I went to the hospital myself. The doctor kept me for observation but couldn't find anything wrong. I asked for a C-section before the due date. I hadn't bothered with prenatal nutritional supplements or education, and at 38, I was old for an expecting mom.

Y weighed in at a little over 6 lb. She was a beautiful baby, with fair skin and curly hair. The doctor was pushing for breastfeeding, but I didn't have much milk myself, so I fed her formula, and she didn't like it and didn't drink a lot. She would smile at people and play with them, and she seemed to recognize people. She would make loud noises too and cry non-stop. Maybe something was wrong with her mentally as far back as then, but we never even considered that possibility.

She learned to walk first, maybe when she was 14 months old, I don't quite remember. But she learned to speak very late, much later than other kids. We both worked to support the family. I actually went back to work after just 1 month's maternity leave. Unlike some other families with grandparents, it was only the two of us taking care of two kids. So Y was sent to the nursery when she was 10 months old.

Q: Who took care of her for the 8 or 9 months before that?

Y's mother: We paid a lady in the neighborhood to take care of her.

Even after she started preschool, she would still cry a lot and cry really loud. But one thing she understood very clearly was if someone mistreated or hit her, she would come home and tell us about it. One time she said that the teacher spanked

her, and I figured that it was because she had relieved herself in her pants. She was five at the time.

Q: Did you object to the preschool teacher spanking her?

Y's mother: I did. I talked to the principal and the teacher reacted strongly. I felt that she started holding a grudge against me after that, so I switched Y to another preschool. Some teachers didn't like my switching schools, because they believed that teachers spanked kids almost as a joke. But I disagreed. My child may not have a high IQ, but her EQ is of a decent level, and I simply cannot ignore problems she reports to me. But of course, as long as you leave your kid in the hands of someone else, things will happen sooner or later...

We hopped from one preschool to another, one of the reasons being that the teachers were always saying negative things about my child, and I wasn't happy about that. Another reason was that, as you know, school education is very fast-paced, and when my child, who has a low IQ to start with, couldn't keep up, the teachers blamed it on the lack of education and lack of a sense of responsibility on the parents' part. At that time, we didn't know that there was something wrong with Y.

We would drop them off at school in a hurry before going to work, and pick them up in a hurry and bring them home and cook for them, so we had little time to communicate with them. It wasn't till Y was about to graduate from preschool that a teacher said to me, "Have you taken your daughter to see any doctors? She can't keep up with other kids and as parents, don't you care?" I was thinking that the teacher was being too demanding and prejudiced against my child, and that she must only like outstanding kids. I was already in my forties and suffering from rheumatoid arthritis myself, and I had to work hard to help support the family, so I wasn't paying much attention to Y. Later I told Y that I felt sorry about it, and she said it was okay. She has a low IQ and couldn't keep up at school, but there's nothing wrong with her EQ. Kids wouldn't play with her, so she asked me to buy stickers and little toys to share with them. And whenever she was bullied at school, she would come home and tell me about it. She wouldn't talk at school at all.

Difficulties in Learning at Regular School

Q: How did she do at elementary school?

Y's mother: She started elementary school at eight, but her IQ was that of a 2- or 3-year-old, so how could she keep up? Her dad was very patient at helping her with homework, and she was okay with calligraphy. But she couldn't use her brain, and her dad had to do all the math including additions and subtractions for her.

Q: Would any classmates bully her?

Y's mother: She had bad grades, so no one would play with her. They would grab her pencils and erasers, so she spent the first year crying.

Her Chinese teacher suggested that I take her to see a doctor. Back then, kids like her were tested at mental institutions. I took her to several of them and she was tested

on shapes like triangles and diamonds and on addition and subtraction, and she was clueless, so the test results were disheartening.

One day she saw me crying in the hospital yard, with a sheet of paper in my hand. She asked if she had tested poorly and I confirmed it (sobbing), telling her that her scores were all bad. She said, “Don’t tell Dad, otherwise he will be mad.” She was only seven or eight then, but she understood.

Q: Why didn’t she want you to tell her dad?

Because I was the one raising her. When she was young, I would go to work during the day and pick her up at 3 or 4 p.m., and that was the way in preschool too. Even now, she interacts more with me. She isn’t expressive. Her dad doesn’t talk much with her. He just helped her with homework and it was very hard for him, and towards the end, it was basically her dad doing all the homework for her. But there was nothing we could do about it.

(Crying) So, we just resigned ourselves to it and left the regular elementary school. Actually, after completing first grade, she hardly attended second grade because she just couldn’t keep up. We visited Qixing Special Education School in Putuo District. The director of academics asked if we had made a mistake because Y looked fine. I showed him the test results and he immediately accepted her. That happened during summer vacation, and Y started at that school on September 1.

Thriving at Special Education School

Q: Which grade was she enrolled in at the special education school?

Y’s mother: Kids were enrolled by age, so she went straight to third grade.

Q: What did she learn at the special education school? Was the curriculum the same as at regular schools?

Y’s mother: How could it have been the same? The curriculum was very simple, and parents sat in on almost all of the tests. The school offered pottery classes using clay, and she won some prizes. She was sent out to competitions and sang *Grateful Hearts* and *Invisible Wings*. She had a lot of opportunities to interact with the world outside school. She participated in all of the activities at school, and the school took very good care of her and offered her a lot of opportunities. She was chosen to raise the flag every day, and to sing and dance. She even performed at Special Olympics.

Q: When did she participate in Special Olympics?

Y’s mother: She was still in elementary school. It was a big deal at the time, with interviews by the TV station and tapings, which I’ve put somewhere. She used to be skinny and looked okay, whereas a lot of other kids at the school looked very offish. Last time I even put the video on DVD and told her teacher about it. Which reminds me, her teacher has a lot of pictures of her raising the flag and dancing, and she knows very well which activities she has participated in. The teacher is super nice. She took over the class when she was in her twenties, and now she is probably 33 or 34. I can’t recall all of the activities.

Q: Which event did she compete in at Special Olympics?

Y's mother: Hula hoop.

Q: Where did she learn that?

Y's mother: At school, since she never did it at home and I have no idea how many twirls she could do. She also competed in diabolo and cucurbit. I'm not 100% sure, actually. She wished she could be better like other kids, saying that the teacher gave her so many opportunities, but she was not the best, and she would tell me who could do this and who could do that. I told her that there were certain things she could do and certain things she couldn't and that she had to accept it.

Q: Did she enjoy participating in those activities?

Y's mother: She did. She really wanted to participate and to be on camera, but she wouldn't ask her teacher for it. She would rather wait for the teacher to ask her if she was interested in a certain activity. She cared a lot about the teacher acknowledging her and giving her special attention. She has a strong sense of honor and a grateful heart.

Q: Was she happy at school?

Y's mother: She loved going to school and being with her classmates. But she hated studying and homework. Her grades were awful and she had no math concepts. She is better at addition and subtraction now, but still can't do multiplication and division. She always wanted to go to school because she could have fun there.

Q: How did she get along with her classmates?

Y's mother: All of her classmates had disabilities. They only knew that the teacher liked Y but didn't know how nice Y is. Some parents knew and would comment on how nice she is.

One thing good about her is that she is eager to help. There were all kinds of kids at the special education school, and in the same class, you could find kids who couldn't control their bowel movements, who had Down syndrome, and who had severe autism. Y was lucky in that she was assigned to a class with the healthiest kids. At least that's what it looked like since there were no kids in the class with really severe conditions like cerebral palsy. She would help feed the classmates. And when some kids relieved themselves in their pants, she would help the teacher fetch the cleaning lady. So, the teacher was very nice to her.

Q: Were there any classmates she was close to?

Y's mother: The kids wouldn't play with her, so she asked me to buy stickers to share with them. She was very eager to make friends, but the kids still wouldn't play with her. She would come home and tell me about it, and I could empathize.

There are two classmates from elementary school that she still meets with, and their disabilities are not as bad as hers.

One of them is very expressive and watches a lot of TV shows, but she can't tell the time on a watch.

The other one is really into dancing. She is very pretty and can't tell the time on a watch, either. She lives with her grandma, her dad and her uncle. Her dad is mute and her uncle is mute, blind, and deaf. She was adopted, so her family situation is very sad. Her aunt has been taking care of the family. She was on the school dance team and tried very hard at dancing and calligraphy. She likes to go on dates and often hangs out with boys.

Both of them graduated and neither of them has a job. One goes to the Sunshine Home, and the other is waiting for her aunt to decide whether to send her there.

Q: How did she get along with the teacher?

Y's mother: The teacher was very nice to her. She was able to go out for competitions and win awards because of the teacher, and the teacher would give her a bigger portion whenever she distributed goodies because she wanted to encourage her. Y had a lot of certificates of honor. She performed at Changning District Cultural Club and presented flowers at activities hosted by the Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF) branches. So, I often tell her that she should be contented. Wherever she went for school, the teachers valued her. And I gradually realized that she isn't expressive by nature, but through her actions, you can feel that she is being nice to you because you have been nice to her.

She is slightly autistic and doesn't talk. She would answer whatever questions the teachers asked her, but if she ran into the teachers somewhere, she would have nothing to say to them. Riding with me on my electric bike, she couldn't stop chatting to me. And she understood everything including which teacher was nice and what the teachers said. Sometimes she would have a sense of loss, saying, "The teacher is getting married and having kids, so she won't like us anymore." She has no sense of security and doesn't believe that other people will always treat her nice.

I actually interacted a lot with the teacher. The teacher would often take them out to eat. I wouldn't shortchange the teacher because everyone should be appreciative. Now that Y has graduated and the teacher has a kid and even the teacher from the vocational school is pregnant, we don't contact each other as often. Some of her classmates know the right things to say, like "I should buy something and visit the teacher" or "I should call the teacher." Y doesn't say things like that, and even though she will have similar thoughts, she won't make the call. She will wonder why the teacher doesn't take her out anymore, and I will tell her that everyone has their own life and we should try not to bother other people, and that she can buy something and visit the teacher instead of waiting for the teacher to contact her first. That's the way we are. We do what we are supposed to do in whatever positions we find ourselves, and our appreciation should not be short-lived. If you think of your teacher, you can show it by sending a card or buying a bouquet of flowers.

Q: How long did she stay at the special education school?

Y's mother: She went to Shicun Elementary School in Changning District for a little over 12 months, then went straight to third grade at Qixing School in Putuo District, which means that she had 6 years' elementary school. With the 3 years at Changning Primary Vocational School, she has had a total of 9 years' schooling.

A Scholarship Recipient at Vocational School

Q: What did she learn at the vocational school?

Y's mother: She learnt making pastries and room service, and received certificates for both. The work was all about using her hands. The teacher would distribute flour

and the students would make dough and bake and bring the baked pastries home. She also learnt to fold clothes and bedding, pour and deliver tea, place chopsticks, teacups and towels, and place placards for arriving customers. She spent 2 years learning and did an internship the third year.

Q: What kind of pastries did she make? Would she make any at home?

Y's mother: She made Western-style pastries. We kept a diary on when she practiced at home what she had learnt at school on certain days. She would roll the dough with a pin before frying it.

Q: Did she like making them?

Y's mother: In the eyes of the teacher, she was the best listener and had good organization. She liked what she did and was able to not make a mess.

Q: Did she like learning about room service?

Y's mother: She did, but she had bad balance, so she often broke the teacups when carrying them.

Q: Was the 2 years' curriculum at the vocational school easier or more difficult than that at the special education school?

Y's mother: The classes she was in at the two schools were of different levels. At the vocational school, she was among the better students. Students at the vocational school were all average kids¹ with good brains. The teachers knew that they were not into academics and therefore had no unrealistic requirements of them. Some of the tests were especially designed for them and were different from tests for regular students. It's almost like special education.

One of the teachers kept asking me to have Y take the entrance exam to secondary technical schools. I told him that Y wasn't made for it, and he said I shouldn't underestimate her. I couldn't argue with him, so I had to tell him that Y has a disability certificate and Grade II intellectual disability. He even doubted the authenticity of the certificate. I am not kidding.

While she was preparing for the secondary technical school entrance exam, I panicked and felt enormous pressure. I couldn't sleep and would get up a little after four in the morning. I had no energy, so I had to drink two cans of Red Bull before waking her up at 5 a.m. I also borrowed a friend's study materials and had them copied for her. They came in such a big stack, (gesturing with her hands).

That teacher kept saying to her in class, "You are not studying hard. Do you not study at home?" He treated her as the average kid and said the same things to her every day. She would cry and come home and tell me about it. But what could I have done?

"Why isn't she studying? She can do it." No matter how I explained to him that my daughter couldn't do it, he refused to understand. In the end, I had to show him the disability certificate and he treated it almost as an antique. I told him I wasn't kidding him, because all parents want their kids to do well at academics. I had to make him understand that my kid couldn't pass the exam, so he shouldn't force her to

¹Shanghai Primary Vocational and Technical School of Changning District is actually a special education school providing students with ID with vocational training.

take it. She couldn't comprehend any of the test materials, so how could she achieve the unrealistic?

I said, "The truth is that my daughter is half a step behind other kids. She did try, but that's the way it is. I can't force her to take any entrance exams, because I shouldn't obsess with it. If she had it in her, of course I would let her pursue higher education. It's not as if I couldn't afford it." I got along very well with her homeroom teacher, but not with that other teacher. But of course I shouldn't accuse him of anything.

Q: The teacher who encouraged her to take the secondary technical school entrance exam, was he from the vocational school?

Y's mother: He was from Changning Primary Vocational School. He didn't know about our situation, so he would accuse us in front of everyone of not being responsible. Y couldn't memorize her study materials and would cry every day.

At Changning Primary Vocational School, Y even received a scholarship of 300 yuan. The teacher said nice things about her.

Q: Can you tell us more about the scholarship?

Y's mother: She should have got the scholarship for 2 years. The first year, she received the 300 yuan. The second year, my understanding with the teacher was that she would receive it, too. But because that other teacher asked her to take the secondary technical school entrance exam and she couldn't memorize the materials, everyone just pretended to forget about the scholarship, and I didn't pursue it. If the school believed that she wasn't trying hard at academics, I didn't want to fight over it. The scholarship was recognition of her dedication to schoolwork, and the school must have had its own reasons for withholding it.

During the third year at the primary vocational school, the teacher referred her to an internship at Papa John's and referred her good friend, too, the one whose dad is mute. Y was sent to the Papa John's store closest to where we lived, and I could get there within 20 min on my electric bike. The other girl was sent to Minhang District, but she lived in Putuo District, so she had to walk a long way to the store after getting off the subway. She didn't want to go anymore after just 1 day at the store.

Before the one-year internship was up, Papa John's called asking us to bring over the graduation certificate so that it could sign a contract with Y. So, when the time came, I picked up the graduation certificate and Papa John's signed a 3-year contract with her.

Adapting to a Demanding Job

Y's mother: Don't tell anyone this, but when my daughter first started the internship, the mentor was very strict, and Y would cry her eyes out as soon as she got home. She grew up in a protective bubble. We spoiled her and never yelled at her or spanked her. That's how my elder daughter grew up, too. Then other people came along and were strict with Y, but she is not the average kid, she has a disability certificate!

I was very frustrated and wanted to give up. I am very strong-willed myself and can't stand any wrong being done to my kids. But I told her, "Let's find out where you can improve. It's true that your mentor is strict with you about work, but she doesn't know you well."

One time her mentor came out of the store and told me, "I treat her as my own daughter, which is why I am very strict with her." She was indeed the kind of person to expect a lot from those working for her. So, I could only tell her that I was leaving my kid in her capable hands. Then I took her hand and Y's hand and put them on top of each other and asked her to take Y inside the store.

There were two choices. Either I asked Y to get back inside the store, or I took her away with me. I thought it through and decided to have her stay at the store.

Some kids may have been spoiled at home and therefore cannot hear anything negative said about them. Y wanted to unload on me thinking that I might fight her battle for her. Yes, sometimes I do fight her battles for her. But I struggled over this one. She has a disability, so where can she get a job? I didn't think anyone would listen to me if I wanted to plead for a job for her.

I heard that someone was fired at the store, so I asked Y if she understood the implications and I told her not to say anything if she did. Her mentor had multiple roles to play at work, and she must have her own strengths to have become the aggressive lady that she is. We can actually learn something from her there. She has experienced a lot which we know little about, and she needs to let it out, and there are a number of ways she can do that. I said to Y, "You work hard, mopping the floor and wiping the tables, but those are your job responsibilities and you can't be picky about them. Why did Papa John's call you? Papa John's was careful about which of the interns could do the job and could therefore stay. It's not hiring anymore, so you should feel lucky that it called you to sign the contract with you. Some things you just need to understand but not say out loud." So, she promised not to say anything and of course I wouldn't say anything either. With some people, when they did something wrong and you say they did it right, they won't say anything about you, but if you point out that they did wrong, then you will end up paying for it.

When she first started working, she would cry non-stop every night she got home. She is much better now. She works in the kitchen, making pizzas most of the time. Based on the orders on the display board, she will make the dough, add ingredients, and bake the pizzas. It takes a lot of strength to knead the dough for a 10-inch-plus pizza, and she is short. Sometimes four people or three people carry the workload of five people, and each person has to do multiple technical jobs. The technical part should be no problem for regular employees, such as baking chicken wings, boiling noodles, and making drinks. When there are not as many customers in the afternoon, employees are required to check the expiration dates of the food and remove what is about to expire, to wipe down the fridges, to mop the floor, and to do some washing. She lives a full life every day (See Fig. 1).

I told her to learn at every job position because it would be good for her. She shouldn't complain about the work being tough, and there's no other option anyway. She could have sat at home enjoying the A/C and the computer, because she is only 20 this year, but then she would have learnt nothing and as she gets older, she will



Fig. 1 Ms. Y at work

end up with nothing. So, she should step in wherever the store needs someone, and her efforts won't go unnoticed. And it won't be for the pay, because she won't get much of a pay rise no matter what. The minimum pay used to be 2,002 yuan. It has since increased to 2,190 yuan and the take-home pay is 2,250 yuan with 60 yuan being some kind of subsidy. She might get a very small raise next year.

Q: So, Y would cry about her work and whine to you when she got home, but she has stuck with it.

Y's mother: What choices does she have? Could she have quit? She struggled in April or May of this year, because she was about to sign the contract. The teacher from the special education school had kept in contact with her, and the teacher from the vocational school visited her often at the store to collect feedback on her from her mentor and manager. She had pressure and felt that by signing the contract, she would sign herself over to Papa John's.

I told her it's okay and that it's just a job and an honor that she has been given the job. I happened to eat with the aunt of one of her classmates. I forgot where that girl was working except that it was a tough job requiring her to wash fish heads on freezing days. She had never worked before that and her hands had been soft and tender. So, the aunt told me not to let Y give up the Papa John's job. Her mom has three kids and she is the only healthy one. The two sons became deaf and mute and half blind in their thirties. To help her kids, her mom found the oldest son a wife, who is a mute from Zhejiang Province, and helped them adopt a child. That child was Y's classmate. She is very pretty but was having a hard time.

Every day Y gets up, I will remind her to get ready fast and not to be late, because the mentor will be mad if she gets to work late.

Q: So, Y's reactions are faster now, are they?

Y's mother: They are, even though it took a while. The manager even asked if she wanted to work in the dining area. I am always reminding her, "Make sure you refill the tea. And don't you use a lot of ingredients for the pizzas like tomato and red pepper! Check that there's enough of everything on the counters and refill immediately when there's the need, instead of having the mentor scream at you, 'YY, YY, we are out on this!' or having her get all impatient and say, 'YY, hurry up, what's taking you so long!'" The first few days that she worked there, she would come home and cry her eyes out. Now the mentor treats her better and often shares this or that with her. And the manager is always saying good things about her. It will not be so easy for the store to hire another employee being cared for, especially considering the mentor's temper and impatience when someone is just one step slower. If the store was to let Y go, it might end up with someone who wouldn't listen and couldn't understand. Kids like Y do understand to a certain degree, so they can still survive in society one way or another.

Q: Does she work every day, or does she have days off?

Y's mother: She does have days off, per government policy. She works 5 days a week and has Thursday and Sunday off, and she normally works from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Q: How does she get along with her co-workers?

Y's mother: She has nothing to say to them. They are all from outside Shanghai and older than she is. Sometimes they will say to her, "Y, why aren't you talking to us? It's no fun when you don't utter a single word the whole day." She takes after her dad in that she isn't talkative. When asked how she is doing, she will just say, "Not too bad." She will talk to me when she comes home, but she doesn't talk to her co-workers.

Q: Is it because she doesn't feel like doing it?

Y's mother: She does want to talk, but she is worried about saying the wrong things. I told her that no one expects a speech from her, and that she could totally handle small talk like, "Have you eaten yet?" I truly believe she is autistic. But the less she talks to people, the more people will gossip behind her back. Of course, I can't see what happens at work, and everything I know I have learnt from her. I keep telling her to approach others to talk, because I have observed her for a long time and concluded that she will never take the initiative to communicate with others.

I often stop by the store, and the mentor always tells me not to worry because Y is doing very well now, so I will always express my appreciation. One time I dropped off lunch for her and the mentor asked me why I stopped by at such an early hour, so I said I was on some other errand and the store happened to be on my way. I wish Y was more talkative like I am. Now she feels more at ease at the store, but she is still very attached to home. No one gives her pressure at home and everyone is so much more tolerant of her at home. I was told that I spoil her, but I have a special-needs kid—what am I supposed to do but spoil her?

Q: So, she talks mostly just to you?

Y's mother: Yes, to me. Sometimes she wants me to take her to work on my electric bike. You are not supposed to have any passengers on your electric bike, and the police are very strict about that now. Even when I showed the police Y's disability certificate, I was told to take her on public transportation instead. So, Y will sit behind me on the bike and keep whining about this or that, and I will explain things to her very bluntly, and she will feel better. Even when I am ready for bed at night, she will talk to me non-stop.

She likes to repeat herself, which I see as a problem. I keep telling her not to do it because it's not normal, but she never remembers what I tell her. She finds it perfectly normal that there are things she needs to unload and I need to explain to her. For example, if something happens at the store, she will tell me about it more than once. I will tell her, "You already consulted me on that one. Some things you just have to understand but not talk about, and I can't exactly explain it to you because I should not badmouth anyone." Some employees play on their phones, and Y wants to do it, too, but the mentor will scold her for doing that. I told her that's something that cannot be balanced and that she shouldn't struggle with. She can play on her cell phone all she wants at home and Mom and Dad won't say a word, but the workplace has the right to ask her not to do it. What can I do? I can't tell the store not to discipline my daughter, can I?

I tell her that people are watching how hard she works. She was spoiled by a lot of people at school and got the best of everything, but at the workplace, there won't be that many people giving her that many opportunities. She is very understanding,

really. She has a decent EQ. She observes everything and she can read what's in your eyes.

We live pretty far now, and I don't have much to do except to cook, so I will drop Y off at the bus station sometimes. She will come home by herself. She is okay going to work and coming home on her own.

When I visited the corporate site of Papa John's, everyone was so courteous towards me, because Y is kind of famous there. The teacher from the vocational school did us a big favor by getting Y into the Papa John's store close to where we live. Some people commute so far to work, and for people with ID, commuting across several districts to work is too tough. I keep telling Y that she is luckier than some other people and luckier than those staying at the Sunshine Home who can't really talk well and can't even read a clock. She may be a little behind people without disabilities, but she is doing pretty well in her own way. I encourage her every day. As parents, we don't have the right to accuse her of anything wrong with her, because it's our responsibility, not hers. She is innocent.

(Y called. After hanging up the phone, Y's mother found Y's photos and showed them to the interviewers.)

Y's mother: This is her. (Laughing)

Q: How cute!

Y's mother: But she has put on some weight, because she often eats out randomly. She starts work at 11 a.m., takes a break at 2 p.m. to eat the lunch she brings from home, and doesn't get off work till 8 p.m. Normally she has a good lunch at home at noon and has dinner at 5 p.m. But that's not the schedule at the workplace. She will eat at 2 p.m., and how can she not eat anything else between 2 and 8 p.m.? After she gets home at 9:30 p.m., we will fix her something to eat. By the time she finishes her shower, it will be 11 p.m. or midnight. She will then watch some TV and play on her phone in her room. I just want her to enjoy good health, whatever it takes.

Q: Does she buy you gifts every time she gets paid at work?

Y's mother: Not every time. When she got paid the first time, she spent several hundred yuan taking us out to eat. Then she bought two cell phones, one for her and one for her dad, which cost about 3 months' pay. Another example is that when we needed to buy an A/C unit, she offered to pay for it, and when 1 month's pay couldn't cover it, she offered 2 months' pay. My elder daughter will never make such offers. Y is very caring towards family members and often offers to do things for them. She was constantly worried about her grandpa's health, and would give her grandparents money in red envelopes for Chinese New Year.

Q: What would have been the ideal job for Y as far as you are concerned?

Y's mother: Papa John's was hiring directly from special education schools, and Y caught the last boat. It must have been the decision of the company or the education bureau and I have no say in that. Y works 5 days a week now with 2 days off, which is normal. But she has no subsidy for meals or transportation, Papa John's doesn't provide free meals, her pay is the minimum and the only extra money she gets is 50 yuan. I am not in a position to talk about an ideal job for her because she doesn't have many skills. I have to recognize that and not have too many demands. Being a mother, I should be appreciative first that the government and the company have

found a place for Y. But I feel that I can ask for some small things for her like subsidies for meals and transportation, because I would like to keep some hope alive for kids like Y who supposedly have descended “from the stars.”²

Q: Did you take Y for any other IQ tests later?

Y’s mother: I was advised to, but why would I want to do it since she already got the disability certificate? Should I have got rid of the certificate? I don’t see the need. The government is treating her better and better. Without the certificate, can you imagine her interviewing for jobs like people without disabilities? I can’t, because she wouldn’t be able to say anything at the interview. I was also advised to let go and allow her to be independent. I do want her to be independent, like the way my elder daughter and I are independent and self-sufficient.

A Lonely Girl’s Love for Dogs

Q: What did she like to do when she was young?

Y’s mother: She liked stickers. She would peel them off in small pieces and stick them again on paper. Each box cost just 2 yuan, so we bought her a lot. She also liked to dress up and strike poses, because she liked how she looked. And she was so happy having her picture taken. I still have a lot of pictures from when she was young. She was very observant and would notice who hadn’t been in contact with me for a long time and which auntie looked very young, and she told me that I would look very young too if I applied makeup.

Q: Did you take her to the park?

Y’s mother: She went to the park with her classmates. She liked playing those claw machines and she grabbed a lot of teddy bears. We also took her to KFC once or twice per month.

Q: Do you still take her out now?

Y’s mother: I mentioned a girl with an auntie taking care of her. Y will go out with that girl, to eat and to shop.

Q: Does she like shopping?

Y’s mother: She does, and often ends up buying a lot of stuff. She buys makeup because she knows how to use it. She also buys some trinkets sometimes but I will tell her that she can’t wear those working in the restaurant industry. I am often amazed at her ability to use up every penny on her card, like more than 1,000 yuan after just one shopping trip.

I won’t tell her dad because I don’t want him to know. I will try to give her the right guidance instead of being too accusatory or pampering her. If I don’t give her enough allowance, she won’t be happy. I will tell her that since she has worked for

²Kids who have descended from the stars: This term refers to autistic kids because they cannot engage in normal communication with the outside world, and just like stars, they are far away from the earth and live in their own world.

the money, she is entitled to be happy and that I won't impose financial restrictions on her. Why? Because she should be allowed to buy whatever she wants.

Q: Does she play on her cell phone?

Y's mother: She had a small computer; now she has a big one. She also has an iPad and cell phone. She gets home late, after 9 and close to 10 p.m. She often plays on her cell phone late at night and I have to remind her that she will have to work the next day so she needs to go to bed early. She uses up data so fast. Five hundred megabytes per month isn't enough for her, and several times she used 500 or 600 yuan for data alone.

I have a family package with several lines, and she has one of the secondary lines. One time I received a bill for 800 yuan. I called 10086 to ask about it and was told that my secondary line used up a lot of data. I said the person with the secondary line has intellectual disability and no idea of data usage and that I had no idea of how much she had used and I couldn't afford the bill. So, the representative reduced my bill by 430 yuan, which was the maximum he could do.

She hadn't really used that much. Being a girl, she likes watching videos when she eats, so she would turn on data and just drain the data while she kept watching videos. So, I kicked her out of the family package. Instead she has a certain amount of data plus 5 yuan extra, and nothing more as soon as she uses that up. She worries about whether she can get Wi-Fi wherever she goes now.

Q: What kind of movies does she like to watch?

Y's mother: New releases. I took her to watch the one starring Yang Ming... what's it called?

Q: *Small Era*.

Y's mother: Right, *Small Era*. I wanted her to see how people carry themselves on certain occasions. I will tell her, while trying to be casual about it, that people should aim high instead of looking downwards because there's nothing to see when they look downwards.

Q: Does she watch TV series?

Y's mother: She does. She watches those ones from South Korea as well as the latest hits produced domestically. She likes watching young and good-looking guys. And she has a good memory and can recall which shows the actors have appeared in before. Sometimes even her elder sister will ask her about it and she can immediately provide the answer. It's weird. I've been watching *Female Cops and K9* these past few days. I also watch war-related shows, but not a lot of love stories about young people. I follow Guan Xiaotong, and I will ask Y to check whether this actor is married or how old the son is and personal information like that, and she will immediately try to dig up the information for me, because I wouldn't know how to do it.

Q: So she remembers faces well.

Y's mother: Right. Sometimes she will ask her elder sister whether her co-worker who dropped by one time before will come again. She keeps track.

She liked Lu Han for a while. Then she liked the singer Zhang Yuan from the show *Happy Voices* and spent several hundred yuan voting for her, but that person didn't win and Y cried over it.

I asked her why she would follow Lu Han and whether she ever hoped to meet him in person. I said, “Fans of people like Lu Han need to have money. Front-row tickets to his concerts cost several thousand yuan, and even if you have that kind of money to spend and even if you get to see him up close and personal, will he know who you are?” We have so many books on him at home (gesturing with her hands), plus pictures. I told her that she’s a fan of Lu Han today and will be a fan of Wang Han tomorrow. Since she is moving from one to another so fast, she shouldn’t spend so much time or energy following any of them. I nagged a couple of times before she got it, and she stopped following anyone. I never get mad at her because she won’t like that. She is approaching 20 now, so she can be rebellious if she wants to. And it’s better for her to like someone than not knowing who to like at all.

Q: So she has several classmates, but no friends who are really close. Is that right?

Y’s mother: She wants to get close to her classmates but doesn’t know how to communicate with them. Unlike you and me. We seem to have clicked today and there’s a lot we can talk about. She has nothing to say to other people.

There’s this girl who is really nice. She is 1 year older than Y and works at China Eastern Airlines making pastries. The pastries she makes are so pretty. Y wants to hang out with her, but they have nothing to say to each other when they are together. Sometimes several of them will go to a bakery to make cakes or go somewhere else for arts and crafts. I set it up for Y many times. I would call up the other girls asking when they would have time to go out with Y and where they wanted to go, and on Y’s birthday, I would invite them to celebrate it with her. She has nothing to say. Actually, she has a lot to say, but just nothing to say to them. There are classmates who are in a worse condition than she is and a couple of them tried to get close to her, but she has a sense of distance with them. She feels that she doesn’t like a certain girl because she is always dating. She knows well what is good and what is bad.

She has several classmates from the vocational school who are not exactly reliable. They have a WeChat group and Y always responds warmly to whatever is proposed in the group. When some trip was planned, Y would be hyped up about it. And then it rained and nobody wanted to go out, and when Y asked, nobody responded. Sometimes she will post in the group, “I have today off. Do you guys want to go anywhere?” And she will never hear from anyone. And if some of them do get together with Y, they will go home after just a little while.

I can’t tell if those classmates are normal or not. If you think something is off with them, they behave perfectly normal sometimes. But if you think they are normal, they don’t carry through a lot of times. I told Y, “I know you want to hang out with them, because hanging out is fun. But those girls are not people you can hang out with, which means that in some way, they are behind you. You have a sense of time. If they were really your good friends and behaving normal, they would talk to you. So what if it rains? You can still hang out somewhere, not a problem at all! So there’s something off with them, not with you.” Sometimes if she was about to run late, I would have her take a taxi so as not to keep anyone waiting. Those are minor details, but those classmates are totally clueless. I know that Y is lonely and wants to be with them. Sometimes she will tell me that she is going to the movies, then she will just buy herself a ticket to Caoyang Movie Theater.

Q: What does she normally do at home? Is she okay staying home alone?

Y's mother: Absolutely okay. What happens at home is this: she will make her bed after getting up in the morning, wash her face and brush her teeth while I cook for her. When she gets home from work, she will take a shower and get onto the Internet on her phone to watch a TV series while laughing to herself and sometimes humming a song. If we ask her to do the laundry, she will do it, and sometimes she will do the dishes for us. But she won't do anything if we don't ask her. She knows how to cook and does cook occasionally, simple dishes like egg fried rice and potato fries. She has no problem with any of those.

She is very loving. When she was three, she wanted a dog, so I got one for her. The dog died in December 2014 and she cried and was so sad. I told her, "Dogs are like people, except that they live shorter lives. If they live past 10 years, they are the equivalent of 100-year-old people. As long as you have been nice to them, they will always protect you, and it will be like they were still living a healthy and happy life with you." After the dog died, we wrapped it up and called for the pet mortuary people. We drove together to cremate the dog and brought back its ashes to place at home. The total cost was 1,000 yuan and I don't think many families in Shanghai would have done that for a dog. We had another dog that died last year and we spent 1,300 yuan taking care of that one.

Q: Why did she want dogs?

Y's mother: She has always been lonely in her heart ever since she was young, and she is still lonely now. If I go out, she will keep asking me, several times a day, "Are you home yet?" "Are you coming back now?" or "Where did you go?" She is so mild at home. She won't make any sound except to cuddle with and talk to the dog. The dog is happy to be with her and sometimes gets to sleep with her in her bed.

I started with one dog, then had two before having three. Two of the three died and I have one left now. She loves pets. We will often go outside and bring home stray dogs, wash them and fix them up and give them away to good families.

The dog we have right now is already 12, so she is worried and asks me to get another dog. I said having dogs is a lot of work and she has no time. She doesn't get up till 9 a.m., so who will watch, feed and wash the dogs for her? She also likes tigers, but she can't exactly bring one home to keep, can she? She has no such money, so she should be happy just looking at the animals. Bottom line is that she is lonely.

Q: Who normally takes care of the dog?

Y's mother: The three of us. She walks the dog when she gets home at night, I feed the dog, and my elder daughter never helps with anything.

Q: Do you see any dramatic changes in Y from when she was young?

Y's mother: She used to listen so well and never put up any resistance. Now she will show her temper from time to time.

Q: Showing her temper means that she has grown up, right? Exactly what kind of temper does she show?

Y's mother: Several of her classmates would get hysterical when they lose control of their emotions and do whatever they want. Y is never like that, but she will show impatience in her actions or language. I will say, "How come you are being unstable emotionally?" And she will immediately ask, "Am I being mean to you?" I will ask

her if she would bring her impatience to work and she will say “No”, because at the workplace, hardly anyone will talk to her. It’s not that she doesn’t want to talk, she just doesn’t feel that she has anything to talk to anyone about.

Q: Has she ever shown any clear signs of rebellion?

Y’s mother: No, because she dares not. But she will judge a person in a very sensible manner. My husband is my age. Sometimes he will say inappropriate things and Y will call her dad out on that. Sometimes he will joke with me, “What do you do at home all day? You have nothing to occupy you?” The truth is that I do almost everything at home, so I will retort, “I don’t do anything? Y, do I do anything?” My husband is 8 months younger than I am. He has not a single mean bone in him, isn’t talkative, and is very much an introvert. But sometimes he will say things that I can’t take, so of course I will talk back and Y will take my side. He is a nice guy, nonetheless. Last time when we were doing home renovations, Y said, “Mom, don’t ask Daddy to do this or that. It will be too much for him.”

Q: You mentioned twice that Y can judge a person in a very sensible manner. Can you give us an example?

Y’s mother: She is a good observer and notices my expressions and that of her dad and elder sister. She also notices the expressions and words of co-workers and schoolteachers. For example, when she was going to the special education school, some teachers behaved differently towards different kids, being especially nice to those with family background or speaking gently to good-looking kids. Y noticed it and wasn’t happy about it. I told her, “There’s nothing you can do about it. Teachers are not your mom. Mom will be nice to you whatever your looks, whereas teachers will definitely be prejudiced, because there are people who are like that everywhere.” She will also notice whether you are in a good mood today or not. I will talk to her sometimes about what happens in society, and if she gets it, it will be helpful to her.

No Forced Marriage and No Plan for Kids

Q: What are your family’s thoughts on marriage for Y?

Y’s mother: People without disabilities will let things happen naturally. They might meet marriage candidates through mutual acquaintances or at work and then get to know them better. No one in the family has tried to set Y up on any date. I have been super busy recently. I took my in-laws out of the nursing home and had been taking care of them. But they were too sick and passed away eventually.

My main concerns are: First, as parents, we hope that Y can get married (sobbing), but it will take longer and be more difficult for her, than for people without disabilities, to get to know someone. She doesn’t get to pick. On the contrary, the other person will have to pick her. My second concern is reproduction following marriage. If the other person wants to have kids, it won’t work for us, because we don’t want to pass on her disability. I am getting old, and if she wants to reproduce, I won’t be able to help her should she run into any difficulties. And that will be doing her a disservice. We don’t want her to find a guy, bring him home and have a kid with him. We are

not that kind of family, because I think long term. And everything is predestined. If she meets a good guy whose parents or siblings do not have any apparent disabilities and whose parents are loving—I have an elder daughter, after all, and once we pass away, she can look out for Y—then she won't have to worry about the rest of her life.

She feels bad about herself sometimes, thinking that she is poorly educated and therefore won't get to date or have kids. I told her not to even think about having kids, because people without disabilities won't settle for her unless they have special reasons. And I named two possible reasons. One, the guy is a widower with one or two kids, so he will only need Y for companionship and not for childbearing. Two, the guy has a disability himself, and his family doesn't care who he marries as long as no kids are planned. And the second reason is more plausible. So she feels awful in her heart. Sometimes she will wonder if she can find a good-looking guy, and I will tell her that the two of them will have different things to think about and move in different circles without ever converging.

Q: Did any doctor advise against Y having kids, or are you worried about who is going to take care of the kids?

Y's mother: Here's the deal with me and her dad, and it's actually something private we keep in the family. We don't know whose gene is at fault. We never had any kids before we got married, and after Y was born, I felt helpless and hopeless, but I didn't despair like some other people.

The daughter of my elder brother got married and had her amniotic fluid tested 3 months into her pregnancy. The test showed Down syndrome, so she had an abortion and divorced afterwards. Whether it is the gene on my side of the family or other reasons, I don't want to find out.

I also have a distant relative. Well, not exactly too distant. It's my aunt, my dad's younger sister. Her son was in a truck on a hill, the truck rolled over and he rolled down the hill and sustained injuries to his head. So he will blabber sometimes. Then he got married and had a daughter, who looks a little like she has Down syndrome, but she functions well. I just can't pinpoint it. Her dad plans to have the future son-in-law live with them, and I asked her mom if she is mentally prepared, because disability is no joking matter. Having a kid is not just to reproduce, because life itself doesn't mean much. Once you die, you don't know what happens next, but if you are not well prepared, you will have ruined the lives of the next generation. They live in the countryside of Changzhou, not in Shanghai like we do.

All things considered, I really don't see the need for Y to have kids. If you like pets, you can adopt one or pay to see one. Even tigers can be adopted in name. As for people, if you like kids, just go see some instead of having them as your personal possession, because you will have to consider whether you have the ability to raise them. We are approaching 60, so who will help raise kids for Y? She can handle eating, shopping and laundry. But if she wants kids, who is going to educate them? We won't be able to do that. It's not about reputation or looking good. We don't need any of that, because we are very realistic. Actress Qin Yi has a son and a daughter. The son had a high fever when he was 16 and suffered cerebral palsy as a result. She is a celebrity, and even celebrities have to deal with disabilities.

What I am thinking is this: maybe fate will have it that she will meet a guy whose disability isn't that severe, and that the two of them can manage to live together. That will be okay with me. Having kids could be a trap. When you have a dog or a cat, you can give it away, but not kids, because they are a higher form of life. There's no way around that, so I have to be extra careful. I have a kid with a disability, and to let her have her own kids is unnecessary and I need to think it through. I just want her to be happy. She can be with a guy who can help her get on the Internet to communicate with grown-ups, and that should be good enough. They don't need to do anything fancy. In the news, wasn't there someone who has cerebral palsy but became a musician later, a conductor actually? But it takes effort. I didn't make the effort, and I couldn't have made the effort.

We had a meeting with a teacher, and one of the parents asked whether a platform could be provided for kids like Y so that they could get together often. They are maturing in age and some of them are already in their twenties and thirties. They might be able to pair up without planning to have kids. I liked that suggestion, because they will have desires once they reach a certain age. Y understands the desires. But kids cannot be in the picture. There's something wrong with the genes, so it's unnecessary to create something bad and try to remedy it afterwards. But who can I talk to about this, Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation (DPF)? I feel bad about a lot of people with severe disabilities and really miserable family lives. Looking at them, I know I am luckier. There's this family with twins. Both have disabilities, are in bad shape and getting on in age. Their parents literally gave it their all. They were asked to help with the oral history book of yours, but they don't want to look back. We are all taking one step at a time. I feel that I should cooperate with you, because I want to talk about my family with you guys. I can't exactly talk to my neighbors or co-workers. But with those who know people like us and who are in the loop, I can talk about what I think.

Q: Do you keep in contact with organizations such as Shanghai DPF and the Sunshine Home?

Y's mother: The Sunshine Home hosts arts and crafts activities and some of the participants are in their thirties or forties, have apparent disabilities and look like they are deteriorating right in front of your eyes. I won't let Y go there. Why? Because that place would drag her down. Sometimes our cell phones will get stuck and she will fix it for us. She might not be the best at it, but she can get it done. Yesterday I saw her chatting online and clicking away, with earphones on and the dog in her arms. I am happy to let her chat with her classmates like that. And I told her that she can even learn new Chinese characters just by typing more often online.

Different Bonding Among Four Family Members

Q: How does your husband treat Y normally?

Y's mother: My husband tries his best. He was basically the one dropping her off and picking her up at elementary school and the primary vocational school. I keep

reminding Y to be grateful to her dad, and she is grateful. Sometimes when we see beggars on the street, she will tell me that she wants to give them money, and I will encourage her to do it since she has that thought herself. I tell her that now that she knows to be grateful, she can buy whatever she wants and I won't restrict her. My elder daughter is more self-centered and has no delicate feelings, not at all. I tell my elder daughter that she should show a little bit of gratitude.

Q: How does your husband feel about Y's condition?

Y's mother: We have never worried about our daughters, be it the adopted one or the biological one with the disability. Why? Because compared to other families who have kids with disabilities, we are in much better shape, which we are pleased about. Y has a job now, which is really nice. And I told my elder daughter to be independent and to look for a job herself. That's where things stand with us, and we have to face it no matter what.

Q: Y's elder sister was six when she was born. How does Y get along with her?

Y's mother: They have never really been able to play together. Y was born in the beginning of the year and her sister was born towards the end of the year, and they are 6 years apart. Her sister isn't very talkative at home either, and right now her life basically consists of work and home, plus getting on the Internet. She seldom interacts with us. I keep telling her sister, "Once we are gone, you will be Y's guardian and will have to take on the responsibilities. You see how I have been caring for both of you. When we get old, you should care for her the way I have been caring for you. That way I will be able to rest in peace when I am gone."

Q: So you hope that her sister can take care of her in the future, right?

Y's mother: That's not very likely. Only parents can give this kind of love, whereas everyone else will do it out of courtesy, (sobbing), really. I am not sure her sister is reliable. I am not badmouthing her behind her back, but she is kind of self-centered. I haven't talked about her at all so far, because she seldom interacts with us.

Y is very attached to home and hopes to see her sister at home. She will ask why her sister isn't coming back yet. She is very attached to her sister, but the feeling isn't reciprocated. That's why I say that as long as I am around, I will watch Y grow up little by little, year after year. Once I get close to not being able to see anything, I will have to do something about it.

We have a happy family. We joke around with each other and there's nothing we can't say amongst ourselves. Y says that I am the big boss at home and everyone should listen to me. She would like the four of us to just stay home to enjoy good food and have fun. But I tell her, "When you were going to school, you had summer vacations. I had poor health then, so I could often stay home. Now we must all work, because living standards are higher now. When you go out, you could spend close to 100 yuan on almost nothing."

Q: Are you and your husband under a lot of pressure taking care of two kids?

Y's mother: The pressure isn't financial. I am actually a very outgoing person, but I don't want to let too many people know about my daughters. That's why I moved, even though that's not the only reason I moved.

Q: When did you move?

Y's mother: We moved several times, in 2000, 2003, 2004, and 2005. I wasn't making a special effort to move since there were no neighbors gossiping about me. Back then, apartments were cheap. I was in real estate and constantly flipping apartments. So financially, I have no problem raising two kids. The main issue is that my younger daughter has a disability and my elder daughter's registration for Shanghai residence was delayed.

Q: Why was it delayed?

Y's mother: The community director of women's affairs asked me where I had got my elder daughter. I said someone gave her up and I adopted her, but she didn't believe me. She thought I had picked up an abandoned baby. So she ignored my elder daughter's paperwork and didn't register her for Shanghai residence. I didn't think too much of it and believed that it was okay not to have residence. She was able to finish elementary school but ran into trouble in middle school. When she was in ninth grade, since she had no Shanghai residence, the school told me that she couldn't continue at the school. What could I do then but to take her home? For several years back then, I was in poor health and didn't have a stable job.

Then I figured that my elder daughter couldn't really do without Shanghai residence, so I made inquiries at a lot of government departments. Registering for residence was not as easy as you would have liked it to be. I had to start with the lowest department and work my way up, and had to submit all kinds of materials from the past. And I had moved to Putuo District, which complicated matters. Then I met someone several years older than I am. He wanted to help. My younger daughter has a disability, and I had developed rheumatoid arthritis after childbirth and other illnesses. He reviewed my materials and helped me. So what really happened was that thanks to the disability of my younger daughter, I was able to register my elder daughter for residence.

Q: Did your elder daughter continue schooling later?

Y's mother: After she graduated from middle school, I told her to skip high school and enroll in a college for grown-ups. I said, "Even though I wasn't able to register you for residence in time, I did succeed eventually, and now you are a Shanghai resident. You should thank your sister for the residence." She works in after-sales services at a website and makes 5,000 or 6,000 yuan per month which she thinks is enough for her. She is a Capricorn while Y is a Gemini. Gemini people are known to have unstable lives and go through dramatic life changes.

I am very proud now, because my two kids have paid jobs that come with health insurance and pension. If my elder daughter wants to open a small shop online, as long as she has a platform and money, I will let her do it. If she decides to be grateful and help her younger sister, that would be nice.

But what I am saying now is all irrelevant. My elder daughter will date and get married, and it would be a blessing if she doesn't come to bother us at home after that. She is an average person, and once she is married, she will have an average family and there won't be anything spectacular expected of her. So what hope will there be for me? Do I really think she will turn around and take care of her younger sister?

I used to ask the teacher from Qixing School to take care of Y for me when I get old. But the teacher has been seeing doctors over the past 2 years and is now 8 or 9 months pregnant. When we first left the school, she kept in close contact with us. But now that she is having her own baby, there will definitely be distance. So I've thought it all through. Y just needs several friends who will care about her, as well as some savings and a place to live, and that's about it for her in the future.

I may not necessarily appoint her sister as her guardian in the future. She is 20 now. As she grows older, I will teach her about money. For example, the way savings work is that I put aside 100 yuan and will get 105 yuan a year later. She will need to learn to read the forms and to seek the bank manager's help with understanding the details. I haven't started teaching her any of that yet. I want to wait till she is older and can use her brain better. She knows how to buy things online using Alipay. For example, a bottle of water costs 2 yuan, the card has 2,000 yuan to begin with and will have 1,998 yuan left after she has bought the water. Alipay will immediately calculate this for her because she won't be able to do it herself. She still has no clear concept of how much change she should get back if she uses 100 yuan to buy something.

Q: So she isn't very good with calculations?

Y's mother: She can do simple ones like getting 95 yuan in change back after using 100 yuan to buy something costing 5 yuan. But she has no clue when you further break it down into cents. She likes to buy drinks from Lawson and FamilyMart, and 100 yuan seems to be nothing to her because she doesn't bother to count the change. When she goes to Huxi Cultural Club in Putuo District, she will often buy some trinkets to hang on her cell phone, and the ladies selling those things there really like her. One time she even bought some clothes there and I asked her how on earth she could wear those clothes out, and since we couldn't exactly return them, she is not allowed to buy them anymore. If I really get mad at her, she will burst out crying.

Q: Does she still buy them?

Y's mother: She does, because she just can't help it. Even if she brings coffee from home, she will buy coffee. She asks me why she can't manage to save money, and I ask her how much she spends and how much she makes each month. She is mindless about that and only knows to ask me for more once she has spent all her money. But she is sweet in that when I talked about buying a new fridge, she offered all the money she had.

Q: Does she have any idea about saving money now?

Y's mother: She does. She has a lot of ideas. I told her she must save money.

Q: Was Y close to her grandparents?

Y's mother: Not really, since she has never spent much time with them.

Q: Does Y socialize with relatives, like cousins?

Y's mother: They hardly communicate. If asked simple questions like where she works, when she goes to work, what she does at home, and whether her job is tough, she can engage in some communication. But she will never strike up any conversations with anyone.

Grateful for the Help Received

Q: Over the years, have you ever felt that the walls were closing in on you?

Y's mother: The walls closing in on me? Not really, because she had always received compliments and honors at school. She participated in every activity at school and won a lot of honor certificates and trophies. No teacher has ever called to complain about her, that's just unthinkable. I feel that she has always been in a very comfortable environment, so there's no need for pain or low self-esteem.

Q: Are you still busy now that you have retired?

Y's mother: The year before last, I took over a street booth selling books and newspapers. I did it for her, because I had wanted her to run it with me. She tried for a while, but it didn't work out, because she had to handle money and she was totally clueless. So I didn't want her to continue because it wasn't the right job for her. I was brainstorming for her. If we opened a clothing shop, she might not have the ability to run it and I might not have it either. When it was time to sign her contract with Papa John's, she didn't want to sign it. She wanted to work with me instead doing whatever I ended up doing. But working with me is risky, and what about the future when she has no pension? Years will go by and government policies might change. Besides, I am getting old, and if she follows whatever I do, what will happen to her if I get really sick one day?

As for that booth selling books and newspapers, Y can't run it and I have no time, so I got a person with ID to watch it for me, like opening and closing it. I used to pay him 300 yuan. But as I got busy with things at home, I decided to pay him 1,000 yuan per month to be in charge of the booth, and I will just drop by every Friday afternoon to organize the newspapers. This guy is in his fifties, with ID and something wrong with his eyes. He used to collect garbage for a living, and is very grateful for the help I am giving him. I have always been saying that I want to give back, because I have received a lot of help from society, without which it would have been difficult for my elder daughter to register for residence and my younger one to go to school or get a job. I am really grateful.

Q: On the phone, you mentioned that you really admire Mom Caihong.³ What do you admire about her?

Y's mother: Right, I watched her giving a talk during the news section of the program *New-Age Uncle*, but I don't know where her studio is and can't find a good address online. Her kid has a more severe disability than mine and is even less able, but she has never given up. A lot of kids with cerebral palsy can gradually make progress if the grown-ups try hard and train them patiently. That's why I say that it's not easy to be a mom. And she set up that studio and hired a lot of employees, including parents from different places. I would like to find her platform and to

³Mom Caihong: Caihong Zhang is the mom of autistic child Weijia Zhang. For many years, she has been actively sharing her experiences with parents of other autistic kids and providing mental support. She self-funded and set up a Mom Caihong's Studio in Minhang District, Shanghai, where she has established a platform for intervention education and experience sharing for autistic children. She is known as "Mom Caihong."

donate my time working there while learning how I can help Y make friends so that she can have a wider social circle.

Q: Do you have any expectations for society and the government? And expectations for the future?

Y's mother: I hope that the government and society will give more attention and show more care to people with disabilities, and as parents, we will be grateful.

Interview with Y's Co-Worker (I)

Interviewee: Ms. A (manager of the restaurant)

Interviewer and writer: Liting Mo

Interview date: January 23, 2018

Interview place: Restaurant where Y works

Q: What's your position at the store?

A: I am the manager.

Q: Y is an employee being cared for. How many employees being cared for in total does the store have?

A: Y is the only one. At the other store that I manage, there are three employees being cared for.

Q: When did Y start working here? How long has she been with you?

A: I have been here for 1 year, and Y has been here for 2 years.

Q: What's Y's work schedule like?

A: She works from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., with a break from 1 to 2 p.m. That's a total of 8 h.

Q: What exactly does she do?

A: She is pretty skillful at making pizzas and appetizers, even though sometimes she needs to be reminded of what the next step is. She knows what she is doing, and is easier to manage than a lot of people now in their twenties. We won't let her near windows where pizzas and other food are handed out, because we worry that she might get burned, being a little different as she is. It has been tough teaching her, but then, it takes even people without disabilities a long time to learn. She mainly had her own mentor, an older female employee, teaching her.

Q: Has Y ever been late for work or left early?

A: No, she doesn't come late or leave early. She is normally very punctual.

Q: Compared to when you first started working here, have there been any changes or improvements in her work? Or has she always been the same?

A: I haven't really seen any changes. A lot of employees get emotional sometimes. She does too, not as often, and doesn't stay agitated for long. You will have to speak to her first. She will never speak to you unless spoken to. She just does what she needs to do quietly.

Q: I saw a lot of orders coming in during lunch hour. Do you rush her when it gets busy?

A: We do, occasionally. We will just say, “Y, hurry up.” And she will acknowledge it. When it gets busy, everyone gets rushed. And we need to communicate across the workstations, otherwise we won’t be able to get anything done. The ovens and drinks station have to be always manned, so communication is essential. Y has worked for a while, so she gets it by just watching. She knows all the processes, like when she puts something in the oven and there’s no one watching the oven, she needs to summon the on-duty manager or a partner saying that she has something in the oven.

Q: Will she say that without anyone prompting her?

A: She will, but very seldom. Normally it will be us telling her, “Y, you are on your own now. Watch out for my food, and call me when it’s done,” or “I am not going to be at this station, I have to get something done at another station.” Once we tell her, she will remind us.

Q: Do you treat employees being cared for and regular ones differently?

A: I do. But we have the same requirements for everyone when it comes to quality, including food portions, ingredients, and sizes. Employees being cared for are not supposed to do anything randomly, because there’s only one set of standards. If it has to be 200 g, it has to be 200 g. We will teach Y the standards making sure that she strictly follows them. But in other areas, we will take it easier on her.

Q: In which areas will you take it easier on her?

A: Cleaning up, for example. We are supposed to clean up our own workstations. She will forget. She will have finished making something but not put the ingredients and tools back. On those occasions, we will remind her.

Q: Do you recall when you scolded her or when you praised her?

A: When we got busy and she made mistakes, I would scold her, “Come on, Y, you did this wrong. I told you otherwise.” When we are busy, we don’t watch what we say to each other, and that includes me, on-duty managers, and others who report to me. But then, we don’t dwell on it afterwards. When you get busy, things happen.

Q: So she has adapted to the environment at the store?

A: Right, she knows my temper and habits, and knows the tempers of other employees. And sometimes she will reply, “Okay, Manager, I got it.” That’s where communication pays off.

Q: When will you praise her?

A: For example, when she finishes something fast or does a beautiful job with something. She has her strengths, and sometimes she outperforms people like us without disabilities.

Q: I watched her work in the morning. Even though she is slow-paced, she doesn’t make mistakes, right?

A: Right. She is clear-headed and knows what to do next. But she makes mistakes when we get busy. Well, people without disabilities make mistakes, too. Then we will tell her, “We might rush you when we get busy, but don’t feel pressured. Just speed up a little bit.” And she will listen.

Q: Did anything happen with Y that really impressed you?

A: I don’t come to this store often. I manage two stores and go to corporate meetings as well as the FDA. I come to this store once a week or once every 2 weeks.

Q: So you happened to be here today.

A: There's a mentor here who is responsible for Y. You saw her just now, and she is the one who trained Y.

Q: So you manage another store, right? Can you tell us about the employees being cared for at that other store?

A: We have two, and sometimes three, employees being cared for there, and they are all very good. The parents are very nice, too. They are happy that their kids, being the way they are, have a job. And people like you often drop by to communicate and to check in on the kids, so the parents are really contented. Some of the kids actually have a more stable and better life than those without disabilities.

Q: Do Y's parents communicate with you?

A: Her mom often communicates with our assistant manager. Our assistant manager is the shift manager who communicates with parents. Some parents might want time off for the kids, or the kids might have other engagements sometimes, so the parents will talk to the shift manager. The shift manager is actually in a social media group with the parents of employees being cared for, and she will announce in the group, "Let me know if something comes up. Otherwise I will just assign the kids the usual shifts."

Q: So the shifts are assigned every week? Do employees being cared for work 5 days a week with 2 days off?

A: Right. Five days a week with 2 days off, that will never change. But the days off may not always be the same days. We are located in a business building here and not busy on Saturday or Sunday. At my other store, I have two male employees being cared for who live close to the store, and the parents are very supportive of their working more hours. So I will ask them to work OT whenever there's the need. We treat everyone the same.

Q: Y works in the kitchen. Does she ever interact with customers?

A: She doesn't, because she is an introvert.

Q: Does she interact with co-workers or with you?

A: Not a lot, but she will talk if you talk to her. If you don't approach her, she won't talk, but she will greet you, nod her head and smile, and that will be it.

Q: You see her at work, but are you in contact with her in private?

A: Hardly ever. But we have a townhall every week, or the on-duty manager will report to me when he sees something off with someone and then we will talk it over with that person. There might be friction at the store or between co-workers, or something happening at home, so we need to observe what the employees are thinking about, as if we were their parents. I put myself in their shoes for them to have a sense of belonging, and for everyone to get along harmoniously at work. We have annual meetings, but Y's mother thought the venue was too far and didn't let Y go with us.

Q: Overall, what kind of employee is Y?

A: She knows what she is doing, does what she is supposed to do, and is punctual.

Interview with Y's Co-Worker (II)

Interviewee: Ms. B (on-duty manager of the restaurant)

Interviewer and writer: Liting Mo

Interview date: January 23, 2018

Interview place: Restaurant where Y works

Q: What do you normally do at the store?

B: I go wherever the action is. You saw just now that it got busy in the kitchen, so I was handing out food there. Now I am filling in for the cashier in the dining area.

Q: How long have you been interacting with Y?

B: She has always had that mentor in the kitchen. I haven't been interacting with her for that long.

Q: Do you usually communicate with Y? Do you see any changes in her compared with when you first met her?

B: I do, the changes are pretty apparent. When I first came here, I figured that since I am the same generation as Y, I went out of my way to talk to her, only to have her nod her head or smile, so I felt rejected. But then co-workers in the kitchen told me that Y is a little autistic, and I got it. Now I know just the right way to talk to her, and she will help me arrange set meals. Sometimes when it gets busy, she will even boss me around, "I told you to take over for me here." And people around us will joke, "This girl can boss us around now." (Laughing loudly)

Q: Do you communicate with Y after work?

B: Hardly ever.

Q: Are you two connected on WeChat? Do you talk on WeChat?

B: We are connected, but we seldom talk. We normally assign shifts once a week, and I will just send the weekly schedule to her. If something comes up, she will tell me and I will adjust the schedule. Other than that, we don't talk.

Interview with Y's Co-Worker (III)

Interviewee: Ms. C

Interviewer and writer: Liting Mo

Interview date: January 23, 2018

Interview place: Restaurant where Y works

Q: How are you? I just want to get some idea today of how Y is doing at the store. What do you do at the store?

C: I work in the kitchen and help wherever it gets busy.

Q: How long have you been with Y?

C: About 2 years, ever since she joined the store.

Q: So you have been training her the whole time, right?

C: Right. I was the one who taught her how to make pizzas.

Q: Can you tell us the processes when Y was learning to make pizzas?

C: So I would teach her to knead and toss the dough first. After she had learnt to do it the standardized way, I taught her how to add the ingredients. And that's how I taught her to make all kinds of pizzas.

Q: What does Y mainly do in the kitchen?

C: She mainly kneads and tosses dough and makes pizzas. Kneading and tossing dough is the most tiring job, and if we get super busy, I will stop her from doing that and have her make appetizers instead.

Q: And making appetizers is relatively...

C: It's the easiest job, as you basically just pick things up with your hands. If chicken wings are ordered, you just bake chicken wings. Kneading and tossing dough is very tiring because that station has to be constantly manned, but the ovens are too hot and I don't want her to get burned.

Q: At work, does she arrange for herself what to do first and what to do next, or do you arrange it for her?

C: I will arrange for her and remind her, otherwise she won't follow the right order.

Q: What do you mean by not following the right order?

C: For example, we won't let her make drinks. And I will have to send her to make appetizers or make dough, otherwise she will just stay put at one workstation and we will be behind with the food.

Q: When you are behind, will you rush her?

C: I will for sure. When we are behind, I will say, "Girl, can you please hurry up?" and she will do as I say. So all is good.

Q: What do you think is the biggest difference between when she first came and now?

C: When she first came, she was quite a handful. Nobody knew what to do when we first came here, and I was no exception. The first day she came here, she had just left her school and parted ways with her classmates, and she found herself in a strange place. For 3 months, I felt I was going out of my mind training her. And it took me three whole months to teach her all the processes, but now she knows how to make everything including dough, appetizers, noodles, and rice. The hardest thing during the first month was teaching her to knead and toss dough, because whenever she messed up, she would turn her head and burst out crying. There was one day when she cried five times.

Q: What did you do when she cried?

C: I was so flustered when she cried. I had to comfort her, because she is a little different from us, after all. And at the end of the day, being a mom myself, if my own kid cries in a workplace, I would want her to be comforted.

Q: Is it still not easy working with her?

C: It's not so bad now. As long as I arrange everything ahead of time, Y will get it done.

Q: Do you communicate with her when you are not busy with work?

C: I do. I will tell her, "If you don't talk to me, I will keep you here to work for free." And she will say, "Okay."

Q: So you do chat with her.

C: I do. We will have time to ourselves between 3 and 5 p.m. when there are no orders. Then she can sit there and have a rest, and I won't give her any work. When it's time for my own lunch break,⁴ I will arrange some work for her. I used to not let her touch knives since they are sharp, but now she wants to do more, so I will slowly teach her more. She can get everything done really well. As long as you tell her what to do, she will do a good job.

Q: What do you chat with Y about?

C: Just small talk, like how her mom is doing and how everything is going at home. Sometimes I will ask her about her age and whether she has a boyfriend. It doesn't hurt to chat with her. As soon as she opens up psychologically, she will talk to you more.

Q: So is she willing to communicate with everyone now?

C: She won't take the initiative to do it. The exception is that when she is making food and cannot find something or doesn't know what to do next, she will come and ask.

Q: Do you see any difference between her and regular employees?

C: Actually, it's like what her mom said, she is slightly autistic. In terms of intelligence, she is a very smart girl and not like the kind of employees being cared for we normally imagine... she just doesn't like to communicate with others and doesn't like to talk.

Q: Did anything happen with her that was memorable for you?

C: Not exactly. Maybe sometimes when she made mistakes and I got mad at her.

Q: Do you still do that now?

C: Not now. She will go back and tell her mom that I have been really mean.

Q: What do you think of her self-discipline? And do you treat her differently from other employees?

C: She is good at self-discipline, and I treat her exactly the same as I treat other employees. Psychologically she is a little different, but since she works here, I told her, "Y, you are the same as everyone else. You have been here for 2 years, and if you make mistakes, you will hear about it from me, like everyone else." She knows that.

Q: Do you talk to her on WeChat?

C: Only occasionally, because I don't like talking on WeChat. (Laughing loudly)

Q: Are you connected with her mom on WeChat?

C: I am. Her mom is very busy, so we only talk occasionally. I am very busy myself and don't really have time for chatting.

Q: Does the store organize any group activities?

C: It does, like group dinner on New Year's Eve. We invited her along, but her mom wouldn't let her go. It wasn't at our store and her mom was worried.

⁴Employees at the store eat and take breaks at different times.

Interview with Ms. Y

Interviewee: Ms. Y

Interviewer and writer: Liting Mo

Interview date: January 23, 2018

Interview place: Restaurant where Y works

(Y was a little nervous.)

Q: Let's look back on when you were going to school. Do you still remember elementary school?

Y: When I was young, I was bullied all the time at preschool.

Q: How were you bullied? It's okay if you don't remember.

Y: Nobody would play with me.

Q: I see. You attended Qixing Special Education School for a while. Do you remember what you learned there?

Y: Dancing and singing.

Q: That's nice. Were there any organized performances? Did you perform outside school?

Y: I did.

Q: What kind of performances were you in?

Y: My dance teacher, Ms. Fu, was very nice.

Q: Can you tell me how nice she was?

Y: She would teach you one on one.

Q: What kind of dance did you do?

Y: Gymnastics. She took her job seriously.

Q: How many kids were in this gymnastics dance group?

Y: More than ten.

Q: And Ms. Fu taught each of you one on one?

Y: Right, because some took longer to learn than I did.

Q: So you picked it up faster. Are you still in contact with Ms. Fu?

Y: I was when I first graduated. Then I lost contact with her.

Q: Are you still in contact with other teachers or classmates from the special education school?

Y: I am.

Q: Can you give me an example?

Y: I keep in touch with this girl.

Q: What do you two talk about?

(Silent)

Q: Do you go out together?

Y: We do.

Q: How did you get to the special education school from where you lived? Was it far?

Y: Not far, and I took the bus.

Q: So your parents didn't drop you off at school?

Y: They just dropped me off at the bus station.

Q: You were pretty independent then.

Y (hesitating): My parents dropped me off for the first 3 years... then I went to school on my own when I was in seventh or eighth grade.

Q: How long did you stay at Changning Primary Vocational School?

Y: Three years.

Q: Do you remember what you learned there?

Y: There was a teacher, Mr. Xia, who taught making pastries. (A long pause)
And another teacher, Mr. Tong, who taught meeting logistics. (Another long pause)
I tested for certificates.

Q: What certificates did you test for?

Y: Meeting logistics and making pastries.

Q: You must have been so good. Were the tests hard?

Y: I had to memorize a lot of stuff. I hadn't been too serious about it.

Q: What else did you learn at the vocational school?

Y: Dancing, but the teacher wasn't as good as Ms. Fu.

Q: Are you still in contact with classmates or teachers from the vocational school?

Y: Ah... I was when I first graduated, then I didn't keep up. Only for Teachers' Day.

Q: Teachers' Day?

Y: I sent cards for Teachers' Day. For the first several months after I graduated, I just wanted to bring gifts to the teachers, and flowers.

Q: That's nice. Did the vocational school organize any activities? Activities for everyone to participate in?

Y: We went out together.

Q: To do what?

Y: To dance.

Q: Where did you go for that?

Y: We danced to English songs.

Q: Besides dancing, what other group activities has the school organized?

Y: The school took us to the movies.

Q: What else?

Y: It also organized field trips.

Q: Where did you go for the field trips?

Y: We visited... (couldn't remember) and we went to movie locations.

Q: Oh, you probably went to the Chedun movie location in Shanghai. How did you go to the vocational school from where you lived?

Y: I took the bus, too.

Q: Was the school far?

Y: Not far by bus.

Q: Let's talk about what a day is like for you. When do you get up?

Y: Nine a.m.

Q: What do you do for breakfast?

Y: My parents make it at home.

Q: When do you normally leave for work?

Y: I take the bus.

Q: When do you usually get to the store?

Y: Forty-five minutes.

Q: Right, you got to the store today at 10:45 a.m. Were you ever late?

Y: Occasionally.

Q: I see. Can you tell me what you do here at the store?

Y: I work in the kitchen. (Head lowered and speaking in a very gentle voice.)

Q: What do you do for a whole day's work? For example, what do you do in the morning? And what do you do in the afternoon?

Y: I have lunch at 1 p.m., and I go back to work at 2 p.m.

Q: Do you bring your own lunch or does the store provide lunch?

Y: I bring lunch.

Q: Do you make the lunch yourself?

Y: My mom makes it.

Q: I saw that you spent the whole morning making dough. What else do you do besides making dough?

Y: I clean up... if there's nothing else to do.

Q: Do you get busy in the afternoon?

Y: Between 4 and 5 p.m., 5 and 6 p.m.

Q: Oh, so those are the busiest hours?

Y: We get busiest between 6 and 7 p.m.

Q: When do you get off work in the evening? Where do you go for dinner?

Y: I go straight home and my parents will have dinner waiting.

Q: When do you normally get home?

Y: Around 8:40 p.m.

Q: Besides making pizzas, do you make appetizers, too?

Y: I do that sometimes.

Q: On your own, you can make a pizza from beginning to end now, right?

Y: Right, but if I have a lot to make, she (the mentor) may have to help me.

Q: Can you tell me how you learned to do it all? You do it so well and are so skillful.

Y: I didn't know anything at the beginning, then I learned slowly... (speaking in an increasingly gentle voice.)

Q: Can you take some time to think about it and tell me more?

Y: The mentor trained me.

Q: How did the mentor train you?

Y: She would do it, and I would copy what she did. Again and again.

Q: How long did it take for you to learn?

Y: About 3 or 4 weeks.

Q: Do you talk to the mentor?

Y: I do... (voice trailing off)

Q: How long have you worked here?

Y: The first year was an internship, this is the second year.

Q: So you are in your second year here. You are doing great.

Q: Do you normally chat with your co-workers at Papa John's?

Y: Occasionally.

Q: Who do you chat with most often?

Y: I don't chat often. (Head lowered and speaking in a gentle voice.)

Q: Can I ask you whether the mentor or the manager has ever scolded you?

Y: Not really, they are okay... (speaking quietly as if not inclined to talk.)

Q: You work here now. Does the store organize any activities for everyone to participate in?

Y: No.

(Twenty minutes later, after Y had lunch in the employees' break room.)

Q: Let's talk about what you do when you have time off and when you get home.

Y: I just watch TV and my phone.

Q: Do you get on WeChat?

Y: I do.

Q: Who do you usually chat with?

Y: Friends.

Q: Oh, like who?

Y: From Changning.

Q: You mean friends from Changning Vocational School?

Y: Right, but we don't chat a lot.

Q: What do you normally chat about?

Y: If I want to go out some day, I will just tell her. (Speaking in a gentle voice.)

Q: When you get home, do you talk to your elder sister?

Y: Not really... I talk a lot to my mom, but not so much to my sister or my dad...

Q: I see. Which days of the week do you usually have off?

Y: I work 5 days with 2 days off, and it depends which 2 days I have off.

Q: What do you do on your days off?

Y: Me? (A long pause) If someone wants to go out with me, I will go. Otherwise...

Q: Who will ask to go out with you?

Y: Friends.

Q: Where did you meet the friends?

Y: At Changning (Vocational School).

Q: What do you usually go and do?

Y: Movies, or to eat out.

Q: Which movies?

Y: *Worry-Free*... (Voice trailing off, trying to recall.)

Q: Was it *Worry-free Convenience Store*? Starring Jackie Chan?

Y: Right.

Q: Do you go out for fun with your family?

Y: I do. We go shopping.

Q: That's nice.

Y: We also walk the dog.

Q: You are very loving. You like having dogs, right?

Y: Right.

Q: What kind of dog? And how old is it?

Y: A poodle. (Silent)

Q: Who takes care of the dog?

Y: We all do. When I get home, I will take care of it.
 Q: Why do you like dogs?
 Y: I just do. Do you play *Jump Jump*?
 Q: Me? I do. What's your score?
 Y: I can score 200.
 Q: That's awesome.
 Y: Last week I scored 280.
 Q: Do your friends play that?
 Y: They do, but they are not as good as I am...
 Q: What else do you play besides that?
 Y: I just read some random e-books.
 Q: What kind of books do you like to read?
 Y: (Silent)
 Q: Tomorrow is a day off. Will you go anywhere?
 Y: I will, with an elder sister.
 Q: You mean your own sister?
 Y: A girl from Changning Vocational School, who is older than I am.
 Q: Do you need to get back to work now? (It was about 1:50 p.m.)
 Y: I do. Bye.

Observation of Y at Work

Observation date: 10:30–20:00, January 23, 2018

Observation place: Restaurant where Y works

Observer and writer: Liting Mo

Time	What Y did	Remarks
10:30	Y hasn't arrived yet, and the store is setting up for the day ahead	The observer arrived at the store
10:50	Y entered the work area and changed into work clothes	
11:03	After a customer placed an order, Y and the mentor worked together to make a supersized pizza	
11:05	The mentor told Y which ingredients to refill for the day	When reminded by the mentor about something, Y just gave simple replies
11:09	Handed out mushroom soup in the kitchen	The store manager reminded Y of it
11:10–11:15	Walked around to clean up and organize. Went to the freezer in the back of the kitchen to fetch something	

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Time	What Y did	Remarks
11:18	Worked independently to complete a takeout order for two pizzas	
11:23–11:45	Received takeout orders and worked independently to make five large-size pizzas, one small-size pizza, and breadsticks	From time to time, Y checked the food she was making against specifications in the takeout orders
11:45	Organized the pizza counter	The mentor was talking to the regional manager in the kitchen. Y kept to herself
11:46	Received takeout orders and worked independently to make three pizzas	Y organized the flour on the pizza counter. Female co-workers were talking in the kitchen and Y kept to herself
11:50–12:03	Worked independently to make three pizzas and organized the pizza counter	Eleven customers arrived at the store and more takeout orders came in. Everyone in the kitchen, including Y, got busy
12:05	As customers kept arriving, Y received instructions to make pizzas for dine-in	
12:10	Worked independently and in an orderly manner to make five pizzas for customers to take away	Y noticed that ingredients were running low and refilled them from storage boxes
12:10–12:25	Made pizzas at the counter, cleaned up flour on the counter, and refilled ingredients	More customers arrived and occupied eight tables
12:25	Made two orders of breadsticks	The mentor helped
12:25–12:34	Made pizzas of different sizes and flavors	Because there were more orders, the mentor helped add the ingredients, reminded Y what to do next, and confirmed how many more pizzas were needed
12:35	Organized and wiped down the pizza counter	
12:39	After the orders were completed, Y cleaned up the pizza counter, rolling knives, pizza nets and baskets, put away the ingredients and washed her hands	
12:45	Worked with the mentor to organize the flour cart	
12:51	Drank water at the pizza counter and returned to the employees' break room	
12:59	Had a brief interview with the observer	

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Time	What Y did	Remarks
13:15–14:00	Rested and had lunch in the employees' break room	
14:00–14:30	Helped chop vegetables and prepared ingredients in the kitchen	According to the mentor, Y volunteered for the extra work
14:41	Made pizzas according to orders and prepared ingredients by chopping peppers and tomatoes	
15:11	The delivery person arrived at the store for the takeout orders. Y stayed in the kitchen by herself to organize the orders before handing them to the delivery person	The on-duty manager helped Y pack the takeout orders
15:20	The delivery person rushed order No. 15. Y took the order and made pizzas	The on-duty manager helped Y pack the takeout order
15:23	Washed hands, organized ingredients, and cleaned the hole-puncher and pizza counter	
15:30–15:40	Rested and played on her phone in the break room	Had some free time as there were no takeout orders
15:45	Received takeout orders and worked independently to make a supersized cheese pizza	
15:52	The delivery person asked Y how the order was coming along	Y was the only person in the work area, so the delivery person sought help from the on-duty manager for communication
16:15	Had some free time as there were no orders, played the WeChat game <i>Jump Jump</i>	The mentor set out spaghetti and other food
16:28	The mentor asked Y to organize the bread cart and to set out food	
16:56	Received takeout orders, worked independently to make four pizzas and worked with the mentor to make two orders of appetizers	Nodded to the mentor and the co-worker packing the takeout orders
17:33	Received takeout orders and made pizzas and appetizers	
17:46	Cleaned the pizza counter and pizza-making tools	
18:06	Received takeout orders, made pizzas and helped pack the takeout orders	Because it's tiring to make pizzas, the mentor and Y took turns doing it
18:11	Helped pack food	Y talked to the delivery person about order numbers

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Time	What Y did	Remarks
18:30	Made pizzas and helped the mentor make appetizers	There were not many dine-in customers. The majority were takeout orders
18:45	Received a lot of takeout orders, made pizzas and appetizers, and refilled ingredients	Y wiped down the pizza counter and sink, and helped the mentor refill ingredients. Because of the large number of orders, Y made the pizza dough while the mentor added the ingredients
18:59	The mentor communicated with Y. Y nodded her head and smiled to acknowledge	
19:08	More orders came in. The mentor helped Y knead and toss dough and make pizzas	The mentor asked Y why there was dough on the counter for one more pizza and Y said that she had made a mistake
19:15	Received orders and worked independently to make pizzas, and cleaned up utensils in the work area in between	Female co-workers in the kitchen were talking loudly and Y kept to herself
19:21	Cleaned up	The mentor asked Y how the cleanup was going, and Y nodded
19:45	Cleaned up	Cleaned up the pizza counter and tools like sieves
19:52	Received orders and made pizzas	
20:00	Cleaned up and got ready to leave	The mentor reminded Y that she hadn't cleaned up the work area

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

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Appendix A

Interview with Papa John's HR Management

Interviewees: Ms. Xiao (manages employees being cared for) and Mr. Cai (manager)

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview dates: June 13, 2016, April 18, 2017, and April 27, 2017

Interview place: Shanghai Papa John's corporate location, telephone interview

Q: Through which channels does Papa John's hire employees being cared for?

A: We mainly rely on referrals from Disabled Persons' Federations, community affairs committees, and schools. We keep in close contact with those three resources. We will notify them of our hiring needs and provide them with feedback on employees working for us already. There are also parents who will come and knock on our door after learning that Papa John's hires people with disabilities.

Q: Were you referring to the Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation?

A: We actually keep in contact with Disabled Persons' Federations in Xuhui District, Yangpu District, and Minhang District.

Q: And which community affairs committees do you keep in contact with?

A: In 2007, we established contact with Xuhui Community Affairs Committee. It has designated members managing affairs for people with disabilities, and it will refer other community affairs committees to us, which has a snowball effect. If we have openings for employees being cared for, the community affairs committees will refer candidates directly to our corporate headquarters. But there were also community affairs committees that proved not to be a good match and that we don't interact with so much as a result.

Q: What do you mean by "not a good match"?

A: For example, we closed some stores in certain communities, or the community affairs committees have connections with other companies and can send a larger number of people with disabilities to work in their factories.

As for schools, we have always worked with Xuhui Jixun Primary Vocational School. There's a simulation Papa John's restaurant at the school that has the same supplier we also use. The teachers will get training at Papa John's and go

back to the school to train their students. After graduation, the students will be referred to working at Papa John's.

Since 2014, Papa John's has been the national internship base for people with disabilities. It is also an executive member of Yangpu District Disabled Persons' Federation.

Q: Are the hiring processes the same for employees being cared for and regular employees?

A: Exactly the same. But of course, we ask different questions at the job interviews.

Q: Are the training processes the same once they are hired?

A: Regular employees will receive 3 months' training for covering all job positions. Employees being cared for will get 1 month training for covering one or two positions. The contents of the training are all the same, but employees being cared for may need a little more time to learn at each position.

Q: What do employees being cared for mainly do at your restaurants?

A: The majority of our employees being cared for have Grade IV disabilities. We also have those with Grade III, Grade II, and Grade I disabilities, but they are the minority. Those with less severe disabilities can greet customers, take orders, and make deliveries. For example, our Yaohan store has a really responsible and effective delivery person. Most of the employees being cared for work in the kitchen.

Q: What do you mean by "effective delivery person"?

A: He knows the routes well and will return to the store as soon as the orders are delivered, instead of lingering around out there.

Q: In general, what is the quality of work done by employees being cared for?

A: Some of them perform very well, like the delivery person I just mentioned.

And others aren't necessarily not performing well. It's more like that their job positions are not right for them. For example, while taking orders, employees being cared for will avoid eye contact and turn their heads away. Customers who are not aware of this will complain. But once we offer explanations, the customers usually understand. There are customers who specifically come for the sake of the employees being cared for because they like a socially responsible restaurant. We had a store on Hengshan Road where a lot of foreigners visited, but that store was closed to make space for metropolitan construction.

There are also employees being cared for who would deliberately slack off at work. For example, they would relieve themselves in their pants so that they could go home to watch cartoons. We had no choice but to send them home. Parents would have a talk with them and send them back to work the next day.

Managers of stores with employees being cared for have a harder time. There's this one manager who carried around a notebook and set up a parent contact list. She would record in the notebook what was taught each day and ask parents to help the employees being cared for reinforcing the knowledge at home. She would also record what was positive about the day and what needed to be improved, such as hiding in the restroom playing with cell phones, to inform parents, hoping that they would motivate the employees to work harder. She did this for an employee being cared for for 1 month, but that kid couldn't fit into a work environment and had to be let go in the end.

Most of our stores have one or two employees being cared for. There are also two special stores where employees being cared for outnumber full-time regular employees, and at one of them, except for the management team of three, the rest are all employees being cared for.

We used to make badges with a smiley face for employees being cared for to wear on their chests, but they refused to wear them, so we stopped doing that.

Q: Will the employees have to compensate the stores for breaking things or making the wrong food?

A: That's at the discretion of the store managers. Usually no compensation is expected for an accident or non-deliberate act. Some measures will be taken against repeated incidents, but they will be in line with the company's policy.

Q: Since work hours are relatively unique in the restaurant industry, are they the same for employees being cared for and regular employees?

A: The requirement is 167 hours per month, and hours in excess of that count as OT at 1.5 times the regular pay. Employees being cared for normally work the morning shift from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. or the afternoon shift from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. We are not comfortable with having them work the evening shift because we worry about their safety. Sometimes our regular employees will send employees being cared for home, because helping to take care of employees being cared for is a form of self-improvement. Working in a restaurant is good for the health, wellbeing and self-development of employees being cared for, since it gives them a chance to interact with others and to be included into society.

Q: Are employees being cared for full-time employees? Are any of them temps? Do they enjoy social insurances?

A: They are all full-time. None of them are temps or part time. We sign contracts with them once every 3 years. And we strictly follow the regulations in Shanghai regarding paying into their five social insurances and one fund, that is, pension, health insurance, unemployment insurance, work-related injury insurance, childbirth insurance, and housing fund.

Q: So, you cover childbirth insurance, too. Are there many employees being cared for who have kids?

A: Many of them are married and some have kids.

Q: Is there an internship for several months before the official hire date? Are contracts signed after the internship is completed?

A: For school graduates, there is no internship. The contract takes effect on the hire date. There is a probationary period under the contract in accordance with the Labor Law, but there is no internship.

Q: So, contracts are signed without an internship? What if the company doesn't think someone is a good fit after several months?

A: The law allows us to terminate the contract if someone is found not to meet the hiring standards during the probationary period. But because employees being cared for are different, we will communicate with the parents and the referring agencies and give them a chance to prove themselves. If they still can't, we will only terminate the contract with consent from the employees themselves, their parents, and the referring agencies.

Q: Do employees being cared for stay long at Papa John's? Can they keep their jobs?

A: The average time they stay with us is about 4 years. We started hiring employees being cared for in 2007. There are employees who have been with us since then, so they have been with us the longest. Employees being cared for are actually the most stable group among field employees. The average time regular employees stay with us is 2 years.

Q: Why did the employees being cared for leave? Where did they go after they left?

A: They went back to school, for an associate degree. Some employees being cared for and their families are self-motivated to make progress. They are not content with just working in services—they want to have management jobs, so they decided to continue schooling. There are schools offering associate degrees in a collaborative effort between special education schools and colleges. To be accepted, people with disabilities need to take the general entrance exam like everyone else, but their scores required for acceptance are lower.

There were also those who left for other jobs, like jobs their parents got for them or jobs at other restaurants. We had an employee with hearing and speech impairments who just recently left to work at Disney.

And then there were those who just left to stay at home because of health issues.

Q: Will parents complain to the company if something happens at work?

A: They will. For example, one parent complained that regular employees asked her kid to buy them some treats. Because all employees are paid the same, and employees being cared for receive disability subsidies¹ in addition to regular pay, which gives them more take-home money than regular employees. So, regular employees joked with this kid on payday, asking him to take them out to eat; the kid might not realize it was a joke and told their parents about it at home; and the parents viewed that as bullying. So, we started reminding regular employees to refrain from jokes related to money or personal possessions.

The employees take turns to eat at work. One employee being cared for didn't get to be the first to eat and went home and told their parents about it; and the parents complained. The employees are required to wear gloves while using hand soap, but one employee being cared for ignored the gloves and got an allergic reaction; and the parents complained about that, too.

Parents of our employees being cared for are of two extremes. Some of them really focus on the kids. Therefore, the kids' development including intellectual ability has improved as a result. Other parents just leave the kids into the hands of the company. When something happens to the kid, we would call the parents only to find them in the middle of a mahjong game. Or if the kid played with their cell phone during work hours, talked back to the customers, skipped on ingredients when making food, or

¹Once they have regular jobs, people with disabilities no longer enjoy any regular fixed subsidies from civil affairs agencies. But governments at all levels, as well as communities, will give them gifts and subsidies on an irregular basis, for example on holidays.

lost self-control..., we would tell the parents about it and the parents wouldn't have a clue.

Q: During our interviews with families of employees being cared for, we heard about certain issues that we want to ask you about. For example, there was some conflict between a manager and an employee, and if what we heard is true, the manager seemed to not have been managing in the best way possible...

A: This employee's parents are the nice and caring kind. The former manager of that store is a lady, who was replaced by a guy who had never been a manager before, had no experience managing employees being cared for and didn't know how to get along with them. Sometimes employees being cared for are really resistant to what regular employees tell them. Patient explanations are needed at those times. We already had a talk with that new manager.

Q: There were also parents who said that they have no idea how much their kids are paid per month since there are no paper pay slips or text notifications from the bank.

A: Because we are trying to go paperless, we have not been issuing paper pay slips since 2014. Everything is sent through email, and emails are forwarded by district managers to store managers who in turn forward them on to employees. Regarding text notifications from the bank, it depends on whether the employee's bankcard, where the pay is deposited, is locked in with his ID and cell phone number, and whether his cell phone can receive notifications of balance changes from the bank. So, whether the employee receives text notifications from the bank depends on whether he has enabled it. Some have, and some haven't, and it can be easily done in person at the bank.

Q: What do you think is the positive impact employees being cared for have on the company?

A: The company has taken on more social responsibilities, which sets a good example. And employees being cared for are given one more job opportunity which can help them become more independent. So, it's a win-win. The prerequisite for the win-win, of course, is that the company treats the employees fairly and the employees have certain skills that meet the company's requirements.

Q: How do you feel about interacting with employees being cared for?

A: Before entering the workplace, most employees being cared for had to put up with the different way people looked at them for more than 10 years. In terms of family education, maybe they were often told not to be bullied or shortchanged, and as a result, they are more sensitive in dealing with other people. Some social interaction that looks perfectly normal to us will carry the impression of being bullied or shortchanged for them.

Therefore, when it comes to social education and family education, our priority should be to explain to them the difference between normal social interaction and malicious acts, and to discourage them from positioning themselves as the disadvantaged group and from being obsessed with whether they are being shortchanged or cheated. We should spend more time encouraging and complimenting them on positive behaviors instead of telling them that they don't have to try hard because they are a disadvantaged group.

Papa John's has been caring for employees with disabilities for many years, and it has learnt that, on the whole, the gap between them and regular employees is not as huge as imagined. Many employees being cared for are self-motivated to work hard for their future development.

*Translated by Cissy Zhao
Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen*

Appendix B

Interview with the Brand VP of Papa John's

Interviewee: Mr. Thomas (Brand VP)

Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao

Interview dates: May 25 and May 31, 2017

Interview place: In writing /telephone interview

Q: Compared to those with other kinds of disabilities, people with ID have a harder time getting jobs because their intellect and ability to adapt to society differs from others. Why does Papa John's champion the hiring of people with ID?

A: When hiring, we don't differentiate between intellectual disabilities and other kinds of disabilities, and we do have people with hearing and speech disabilities working at some of our stores. It's just that right now we work mainly with Jixun Vocational School² and we hire many students from there because they have received specific training. Work at chain restaurants is relatively standardized, and there are standards and requirements for everything that's done at the store. After training, students from that school can normally do a good job. But, of course, they do react a bit slower.

Q: From the perspective of a corporate manager, what benefits and challenges does hiring employees being cared for bring to the company?

A: The benefit is that it presents us as a responsible brand that is doing something very practical to show that we care, so it will help enhance the brand's social influence and help build an image of the company as caring and willing to take the initiative.

The main challenge is management and customer feedback. Employees being cared for are not good at self-discipline and often do things out of line, which might not be so harmful, like abandoning their post and rejecting assigned work, or worse, like fighting with co-workers and failing to control outbursts. Don't underestimate those kids, because they can be quite handful when they get naughty. There was this kid who wasn't getting along with the store manager and things got a little unpleasant.

²This is a special education school for students with ID.

So, he made up a lot of orders under the customer name "Thomas."³ It was actually pretty funny. Managers do need to spend a lot of time and energy handling things like that.

We are in the service industry, so there are customers who can't relate to employees being cared for and who would feel like they're being fooled when employees being cared for provide service to them. At those times, we need to communicate more so as to reduce society's discrimination against employees being cared for.

Q: We heard from a store that for a while, many employees being cared for were working in the dining area. But because the customers couldn't relate to them, they were gradually transferred back to the kitchen.

A: Having employees being cared for work in the kitchen was actually my decision. Before that, we had some employees being cared for working in the dining area ushering customers, taking orders, bringing food, and taking payments. But after a while, a major issue presented itself. Employees being cared for do not look much different from regular employees (and they were all reluctant to wear a badge showing their special status), but they are not proactive at all. Most of them were unwilling to engage with customers beyond following required service processes, and react relatively slow when customers demanded extra services, which the customers saw as an attempt to ignore them or to not do what was required. Lots of complaints were filed because of that. Employees being cared for more or less show their slowness in their eyes and in their tendency to avoid eye contact with the customers, so the customers couldn't feel warmth they had expected from service staff. They just felt that they were given the cold shoulder. And there were operational problems as well. For example, when something was missing from an order or some customer complained, Many employees being cared for would pretend that nothing had happened and would not tell the supervisor about it or explain to the customer. And the manager on duty wouldn't know about it until the customer exploded. Employees being cared for do have some difficulties with human interaction and many things just can't be trained.

Q: Since you hire employees being cared for, do you provide your regular employees with related training and education, like how to get along with employees being cared for?

A: After trial and lesson, we have gained some experience. We have designated several stores as special stores with four to six employees being cared for in each store. Those stores are generously staffed and the managers are more caring and patient and easier to get along with. Of course, conflict is unavoidable in human interaction, but overall, no major conflict has happened. Regular employees take good care of employees being cared for and don't take it too seriously with them. Most of the regular employees get along really well with them. And we plan to provide employees being cared for with more intensive training so as to help them pass the training without too much struggle.

Q: Some parents believe that companies hire people with disabilities for the sake of financial benefits like tax exemptions. What do you think of that?

³The customer shares the name with the DGM of the company.

A: It is true that the government rewards us for hiring employees being cared for, but the reward is disproportionate concerning our investment. We spend a lot of time and energy on employees being cared for starting with training, which itself takes a lot more than training for regular employees. Because of their limited abilities and inability to acquire the skills for multiple job positions, stores with employees being cared for are not very efficient and need a larger staff than other stores. At peak times, employees being cared for will make this or that mistake, like making the wrong food and hiding the original order, thus leading to customer complaints. Things like that are visible costs, and there are invisible costs which are even harder to predict.

Also, the government offers a lot of subsidies and preferential policies to companies in which about 25% of the workforce are people with disabilities. But for a company, if 25% of its employees are employees being cared for, management of operations and services will be significantly affected. As of now, we don't have any store that fits the bill, so we don't enjoy any preferential policies for these employers.

I do hope that families of employees being cared for can be more understanding towards us. Maybe we are not doing the best job yet. We have succeeded in hiring employees being cared for, but we haven't succeeded in giving them a strong sense of belonging, which was my original intention. As a company, we have the pressure to deliver results, for this or that reason. But we have been trying all these years and we have never given up.

Q: Is there anything especially memorable from your interaction with employees being cared for and their families?

A: Every time I went to the Hengshan store, there was this shy guy who would stand up straight and greet me loudly, calling me "Boss" to the point that, several times, he startled customers nearby. So, I told him, "We don't use the term 'Boss' in the company, so you can just call me 'Thomas'." He pondered over it and said, "You can't call a leader by his name, it's rude!" After that exchange, he would still stand up straight and loudly call me "Boss" and I just came to accept it. I remember this well because I could feel his sincerity. I believe that they know how we have been trying and giving, and that they are showing their appreciation in their own ways.

Translated by Cissy Zhao

Edited by Andy Boreham and Zijian Chen

Appendix C

Interview About the Preferential Policies Benefiting Papa John's for the Hiring Persons with Disabilities

Interviewees: Finance and HR Departments of Papa John's
Interviewer and writer: Mei Liao
Interview dates: May 2017 and March 2018
Interview place: In writing

Land use tax

1. Under the *Notice of Shanghai Finance Bureau, Shanghai Local Taxation Bureau (SHLTB), Shanghai Bureau of Civil Administration, and Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation (SDPF) on Reduction/Exemption of Urban Land Use Tax for Employers of Disabled Persons* (SHLTB Document [2011] No. 97, SHLTB Document [2015] No. 95), if "the percentage of persons with disabilities employed by the taxpayer each month on average consists of 25% or more of all in-service employees, and the number of persons with disabilities employed by the taxpayer is ten or more," then "the taxpayer will be exempted from the payment of urban land use tax of the year."

Q: Is Papa John's entitled to land use tax exemption?

A: The ratio of the employed persons with disabilities by Papa John's is less than 25%. So Papa John's is not entitled to this policy.

VAT

2. Under the *Notice of the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation (MOF and SAT) on Preferential Value-Added Tax Policies for Promoting the Employment of Disabled Persons* (MOF and SAT Document [2016] No. 52), if "the percentage of persons with disabilities employed by the taxpayer each month is 25% or more of all in-service employees, and the number of employed persons with disabilities by the taxpayer is ten or more," then "the tax authorities shall adopt the method of refunding for a limited amount immediately after payment of VAT according to the actual number of employed persons with disabilities."

Q: Is Papa John's entitled to this preferential VAT policy?

A: The ratio of the employed persons with disabilities by Papa John's is less than 25%. So Papa John's is not entitled to this preferential policy.

Corporate income tax

3. Under the *Notice of the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation (MOF and SAT) on Preferential Corporate Income Tax Policies for Employers of Disabled Persons* (MOF and SAT Document [2009] No. 70), if a company enters into an employment contract with a person with disabilities for a period of 1 year or longer, pays the social insurances in full each month as required by the state, and pays salary no less than the local minimum salary standard through a bank, then "on the basis of making deductions according to the salary actually paid to the disabled employee, the amount of the taxable income can be further deducted according to 100% of the salary paid to the employee with disabilities."

Q: Is Papa John's entitled to this preferential corporate income policy?

A: Yes. According to the company's records, Papa John's started applying for this tax benefit from March 2017. Due to the departure of the financial director, the reason for Papa John's previous failure to apply for this tax benefit is unknown.

Employment job subsidy

4. Under the *Notice on Employment Post Subsidy for Arrangement of Integrated Employment of Disabled Persons* (SDPF Document [2014] No. 93), if an employer employs a person with disabilities, enters into a fixed-term or non-fixed-term employment contract with this person, pays salary for the employee with disabilities at or above Shanghai's minimum salary standard of the same period, pays urban employee social insurance for the employee with disabilities for 12 months or longer, and pays the employment security fund for persons with disabilities, then the employer can apply for employment job subsidy according to the number of employees with disabilities. Such subsidy will be granted to the employer.

Fixed-term employment contract: employment job subsidy

$$= \text{Shanghai all employees' average monthly salary in the previous year} \\ \times \text{proportion of urban employees' social insurance payable by employers} \\ \times 2$$

Non fixed-term employment contract: employment job subsidy

$$= \text{Shanghai all employees' average monthly salary in the previous year} \\ \times \text{proportion of urban employees' social insurance payable by employers} \\ \times 3$$

Q: Did Papa John's apply for this subsidy?

A: Papa John's applied to the district's federation of disabled persons for this subsidy.

Job subsidy and social insurance subsidy for “people with difficulties in finding a job”

5. Under *Several Opinions on Improving Employment Aid in Shanghai* (Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2016] No. 54), employers, including enterprises and public entities, social groups, private non-enterprises, individually owned businesses, or any other employer (except labor dispatch companies), can apply for job subsidy and social insurance subsidy as prescribed if they employ recognized “people with difficulties in finding a job” to work at first-tier non-management positions under a labor contract for a period of longer than 1 year, have carried out employment registration procedures, and paid social insurances.

“People with difficulties in finding a job” refer to those who are in the legitimate labor age range with certain labor capacity, whose residency is registered in Shanghai, with moderate or above grade of disability, who have partially lost labor capacity or come from a household of more than one member with disabilities, and who are keen for a job, but cannot find a job in the market due to their poor job hunting conditions and who have been jobless for more than 6 months.

Q: Did Papa John’s apply for these two subsidies?

A: Most of the employees being cared for of Papa John’s are recommended by schools and disabled persons’ federations, who are not categorized as “people with difficulties in finding a job” at the time of recommendation. Therefore, Papa John’s did not apply for these two subsidies.

Reward for employers with a number of employees with disabilities over the required proportion

6. Under the *Notice of Shanghai on Adjusting the Standard of Reward for Employers with a Number of Employees with Disabilities Over the Required Proportion* (Shanghai Disabled Persons Work Committee Document [2014] No. 3), if “an employer’s average proportion of employees with disabilities in its total number of the employees exceeds 1.6% (changed to 1.5% after 2017)⁴ in the previous year, such as state organs, organizations, public institutes, enterprises and private non-enterprises,” rewards will be granted to them on an annual basis for each additional employee with disabilities according to the following formula:

$$\text{Reward} = \text{average monthly wages of employees in Shanghai in the previous year} \\ \times \text{proportion of urban employee social} \\ \text{insurance payable by employers} \times 3$$

⁴*Shanghai Disabled People’s Integrated Employment Measures* (promulgated in 1993 and amended in 2000) require that the employers shall arrange the employment of disabled persons at the ratio of 1.6% of the total number of their in-service employees, which was changed to 1.5% in 2017 by *Guidelines for Collection of the Employment Security Fund for Persons with Disabilities in Shanghai*. Please see the website of Shanghai Disabled Persons’ Federation (SDPF) for details: <http://www.shdisabled.gov.cn/clwz/clwz/ggl/2017/09/04/4028fc765e3cca14015e4c2e1a5a21ad.html?tm=1504864907104>.

Q: Is Papa John's entitled to this reward?

A: Papa John's applies for this reward to the district federation of disabled persons every year.

Training staff subsidy

7. Under the *Notice on Strengthening the Vocational Skill Training for Disabled Persons* (SDPF Document [2014] No. 96), if the training staff enter into a Training Agreement with the newly hired employee with disabilities for a training period of more than 3 months, and this employee enters into an employment contract with a company, the training staff can apply for training staff subsidy through the company for a period of up to 6 months (including 6 months).

$$\text{Subsidy} = \text{number of trainees} \times \text{number of months} \times 200 \text{ yuan}$$

Q: Did Papa John's apply for any training staff subsidy?

A: Papa John's applied for training staff subsidy in November 2015 through the Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation. But this subsidy can only be applied for once when the employees with disabilities are onboard. In recent years, Papa John's has only taken on a small number of disabled new hires. Due to the complicated application procedures, the labor costs spent in application exceed the amount of subsidy, so Papa John's has not made any application in the past 2 years.

Social insurance subsidy for graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes

8. Under the *Notice on Strengthening the Employment Promotion of Disabled Graduates of Full-Time Secondary and Higher Education Institutes* (SDPF Document [2014] No. 94), the employer can receive social insurance subsidy for employing graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Social insurance subsidy} = & \text{actual number of months of employment} \\ & \times \text{minimum contribution base of urban employee} \\ & \text{social insurance of the same period} \\ & \text{social insurance of the same period} \\ & \times \text{proportion of urban employee social} \\ & \text{insurance payable by employers} \end{aligned}$$

Q: Does Papa John's recruit any graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes? Is Papa John's entitled to social insurance subsidy?

A: Papa John's has recruited graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes, but it has never received such social insurance subsidy because the policy is subject to the qualification verification by the district's disabled persons' federation, rather than based on the company's data at the time of employment. For example, some employees were registered as junior high school students at the

federation, but then they went to senior high schools and universities. After they came aboard, the employees and their families were unwilling to change their profiles at the federation, so the federation could not verify them as from secondary and higher education institutes.

Calculation of employment of graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes

9. Under the *Notice on Strengthening the Employment Promotion of Disabled Graduates of Full-Time Secondary and Higher Education Institutes* (SDPF Document [2014] No. 94), if an employer hires graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes, the number of its employees with disabilities will be calculated according to the following formula for the collection of the employment security fund for persons with disabilities (including in the reward calculation the number of employees with disabilities exceeding the required proportion): for the employment of blind graduates from secondary and higher education institutes (Grade 1 and 2 of visual impairments), each will be counted as three employees with disabilities; for the employment of graduates with other grades of disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes, each will be counted as two employees with disabilities during the existence of the employment contract.

Q: Are there any graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes among Papa John's current employees? Is Papa John's entitled to this calculation method?

A: There are graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes among Papa John's current employees being cared for. However, due to the reasons stated in the question above, Papa John's is not entitled to this calculation method.

Other policies

10. Q: Is Papa John's enjoying any other national and local preferential policies for recruitment of employees being cared for?

A: Other than the policies mentioned above, Papa John's is not enjoying any other national or local preferential policy.

Translated by Liming Jiang

Edited by Zijian Chen

Appendix D

Compilation of Employment Policies for People with ID in Shanghai⁵

I. Forms of employment of persons with disabilities⁶

(I) Concentrated employment

Concentrated employment

Concentrated employment refers to the segregated placement of persons with disabilities in employment, such as in welfare enterprises for persons with disabilities, blind massage shops, and other public welfare employers.

In case of concentrated employment for persons with disabilities, the employers must have 25% or more full-time employees with disabilities and 10 or more employees with disabilities. There should be 5 or more employees with disabilities in blind massage shops.

The public often refer to enterprises of concentrated employment of persons with disabilities as “welfare enterprises.” In October 2016, the Administration of Civil Affairs cancelled the qualification certification of welfare enterprises.⁷

Assisted employment

Assisted employment means a form of concentrated employment for people with intellectual, mental, or severe physical disabilities of employment age who have difficulty entering a competitive labor market. Assisted employment takes a more flexible approach in terms of working time, intensity, remuneration, and conclusion of labor contracts compared to employment for persons without disability. Entities of assisted employment can accept social endowment and enjoy more policy support than welfare enterprises.

⁵Compiled by Mei Liao.

⁶The categorization and definition of employment forms are based on: the *Opinion of Eight Departments on Developing the Assisted Employment of Disabled Persons*, China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) Document [2015] No. 27; *Shanghai Measures of Employment of Disabled Persons* (2017 Draft for Consultation of Public Opinions); and *Opinion of Supporting the Independent Employment and Entrepreneurship of Disabled People*, CDPF Document [2018] No. 6.

⁷*Ministry of Civil Affairs on the Work Relating to the Cancellation of the Social Welfare Enterprise Qualification Certification*, Ministry of Civil Affairs Document [2016] No. 180.

Entities of assisted employment include: industrial/agricultural therapy institutes; other public-interest or non-profit institutes and social organizations with independent legal person status that implement assisted employment; other workshops that implement assisted employment affiliated to various enterprises, service organizations that take care of persons with disabilities, social welfare service organizations, and organizations of occupational therapy.

(II) Integrated employment

Quota employment

Quota employment refers to inclusive rather than concentrated employment placement for persons with disabilities such as in state organs, social groups, enterprises, public institutes, and urban collective economic organizations. Shanghai government prescribes that all employers shall arrange the employment of persons with disabilities at the ratio of 1.5% of the total number of their in-service employees.

Independent entrepreneurship

Independent entrepreneurship refers to the self-employment of people with disabilities by establishing economic entities, social organizations, or other forms, including privately or individually owned businesses, corporates, farmers' professional cooperatives, and other production and operating entities legally registered at the Administration of Industry and Commerce; incorporating social groups, private non-enterprises and other social organizations registered at the Administration of Civil Affairs, and other independent entrepreneurship recognized by human resources and social security departments.

People with ID are mostly not being able to create independent entrepreneurship.

Flexible employment

Flexible employment refers to employment in the form of part-time, on-call, and flexible working hours, including undertaking family sideline production, household services, repairing, basic hairdressing, gardening and sanitary services, as well as other forms of flexible employment recognized by human resources and social security departments.

Employment of disabled persons in rural areas

Disabled persons in rural areas are mainly engaged in planting, breeding, handcrafting, and other forms of productive labor.

Currently the employment of disabled people mainly takes the form of concentrated employment and quota employment.

II. Employment management, benefit and reward policy

(I) Policies for employers of concentrated employment for persons with disabilities

If welfare institutes and blind massage shops have concluded an employment contract or service agreement with a valid term of 1 year or longer with each employee with disabilities, cover basic pension, basic medical insurance, unemployment insurance, job-related injury insurance, and childbirth insurance in full each month for each employee with disabilities, and pay salary no less than the local minimum salary

standard each month through a bank or other finance institutes, the government implements the following benefits and reward policies:

Exemption of land use tax

The employers will be exempted from the urban land use tax of the year.⁸

VAT refund quota

The tax authorities will refund the VAT at a limited amount according to the number of persons with disabilities employed by the taxpayer. The specific quota of refundable VAT each month for employment of each person with disabilities shall be determined by the tax authority at the county level or above according to four times the monthly minimum salary standard of the district/county (including county-level city or banner, same hereinafter) where the taxpayer is located, approved by the provincial (including autonomous region, municipality directly under the separate state planning, same hereinafter) people's government.⁹

Social insurance subsidy

This subsidy will follow the method of “granting subsidy after payment has been made, once every other year.” Subsidies will be granted to qualified welfare enterprises according to the number of months of actual payment in the previous year for each hired person with disabilities having Shanghai registered residency, subsidies will be granted according to the number of months of actual payment in the previous year.

The standard of subsidy is: 50% of the minimum payment standard of urban employee social insurance of Shanghai payable by employers that is announced in the previous year.¹⁰

Preferential income tax policy

On the basis of making deductions according to the salary actually paid to the employee with disabilities, the amount of the taxable income can be further deducted according to 100% of the salary paid to the employee with disabilities.¹¹

⁸*Notice on Reduction/Exemption of Urban Land Use Tax for Employers of Disabled Persons*, SHLTB Document [2011] No. 97; and the *Notice of the Continued Validity of the Notice on Reduction/Exemption of Urban Land Use Tax for Employers of Disabled Persons*, SHLTB Document [2015] No. 95.

⁹*Notice of the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation (MOF and SAT) on Preferential Value-Added Tax Policies for Promoting the Employment of Disabled Persons*, MOF and SAT Document [2016] No. 52.

¹⁰*Notice on Social Insurance Subsidy for Welfare Enterprises Implementing Concentrated Employment of Disabled Persons in Shanghai*, Shanghai Private Company Administration Document [2014] No. 14.

¹¹*Notice of the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation on Preferential Value-Added Tax Policies for Employers of Disabled Persons*, MOF and SAT Document [2009] No. 70.

Reward for employers with a number of employees with disabilities over the required proportion

For employers whose proportion of employees with disabilities exceeds 25% of the total number of employees in the previous year (except welfare enterprises in Shanghai), a reward will be granted to them for each additionally hired employee with disabilities at a rate of three times the product of average monthly salary of employees in Shanghai in the previous year and the proportion of urban employee social insurance payable by employers; the number of persons with disabilities employed over the required proportion will be counted in real terms, with two digits after the decimal point.¹²

(II) Policies for assisted employment entities

Purchase subsidy for assisted employment entities

If assisted employment entities purchase any occupational recovery, occupational capacity assessment, employment training, barrier-free construction, and other equipment or facilities for the purpose of carrying out occupational recovery, occupational capacity assessment, and employment training for persons with disabilities within the entity, a purchase subsidy of 200,000 yuan will be granted in batches upon verification.

Operating cost subsidy for Sunshine employment support service sites

The purpose of this subsidy is to encourage various social entities and institutes to establish employment support service sites to provide training, internship, entrepreneurship incubation, and other services to workers with disabilities. Those Sunshine employment support service sites are certified as Class A, B, or C upon evaluation and will be granted an operating cost subsidy of 300,000; 200,000; or 100,000 yuan respectively. Such evaluation will be carried out once every 3 years.¹³

(III) Policies for employers of quota employment

Management policy

Employment security fund for persons with disabilities

All of the state organs, social groups, enterprises, public entities, and private non-enterprises in Shanghai shall arrange the employment of people with disabilities according to 1.5% of the average number of in-service employees of the employer in the previous year. If any employer fails to meet the required proportion, they must pay for the employment security fund for persons with disabilities.

The calculation formula is: annual payment amount of security fund = (1.5% – percentage of employees with disabilities) × sum of payment base of social insurance paid by the employer in the previous year

¹²*Notice of Shanghai on Adjusting the Standard of Reward for Employers with a Number of Employees with Disabilities Over the Required Proportion*, Shanghai Disabled Persons Work Committee Document [2014] No. 3.

¹³*Notice on Implementing the Disabled Workers' Employment Promotion Plan*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2017] No. 26.

Within 3 years of registration at the Administration of Industry and Commerce, small and micro-sized enterprises with 30 or less in average in-service employees annually, which fail to meet the required proportion of employees with disabilities can be exempted from the payment of employment security fund for persons with disabilities.¹⁴

Benefit and reward policies

If an employer has lawfully concluded an employment contract or service agreement for a valid term of 1 year or longer with each employee with disabilities who actually works in the enterprise, pays salary no less than the local minimum salary standard each month through a bank or other finance institute, pays for urban employee social insurance for at least 12 months and also pays the employment security fund for persons with disabilities, such employer will enjoy the following benefits and reward policies:

Preferential income tax policy

On the basis of making deductions according to the salary actually paid to the employee with disabilities, the amount of the taxable income can be further deducted according to 100% of the salary paid to the employee with disabilities.¹⁵

Employment job subsidy

If an employer concludes a fixed-term employment contract with employees with disabilities for a term of 1 year or longer, the employer will be entitled to a subsidy for each employee with disabilities at a rate two times the product of average monthly salary of employees in Shanghai in the previous year and the proportion of urban employee social insurance payable by employers. And the number of subsidized persons will be counted in real terms.

If an employer concludes a non-fixed-term employment contract with employees with disabilities for a term of 1 year or longer, the employer will be entitled to a subsidy for each employee with disabilities at a rate three times the product of average monthly salary of employees in Shanghai in the previous year and the proportion of urban employee social insurance payable by employers. And the number of subsidized persons will be counted in real terms.¹⁶

Social insurance subsidy for graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes

Social insurance subsidy will be granted to employers for each of their hired graduate with disabilities from full-time postgraduate schools, universities and colleges,

¹⁴*Guidelines for Collection of the Employment Security Fund for Persons with Disabilities in Shanghai*, Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation, <http://www.shdisabled.gov.cn/clwz/clwz/ggl/2017/09/04/4028fc765e3cca14015e4c2e1a5a21ad.html?tm=1504864907104>.

¹⁵*Notice of the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation on Preferential Value-Added Tax Policies for Employers of Disabled Persons*, MOF and SAT Document [2009] No. 70.

¹⁶Shanghai Disabled Persons' Federation, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, and Shanghai Finance Bureau, *Notice on Employment Post Subsidy for Arrangement of Integrated Employment of Disabled Persons*, SDPF Document [2014] No. 93.

technical secondary schools, and vocational secondary schools who has Shanghai registered residency and graduated within 5 years or less. The standard of subsidy is part of the urban employee social insurance of Shanghai of the current period payable by employers. And the number of subsidized persons will be counted in real terms.

This subsidy will be terminated upon the termination of the employment contract with the hired graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes or the hired graduate has been graduated for five years (whichever comes first), and the term of subsidy shall not exceed 5 years. This social insurance subsidy shall not be enjoyed in combination with other social insurance subsidies.¹⁷

Calculation of employment of graduates with disabilities from secondary and higher education institutes

The number of employees with disabilities will be calculated as follows for the collection of the employment security fund for persons with disabilities: the employment of each graduate with visual impairments from secondary and higher education institutes (Grade I and II of visual impairments) will be counted as the employment of three employees with disabilities; the employment of each graduate with other disability categories and grades from secondary and higher education institutes will be counted as the employment of two employees with disabilities during the existence of the employment contract.¹⁸

Social insurance subsidy (for social organizations only)

Eligible social organizations will be granted the subsidy for each employee with disabilities they hire at the amount of 50% of the minimum payment standard of urban employee social insurance payable by employers.¹⁹

Job subsidy and social insurance subsidy for “people with difficulties in finding a job”

Employers, including enterprises and public entities, social groups, private non-enterprises, and individually owned businesses (other than labor dispatch companies) in Shanghai, can apply for job subsidy and social insurance subsidy as prescribed if they employ recognized “people with difficulties in finding a job” to work at first-tier non-management positions under a labor contract for a period of more than 1 year, have carried out employment registration procedures, and paid social insurances. For “people with difficulties in finding a job” whose social insurance is retained under agreement, their employers are entitled to apply for job subsidy on a monthly basis, at the standard of 50% of the monthly minimum salary of Shanghai. For other categories of “people with difficulties in finding a job,” their employers are

¹⁷*Notice on Strengthening the Employment Promotion of Disabled Graduates of Full-Time Secondary and Higher Education Institutes*, SDPF Document [2014] No. 94; Shanghai Disabled Persons' Employment Service Center, *Specific Implementing Rules on Social Insurance Subsidy for Disabled Graduates of Full-Time Secondary and Higher Education Institutes*, Shanghai Disabled Person's Employment Service Center Document [2014] No.17.

¹⁸*Notice on Strengthening the Employment Promotion of Disabled Graduates of Full-Time Secondary and Higher Education Institutes*, SDPF Document [2014] No. 94.

¹⁹*Notice on Implementing the Disabled Workers' Employment Promotion Plan*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2017] No. 26.

entitled to apply for job subsidy and social insurance subsidy on a monthly basis. The standard of job subsidy is 50% of the monthly minimum salary of Shanghai. The standard of social insurance subsidy is 50% of the pension, medical insurance, and unemployment insurance payable by employers, using 60% of the average monthly salary of employees in Shanghai in the previous year as the payment base.

For the same “person with difficulties in finding a job,” the term of the above subsidies and lump-sum subsidy enjoyed by the employer before the issuance of these opinions shall be no longer than 3 years in total. At the expiration of the term of subsidy and if such “person with difficulties in finding a job” is less than 2 years younger than the statutory retirement age, then the term of subsidy can be extended to when such “person with difficulties in finding a job” reaches the statutory retirement age.

Employers of specific industries (except labor dispatching companies) that employ any “person with difficulties in finding a job,” can apply for job subsidy on a monthly basis as prescribed. The standard of the job subsidy is 50% of the monthly minimum salary of Shanghai. For the same “person with difficulties in finding a job,” the term of the job subsidy shall be no longer than 3 years in total. At the expiration of the term of subsidy and if such “person with job hunting difficulties” is less than 2 years younger than the statutory retirement age, then the term of subsidy can be extended to when such “person with difficulties in finding a job” reaches the statutory retirement age.

“People with difficulties in finding a job” refer to those with moderate or above grade of disability, who have partially lost labor capacity, or come from a household of more than one member with disabilities, who are in the legitimate labor age range with certain labor capacity, whose residency is registered in Shanghai, and who are keen for a job but cannot find a job in the market due to their poor job hunting conditions and who have been jobless for more than 6 months.²⁰

Reward for employers with a number of employees with disabilities over the required proportion

For the state organs, social groups, public institutes, enterprises, and private non-enterprises that arrange for quota employment of people with disabilities and achieve the required proportions (except those individually owned business with employees, people who are flexibly employed, and non-certified employment organizations), a reward will be granted to them due to any additional hired person with disabilities at a rate three times the product of the average monthly salary of employees in Shanghai in the previous year and the proportion of urban employee social insurance payable by employers. The number of employees with disabilities over the required proportion will be counted in real terms, with two digits after the decimal point.²¹

²⁰*Several Opinions on Improving Employment Aid in Shanghai*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2016] No. 54.

²¹*Notice of Shanghai on Adjusting the Standard of Reward for Employers with a Number of Employees with Disabilities Over the Required Proportion*, Shanghai Disabled Persons Work Committee Document [2014] No. 3.

(IV) Policies for individuals with disabilities and policies on independent start-up and flexible employment of persons with disabilities

Individuals with disabilities

Social insurance subsidy for flexible employment of “people with difficulties in finding a job”

Employees with disabilities can apply for social insurance subsidy if they are certified as “people with difficulties in finding a job” who achieve flexible employment and pay social insurance as required. The standard of monthly subsidy is: 50% of the social insurance payable, using 60% of the average salary of employees in Shanghai in the previous year as the payment base. The period of subsidy shall be 3 years at maximum, with the exception of those who are less than 5 years under their statutory age of retirement; in such cases, the period of subsidy can be extended to the time of retirement.²²

Income tax

From 1 January 2017, the annual reduction of income tax paid by persons with disabilities will be increased to 5,640 yuan. For the same taxpayer in one taxable year, the total amount of annual income tax reduction shall not exceed 5,640 yuan.

Labor income which benefits a fixed deduction of personal income tax includes: income of salary and wages, income of production and operation by individual businesses, income of operation by contracting/leasing with enterprise/public institutes, income of labor services, remuneration of writing and income of franchising.²³

VAT

The labor services provided by persons with disabilities for processing, repairing, and assembly work will be exempted from VAT.²⁴

Enterprises established by persons with disabilities

Proportional reservation of convenience service sites for persons with disabilities

In case of government or sub-districts setting up trade markets, stores, booths, lottery stations, newsstands, or other convenience service sites, no less than 10% of such places shall be reserved for people with disabilities. The booth fees and rent shall also be reduced appropriately and even exempted wherever possible.²⁵

Set-up subsidy for independent entrepreneurship

In case of start-ups by workers with disabilities within the legitimate employment age registered at the Administration of Industry and Commerce and Administration

²²*Several Opinions on Improving Employment Aid in Shanghai*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2016] No. 54.

²³*Notice on Continued Implementation of Policy of Reducing IIT Imposed on Labor Income of Disabled Persons, Childless Elderly People and Relatives of Martyrs*, SHLTB Document [2017] No. 1.

²⁴*Notice of the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation on Preferential Value-Added Tax Policies for Promoting the Employment of Disabled Persons*, MOF and SAT Document [2016] No. 52.

²⁵*Opinions on Support for Disabled People’s Independent Employment and Entrepreneurship*, CDPF Document [2018] No. 6.

of Civil Affairs that are in actual operation, a start-up subsidy of 10,000 yuan will be granted in two installments of 5,000 yuan each. The second application shall be made 1 year after the actual operation. For start-ups that have been in operation for more than 1 year, an operation subsidy of 10,000 yuan will be granted each year for no longer than 2 years.²⁶

Exemption of administration business charge

When persons with disabilities register for independent employment and entrepreneurship, administration business charges and monopoly operating charges for administration, registration and licenses/certificates shall be exempted according to the relevant provisions. With the consent of industry associations/trade unions, membership fees and other service costs can be exempted or reduced appropriately. In case of difficulty in production or operation, an application can be made according to law for reduction of the deposit rate of housing fund or payment extension, and such deposit ratio may be raised or payment may be made later when the business operation improves.

Discounts for electricity, water, gas, and heating charges

Civil use standards should be applied for the collection of the electricity, water, gas, and heating charges of the business premises of private non-enterprise units established by persons with disabilities, which are deemed as operations for public interest of welfare, or for public benefit, and registered at the Administration of Civil Affairs.

VAT

Under the relevant requirements, for enterprises established by persons with disabilities with annual taxable income of 500,000 yuan or less and which meet small-sized micro-profit conditions, their taxable income shall be calculated by deducting 50% of the income and their corporate income tax shall be paid at the tax rate of 20%.²⁷

(V) Labor training policy for individuals with disabilities and training organizations

Individuals with disabilities

Subsidy for vocational skill training

Persons with disabilities within the legitimate employment age who have Shanghai registered residency can participate in vocational skill training programs organized or certified by municipal/district employment service organizations for persons with disabilities. Those who complete the entire training program and pass the exams as required will be granted a subsidy for the vocational skill training costs. Each person can participate in no more than two subsidized vocational skill trainings each year; the amount of subsidy shall not exceed 10,000 yuan. The training costs will be directly settled between the district/county employment service organizations for persons with disabilities and the training organizations.

²⁶*Notice on Implementing the Disabled Workers' Employment Promotion Plan*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2017] No. 26.

²⁷*Opinions on Support for Disabled People's Independent Employment and Entrepreneurship*, CDPF Document [2018] No. 6.

Living allowance during vocational skill training

Those who are within the legitimate employment age, with Shanghai registered residency, jobless, and participated in certified training programs may apply for a living allowance. The standard of subsidy is 50% of the minimum employee salary of Shanghai during the training period. The number of applications shall be limited to two each year, for a period of no longer than 6 months in total.

Subsidy for youth interns' training

Those youth with disabilities who have Shanghai registered residency in the age range of 18–35 years learning at vocational training centers for youth with disabilities, which are certified by the municipal/district employment service organizations for persons with disabilities, can apply for living allowance at the amount of 80% of the minimum monthly salary of urban employees in the current year, for a term of no longer than 6 months.²⁸

Skill training for “people with difficulties in finding a job”

“People with difficulties in finding a job” can choose to participate in vocational skill training and certification in the subsidy catalogue at their own discretion. Upon certification, 100% of the training costs will be subsidized.²⁹

Employment assistance for “people with difficulties in finding a job”

Identified “people with difficulties in finding a job” and other workers with disabilities having special difficulties will be classified as prioritized participants for assistance. A joint service model of “one community assistant for disability affairs + one employment assistant + one career coach” will be implemented to strengthen assistance for employment opportunities, strive for the goal of “identifying, certifying, and assisting each person with disabilities in need of employment.”³⁰

Training staff and training organizations

Subsidy for training staff

A training subsidy will be granted to a training staff if an employer implements training for employees with disabilities with Shanghai registered residency within 3 months of employment and this training staff enters into a training agreement with the employee with disabilities for a training period of more than 3 months. The subsidy standard is 200 yuan each month per each employee with disabilities. The length of time for the subsidy shall be no more than 6 months in total.

Subsidy for training staff of youth with disabilities

A subsidy will be granted at the rate of 200 yuan each month to those training staff for each youth with disabilities they coach at the job-training centers for youth with disabilities certified by municipal/district employment service organizations for

²⁸*Notice on Strengthening the Vocational Skill Training for Disabled People*, SDPF Document [2014] No. 96.

²⁹*Several Opinions on Improving Employment Aid in Shanghai*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2016] No. 54.

³⁰*Notice on Implementing the Disabled Workers' Employment Promotion Plan*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2017] No. 26.

persons with disabilities. The length of time for the subsidy shall be no longer than the time of living allowance granted to the trainees.

Reward for recommendation by vocational skill training organization

If a certified training organization recommends a person with disabilities who has completed a vocational skill training program to participate in internship training for 6 months or more, a reward will be given to the organization at the rate of 500 yuan for each person with disabilities it recommends. If it recommends job opportunities for a person with disabilities, with a subsequent employment period of 1 year or more and paid urban employee social insurances by the employer, subsidy will be granted to this organization at the rate of 1,000 yuan for each recommended employee with disabilities.³¹

Employment training subsidy for “people with difficulties in finding a job”

A subsidy of the 100% of training costs will be granted to any organization that proactively implements targeted training and achieves the employment of “people with difficulties in finding a job” through such training.³²

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Edited by Zijian Chen

³¹*Notice on Strengthening the Vocational Skill Training for Disabled People*, SDPF Document [2014] No. 96.

³²*Several Opinions on Improving Employment Aid in Shanghai*, Shanghai Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau Document [2016] No. 54.