



This photo was taken at the scene of Produce 101, clearly showed fans' passions toward their favorite idols.

From WeChat Official account *Yi Pie Yi Na*'s article, published in August 14th, 2018

“Being A Future Superstar, Do You Want It?”

The Dilemma Produce 101 brought to Chinese Teenagers

Inspired by the Recent TV Show “Produce 101” in China

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Team 01

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Team Name: Four Oligarchs

Social Responsibility

“*I love her so much! Pick her! Pick her!*” Shouts explode out from every corner of the auditorium, where are occupied by all the idol’s death-love fans. Produce 101, labelled as “the first idol training reality show” in China, seems superficial, yet it is a mark of the “rising idolizing” social pattern gradually emerging in Chinese society.

Why do Chinese teenagers favor Produce 101 so much recently? Why are China’s teens so open to obsession? How parents deal with teens who want to be movie stars? A thorough research and critical analysis had been done on this phenomenon. Readers will find answers to these questions through this report. A number of people were interviewed to talk about their attitudes toward Produce 101 and being obsessed with superstars. The topic was explored through three perspectives: children (kids between 3-10 years old and students between 12-16 years old), directors, and parents. By these three following parts, readers may understand the current status quo in China and find answers of foregoing questions.

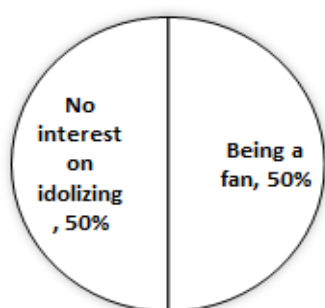
Obsessed Teenagers, Anxious Parents

The obsession with superstars is a common psychological stage for all teenagers to show their yearning for beauty and fashion. Some people believe that superstars can motivate and inspire teenagers to have good grades and stay out of trouble. However, some teenagers are more likely to listen to their favorite superstars instead of their own parents, according to *The Effects of Celebrity Role Models on Kids and Teens*, published by Eliza Martinez in September 26, 2017.

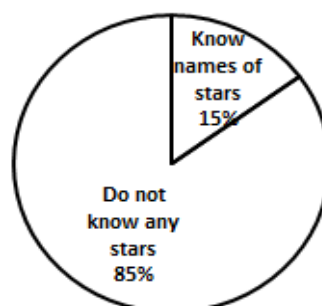
Through the interview of “students group,” 50% of students like being fans instead of a superstar; the other half shows no interest in idolizing a person. Moreover, female

students have a greater tendency to pick superstars and idolize them, compared to male students. Besides, 90% of students think this prevailing social pattern will have a strong impact on the market. The majority of interviewed parents strongly oppose their children's craziness about idolizing a star or using their pocket money to buy albums and concert tickets. A possible explanation of the phenomenon is that Chinese social media usually exaggerates the entertainment gossip to attract attention and focus. Unlike their trends in the past, more and more teenagers focus on the entertainment industry, instead of the public events, diplomatic news, and government policies, which are related to their daily lives.

SURVEY ON THE STUDENTS GROUP



SURVEY ON THE KIDS GROUP



The result indicates that almost every interviewee between 10-16 years old do not have interest to become a superstar. Most of them would like to be fans and watch idols' videos through spare time. For 3-10 years old kids, the majority of them do not know idols' names, which means youngsters are less likely to follow of an idols.

According to the interview of the "kids group", only 15% of them know some

names of superstars: they basically collect information from their parents, classmates and friends. In China, parents emphasize the concept of the rules. Many of them pay attention to their children's education and set some strict rules on their children's daily lives, such as the time spent watching TV or using mobile phones.

It is irrefutable that parents' correct ideas play a crucial role in children's growth and development. "The only expectation I have for my kid is to be healthy and happy—that's all. Also, I had never wished her to be a star in the future, unless she has a strong willingness to do so," said by Hua Tian, mother of an eight-year-old girl, who had arranged screen tests for her girl twice. In fact, most parents claim that they would encourage their kids to admire someone who really contributed to the society, for instance, scientists and politicians—they want their children to follow their views of the world. As interviews show, parents would only support their kids if they really love what they are doing, like performance art. That means, generally, if kids are only perusing the fame and reputation, nobody will support them.

"As a parent, it's important to talk to your child regularly and pay close attention on his activities," said Theodosiou. The connection between parents and teachers to manage youngsters' activities is also very important. Based on our research, it showed that elementary schools in Beijing give students lessons to ensure that young children will not get many opportunities for obsession. Also, most of youngsters lack financial freedoms. Due to these factors, younger teenagers are less likely to be followers of an idol.

A Dilemma in China: To be a star or not to be, it depends on parents

A journalist from Hunan Satellite TV was advertising, “How old are you? Do you know Produce 101? Please fill in your basic information here. We will offer your opportunities for your son to become future superstar.” After his “client” filled in all things on the sheet, he talked to another passerby and offered her the same thing, trying to get more seeded players for the TV program.

In China, more and more teenagers want to be superstars like “Cosmic Girl” in Produce 101, instead of engaging in other careers. The explanation of this phenomenon could be very simple: they are able to be famous, have lots of followers and fans, as well as earn money. Also, the minority should not be excluded—they are the teenagers who really love the art and performance, and they would like to show people their talent, not for money or fame, but for their own interests. How can you become a future superstar? Han Zhijun, a famous director has his answer, “There are four conditions for the success of talents: teachers, endowments, skills and opportunities. To be a superstar does not mean to be successful. You can have such a dream, but you must also consider all the conditions of your own, and you are not supposed to have unrealistic fantasies.”

In China, some teenagers are forced to “have dreams” of becoming superstars. Some parents find their children are talented and want them to utilize this advantage. Some parents think it is easier for their children to enter colleges by art exams, because the competition of the academic test is too fierce. Some parents think that becoming stars is the most efficient way to make money and have a good life. Shen Muhan, a young director, said proudly that he followed his interest and majored in directing in

college. Fortunately, his parents supported him by multiple means. For example, they act as guest performers in his play, as well as gave him some suggestions to help him improve his play. His story shows the strong positive impact parents could bring to their children's career. However, negative impacts brought from parents could also harm their children's work tremendously.

Polarizing Condition: Yes or No?

Recently in China, parents are paying more and more attention to their kids' education. They are extremely anxious about their children's future—generally they want to do everything as early as possible. Thus, many parents would like to send their kids to the entertainment industry by signing up for model contests. And this explains why the amount of model contests, especially these for kids, has an explosive growth. To learn this phenomenon better, some parents are interviewed to talk about their ideas.

A six-year-old boy's mother said, "It's been much harder to stand out from the competition than before." From her point of view, she needs to help her kid get prepared. As a result, the little boy is going to practice his singing and dancing skills ten hours per week. Furthermore, she often signs up for some model contests for her son, and she thinks that children should take a glance at the "modern society" when they are young. As a supplement, an event held in Changchun, Jilin Province called *Children's Victoria's Secret Show* has drawn many people's attention. Kids' ages are from 4 years old to 12 years old. They made some body movements on the stage, just like adult models. Many people criticized this event. They argued that the childhood should not be like that. Children should perform their innocent side, not the so-called mature side.

Nonetheless, some kids in elementary school are already the fans of superstars. As the development of high technologies in China, even first or second-graders have multiple ways to get different kinds of information via Internet. They leave comments to support their idols, and they will even buy things related to their idols. Their parents, however, have absolutely polarized thoughts about this topic.

The father of a grade 3 girl said that he will definitely encourage his daughter to follow a star she loves. He thinks that the idol will inspire her to do better in her life, and if she wants, he will permit her to buy her star's records or any other things. "That could be a reward to her," he said.

As a contrast, the mother of a 15-year-old boy said, "I will prohibit him from following any singers or actors uncompromisingly." The reason is that being a fan will affect learning and make him forget about what he should do in the current condition. As she said, "It is an addiction."

Where there is error, may we bring truth; where there is doubt, may we bring faith

In countries all around the world, being obsessed with superstars is a psychological stage for all teenagers. They need a channel to show their desire for beauty. Indeed, having an idol can inspire teenagers to overcome difficulties and embrace a brighter future. However, when teenagers cannot control themselves well and lose the ability to schedule the time, entertainment industry may have negative effects to them.

The current status quo for Chinese parents is actually a dilemma. They do not know whether to support their children and respect their interests, or to object to their children's craziness—because they have never faced these kinds of situation ever before. It is a totally new condition for everyone. Therefore, parents' extremely different attitudes toward the entertainment industry are not confusing anymore—they barely want their children to have a better future. As the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher said, “Where there is error, may we bring truth; where there is doubt, may we bring faith”. We should believe that everything happening now is the best thing to happen. The time will tell the final answer.