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Idol Worshipping for Vain Glory, Illusory Romance or Intellectual Learning: A Study in Nanjing and Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed a sample of 549 and 277 secondary school and university students in Nanjing and Hong Kong to test hypotheses concerning the impact of preference for popular stars as idols or role models on valuations of vain glory, illusory romance, and intellectual learning. The illusory glory and romance represent only the characteristics of popular stars and are thus valued by their followers as a form of remote intimacy. To examine to what extent such valuations determined one's preference for popular stars, this study employed a causal modeling technique to estimate the reciprocal relationships. Supportive of the hypotheses, results indicate that preference for popular stars had weak but significant positive effects on valuations of vain glory and illusory romance and a significant negative effect on valuation of intellectual learning.

Pop stars are those figures or celebrities who, typically involved in the entertainment industry, gain popularity among people in the modern world. They readily become targets for idol worshipping, especially among young people, and could exert a tremendous influence on their followers’ formation of values,

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attitudes, and behaviors such that their lifestyles, dressing, make-up, and characters are all to be idealized or imitated by their fans (Schultze et al., 1991). The worshipping and imitation are certainly desirable to the commercial world, which thrives on the customers' consumption of goods related to their idols. Hence, pop stars and the associated businesses actively promote their followers' idol worshipping, which in turn leads them to identify with some pop stars against others (Basil, 1996).

In urban Chinese societies, profusion of pop star worshipping is as widely prevalent as it is in the West. Such pop stars generally embody glory to their fans because of their remarkable wealth, fame, and power acquired in a short time. They also become an easy source of imaginary romance due to their attractive outlooks and youthful glamour. These attributions are central to the theory of post-modernization which anticipates that popular mass media and culture featuring consumerism, hedonism, and romanticism are pervasive and dominant in the post-modern era (Best and Kellner, 1998; Kellner, 1995; Morrison, 1995; Schultze et al., 1991). Mass media and their culture become popularized as a result of trickling down (Sobel, 1981). They dissolve tradition, rationality, intellectual inquiry, and adherence to conventional social norms. In Hong Kong, for instance, the emergence of the nonsense cult advocates no rationality and reasoning but nonsense words and responses, appearing to be a manifestation of post-modernization (So and Chan, 1992). Therefore, they may bring out various social problems, such as juvenile delinquency and denial of conventional social norms (Morrison, 1995).

In place of concrete human relations, illusory and fabricated intimacy with highly idolized pop stars in the postmodern era may undermine social integration and attachment necessary for people's social or emotional well-being (Schultze et al., 1991). Indulgence in the nonsense cult appears to have an effect on deviant behavior and beliefs of young people in Hong Kong (So and Chan, 1992). Moreover, due to the various innovations in modern technology, pop stars nowadays could wield a far greater influence on their fans than did any of the idols and cults worshipped in history. Pop fans nowadays can even make contact with their idols via electronic media and thereby maintain a remote intimacy with them. The entertainment industry endeavors to promote such an illusory affection between pop stars and their followers so as to maximize its commercial revenues. As an illustration, entertainment industries can make a huge profit from concert attendance, album sales, and sales of
paraphernalia and other articles related to pop stars. To the extent that such industries are integral to modern society, worshipping pop stars is crucial in the life of modern people, especially to young people.

That pop stars could influence their followers via senses of vain glory and of illusory romance appears to be plausible in view of some selected case studies (Schultze et al., 1991). Such influences would reflect the process of alienation, which deprives an individual of his or her autonomy, true consciousness, and realization of potentialities, according to Marxian and critical theories (Kellner, 1989). The impact of idol worshipping on the psycho-social development of young people, however, have rarely been examined. Of the few studies that have been carried out, some examined the patterns of attachment to pop stars (Adams-Price and Greene, 1990; Greene and Adams-Price, 1990). Others examined involvement or consumption in heavy metal and rock and roll music (Friesen and Helfrich, 1998; Sloat, 1998). Still others examined the effectiveness of figures or celebrities for promotional campaigns (Gunter et al., 1993. Pollock, 1994; Tesoriero et al., 1995).

Of these three types of studies, the first type tended to outline some antecedents to idol worshipping, such as autonomy from parents and affective identification needs (Greene and Adams-Price, 1990). The results indicated that a female was more likely to imagine a romantic relation with idols than was a male and that her emphasis is on expressive aspects (Adams-Price and Greene, 1990; Argyle, 1994; Greene and Adams-Price, 1990). In contrast, a male was more likely to favor agentic features of idols (Adams-Price and Greene, 1990). Young people were also found to pay more attention to expressive features of idols (Adams-Price and Greene, 1990). People of low socioeconomic status were more likely than those of high socioeconomic status to favor idols who were popular to ordinary people (Sobel, 1981; Argyle, 1994). People of higher class origin would also tend to favor people of high and selective culture rather than of popular culture (Katsillis and Rubinson, 1990).

The second type of studies examined the association of consumption of heavy metal, rap, rock and roll, punk, alternative, industrial, and other underground music with juvenile deviant behaviors, including delinquency, school problems, drug abuse, depression, and suicide. Evidence for the association has been readily available (Friesen and Helfrich, 1998; Kaminer, 1994, Lull, 1987; Martin et al., 1993, Sloat, 1998; Took and Weiss, 1994) in view of content analysis of lyrics and beat of the popular songs,
which tend to concentrate on sexual, violent, rebellious, antisocial genres (Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993; Friesen and Helfrich, 1998; Prinsky and Rosenbaum, 1987; Sloat, 1998). The third type of studies investigated the effectiveness involving pop stars to promote public awareness campaigns, such as those for AIDS prevention program (Gunter et al., 1993; Pollock, 1994; Tesoriero et al., 1995). For instance, Magic Johnson, being an AIDS patient himself, played an instrumental role in enhancing AIDS prevention programs in the US as well as for tolerance of AIDS patients in the society.

Apart from the above studies, some other studies sought to reveal the impact of identification with pop stars on youngster’s self evaluation by examining the relationship between self-esteem and membership in a fan club, such as among secondary school students in Hong Kong (e.g., Cheng, 1997). Though a significant relationship between the two variables has been found, the analytic technique used generally failed to support the claim that association with a fan club would necessarily lower one’s self-esteem. Alternatively, though the seminal finding tended to indicate a close relationship of fan club membership to personal problems, it did not explore specifically the contribution of pop stars to youths’ values that would have more pervasive significance than self-esteem. Still other studies have focused on impacts of consumption of mass media in general on value and belief changes (Cheung and Chan, 1996; Gerbner et al., 1994). Recently, Yue and Cheung (1998) applied a hexagonal model in differentiating adolescent idol worshipping and role modeling behaviors in terms of three pairs of bipolar concepts: idealism versus realism, romanticism versus instrumentalism, absolutism versus relativism. Their analysis of data collected from Chinese high school and university students in Hong Kong and Nanjing (which is one of the biggest cities in the mainland of China) provides convergent support for the hexagonal model. Idealism, romanticism and absolutism were found to be more important in idol selection. Realism, instrumentalism, and relativism were found to be more important in model selection. Young people in Hong Kong were significantly more attached to instrumentalism-romanticism-absolutism (IRA) oriented figures or celebrities than adolescents in Nanjing.

Out of the above studies, there emerges a strong need to examine more specifically how identification with pop stars enhances people’s hedonist and romantic valuations emphasized in the postmodern culture instead of those of morality and rationality emphasized in traditional and modern cultures.
Alternatively, postmodern culture features illusion and irrationality and emphasizes visceral satisfaction and beauty (Best and Kellner, 1998). Rationality, skills, and hardworking are no longer the most important determinants in post-modern idol worshipping. Instead, wealth, beauty or physical attraction became the most important determinants of becoming an idol. For instance, pop stars in Chinese societies, particularly in Hong Kong, are generally those who are beautiful, handsome, and wealthy. Similar to their Western counterparts, they embody wealth, power, and physical attraction and frequently engage in unscrupulous marital and sexual affairs. Particularly appealing to young people is that their easy and quick access to wealth and fame.

In view of these characteristics, the present investigators were interested in examining young people’s idol worshipping in terms of valuation of vain glory, illusory romance, and intellectual learning. Specifically, vain glory is associated with young people’s gratification of hedonic or materialistic needs in idol worshipping, such as in their needs for identification with idols of high power, wealth and social status. Illusory romance is associated with young people’s gratification of affective needs in idol worshipping, such as in their needs for developing intimacy with idols of high physical attraction, glamour, and romantic love. By contrast, intellectual learning represents young people’s desire to identify with people worth of their model learning or role modeling. Specifically, according to Yue and Cheung (1998), idol worshipping is primarily oriented in idealism, romanticism and absolutism whereas model learning is primarily oriented in realism, instrumentalism and relativism. Whereas valuations of vain glory and illusory romance may characterize idol worshipping in the postmodern era, valuation of intellectual learning still conforms to rationality in the modern and conventional culture.

Thus conceived, it was generally hypothesized that:

(1) a young person’s preference for pop stars has a positive effect on his or her valuation of vain glory such that he or she would give higher regard to values relating to fame, wealth and hedonism

(2) a young person’s preference for pop stars has a positive effect on his or her valuation of illusory romance such that he or she would care a great deal for the physical attraction of the chosen pop stars.
(3) a young person’s preference for pop stars has a negative effect on his or her valuation of intellectual learning such that he or she would not find an idol of any sort worthy of learning, modeling, intellectual exchange, and making reference.

To test these three hypotheses, we deemed it necessary to generate an analytic framework that could isolate impacts of preference for pop stars from other competing relations. Besides, we also realize that there could be a reciprocal relationship between the preference and valuation. Specifically, as a young person might learn to value vain glory and illusory romance through identification with their favorite pop stars (Tan, 1986; McGuire, 1986), the pop stars they chose as idols would certainly function to reinforce value formation in the youth. Alternatively, a youth would choose an idol that could maximize the value or utility that the young person desires for himself (Feather, 1990; Singer et al., 1993).

Identification with opposite-sex figures or celebrities and others becomes popular during adolescence (Feldman and Wentzel, 1995; Lempers and Clark-Lempers, 1993). However, such identification may be maladaptive for young people who experience negative relationships with and between their parents (Feldman and Wentzel 1995). Because many of the favorite pop stars are of opposite sex to the young people ($r = .493$ in this study of Hong Kong youths), preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities would confound effects of preference for pop stars. Therefore, a competing hypothesis, concerning effects of preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities on the valuations, is important for the study to test the three core hypotheses. Besides, preference for opposite-sex pop stars may have additional impacts on the valuations because the idols incorporate both characteristics of pop stars and opposite sex figures or celebrities. The integration may accentuate effects of either characteristic in isolation. Hence, a hypothesis concerning the interactive effect of pop stars and opposite-sex figures or celebrities as idols is of interest.

The background characteristics, such as sex, age, paternal and maternal education levels, tend to have effects on the youth’s preference for pop stars and valuation of romance and hedonism as well (Adams-Price and Greene 1990; Argyle, 1994; Greene and Adams-Price, 1990; So and Chan, 1992). Hence, they may be common predictors of the preference and valuation and may explain away the relationship between these constructs. Identification of all these alternative relationships calls for a
causal model that incorporates the relationships in a way that is amenable to rigorous analysis (see Figure 1).

METHODS

Participants

A total of 826 secondary school and university students in Nanjing and Hong Kong participated in the present study, including 325 university students and 224 high school students in Nanjing and 110 university students and 167 high school students.
in Hong Kong. Students of the two cities had an average age of 17.8 and 17.7 years respectively. 57.9% of the sample in Hong Kong were females, 41.4% of them in Nanjing were females. Nearly 50% of students in Nanjing had fathers having a tertiary level of education whereas only 8.20% of those in Hong Kong had fathers of such a high educational attainment. Similarly, 32.2% of students in Nanjing had mothers having a tertiary level of education, only 1.6% of students in Hong Kong had mothers of such a level of education. Beyond their similarities in urban population and metropolitan sizes, the two cities were chosen for representing distinctive Chinese urban communities, with Nanjing representing a more traditional Chinese society and Hong Kong representing a more open and westernized society.

**Questionnaire**

A survey questionnaire employed structured rating items was developed to elicit responses concerning valuations of vain glory, illusory romance, and intellectual learning, and preference for idols and models. The measures of the preference relied on content analysis that coded reported idols with reference to their sex and status as entertainers, that is, pop stars. A score of preference for pop stars referred to the proportion of idols who were entertainers. Similarly, a score of preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities was the proportion of opposite-sex figures or celebrities mentioned. Furthermore, a score of preference for opposite-sex entertainers was the proportion of opposite-sex entertainers mentioned as idols and role models. A respondent who did not report an idol would have a score of 0 for the preferences. The internal consistency reliability (alpha) for the composite score of preference for six pop star idols or models was .667 and that for the composite score of the six opposite-sex idols or models was .826. The fairly high internal consistency indicated that a youth tended to prefer pop stars or opposite-sex figures or celebrities exclusively.

On the other hand, the measures of valuations of vain glory, illusory romance, and intellectual learning employed a five-point scale to capture responses to the questions: “how important is the attribute to characterize an idol?” “how important is the attribute to characterize a role model?” The 7 attributes for valuation of vain glory included: pursuit of material enjoyment, living extravagantly, regarding the individual as the most important, being wealthy, being tasteful in living, being powerful, and
having status. The internal consistency reliability was .914 for the 14 items (7 for idols and 7 for role models). In the same vein, 11 attributes reflecting valuation of illusory romance included: being deeply affectionate, being full of glamour, having an attractive outlook, being worthy to sacrifice for, being an ideal companion, having an elegant manner, being an object for romantic love, having the glamour of a star, being congenial affectionately, make my heart beating rhythmically, and making one fantasying endlessly. The 11 attribute items yielded a composite measure of valuation of illusory romance with an internal consistency reliability of .928. Finally, the measure of valuation of intellectual learning included ratings of importance for the 4 attributes for idols and models: being worthy of learning, being a model to learn, possibility of intellectual exchange, and being worthy of making reference. The composite score of the 8 ratings (4 for idols and 4 for role models) attain an alpha reliability of .797.

Analytic Strategy

Analysis of the causal model involving reciprocal relationships between the preferences and valuation required the technique of structural-equation modeling (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993). The technique was distinctive in its ability to estimate reciprocal relationships given the problem of endogeneity (Cheung, 1995; Farrell, 1994). It thereby reached the greatest fit to the data by estimating reciprocal relationships and others using maximum likelihood estimation. To identify the reciprocal relationships, the general tendency of importance rating served as an exclusive predictor (instrument) of the three valuations and membership in a fan club served as an exclusive predictor of the preferences. Preference for pop stars would be a mediator of any effect of membership in a fan club with reference to the principle of psychological mediation (House, 1981). Accordingly, the process of identification is necessary for mediating the effect of a structural influence (Basil, 1996). On the other hand, the general tendency of importance rating should only affect valuations of vain glory, illusory romance, and intellectual learning because of use of the rating method. The linkage was responsible for precautions taken to control for the acquiescence response bias (Cheung and Kwok, 1998; Watson, 1992).

Owing to the different methods used to measure valuation and preference, there was no reason to predict a direct effect of the general tendency of importance rating on open-ended responses
regarding preference for idols and role models. Only through such specification and estimation of the causal model that involved multiple variables could the technique identify reciprocal relationships that operated contemporaneously. The reciprocal effects would indicate to what extent that preferences and valuation affected each other given the effects of other predictors. (No estimation of reciprocal relationships was possible without the presence of other predictors.)

The aim of causal modeling with structural equation modeling was to test the validity of the causal model and estimate its parameters so as maximize the fit to correlational data. For this purpose, the modeling used a small number of causal paths and residual correlations to reproduce all the correlations. It could also decompose a correlation into reciprocal causal paths. The criterion was to attain a maximal fit, in terms of high levels of the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and Comparative Goodness-of-Fit Index (CFI) and low levels of the likelihood-ratio chi-square ($L^2$), its ratio to degrees of freedom, and the root mean square of residuals (RMSR) (Bentler, 1990).

The strategy of analysis involved fitting the causal model separately for data of Hong Kong and Nanjing because of the possible structural differences between the two cities (see Figure 1). The two cities were under two different systems, the capitalist system and socialist system. This difference and others resulted in the discrepancy detected in the background characteristics mentioned before. Besides, to eliminate the risk of multicollinearity arising from effects of preference for pop stars, preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities, and preference for opposite-sex pop stars together, the strategy was to leave out the latter and to see what it would be if it appeared in the causal model. Analysis of the causal model also produced estimates of residual correlations (1) between the three valuation and (2) among the three preferences.

RESULTS

Students in Hong Kong tended to show significantly higher valuation of vain glory ($M = 33.2$ vs. 21.9), illusory romance ($M = 42.6$ vs. 36.0), and intellectual learning ($M = 64.9$ vs. 57.2) than their counterparts in Nanjing (by $t$-tests). Nevertheless, the levels of valuation appeared to be rather low. While roughly equal proportions of students in Hong Kong (71.6%) and Nanjing (70.1%) reported having their idols, more students in Nanjing
(73.4%) than those in Hong Kong (66.6%) reported having their role models. Students in Hong Kong were significantly more likely than those in Nanjing to prefer pop stars as their idols or role models ($M = 19.5\%$ vs. $11.6\%$). However, students in Nanjing were significantly more likely to prefer opposite-sex idols or role models than were those in Hong Kong ($M = 30.1\%$ vs. $16.9\%$). Overall, students in Hong Kong were significantly more likely to prefer opposite-sex pop stars as idols or role models than were those in Nanjing ($M = 8.34\%$ vs. $5.64\%$). The difference in proportions of students joining fan clubs between the two places was not significant ($4.14\%$ vs. $2.16\%$). Examination of 230 pop stars or figures or celebrities listed indicated that $90.9\%$ (209) of them were those active in entertainment or sport industries in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and Western countries. Obviously, students in both Hong Kong and Nanjing tended to prefer pop stars in the capitalist world, whereas the entertainment industry has done a good job in packaging, promoting, and commodifying pop stars.

All three hypotheses generally held true in view of the results from structural equation modeling. Accordingly, preference for pop stars showed a significant effect in the expected direction on valuations of vain glory ($\beta = .186$ and $1.70$, respectively for Hong Kong and Nanjing, see Figure 2), illusory romance ($1.96$ and $1.89$), and intellectual learning ($-.267$ and $-.204$) in students in both Chinese societies. That is, preference for pop stars showed a significantly positive effect on valuations of vain glory and illusory romance and a significantly negative effect on valuation of intellectual learning. These effects persisted in the presence of reciprocal effects of valuation on the preference. Nevertheless, only the reciprocal effect ($1.53$) from valuation of intellectual learning on preference for pop stars among Hong Kong students was (see Figure 2). The estimated effects appeared to be credible in view of the coefficients of determination ($R^2$) for valuations of illusory romance ($476$ and $497$ in the two cities) and valuation of vain glory ($501$ and $533$), and intellectual learning ($651$ and $657$). Furthermore, the very good fit of the causal models estimated for Hong Kong ($GFI = .992$, $CFI = .996$, $RMSR = .017$, $L^2(6) = 13.8$, $p = .05$) and Nanjing ($GFI = .996$, $CFI = .998$, $RMSR = .019$, $L^2(6) = 13.6$, $p = .06$) guaranteed the validity of the estimates. Undeniably, the fit also gave credence to the whole causal model.

Whereas identification with pop stars appeared to affect valuation, preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities in general did not show significant effects. The effects on valuations
of vain glory (−.060 and −.069), illusory romance (−.026 and .047), and were weak on intellectual learning (.048 and .053). On the other hand, the reciprocal effects from valuations on preference of opposite-sex idols were all close to 0, according to the estimated expected change from structural equation modeling. However, preference for opposite-sex pop stars could additionally produce an effect on valuations of vain glory and intellectual learning (.095 and −.097) for Hong Kong students only. However, these effects did not seem to be significant. Effects of preference for opposite-sex pop stars on valuation of illusory romance were even weaker (i.e., close to 0).
Membership in a fan club emitted some significant effects on preferences for pop stars (.220 and .081 in Hong Kong and .128 Nanjing respectively), opposite-sex figures or celebrities (.069 and .053), and opposite-sex pop stars (.065 and .108). On the other hand, the general tendency of importance rating was a strong and significant determinant of valuations of vain glory (.680 and .649), illusory romance (.792 and .784), and intellectual learning (.692 and .712). Hence, both membership and the general tendency of importance rating were crucial instruments for the causal model.

Effects of background characteristics were slightly different between Hong Kong and Nanjing. In Hong Kong, the female was significantly higher than the male on valuation of illusory romance ($\beta = .104$) and preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities (.184). In Nanjing, the female was significantly higher than the male on preference for opposite-sex figures or celebrities (.778) and preference for pop stars (.124) but was lower on valuations of illusory romance (-.134) and vain glory (-.103). Hence, female students in Hong Kong and Nanjing commonly preferred for opposite-sex idols relative to male students. In Hong Kong, students of higher educational attainment preferred significantly less opposite-sex pop stars (.354) and valuation of intellectual learning (-.176). By contrast, students of higher educational attainment in Nanjing tended to rate all attributes significantly less highly (-.340). In Hong Kong, students whose fathers received higher education tended to value higher vain glory (.101), the same is found true for students in Nanjing whose fathers who received higher education (.181). In addition, a higher paternal education tended to increase the students’ tendency to rate highly all attributes (.125). The students’ age and maternal education level had no significant effects on both Hong Kong and Nanjing samples.

There was a weak but significantly positive (residual) correlation between valuations of vain glory and illusory romance (.154 in Hong Kong, 128 in Nanjing). However, residual correlations between valuations of intellectual learning and vain glory (-.263 and -.202) and illusory romance (-.233 and -.152) were significantly negative. The correlation indicated that while the valuations were largely distinct. Another residual correlation between preference for pop stars and opposite-sex figures or celebrities was also significant (.473 in Hong Kong, .080 in Nanjing). Hence, favorite pop stars might simply be opposite-sex figures or celebrities, especially among students in Hong Kong. Among students in Nanjing, there was much less overlap between favorite pop stars and opposite-sex idols or role models.
DISCUSSION

Results of the structural equation modeling in the present study offer convergent support for the three hypotheses concerning the positive influence of preference for pop stars on the Chinese students' valuations of vain glory and illusory romance and the negative influence on valuation of intellectual learning. The influence was unlikely a reflection of a reciprocal effect of valuation on the preference because the causal model already incorporated the reciprocal effects in the estimation. Moreover, the estimation appeared to be valid given the good fit of the causal model and individual equations for the valuation. Therefore, there is credible support for the hypotheses that valuation of vain glory and illusory romance are attributable to Chinese young people's identification with pop stars. Clearly, the pop stars all seem to live an extravagant life and many of them actively engage in high-class parties and activities. They are also well received by the society, some female stars even become wives or lovers of billionaires. All these appear to be compelling enough to induce the value of vain glory in young people.

Moreover, virtually all pop stars had an attractive outlook. Their lives appear to be full of joy, as shown by their smiling faces and lively performance. These qualities naturally attract young people's admiration. The pop stars are therefore ideal as romantic partners of many young people who become indulged in their rosy fantasies. In their spectacular performance, they require no rational thinking, intelligence or wisdom. Alternatively, their success stems neither from formal education, nor from intellectual effort. Therefore, it is no surprise that identification with pop stars tends to dampen young people's valuation of intellectual learning.

The present finding also casts some doubts on the prediction derived from value-expectancy and rational-choice theories. It implies that young people may not engage in a rational process in their preference for idols and role models. Rather, the profusion of pop stars functions to attract young people's attention and preference. That young people are not rational actors has been apparent in their risk-taking and sexual behavior (Adler et al., 1992; Loewenstein and Furstenberg, 1991; Moore et al., 1993). Hence, values might not seem to be a useful guide for choosing pop stars and instead it was the bombardment of pop stars that would create the preference.

Unlike preference for pop stars, preference of opposite-sex
idols showed no significant effects on the two valuations. The non-significant findings may resemble those regarding effects of the sex of the single-parent on the child (Powell and Downey, 1997). Accordingly, the youth can adapt to a parent or idol of either sex. Nevertheless, opposite-sex idols may have significant effects on youth development other than that reflected by vain glory and illusory romance. For instance, they may be less motivational than same-sex role models for young people because they were less similar, relevant, and attainable (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). Furthermore, they may be less instrumental for validating and enriching young people's self-development (Lempers and Clark-Lempers, 1993). Their emotional support for young people may also be less likely and effective than that of same-sex figures (Feldman and Wentzel, 1995). These other areas regarding impacts of opposite-sex idols would be necessary for further research. Nevertheless, the absence of significant effects due to opposite-sex idols on the two valuations assures the validity of the impact of pop stars by minimizing the possibility of confounding. Preference for opposite-sex pop stars added no consistent and significant effect on young people's valuations. Hence, pop stars of either sex were equally influential on young people of either sex. The extent of influence was similar, because whereas same-sex pop stars would be ideal for identification, opposite-sex pop stars would be targets for remote intimacy. Both processes could generate the detected influences.

CONCLUSION

Despite the structural differences (capitalist vs. socialist) between Hong Kong and Nanjing, Chinese young people appear to be equally vulnerable to the influence of pop stars. Young people in the two cities appear to share the same pop stars created in the capitalist world. These similarities support the theory of post-modernization regarding the reign of electronic media, which transcend national, cultural, and ideological borders. Also supportive of the theory is the contribution of pop stars to young people's valuation of vain glory and illusory romance. Postmodern media culture and its influence is responsible for the rise of juvenile delinquency (Morrison, 1995). Postmodern values of beauty, life quality, personal choice, romanticism, and irrationality would supplant modern values of rationality and hardworking, that is, the Protestant work ethic. Although the influence of pop stars on delinquency and other social problems
via their influence on valuation is not readily transparent, it
decidedly deserves further empirical study.

As the present research is only in a beginning stage, many
questions remained unanswered. Besides the questions
concerning the contribution of pop stars to young people
deviance and delinquency, questions concerning the positive
impact of pop stars to youth development requires further
research. Proponents of the positive contribution of pop stars
would contend that they foster young people's aspiration to
success, achievement of identity and intimacy, in addition to
providing fun and relief to them (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997).
Apologists of the influence of pop stars would even state that
attachment to pop stars is natural in the moratorium stage of the
youth's identity development and is necessary to replace parents
as significant role models so as to transcend the stage of
foreclosure. However, these justifications may be weak to counter
to refutation based on content analysis and anecdotal findings
that pop stars do not have a genuine, stable, and respectable
identity for young people to learn (Kellner, 1995; Morrison, 1995;
Schultze et al., 1991). According to the latter theorists and
researchers, the identity of the pop stars tends to be fickle and
fabricated. Moreover, no diversity seems to exist among pop stars
and their performance, which simply repeats previous perfor­
mance. Therefore, the theory would anticipate no choice and
exploration for young people to walk through the stage of
moratorium toward achievement of identity. Arguments and
counter-arguments alone cannot resolve the debate, which should
require further research on various impacts of pop stars on
diverse aspects of youth development.

Whereas the present study examines only the
contemporaneous influence of preference for pop stars on the
three valuations among young people in Hong Kong and
Nanjing, there are certainly many that need further research. In
the first place, a panel design should enable the further study to
detect causal relationships across time. Such causal relationships
would be more convincing than the contemporaneous causal
relationship examined in the present study, especially in the case
that influence takes time to develop. Secondly, the measures of
valuation were not generic enough when they focused on issues
related to idol worshipping and model learning. More generic
measures are necessary to verify the influence of pop stars
beyond the realm of idol worshipping and model learning.
Thirdly, a probability sampling procedure was not feasible during
the data collection of the present study. Hence, findings of the
study can at best apply to the population similar to students sampled. However, because the sample might not be representative of the true and existing population, the findings might not be generalizable to all youths in Hong Kong, Nanjing, and other places of China.

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