The Influence of Watching TV Talent Show on Teenagers Socialization From Marcuse’s Thought of “One Dimensional Person”

Jiarui Zhang  
City University of Macau, Macau, China

Based on Marcuse’s thought of “one-dimensional person”, this paper discusses the influence of TV talent show on teenagers’ socialization. By analyzing the characteristics of TV talent shows that emphasize individual competition and success, appearance and image, and instant satisfaction, it is pointed out that these characteristics are easy for teenagers to produce the mentality of pursuing fame and fortune, appearance, and instant satisfaction, ignoring the development of other important values and qualities. Therefore, we need to guide teenagers to maintain a critical attitude toward TV talent shows, and pay attention to cultivating their independent thinking and all-round development.

*Keywords:* Marcuse, one dimensional man, TV talent shows, socialization of teenagers

**Introduction**

In this era of rapid development of information, the mass media is playing an increasingly important role in the process of human socialization. As a program that allows people to have leisure and entertainment in their spare time, TV talent shows are highly interactive and meet the cultural needs. Moreover, most of the contestants are young people, so they are more easily accepted by young people in terms of age and psychology. Through observing the behaviors of contestants and the way they interact with the media, coupled with the influence of the surrounding environment, a new ideology will naturally emerge, which makes the teenagers in the transition period unable to obtain the information they want under the massive information, thus weakening the recognition of the mainstream ideology.

The culture propagated by mass media is mass culture, and the Frankfurt School once criticized mass culture wildly. It concluded that in the context of the development of capitalist culture, mass culture has lost its original characteristics and is no longer an art, but a product for people’s consumption, with the nature of falsehood and deception (Pei Zhang & Changzhu Wang, 2021). As Marcuse’s “one-dimensional man” thought mentioned, under this kind of material-oriented totalitarianism, people are easy to lose their negation and criticality, thus immersing themselves in consumerism. Teenagers are a special period in their life, their thoughts are not mature, they lack the judgment of things and the ability to think rationally, and they are strong in conformity. Their world view is still in the process of gradually forming, so the concept of discerning right and wrong is weak. While TV
talent shows bring teenagers relaxation, there is no doubt that the money worship and hedonism of the society are directly or indirectly brought to the teenagers, which interferes with the formation of their correct values and leads to some problems of one kind or another.

**Literature Review**

**Definition of Concepts**

This study mainly discusses the influence of TV talent shows on teenagers’ socialization, so socialization will be an important concept involved in this paper. German sociologist G. Simmel first used the concept of human “socialization” in 1895. Since then, scholars from different countries have different interpretations of socialization from different perspectives. From the perspective of people, socialization refers to assimilating individuals into a member of the society. Leitong Group believes that “the term socialization has a very wide scope, and all society can make individuals or groups, or other societies assimilate one of their own members, or a part of them, collectively referred to as socialization” (Xiao Lang & Xu liuying, 2011, p. 48-55). From the perspective of social life, socialization is considered to be a process of unification, which usually refers to the centralization, unification, and standardization of people’s activities in a certain aspect, and is a trend in the development of social life (Wang Kang, 1988). In the United States, C. Cooley and G. Mead, an American psychologist, regard human socialization as the process of forming and developing social beings with personalities (Li Qin, 2012). The socialization mentioned in this study mainly refers to the process of continuous interaction between individuals and society, adaptation and absorption of social culture, and becoming a qualified member of society. The main source of learning for adolescents is the mass media, which can timely and rapidly convey information about social events and social changes, and display social role patterns and popular values. It provides a large number of reference objects for teenagers to observe and learn, and speeds up the socialization process of teenagers. This leads to another concept—mass culture. The Spanish philosopher Oort first put forward the term “mass culture”, which mainly refers to the newly emerged culture believed and accepted by the public in a certain region, a certain community, or a certain country (Liu, 2004); Because China is different from the culture produced under the western system, the definition of the concept of mass culture in China is diverse. Mass culture is considered to be disseminated and expressed through mass media, and its purpose is to make a large number of ordinary citizens get emotional pleasure in the daily cultural form.

**Literature Review**

With the rise and popularity of TV talent shows, various voices begin to appear in the market. Some people say that their children do not learn because of the problems existing in family education itself, which has nothing to do with TV talent shows; Some people say that the current social atmosphere is more and more impetuous, leading to more temptations of the outside world, leading to teenagers to abandon their studies to decadence. In the process of watching talent shows, teenagers have more reference objects and higher standards of comparison, and it is easier to find their learning goals. Some teenagers will also add their own style to this goal, enjoy fun while appreciating art, and be unconsciously influenced by the ideas and viewpoints in it, and form their own set of value system.

**Research Questions, Research Objectives, and Research Gaps**

Based on the extensive collection and analysis of relevant literature, this study aims to analyze the influence of today’s TV talent shows on teenagers by using the thought of “one-dimensional person”. To understand the
value orientation, behavior characteristics, and culture spread by TV talent shows affect and the factors that affect young people, and analyze the problems that arise in our TV talent shows and make suggestions for teenagers to establish correct worldview values. At present, the domestic research on the influence of TV talent shows on teenagers’ socialization is relatively comprehensive, and the research results are also very rich, but there is a lack of analysis on the socialization characteristics of teenagers in different classes. This study will introduce the dimension of behavioral characteristics of different classes for analysis, enriching the previous research results.

Theoretical Framework—Marcuse’s Thought of “One-Dimensional Man”

The development of human beings should be multi-dimensional. Marcuse, an important representative of Western Marxism, put forward in “The Man of One Dimension” that with the development of science and technology, people have not only failed to pursue spiritual freedom and wealth freedom, but have lost the ability to criticize, negate, and surpass, becoming “the man of one dimension”. In “one-dimensional politics”, Marcuse believes that under the totalitarian control, people have long been accustomed to the receiver of such control, unable to distinguish between “real needs” and “false needs” (Liu, 2022). In “The Philosophy of One Dimension”, Marcuse argues that people have lost their negation. The formal logic mentioned in it is to treat logical judgment as a simple tool or formal skill with thinking, so as to completely separate form and content. On this basis, the formal logic should be critical, but the “form” here is the “form” lacking content, and the “form” of “neutrality”. Under the rule of formal logic, the conflicting concepts of essence and phenomenon are either meaningless or can be dissolved (Liu, 2022). In “The Language of One Dimension”, Marcuse argues that under totalitarian control, language tends to be functionalized and becomes a means of control, which hinders the development of concepts, and people succumb to the immediate facts and oppose the understanding of the causes behind the facts. (Zhang & Wang, 2021). Finally, in the “one-dimensional culture”, the outstanding manifestation of the developed industrial society is the vulgarization of the “high culture”, which is a pre-technical culture with a strong feudal color, and there is an insurmountable gap between it and reality. Today, “high culture” is given the value of commodities, so that the gap between it and reality is gradually eliminated, and it loses its negative power, becoming a tool to defend existing unreasonable social phenomena (He, 2022).

In general, Marcuse’s thought of “one-dimensional man” can be understood as the ruling class uses mass media to create false needs and control people’s inner world, resulting in the loss of people’s negation. Due to the development of science and technology, more and more people are engaged in mental work, so that the reality of long-term exploitation of the working class by capitalists is covered up, resulting in people losing their criticism and no longer resisting and negating the society; In capitalist society, after the packaging and transformation of the ruling class, the language has successfully cleaned the multidimensionality of the language, and the transcendence of man has gradually lost.

Theoretical Analysis

Nowadays, everyone is used to getting information through mass media such as mobile phones, tablets, and TVs. In addition to learning from the people around you, people also learn through mass media. With the ever-changing forms of variety shows in China, TV talent shows, represented by “Youth has You”, have emerged. Such shows revolve around the growth of contestants. After layers of elimination, nine contestants are finally voted by the audience to make their debut in the form of a group. Its high-density publicity makes young people have almost no other way out except to watch TV (Liu, 2016).
Due to the long-term pressure brought by exam-oriented education and family, contemporary teenagers can’t vent their depression, irritability, and other emotions that have been accumulated in their hearts for a long time. However, the organizers and TV stations grasp this factor and take different strategies to meet the emotional needs of teenagers. By allowing teenagers to see the false phenomenon that ordinary people become stars in a short time, they will increase their stickiness to the program (Fu, 2018). When teenagers watch the program, their own emotions can also be catharted to a certain extent, and the character and interests of teenagers from different classes and at different stages of growth will also be affected by the program. The family of origin has a deep-rooted influence on the minds of teenagers. The cultural capital and economic capital of the family decide what kind of school and education the children go to. For children in the upper class, the education they receive is more elite education, and children who receive this kind of education mode from an early age are more likely to move towards their dreams, and they usually have advantages over others in academic adaptation and interpersonal communication. For children from the bottom class, although they can play a leading role, their education lags behind all the educational resources of the upper class at the very beginning. In addition, their parents ignore their study and life, and even deprive their children of the right to education, hoping that their children can earn money as soon as possible to support their families. As a result, some teenagers cannot know what they should do now. Watching talent shows, coupled with publicity and external temptation, gradually lose their negative and critical nature.

Teenagers without self-control are so obsessed with voting for their favorite idols that they spend a lot of money on buying their accessories and selling their products, thus losing the direction of their efforts. Just as Marcuse said in the book, “Only the needs necessary to achieve the material level of clothing, food, shelter and transportation, to maintain life, are real needs.” However, contemporary teenagers do not take the need of survival as the first demand, However, contemporary teenagers do not take the need for survival as the first demand, but under the control of social technology to carry out some "forced consumption", the same style of clothes of idols as a necessity, in the school to produce a psychology of comparison, money worship, the pursuit of gradually in the whole society to form a kind of "false demand" that has nothing to do with human survival, it believes that a large number of consumer goods can satisfy their own needs, and loses criticism, thinking that what idols say is right, and the culture spread by society is correct. They do not realize that the superficial prosperity is only temporary, is the baptism of language by the ruling class. As the main line of the talent show is that the contestants make their debut through hard work and struggle, teenagers learn that it takes hard work to become successful and keep moving forward in the process of realizing their dreams. At the same time, this kind of show will also encourage young people to have the mentality of eager for quick success and instant profit, and produce wrong values, thinking that the art exam is the shortcut to the college entrance examination, and only see the bright surface of the idol, but do not see the efforts behind it and the operation of capital. At the age when they should receive compulsory education, they choose to imitate the clothes and behaviors of their idols, such as dressing up avant-garde, consuming fashion, and other excessive social behaviors. Leaving study and life behind, the cultural heritage is getting poorer and poorer, and they are drifting away on the wrong road. From the perspective of Marcuse’s “one-dimensional man” thought, the efforts of the so-called idols and a series of propaganda are just a way for the capitalists to operate. In this mode of operation, people become slaves to things and are satisfied with the pursuit of instant happiness. This “false demand” deprives people of their spiritual freedom and liberation, and at the same time causes teenagers to lose their transcendence and their independent initiative to be swallowed up by capital.
Summary and Suggestions

It is very important to enhance cultural soft power in the era of peace and development. Through the analysis of the influence of TV talent shows on young people, combined with Marcuse’s thought of “one-dimensional man”, this paper can help us further strengthen the cultivation of young people’s cultural quality, play a leading role in the field of socialist ideology, and form the correct socialist core values on this basis. The growth of contemporary teenagers is accompanied by movies and TV, and their ideas and behaviors cannot be separated from the influence of these media.

First of all, as a media, programs should standardize the ideological values they spread, and pay attention to their cultural quality while entertaining the public. Culture is the power for the sustainable development of a country, a nation, and a person.

Secondly, from the perspective of the government, it should actively deal with the contradiction between the people’s yearning for a better life and inadequate and unbalanced development, and strive to meet the development needs of the people and strive to make a hundred flowers bloom. The thought of “one-dimensional man” tells us that we should treat our culture correctly and create a culture that conforms to the characteristics of the times on the basis of local culture. Culture must come from reality and have the spiritual essence of surpassing reality to realize the real prosperity of socialist culture.

In addition to family education, schools should also attach importance to young people’s personality development, care about their inner thoughts, properly carry out film and television appreciation courses, help young people distinguish between effective and ineffective information in the information age, teach them to learn to process and use, not over-rely on science and technology, but internalize into information for their own benefit, we must overcome alienated consumption and false needs, gradually forming the green consumption concept of spending less than one’s income and giving priority to moderation, so as to help oneself set up correct values.

The media is a double-edged sword. TV talent show has both advantages and disadvantages. Its influence on teenagers is profound. The thought of “one dimensional man” suggests that we should eliminate the one dimensional development of man in today’s modernization construction and attach importance to the free and all-round development of man and the development of his personality.

References

He, S. (2022). Criticism and reconstruction of “one-dimensional man” from the perspective of Marx’s individual view. Theoretical Observations, 21(8), 53-57.