

Document 19.7: Excerpts from “Youth Under Pressure” by Zhang Xueying, in *China Today*, June 2006

Too much pressure and not enough sleep are common problems among China’s primary and middle school students. One out of every three students suffers psychological problems, and 66.6 percent find it hard to fulfill their burden of study, according to a survey of 20,000 students in 500 classes at Beijing’s primary and middle schools by the Psychology Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Educators say that although today is an era of freedom and opportunity for Chinese youth, it is also one of unprecedented pressure, particularly in cities....

Dong Xinyu [age 16] says that her favorite leisure activity is watching white clouds float through a blue sky. Every child has his or her own preferred pressure outlet. Ma Yu [age 14] likes to be left alone at home for one afternoon a week to read and cook. He says it helps him to relax.

On-line chatting is also a popular pressure release. Of China’s 20 million Internet users 35.9 percent are young people aged between 15 and 24 years old who average eight hours online per week. For children who spend the bulk of their time studying, the Internet is the best alternative to more time-consuming sport hobbies. A survey of the Internet life of middle school students indicates that 60.7 percent of them play on-line games, 34.1 percent chat, and the rest look for information and send e-mails. Ma Junjie, chief of the survey project, concludes that middle school students regard the Internet as a form of entertainment and socializing rather than an information-seeking channel.

“My daughter surfs the Internet two to three hours a day, mainly to chat on-line. At first I was worried that it might affect her academic studies,” says Ms. Xu, whose daughter is a grade two student at junior high school. To her delight, however, her daughter’s academic scores have not been adversely affected.

School authorities are paying ever-closer attention to students’ psychological problems, and many have specialized departments dealing with problems relating to study overload....

Source: Zhang Xueying. “Youth Under Pressure.” *China Today*. June 2006.