Exploring the relationship between the traditional culture and career planning: Evidence from a short-term “Wang Yang-Ming” training among undergraduate students

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Abstract—this study focuses on an important but ignored topic by investigating the influential processes of traditional culture on career planning. The findings show that the traditional culture is positive to be career planning. Additionally, the sense of home culture, self-questioning, cross-cultural competence, emergent leadership and sense of social responsibility appear in the process of traditional culture influences career planning. The results not only open a new perspective of studying traditional culture and career planning but also may be referred by the educators and managers to design personalized courses for talents cultivations.

Keywords—traditional culture; career planning; sense of home culture; self-questioning; cross-cultural competence; leadership; sense of social responsibility

I. INTRODUCTION

Career planning is defined as a process that organizations and individuals work together to make plans based on individuals’ personalities, abilities, interests and outside environments [1]. Career planning is not only positive to individuals but also positive to the performance of organizations [2]. Past scholars and practitioners have tried to identify what factors contributed to career planning and how it is realized. Lent and Brown [3] propose the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to explain the roles of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, goals, and individuals’ difference (personalities, background, habits, language, etc.) in the process of career planning initiation. Boslaugh [4] puts forward the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain the relationship between attitude and career planning. In the meanwhile, the family factors, organizational climate, and social comments predict the career [5], and individuals’ self-perceptions and cognitions can be influenced by traditional culture indirectly [6]. Chen [6] suggests that universities should enhance the education of traditional culture and pay attention to the possibility that traditional culture may influence students’ career-related behaviours. However, few study focus on the impact of Chinese traditional cultures on the career planning and related behaviours. In this research, the relationship and the process between the traditional culture and career planning are explored. The research questions are as follows: RQ1 what is the link between traditional culture and career planning (including studying planning)? RQ2 is this impact lasting? RQ3 How does traditional culture influence career planning?
Bryman [7] believes that the qualitative research has some advantages to explore a phenomenon, including studying the phenomenon through the eyes of the people being studied, describing the issue based on specific contexts, emphasizing the process of changes, conducting with flexible structures and generating new theories. For the study of the influence of traditional culture, there is no perfect theory to explain the phenomenon; therefore, I conduct a qualitative research.

I focus on the Chinese traditional culture training among some university student groups, to explore these research questions. I review the existing literature on the influence of culture on individuals’ career-related behaviours. Then, I explain the rationale of the study and the setting of the case. Finally, I analyze the data to establish a theory.

II. EXISTING THEORY AND RESEARCH

Till now, career anchors theory developed by Schein in 1970s is considered as the classical theory for career study and this theory puts forward a self-completion scale for measuring the types of talents for career orientations [8]. Schein and Van [8] proposes several kinds of career anchors, including independence, stability, technical-functional competence, general managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service or dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. However, the self-completion questionnaire has some disadvantages that may lead researchers to have a biased understanding of the topic [7]. For instance, it is hard to ask the participants too many questions in the questionnaires, otherwise, the participant may lose patience to answer and respond casually.

There are two theories, Social cognitive career theory [3] and Theory of planned behavior [4], explaining how to realize the success and decision-making of academic and career. To be specific, Social cognitive career theory assumes that peoples’ career choices will be attributed to interested, self-efficacy beliefs, skills and environmental supports [3]. Boslaugh [4] extends the theory of Lent and Brown and he proposes that subjective norm, attitude and perceived behaviour control influence the career choices of people. Although these theories extend the research of career anchors to explore the influences of individuals’ and outside supports and expectations, few of them discuss the effect of the traditional culture. Cronk [9] asserts that culture can significantly influence the cognitions and behaviours of individuals. Therefore, I assume that the culture may influence the career intentions through influencing the cognitions and attitudes of individuals.

The research may make contributions to the theoretical and practical aspects. The research may fill the gap in studying the effect of culture on people’s career intention and inspire more indigenous studies in theory establishments and measurement development. The findings may also be referred by the educators and organizations to pay attention to the importance of culture in talent education.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research context

The past quantitative scholars cannot really examine the dynamic and changing phenomena through applying traditional survey and statistical analyses. On the contrary, the qualitative research method is believed to be more suitable for analyzing the dynamic processes [10]. In order to explore the research questions, I focus on full-time university students, a group of people who have been enrolled in a cultural training and all of them may face choices in pursuing academic study and job hunting.
In the summer of 2017, a group of foreign language major students from Ningbo Institute of Technology, Zhejiang University (NIT) participate in a training of traditional Chinese culture as their summer internship Figure 1(in Appendix). All the members attend lectures about the philosophy of Wang Yang-Ming taught by a Professor from Zhejiang University. In the meanwhile, they are required to finish a series of projects in English.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course name</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wang Yang-Ming philosophy</strong></td>
<td>5 lectures give a general introduction to the main philosophy concepts, recent research discussions, and the derivative schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wang’s philosophy and enterprise</strong></td>
<td>5 lectures discuss the application of Wang Yangming’s philosophy in human resource management, leadership and business strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wang’s philosophy and education</strong></td>
<td>5 lectures mainly discuss the application of innate knowing, integrating knowledge and action and Mind the world in education practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wang Yangming is a Neo-Confucian philosopher, official, educationist, as well as a calligraphist and Military general during the Ming dynasty in Ancient Chinese [11]. He proposes three core concepts to interpret the world, including innate knowing, integrating knowledge and action and Mind the world, spreading to wide Asia, and applied in the recent modern century (e.g. Japanese philosopher and entrepreneur, INAMORI KAZUO, puts forward management theory based on Wang Yangming’s philosophy) [12]. The education has been verified to be influential to the behaviors of the individuals [13] [14]. Therefore, I assume that the training of Wang Yangming may influence the behaviors of students.

**Sampling and research strategy**

The participants are encouraged to speak out about their emotions and opinions toward several questions regarding their feelings and attitudes toward training and career plans during the interviews. The conversation contents are interpreted through discourse analysis. The whole research procedure can be divided into three stages: group classification and sample selection, interview and data analysis. I firstly set two groups (Group A and Group B) to compare their different responses on career planning, aiming to explore whether traditional culture training affected the career planning of the participants. The Group A is set as the control group whose members are not immersed in training and Group B is set as a treatment group whose members have joined ‘2017 Training’. The members are chosen as Group B, because the training just finished and the influences of training on individuals are more obvious than the past years’ training. For the Group A, I apply convenience sampling among the whole university students. I go to the NIT to invite the passers-by on campus to join the research. Since the research is carried out by interviews in the NIT during Chinese National Holiday, convenience sampling helps the researcher to access samples more easily [7]. I assume that compared with selecting samples from other universities, the students in the same university enjoy the same quality of education and this premise can decline the risk of appearance of the significant difference among the samples. Totally 3 students who do not enroll in the training are invited to participate the interviews in Group A. Random sampling approach is applied in Group B, so that each individual has the same possibility to be picked as the sample [7]. Totally 5 members of ‘2017 Training’ are invited to join the research. I also set Groups C whose members joined ‘2016 Training’. As the sampling approach of Group B, totally 2 members are randomly selected to be invited to participate in the research. The details of the participants can be checked in Table 2(in Appendix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Training: yes/no</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Stage enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>International Business</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>English Literature</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>New Media</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>English Literature</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1 and 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethical Issues

This study is carried out under the ethics guidelines. The informants are provided with the informed consents to understand the basic information of the research and their rights to withdraw without prejudice. They can choose to participate or not in the study voluntarily. Requirements for anonymity and confidentiality of the data are safeguarded; the interview transcripts and all data are anonymous.

Phases of interviews

An open-ended interview is applied in the first phrase among 5 students who are enrolled in “2017 Wang Yangming Training”. They are asked to describe the general situation and their feelings about the training. This step gives the researcher a general picture and the effects of the whole training. Then the interviewees are asked to respond to the questions as ‘Do you have any career plan before this training? What is your career plan now?’ This step exposes the changes that happen after the training. In the third step, the interviewees are asked to explain how and why these changes happen. This step reveals the phenomenon that cannot be explained by SCCT and the theory of Planned Behaviours. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews are used to find out to what extent participants know about traditional culture and career planning and how traditional culture influenced career planning. In this stage, students in the three different groups are asked to explain the meaning of several sentences from Philosophy of Wang Yangming and demonstrate their career anchors. Through comparing the responses from the interviewees, I figure out how the process of the Chinese traditional culture influences career planning. During the interview, the students are encouraged to speak openly and express what they have experience from beginning to the end of training. I ask follow-up questions according to responses of students.

Data analysis

Discourse analysis is applied to interpret the transcripts of the interviews. Discourse analysis is defined as a way of analyzing the inner psychological worlds of the interviewees based on the transcripts of interviews [7]. I firstly transfer the interview records into transcripts and print them out in form of hard copies so that the data can be easier to comment. Bryman [7] suggests the researchers analyze the data regarding three questions: What is this discourse doing? How is this discourse constructed to make this happen? What resources are available to perform this activity? The researcher follows these steps to interpret the discourses. Finally, I analyze the discourses to figure out findings.
IV. FINDINGS: HOW TRADITIONAL CULTURE INFLUENCES CAREER PLANNING

The most prevalent theories for explaining career planning are SCCT and Theory of planned behavior. However, the open-ended interviews show that the above two theories cannot fully explain the phenomena.

Why SCCT cannot explain the phenomena?

Figure 2 shows the main relationships among different concepts on the process of career planning. However, the interviews show some “puzzles” when the author refers this theory to explain the phenomena.

![Figure 2. The main relationships among different concepts on the process of career planning](image)

Firstly, the learning experience is considered to lead to self-efficacy expectations and outcome expectations. However, when the interviewees report what they feel about the training, their reports seem to be confused. Table 3 shows the discourses of some of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DISCOURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jin (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>I was instigated by my senior students and I am only interested in the stories of Wang Yangming about saving the people. I never think about what learning outcomes I want to get after finishing the whole lectures training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>After the training, I just was curious about the history of Ming Dynasty and I didn’t think about to what extent I want to know it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>Calligraphy of Wang Yangming attracts me and I think it is cool to know such a guy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above discourses confirm that interests can be inspired by the learning experience. The students experience the training related to Chinese philosophy, education, business, and art.
discourses show that this learning experience indeed makes interviewees get interested in some aspect (story, history, calligraphy). However, the interviewees do not show any significant further specific outcome expectations. Therefore, the theory cannot fully explain the phenomenon.

The SCCT argues that interests will lead to choice goals. Table 4 shows the discourses of some of them when the interviewees are asked to talk about their future plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DISCOURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jin (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>The stories of Wang Yangming were interesting and revealing lots of truths about education and humanity, I am not considering to read all of them or choose social work or education as my further study. But I will consider studying translation in my postgraduate period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>Wang Yangming helped us to know about the society of the Ming Dynasty, but I didn’t think I will choose history as my optional module during my undergraduate study. But I am considering transferring to Communication Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>Chinese calligraphy is just hobby, I will not spend too much time on it. But I think it is a good idea to figure out the effect of calligraphy on education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be figured out that the interviewees have their own interests. Based on the SCCT, their interests will lead them to focus on the interests. However, the interviewees clearly explain that they will not pursue further study or work on their interests. Therefore, the SCCT cannot explain the phenomenon fully.

**Why Theory of Planned Behavior cannot explain the phenomena?**

The theory of planned behavior (figure 3) believes that attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control are strongly positive to the intention of behaviours. Table 5 shows the discourses of the interviews toward this question.
Question: what you do think the most difficult during the training? What will you plan to do for the career?

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DISCOURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jin (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>The ambiguous meaning of sentences made me cry during the past weeks. We kept working from 10 am - 2 am. It is so hard to translate. Although it is hard, I think it is a good idea to study translation of ancient Chinese and literature in my further study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>Ancient Chinese prose was the most difficult for me. I hated that. When we tried to translate them into modern Chinese language and English, I almost died. I hate that I have to guess what the sentences mean. For the career, I want to be a journalist and introduce the Wang Yangming to the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen (Participant of Group B)</td>
<td>We tried to write a pedestrian version. But, trying to explain the content of Philosophy to others was too hard and driving my hair to lose. It will be difficult to disseminate traditional cultures, but it will be my career planning and I want to be a researcher in education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that the interviewees express their negative attitudes toward the part of past
experience. Based on the Theory of planned behavior, the negative attitudes of the interviewees toward Chinese traditional cultures will lead them to pursue other fields. However, the potential careers or courses that the interviews want to choose are related to the Chinese culture. Therefore, the theory of planned behavior cannot fully explain the phenomenon.

**Findings of semi-structured interviews**

After open-ended interview study, I carry out the semi-structured interviews (The questions can be checked in Appendix) among Group A, Group B and Group C to explore the process of influence of traditional culture on career planning. The three groups are asked a series of questions and their responses toward some of the questions show different. The details can be checked in the Appendix.

**The link between traditional culture and career planning**

I answer this question through applying two-stage comparison including the horizontal comparison and the longitudinal comparison.

Both of the Group A and Group B are asked to respond “Why do you choose this major?” The responses to the first question can be summarized as follows:

The main themes of Group A’s discourses for this question are: “interest on related issues”, “general usage of major in society” and “society new tendency”. For Group B’s discourses, the themes are: “interest on related issues”, “past study experience” and “parents’ pressure”. The results show that both of the groups have no clear and detailed career planning. From this result, I assume the perceptions of Group B on career planning are similar to Group A’s perceptions.

Then, I ask two groups to answer “What is your career planning (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims) now?” The main themes of responses of Group A are “master degree”, “parents’ pressure” and “no idea”. The main themes of responses of Group B are “additional course about culture”, “master degree”, “internship” and “teacher”. Both of the groups mention “master degrees” as further study, however, the people give totally different reasons for pursuing master degrees. The member of Group A asserts that the influence of classmate shows strongly. Compared with Group A, the members of Group B show more clear and detailed career plans and some of them think the reasons for those choices are out of eager for contribution to society. Therefore, I assume that the Chinese traditional culture may make people become more responsible and clear about their further career.

The members of Group B also are required to respond, “What was your career planning (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims) before the training?” The researcher compares the answers about present career plans and the responses about the past career plan. The results show that the students become more pragmatic, responsible and independent-minded. Therefore, I assume that the training of Chinese traditional culture contributes to the development of career planning.
Therefore, I propose that Chinese traditional culture contributes the career planning.

**Is the influence lasting?**

In order to figure out whether the influence of Chinese traditional culture on career planning can last, I ask the members of Group C to talk about the past and present career plans. Then, the results from Group B and Group C are compared.

The members of Group C have some changes in career plan after training. With few considerations, the members of Group C are enrolled in the majors. They assert that they once plan to run a business or do a job before the training because others told them those occupations are good. In the contrary, at present, they have more clear career aims, including apply a gap year to find themselves or pursue a master degree in Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, I assume that the influence of Chinese traditional culture on career planning may be lasting.

**How does Chinese traditional culture influence career planning?**

After summarizing the discourses of the Group B and Group C based on answers question, “What have you learned from the training?” The themes can be summarized as follows: Table 6 (in Appendix)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of home culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Cross-cultural competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
translation master and translate Chinese philosophy to serve the world and realize the integration of civilization. You know, change yourself before changing the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Emergent leadership</th>
<th>I once stood out to be a task leader to organize paper writing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-questioning</td>
<td>Self-question</td>
<td>I recall me to think about my past semester.....it is so decadent..... I think it is time to be an adult and focus on the study. I used to be an indecisive man. Now, I plan to make some changes. I have submitted some application to companies, I want to find myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>Study plan and job hunting</td>
<td>Maybe I consider being a teacher or similar to that. I am considering applying a gap year. I have submitted some application to companies. I may pursue a translation certificate and related master degree. I am preparing the exam of national postgraduate. I hope I can go for translation master and translate Chinese philosophy. I still want to be an interpreter but it is not because of earning money. Now, I think I'd better try some Chinese culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 6 shows that the Chinese traditional culture may predict the career planning. Among the process of Chinese traditional culture influences the career planning, several factors exist, including the sense of home culture, self-questioning, sense of cross-culture competence, sense of career calling, emergent leadership and sense of social responsibility.

**V. DISCUSSION**

I apply a qualitative study among 10 college students who are in NIT. There are two objectives. Firstly, the research wants to examine the relationship between traditional culture and career planning. Secondly, this paper proposes some factors that contribute to the process. Given these two purposes, I evaluate whether the well-accepted theoretical models adequately explain the content and process of career planning.

The proposition about the relationship between traditional culture and career planning can be supported by past literature. Firstly, this research thinks that the traditional culture can influence the career planning of students because the culture has been verified to influence people’s views and decision-making behaviours [15]. Secondly, Rashid and Mwale [16] support the positive and lasting effect of education on people’s perceptions and behaviours. Thirdly, the research finds that the culture training inspires a sense of home culture and cross-culture communication. This finding is supported by Liu and Fang[17]. Fourth, the traditional culture is assumed to predict the sense of social responsibility in this research. Yungwook and Soo-Yeon[18] assert that the culture can influence managers’ perceptions of social responsibility and behaviours. Fifth, the relationship among career calling, self-
questioning and career planning are found in the research. The positive relationships among these cultures are supported by Praskova, Hood, and Creed[19].

It is amazing that the emergent leadership are also observed in the research.

VI. CONCLUSION

There are some implications from the theoretical and practical perspectives. From the theoretical perspective, this study opens a new perspective for the scholars and inspires more people to study the role of traditional cultures in the development of teams. From the perspective of practice, the study may inspire the high education institutes to add traditional culture course so that the institutes can offer more personalized programs.

This paper encourages further studies to test and promote the proposed model so that educators and managers can design training programs for human resource management.

REFERENCES


Appendix

Interview questions

- Open-ended interview: Why do you join in this training? How do you feel about the training? What’s your career/study planning for the future?

- Semi-structured Interviews:

  For Group A: why do you choose this major? What was your career planning (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims)? What are your understandings about the following sentence? “Mind Is Principle”, “The extension of innate knowledge”, “The unity of knowledge and action”, “Reconcile one's ambition to the situation”, “Ambition has its source”, “Ambition needs to be different from others”, “Be in place and strive to do what should be done”

  For Group B: why do you choose this major? Why did you join this training? What are your understandings about the following sentence? “Mind Is Principle”, “The extension of innate knowledge”, “The unity of knowledge and action”, “Reconcile one's ambition to the situation”, “Ambition has its source”, “Ambition needs to be different from others”, “Be in place and strive to do what should be done” What was your career planning (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims) before the training? What is your career planning now (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims)? What have you learned from this training?

  For Group C: What are your understandings about the following sentence? “Mind Is Principle”, “The extension of innate knowledge”, “The unity of knowledge and action”, “Reconcile one's ambition to the situation”, “Ambition has its source”, “Ambition needs to be different from others”, “Be in place and strive to do what should be done”. Why do you choose this major now? Did you change it after training? Why did you join this training? What was your career planning (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims) before the training? What have you learned and changed this training? What is your career planning now (studying plan, career goals, career steps and future career aims)?