

# Vocational Identity and Agency of Chinese College Students: Effects of Filial Piety and Implications in Career Education

Baixiao Ouyang<sup>1\*</sup>

(<sup>1</sup>School of Education, City University of Macau, China)

**Abstract:** Balancing family obligations and personal aspirations is crucial for college students in making life decisions. This critical review examined empirical studies on the effects of filial piety on college students' vocational identity and agency. According to identity capital theory, college students need a sense of agency to construct identity consciously and adapt to adulthood. Filial piety may profoundly influence this process as the core value and internalized social structure for the role of being an adult child in a Chinese family. However, no studies have been conducted from the identity capital perspective. This review found that filial piety had direct effects on college students' vocational identity and also indirect effects by shaping specific agency competencies. The impact of filial piety on the agency was more likely to occur through providing normative guidance about adult roles, influencing how college students view family as a supportive resource, and perpetuating parenting experiences. Based on these findings, this article suggested further examining the mediating role of agency between filial piety and identity development, as well as the effects of filial piety on the psychological foundation of agency development. This review suggested enhancing the agency of college students and encouraging reflections on filial piety in career education.

**Keywords:** filial piety, agency, vocational identity, college students, career education

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\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Baixiao Ouyang, School of Education, City University of Macau, 81-121 Avenida Xian Xing Hai, Macau, 999078, China. Office: Room 502, Golden Dragon Centre.  
ORCID: 0009-0009-9861-9453. Email: [claireouyang@cityu.edu.mo](mailto:claireouyang@cityu.edu.mo)

## Introduction

Identity is an organized and integrated meaning system synthesizing the individual's sense of continuity and connection with the environment (Erikson, 1968). Identity is an important developmental task that young people must achieve. Via their sense of agency, college students may actively obtain necessary resources and consciously make important decisions. Identity is also the result of an individual's interaction with a particular cultural and social context. The extent to which significant others intervene in identity construction differs between Eastern and Western cultures (Savickas, 2011, 2013). Research has found that Chinese college students often consciously incorporate their family's advice into their choice criteria and hesitate to implement their preferences because of concerns about their parents' feelings (Deutsch, 2004; Zhang & Kline, 2009). An in-depth understanding of the identity development in specific cultures is important for enhancing cultural diversity in identity studies. Therefore, it is necessary to deeply explore how Chinese college students deal with the relationship between others and themselves in their personal development in early adulthood.

This paper combined filial piety (Bedford & Yeh, 2019), an indigenous psychological concept, with the identity capital model (Côté & Levin, 2002) to discuss how the social values that Chinese adult children follow to interact with their parents' social values of interactions affect adolescents' autonomy as well as identity development. There were no empirical studies that explicitly incorporated the concept of agency in exploring the effects of filial piety on emerging adults, although several studies have discussed the impact of filial piety on college students' psychological adjustment, socialization styles, and academic achievement. To further explore the effects of filial piety on agency and identity development, this paper aims to reorganize the findings of existing studies from the perspective of identity capital theory

to provide directions for future research.

Identity has specific manifestations in various domains of social life (e.g., gender identity), and vocational identity is one of the most salient pieces to represent how young people fit into society (Erikson, 1968). Research has found that Chinese college students often face challenges in balancing self-actualization, family obligations, and parent-child interactions in their career choices (e.g., Hon, 2014; Li, 2013). Therefore, this paper focused on identity development in the specific domain of vocation. From a practical perspective, college graduates face greater psychological pressures because of employment in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sorting out the existing research from the standpoint of filial piety and agency can also assist career educators in helping college students cope with the challenges in the job market and lifelong career development (Becht et al., 2019; Li & Pan, 2022).

## Conceptualizing: Vocational identity development, agency and Filial Piety

### Perspectives of vocational identity development

*Vocational identity* is a domain-specific identity representing the meaning system of an individual's vocational life (Erikson, 1968; Savickas, 2011). Measurements of vocational identity development have been established based on the status-process approach (e.g., Blustein et al., 1989; Porfeli et al., 2011) and widely adopted in existing empirical studies. According to the status-process approach, one's identity development can be conceptualized by behavioral performance on two separate dimensions (Marcia, 1966): commitment to specific identity options and crises of internal and external conflict experienced while forming the commitment. Based on these two dimensions, identity development can be categorized into four states (Kroger & Marcia, 2011), namely achievement (experiencing a crisis and then making a commitment), foreclosure (committing

without experiencing a crisis), moratorium (experiencing a crisis but not yet having made any commitment), and diffusion (having neither a commitment nor a crisis). It is theoretically expected, especially from the perspective of the Western postmodern society, that adolescents should strive for achievement status by fully exploring the inner and outer worlds. Building on Marcia's work, scholars have expanded the concepts of commitment and crisis into sub-dimensions to capture the process of identity formation and to distinguish more detailed statuses (Beyers & Luyckx, 2016; Crocetti et al., 2008; Grotevant, 1987; Luyckx et al., 2008).

The personal-social perspective considers that identity formation occurs in hierarchical domains of social structure, interpersonal interactions, and one's ego function (Côté & Levine, 2002). Individuals need a certain sense of agency to construct adaptive identity in the postmodern society. Focusing on the dynamics instead of behavioral performance, various theories elaborated on the role of agency in the pursuit of individuality and connections with specific research foci such as cognitive, emotional, and affective values (e.g., Adams & Marshall, 1996; Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Kerpelman et al., 1997). Therefore, the personal-social approach can be considered the umbrella theory for these theories (Schwartz, 2001). The current paper took the personal-social perspective as the lens to organize research findings on filial piety, identity development, and the role of agency in order to understand how internalized social norms of parent-child interaction influenced the interpersonal and ego level.

#### Identity capital theory and conceptualization of agency

Based on their personal-social perspective, Côté & Levin (2002) proposed the identity capital model and elaborated on the role of agency as a key component in one's identity development. *Agency* is capacities or willingness to engage in behaviors despite social

structural obstacles which perceived by individuals as their own strength (Côté & Levin, 2002). With a sufficient sense of agency, individuals can understand who they are and what they should be as themselves and in relation to others, and consciously reconcile his/her relationship with the environment to gain identity capital for identity formation (e.g., finding supportive peers or successfully earning a degree).

According to the identity capital model, the agency is shaped by individual experience within specific social structures and interpersonal interactions. Social structures (including norms, values, etc.) in a particular cultural context shape individuals' interpersonal interactions by identifying related principles of behaviors and cognition, limiting the space for obtaining personal experiences. To what degree individuals may utilize or be passively institutionalized by the outcomes of previous socialization depends on their ego synthetic and executive capacities, which are the fundamental elements of agency. Studies on Chinese college students found that outer social resources (such as family and friendship) might enhance identity capital through increasing their sense of agency (Yuan & Ngai, 2016, 2019). However, no studies have discussed the impact of internalized values of parent-child interactions on agency and identity development.

Agency consists of multiple psychological constructs. Côté (1997; Acumen Research Group, 2008) proposed to measure the agency by mainly examining psychological constructs of general function, including Self-Esteem (Coopersmith, 1981), Purpose in Life (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969), Internal Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966), and Ego Strength (Epstein, 1983). Other scholars suggested supplements such as self-efficacy and resilience (Yuan & Ngai, 2016) and concrete coping capacities such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity (Eichas et al., 2015; Tsang et al., 2012; Sica et al., 2022). These supplement constructs can be considered

manifestations of agency in responding to specific contextual needs of identity development. This paper adopted both general and specific connotations of agency mentioned above in searching for relevant empirical studies.

#### Conceptualization of filial piety

Existing research on filial piety is mainly centered on the indigenous psychological perspective. *Filial piety* is a contextualized personality construct that links individual-level motivations or goals to the social context of parent-child interactions (Bedford & Yeh, 2019). The dual filial piety model is the most frequently adopted conceptualization in empirical studies (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). According to the dual filial piety model, there are two coexisting aspects of filial piety. *Reciprocal filial piety* (RFP) stems from genuine feelings of daily, long-term positive interactions with parents. It is rooted in the quality of intimacy in parent-child relationships. In contrast, *authoritarian filial piety* (AFP) involves repressing one's own will, following the parents' wishes, and obeying role obligations based on the family hierarchy.

Filial piety results from socialization of the core Confucian ethics for adult children to interact with their parents (Ho, 1986). From the perspective of identity capital theory, college students may adopt filial piety as a default part of the meaning of their career, such as honoring parents and providing financial support, and meanwhile, try to blend in their own aspirations and wishes depending on their agency function. From the perspective of the dual filial piety model, the effects of AFP and RFP on agency and vocational identity may be different. College students endorsing RFP may tend to focus on support and intimacy in parent-child relationships and allow themselves to fully explore vocational options before making career decisions, and may, therefore, enhance the agency function. In contrast, the submission to parental authority represented by AFP may narrow the space for youth's autonomy, resulting in developing

vocational identity in line with external expectations and less self-realization.

Although some studies considered filial piety as an outcome of socialization and examined its impacts on college students' social adaptation and academic achievement, there was no study investigating filial piety combining the concept of agency. Exploring the effects of filial piety on vocational identity from the perspective of identity capital theory can reveal the significance of specific social values in individual choices and is necessary for enhancing cultural diversity in identity studies. Therefore, a critical review of existing research findings from the perspectives of socialization and agency will help to identify future research directions.

#### Purpose of this study

Based on the conceptualizations above, this review aimed to examine empirical studies on filial piety, vocational identity, and agency among Chinese college students from the perspective of identity capital theory. Specific questions of this review were:

- 1) What are the effects of filial piety on vocational identity? What is the role of the agency?
- 2) What are the effects of filial piety on agency?

#### Research method

The researcher searched among Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest Central (plus ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global), and CNKI (limited in CSSCI, BEIHE, CSCD) databases, encompassing peer-reviewed journal articles since 2000 (since 2005 for Web of Science for data availability limitation). The search strategy incorporated a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary specific to the field of filial piety and the population of college students in general. In Scopus, the search condition was title-abstract-keyword: "filial piety" AND ("college students" OR "university students" OR undergraduate\* OR graduating). In ProQuest, the search condition was non-full-text: "filial piety" AND ("college students" OR "university students" OR

undergraduate\* OR graduating). In Web of Science, the search condition was all fields: "filial piety" AND ("college students" OR "university students" OR undergraduate\* OR graduating). In CNKI the search condition was title-abstract-keyword: "filial piety" AND "university students (daxuesheng)", "filial piety" AND "college (dazhuan)", and "filial piety" AND "vocational college (gaozhi)". A total of 230 articles were retrieved as a result of the initial search.

A total of 24 empirical studies were selected for the critical review based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria: 1) Research participants were Chinese college students. Emerging adults in regular four-year universities, vocational track higher educational institutions, and community colleges are included. Cross-cultural studies with Chinese college student participants were also included. 2) Relevance to agency. Articles that specifically addressed the mechanism of agency function, and research variables were consistent with the conceptualization of agency elaborated in the current paper. 3) Non-empirical studies were excluded. 4) Duplicated articles were excluded.

### Findings

The effect of filial piety on vocational identity

Research has indicated that filial piety influences the dynamics and content of an individual's vocational identity. On the one hand, a person's endorsement and practice of filial piety beliefs may lead to the suppression of career aspirations in deference to parental authority. An earlier longitudinal qualitative study on college graduating students showed that more than half of students hesitated to follow their personal preferences that differed from their parents' demands, and single children in the family appeared to be more able to assert themselves (Deutsch, 2004). A recent study found that filial piety, parental recommendation, and elders' advice were key factors influencing Chinese nursing college students' choice of college major and career path, although many students didn't

have passion for their major (Dos Santos, 2020). On the other hand, research has also revealed that filial piety played a role in guiding children's transitions into adulthood. Recent data from a large-scale survey have shown that AFP was positively associated with the willingness of emerging adults to commit to adulthood in terms of career and other aspects (Beckert et al., 2020). As internalized social norms, filial piety in today's society allows young people to exercise their vocational aspirations more than ever (Kaland, 2021).

Two studies drew on the dual filial piety model to explore the complex pathways more deeply (Li, 2013; Hon, 2014). Findings indicated that AFP generally repressed individuals' autonomous exploration in vocational identity development. Hon (2014) studied parental attachment, filial piety, and vocational identity development based on attachment theory for Mainland China and Hong Kong college students. The study found that AFP had a direct positive correlation with the tendency to foreclosure of vocational identity and a negative correlation with career exploration and career commitment. Based on the theory of career development, Li (2013) also found that AFP had a direct positive correlation with the tendency of foreclosure of vocational identity among undergraduate students in Shanghai. AFP emphasized obedience to parents' authority and putting the family's interests as the first priority. The direct relationship between AFP and vocational identity development paths implied that the more young people endorsed AFP, the more they tended to obey their family's opinions and assume their family's responsibilities as the main significance of deciding their future career paths. AFP, as a part of outcomes from prior socialization, didn't leave any space for one's agency to play a role in constructing vocational identity.

In contrast, the role of RFP is more complex. Li (2013) found an indirectly positive relationship

between RFP and vocational exploration and commitment (i.e. the tendency of achievement) and the tendency to foreclosure of vocational identity, through career adaptability as a mediator. In addition to these two coexisting indirect paths, Li's (2013) study also found a directly negative relationship between RFP and the tendency of foreclosure. This inconsistent mediating effect (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) suggested that multiple mechanisms might exist simultaneously between RFP and the tendency of foreclosure. Career adaptability includes cognitive and behavioral capacities of managing one's current and future career transitions (Savickas, 2005), which could be considered a specific type of agency in career development. RFP, as internalized social norms emphasizing intimate parent-child relationships, might support college students' autonomy in vocational exploration and strengthen their abilities and awareness to proactively deal with career transitions. This made them more likely to reach a status of achievement. Meanwhile, college students were also more able to realize the uncertainties and difficulties in career development because of their enhanced career adaptability, and thus tended to avoid the negative effects on their parents caused by future challenges and uncertainties. As a result, they might consciously choose careers with sound social prestige and economic status without further experimentation, which led to the foreclosure tendency. On the other hand, the direct negative relationship with the tendency of foreclosure might indicate that college students retained the possibility of further vocational exploration because they perceived their parents' expectations and encouragement. However, this possibility didn't come from conscious striving on the part of the children, but rather from perceived permission from parents. These seemingly contradictory mechanisms of RFP deserve further exploration.

Overall, the findings of a small number of

existing studies indicated that AFP directly regulated college students' vocational identity development to the tendency of foreclosure. RFP could indirectly direct college students' vocational identity to the achievement status and the tendency of foreclosure through enhancing career-related agency. Meanwhile, RFP had directly negative association with the tendency of foreclosure.

#### The effect of filial piety on agency

Existing research indicated that filial piety might provide college students with a code of conduct for being an adult child, which could also serve as a guide for exerting agency. The research found that both RFP and AFP positively predicted the presence of meaning and searched for meaning in life among late adolescents (Sun et al., 2023) and moderated the positive associations between grandparents' involvement and college students' cognitive well-being (Li et al., 2018). However, there was not enough evidence to know whether these findings resulted from over-rationalization of parental authority. Research also indicated that the guiding role of AFP on career-related agentic capacity was not robust. In the previously mentioned study by Li (2013), it was found that college students' RFP and AFP beliefs related to career development were positively correlated with all sub-dimensions of career adaptability, but there was no significant association between AFP and overall career adaptability. Hui et al.(2018) also found positive correlations between RFP and all sub-dimensions of career adaptability but no significant correlation between AFP and career adaptability. From the perspective of identity capital theory, filial piety as an internalized social structure might provide normative guidance for young people in postmodern societies. However, how this normative guidance supported the sustainability of agency still required consideration of various aspects of college students' lives.

Research suggested that adult children's FP

might influence their perceptions of parent-child relationships, such as whether they perceive the relationships as being supportive and providing opportunities for them to learn to cope with life's challenges from their interactions with their families. These perceptions may facilitate the development of agency in terms of regulating and coping capacities. Studies found that RFP was positively associated with all dimensions of emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, and malleable creative mindset, which contributed to college students' life satisfaction (Chen et al., 2018; Jen et al., 2019; Zhang & Chen, 2023). In contrast, these studies found that AFP was not associated with emotional intelligence, negatively related to cognitive flexibility, and associated with a fixed creative mindset. This might be because the RFP's emphasis on voluntary respect for parents and intimacy gave children more support and opportunities to learn how to regulate their emotions and explore ways to deal with challenges from their interactions with their parents. In contrast, AFP's emphasis on hierarchy and obedience encourages young people to sacrifice their interests to conform to their parent's expectations and demands, thus stifling creativity and flexibility and failing to provide sufficient space to practice emotional competence.

RFP and AFP also appeared to reflect college students' differing expectations of parental feedback patterns, which may further influence their motivation and efficacy regarding sustained breakthroughs and growth. One study found that RFP was associated with an incremental view of intelligence and contributed to academic achievement, and AFP was associated with an entity view of intelligence and decreased students' academic achievement (Chen & Wong, 2014). In another study, RFP was found to be associated with mastery orientation and contributed to academic achievement, yet AFP was associated with performance orientation, including performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, which

were positively and negatively related to academic achievement, respectively (Chen, 2016). This can be explained by the fact that college students have more courage and confidence to attempt new academic tasks due to the relaxed inner atmosphere of RFP. AFP, on the other hand, by placing too much emphasis on academic achievement in relation to family honor and failing to provide the corresponding support, allows adult children to turn to blame themselves for being under-qualified, not daring to try, or too much linking their self-worth to achievement. Early research found that college students who perceived that their parents took the general beliefs of filial piety as an important socialization goal might have higher personal academic self-efficacy only if the training parenting style can be perceived simultaneously (Li et al., 2010). Also, a recent study found that grit was only related to an authoritative parenting style but not related to the general beliefs of filial piety (Lee & Datu, 2022). This may indicate that only when adult children obey filial piety beliefs and meanwhile perceive support from parents can their sense of agency be enhanced. Relative to AFP, RFP has more qualities of providing child-centered support and guidance and, therefore, may be more possible to contribute to one's sense of agency.

Research indicated that RFP and AFP could be generalized into other interpersonal contexts (Guo & Bai, 2014) or have impacts on their adaptation to broader social life (Sun et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021). Recently, Wei et al. (2019) found that RFP and AFP were negatively and positively associated with maladaptive cognition, respectively, and maladaptive cognition was positively related to social networking addiction. Similarly, Wan et al. (2024) found that maladaptive cognition and the fear of missing out played independent and continuous mediating roles between AFP and RFP and social networking addiction. Researchers suggested that young adults with AFP might have experienced setbacks in dealing

with conflicts and building close relationships in their original family, and they extended the passive interpersonal model with parents to other social interactions. Thus, college students with high AFP are more inclined to believe that the online world and virtual self are better than the real world and self and subsequently join the online society to escape from the reality. This can be viewed as a more extreme form of agency deficit.

In addition to influencing regulation and motivation during the transition to adulthood, college students might identify with their upbringing experiences through obeying filial piety may, and thereby affecting agency in terms of self-worth and how they perceive it. Research found that FRP was positively related to self-esteem, whereas AFP was negatively related to self-esteem (Yan & Chen, 2018). Researchers believe this may be because strict adherence to AFP can cause emerging adults a strong sense of helplessness and frustration due to parental over-control and even impairing cognitive abilities, so they cannot correctly evaluate themselves. A mixed study found that AFP, as a part of traditional Chinese family education, along with characteristics such as tiger mother education, frequent comparisons with others, and respect for absolute parental authority, led to students' inferiority complex and low self-esteem and also affected students' perceptions of their own low self-esteem (Leung, 2021). One study further confirmed the mediating role of filial piety in parenting styles and self-esteem. Parenting styles with psychological control affected the self-esteem of college students with high and moderate levels of filial piety and had no significant effect on college students with low levels of filial piety (Jorgensen et al., 2017). In other words, the more college students identify with filial piety, the more likely they are to internalize negative parenting experiences, which reduces the sense of agency in terms of self-perception. From the perspective of identity capital theory, individuals need

to consciously maintain a reflective distance from filial piety as a social structure to regulate its limitations as a normative guide.

### Discussion

This article reviewed empirical studies on the effects of filial piety on college students' vocational identity and agency from the theoretical perspective of identity capital. Existing research suggests that filial piety, as an outcome of socialization, may directly regulate vocational identity formation or indirectly regulate it through career-related agency. The influence of filial piety on the agency may be through providing normative guidance about adult roles, serving as a social support or risk factor during the transition to adulthood, or increasing identification with the parenting styles. This session will elaborate on research gaps and future research directions based on these findings.

The mediating role of agency between filial piety and vocational identity development

Based on existing studies, the direct effect of filial piety on vocational identity may imply that individuals replicate social norms as an adult-child in parent-child interaction in their career choices, while the indirect impact of filial piety (mainly RFP) on vocational identity reflects the role of the individual agency. In this process, proactive and passive ways of constructing identity coexist. This is consistent with Côté & Bynner's (2008) findings on emerging adults in the UK and Canada that the gradual growth of agency may not be able to replace traditional forms of socialization in the family during the construction of identity. Côté & Bynner (2008) also argued that the co-existence of the two may create greater challenges and uncertainty to the young adults. Regarding the dual filial piety model, AFP seems to take on more traditional socialization qualities, while RFP gives more room for the agency to develop. Findings as above provided preliminary evidences for identity capital theory. It is also worth noting that, Chinese



college students tended to the tendency of foreclosure through agentic engagement, which was different from the ideally expected identity achievement as a goal in the Western cultural context.

Since there is too little relevant empirical research, future research should further explore the mediating role of agency between AFP and RFP and identity. This would help to distinguish the respective roles of agency and traditional forms of socialization in identity development. Current research only examined career-related agentic competencies (i.e., career adaptability) as the mediator. Vocational identity is rooted in one's overall psychological functioning, and career decisions are often interrelated with decisions in other life domains (e.g., intimate relationships). Considering the need for holistic development of college students, career-related and general psychological constructs of agency deserve further exploration. Another limitation of existing studies is that all studies adopted the Commitment to Career Choices Scale (Blustein et al., 1989) as the measurement tool for vocational identity. This measurement was to only measure the tendencies of achievement and foreclosure, and was unable to capture the relationship between filial piety and diffusion or moratorium. Future research could adopt a measurement tool based on the status-process model (e.g., Porfeli et al., 2011), and investigate implications of each behavioral dimension, such as exploration, commitment, and reconsideration.

In addition to investigating the mediating role of agency, future research could use qualitative and longitudinal studies more. For example, similar to Li's (2013) findings, Jin's (2009) study of graduate students also found that RFP was indirectly and positively associated with both achievement and foreclosure tendencies in vocational identity, fully mediated by vocational decision-making self-efficacy. However, Jin (2009) didn't find any direct association between RFP and the tendency of achievement as Li (2013)

did. Future research could examine whether the direct effect of RFP on vocational identity diminishes with age. Qualitative research could provide more insights into how filial piety's direct and indirect effects occur and what it means for college students that both achievement and foreclosure tendencies are related to filial piety.

#### The underlying mechanism between filial piety and agency

Existing literature suggests that filial piety may regulate the personal agency of college students as they enter adulthood. In general, the impact of RFP is positive, whereas the impact of AFP seems comparatively negative. However, existing research is still relatively preliminary in understanding the underlying mechanisms by which filial piety affects agency. Existing understandings of the relationship between filial piety and agency stem mainly from studies of filial piety and other psychological constructs and the adoption of agency as a mediating variable. Most of the findings were obtained through a cross-sectional correlation research design, and conclusions were drawn based on the researcher's interpretation.

Agency is a composite psychological function in a particular context, encompassing several psychological constructs. These constructs may interact with each other. Few studies have further extended the modeling of the relationship between filial piety and agency. Among the existing studies, only Jen et al. (2019) extended the hypothesis of the relationship between filial piety and self-esteem and found a mediating role for cognitive flexibility. Future research could further explore whether there is an interaction among variables within agency. In addition, findings from existing studies are mainly based on specific agentic competencies, and no research has been conducted based on the general agency conceptualized in identity capital theory (Côté, 1997; Acumen Research Group, 2008). Localized

measurement instruments are needed to gather further empirical evidence (Côté et al., 2016).

While existing research found that filial piety could moderate the negative effects of upbringing experiences, it has not been able to explain how this occurs. Côté & Levin (2002), borrowing from Erikson (1964, 1975), noted that this ability to maintain a certain reflexive distance from social structures emerged in the early years of the autonomy developmental stage and would be refined during and after adolescence. According to Côté & Levin (2002), this paper considered the reflexive ability in parent-child interaction based on one's separation-individuation during and after adolescence (Spidel et al., 2023). Research indicated that not only psychologically controlling parents led to one's dysfunctional individuation (Kins et al., 2012), but also one's over-identification with excessive family obligations created barriers to the process of separation from the family of origin (Oznobishin & Kurman, 2016). In contrast, a sense of support and emotional security in parent-child interactions can facilitate the process of individuation and enhance coping capacities (Spidel et al., 2023; Yu & Xu, 2022). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that a person's endorsement of AFP and RFP may move emerging adults' further individuation process towards different paths and speeds and, in this way, influence the development of agency. Future research could provide a deeper understanding of the impact of filial piety on the development of agency in emerging adults from a separation-individuation perspective.

#### Implications for career education

The preliminary findings of filial piety on college students' professional identity and agency can be integrated with existing educational models to inform vocational education practices. A number of educational models aligned with individual-social perspectives and identity capital theory have been developed (Kurtines, 1999; Schwartz, 2000;

Schwartz et al., 2005; Tsang et al., 2012). These models emphasize the enhancement of coping skills for constructing identity through problem solving and critical thinking activities, and advocate emotional expression to promote self-discovery and enhance reflective skills. Eichas et al. (2015) synthesized the above models and proposed a model of self-transformation. Research has initially found that this model has positive effects on general and vocational identity development in college students and young adults at risks (Berman et al., 2008; see also Eichas et al., 2015; Kijima et al., 2021; Wang & Sung, 2022). The design and pedagogy of career education emphasizes the enhancement of participants' sense of agency (Healy, 2023). According to the self-transformation model, career education programs can begin by guiding college students to examine family-related opportunities or constraints encountered in their career development and encouraging them to reflect on their filial beliefs.

To improve coping-related agentic capacities, career education programs can encourage participants to focus on specific challenges or dilemmas and work with group members to face these difficulties (Eichas et al., 2015). For example, participants could discuss the barriers to communication with their parents or the problem of balancing personal career goals with the responsibility of caring for their parents in small groups. By empathizing with each other's experiences, individuals can broaden their perspectives and identify the strengths and weaknesses of current coping styles. By supporting each other, participants can develop new insights and strategies to overcome challenges in family interactions. In this process, college students need to explore how their filial beliefs influence their behavior when they can begin to consciously adjust their actions.

To enhance self-awareness and reflective skills, Eichas et al. (2015) suggested that participants begin by sharing their own short-term career or academic

goals and that all group members work together to break down these goals into actionable steps. Afterward, the participant continues to articulate aspirations related to the flow experiences and intrinsic motivation, and the group works together to help the participant integrate those flow-inducing components with existing short-term goals. During this process, participants may recognize how their current self-perceptions and the way they look at their careers are influenced by filial beliefs and parental expectations. This realization may help them improve their self-perception and reflective skills. Given the strong emotions that may arise during this process of deep reflection, educators should ensure that participants feel adequately supported and accepted and be sensitive to participants' emotions. Excessive levels of anxiety during discussion of family issues or participation in activities may indicate that the participant needs further professional help, such as

counseling or therapy.

### Conclusion

Developing vocational identity is an important and challenging task for emerging adults. This paper critically reviews existing research by incorporating the indigenous psychological concept of filial piety and the identity capital theory. Existing research has found that filial piety, as an internalized social structure and parent-child interaction cultural value, may directly regulate the development of an individual's vocational identity and indirectly regulate it through the sense of agency. The effects of filial piety on agency mainly occur through providing normative guidance about adult roles and influencing college students' perceptions of parent-child interactions. Future research could adopt the idea of agency to conceptualize the effects of filial piety on the development of emerging adults and enhance the effectiveness of related educational programs.

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