

Chinese International Students' Transition from Study to Work in Canada

by

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A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Education

In the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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## **Abstract**

Existing research on international students studying and working overseas mainly focuses on international students' academic adaption and personal adaption in a host country, but only a few studies have paid attention to Chinese international students' study-to-work transition in Canada. This transition includes three phases: Preparing for work prior to arriving in the host country, preparing for securing employment while studying in host country, and searching for a full-time job in the host country after graduation. Research indicates that several factors may influence the transition from study to work among Chinese students in Canada, including interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, parental influence, professional and personal relationships, the degree of language proficiency, and employers' attitudes. This project reviews published literature on both the issues and advantages that these factors may bring to Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada. In the second part of the project, suggestions are proposed on how Chinese international students might better prepare themselves to secure employment after graduation and what career services Canadian institutions could offer to Chinese students intending to seek a career in Canada after graduation.

*Keywords:* Chinese students, Canada, transition from study to work, career planning, job-searching, influence, cultural factors

## **Introduction**

The topic of this project is about how factors such as interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, parental influence, professional and personal relationships, the degree of language proficiency, and employers' attitudes influence Chinese international students' study-to-work transition in Canada. The following section, background, demonstrates the importance and the meaning of the topic of study-to-work transition. Personal experience and existing research is provided to illustrate the factors investigated in this project and why these factors were chosen. The next section provides readers with the key terms used in this Project, followed by a description of the research path, revealing the overall research structure that informs this Project.

## **Background**

A growing number of international students want to obtain employment in Canada after graduation (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014), especially among Chinese students whose main motivation for studying abroad is to secure better job opportunities in a host country (Wu, 2014; Yang, Sing, & Ping, 2013). It is possible for international students to work in Canada because Canadian immigration policies now not only allows international students to work in Canada while they are students, but also allow international students to be issued with work permits for up to three years post-graduation (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2008). International students' specific experience and skills make them a valuable source of labour in Canada (Industry Canada, 2002). However, influenced by cultural differences between home country and host country, international students face diverse issues during their study-to-work transition in the host country (Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Dyer & Lu, 2010; Perketi, 2008; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). At the same time, research indicates that factors such as international students' personal and professional relationships may also contribute to the

study-to-work transition in Canada (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). Based on such findings, it is not difficult to anticipate that these influential factors may present both issues and advantages as international students' transition from study to work.

The purpose of this Project is to review pertinent literature to examine how each factor affects specific tasks in each phase of the study-to-work transition. The results of the review may be meaningful in two aspects: One is to familiarize Canadian institutions with the factors that may cause potential issues in Chinese international students' study-to-work transition, such as the low degree of English proficiency and the lack of professional relationships; with this information Canadian institutions could offer more specific and effective career counselling to Chinese students. Since factors such as interdependence, valuing academic knowledge and parental influence derive from Chinese traditional culture, personnel in Canadian institutions may be unfamiliar with how these cultural factors would affect Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada. By knowing more about the influence of these cultural factors, better career services could be offered by Canadian institutions to assist international students in obtaining successful employment in Canada after graduation. The other meaning of the review results is to inform new Chinese students in Canada about the potential issues and advantages they may encounter in study-to-work transition so that they can better prepare themselves for securing employment while studying to meet these challenges and enhance their advantages in advance.

### **Sources Lead Me to Identify Influential Factors**

In this section, I will introduce my personal experience that led me to identify factors that influence Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada. After reviewing published research, I discovered more factors that have been widely examined on international students' study-to-work transition.

**Personal Background.** Since the first day I entered Canada, I have been frequently asked one question by my new friends, my family members, my classmates, and my professors: Are you going back home or do you plan to find a job in Canada after your graduation? At first, I answered that of course I would find a job here because I can have a three-year work permit after graduation. Gradually, I felt discouraged because I realized that it is not that easy for international students to find an ideal job in Canada because many Canadian employers hold negative attitudes towards international students due to their temporary residency status. Chinese students who I know have shared with me their experience about how the study-to-work transition has been influenced by certain factors. English proficiency is one of the major hindering factors. For example, my friend (Chris) is in his fourth year in the Software Engineering program in the University of Victoria. To meet the requirement of graduation, he needs to complete at least four co-op (internship) terms. He has tried to find a co-op job for more than one year but has still failed to find one. The main reason, he believes, is that his degree of English proficiency prevents him expressing himself during the interview. Although he is good at software programming, he failed to convince the recruiter that he could do this job well. On the contrary, most Chinese students that I know said due to their bilingual ability, it is much easier to land a job in companies owned by Chinese people in Canada or companies which have business contacts with China. Other factors such as valuing academic knowledge but underestimating the importance of local work experience are often mentioned by my friends as well. Many of them have attained high marks in academic courses but never tried to get a part-time job. So they found it hard to add pertinent work experience onto their resume and thus seldom received interview opportunities. Additionally, my later job-searching process became successful because of the positive influence of my professional relationships. Based on these personal experiences, I

realized that factors such as employers' attitudes, professional relationships, the degree of language proficiency, and valuing academic knowledge can influence Chinese students' transition from study-to-work in Canada positively and negatively.

**Existing Research.** Research indicates that several factors are influencing Chinese students' transition from study to work in the host country (Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Dyer & Lu, 2010; Perketi, 2008; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). For example, the parental influence may affect the academic program selection and early career decisions (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Dyer & Lu, 2010; Okubo et al., 2007). Chinese students tend to be interdependence, but seldom seek career counselling in the Canadian universities (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). Valuing academic knowledge may lead Chinese students to fail to develop appropriate employable skills and abilities (Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014; Wang, 2014; Xiong, 2011). The degree of language proficiency and employers' attitudes will influence whether international students can receive interview opportunities and successful interview results (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; James & Otsuka, 2009; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010).

To sum up, six factors, including interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, parental influence, personal and professional relationships, degree of language proficiency, and employer's attitudes, are widely researched. Other possible factors such as gender difference, and high expectation of working in Canada may be mentioned by my Chinese students, but no current research can be found on these factors. This Project only examines how six factors may make a difference in Chinese international students' study-to-work transition. Further research on other factors is needed.

### **Definition of Terms**

This section provides definitions of study-to-work transition and Chinese international

students. Since study-to-work transition is a relatively new notion among researchers, it is necessary to clearly clarify which phases are included in this transition, and what tasks related to preparation for work are involved in each phase.

**Study-to-work transition.** Researchers define international students' transition from study to work as a process from full-time student to full-time employee in a host country (Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Dyer & Lu, 2010; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). But researchers focus on different phases of the study-work transition in their study and investigated diverse tasks, which are involved in each transition phase. Dyer and Lu (2010) divide the transition into two phases: occupational choice and organizational entry, and also indicate what key tasks need to be completed by job seekers in order to secure employment. In the occupational choice phase, associated key tasks include exploring alternative occupations and then pursuing appropriate academic programs. In organizational entry, gathering information on various organizations and securing a job offer are the two main tasks (Dyer & Lu, 2010). Dyer and Lu (2010) also found that factors such as Chinese students' parents could impact these tasks.

Researchers also emphasize that preparation for securing employment while studying in the host country is an important phase of the transition; during the preparation stage international students usually engage in tasks such as developing employable skills and abilities which might be affected by cultural factors, such as valuing academic knowledge (Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014; Wang, 2014). Other researchers also regard the job-searching process as a major phase of the study-to-work transition in which key tasks include obtaining interview opportunities, seeking help from personal and professional relationships, and obtaining recruitment resources and information from career counsellors; all of these may be influenced by factors such as employers' attitudes and the degree of language proficiency (Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Arthur &

Popadiuk, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). In addition, Arthur (2008) defined the transition as three phases: “(a) managing the cross-cultural transition of entering a new culture, (b) learning in a new cultural context, and (c) transferring international expertise to work settings in the host or home countries” (p. 8). Concerning a specific task—career planning in the study-to-work transition, Arthur (2008) stated that career planning might vary in three transition phases due to the influences of various factors.

Based on these definitions, we may conclude that: (a) study-to-work transition is not a single event but a dynamic and developmental process which can be divided into different phases; (b) in each transition phase, diverse tasks with the aim of securing employment after graduation need to be completed; and (c) particular factors might impact these tasks and thus influence the study-to-work transition.

To clearly present the process of study-to-work transition in this project, I inductively synthesized pertinent published research on international students’ transition, and then divided the study-to-work transition into three contiguous phases arranged in chronological order. The first transition phase is preparing for work prior to arriving in the host country; the second transition phase is preparing for securing employment while studying in host country; and the third transition phase is searching for a full-time job in the host country after graduation. In the purpose of securing employment in Canada, Chinese international students need to complete multiple tasks in each transition phase. Thus, the influence of factors on the study-to-work transition is actually reflected by particular influences on every single task. Therefore, it is necessary to ascertain key tasks in each transition phase. Based on findings of pertinent research reviewed in this project, I identified key tasks that need to be completed to secure employment, and matched each task with the appropriate transition phase to clearly show what key tasks are

involved in each transition phase (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Three Phases of Study-to-Work Transition and Key Tasks in Each Transition Phase*

Phases of Transition	Key Tasks
Prior to Arriving (The First Transition Phase)	Early career planning; early career decision; academic program selection
While Studying (The Second Transition Phase)	Academic success; development of employable skills and abilities; obtaining local work experience such as part-time jobs or internships; development of personal and professional relationships; seeking career counselling; confirming or modifying early career planning or early career decision
Job-Searching Process (The Third Transition Phase)	Obtaining interview opportunities; obtaining recruitment resources and information; seeking career counselling

It is clearly shown in Table 1 that each transition phase involves diverse tasks with the aim of securing employment in the host country successfully, and that one task may exist in more than one transition phase. It is worth noting that tasks in the second transition phase are more than the other two transition phases, which suggests that both Chinese students and Canadian institutions need to pay more attention to the preparation for securing employment in the second transition phase and ensure that tasks could be well completed.

**Chinese international students.** Currently, the largest source of international students in Canada is from China (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2012), therefore this study focuses on Chinese students in Canada. “International students are those who are pursuing education in a country other than their country of residence or the country in which they were previously educated” (Statistics Canada, 2016a, p. 67). Andrade (2006) also defines international students as “individuals enrolled in institution of higher education who are studying on temporary student visas and are non-native English speakers” (p. 134). Based on these two definitions, Chinese international students in this project refer to a group of students who pursue undergraduate or graduate education in Canada using student visas and whose native language is not English.

### **Research Path.**

I used Web of Science and University of Victoria Library as my search engines. At first, I used “career,” “transition,” “cultural factors,” “Chinese international student,” and “Canada” as the search terms. I found Canadian researchers have studied the influences of the degree of language proficiency, employers’ attitudes and personal and professional relationships on international students’ study-to-work transition; however, most studies conducted in Canada mainly focused on the larger group of international students instead of specifically on Chinese international students. Then, I started to review research on Chinese students’ study-to-work transition that is conducted in China and other countries. After comparing and contrasting related research, I found out several factors that are frequently examined by researchers such as, “interdependence,” “valuing academic knowledge,” “parental influence,” “personal and professional relationships,” “the degree of language proficiency,” and “employers’ attitudes,” which may bring both positive and negative influences to Chinese students’ study-to-work

transition in Canada. Therefore, the Project focuses on reviewing research about how these factors make a difference—if at all—in each phase of the study-to-work transition (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Research Matrix Used to Research The Influential Factors and Three Phases of Study-to-Work Transition*

Factors	Phases of Transition		
	Prior to Arriving	While Studying	Job Searching
Interdependence		X	X
Valuing Academic Knowledge		X	
Parental Influence	X		
Personal and Professional Relationships		X	X
Degree of Language Proficiency			X
Employers' Attitudes			X

It is clearly shown in Table 2 that the structure of this project is to examine how each factor affects different phases of the study-to-work transition. Besides, as the influences of factors on each transition are reflected by influences on key tasks in the transition phase, factors are often researched along with various terms such as “career planning,” “career decision-making,” “employable abilities,” and “job interviews.” Therefore, I started to use the combination of

specific factors and key tasks in transition to narrow down the target literatures in the search engines. For example, “career decision,” “Chinese international students,” and “parental influence” were combined when reviewing literatures concerning the impact of Chinese parents on students’ career decision-making. In addition, “job interviews,” “Chinese international students,” and “language proficiency” were combined when reviewing literatures regarding how the degree of language proficiency influences Chinese international students’ job interview outcomes. This combination technique works well for other factors and key tasks that are examined in this Project.

During the literature review process, the first step was to take a glance at the title and the abstract of literatures, which enabled me to quickly identify if it is closely related to my research topic. I also checked the method of the research to make sure it is empirical research. Once I identified that the article is worth further reading, I used Web of Science and University of Victoria Library to find this article and read the literature thoroughly. Then, I looked into the references of each literature to find more pertinent research. Since my project needs evidence such as government policies and government report data on international students in Canada, I also searched relevant policies and reports on the website [www.cic.ca](http://www.cic.ca).

## **Literature Review**

Before examining influential factors on Chinese international students' transition from study to work in Canada, this Project first reviews literature to investigate the context of international students' choice of working in Canada, including how this work may become a mutual-benefit decision for both the need for an enhanced Canadian skilled worker pool and international students' desire to make their stay in Canada permanent.

### **Context of This Project**

According to Statistics Canada (2016b), the population of international students at Canadian universities has increased from 66,000 to 124,000 during the decade from 2004/2005 to 2013/2014, an increase of 88 %. According to the government agency, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (2012), international students contributed more than \$7.8 billion to the economy of Canada. As temporary residents, international students' contributions to the internationalization of educational institutions are widely recognized (Nunes & Arthur, 2013). More importantly, international students are also prospective permanent skilled immigrants and thus a valuable source of human capital in Canada (Industry Canada, 2002). As international students already have study and living experience in Canada, more advantages to Canada can be found in international students than other potential immigrants; in general, such as international students have higher English proficiency, more familiarity with Canadian cultural values, and better adjustment to local living styles than other immigrants (Dyer & Lu, 2010; Peykov, 2004). Ziguras and Law (2006) indicate more advantages of international students brought to host country such as providing an increasing skilled labour force, supporting economic development, and relieving the situation of declining birth rates and ageing populations. These advantages suggest that international students are attractive immigrants to increase the pool of skilled labour

in Canada (Nunes & Arthur, 2013).

By recognizing the importance of international students to Canada, the Canadian federal government made changes towards prolonging international students' work permit's period of validity, thus easing the restriction on international students' employment in Canada. In the past, many international students had to return their home country to seek employment because the work permit policy restricted their opportunities of working in Canada (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013). Since 2008, Canadian federal government made changes to the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program, which allows international students to work in Canada for up to three years after they graduate from a qualified post-secondary institution (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2008). Therefore, international students have a longer period to seek and maintain employment in Canada with legal temporary residence status as foreign workers. Furthermore, aiming to attract more international students to work in Canada after their graduation, the Canadian government also implemented a new immigration program to enhance international students' possibilities of immigration into Canada. The new immigration program, called 'Canadian Experience Class,' makes international students qualified to apply for permanent residence status after gaining a minimum of one year of Canadian work experience through the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (Ibid, 2008). Since 2015, the Canadian Experience Class program has been managed by a system called, 'Express Entry' that ranks candidates who apply for permanent resident status through a Comprehensive Ranking System (Ibid, 2016). An automatic score is generated through the Comprehensive Ranking System for candidates based on their age, education, official language proficiency and work experience (Ibid, 2016). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2016), Express Entry is beneficial for international students when applying for permanent residency because international students can

obtain higher scores for their higher education in Canada, Canadian work experience, strong English skills and younger age. Around 74% to 80% of the international students are under the age of 25 (Statistics Canada, 2015). Due to the enhanced possibilities of immigration into Canada, “approximately 50% of Canada’s international students indicate that it is their long-term goal to gain permanent residency” (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2014, p. 5). But before that, having a full-time job for at least one year is required.

In conclusion, international students’ choice of working in Canada becomes a reciprocal decision, benefitting both the need for an enhanced Canadian skilled worker pool and international students’ desire to make their stay in Canada permanent. However, Chinese international students often have difficulties in securing employment in Canada. For instance, during the first transition phase they may select an academic program that their parents expected but they do not like (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Okubo et al., 2007), and this may lead to dilemmas or conflicts over career decisions. Due to influence of one Chinese cultural factor, valuing academic knowledge, Chinese students tend to fail to develop appropriate employable skills and abilities during the second transition phase (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014; Mok, Wen, & Dale, 2016), and thus cannot compete with other job applicants. Moreover, Chinese international students seldom receive interview opportunities and successful interview results due to their degree of language proficiency and local employers’ attitudes in the third transition phase (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; James & Otsuka, 2009; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010). Considering these potential issues, Canadian institutions are believed to play an important role in assisting international students in obtaining employment successfully in Canada (Arthur, 2007; Arthur & Flynn, 2011), and one effective way is to have a comprehensive understanding of the influential factors on international students’ study-to-work transition and thus providing

specific career counselling service to them (Nunes & Arthur, 2013). Chinese international students in Canada also need to know about the potential issues and advantages brought by factors so that they can better prepare themselves while studying to meet these challenges and enhance their advantages in advance.

In the following section, the influences of factors, including interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, parental influence, personal and professional relationships, language proficiency, and employers' attitudes on Chinese international students' study-to-work transition in Canada will be examined; these influences will be clearly placed into the according phases of the study-to-work transition.

### **Influential Factors on Study-to-Work Transition**

A growing number of studies pay attention to international students' study-to-work transition in the host country, and also focus on how certain factors may affect this transition (Dyer & Lu, 2010; Perketi, 2008; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). For example, some researchers studied factors like parental influence and found that the parental influence would affect academic program selection and early career choices which are two key tasks in the first transition phase (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Dyer & Lu, 2010; Okubo et al., 2007). Whereas other researchers stated that multiple factors such as valuing academic knowledge (Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014; Wang, 2014; Xiong, 2011), and personal and professional relationships (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014) may simultaneously affect international students' preparation for securing employment while studying in the host country, which is the second transition phase. Based on such findings, it is not difficult to anticipate that one factor may pose different impacts on more than one transition phase, and one transition phase may be affected by multiple factors. It is worth noting that influences on the

study-to-work transition are actually reflected by influences on particular tasks in each transition phase. In this literature review, therefore, I will demonstrate how these factors affect particular tasks and place the influences of factors in corresponding transition phases.

**Chinese Cultural Factors.** This section is driven by my personal experience at first because I found that even when my Chinese friends and I came to Canada, our study-to-work transitions are still affected by certain cultural factors such as interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, and parental influence. These factors may bring similar issues to Chinese students' study-to-work transition both in Canada and in China, whereas due to cultural differences, these factors also bring new issues to Chinese students who plan to search employment in Canada. For example, Chinese students tend to be interdependent and then rely on seniors' advice and help during the transition; however, they are likely to ignore that the significant source of career information and career advice is from career counsellors in Canadian universities (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). Valuing academic knowledge may benefit Chinese students' study-to-work transition in China because higher grades are regarded as one primary requirement for job applicants, whereas if Chinese students only value academic knowledge but ignore the improvement of other work abilities, they may fail to meet local employers' requirements in Canada (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014; Mok, Wen, & Dale, 2016). As a result, their success in securing full-time employment in the third transition phase may be affected. Moreover, Chinese parents may choose academic programs for Chinese students that are linked to high-income and what these parents consider to be high-prestige jobs (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Chinn & Wong, 1992); however, after developing interest and abilities in the new cultural context, some students tend to switch their academic programs or career decisions so that they are likely to encounter dilemma or conflicts with parental expectations

(Arthur, 2008; Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005). In the following part, factors such as interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, and parental influence affect Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada will be investigated separately.

***Interdependence.*** Interdependence may benefit Chinese international students' occupational information gathering process in the third transition phase, and lead them to make appropriate job choices (Dyer & Lu, 2010). In the following section, I will first introduce the traditional origin and definition of interdependence, aiming to explicate this specific notion to readers who are not familiar with it. Then, I will use empirical research findings to show how interdependence influences the Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada.

*Traditional origin and definition.* Interdependence derives from Confucian ideology. According to Confucianism, individuals are interdependent on each other in the society and the relationship is reciprocal; therefore, Chinese people are inclined to respond to others' help request, and likewise, desire to rely on others' help or advice when facing problems (King, 1991). In other words, Chinese students' interdependence means that they tend to depend on others' advice when they have career-related problems. This Confucian heritage is still in effect as research found that Chinese students prefer to ask for advice from others during study-to-work transition (Dyer & Lu, 2010; Okubo et al., 2007; Perketi, 2008).

*Interdependence may bring positive influences to the third phase of study-to-work transition.* Dyer and Lu (2010) found that interdependence may benefit Chinese international students' job-searching process through gathering sufficient useful occupational information from others, and then lead Chinese students to make appropriate job choices. In Dyer and Lu's (2010) research, a total of ten Chinese students who graduated from a New Zealand university were interviewed about their study-to-work transition. The majority of Chinese students showed their tendency of

being interdependent when they encountered job choices issues in the third phase of transition. Eight of the ten participants believed that seeking help from others contributed to their job choices because they could collect adequate information to determine which occupational choice was particularly appropriate for them (Dyer & Lu, 2010). For example, one participant said, “I talked to lecturers, work supervisors, and parents to discover which types of jobs might fit my personality and skills” (p. 26). Another participant described that he had three occupational options in his mind and other people’s advice and occupational information helped him determine the final choice (Dyer & Lu, 2010). The findings are in line with research conducted in Canada which indicates that international students’ collecting adequate information on job choices from others contributes to determining better job choices for them (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014).

The benefits of interdependence on the third phase of transition may also exist when Chinese students search jobs in China because they can seek advice and gather information from supervisors, friends, and family members. However, it is worth noting that when Chinese students try to search jobs in Canada, their family members may not provide them with practical suggestions or effective occupational information if the family members only have work experience in China. Therefore, when Chinese students search jobs in Canada, one key information source would be career counsellors in Canadian universities because career counsellors often have comprehensive knowledge of the Canadian job market (Arthur, 2008; Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). It is widely believed that obtaining effective career counselling from career counsellors in the second transition phase is beneficial for students to make well-advised occupational choices, especially for international students who wish to situate in an unfamiliar work culture (Arthur, 2008; Arthur & Flynn, 2011).

However, research also indicates that Chinese students in Canada seldom seek career counselling in universities (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). For example, Arthur and Flynn (2011) interviewed a total of nineteen international students and found that all students, including eight Chinese students, had not sought career counselling during their job-search process. In Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) research, only a few of eighteen international students utilized the university career counselling during the study-to-work transition.

To sum up, interdependence may benefit Chinese international students in the third transition phase through gathering sufficient and useful occupational information and advice from others but the value of actively seeking career counselling in Canadian universities in the second transition phase needs to be raised among Chinese international students so that these students can make well-advised job choices in the Canadian labour market.

***Valuing academic knowledge.*** Chinese students attach great importance to academic knowledge (Mok, Wen, and Dale, 2016; Wang, 2014; Xiong, 2011), and this may bring both advantages and issues to the second phase of study-to-work transition in Canada. The cultural emphasis of academic achievement enhances Chinese students' theoretical knowledge of the professional area where they want to work, which benefits the second transition phase: Preparing for securing employment while studying. However, if Chinese students only value academic knowledge they may underestimate the importance of work abilities gained from local work experience and thus may lack appropriate preparation to meet employers' requirements in the host country, which would further affect the third transition phase as they may fail to secure employment in the host country (Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014; Mok, Wen, & Dale, 2016). In the following section, I will first introduce the traditional origin and definition of valuing academic knowledge, aiming to explicate this specific notion to readers who are not familiar

with it. Then, I will use empirical research results to show how valuing academic knowledge influences the Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada.

*Traditional origin and definition.* Similar to interdependence, valuing academic knowledge also traces back to Confucianism. In traditional Confucian culture, intellectuals enjoy higher social status and higher prestige than other professions and the only method for becoming an intellectual is to achieve academic success through education (Xiong, 2011). Therefore, Chinese people value academic knowledge, which is often perceived to be reflected through high grades in higher education that is linked to a prestigious profession (Sue & Okazaki, 2009). Researchers in China also emphasize that Chinese education is about “learning for taking examinations (ying shi jiao yu)” (Sun & Wang, 2009, p. 514). Because there is only a limited number of places available in tertiary education which cannot offer admission to the tremendous number of applications from Chinese students, the centralized education system in China, to a large extent, trains Chinese students to attain higher marks in national examinations instead of facilitating their preparation for future careers (Zhang & Tang, 2007). This kind of exam-oriented education may also lead students to only value academic knowledge rather than work abilities.

To sum up, for Chinese students, valuing academic knowledge reflects in obtaining higher grades and underestimating the importance of work abilities at the same time.

*Highly valuing academic knowledge may negatively influence the second phase of study-to-work transition.* Highly valuing academic knowledge may lead Chinese students to lack appropriate preparation for employable skills and abilities in the second phase of study-to-work transition in the host country (Huang, Turner and Chen, 2014; Mok, Wen, and Dale, 2016; Wang, 2014). In terms of employable abilities, Western employers' expectations for new graduates are different from Chinese students' assumptions of employable abilities. For example, interview

results of Finnish and Australian employers both indicate that higher academic grades are only one of their criteria and they also require job applicants to possess certain work abilities that are learned from local work experience (Cai, 2014; Crossman & Clarke, 2009). According to international students' job-searching experience in Canada, they also reported that Canadian employers highly emphasize the importance of local work experience (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). However, based on interviews in Wang's (2014) research, all sixteen Chinese students generally believed that studying hard and then obtaining higher grades was sufficient to find a good job, thus ignoring other employable abilities. One Chinese student in this study clearly said, "I should study hard because I want to get a good job" (p. 774). Although this study was limited to only sixteen students and does not necessarily reflect Chinese students overall, it can be inferred from the words that Chinese students expressed in the interview that Chinese students tend to link the success in finding a job only to academic knowledge instead of other work abilities. Therefore, Chinese students' highly valuing academic knowledge may result in Chinese students lacking the appropriate preparation for securing employment in the second transition phase since typically Western employers require more than that.

However, it is worth noting that research indicates that besides acquiring higher grades in university, some Chinese international students do engage in different pre-graduation activities to make them more employable in the second transition phase (Huang, Turner, & Chen, 2014). Although there is no relevant research conducted on Chinese international students in Canada, research in Western countries can be used as an inference; further research is needed in this area. Huang, Turner and Chen's (2014) investigated 449 Chinese international students in the United Kingdom and found that some Chinese international students also engaged in different pre-graduation activities to make them more employable, such as obtaining work experience and

attending career-related workshops and social activities. In contrast, according to interviews of a total of forty-four Chinese university graduates, Mok, Wen, and Dale (2016) note that most of these Chinese students failed to prepare before graduation for the necessary skills and work capabilities required by the workplace before graduation. After experiencing failure in employment seeking, most Chinese students realized that “a higher education degree is no longer a guarantee of employability” (Mok, Wen, & Dale, 2016, p. 270) in the third transition phase.

*Discussion.* The distinction between the two groups of Chinese students’ pre-graduation preparation for improving work abilities may be due to that Mok, Wen, and Dale’s (2016) research focused on Chinese university students in the Chinese context in which academic knowledge is highly valued by most students. However, upon entering a new cultural context, Chinese international students may learn about the new work requirements in the host country and gradually recognize the importance of work abilities and work experience besides academic knowledge. Therefore, we may anticipate that Chinese students’ cultural concepts such as valuing academic knowledge could be adjusted after experiencing a cultural shift in the host country, and thus the influence of valuing academic knowledge may moderate during the study-to-work transition.

*Parental Influence.* It is widely believed that Chinese students’ early career decisions are often influenced by parental expectations as Chinese parents may only allow Chinese students to choose a narrow range of careers that parents find acceptable (Fouad et al., 2008; Liu, McMahon, & Watson, 2015; Young, Ball, Valach, Turkel, & Wong, 2003). Based on parental expectations for their children’s careers, Chinese parents also tend to choose overseas academic programs for Chinese students in the first transition phase (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Lee & Morrish, 2012). However, the Canadian labour market is different from China, and thus it is likely that Chinese

parents' career choices for Chinese students may not be suitable for the Canadian labour market. In addition, after developing interest and abilities in the new cultural context of host country, some students tend to reassess their academic programs and are likely to encounter dilemmas or conflicts with parental expectations (Arthur, 2008; Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005). Both these two influences may negatively affect Chinese students' success in securing employment in Canada.

In the following section, the traditional origin of parental influence and the definitions of the students' career aspiration and parental career expectation will be introduced first. Then, I will present pertinent research findings to examine the parental influences on Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada.

*Traditional origin and definitions.* Among Chinese students, respecting parents' wishes about career choices is an essential aspect of Chinese cultural values (Beynon, Toohey, & Kishor, 1998; Leung, Hou, Gati, & Li, 2011). The origin of this cultural value can trace back to the Confucian ideology, which was described by Lau:

Confucius emphasized putting family's or others' needs before one's own and constraining one's behaviours and emotions, also that taking care of family, obeying parents, and living close to them while they are still alive—so called, 'filial piety'—was an essential part of the social order. (as cited in Yu, 2016, p. 30)

In other words, Confucian ethics encourage Chinese young people to maintain family harmony through fulfilling their parents' career expectations for them (Leung, Hou, Gati, & Li, 2011). Since most research reviewed in this section studied on students' career aspiration and parental career expectation, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the definitions of these two terms. Hou and Leung (2011) defined career aspiration as "occupational alternatives

that young people have considered” (p. 350), and defined parental career expectation as “occupations that parents wanted their children to pursue in the future based on their assessment of the reality” (p. 350).

*Chinese parents may only allow Chinese students to choose a narrow range of careers.*

Chinese parents tend to expect their children to pursue specific careers such as high-income jobs and high-prestige jobs that are acceptable to them (Liu, McMahon, & Watson, 2015). Further, when deciding on overseas academic programs, Chinese parents often make decisions for Chinese students regardless of the students’ interest (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Lee & Morrish, 2012). However, Chinese parents’ career choices are often based on Chinese culture and parental experience in China which may not be suitable for Canadian labour market needs, or may conflict with the Chinese students’ own interests (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Ma, Desai, George, Filippo, & Varon, 2014).

Liu, McMahon, and Watson (2015) interviewed eight Chinese parents about their perceived influences on their children’s career aspiration. All parents reported that they will not simply force their children to choose the career that they wish, but they will explicitly and implicitly lead their children’s career aspiration towards high-income and high-prestige jobs (Liu, McMahon, & Watson, 2015). Although this study was limited to only eight Chinese parents and does not necessarily reflect Chinese parents overall, the high degree of similarity of these eight parents’ thinking about their children’s career choices may give us a hint that Chinese parents tend to gradually and steadily influence their children’s career aspirations. In terms of career choices that are preferred by Chinese parents, Hou and Leung (2011) investigated the difference between Chinese high school students’ career aspirations and parental career expectations (n = 1067 parent–child dyads). Both parents and students completed a demographic questionnaire and

an Occupations List to indicate the occupations that parents expected their children to pursue and occupations that students aspired. The occupations list is based on six types, including Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional occupational types (Hou & Leung, 2011). Percentages of parents' occupational choices are calculated in Table 3 that showed that Chinese parents were more likely to expect their children to pursue Investigative jobs such as professors and researchers (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Chinese Parental Expectations Classified into Holland Types*

Rank	Parental Expectation	Job Examples
1	Investigative (27.00%)	Professor; Researcher
2	Enterprising (21.58%)	Business/Politics Leader; Lawyer
3	Social (16.18%)	Counsellor; Nurse; Social Worker
4	Artistic (15.57%)	Musician; Actor; Dancer
5	Conventional (11.29%)	Bank Teller; Secretary; Bookkeeper
6	Realistic (8.44%)	Carpenter; Truck Driver; Farmer

In addition to professors and researchers, there are other specific professions that are culturally identified as enjoying higher prestige in Chinese society, such as doctors, lawyers (Kim, 1993), and teachers (Beynon, Toohey, & Kishor, 1998) that Chinese parents would also expect their children to undertake.

To prepare Chinese children for such professions, Chinese parents also tend to select

particular academic programs for their children's overseas higher education. In Bodycott and Lai's (2012) investigation, a total of ninety-five Chinese students completed a questionnaire on how their family makes decisions about academic programs of their higher education. Despite that only 30% (twenty-nine) of all students indicated their degree of participation in program selection was minimal, 100% of all students in this study reported "parents using strategies ranging from gentle cajoling to heavy-handed coercive approaches during family discussions" (p. 262). To be specific, parents prefer academic programs such as "medicine, dentistry, natural sciences, engineering, architecture, economics, accounting, and computer science" (Chinn & Wong, 1992, p. 121). Therefore, Chinese parents' career choices or academic program selection would direct Chinese students to a narrow range of jobs that are perceived to be of high influence in China, but these job choices may not be realistic in Canada. Although no research can be found to study the gap between Chinese parents' expectation and realistic job opportunities in the Canadian labour market, a recent rank of professions generated by Canadian Business Staff (2016) in terms of highest salaries, hottest opportunities and fastest-growing in Canadian job market of 2016 (see Table 4) may give us a hint of the gap.

Table 4

*Canada's Best Jobs 2016: Top 5*

Rank	Sort Categories		
	Median Salary	Wage growth	5-year employee growth
1	Senior Industrial Manager	Avionics Assembler	Carpentry Supervisor
2	Economic Development	Pilot or Flying Instructor	Specialized Engineer

	Director		
	Petroleum or Chemical	Corporate Sales	
3	Engineers	Manager	Statistical Officer
	Health & Community		
4	Service Manager	Bricklayer	Software Engineer
	Mining or Forestry		Business Development
5	Manager	Mapping Technician	Officer

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*Note. Adapted from "Canada's Best Jobs 2016: The Top 100," by Canadian Business Staff. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianbusiness.com/lists-and-rankings/best-jobs/2016-top-100-jobs-in-canada/>*

In Table 4, the jobs with the highest salaries are sorted by median salary. Professional fields in which qualified employees are in short supply are sorted by wage growth. Professions with more opportunities are sorted by growth in the number of employees over the last five years. It is clearly shown in Table 4 that jobs that Chinese parents prefer are different from good jobs in the Canadian job market. For example, Carpentry Supervisor ranked the first in professions with more opportunities; however, in Chinese culture, Carpentry Supervisor belongs to craftsmen who are believed to enjoy lower social status in China (Xiong, 2011), a job that is often not acceptable to Chinese parents. In Table 3, a realistic job like carpenter is the job Chinese parents prefer the least. In addition, particular professions that Chinese parents expect their children to undertake such as doctor, lawyer, teacher, professor, and researcher are not in the top 5 in terms of all three categories in Table 4.

With respect to potential conflicts or dilemma between Chinese students' career aspiration and parental expectation, research indicates that in the Chinese context, Chinese students tend to

comply with parental expectations even when they feel complaining and discontent with their parents' choices (Blustein, 2001; Keller & Whiston, 2008). For example, one Chinese student (Cherry) said that

I have my own interest. I want to study design. But he (father) feels that English is better, more practical. My interest cannot link to this reality. I cannot do what I am interested in. Most of my fellow students are like me and basically cannot choose their interested subject as major. They choose for me a practical path to support the family. I do not love what I am doing, 90 per cent of them [PRC friends] do not, which is a real concern. (Bodycott & Lai, 2012, p. 262)

On the contrast, research indicates that after entering a Western cultural context where individual interests are encouraged, Chinese students would be less inclined toward complying with parental expectations (Blustein, 2001; Whiston & Keller, 2004). As a result, Chinese students are likely to reconsider career choices and then may encounter a dilemma or conflicts due to high parental expectations (Arthur, 2008; Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005).

*Discussion.* Chinese parents' influence on Chinese students' study-to-work transition mainly reflects in early career choices and academic programs selection in the first transition phase. Although leading Chinese students to high-paid and high-prestige jobs is well-intentioned because Chinese parents hope their children will be able to live a better life, these jobs may not be necessarily suitable in the Canadian labour market, and the academic programs chosen by parents may conflict with Chinese students' interest.

**Factors associated with Canadian context.** Chinese students' study-to-work transition may be affected by several factors associated with the Canadian context that Chinese students may not encounter when they search jobs in China. These factors include personal and professional

relationships built up in Canada that may bring full-time job opportunities to international students and thus greatly contributing to the third transition phase (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). These factors include the degree of language proficiency which mainly affects the outcome of job interviews (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Campbell & Roberts, 2007; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010) while searching jobs in Canada which is an English-speaking country and Canadian employer' negative attitudes towards international students, which may greatly reduce the number of job interviews and job opportunities that Chinese students could receive in Canada (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). In the following part, factors such as personal and professional relationships in Canada, the degree of language proficiency, and Canadian employers' attitudes will be examined in three sections.

***Personal and Professional Relationships.*** Personal and professional relationships are widely recognized being beneficial to securing job opportunities (Song & Werbel, 2007) and thus positively influencing the third transition phase: the job-searching process. Studies conducted in distinct cultural backgrounds all indicate that it is beneficial for international students to take advantage of personal and professional relationships in order to procure employment opportunities, like in Canada (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014), in New Zealand (Dyer & Lu, 2010), in U.S. (Granovetter, 1973; Shen & Herr, 2004), and in China (Bian, 1997; Tsui & Farth, 1997).

International students are in a special situation because they have relationships built in their home country as well as newly-built relationships in the host country (Popadiuk, 2008). The influence of relationships in the home country such as family members, seniors and friends has been discussed in preceding sections like interdependence and parental influence, therefore, in

this section, only locally-built relationships are examined on how these relationships contribute to international students' study-to-work transition and thus benefiting obtaining employment successfully in the host country. In the following section, the positive influences of personal and professional relationships on study-to-work transition will be demonstrated from two aspects: first, relationships may lead international students to procure job opportunities during the third transition phase; second, relationships may connect international students to role models so that they may make better preparation for securing employment during the second transition phase (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). Despite these two benefits of relationships, difficulties of establishing local relationships in the host country are often reported as a common issue among international students (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013), which is also reviewed in the third part of this section.

*Relationships may lead international students to procure job opportunities.* International students who have already landed a job after graduation highly appreciated the relationships built in Canada (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). Research indicates that these job opportunities come from two kinds of relationships; the first kind is the individual relationships with supervisors or professors in Canadian universities (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014). For example, based on interviews of international students in Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) research, one international student's supervisor offered him a position in the research group, and another participant's supervisor utilized his own relationships to find a job opportunity in another province in Canada for him. Similar findings are found in Arthur and Flynn's (2011) research that "international students greatly appreciated information and contacts provided to them by academic faculty or supervisors," (p. 229) which lead international students to obtain full-time job opportunities.

The second kind of relationship is ongoing relationships with prospective employers and part-time/internship employers in a Canadian workplace. For example, in Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) study, one international student reported that building up positive working relationships with colleagues and supervisors in his co-op workplace lead him to procure a full-time job after graduation. Another international student in Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) study stated that she built up good relationships with office staff in the career services office in her university. To her surprise, there happened to be one vacant position in the career services office when she graduated, so that the staff in the office recommended her to the recruiter when they knew that she was seeking for full-time employment (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014).

Despite these benefits to obtaining job opportunities in the third transition phase, researchers suggested that such personal and professional relationships need to be built and maintained continuously and sincerely in the second transition phase as preparation, instead of taking advantage of relationships to find jobs at the last minute of graduation (Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014).

*Relationships with mentors from international alumni would provide international students with role models.* It is widely believed among researchers that having international students who had successfully made the transition from study to work in the host country as role models would have been helpful for international students' transition in Canada (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). The positive influences are studied from three aspects: (a) to have more practical information about the local labour market such as which occupations are more likely for international students to apply for, which benefits the third transition phase; (b) to obtain effective resources and contacts that may benefit securing job opportunities, which also benefits the third transition phase; and (c)

to learn from their successful experience during the study-to-work transition to know how to prepare for securing employment while studying, which benefits the second transition phase (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Flynn, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011).

International students have recognized the importance of mentors from international alumni as well. For example, in Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, and Cavazos' (2011) research, international students found it is "helpful to connect with individuals who were from the same country of origin and had been through a similar employment search process because they trusted and valued the experiences of these individuals" (p. 23). Similarly, nine of eighteen international students in Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) study spontaneously reported the need for a mentoring relationship with students who had already succeeded in study-to-work transition and thus international students could use them as role models. However, international students in Popadiuk and Arthur's (2014) study did not report knowing international students who were successfully living in the host culture and working in their field, which may suggest international students' difficulties to connect with such role models while studying in the host country.

*Difficulties building local relationships.* In Arthur and Popadiuk's (2013) research, one international student stated that the reason why it is quite difficult to make connections with local people is that local people have already had stable friends from their culture, which makes it hard to fit in. Another reason is that it is hard for Chinese students to make conversations with local people due to cultural differences and language barriers (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Thus, Chinese international students tend to only connect with groups with a similar cultural background (Nunes & Arthur, 2013). According to interview results, Nunes and Arthur (2013) found that many Chinese international students preferred to hang out with friends who come from the same

country and thus they seldom build relationships with Canadian students or professors actively, resulting in potential issues during the third phase of study-to-work transition.

*Language Proficiency.* English proficiency is widely pointed out as an influential factor on international students' transition from study to work in Canada, especially in the third phase of transition: Searching for full-time employment (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). Based on interviews of employers in the host country, Chinese international students' bilingual ability is valued by employers, which endows Chinese students special advantages compared with other job applicants during the job interview (Cai, 2014; Crossman & Clarke, 2009; James & Otsuka, 2009). However, most research indicates that international students usually have a lower degree of English proficiency than native-born students, which may bring various difficulties to their third transition phase, including less job choices (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007), weakening work capacity in the employers' view (Nunes & Arthur, 2013), and failures in job interviews (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Campbell & Roberts, 2007; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010). Existing research on the influence of international students' language proficiency on their study-to-work transition can be divided into two categories: (a) the influence of English abilities which are reflected by lexical level, grammatical level, accent and fluency (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Carlson & McHenry, 2006); and (b) the influence of pragmatic competence (Campbell & Roberts, 2007; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010). In the following part, how these two categories of English proficiency may affect Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada will be examined in two sections.

*Lower English abilities may bring various negative influences to the third transition phase.* According to international students' job interview experience, many Canadian employers are impatient with international students' accents and non-fluency in English (Arthur & Popadiuk,

2013). Besides, researchers found that the insufficient English abilities may weaken the work capacity of international students in employers' views (Nunes & Arthur, 2013). As a result, lower English abilities may lead international students to failure in job interviews in the third transition phase.

Further, Arthur and Flynn (2011) indicate that international students' poor English abilities may cause international students' lack of confidence in using English. According to an investigation of a total of two hundred and sixty-one international students, the lack of confidence in using English may often cause international students to feel stressed during the job-searching process, and thus they may avoid pursuing professions that demand communicating in English and only consider professions that require relatively lower English abilities (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007); however, such professions are quite limited in an English-speaking country such as Canada. Therefore, lower English abilities may eventually limit Chinese international students' job choices when they decide which companies or positions to apply to in the third transition phase.

*Lower pragmatic competence may negatively influence the job interview outcome in the third transition phase.* LoCastro (2003) defines pragmatic competence as "the ability to use language to carry out everyday functions in culturally appropriate ways" (p. vii). For Chinese students, it is very likely to have pragmatic misunderstandings during job interviews with Canadian recruiters because "candidates and interviewers from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations about what a job interview consists of" (Lipovsky, 2006, p. 1152). For example, in Louw, Derwing, and Abbott's (2010) study, when Canadian interviewers asked why the candidate chose his or her field, Canadian interviewers expect to hear the personalized experience or information that had motivated the candidate to go into the field;

however, Chinese students' responses are not clearly and they did not understand what they were expected to say. One Chinese student in this study answered "oh I, I think for me it's better to chose this positions because I was an engineer before I came to Canada, and uh, so I think I'm, uh, familiar with this position, so I just want to apply, to apply for this positions" (p.749).

In terms of the pertinence between pragmatic competence and employment, Louw, Derwing, and Abbott (2010) stated that, "culturally different ways of speaking and understanding are judged as indicators of character or overall competence in the workplace" (p. 741). In other words, lower pragmatic competence is closely linked to the perception among potential employers of lower work abilities. Regarding the negative influence of lower pragmatic competence, Gumperz (1999) believed that in job interviews, pragmatic misunderstandings are more serious than lexical and grammatical mistakes because these misunderstandings are more likely to leave a negative first impression to recruiters and thus badly affecting the outcome of the interview. This finding is in line with Campbell and Roberts' (2007) research. Based on recordings of sixty naturally occurring job interviews, and feedback from interviewers, despite having sufficient work skills to undertake the position, international students' lower pragmatic competence may still cause failures in interviews and they were often judged as "inconsistent," "untrustworthy," and "non-belongers" by recruiters (Campbell & Roberts, 2007). Similar findings are found among Chinese students in Canada (Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010). Based on the analysis of simulated interview performance, all three Chinese students demonstrated weak pragmatic competence in Canadian employers' views (Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010). Even though Chinese students have worked as experienced engineers in China before and thus are qualified to undertake the job position, their lower pragmatic competence negatively impacted their chances of being employed (Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010), and thus affecting

the third phase of study-to-work transition.

*Employers' Attitudes.* Unlike searching jobs in China, Chinese students in Canada tend to experience Canadian employers' negative attitudes during the third transition phase: Searching for full-time employment in Canada, which is a major obstruction for securing employment successfully (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013; Nunes & Arthur, 2013).

Employers' negative attitudes reflects in two ways: (a) employers in the host country prefer local students or permanent residents rather than international students (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; James & Otsuka, 2009; Nunes & Arthur, 2013); (b) employers may undervalue international students' bilingual capability, international experience, and business contacts in their home country which are important for local companies in reality (Blackmore, Gribble, & Rahimi, 2017; James & Otsuka, 2009). Owing to these two kinds of employers' negative attitudes, Chinese international students may seldom receive interview opportunities or job opportunities in the third transition phase in Canada. However, other researchers indicate that some employers hold positive attitudes towards Chinese students as well (Cai, 2014; James & Otsuka, 2009). In the following part, I will use empirical research findings to examine how both negative and positive attitudes from employers influence the international students' study-to-work transition.

*Employers prefer local students more than international students.* According to interview results, most international students indicated that they had experienced bias from employers because Canadian employers prefer local students first and then consider international students (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013). Similarly, international students in Nunes and Arthur's (2013) research regarded their lack of Canadian citizenship (or permanent residency status) as the major difficulty in securing employment in Canada; as a result, only twenty five percent of sixteen international students had secured a job after graduation and only one

international student expressed that the job was his desired job (Nunes & Arthur, 2013). With regard to the reasons for employers' negative attitudes, researchers summarize that Canadian employers believe that local students are more stable than international students who may not commit to long-term employment (Arthur & Flynn, 2011), and that Canadian employers presume hiring international students would be quite complicated due to their unfamiliarity with international students' work permit policies (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013). Affected by employers' negative attitudes, international students, including Chinese international students, find it difficult to receive interview opportunities or job opportunities in the third transition phase in Canada.

*Employers may undervalue international students' special skills and assets.* Researchers argue that international students' special skills and assets such as bilingual capability, international experience, and business contacts in their home country are of great importance to the labour market of the host country, whereas they also find that employers in the host country tend to ignore international students' beneficial skills and assets and seldom offer interview opportunities to them, let alone job opportunities (Blackmore, Gribble, & Rahimi, 2017; James & Otsuka, 2009). For example, on the basis of interviews of ten Chinese accounting graduates' on their perceived employers' attitudes during the two-year employment-seeking process after graduation, James and Otsuka (2009) summarized that employers in an Australian company refused to offer jobs to Chinese students because Chinese students are perceived to be inferior to local students from three aspects: lack of local work experience, which is also regarded as the major disadvantage of Chinese students according to Finnish employers (Cai, 2014) and Canadian employers (Nunes & Arthur, 2013), lack of knowledge of Australian culture, and lack of "Australian English." As a result, in James and Otsuka's (2009) study, Chinese graduates sent

out more than 479 job applications to Australian accounting firms and corporations but only received 23 interview opportunities, accounting for 4.8%, and only one of all ten Chinese international students secured an accounting-related job successfully. Similarly, in Blackmore, Gribble, and Rahimi's (2017) investigation, only three of all thirteen Chinese international students in Australia have secured accounting-related employment after eighteen months since graduation. Despite that there are no studies on the rate of interview opportunities received by native-born graduates, the preceding research results may imply that companies in the host country incline to ignore or underestimate the Chinese students' advantages such as bilingual capability, cross-cultural experience and potential business contacts in China, and thus negatively affecting the third transition phase (Blackmore, Gribble, & Rahimi, 2017; James & Otsuka, 2009).

*Employers' positive attitudes towards Chinese students lead them to procure job opportunities.* In contrast to the preceding two sections which review employers' negative attitudes, in this section, research indicates that some employers in the host country may hold positive attitudes towards Chinese students, which is beneficial for Chinese students to secure full-time jobs in the third transition phase (Cai, 2014; James & Otsuka, 2009). The reason for the distinction of employers' attitudes towards Chinese students is also discussed at the end of this section.

In terms of employers' positive attitudes towards Chinese students, there is no pertinent research on Canadian employers, whereas possible attitudes might be speculated based on research findings in other host countries. On the basis of the findings of interviews of sixteen Finnish employers, it is clear to find that Finnish employers have positive attitudes to Finnish-educated Chinese graduates (Cai, 2014). According to interviews, Finnish employers believed

that the Finnish-educated Chinese graduates are easy to communicate with in the workplace due to their bilingual capability and good understanding of Finnish culture, and thus Chinese graduates could help the companies to “overcome cultural challenges through cross-cultural perspectives” (Cai, 2014, p. 387). In addition, Finnish employers recognized that Chinese international students have adequate “professional knowledge and hands-on skills” (p. 387). Moreover, some other advantages of Chinese students are valued by different Finnish employers such as “the ability to work independently, adaptability, an outgoing personality, initiative, good work motivation, team spirit, leadership skills, and sense of responsibility” (p. 388). For these reasons, most Finnish employers would like to offer job opportunities to Chinese job applicants with Finnish education credentials (Cai, 2014).

The reason why Finnish employers highly recognized Chinese international students’ skills and assets might be that Finnish employers who were interviewed in Cai’s (2014) research have worked in a branch office in China with many Chinese employees and thus having a better understanding of Chinese employees’ characteristics, skills and assets. As a result, based on their understanding of Chinese students, they would like to hire Chinese students who have graduated from Finland. Similarly, in James and Otsuka’s (2009) research, the only case who has successfully secured employment in Australia said her boss has worked with Chinese workers before and has worked in China for a certain time, and thus had a good knowledge of Chinese employees. Therefore, it might be inferred that employers’ familiarity with Chinese workers may contribute to the development of positive attitudes towards Chinese international students, and thus being willing to offer a job to Chinese students, which may greatly benefit the third phase of study-to-work transition among Chinese students in Canada. The need to improve employers’ familiarity with Chinese students will be discussed in the implication section.

**Conclusion and Discussion.**

The preceding section reviewed published literature about the various impacts of factors such as interdependence, valuing academic knowledge, parental influence, professional and personal relationships, the degree of language proficiency, and employers' attitudes on particular tasks in each transition phase and thus influencing the whole study-to-work transition. For each transition phase, different tasks and influential factors are studied: (a) in the first transition phase, key tasks are early career planning and academic programs selection which are proved to be affected by parental influence. Potential issues would be that academic programs chosen by Chinese parents may not be suitable for the Canadian labour market and may conflict with Chinese students' own career interest; (b) in the second transition phase, a large number of key tasks need to be completed with the aim of securing employment after graduation, including academic success, development of employable skills and abilities, obtaining work experience such as part-time jobs or internships, development of personal and professional relationships, career counselling, confirming or modifying early career planning or career decision, which are influenced by factors like valuing academic knowledge, the degree of language proficiency, and personal and professional relationships. The lack of sufficient preparation in this transition phase may directly cause issues in the third transition; and (c) in the third transition phase, key tasks involve obtaining recruitment resources and information, career counselling, and securing interview opportunities and job opportunities in the end which are greatly affected by the lack of relationships, lower degree of language proficiency and employers' negative attitudes.

It is worth noting that the third transition phase is of great importance for securing job opportunities, whereas lack of proper preparation in the second transition phase would directly negatively impact the job-searching process. Therefore, influential factors that seem to affect the

third transition phase need to be taken into consideration early in the second transition. For example, despite that personal and professional relationships strongly contribute to international students' job opportunities in the third transition phase, these relationships should be built and maintained earlier in the second transition phase as preparation. Besides, lower English proficiency would bring many negative influences to study-to-work transition. Since language proficiency cannot be improved in short term, there is the need to improve Chinese students' language proficiency in the second transition phase as preparation for employment. As a result, both Chinese international students and Canadian institutions need to pay more attention to the preparation process for securing employment in the second transition phase and ensure that key tasks could be well completed. Then, Chinese students may stand a better chance in securing employment successfully in Canada.

### **Implications**

According to the findings of this project, Chinese cultural factors are likely to bring both issues and advantages to Chinese international students during their study-to-work transition process in Canada. At the same time, Chinese international students may lack personal and professional relationships and sufficient English language proficiency, and also experience Canadian employers' negative attitudes during the study-to-work transition. Given the preceding findings, several implications were drawn which lead to suggestions for university career service, and the university international student service on how to provide better career counselling and career service to Chinese international students, and suggestions for Chinese international students on how they might better prepare themselves for securing employment in the Canadian labour market.

### **Suggestions for Universities**

**Career services.** To offer specific career support to Chinese international students, career counsellors in Canadian universities need cultural training to be more familiar with Chinese students' cultural experiences. It seems to be consistent with Savickas, Van Esbroeck, and Herr's (2005) suggestion that it is important to educate career counsellors in order to provide better service in helping the career development of international students. With this education, counsellors will have a better understanding of international students' difficulties that may stem from cultural differences. Consequently, counsellors can offer specific career support to Chinese students. For example, if counsellors are aware that Chinese parents pose great pressure on Chinese international students' career choices, counsellors will understand the reason why Chinese international students seem to change their career choices frequently, since it may be due to such decisions swayed by their parents. Then, counsellors could offer specific suggestions

on career choice to help Chinese international students make a well-advised career decision. If possible, the career service office can recruit counsellors who have had work experiences with Chinese students or international students because such counsellors tend to have a better understanding of diversified cultural conceptions.

Sangganjanavanich, Lenz and Cavazos (2011) also advise that the career services office should assess the level of international students' acculturation, but they do not specify how to assess this acculturation. According to the findings in this literature, few Chinese international students would come to the career office proactively if the office does not publicize such kind of career service. To raise Chinese international students' awareness of their lack of Canadian work culture, the career office can send regular surveys to international students at the end of every school term. The content of surveys should be concise and interesting, based on international students' common mistakes and misunderstandings of Canadian work culture. Then, career counsellors could go through all surveys and know what kind of career service international students need. Another way is to send several career-related questions to students, who could receive the correct answers after their submission of their own answers; this might enable Chinese students to realize how much they do not know about Canada. This process may inspire them to be more willing to ask for career support from the career service office.

Other methods can also be utilized to publicize career services that universities offer, such as distributing handouts, holding career workshops to introduce job market niches, offering suggestions on how to network with potential employers, organizing mock interviews to improve interview skills and pragmatic English skills, and holding career symposia. I highly recommend that career service offices organize more career symposia in which graduated students who have already found jobs successfully are invited. It is useful for international students to learn from

invitees' job-searching experience and techniques, such as interview techniques, how to overcome barriers, how to improve their employability, which professions or companies welcome international students, or which recruiting websites are useful. Due to similar conditions, invitees' job-searching experience could be a good example for international students. Besides, invitees are good sources of internal recommendations when international students are seeking employment. A database could be built of companies that are interested in hiring international students. Although most universities have career symposia, the target groups are all students. My suggestion is that specific or tailored career symposia should be organized for international students' career development needs, and all invitees are international students as well. Another suggestion is that each symposia focus on one main profession, such as business, computer science, education or arts, which can fulfill the needs of different groups of international students who are taking diverse academic programs. Obviously, by inviting local companies to communicate with international students, career service personnel would create more opportunities to help students meet prospective employers and may build networks with Canadian employers. Correspondingly, career service personnel should also provide employers with current information about ways to hire international students.

Since Chinese international students receive an exam-oriented education in high school, they may lack career knowledge and career planning compared with Canadian post-secondary students after their entering into a Canadian university, which is reflected in that some Chinese international students even do not start thinking about career-related issues until their last year or last semester of their post-secondary academic program. Therefore, career-related activities should be carried out earlier in order to make it possible for Chinese international students to plan for their future career earlier. The ideal process would be that Chinese international students

have a general to-do list for career development in their first year and prepare for their future career in the following years.

Research indicates that meeting career counsellors is an important approach that international students could adopt to enhance their career transition from study to work (Arthur, 2007; Shen & Herr, 2004). Higher requirements for counsellors need to be pointed out. First of all, it is important for counsellors to be familiar with diverse work culture, and to recognize potential discriminations or different forms of stereotypes may exist in the Canadian workplaces towards international students. When international students demand counselling, counsellors need to discuss about these possible challenges and barriers with international students to prepare them for the possibility of experiencing Canadian employers' negative attitudes during the career transition from study to work and try to figure out appropriate solutions in advance.

Counsellors should provide helpful resources and suggestions to Chinese international students regarding career development. For example, in order to help international students pass job interviews successfully, counsellor should provide professional advice on interview skills, acceptable dress code, and typical work jargon or pragmatic competence in Canadian business. Counsellors should encourage Chinese international students to explore their career interest as early as possible by being engaged in a variety of part-time jobs, volunteer jobs, internship or co-op programs, which could improve their employability at the same time. Counsellors also need to encourage Chinese international students to build local networks in order to obtain employment successfully in Canada. Effective strategies should be provided to Chinese international students by counsellors in order to enhance their adaptability of speaking English. Counsellors also need to enhance Chinese international students' self-efficacy by emphasizing their advantages in diversified cultural experience and encourage them to increase their employability consciously.

Existing research indicates that most career services only aim to help undergraduate students, graduate students may feel that they are ignored or isolated (Nunes & Arthur, 2013); therefore, more career services for graduate level students are also necessary.

**International Student Services.** Most universities have an office for international students, which could play an important role in supporting Chinese international students on campus. In University of Victoria, it is called International Student Services. First of all, the office should offer more information about the application for post-graduation work permits through handouts, workshops or lectures. To be specific, counsellors should make sure that Chinese international students know when to start the application process, what kind of documents are needed, how long will the application process take, and what common mistakes that Chinese international students often make during the application process. Since work-related policies are actually revised frequently, it would be better that Chinese international students are notified of any real time changes from the International Student Services.

The International Student Services should ensure that rules and regulations as foreign workers are more widely and especially known to Chinese international students. For example, international students who study full-time in designated post-secondary institutions are only allowed to work off campus for up to 20 hours a week (CIC, 2012b). Accordingly, the International Student Services should also familiarize Chinese international students with laws and regulations so they can protect themselves from exploitation. CIC (2013) summarizes several rules to inform international students that

Your employer: must pay you for your work (including overtime, where required);  
must make sure your workplace is safe; must give you proper break time and days off;  
cannot force you to perform duties for which you were not hired or trained; cannot

take your passport or work permit away from you; and cannot threaten to have you deported from Canada or to change your immigration status. (p. 2)

The International Students Services should also make sure international students acquire related knowledge of employment standards such as “contract, hours of work, minimum wage, termination of employment or eligibility for certain benefits” (CIC, 2013, p.3). Although international students should not fully rely on the International Student Services for every piece of information related to employment, the International Students Services needs to deliver a message that international students’ rights and interests as foreign workers are protected.

Some publications indicate that mentorship programs are helpful for international students because these students benefit from contact with senior students who have already had experience in job acquisition and cultural adaption to the Canadian labour market (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014; Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Arthur & Flynn, 2013). However, the International Student Services still needs to enhance the effectiveness of mentor programs in order to indeed facilitate international students’ career transition from study to work. First of all, the topics or the focus of peer mentoring needs to be expanded from cultural or social adaption to career planning or job searching. To reach this purpose, the relevant training for mentors is necessary to be conducted by the International Student Services in advance. In addition, connecting Chinese international students with peer mentors from similar cultural backgrounds would be better because mentors could offer specific career-related suggestions for Chinese international students who are more likely to encounter similar barriers or challenges during job acquisition. Mentor programs can be more informal, unlike serious career workshops or symposia, which could make Chinese international students more comfortable to share their personal experiences or problems. Peer mentors sharing both positive and negative experiences about career transition would be a

valuable reference for Chinese international students. Although a one-on-one mentor would be more beneficial for international students, it might be unrealistic to arrange a mentor to each international student. A support group with three or four international students may be more effective because listening to more job searching experience of others could help international students solve their own potential problems.

Another kind of program that the International Student Services can offer is a conversational partner program. Such programs are a good opportunity for Chinese international students to build networks and improve their English skills as well. However, given that almost all conversational partners are volunteers, like current university students, they may be not that professional in tutoring English. For example, I was assigned a conversational partner for one month through the Conversational Partner Program of the University of Victoria. We met once a week for about one hour to do sports like badminton or volleyball together. She was a bright girl and she was passionate about exercise. However, during each meeting, our time to talk in English was quite limited since we spent most of our time doing exercise. She was nice and patient, but she did not know how to improve my English skills through conversations. After one hour, she returned to study or go to classes and we did not have other chances to talk. To be honest, I do not think I benefited a lot from this experience. Therefore, it is still necessary to train volunteers, at least provide them with a general guideline on how to organize each meeting in different ways. On the other hand, the International Student Services needs to know more about international students' purpose of joining such conversational program in advance and then match appropriate volunteers to international students according to their specific needs. Similarly, topics should be expanded from school life to career-related topics to expand the vocabulary of job jargon. Since Chinese international students' relational networks tend to be limited in a small

group with the same culture background, a conversational partner program is a great opportunity for them to know more about Canadian culture, Canadians and Canadian work environment, which benefits their future entry into the Canadian labour market.

Another important service that the International Student Services needs to enhance is to help international students find more volunteer jobs or part-time jobs, since employers value Canadian work experience. Although all students need professional experience, lacking local networks means that international students need work experience more than local students. By acquiring local work experience, international students become more competitive while searching jobs. For example, the University of Victoria carries out a part-time job program called a “work-study program,” which provides a wide range of part-time jobs on campus. Other positions at the University of Victoria are open for international students as well such as teaching assistant, research assistant or office assistant in different on-campus organizations such as labs, English Language Center, and after-school care center. The International Student Services in other educational institutions may also offer such work opportunities provided by the University of Victoria as references.

Given that employers in Canada may hold negative attitudes toward international students, the International Student Services may need to make some efforts to modify the attitudes. It is necessary to train employers to be more familiar with the process of applying for a post-graduation work permit. On the one hand, the application for a post-graduation work permit is not a long process during which international students are allowed to work full-time. On the other hand, the post-graduation work permit is an open work permit which means that “employers do not need to apply to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) for authorization to hire a foreign national (i.e., a Labour Market Opinion)” (CIC, 2012b, p.1).

Therefore, the International Student Services needs to let local employers know that it is quite easy to hire an international student even if they are not a Canadian citizen. The International Student Services also needs to remove employers' fear of international students only working for a short term. If international students find a full-time job, their work experience and Canadian credentials are more likely to help them become permanent residents, so they definitely can work longer and international students are a young group who are fast learners and can work enthusiastically in the long term. According to CIC, after international students become permanent residents, they are willing to devote themselves to their companies and work for many years (2012b). In addition, the International Students Services may need to provide information or evidence to employers that international students' cross-cultural work skills and experiences can bring many benefits to the Canadian employers' company such as helping to satisfy labour needs, promoting competitiveness, and expanding both local and global markets (CIC, 2012a). To make employers know more about international students, the International Student Services needs to attract more employers to attend career fairs or career workshops, and thus increasing chances for international student to interact with prospective employers, which may contribute to removing stereotypes of international students, knowing more about their skills and qualifications, and recognizing the value of their international experience.

Lastly, the International Student Services in universities may need to work with CIC make relevant policies that protect international students from racism, discriminations, or exploitation more widely and especially known to international students.

### **Suggestions for Chinese International Students**

**Frequent conversations with parents.** Chinese parents traditionally tend to make career choices for their children or put pressure on their children to choose certain professions,

especially among those Chinese parents who seldom or never have lived or studied in a Western country. Therefore, such parents are more likely to have some unrealistic expectations for their children' career or some misunderstanding of the Canadian workplace.

One suggestion is that Chinese students need to describe and explain to their parents about what kind of differences they have seen and experienced in Canada little by little, including job types, attitudes toward different jobs, work culture, salary range, and job requirements. It is like a long-term training for their parents to get to know Canadian work culture gradually. So Chinese students need to start to do this from their arrival in Canada. Failure to do so may result in that parents are still making career choices for their children according to their experience in Chinese context. Chinese students may refuse to communicate with their parents because their parents seem to know little about Canadian culture.

I want to share my experience how I persuaded my parents to allow me to have a part-time job as waitress in a Chinese restaurant in Victoria. I still remember that before I came to Victoria, I promised my parents that I would find a part-time job to earn my own living expenses. I thought I could work as an after-school tutor for Chinese high school students with their courses, or a Mandarin tutor for a second generation of Chinese immigrants. However, due to the lack of recruiting information and Canadian local work experience, I failed to find such jobs. At that time, the job of being a waitress was been brought to my attention because I found that most waitresses in Chinese restaurants are university students just like myself. After communicating with many Chinese students who work in restaurants, I discovered more advantages of this job such as flexible work schedule, lower job requirements, relatively better pay because of service tips from customers, and chances of practicing oral English. At the same time, I also found a Chinese restaurant that was hiring when I browsed a recruitment website. I told my plan to my

parents excitedly. But they were upset and tried to prevent me from working as a waitress. In their opinion, being a waitress is not a decent job due to the oily working environment and impolite treatment from customers. Besides, they also thought that I deserve a better job, one that matches my Masters degree. In China, one stubborn stereotype of waitress is that it is a kind of job for girls who only finished high school.

To persuade my parents, I described and explained several advantages of this job as a waitress that will not affect my completion of my school courses and assignments, and whose payment is sufficient to cover my living expenses. Then, I took some pictures of local restaurants to show the clean environment. And I also described how local people respect waitresses. After one-week communication, they finally recognized that waitress is a good choice of part-time job in the Canadian context, which is quite different from China and then they were willing to accept my decision of working as a waitress after school.

Frequent conversations are necessary between Chinese international students and their parents. In addition, Chinese students can also forward relevant information or brochures from the university or from the Canadian government to their parents. Proactive and continuous communication is a good way to correct parents' misunderstanding and may avoid conflicts between students and parents because parents may think their children are disobeying them or contradicting them for no reason.

**Chinese students need to determine appropriate career choices that are appropriate for themselves.** As mentioned in the literature review, Chinese international students tend to fulfill their parents' wishes on career decisions, which reflects in that Chinese international students' academic programs and career decisions are more likely to be swayed by their parents. As a result, they may pursue certain jobs that they actually do not like but their parents told them

to pursue. The unwilling attitudes will definitely influence the success of career transition from study to work. My suggestion is that Chinese international students need to explore more about themselves earlier. Chinese international students should take part in diversified extra-curricular activities to help themselves find out what they are interested in and what they are good at. For example, according to existing literature, many Chinese parents strongly hope that their daughter could be a teacher (Okubo et al., 2007). For female Chinese international students, they can volunteer as different teachers or tutors for some time to know if they really do like teaching.

The first choice is volunteering in an English Language Center (ELC), which offers English writing tutoring, oral English practicing, or other English language courses for students who need extra language instruction or who need to pass the language courses to enter an academic program. It is convenient because many Canadian universities or colleges have their own ELC (may exist under other names) situated on campus like the University of Victoria and Camosun College in Victoria. It is easy to find such volunteer jobs because universities and colleges welcome their own students to work as volunteers. In ELC, international students usually work as teaching assistants. This kind of position requires relatively good English language skills, so it is more suitable for graduate students or senior undergraduate students.

The second choice is volunteering in after-school care centers, which offers extra-curricular activities for young children. Main job duties are to assist teachers to conduct a wide range of class activities and ensure young children's safety. After practically engaging in the work of teaching dealing with students in different age, Chinese students may find out whether they prefer working with senior students or younger children. If they have no interest in all this kind of teaching job, they may need to reconsider about their career choice as a teacher.

**Proactive attitudes and practical actions.** The majority of international students in Nunes

and Arthur's (2013) research advised that new international students should educate themselves about Canadian culture, Canadians, and the Canadian work environment. Rather than negatively receiving career-related information, it would be much better if Chinese international students could collect such information proactively. As I discussed before, Canadian universities offer a variety of career services that are indeed practical for international students. However, Chinese international students seem to be not aware that these resources exist and thus ignore those resources. Instead of worrying about unemployment, Chinese international students should seek career support proactively and make full use of university resources related to career development. For example, Chinese students might find a mentor to learn from their experience or find a career counsellor to acquire more information on what to pay attention to during the job searching process. Also, diversified extra-curricular activities are open for international students, and there is abundant information on the website of the Canadian government regarding work permits. Chinese international students should not only focus on study but also enhance their employability proactively as well. If it is difficult to find the first paid job, Chinese international students can start their work as volunteers, which would be beneficial for building up local work experience and may connect Chinese international students with more prospective employers naturally. For example, if a Chinese international student's work abilities are recognized by the employer of the volunteer job, the employer may consider this student in the first place if there is a vacancy in other part-time or full-time positions. In addition, Chinese international students need to improve their career planning skills, and divide a big career plan into small steps and comply with them. Career planning should not be viewed as a separate part from Chinese international students' overseas education, but as an integral part of their study experience.

As I am currently in my last semester of my academic program, most of my classmates are

worried about future jobs. It is common that international students face more difficulties when searching jobs than their Canadian classmates. Because of this, my suggestion is to take more practical actions to improve the employability and be less worried about unemployment.

Especially for newly arrived Chinese international students, who have quite sufficient time to improve their employability. As long as they hold proactive attitudes toward improving their employability, they are very likely to find a satisfactory job.

One strategy for being familiar with Canadian professional requirements is to browse the recruitment websites, searching for job types that you are interested in, looking carefully at the job requirements, and then prepare yourselves accordingly. For example, if one job requires good communication skills, it means the ideal employee at least needs to have good oral English skills. Then, do spend some time on improving your oral English. Or if one job requires specified technical knowledge, it means the ideal employee needs to take relevant academic courses. Then, do take relevant courses and try to get a good mark to prove that you learned the technical knowledge very well. If one job requires related work experience, it means the ideal employee at least has previous work experience. Then, do try to apply for such jobs and work as volunteers or part-time worker. Even if what you are doing is a short-term job, it helps.

**Establish local personal and professional relationships.** Existing research emphasizes the importance of relational networks during career transition from study to work. Building local relationships is a priority for Chinese international students who want to obtain employment in Canada because almost all job applications require two or three references. According to my personal experience, social networks helped me find a satisfactory job in Victoria.

As I mentioned before, I had a part-time job as waitress in a Chinese restaurant. After one-year work in the restaurant, my oral English improved and my customer service skills

strengthened. I thought it was time to improve my employability in other aspects. So I planned to change jobs into a new field. I talked to my co-worker in the restaurant about my plan. She recommended me to find a job in which I can work with students because I major in Education. She gave me an email address of a human resources recruiter and told me to contact her. It was a Chinese company. Then, I sent my resume and got the chance of an interview. I appreciated this job opportunity very much so I prepared for the interview extremely carefully. Fortunately, I was employed and now work in this company as an IELTS teacher. When I worked there, colleagues admitted my work ability and recognized that I am responsible for work. Later, this company had a vacancy for a homestay coordinator and all colleagues recommended me to the manager to apply for this position. After a casual talk with the manager, I was employed again with another title. And the manager said she would offer me a full-time job after my graduation.

My personal experience proves that networking from extra-curricular activities works well in the study-to-work transition process, and other activities including volunteer jobs and intern jobs may work as well. It is not a good strategy if Chinese international students only group with co-cultural groups. I would recommend that Chinese students find Canadians as their landlord or roommates to build networks with them. When doing group work, Chinese international students could choose to group with Canadian classmates. Participating in university clubs is another effective approach to connect with more local students who have common interest with each other. And it is practical to build networks through other important relationships such as student-professor, mentors, and conversational partners.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

A limitation of this project is the small size of research that has been reviewed. Thus only several major cultural factors are discussed in-depth with losing sight of other possible factors. Further research is needed to address this limitation by reviewing more relevant factors and then offer better career support for Chinese international students in Canada. Another limitation of this project is that only the early period of career development is considered such as preparing for work prior to arriving, preparing for work while studying, and the job searching process. Further research is in demand to study how to help Chinese international students maintain success in employment after they find a job in Canada.

As I mentioned in the research path, literature that specifically focuses on Chinese international students in the Canadian context is limited. Since Chinese international students are the major source of all international students in Canada, further research needs to investigate this unique group. Literature reviewed in this project is mainly conducted in Western universities in Canada, so it is necessary to carry out further research in different provinces or districts of Canada, which may offer tailored career support to Chinese international students who attend different universities all over Canada. The focus of further research could also be more subdivided. For example, research can study undergraduate students and graduate students separately, or science students and arts students respectively, which would benefit diversified groups among Chinese international students in Canada. Furthermore, although several suggestions on how to facilitate Chinese international students' transition from study to work are made in this project, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of these suggestions.

### **Conclusion**

This project focused on six influential factors that may bring both advantages and issues to Chinese international students' transition from study to work in Canada. Among six factors, four factors such as interdependence, personal and professional relationship, English language proficiency, and employers' attitude may influence the third transition phase; interdependence and valuing academic knowledge may impact the second transition phase; and only parental influence may affect the first transition. It is obvious that the third transition phase is important, as Chinese students need to secure interview opportunities and job opportunities in the third transition phase, whereas lack of proper preparation in the second transition phase may directly lead to failure in the job-searching process. Therefore, influential factors that seem to affect the third transition phase need to be taken into consideration early in the second transition.

In the implication part, this project also provides suggestions on how to help Chinese international students successfully obtain employment in the Canadian workplace in a variety of aspects. And it is worth noting that the increasing employment rate of international students in Canada is mutually beneficial for both the Canadian skilled labour pool and international students' motivation of staying in Canada permanently.

The meaning of this project may exist in raising the awareness of new-coming Chinese international students who expect to work in Canada of what kind of factors may influence their transition process and what preparations they need to make in advance for their future study-to-work transition. Besides, this project offers a detailed presentation of Chinese students' study-to-work transition to personnel in Canadian institutions and thus they may have a better understanding of how to facilitate Chinese students' study-to-work transition in Canada.

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