

# False Anticipation and Misfits in a Cross-Cultural Setting: International Scholars Working in Chinese Universities

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Jiexiu Chen<sup>1</sup>  and Junwen Zhu<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

As the rapid development of internationalization in Chinese higher education, the number and scale of international scholars working in China has significantly increased. However, few studies have focused on international scholars' cross-cultural encounters in the Chinese academic context. Based on 21 in-depth interviews, this article investigates international scholars' subjective experiences in a cross-cultural setting through Bourdieu's conceptual lens. After presenting an overview of participants' major motivations for working in China, we find their vague and idealistic expectations engendered "false anticipation" of their possible career future in China, which left some of them unprepared to experience a sense of misfit when entering the new field of Chinese academia. Moreover, we identify the dual habitus–field disjunctures emerging from participants' perceptions of misfit in the cross-cultural scenario, namely explicit disjuncture and implicit disjuncture, which reveal the underlying reasons for mismatch between international scholars' previously generated habitus and the new field of Chinese universities.

## Keywords

internationalization of academic profession, academic mobility, East Asia, qualitative study, staff and faculty development

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<sup>1</sup>University College London, UK

<sup>2</sup>East China Normal University, Shanghai, China

## Corresponding Author:

Junwen Zhu, Faculty of Education, East China Normal University, North Zhongshan Road Campus 3663 N. Shanghai, Shanghai 200062, China.

Email: [jwzhu@ed.ecnu.edu.cn](mailto:jwzhu@ed.ecnu.edu.cn)

## **Introduction: Higher Education Internationalization and Talent Introduction in China**

In the context of globalization and the knowledge economy, the competition for talents with internationally recognized expertise has spread around the world (Altbach, 2015; Brown & Lauder, 1996). Many nation-states have launched policy and funding schemes to promote the international mobility of university academics (Fahey & Kenway, 2010). Moreover, the internationalization of higher education has significantly promoted academic mobility across national borders, and sometimes across different cultures. In various forms of individual and institutional cooperation, such as visiting scholars, transnational higher education institutions, and international branch campuses, the internationalization of academic faculty has become a global trend, and academic scholars have become more internationally mobile than ever (Bauder, 2015; T. Kim, 2017; Marginson, 2014).

China has actively joined the positional competition in the global battle for world-class excellence (Hazelkorn, 2009; Huang, 2015). One of the major approaches implemented by Chinese universities to obtain internationally recognized reputations and enhance their capability of joining the global competition has been to recruit international scholars to work in China (Wu & Huang, 2018). The number and scale of international scholars working in China has significantly increased as a result of the internationalization of Chinese higher education. In 2017, the number of foreign staff teaching in Chinese universities was 18,360, which was almost double the 9,433 in 2007 (Liu et al., 2019). A series of policies have been implemented to boost talent introduction, such as the “Thousand Talents Plan” (Lu et al., 2010). At the same time, local governments have launched corresponding provincial policies to ensure consistency in implementation and further expand the scale and level of talent introduction (Zhu & Shen, 2013).

Although the scale of international faculty hiring has been increasing in Chinese universities, in Cheng and his colleagues’ (2014) research on 217 Chinese higher education institutions, the average percentage of foreign staff is 2.3% and their degree of internationalization was still low. Cai and Hall’s (2016) empirical data showed that cross-cultural difference is one of the major challenges faced by international scholars in China. However, existing studies about international scholars working in China have focused on the policy and practices of internationalization at the institutional level (Huang, 2007; Yang, 2005). Only a few studies have paid attention to international scholars’ individual experiences. Their real involvement in the Chinese academic context is far from being fully studied.

This article aims to explore international scholars’ encounters with cross-cultural challenges through Bourdieu’s conceptual lens. With a focus on the comparison between international scholars’ expectations prior to departure and their later experiences in Chinese universities, we utilize the idea of “false anticipation” proposed by Bourdieu (1990) to understand why participants’ vague and idealistic expectations failed to provide practical guidance for their future work in China. Moreover, we highlight the cross-cultural misfit that appeared as a common issue faced by most of the

participants in this research, and we adopt Bourdieu's (1990, 1999) theoretical discussions on habitus–field mismatch to examine the manifestations of cross-cultural misfit in the context of field change. This article is intended to contribute to the current literature, policy, and practice in the context of the limited attention that has been paid to international scholars in China. This study focused on providing novel and detailed accounts of international scholars' real-life challenges in Chinese academia, with an intention to facilitate mutual understanding between Chinese academia and international academics, and to provide useful implications for practitioners involved in international higher education.

## **International Scholars in a Cross-Cultural Context**

After reviewing the field of academic mobility, we found, as many researchers also have recognized, there has been a plethora of studies on the experiences of international students, rather than those of academic staff (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Cai & Hall, 2016; Pherali, 2012). Among the studies on mobile academics, more attention has been focused on those who are allocated via the programs of cross-border institutions, whereas fewer articles have touched upon the experiences of self-initiated international scholars. In this section, we will review the relevant literature on mobile academics and address the empirical gap in this field.

In the context of the increasing scale of transnational education, faculty members have been contracted to teach in international branch campuses and provide academic trainings in other countries (Naidoo, 2009). As Gopal (2011) emphasized in research on faculty at international branch campuses, faculty members' cross-culturally competent pedagogy and their ability to communicate and work with international learners has played a vital role in the internationalization of higher education (Paige & Goode, 2009). Academic articles on this group of academics have discussed the development of intercultural competence and its impacts on pedagogy and curriculum transformation (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Deardorff, 2006; Dunn & Wallace, 2006), and have recognized the institutional challenges that exist in the current paradigm (Huang, 2007; Olcott, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2016). Some researchers have further provided critical reflections on the institutional support provided for those faculty members who might encounter cross-cultural challenges in a foreign context (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Leask, 2008; Smith, 2010). Those studies have predominantly centered on faculty members' teaching roles in internationalized educational settings, while arguably neglecting their roles as social and cultural sojourners.

Types of academic mobility that are arranged by institutions usually follow a short-term paradigm, whereas self-initiated mobile academics are more likely to report diverse motivations and various local experiences. Froese's (2012) research on expatriate academics (mostly Western) in South Korea reported that their motivations to work overseas included the desire to seek novel experiences and better career opportunities, while the process of their adaptation was not treated in much detail. Similarly, Huang's (2018) research on foreign faculty at Japanese universities revealed a positive

tone regarding their cross-cultural experience. Huang's (2018) article listed several motivations, including academic and professional development and preference of local culture and privilege, as manifested in a U.K. scholar's words that he enjoyed being respected as "a symbol of internationalisation" (p. 246).

A few studies focusing on non-Western academics working in a Western context presented more challenging situations compared with the findings above. In Luxon and Peelo's (2009) study on the experience of non-U.K. academics working in a British university, international staff were found to face "substantial practical, cultural and linguistic challenges." The split between the local norms of U.K. universities and the international nature of those academics resulted in the fragmentation of research and teaching, which required constant adjustments. Similarly, researchers focusing on Chinese overseas scholars have demonstrated how much effort is needed to address cultural and social differences. Researchers focusing on Chinese academics in the United Kingdom have identified several commonly found challenges, for instance, the different academic practices and language obstacles reported by Jiang et al. (2010), as well as the interpersonal relationships with colleagues and students and pedagogical differences discussed in Hsieh's (2012) article.

However, despite the emerging community of international scholars in China, only a few studies focused on this group. Wu and Huang (2018) conducted survey research on international faculty in four leading universities in Shanghai, which provided useful explorations of international scholars' demographical information and motivations to work in China. In addition, Getty's (2011) article on her teaching experiences in an American study abroad program provided valuable reflections on the challenges embedded in the context of global difference. Inspiringly, she probed cultural differences by examining teachers' false assumptions about teaching norms. We recognized Getty's (2011) valuable exploration and suggested there was room to further examine this topic beyond personal experiences. Moreover, Cai and Hall (2016) interviewed 20 academic expatriates, dominantly from a European background, who worked on a Sino-Foreign Venture in China. As academic expatriates mobilizing within an educational institution, many of them considered their job in China as a chance to take a break from their home university and immerse themselves in the local culture, rather than plan their future career development in China. Although these expatriates also reported language barriers and limited translation assistance, they were all well supported by institutionalized logistical assistance.

In sum, drawing upon the literature on various types of mobile academics, we found limited research on international scholars in China, one of the major and fast-expanding academic markets in the world. This article therefore contributes to the higher education internationalization literature where there is a shortage of empirical explorations of this understudied group. We consider that it is vital to pay attention to the emerging community of international scholars working in Chinese universities, unveil their unique cross-cultural experiences, and provide reflections and implications for both academics and policy makers. In terms of the theoretical exploration, we found Bourdieu's conceptual tools, habitus and field, particularly useful in examining the dynamic and interactive nature of individuals' encounters in a cross-cultural scenario.

In the next section, we will introduce those concepts and explain briefly how they facilitate our understanding of international scholars' cross-cultural challenges.

## Habitus–Field Mismatch and False Anticipation

Both habitus and field are central to Bourdieu's (1990) philosophy of practice. According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is "socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking" (p. 52). Habitus is largely shaped by social conditioning and is manifested through one's enduring ways "of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 70). Field, in Bourdieu's words, "structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field" (Bourdieu, cited in Wacquant, 1989, p. 44). The interrelated and interpenetrating relationship between habitus and field entails discussions of change in which "a change in one necessitates a change in the other" (Hardy, 2014, p. 126). When a habitus enters an unfamiliar field, ambivalences and uncertainty may emerge as a result of the declining degree of habitus–field fit (Reay, 2004). Therefore, when we consider the idea of change inevitably embedded in cross-cultural mobility, habitus and field are applicable tools to understand international scholars' experiences in a novel field.

When an international scholar enters into an unfamiliar academic environment, there might appear moments of crisis or transition when their "old" habitus does not fit the new field, and there is a time lag as their habitus slowly adapts to the change of the rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1977). This mismatch between habitus and field manifests itself evidently in "false anticipation." As Bourdieu (1990) explained,

The presence of the past in this kind of false anticipation of the future performed by habitus is, paradoxically, most clearly seen when the sense of a probable future is belied and, when dispositions ill-adjusted to the objective chances because of a hysteresis effect, . . . are negatively sanctioned because the environment they encounter is too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted. (p. 62)

Before entering an unknown or unfamiliar field, one's aspirations and expectations are not naturally formed but rather conditioned by individual habitus and social environment. When one's habitus generated in the previous field does not correspond to the rules of the game in the current field, one's subjective expectations may fail to predict the objective probabilities in the new field (Bourdieu, 1990). In this way, the "false anticipation" reveals the disjuncture between one's previous habitus and current field, and it further generates various perceptions of "cultural shock" (misfit) and/or cross-cultural adaptation (habitus transformation).

In the cross-cultural setting, Bourdieu himself utilized the experiences of an Algerian migrant family in France to illustrate habitus–field mismatch, as the first-generation migrants' life and practices in Algeria could no longer be maintained in Paris, and the migrants did not acquire the resources to claim a desirable position in the new field (Bourdieu, 1999). Moreover, Dai and his colleagues (2020) applied

Bourdieu's concepts to examine Chinese students' experiences in a transnational education program. They reported students' encounters with the field-habitus dissonance and argued this could produce transformation of the habitus, which might lead to better adjustments to the logics of the new field.

Drawing upon Bourdieu's conceptual tools, we aim to explore the following two major themes in this article. First, we intend to explore participants' major motivations or expectations of a promising career future in China, and further probe why those expectations turn out to be "false anticipation" that lead them to a varying degree of cross-cultural shock when they first entered Chinese academia. Second, through the theoretical lens of habitus-field disjuncture, we intend to examine participants' accounts of their sense of misfits in Chinese universities, and explore the types of disjunctures they are expected to bridge to achieve a better fit in the cross-cultural setting.

## **The Study**

This article seeks to contribute to investigating the nature of cross-cultural misfits by focusing on the lived experience of international scholars working in Chinese academia. To achieve this goal, a qualitative research methodology was used in the research design. The data reported in this article were collected between 2015 and 2016 as part of a project examining international scholars' cross-cultural experiences in top research universities in Shanghai. We collected academic staff information published on the official websites of "985" and "211" universities in Shanghai, and we obtained a total of 281 international scholars' profiles (Chen and Zhu 2020). To involve a diverse and inclusive board of participants (Bungay et al. 2016), we adopted purposive sampling to recruit participants from diversified demographic groups, such as female scholars and those from non-Western backgrounds. Apart from that, the snowball sampling method was also applied during the later stage of interviews out of practicality.

A total number of 21 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted and recorded for data analysis. Among them, 17 participants were working full-time and 4 were visiting scholars. Amid those full-time staff, there were seven professors, five associate professors, two lecturers, and one researcher. The participants' national origin covered 11 countries in Europe, Asia, and North America. As for gender, 20 male scholars and 1 female scholar were interviewed. In terms of discipline distribution, a total of 12 interviewees researched or taught in the humanities and social sciences, and 9 in natural sciences and engineering. In terms of the data analysis, we adopted thematic analysis to process the interview data. We conducted three rounds of coding analysis with the help of MaxQDA, a type of qualitative data analysis software, to label, categorize, and synthesize the key themes and subordinate codes that emerged from the qualitative interview data. In addition, in consideration for the ethical guidelines to which we were committed in the research process, we provided participants with a consent form and information sheet to ensure an informed basis for their consent to participate. Moreover, in both the interview and data analysis processes, we adopted anonyms to safeguard participants' confidentiality. We also altered certain

country names when we considered that there would be a risk of identifying particular participants if we mentioned those countries.

## False Anticipation

From the interview data, we found most of the participants' motivations for working in China were career driven: They intended to plan and develop a career path in China. However, their expectations focused more on the broad context of working in China rather than specific situations within their chosen academic institution, which revealed their lack of knowledge and information about the new field they were about to enter. In this section, we first will provide an overview of participants' major motivations for and expectations of developing their career future in China. Then, we will show how our analyses suggested that, to a varying extent, the participants' vague and idealistic expectations turned out to be "false anticipation" of their possible career future in China. The analysis divulged how distant Chinese academia was for the participants and how their anticipations failed to provide practical guidance for their future work in China.

For most participants in this research, China's rising economic power was widely regarded as a positive sign to justify their choice of working in China. Mark gained this perspective from his father's decades of business with Chinese partners, which not only turned his family into one of the richest in their region of the United States but also soundly convinced him that "the future of the world will be set in China." In some cases, participants built a subtle link between China's economic developments and their academic future. For instance, Oliver, an early career researcher in natural science, commented the following: "It is true that the country is growing. This means the quality of research right now is not like Europe and the US. But it's improving, very fast." In his perspective, a country's potential for future development guaranteed long-term research investment, and eventually would lead to improvements in research quality. He planned not only for his current job but also for the chances of long-term career development in China.

Relating to the economic factor, many participants (14 of 21) considered a favorable package of salary and research funding offered by Chinese universities as the guarantee of academic development and career security. As we have discussed elsewhere, the early career researchers participating in this research found it very difficult to find sufficient funding in some Western countries due to the effects of austerity in academia (Chen and Zhu, forthcoming). However, in China, a series of policies have been launched to facilitate scientific and technological innovations; accordingly, China's investment in academic research has increased year by year (Wu, 2014). Thus, Daniel said his reason to work in his current university in Shanghai was simply the "good enough" package he received there. *With the funding available to him, he would be able to get more research done and recruit more qualified researchers to his team.*

In terms of those participants (15 of 21) who had visited China before they took a full-time job there, their personal encounters made them see the possibility and practicality of working in China. Richard was a professor in engineering who originally

came from the Middle East. He had visited China twice, and he had “a good impression of the developing environment and a quite good comfort in doing research.” He considered the enthusiastic students and comfortable research environment as the main reasons for him to take a job in China. More than half of the participants shared similar experiences. As part of the internationalization of the Chinese higher education system, there have been surging opportunities to visit China via seminars, conferences, workshops, and cooperative projects. Thus, these scholars had had a chance to glimpse China through a personal window, which led them to plan a career journey in China. However, those academic activities usually involved short-term intensive visiting experiences that could hardly represent the actual experiences of working in China. As both Michael and David pointed out, when they were invited to give academic lectures at a Chinese university before, they felt they were treated as a “Western expert” (Michael) who enjoyed certain privileges such as “wonderful food” and “good accommodation,” and was shown tourist sites of the city (David). Therefore, during those previous visits, some international scholars thought they had an inside view of Chinese academia, but their positions were actually those of guest visitors who could only be allowed to observe the system from the outside.

In addition, some scholars (6 of 21) regarded China’s unique cultural and social milieu as impetus for their academic study and life there; this was especially true for those working in social science. For instance, Jack was an expert in business and management. In his own words, his motivation was to “experience China first-hand.”

I am interested in cross-cultural management. China is a different culture, very historical, great civilisation, also it’s a very huge and emerging market in the world. In that sense, China is very interesting from the international business perspective and cross-cultural management perspective.

Jack believed that the experience of living in China could enable him to immerse himself in the local context and acquire authentic experience in this fast-changing society. In his interview, we found his expectations of working in China were rather vague. He talked about the culture, history, and civilization in China and his interests in exploring this country. He tended to regard his future job as a field work site, while neglecting its inner complexity as a specific workplace. From our point of view, he seemed to position himself as an observer or researcher of China rather than someone who would actually live a working life there.

In sum, we found most participants in this research generally regarded professional development as the major concern in their motivation to work in China. We suggested that some of the factors they perceived as beneficial to their academic careers were more like vague glimpses and broad impressions. As they lacked information and experiences, their anticipations did not include many details of the experience of working in Chinese universities or the specificities of particular institutions, which might fail to provide accurate predictions of their future working conditions in China. In Bourdieu’s (1999) words, “when the sense of a probable future is belied and, when dispositions ill-adjusted to the objective chances,” “anticipation” turns out to be

“false” (p. 62). This “false anticipation” derived from the participants’ previous vague impressions of China was unable to prepare the participants practically for the future possibilities in the new field. They tended to underestimate the difficulty of adapting to Chinese academia, and they were likely unprepared for the challenges they might encounter in the novel field. In the next section, we will draw on participants’ experiences in Chinese universities to examine the mismatch between their habitus and the brand-new field of Chinese academia.

## Misfit in a Cross-Cultural Setting

Although most of the participants had generally achieved a satisfactory adaptation at the time that they were interviewed, according to their reflections, they usually had some ups and downs in the process of adaptation (Chen and Zhu, 2020). Particularly, we found that many of them (18 of 21) talked about encountering challenging moments to varying extents in their cross-cultural adaptation process. Therefore, in this section, our focus is on examining those shared experiences of “misfit” in the interviewees’ cross-cultural adaptation and on providing a deep analysis of this common issue faced by most of the interviewees in this research. We will first draw on participants’ interview excerpts about their early encounters in Chinese universities to examine their perceptions of cross-cultural challenges (misfits), if any. Then, we will further propose the dual habitus–field disjunctures emerging from participants’ cross-cultural encounters, namely explicit disjuncture and implicit disjuncture, to examine the reasons for the mismatch between international scholars’ habitus and the new field they entered.

Many of those who experienced Chinese academia for the first time and had limited access to institutional or social assistance to navigate the new environment had spent considerable efforts to accommodate their negative emotions aroused by cross-cultural challenges. Some of them reported feelings of “loneliness” (George), “no sense of belonging” (Jack), and “isolated” (Amanda) when they first entered their institutes. These feelings of being out of place were mainly perceived by participants at the early stage of their adaptation journey, when they were crossing over explicit disjunctures such as language barriers and logistic challenges. We will elaborate on the details of “explicit disjuncture” in later analysis. Furthermore, as the participants gradually became involved in teaching and researching, some found that their own ideas clashed with the organizational culture of the Chinese universities, and a sense of fatigue and disappointment emerged in the process of negotiations and struggle for change. Participants expressed feeling “tired” (Andrew, Matthew), “frustrated” (Jack), and “stressful” (Noah, Matthew). We will elaborate on this point in the following section on “implicit disjuncture.”

In sum, we found that, to varying extents, the sense of misfit and being out of place was widely reported by participants at different stages of their cross-cultural adaptation process. It was in those above-mentioned forms of psychological costs, such as the sense of loneliness, isolation, and frustration, that the disjuncture between international scholars’ habitus and the novel field revealed itself most clearly. In the following two sections, we will propose dual habitus–field disjunctures, respectively,

“explicit disjuncture” and “implicit disjuncture,” to examine the reasons for international scholars’ experiences of misfit and cross-cultural challenges.

### *Explicit Disjuncture*

In this section, we will adopt the term “explicit disjuncture” to examine the cross-cultural phenomena that can be seen, heard, and felt when first entering an unfamiliar organization, such as language, regulations, and methods for running meetings (Schein, 2010). Participants could usually identify the explicit disjunctures they experienced while crossing the two different fields, and they were aware of how to acquire certain skills accordingly. However, even though at the time of their interview, 12 participants were learning (or about to learn) Chinese, the acquisition of language can hardly be achieved immediately. A “time lag” emerged as the participants’ habitus slowly adapted to the new requirements of the field, which generated an enduring sense of misfit.

The language barrier was considered the major challenge by participants (16 of 21). As in Jack’s words, “that’s a huge advantage, to learn the language, at least 10%-20% language skills, because that would solve most of the problems.” Jack originally had some of the highest expectations of all the participants of the internationalization level in Chinese universities. However, he underestimated the language barriers he was about to encounter in his future work.

The work atmosphere on the other hand is not so exciting . . . I was expecting more faculty members in the school to speak English and be able to converse with me and to have discussion with me for our research . . . (Jack)

After experiencing difficulties with communication at his institute, Jack’s previous anticipations turned out to be “not true,” and the gap between expectation and reality led him to a status of “shock” and “disappointment.” As discussed in the previous section, Jack talked about his ambition of “experiencing China first-hand” as an expert in international business and management. However, as a result of language barriers, Jack was impeded from socializing with his Chinese colleagues and immersing himself in the local context when he first entered his new situation in China. Thus, as the acquisition of a foreign language usually takes extensive time and effort, Jack faced a sudden change in field and a gap between an imagined future and his current reality. This gap caused him to be caught in a sense of isolation.

Even for those participants who joined a more internationalized institute where most of their colleagues could communicate in English, some of them still encountered extensive language-related difficulties in their work. In most Chinese universities and the broad higher education system in China, the working language is Mandarin. Thus, some participants found it challenging to keep updated with newly changed policies and regulations, and some reported they were not able independently to fulfill the application process for research funding. For instance, Robert told us he “lost some money” due to the frequent changes of reimbursement rules. He prepared receipts and

materials according to the policy he knew, not being aware that it was newly changed. As he could neither read nor communicate in Chinese, and he was not comfortable with always asking his colleagues for help, he felt “powerless” in that situation. Moreover, language issues hindered most participants from effectively engaging in department meetings, as Chinese was the only available working language. Some of the international scholars struggled to participate with their local colleagues’ assistance on translation (such as Kevin, Daniel, and Ethan), and the others rarely showed up at such meetings (such as George, Jack, and Amanda).

### *Implicit Disjuncture*

An academic organization usually employs a unique culture and underlying logic (Schein, 2010). Even within the same cultural and social context, being inside or outside an organizational environment can make a significant difference. In our research, some participants (8 of 21) with sufficient knowledge and experience in China still reported a certain degree of collapse when they started to work at a university. We found their previous habitus generated as a visitor, a researcher, or even a member of a Chinese family might not guarantee a straightforward transition into an academic organization. Thus, we suggested the term “implicit disjuncture” to explore international scholars’ encounters with the underlying logic of the new field of an institute. In the following analysis, we will utilize Matthew’s story of his positional change from an “outsider” to an organization to an “insider” to elaborate on this point.

Matthew was a renowned researcher in studies related to China. He had spent decades researching Chinese culture and conducting fieldwork in a region of China. Although he had never worked in mainland China before, he had plenty of working experience in the Greater China area, and he went to quite a lot of meetings with “Chinese academics and Chinese government people.” On top of that, his wife was Chinese. However, he still had a strong sense of “shock” when he started to work in a Chinese university:

So the big shock was when I started working at \*\* university because before I was just like a visitor in China; I thought I knew China very well but I didn’t. Because I was an outsider. And in 2010, I became a Chinese employee, and it’s a very different experience. Now I’m inside. I understand all pressures and difficulties of people’s life here from the inside, which I think I never really understood before.

In Matthew’s reflections, he used the words “outsider” and “insider” to describe his perceptions of his positional change that came with taking this new job. He considered his previous knowledge about China to have been from the perspective of an “observer” “looking from the outside,” whereas working in a particular organization was different. As the new leader of his department, he experienced various challenges related to organizational politics, such as the complexity of interpersonal relationship and interests groups, the ways of negotiating with the university’s managing board, the use of social networks in funding application, and resource distribution. Deciphering those

hidden rules took time. He said he had no clue about how to deal with the politics and interpersonal relationships when he first entered this institute. His decades of academic experiences acquired in a hilly area of China and from numerous conferences were not effortlessly transferred to the organizational setting. He endeavored to read-just himself and observed the ways of doing things in his institute from scratch.

Drawing upon other participants' encounters with implicit disjunctures (such as those of Robert, Charlie, and Richard), we found senior researchers were more likely to be involved in department politics and/or more able to identify the existence of implicit disjunctures. Compared with early career researchers, they usually had accumulated sufficient working experience and had developed their own ways of doing things. For some of these senior researchers, it was difficult to adjust their habitus to the rules of the game in the new context, or there would be a price to pay. When Matthew recalled his feeling of finally achieving a task that involved abundant negotiations with other powerful groups in his department, he said "it's been a big fight. It's been very tiring. I lost some health."

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this article, we have presented an overview of international scholars' major motivations for working in China and their expectations of this work, which demonstrate a more career-driven and strategic trend compared with this group's motivation for working in China presented in previous literature (Cai & Hall, 2016; Wu & Huang, 2018). Furthermore, we argue that, due to a lack of information and specific knowledge about Chinese academia, participants' interview data feature rather vague and idealistic expectations that fail to provide a reliable prediction of their future encounters in China. This "false anticipation" revealed itself when international scholars entered the field of a Chinese university. Those findings resonate with Getty's (2011) research, in which she argued that the cultural differences between Chinese and American academia lead to foreign teachers' false assumptions about teaching norms. As Bourdieu (1977) suggests, ". . . when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted," the practices (dispositions of habitus) are "liable to incur negative sanctions" (p. 78), or in other words, misfits. In addition, we further propose dual habitus-field disjunctures to unpack the mismatch between international scholars' habitus and the new field, which include explicit disjuncture, such as language and regulation, and implicit disjuncture, referring to the underlying logic of an organization.

This research contributes to the innovative application of Bourdieu's conceptual tools in investigating the phenomenon of cultural shock in a cross-cultural setting. In the existing literature, the cultural shock or other negative emotional responses (e.g., uncertainty, ambivalence) generated from cross-cultural experiences have been widely considered problematic effects that need to be addressed (Y.Y. Kim, 2001; Oberg, 1960; Presbitero, 2016; Roskell, 2013). However, with the insights from Bourdieu's two interlocking concepts, habitus and field, we argue that an individual's cross-cultural journey is a dynamic and ever-changing process, which is co-constructed by

individual dispositions (*habitus*) generated in historical contexts and the rules of the game in the new environment (*field*). Then, we further suggest that cultural shock represents a lower degree of *habitus*–*field* fit when individual *habitus* slowly adapts to the change of the logics in a novel *field* (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, we challenge the conventional view on cultural shock and propose that false anticipation and misfit are not necessarily negative phenomena but rather a starting point for raising cross-cultural awareness and initiating practical adjustments.

In addition, as an ever-evolving methodological tool, Bourdieu considered the chief strength of *habitus* to lie in its empirical relevance (Reay, 2004) and the value of *habitus* to be situated in its “temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work” (Wacquant, 1989, p. 50). Through drawing upon interviewees’ interview data and revealing the two levels of *habitus*–*field* misfit (explicit and implicit), this article contributes to the development of Bourdieu’s discussion of *habitus*–*field* mismatch in a cross-cultural setting and further unveils the complexity and dynamics embedded in the interactions between individual *habitus* and the changing *field*.

In terms of the international implications, we consider the theoretical framework and findings we have generated in this article to have the potential to be applied in diverse cross-cultural contexts, and to facilitate the study of the interaction between international scholars and local academic fields in the context of globalization. Moreover, as Chinese universities have been promoting internationalization and talent introduction strategies in recent years, an increasing number of international scholars are collaborating with or working in Chinese academia. We suggest that this article could provide firsthand information, based on the perspective of international scholars, to help an international audience gain insight into the emerging international education market in China. For further research, we aim to delve into the different patterns of international scholars’ adaptation experiences that cover various subgroups, such as full-time and visiting scholars and scholars with different disciplinary backgrounds. Moreover, we plan to explore the dynamic interactions between the hosting institution and international scholars, as well as the interpersonal relationships between local and international staff, to provide a detailed analysis of the entire process of international scholars’ adaptation in Chinese academia.

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**ORCID iD**

Jiexiu Chen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8390-0757>

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## Author Biographies

**Jiexiu Chen** is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Education, University College London, UK. She was awarded a full PhD scholarship by the China Scholarship Council's National Construction High-Level University Postgraduate Project. Her research interests include educational inequality, social mobility, cross-cultural adaptation, higher education policy, globalization, and the knowledge economy. She has an emerging journal article and book publication on international education and social mobility.

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**Junwen Zhu** is a professor in the Department of Educational Management in the Faculty of Education at East China Normal University. His research interests focus on talent policy in science and technology, research evaluation, science and technology policies, and cross-cultural management. Selected for a New Century Excellent Talents in University Award by the Ministry of Education of China in 2012, he has authored or coauthored a number of books, journal articles, and government advisory reports.