

**Mainland Chinese students at an elite Hong Kong university: Habitus-field
disjuncture in a transborder context**

Abstract

Drawing on in-depth interview data of 31 MLC students in a Hong Kong university, this article conceptualises mainland Chinese (MLC) and Hong Kong higher education (HE) as two dissonant but interrelated subfields of the Chinese HE field. It argues that these MLC students' habitus, one that possesses rich economic, social and cultural capital, prompts a strong sense of entitlement to anticipated privileges. However, this sense of entitlement is disrupted by the differential capital valuations across these fields. There is thus notable habitus-field disjuncture, which, exacerbated by the hysteresis effect, gives rise to a sense of disappointment and ambivalence. This article demonstrates how the Hong Kong education credential, which these students initially set out to pursue as a form of capital, can become a disadvantage at multiple levels; it illustrates that capital valuation and conversion in a transborder context is not a straightforward, but rather a complicated and sometimes contradictory, process.

Keywords: Bourdieu, habitus, field, hysteresis, Hong Kong, mainland China