

“There are rules you have to know”: International students, domestic student gatekeepers, and the institutional habitus of the university

Amankulova, Z., Seithers, L., & Johnstone, C.

 Comparative and International Development Education

Rationale

- Internationalization
- Increased engagement between international and domestic students
- A deficit approach dependent on international students’ “adjustment” to the host culture
- Overlooking the need for adjustment to be a two-way exchange

Knight, 2015; Leask, 2009; Lee, 2010

Research question

How is institutional habitus enacted in cross-national group work interactions between domestic and international students?

Key definitions

“International” any student who resides in a country outside the U.S. and is studying under the provision of a nonimmigrant visa.

“Domestic” any student with U.S. citizenship or residency

Limitation: tremendous heterogeneity in both populations



Retrieved from: http://www.esj.org/var/cdev_base/storage/images/media/images/international-student-helping-classmate-3/65230-1-eng-US/international-student-helping-classmate-3.jpg



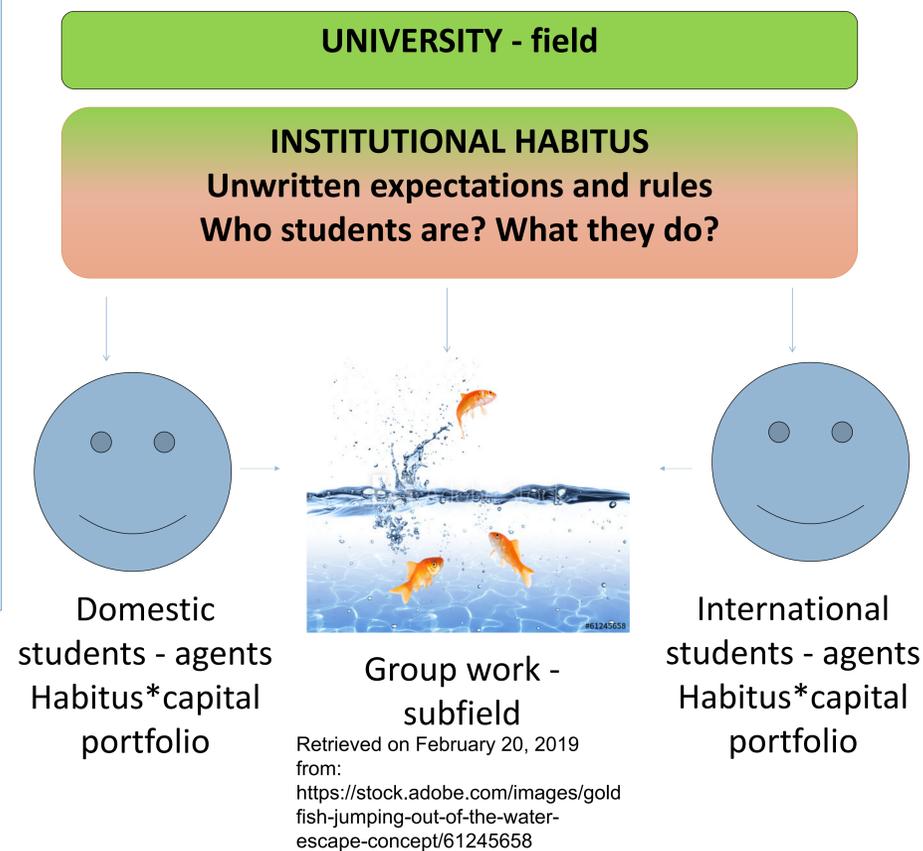
[Untitled image of a globe with hands] Retrieved on November 12, 2016 from <http://userscontent2.emaze.com/images/2b73571b-63f4-4fdf-821b-1d835a0a72c2/7ec92458-1e57-40ec-be41-04f083476d56image1.jpeg>

Research design

secondary analysis of qualitative data

Participants	Undergraduate students	Graduate students	Total
International	30	20	50
Domestic	50	21	71

Conceptual framework



Retrieved on February 20, 2019 from: <https://stock.adobe.com/images/gold-fish-jumping-out-of-the-water-escape-concept/61245658>

Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Cornbleth, 2010; Marginson, 2008; Reay, David, & Ball, 2001.

Preliminary findings

Institutional habitus is a puzzle to be learned

“...so, it was so difficult for me to get used to the group work dynamic in United States, and there’s an assumption that when you start working everyone has the same power...” (International student)

For international students, success in navigating the system is dependent on successful interaction with domestic students

“...so there are rules you have to know, otherwise you obey it or you fight against it,... to have the opportunity to work with American peers, you get to know more, like, aspects, having to work with American peers, and what are some things that you don’t know but they do...” (International student)

American students tend to take charge in cross-national group work interactions

“..usually it’s the American students that take charge... a lot of times people kind of assume that the international students would rather not take charge, or are shyer, or like if they have a language barrier...” (International student)

For international students, a successful display of linguistic capital becomes a key demonstration of their ability to navigate the rules of the game for group work.

“...a lot of international students that I meet tend to be more quiet and reserved, and so they don’t like seem to really speak up, I don’t know if it’s cause of fear of like their English skills, or what it is...I think that’s kind of why the American students just kind of take over...” (Domestic student)

Conclusion

- Domestic students are better socialized to understand the institutional habitus of the institution. They consciously or unconsciously enact unwritten rules in their cross-national interactions, thus taking the role of gatekeepers.
- International students may struggle to engage in academic and social life of the university due to lack of familiarity with the institutional habitus of the institution.
- Universities need to shift the mindset toward international students and create inclusive intercultural programming that places domestic and international students on equal footing.