



# A set of 35 Critical Incidents developed within IO1

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Critical incident

“ANGRY STUDENT”

Vienna

## The incident “ANGRY STUDENT”

**A critical incident told by a student assistant responsible for exams in Vienna, recorded in 2018 by University of Vienna**

*“I worked as a teaching assistant at university and we had to administer two large exams, the first with 1.000 students and the second with 400 students. The first exam was the prerequisite for the second exam. For each exam, there was a moodle folder with all the learning material, but students were only granted access to the second folder for the second exam, when they successfully passed the first exam. So, on that particular day, I was in the office, analyzing exam results, when a student entered. He was in his mid 50ies, a migrant from an Arabic country, I don’t know, where he came from, and he wanted to speak to the professor. He just came in without an appointment or asking. He wanted access to the second moodle folder and I asked him, if he fulfilled the requirements for it and he said yes. He wanted to complain that he had not been granted access. So I asked for his name to check the information, but he started to yell at me. That he can’t do everything at once. That he is supposed to study, not to do administrative business. What he said was insulting as well. Rage without reason. I didn’t know how to react and what he was going to do and he was quite big. I told him to calm down and that we could talk about everything. But he would not listen, so I told him to leave. He yelled at me, that he would call everybody in the university to complain, the dean, the professor. Finally, he left. After that, I immediately wrote a protocol and sent it to my boss.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is an Austrian woman of 24 years old. Her native language is German. She a master’s degree student in the faculty of Education. She is of the middle social class. She also works a part time student assistant responsible for student exams.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	He is an Egyptian man of around 50 years old. German is a foreign language for him. He is at his first semester of his bachelor’s degree in the faculty of Education.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is: their field of studies. What separates them are: their country of origin, their status in Austria (resident vs. native), their gender, their age, their native language and mostly their social status (majority – minority).

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The incident took place in a small office of the dean at the university. There were several chairs in the room. The narrator sat behind a table with a computer. The room was an office room for administrative work, but offered opportunities to sit for visitors.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	No other people in the office
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	In Austria, student have to pass the STEOP exam for being admitted to any other course

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

*Puzzled, scared*

A student comes into the office of a teaching assistant without appointment and requests an exam by insulting the teaching assistant, who then asks him to leave

*Threatened, offended*

#### **RESPECT OF PROCEDURES/ LINEAR TIME PERCEPTION:**

Usually students take appointments for meetings with the teaching assistant. Her office does not operate on the basis of an open-door policy. This is in line with the idea of respecting working hours and of being able to plan meetings.

**POLITENESS:** The narrator felt that the student did not act politely because he was loud and insulting. She had expected a polite way of bringing forth his request because she believed that with a polite tone, people are more responsive and helpful, no matter, what they need.

**Culture of discussion and conflict resolution:** The narrator expects eventual disagreements or criticism to be expressed in a respectful, non-aggressive and conversational way instead of being offensively accused of a lack of respect of culture / religion / values. Her value of being able to have an argument and discuss it is based on a solid and verbal way of conflict resolution, which was not possible with the other student.

**RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION:** The narrator understands respectful communication as a two-way-process, in which both parties sit down or both parties stand up and communicate. This is a way to ensure reciprocity through non-verbal communication. Walking up and down in front of someone seated breaks with this reciprocity. The tone of respectful communication should be calm. The extent to which the narrator externalizes emotions in professional communication is small. The use of insults is forbidden: in fact respecting the face of the other implies a clear taboo for any insult degrading the other person.

**REPRESENTATION OF RULES:** According to the values of the narrator, explicit procedures / rules apply to all students and they have to respect them, and students are treated the same way (rules apply to everyone), but not in a completely rigid way: if there is a good reason, rules can be changed according to the individual situation. This was not the case because the student did not bring forth a particular reason for his request (family reasons, illness etc.).

**DIRECT/ RATIONAL COMMUNICATION:** When we need to convince someone, especially in a professional setting, this takes place with making explicit verbal arguments, not by physical or verbal intimidation or display of power. Furthermore contradictory information (first arguing having completed the prerequisites, then saying the opposite) implies lies, which are again under taboo.



### ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

A student comes into the office of a teaching assistant without appointment and requests an exam by insulting the teaching assistant, who then asks him to leave.

#### **HIERARCHY, GENDER AND POWER:**

The student was much older than the teaching assistant and her age and gender might have pointed to a person without experience in his opinion. He did not associate competence and status with her. Also, it may have been a challenge to assume a younger woman has more status than him in a given situation.

#### **RESPONSABILITY OF STUDENTS:**

In the opinion of the student, it is not his responsibility to administer his own study. He does not feel that administration is part of studying too. Administration should be done by administrative staff, whose role is to help students focus only on the content of the studies.

#### **USING INTIMIDATION, DEMONSTRATION OF POWER IN AN ARGUMENT:**

With walking around the room and refusing to sit down, he demonstrated power. By being taller and bigger than the teaching assistant he brought her into an inferior, physical position, which could have helped him to get his way. The strategy of intimidation may be a consequence of a perceived loss of face: by failing to register for the exam, his performance as a “good student” is questioned. Possibly also he is faced with the threat of a lack of understanding the university system. Having to admit this to a young woman in hierarchical position may exacerbate the sensation of loss of face further.

**PERCEPTION OF RULES:** He might have a very flexible representation of rules and might feel that rules and regulations apply, but are not strict and can be adopted to individual situations and needs, when necessary.

**ENFORCING HIS OWN RIGHTS:** The student might be used to the necessity to enforce his own rights to public administration because without personal interference his rights might be “forgotten”. So, with his personal confrontation, he wanted to underline the importance of his right to study further.

**DIGITAL DIVIDE:** Because of coming from an older generation the student does not know how to use moodle as a learning platform and how to comply with the rules of online registration. It may also have been the case that the student did not assess the extent to which the online procedures were important (essential) in the process of studying correctly.

BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?

OBSERVATIONS

Communicating students what they are responsible for is a necessity; administrative issues also count as an experience of studying and being enrolled as a student at a university.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

**Interrupting staff members without an appointment** – fixed office hours could be a solution and explicit procedures for making appointments.

**Training students** to use digital devices and platforms is essential for their study success, especially students above the age of 50 years; the university should offer services or trainings free of charge to grant access to learning material.

**Safety in university** – the incident also raises questions of safety, when female or male staff members are alone in an office; there should be emergency contacts or procedures for incidents like this.



Critical incident

“MOHAMMEDAN”

Vienna



## The incident “MOHAMMEDAN”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Vienna , recorded in 2019 by University of Vienna**

*“My critical incident took place at university during urology class. I cannot remember the exact course of the class anymore, but I remember that the topic was about circumcision of boys at one specific time and instead of naming the group of people “Muslims” the professor named them “Mohammedan”. I waited until the end of the class, and before we said goodbye for the break I asked him about this, but not in plenary in front of the others. He claimed to not know any other correct term for this group. I was shocked, I would have expected more from a professor. I would have expected more education from him. Until today I am deeply shocked, troubled and agitated about this incident. On the streets, I experience situations like this a lot, but at university I do not want to experience something like this again.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a woman of German nationality of 22 years old. Her native language is German and Turkish. At the moment of the incident she is a student at the faculty of medicine in her third semester. She comes from the upper social class. She is Muslim.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	He is a man of approximately 55 years old and his native language is German. He is a professor at the faculty of Medicine. He is from an upper social class. He is most probably Christian.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is: their legal status in Austria, the faculty of university to which they are related and their social class. What separates them are: their age, their gender, their profession, their social status (majority – minority), their native language.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The class took place at a university in Austria, in a standard classroom.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	The class was made up of several other students, app.20 other students, mostly Austrian students, but also some minorities.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	The political situation in Austria in 2016 was rather non-migrant-friendly, since a lot of refugees came to Austria in 2015 and the system was overloaded. The political climate towards openly discussing migration or related issues was rather negative. This might have influenced the situation also at university. Most Austrians are well informed about Christian religion, but there are a lot if myths and non-informed ideas about Islam. Precise knowledge about this religion might not be available for most people.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Shocked, Troubled

Agitated

The professor talks about circumcision and names Muslim people “Mohamedean”. A student asks him why he used this term and he claims not to know another.

**GENERAL KNOWLEDGE VERSUS EXPERT KNOWLEDGE:** The student expects a professor to have expert knowledge in medicine / urology, but also to have a certain general knowledge about the variety of religions and their respective names and customs. A degree of general knowledge is expected of socially “higher” professions – that means that members of these professions are rather well educated. In the student’s expectation, the term “Muslims” and the respective customs should have been common to a professor.

**RESPECT FOR HIERARCHY:** The student feels that she can only express herself freely about her concerns when the hierarchic space of a university lecture is over. Nonetheless, she only uses this freedom until a certain point – when the professor states his lack of knowledge about the denomination of members of the Islamic religion, she doesn’t openly express her shock about this circumstance in front of the professor. She also leaves for the break without further confronting him. This shows that she respects him because of his hierarchical position.

**POLITENESS AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS:** The student thinks that there are politically correct terms, which should be used to address certain population groups. She values political correctness as it protects people (and herself) from (open) discrimination.

**OBJECTIVITY IN TEACHING PROFESSIONS AND DIFFERENTIATED OPINIONS:** In a higher education context, the student expects differentiated opinions and use of wordings by the professor. The student expects the professor to express himself in an objective way about religions and the respective customs. Also, the student expects the professor to express himself objectively about medical interventions (circumcision in this case) in a more objective way; not connecting it exclusively to the Islamic religion, since it is also an issue in Jewish religion for example.

**VALUING ALL RELIGIONS THE SAME:** The student values all religions the same and is surprised by the term the professor uses, which shows a stereotyped and narrow-minded opinion from her perspective. As the professor narrows down the Islamic religion and its members of faith to the prophet Mohammed and the fact that circumcision is also practiced in that religion, the student is shocked by this very restricted view of the religion of Islam.

**CIVIL COURAGE:** The student demonstrated a form of civil courage by approaching the professor and confronting him. She would not have had to do so. She demonstrated being a responsible student and – if needed – also stepping in for people who might be discriminated against. She felt that her religion was discriminated because the professor de-valued it when not using the politically correct term for Muslims.

**MOHAMMED AS A FIGURE IN ISLAM:** To name only Mohammed as an important figure in Islam religion is a reduction of reality for the narrator, since Islam is much more than ‘following one prophet’. Being a Mohammed-follower has a negative connotation for her. Circumcision was practiced by Muslims at the time of Mohammed, but was also proclaimed as an important religious ritual by him, a ritual to celebrate the union between God and his people. Jewish and Muslim religions are both based in Abraham, who is the father of both religions and who was circumcised as well. Circumcision therefore is NOT connected to Mohammed as a person, but was “invented” a long time before.

**SAVING FACE OF THE OTHER:** The student does not want to shame the professor in front of other and she saves his face by seeking a personal conversation.

### ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

The professor talks about circumcision and names Muslim people “Mohamedean”. A student asks him why he used this term and he claims not to know another.

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH:** The professor expresses himself in an open and non-restrictive way as this is a commonly perceived as correct in the Western European world. He may therefore see no need in not expressing certain thoughts or even specific words or differentiating his opinion or language.

**ETHNOCENTRISM AND NOT PERCEIVING DIVERSITY IN CLASS:** The professor might not have looked at his students in the urology closely and might not have noticed, perceived or expected a diverse range of students from Christian, Muslim and other religions in class. His view of the world might be ethnocentric, not acknowledging the differences between students or people in general. He might have a universalist bias, thinking that all students are the same or that differences don't matter.

**LACK OF TIME / PREPARATION:** The professor might experience a role conflict, as he might teach, do research, contribute to administration, supervise students etc. He might simply not have the time to participate in teacher training, to learn about anti-discrimination or engage in any other topics than urology.

**FOCUS ON CONTENTS AND PRACTICALLY:** The professor might not care about political correctness. Language is not as important to him. He focuses on the contents of his lecture since this is what he needs to provide for the students. He values the content more than the teaching didactics or contexts of his lecture. He defines himself as an expert for urology, not for communication or religion. Also, his argument about Muslim religion might have been a side-argument in his view, so he did not pay much attention to the correct wording as it was not part of the main content of his lecture.

**SUPERIORITY OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF (NO NEED FOR SELF – CRITICAL REFLEXION):** The professor may see himself as superior to his students; maybe even as a member of a “superior” profession in society. As a consequence, this feeling of superiority allows him to abandon self-criticism or the criticism of the student as his authority and high status are supposed to remain unquestioned.

**MEANING OF “MOHAMMEDAN”:** The professor might not have known the representation of this word/name. For him this may be a common word to describe followers of Mohammed, without any awareness of the negative association. For the student the name simplifies Muslim faith to following a prophet (Mohammed). Although he is a central figure in Muslim faith, it is pejorative to call members of Islam “Mohammedan”, just like it would be in Christian faith to call followers “Jesus freaks” or “Jesus followers”.

BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?

OBSERVATIONS

**Quality of teaching in higher education:** Teaching is still viewed as “inferior” to research at universities. Teaching as a professional practice is not viewed as important a doing high quality research and publishing the results.

**Diversity in higher education:** It is hard for teaching staff to perceive differences in the student population, as signs of culture might not be visible on the outside (religion, sexuality, etc.). Also, if classes are too large, staff cannot perceive individual characteristics as well as in smaller groups.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

**Quality of teaching in higher education:** Teacher training in higher education is essential, especially when student population groups are changing rapidly due to internationalisation, mobility, or a more open access to university for non-traditional student groups.

**Diversity in higher education:** Maybe a solution to this would be to always communicate when talking about specific groups as if members of that particular group were present.

**Specific training:** This poses challenges to diversity-oriented teaching in higher education. Many universities have – in the last years – focused on diversity & teaching and have developed workshops, courses and other formats for teachers to gain further knowledge in this area. These educational services offer the opportunity to learn about intercultural interactions, diversity-oriented teaching formats or solving intercultural conflicts in class. They raise awareness for diversity of students, anti-discrimination, language and students’ needs. And more particularly, it may be interesting to look at the distinction between emic and etic descriptions of religion and associated aspects. Emic=the narrative produced by members of that particular group to describe themselves and etic=narratives by external people.



Critical incident

“CHRISTMAS PRESENTS  
FOR EVERYONE”

Vienna



## The incident “CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR EVERYONE”

**A critical incident told by an international student in Vienna, it happened in 2017 by University of Vienna**

*“In the period before Christmas I made little presents for my fellow students at university. Nothing big, just small stuff. Without thinking further about it, I handed a present over to my Muslim colleague in our class and wishes him a nice Christmas time. He jumped back, outraged, and rejected the present. He left me standing there with a bad conscience and embarrassed. It was only after a while that I realized my faux pas and apologized to him. He said that I had embarrassed him because he was not allowed to receive Christmas presents. I fully agreed with him and underline my thoughtlessness, but he remained full of accusation and criticism against me.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a catholic female student of 19 years old who comes from Germany.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	He is an Egyptian Muslim student of 18 years old.
<b>WHAT CONNECTS THEM / WHAT SEPARATES THEM?</b>	What connects them is that they are inscribed into the same university and class, the two of them are a German citizen. What separates them are: their country of origin, their gender, and mostly their status.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	University classroom.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Fellow students.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	The political climate in Austria is rather rough and unfriendly towards Muslims. Being Muslim is connoted in a negative way in some media and also in the context of migration. The political climate is non-migrant friendly in Austria.



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

*Suprises, confused*

*Embarrassed, out of place/confused*

A student brings items to the classroom with the intention of distributing them to his fellow students as “Christmas presents”, including her Muslim fellow student.

**FELLOW STUDENTS AS FRIENDS:** For the student, studying is the main job and she spends a lot of time at university and with her fellow students there. She sees them as friends and appreciates them.

**CULTURAL / RELIGIOUS GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** The narrator comprehends that having a certain general knowledge about cultural and religious diversity is considered self-evident and has to be respected when interacting with fellow human beings.

**VALUE OF RITUALS AND RELIGION AND IN PARTICULAR CHRISTMAS:** For the student, Christmas is a representation of family time and friendship. She values rituals at certain times of the year, like before Christmas, and wants to make them special. Therefore, she likes to prepare small presents for fellow students because she sees them as her friends. (There was no information in the analysis if the narrator was particularly religious or not, or if presents only represent a secular form of a former religious ritual).

**CULTURAL / RELIGIOUS GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** The narrator comprehends that having a certain general knowledge about cultural and religious diversity is considered self-evident and has to be respected when interacting with fellow human beings.

**UNIVERSALIST BIAS:** Her view of the world might be ethnocentric, not acknowledging the differences between people in general. She might have a universalist bias, thinking that all students are the same or not recognizing differences so much.

**COLLECTIVISM AND GROUP IDENTITY:** She valued her classmates and fellow students and had good intentions to show that she liked the good quality atmosphere in the class. Therefore, she invested time and prepared presents for the special occasion of Christmas.

**INTENTION OF NOT DISCRIMINATING ANYONE:** Giving gifts to all fellow students was not meant to discriminate anyone, who was for example Muslim or Atheist. It was meant as a gesture of friendship.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

One student brings items to the classroom with the intention of distributing them to his fellow students as “Christmas presents”, including her Muslim fellow student.

**DEMONSTRATION OF MAJORITY RELIGION:** By offering him a Christmas present, although she knew that he was not Christian, was a demonstration of her majority status and that the Christian religion is the majority religion in Austria. He felt discriminated and had to defend himself as a religious minority that he did not want to have anything to do with a “foreign” Christian ritual. She brought him into an inferior position by offering him a present.

**ENFORCING HIS OWN VALUES:** The student thought that it was necessary to enforce his own values and his own religion by rejecting the present. He saw the present as a religious present, not a present by a friend. If it had been a different season, he would have not received a present at all, so he labeled it as “religious”.

**RIGHT OR NEED TO REJECT (DIFFERENTIATE FROM) OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS:** For the student, Christmas is a ritual of a religion that is not his own and therefore must not be respected. Also, it is even prohibited to celebrate Christian rituals for Muslims, so it is not his individual choice.

**CONFLICT CULTURE AND CROSSING THE LINE / NO –GO:** The Muslim student does not seem to have the same values of discussing a disagreement. The apology intentions of his fellow student remain insufficient to calm him down. He might have expected another kind of apology or conflict solving in that situation. Maybe also, his fellow student crossed a line by handing over the Christmas present and he felt so rejected as a Muslim or member of a different religion. With this “no-go” he reacted with the refusal to forgive her and rejected her as a person in general. He could have simply explained his reaction to the narrator, but he must have felt intensely about the incident and experienced some kind of identity threat or stigmatized identity with a strong need for compensation. This could be explained if the student had experienced a series of similar incidents before and was in constant need for self-defense.

**DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN FORMAL AND PRIVATE SPACES:** The Muslim student might differentiate more between public and private spaces. He might not bring items from the personal realm (religious, sports, family items) to class. For him university is a more formal context. The formal context could have been the reason why he expected a broader knowledge about the triggered cultural / religious gaps between him and the narrator; he might not have expected a Christmas present in a more personal surrounding

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>	<p>The lack of recognition of a cultural identity can provoke strong negative emotional reactions even when the concrete situation seems harmless such as offering a Christmas gift. The resentment of lack of recognition can be stronger for groups that are often discriminated.</p>
<b>POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</b>	<p><b>Diversity trainings</b> be an occasion to explore and commit to a protocol about cultural diversity that guarantees that members of minority groups feel recognised.</p> <p><b>Conflict mediation by faculty</b> Teaching staff or professors can act as mediators in conflict situations like this between students.</p> <p><b>Intercultural training / awareness raising about religious celebrations and presents</b> Usually European universities close for Christmas or Easter break, although not all students have the need for these traditions and follow other cultural and religious norms. The university has to be careful when offering individual presents, events, or other religion-related activities to not exclude others. Heringer (2014) explores, why presents are cultural “hot spots”. Following his arguments, the following questions are culturally relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is a “good” present? In Arabic countries a bottle of wine is a taboo present, while in Europe it is a good present. Flowers are also a culturally “hot present” since flowers have symbolic meanings.</li> <li>▪ When do you hand over a present? At the beginning of an event, at the end or the next day?</li> <li>▪ Who is allowed to give presents to others? Is the host responsible for giving welcoming presents to guests or is the guest supposed to bring a present for the host? Are students allowed to give presents to professors and vice versa?</li> <li>▪ When are presents opened? In front of others or in private?</li> </ul>



Critical incident

“LOUD FLATMATE”

Vienna

## The incident “LOUD FLATMATE”

**A critical incident told by an Austrian student studying in Vienna , recorded in 2019 by University of Vienna**

*“After high school I moved to Innsbruck to live in a student home for my first year of studies. There I had a flat mate which whom I shared kitchen and bathroom. She was an international student from Italy. With her influence, the student home was turned into “Little Italy”. She had visitors all the time, around the clock, she cooked until 11 pm and had dinner during the night. She sat together with her friends until 3 o’clock in the morning, in our shared kitchen, and had loud discussions. She did not consider me and my needs at all.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is an Austrian woman of 19 years old. Her native language is German. She is a student at the faculty of chemistry in the university of Vienna. She comes from the upper social class.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is an Italian woman of 22 years old and her native language is Italian. At the moment of the incident, she had been living in Austria for a year. She is a university student in international mobility at the faculty of languages. She is from the upper social class.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is: their gender, their age, their social class, their student status and the university where they both study. What separates them are: their country of origin, their native language, their legal status in Austria and their faculty of studies.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Shared flat / kitchen: 2 separate rooms for each student and 1 shared kitchen space and bathroom
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Friends or invites of the Italian student
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Limited personal space due to shared living: kitchen is used as a mutual space: the narrator also wants to use the kitchen for her personal needs but it is occupied the flat is not spacious enough to avoid hearing and encountering fellow cohabitants and their invites



**ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR**

Annoyed, Frustrated

Incomprehension, Anger

An Italian student shares a flat with an Austrian student. The Italian student invites friends over at night in the shared kitchen and does not react to complaints of her roommate.

**POLITENESS:** The narrator felt that her Italian flatmate was not asking for her needs and wishes. Her value of general politeness was threatened.

**INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** The narrator wanted her flatmate to understand that she felt bothered without explicitly having to tell her. Her communication style was indirect. She thinks that by sharing a flat, you get to know each other, and can assess the needs of others better because of trust and closeness.

**RESPECTFUL CONTACT AND USE OF COMMON SPACE:** The narrator felt that in a shared living, certain hours of "silence" a day have to be respected and that commonly used spaces should not be abused in the means of occupying it with many invites at late daytimes. For her, to share space, means to share it respectfully and to negotiate common use (in comparison to not asking).

**PERCEPTION OF CULTURAL FREEDOM:** The narrator felt that her Italian flatmate abused her freedom to live her cultural identity because the habits of late dinners, many invites in mutually used space and loud discussions in the presence of fellow flatmates are not compatible with the narrator's Austrian cultural habits, which require more silence. Her perception of cultural freedom ends where it hurts others.

**SERIOUSNESS OF STUDING:** The narrator was in her home country and did not experience "being abroad" like her flatmate. She was focused on studying more than her social life.

**HIERARCHY OF NEEDS:** Austrian and Italian cultures may have different representation of the hierarchy of needs. For the Austrian student, peaceful good night sleep, cleanliness and other values might be a stronger need with respect to home/housing than socializing. The Austrian student might think that socializing can also take place outside the apartment.

**COMMON SPACE:** Certain signs of respect such as lowering the voice to respect the peace of fellow cohabitants, switch to less private surroundings for invitations at late daytimes etc. seem to be aspects of common sense to the narrator but not to her Italian flatmate.

**TIME AND DINNER RITUALS:** In Austria, dinner time is early, at around 6 pm. It takes maximum one hour. After 8 pm in the evening, there usually follows a more quiet time, reading, watching television, preparing for the night. After 10 pm is considered night time. Also, in most housing rules – which you sign when you rent an apartment in your rental agreement– you have to sign to stay quiet after 10 pm in order not to disturb other parties in the house. Loud music, loud talking, etc. is usually forbidden.



### ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

An Italian student shares a flat with an Austrian student. The Italian student invites friends over at night in the shared kitchen and does not react to complaints of her roommate.

#### **CULTURAL FREEDOM AND KEEPING TRADITIONS:**

The Italian student freely lives her cultural habits. She values her traditions, sitting together, drinking or eating, and having a social life. This is especially important when you are away from home. Rituals help to feel home.

**DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION:** The Italian student might think that if her Austrian flat mate feels bothered by her behavior then she might say so. She might expect direct communication; otherwise there is no need for change.

**CAMPUS LIFE:** For the Italian student campus life happens everywhere (on campus, in libraries, outside, in her flat) and she considers her flat as part of social life, to which she can invite friends and fellow students. The Italian student uses the common rooms in the flat to meet her friends, eat and discuss as this might be a feature of shared living and her definition of student life as well as of living abroad and being an international student away from home.

**PERCEPTION OF « STUDENT LIFE / WILD LIFE » :** The Italian student might think that student life includes the freedom of meeting invites at late daytimes, cook and have high-volume discussions with them. Also, it might be an expression of not being at home, of having a “wild life” not living with her parents for the first time and not having to adhere to certain rules as an international student.

**COLLECTIVISM:** The Italian student comes from a more collectivist culture, where family and friends often eat together and share a limited space. She is used to this in comparison to her Austrian fellow student, who comes from a more individualistic culture, in which people live and sleep in separate rooms and do not share as much space as in Italy.

BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?

**OBSERVATIONS**

Sharing a living space with people from different cultural background is a recurrent source of experiences of culture shock, as there is a great diversity in the norms and values and the different practices are very easily interpreted as lack of respect.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

**Rental agreements in the host country:** It might be worth offering specific information about rental agreements in the host country. This also contains all rules of living together, legal basics (i.e. night time) and raises awareness for sharing spaces in intercultural housing.

**Training sessions for local and international students using theatre methods:** It might be worth to offer special sessions for international and local students, who will live together, to work on common values and preferences. Playful, theatre-based techniques or even techniques combining critical incidents and theatre may help them to raise awareness for their different preferences, a first step to collaboratively construct or negotiate common rules.



Critical incident

“PROTECTED GIRLS”

Vienna

## The incident “PROTECTED GIRLS”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Budapest, recorded in 2019 by University of Vienna**

*“Some years ago, I studied in Hungary – it was my year abroad. I studied at a medical university, in which many different nationalities were enrolled. It was a very diverse university. One evening, we went out as a class and I was able to observe a group of Iranian girls, my fellow students, who were with us as well. During the whole evening, these girls were accompanied by another Iranian, a man, who seemed to be their guardian. He went with us to the bar, he stayed with us the whole time, and he accompanied the girls home afterwards. However, he did not seem to be a friend or have a friendship status. When I asked a fellow student about the man, he reported to me that he was there to observe the girls and to make sure that they do not have contact with other Europeans. This shocked me very much since I grew up with the idea of a freedom of choice; the freedom to choose what to talk about and who to talk to and with whom to spend time with.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 20 years old young man from Germany enrolled in an Austrian university, faculty of medicine. Currently present in Budapest as an international student.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The people provoking the incident are Iranian students attending the same university. The young women are about 20, and it is assumed that they are Muslim. They are accompanied by an Iranian man who was not introduced to the fellow students.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	The common point is that they are inscribed into the same university, same class. What differentiates them are their country of origin, their religion beliefs and their gender.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The situation happens in public space, in a city in Hungary during the evening.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Fellow students of the narrator and the Persian students (“class”) There were no other private people in the group, just the classmates. The Persian students were all female, the rest of the group was mixed between men and women.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

*Surprised, confused*

*Embarrassed, out of place, confused*

When going out to bars during nighttime, the Iranian female students were accompanied by a man, who seemed to be their guardian, but he was not introduced to the other students.

**FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND INDIVIDUALISM:** The narrator grew up believing that every individual should have the right to choose their conversation topics, conversation partners and free-time activities. This value was threatened when watching his female fellow students being released from this right. For the narrator it was obvious that the female students were not supposed to have contact to other students, which restricted their freedom of choice and individualism.

**PERCEPTION OF LEARNING OR STUDYING:** The narrator sees studying as not restricting to university or to learning in a specific building; he sees it as a phase in life, in which you make different cognitive, social and emotional experiences. For him, studying means connecting and developing new social contacts as well, especially with people who have the same interests or the same field of study. For him, university life also contains “nights out”.

**RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION:** The narrator is intrigued by the fact that the unknown companion of the Persian students is not introduced to the rest of the group; the narrator might believe that spending private time together asks for a basic appreciation and introducing oneself. The guardian could have shook hands with the other male or female students or said his name.

**WOMEN’S EMANCIPATION AND GENDER EQUALITY:** The narrator believes in the equality of men and women. He assumed that because of the national or cultural background of the Persian students, the presence of a man was seen as necessary. However, in the opinion of the narrator, girls can spend time alone without a male being present. The narrator cannot understand or be empathetic about girls wanting or desiring protection, as he does not know any girls who think like that. His value of equality was hurt that night. However, he did not ask the girls about their guardian and whether or not they wanted his company.

**PERCEPTION OF STUDYING ABROAD / CAMPUS LIFE / CITY LIFE:** For the narrator, studying abroad is a complex experience, which means getting to know a new culture, a new city, the campus, but also leaving the campus and seeing other parts of town. For him, it is a chance to see something new and a necessity to contact other students during this experience. University time for him is a time to find friends. Networking seems to be an important aspect of the time spent at university for the narrator and the narrator is not used to this time being controlled or supervised by a third party like the companion of the Persian students.

**OPEN AND CLOSED GROUPS:** The narrator felt that the group of students, who all knew each other from studying together, was invaded by a stranger. This student group was a closed group, a group which during the daytime spends time with each other. There were no other “outsiders” on the “night out” except for the unknown guardian. This led to a lack of trust in the narrator as he did not know or trust the unknown person and the presence of an unknown person in a closed group seemed strange.



## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

When going out to bars during nighttime, the Iranian female students were accompanied by a man, who seemed to be their guardian, but he was not introduced to the other students.

**ALCOHOL AND BARS:** Usually going out to bars, where alcohol is served, is a cultural “no-go” for Iranian girls. In order to allow this experience for the female students, the guardian was sent so that the Iranian students can hang out there with unknown foreign men, where there is alcohol.

**GOAL-ORIENTED LEARNING:** In Iran the idea of studying abroad might be restricted to learning contents and to learning in the university building, so that the students can make the most out of their time studying abroad and bring home as much knowledge as possible. Social events might not count as much. However, the Iranian students chose to go out with the group.

**ACCULTURATION:** Probably going out to bars where alcohol is consumed is not a regular part of Iranian university life. The fact that the Iranian girls chose to attend this event seems to be a sign of their desire to accommodate, acculturate, and adjust to local practices. They even found a quite ingenious way to do it, by asking an older male (extended) family member to go with them.

**COLLECTIVIST CULTURE:** Persian culture might have allowed the international students to connect to others from their home during their stay abroad. They might benefit from the collectivist culture and might have found a group of friends, quasi-family, guardians etc. to help them during their stay abroad. They can rely on their fellow countrymen. Their individual needs (of freedom etc.) might not be of such big importance but the family’s and community’s needs. The community is concerned a lot about the reputation and honor of the female students.

**CULTURAL CONFORMITY AND BEING AFRAID OF LOOKING “EXOTIC”:** The female students might have felt the need to culturally conform to the practice of having a guardian in order to be able to go out at all. Why the guardian was not introduced by them, can be explained with the feeling of eventually being afraid of being criticized, looking “exotic” or “retro” or “anti-feminist” and knowing that this way of acting does not comply with Hungarian or Western European social rules, so they remained silent and did not explain this practice openly.

**PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND (BODILY) INTEGRITY:** The Persian students might expect unknown, European man to flirt with them or ask them out on a date or drink. They have experienced the need for protection at home or in other countries, especially at night. They might accept and like this situation as they feel the need. They feel that the guardian helps them to protect their (bodily) integrity or intactness in the face of possible threats, like being approached by other men, robbery, violence, etc.

**INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** The Persian students do not discuss the fact of being supervised or accompanied by a third party with the others. They might see it as self-evident or natural and might have grown up with such rules. So there is no necessity for direct communication.



BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?

#### OBSERVATIONS

**A fear of intruding on the other:** when confronted with the possibility of a culturally different behaviour that they cannot explain, people often are reluctant to ask questions directly, as they fear they would be intruding on the other. Nevertheless, such questions often have simple answers which could avoid guessing and possibly reinforcing stereotypes

**Importance of familiarizing international students with places outside the campus**  
Students from abroad, especially from non-European countries, might need more guidance than European students when it comes to campus life and city life. They might need specific knowledge of place to go or to avoid and might need training in safety issues or emergency contacts or procedures.

**Gender,** also referred to as the “taboo dimension” (Hofstede) in intercultural contact has a great diversity of representations and approaches. Gender constructions are often connected to issues of respect, dignity, decency. For this reason, they may become very sensitive and trigger tensions or judgments.

#### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

**Importance of familiarizing international students with places outside the campus,** the university could take over responsibility for these aspects for international students from far away.

**Intercultural trainings** can have modules which open up expectations and representations concerning **gender**. These sessions should not be focused on international students only, rather become an opportunity for all the students and staff to explore together cultural diversity in this domain, and how these differences could have an impact on University life. Such trainings can also be the occasion for adopting joint rules / protocols if needed.

**Diversity trainings could be the occasion** to tackle together what approach to cultural differences are accepted or non-accepted. For instance, how is it possible to ask questions to each other without being intrusive or disrespectful, without putting the burden of educating the members of the majority on the minority students.



Critical incident

“RED WINE CAKE”

Vienna

## The incident “RED WINE CAKE”

**A critical incident told by a student studying in Switzerland, recorded in 2019 by University of Vienna**

*“In the context of a seminar about mathematics didactics, the students were asked to prepare a presentation about +a practical implementation of a didactically interesting mathematic-lesson. I prepared a lesson about fractions on elementary-school level. Therefore, I had baked a cake at home, which I brought to class to visualize the topic by cutting the cake into parts. Starting my presentation, I quickly had my co-students hooked, so I was looking forward to distributing the cake wedges in the end of the lesson – so to say as the “highlight” of the presentation. That intention totally hit the mark – all of my classmates enjoyed the cake and thanked me for that initiative. One of the students liked it so much that she asked me for the recipe, when the others were already about to leave. I willingly told her the recipe orally, as it wasn't difficult and I knew it by heart. I went “...sugar, flour, cinnamon, a glass of red wine...” – and at that moment, I was harshly interrupted by one of my fellow students, a Muslim from Kosovo, who boiled with indignation. “What?!”, he shouted, “there was wine in that cake?! Why didn't you tell me? You know I'm a Muslim and am therefore not allowed to consume alcohol – how could you make me eat that cake?” I do not remember exactly what else he said as I was completely blindsided by his reaction. I stuttered some excuses, some justifications but didn't really know what would be appropriate to respond at that point, as he had already eaten the cake and it was “too late” to make it undone. He went on scolding me for some time more – in the meantime, I had gone silent – until his best friend (!) stopped him. “Listen, calm down now, you have your religious principles, which is fine”, he said, “but if you want to keep them so strictly, then it is your responsibility, not that of others! You need to ask about ingredients of unknown food in advance. I had never experienced a situation like this before and I was shocked. It took me a while to think about whose “fault” it really was – and I must say it wasn't an easy point to make. This was memorable”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a Christian female student, 20 years old, she comes from Luxembourg and her native language is German.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	He is a Muslim male student of 25 years old who comes from Kosovo. His native language is Albanian.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is that they are inscribed into the same university, same school class, situation of residency. What separates them are: their country of origin, their native language, their religion, their gender, and mostly their status

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	University classroom (small seminar room) with tables & chairs in rows. Mathematics didactics seminar.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Approximately 20 students with different cultural & religious backgrounds and one professor. Good friend of the Muslim student as part of the student group.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Predominantly Christian Education context in Switzerland

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

*Surprises, confused*

*Embarrassed, out of place/confused*

The narrator explains a mathematical phenomenon using a cake, which is then offered to all students to eat. A Muslim student is offended when he finds out that the cake contained alcohol.

### **EQUALITY BETWEEN STUDENTS IN LEARNING PROCESS:**

The narrator gave a piece of cake to every single student present, without making a difference between religions, cultural or social backgrounds. All students equally participated in the activity, as it was viewed as part of the learning activity here. Eating the cake was so-to-say part of the learning process and the way it was presented, was more like a “present”, additional to the learning process. In many cultures it is seen as disrespectful to deny presents and therefore it was maybe less „optional“ to reject the piece of cake than in a restaurant for example

### **ADULT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE’S OWN CULTURAL VALUES / NORMS:**

The narrator expects adults to take responsibility for their beliefs / values / norms. If a person is not allowed to consume a certain comestible, that person should act consequently by refusing / avoiding that food. The narrator holds strong values of individual and direct responsibility (instead of blaming others).

**COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AS STUDENTS:** The narrator sees all students as sitting “in the same boat” as all students will have to perform in front of the others. She respects the efforts of her co-students and would not affront them before the class. The narrator knows that the other student also has to perform in front of the other students in the future, that is why she did not expect critical opinions, but affirmative behaviour.

### **UNIVERSALIST BIAS AND UNAWARENESS OF FOOD**

**PERMISSIONS/RESTRICTIONS:** The narrator grew up in only one cultural / religious background that allows her to consume alcohol. She did not question the ingredients for her cake, maybe due to a universalist bias or not having had much contact with Muslims before. The cake was not meant to be a traditional or “Christian” cake, it was meant to be a present to fellow students.

**LAICITÉ:** The incident took place in Switzerland, close to France, where the principle of “laïcité” is important. The narrator might have assumed that religion is not present in the classroom because of this. Public universities are not viewed as spaces of religion.

### **CULTURE OF DISCUSSION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION:**

The narrator expects eventual disagreements or criticism to be expressed in a respectful, non-aggressive and conversational way instead of being offensively accused of a lack of respect of culture / religion / values. Her value of being able to have an argument and discuss it is based on a solid and verbal way of conflict resolution, which was not possible with the other student.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

The narrator explains a mathematical phenomenon using a cake, which is then offered to all students to eat. A Muslim student is offended when he finds out that the cake contained alcohol.

**VISIBILITY OF HIS RELIGION:** The student might think that it is evident that he is a Muslim (because of his clothing, his beard etc.), so he does not understand why the narrator did not see this fact.

**PRIORITY OF RELIGION AND ADHERENCE TO RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS:** The student grew up with a Muslim religious background, so he understands himself as not being allowed to consume alcohol in any form. He tries to respect this value with a high dedication. Religious traditions have priority for him.

**RELIGION IS EVERYWHERE:** Religion is present in all moments and all domains of life, also in the public sphere, also in the university classroom. This is in contrast with other practitioners of faith, for whom there are specific spaces (such as the church) or periods of the year (feasts, celebrations...) dedicated to religion.

**OPEN EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS:** The student sees himself as allowed to express his disagreement openly and emotionally towards the narrator. As he is deeply unsettled by the situation, he reacts in an emotional way. He believes that it is healthy of openly express emotions, especially in a group, in which all students know each other (well). Maybe part of his strong emotions were also partly blaming himself because he failed to ask for the ingredients.

**RAGE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION:** The student might feel that the incident is similar to other events he has experienced as a Muslim in a Christian country and might be angry about being discriminated (again). This can be very relevant for “stigmatised identities” of people who due to past experiences of discrimination or prejudice are very likely to apply the idea of discrimination as an explanation for new situations

**THOUGHTFULNESS:** His value of thoughtfulness is threatened by the situation, as the narrator does not pay attention to his individual characteristics



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

The lack of recognition of a cultural identity can provoke strong negative emotional reactions even when the concrete situation seems harmless such as offering a Christmas gift. The resentment of lack of recognition can be stronger for groups that are often discriminated.

Bringing traditional food to university has advantages and disadvantages. It exposes cultural elements, but it can also emphasise stereotypes (for example: all Turkish students eat Baklava). Saying yes or no to food in the classroom might be connected to cultural signs of respect. It might not be viewed as polite to reject food, since it was presented as a present for fellow students and rejecting presents is culture specific.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

**Chance of the professor to mediate the intercultural conflict**  
The role of the professor as the only professional teacher in the room could have been to take responsibility for the conflict and to reflect cultural / religious values with their students to avoid critical incidents like this one in the future. The professors could have intervened one by mediating between the arguing parties.

**Intercultural trainings at university**

Universities could consider doing intercultural trainings about the difference between direct and indirect discrimination and different forms of ethnocentrism, and “universalist bias”.



Critical incident

“NO INTRODUCTION”

Vienna

## The incident “NO INTRODUCTION”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Vienna , recorded in 2019 by University of Vienna**

*“On the first day of a seminar I was taking on Education Policy, I had an experience that I found surprising and starkly different from my academic experience in America. Upon the professor beginning the class, an attendance sheet was passed around with our names while the professor introduced himself and his work. I assumed that after introducing himself, he would proceed to ask us about ourselves, our experiences and our previous work. The class was small, so an introduction seemed necessary, especially seeing as some of the students – including myself – who were part of an exchange program and new to the course. However, following his self-introduction, the professor proceeded to introduce the course topic of our homework before dismissing us for the day. The professor never asked us to ever say our names. I was shocked, because it felt very rude, especially as a foreign student, not to familiarize oneself with the students. I didn’t say anything, partly because I knew no one in the class. But the entire experience made me feel very small and childish, especially considering it was a Master’s programme”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 24 years old, she comes from US. It was her first year in Vienna.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	He is about 50 years old, he is an Austrian professor researcher in the university
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is that they are inscribed into the same university, same social class. What separates them are: their country of origin, their status in Austria (resident vs. native) their gender, and mostly their status

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	University classroom
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Other students in the class

**ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR**

*Suprises, confused*

*Embarrassed, out of place, confused*

The professor introduced himself and the course, did not ask the students to introduce themselves. The course was held and then the students were dismissed.

**RECIPROCITY AND FRIENDLINESS** : For the narrator it is simply a matter of friendliness to introduce all people present, and not ignoring or dismissing people. For her, communication is a reciprocal process

**RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION AND ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER** : For her it is important to look each other in the eye, say names and have eye contact. She considers these things as important for interpersonal respect and the basis for really encountering the “other”.

**NON-HIERARCHICAL COMMUNICATION** : The student expected communication on an equal footing, since it was her first day of class in the Master’s programme. For the student her perception of communication order was disrupted, when the professor introduced himself, but did not let the others do so. For her, it is a matter of communication order and equality to say hello before starting to engage with one another.

**FRIENDLY WELCOMING CULTURE** : The narrator expected a welcoming culture in the host country and the host university, especially on her first day of studies. The welcoming culture also includes being able to say you are from abroad and being recognised as a foreign student in the host country. This value was threatened because she was not even allowed to say her name.

**INDIVIDUALISM** : She expected to be treated in a different and more individualistic way, since her studies were advanced. She expected more personal interest of the professor for who he was talking to because there are fewer students in Master’s programmes. However, in Austria titles are very important, and the professor might have thought of himself as someone of a higher status with the right to introduce himself rather than students without title.

**CONNECTING IN CLASS / SOCIAL ASPECT OF STUDING:** The welcoming culture also incorporates social aspects of studying. With the introduction round she could have made first connections to students in class, possibly also other students from abroad and this could have helped her to develop a sense of belonging. Instead she felt isolated.

**DESIRE FOR ACCULTURATION AND COMPLIANCE** : The narrator is used to educational systems, in which you as a student do not make a fuss and comply with rules. She did not want to already “standout” on her first day, but had the desire to acculturate to Austria. So she complied with the rules to fit in.

## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

The professor introduced himself and the course, did not ask the students to introduce themselves. The course was held and then the students were dismissed.

**TIME EFFICIENCY :** The professor might have been stressed at the beginning of the semester, wanting to get over administrative issues as quickly as possible, not spending too much time on introductions, but getting to the course contents as soon as possible. Also, he might have had several classes start on that day and might have forgotten about the introduction round because it was his third, fourth or fifth class that day.

**WORK EFFICIENCY:** He might have thought that introduction rounds are a waste of time and he wanted to step right into the course contents.

**ORIENTATION TO TASK RATHER THAN PERSONAL RELATIONS :** The professor focussed on the content and the task and not the relationships. In his eyes, teaching was his main role in the situation and not “being the student’s friend”. Therefore, he introduced himself but had no need to know who he was dealing with on the student’s side. In his role as a professional, he does not need personal interaction with his students.

**INVISIBILITY OF THE DIVERSITY OF STUDENTS :** The professor was not aware or did not think it relevant that some students were experiencing their first day of studies in a new university. The American student might have looked like a European student, so he might have not paid attention to the diversity of students in general.

**PERCEPTION OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION:** The professor perceives professional communication as a form of communication not invading privacy and keeping objectivity and anonymity in the class. He might also view the tasks of private communication, connecting to other students, and networking as issues to be covered outside the classroom.

**REPRESENTATION OF LEARNING:** The student wanted to introduce herself because she expected to be able to contribute to class in the future. Not letting students introduce themselves, probably leads to less interaction and examples from students’ experiences. It leads to more hierarchical learning. The professor seemed to be the only one holding the knowledge.

**RESPECT AND A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAVE TO EARNED :** The students hadn’t earned the professor’s respect yet (meritocracy). In his opinion a more individual approach, appreciation and a personal relationship have to be earned, although this is not a common characteristic of professors in Austria.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

The first contact of international students on campus, at their faculty or elsewhere can be organised by the International Office or other delegates for mobility. In this way, it is not left to individual professors or staff members to introduce new students. Students can develop a sense of belonging to the respective university with more formal introduction traditions. It is expected of students in higher semesters that their experiences and opinions are included and that lessons are more interactive and practical. It is expected that teaching does not happen one-way, but that the practical experiences or questions of students are considered. Transforming knowledge to students can only happen with a personal relationship. The discussion about the degree of theory and practice in higher education could contain questions about cultural differences as well.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Students can develop a sense of belonging to the respective university with more formal introduction traditions (small workshops, welcoming day, first day party, etc.) Also, the exchange between international students and regular students can be enhanced with different matching activities. How are introduction rounds made? How formal are they? Which formal information do they contain? (name, professional experience, years of study) Which personal questions are allowed? Which are taboo? (asking about family status, mother tongue, duration of stay in the host country etc.) – These questions could be discussed in institutional meetings in order to reach consensus among teachers in this matter.



Critical incident

“WHERE ARE YOU  
FROM?”

Germany

## The incident “WHERE ARE YOU FROM?”

**A critical incident told by a staff member of a German university, recorded in 2019 by JGU**

*“A student came in for an interview for the position of student assistant at my place of work, a university centre. Both my boss and I interviewed her. From the name of the student we could not tell what nationality she had, but when she walked into the office it was clear from her appearance that she must have an intercultural/international background since her skin was a little darker and her hair was curly. Towards the end of the interview, I asked her where she was from and that her father’s name seemed Japanese. She did not react to my question. This surprised me since I am always very excited to find out more about other people’s background. I myself am a person with a multicultural background. But it is possible that she did not realize that I, too, am from a multicultural background.*

*She got the position as a student assistant and later on, when we were working together, I once again asked where she was from and she answered that she was from Germany. She was born in Germany and grew up here. I asked her where her parents come from and her answer was also from Germany. She is black living in her home country Germany. She said that we associate a certain appearance with “being German”. We expect Germans to look “German”, which means not black. She said there are many people like her. She talked about the racism she has experienced. I told her that the reason why I asked her this question was because of my own intercultural background”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is around 50 years old, she currently lives in Germany and she has a multicultural background (German, Polish, Vietnamese, and French). She is in the university of Mainz as a project coordinator for more than 15 years.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is in her early thirties and she is a person of color of German nationality. She is a student in the university of Mainz.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	Similarities are: their gender, that they are both related to the same university, they have both legal status and they both speak German. Differences are: their nationalities, their age, their professional status, their skin colour.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The interview took place in the Office of the Head of the Centre, at a round table with the Head of the Center and the narrator sitting opposite the interviewee.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	The Head of the Centre was part of the interviewer team. She is a 50+ woman, a person of authority and a typical “white” German. The Head of the Centre did not ask any further questions about the topic, so the narrator stopped asking. The Head of the Centre influenced the situation, because she is a German native. Maybe the dynamics would have been different if she, too, had been from a different country.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	In official interviews Germans stay formal, but it can be a bit more casual when the interview takes place in a university setting. For the narrator it was not a formal event, but the other person might have expected it to be more formal. This difference in perception is the reason why the narrator asked this informal question.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Happy, Interested, curious

Irritated, puzzled, rejected

During a job interview, the narrator asked the interviewed black student where she came from. However, the black student did not react to this question at all, even when it was asked.

### CONNECTING SKIN COLOUR TO MULTICULTURALITY:

Visible markers of differences (hair, skin etc.) are usually indicators of a multicultural history. In Germany such visible traits usually imply another culture or migrant background. Also, the narrator is in a colour-fair rather than color-blind position. This means that for the narrator it is acceptable to notice differences in skin tone and skin colour, it is not a taboo for her to mention them.

### A MULTICULTURAL PERSONAL HISTORY IS A RESOURCE, A SOURCE OF COMPETENCES:

It may be a source for positive contributions especially in an international university, for this reason it is not an inappropriate question in a job interview.

### PERCEPTION OF DIVERSITY, MULTICULTURALITY AS A VALUE:

Because of her very multicultural heritage, the narrator perceives diversity as a source of beauty and richness.

### IDENTITY THREAT OF THE INTERCULTURAL TRAINER / PERSON:

The narrator may have believed that her question would be understood as part of a (mutual) self-disclosure, her multicultural identity being reflected by that of the other person. The refusal of the student has subverted this expectation. Due to the fact that the narrator categorizes herself also as a multicultural person, she feels authorized to ask this question. The narrator has always worked in international teams and contexts which is why she did not consider this question to be anything out of the ordinary.

### INFLUENCE OF A MULTICULTURAL FAMILY HISTORY:

Having such multicultural family histories is unusual and the narrator looked forward to working with a student with whom she could share a multicultural background.

### DIRECT / INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:

It is allowed to ask a question as long as it is within the range of polite questions. For the narrator the question about "origins" is not a rude or indiscreet question, so it may be asked. However, her own multicultural background is not visible at first glance, so the black student didn't know about it. Choosing not to answer a question asked by the potential future employer in a job interview is unwise. This is a signal of being offended by the question.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

During a job interview, the narrator asked the interviewed black student where she came from. However, the black student did not react to this question at all, even when it was asked.

**IGNORANCE OF BLACK GERMAN HISTORY:** Black German History is not well known by non-black Germans. That's why they tend to associate a darker skin colour not with a German person, but with people of other nationalities or cultural backgrounds instead. By asking the question "Where are you from?" we implicitly deny that black people could be German.

**ROLE OF MINORITIES:** There could be many reasons why the question was not answered. The student did not want to go into details. It is not the role of minorities to educate the members of the majority group. When asked such a question it is a legitimate position to ignore the question and to choose not to answer. This should not be qualified as rude.

**UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITY AND PRINCIPLE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION:** During a job interview this question should not be asked.

**CATEGORISATION OF "THE OTHER" BASED ON SKIN COLOR:** Skin tone implies a permanent exposure for being the subject of categorisation as the "other". Past experiences of prejudice, discrimination and racism make her sensitive to such occurrences, thus rendering racism an easily accessible explanation. Her phenotype (being black) does not imply any specific cultural difference, in her case.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Does the situation highlight any problem concerning the professional practice, or in general about the challenges of international student mobility or how diversity is handled in the university in general? It takes a lot of effort to find a good balance between recognizing diversity and cultural difference while granting people enough space to define themselves.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Learning more about black German history could potentially promote the understanding of diversity in Higher Education Institutions even further.



Critical incident

“WRITING ABOUT OWN  
ACHIEVEMENTS”

Germany

## The incident “WRITING ABOUT OWN ACHIEVEMENTS”

### A critical incident told by a staff member in a German university, recorded in 2019

*“In 2018, a PhD student asked for advice on a scholarship. The PhD student came from South America and had been studying in Germany for 2 years but didn’t speak German. The organization providing the scholarship requires two scientific reports from professors and a detailed statement of the applicant herself about her scientific achievements and career perspectives. Before submitting the application, a one-on-one consultation is mandatory. In her personal statement, the young female scientist didn’t write anything about the required information. Due to the fact that her application would have been considered incomplete I asked why she didn’t answer the questions. She was getting extremely nervous and it seemed to me that she was thinking about not applying for the scholarship at all. I tried to translate the scholarship call, which had been published in German only. Applications were also only allowed in German. But the language didn’t seem to be the problem. After a while she said that she feels very uncomfortable writing something about her scientific achievements and career perspectives since two professors had already written something about her. She said that this would be considered rude in her home country. I tried to encourage her, telling her that it is common in Germany and gave her some examples of what to write. Finally, two or three weeks later, she did send her personal statement. She didn’t receive the scholarship the first time she applied. The second application was successful”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is German. She is female and a mother of two children. She has a doctorate and at the moment of the incident has been working in the university for 10 years.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is of Colombian nationality and she is a legal resident in Germany. She is a mother of one child. She is a PhD student and she has been in the university for 2 years.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common are: their gender, the motherhood, their education, their legal status in Germany and the university to which they are both related in a way. What differentiates them are: their country of origin, their native language, their professional status in the university, the years spent in the university in question and the field of their studies.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The situation happened in the university and more specifically in the Service Center for Equality and Diversity.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were no other people present.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Lower status of the narrator, who is still a PhD student, in comparison to the professors.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Irritated, annoyed

Puzzled

Happy

The student applying for a scholarship didn't want to fill in the required information in her personal statement, even though it was clearly demanded.

**COMMUNICATION (OTHER LANGUAGE):** Direct/low context communication. Written communication in an application form is direct. What is important needs to be expressed directly and explicitly. Relational considerations are irrelevant. The fact that a student has to write a statement about her own academic career when two professors have already sent written contributions is of no importance or relevance. Only the content and the message are important. This is what the application requires.

**GENDER:** Is this Colombian woman not emancipated? The student's behavior is a demonstration of "humility". It was difficult for her that she had to explain her behavior to another woman with a totally different self-image. Two different female role models met: a modern emancipated woman and a strong belief in an academic hierarchy dominated by males.

**IDENTITY:** Individualism: An individualistic perspective implies that we ourselves are responsible for our success. So in this case the female student is responsible, not the system of relationships (for instance with the professors). A high self-esteem allows the individual to talk about his or her achievements and competences. And this is what is expected in applications: To be able to underline the own competences, achievements and former successes, instead of weaknesses, signs of uncertainty or simply the lack of achievements. It is part of the academic competition to demonstrate to be a strong and self-assured person.

**HIERARCHY:** The female student does not dare to add anything about her academic quality when two professors, two powerful academic leaders, high above her own student's position, have already written something about her and her academic career. She does not feel that she is in the position to add something and thereby to complete the picture drawn by the professors. It would be like criticizing them.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

The student applying for a scholarship didn't want to fill in the required information in her personal statement, even though it was clearly demanded.

**HIERARCHY AND POWER (RESPECT FOR IT):** The PhD student didn't want to be disrespectful in writing something about herself because two professors had already written something. In her home country, this would be considered as an incorrect behavior. For this reason, she chose not to respond to an explicit question in an application form. That means that the anxiety to offend the two professors by "correcting" them (by adding something from her own perspective) was much stronger than the persuasion that the (German) formal requirements had to be fulfilled.

**GENDER:** The respect of an academic hierarchy dominated by males and of the power of academic staff is high in Colombia. This respect is further reinforced by the fact that she is a woman. So she is under two disadvantages: as a student, she is on a lower level within the academic hierarchy, and she is also female.

**IDENTITY:** This might have to do with her cultural identity. Assuming that her cultural identity is characterized by a marked collectivistic approach, it could be challenging for her to adapt to a more individualistic perspective. There seems to be a huge difference between the Colombian and the German cultural tendency in this respect. The German staff thinks in terms of individuals while the female student thinks of herself as being within a system of depending relationships (herself depending from the will of the professors).

**COMMUNICATION:** In the conversation about her application, she finally referred to her inner conflict ("correcting" two professors as a (female) student by writing a statement of her own is not allowed in her home country). The fact that she realized and named this conflict shows that she understood the different requirements of the two different academic systems.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Not only language-differences, but cultural differences of values and norms could be the problem. What are the rules within the academic system? What is the process of applying for something like, how do you present yourself? Are you allowed to say something that has already been said by a person who is on a higher hierarchy level than you? There is the fear of saying something incorrect or feeling ashamed when evaluating oneself in a positive way.

What about the academic hierarchy in different countries? What about the female representation in higher academic positions? How are the different rules of the corresponding academic systems (only professors have to prove student's quality / students also have to write something about how they assess their work and themselves).

What do international/exchange students need to know when they want to apply for something in an academic system with which they are not familiar?

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

With respect to the different perspectives on identity it is important to be aware of the impacts of the differences between the individualist / collectivist dimension.



Critical incident

“A WOMAN IN HIGH  
POSITION”

Germany

## The incident “A WOMAN IN A HIGH POSITION”

**A critical incident told by the head of the Centre for Continuing Academic Education in the university, recorded in 2019 by JGU**

*“A visiting professor came to my office. He wanted information about the programme and curricula we offer. I gave him some materials and explained to him who I am, what we do and what the conditions for taking part in our programs are. It seemed to me that he didn’t listen very carefully: He looked down at the table, checked his mobile phone for messages, didn’t look into my eyes or my face, he arranged his papers and seemed to be very nervous and distracted. It was obvious that he did not fully pay attention, but I couldn’t tell why. So I tried not to be irritated by his behavior and went on with my explanations for another 10 minutes. At the end I asked him if he had any questions. Instead of replying to my question he asked me: “When is your boss coming?” I explained to him that I was the head of the unit and that my boss was the president of the university. “So I want to talk to him.” I told him that this was not possible in this case because I was the responsible person for his questions and that the president himself didn’t have the time to talk to every visiting professor about things he had experts and staff for. The visiting professor stood up abruptly and left my office”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a German woman around her late forties. She is of a higher social class. She has got a doctorate and she is the head of the Centre for Continuing Academic Education of a university.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is an Egyptian man around his fifties. He is a post-doctorate and at the moment of the incident he is a visiting professor in the university in question. He is from a higher social class and he has spent a year at the current university.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common: their age, their education, their social class. What differentiates them: their nationality, their native language, their gender, their professional status.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Official situation in a university office, more precisely in the Office of the Head of the Center. Official and standard situation of a visiting guest professor. Round table with the Head of the Center/the narrator on one side and the other person on the opposite side.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were no other people present.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	During visits, Germans stay formal, but in the university setting it depends. For the narrator it was a formal situation. The fact that the visitor was a guest professor (paid by a scholarship from the hosting university) underlined the importance of his function.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Irritated, uncertain

Uncomfortable

Ignored, not respected

Humiliated

A guest professor comes to the Center for Continuing Academic Education at the university asking for information. The head of the office is giving information in detail, but the professor doesn't really pay attention and finally asks for her boss. Then he suddenly leaves the office.

**HIERARCHY:** In the society of the narrator people strive to equalize the distribution of power and they demand justification for inequalities generated from power. This is meant to avoid an hierarchy. The narrator always addressed the guest professor with his full title (Professor). He himself didn't address the narrator with her full title (Doctor).

**GENDER EQUALITY:** Men and women are expected to have the same rights. Gender roles are overlapping. Many women nowadays are leading academic units in HEIs. He disregarded the female host even though he was the guest.

**POLITENESS:** It was impolite of the other person to look down at the table, check his mobile phone for messages, to not look into the eyes or in face of the narrator, and to arrange his papers. He seemed to be nervous and distracted.

**DIRECT / INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** For the narrator, the visiting professor's body language was very clear and offending. Receiving no answer at all to a question directly asked is a serious sign. It is a breach in reciprocity that signals a major problem, that something is wrong in the interaction process. Leaving a meeting suddenly and without any apologies is rude.

**IDENTITY THREAT:** The narrator in her role as a head of a university unit felt offended, not respected and not taken seriously.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A guest professor comes to the Center for Continuing Academic Education at the university asking for information. The head of the office is giving information in detail, but the professor doesn't really pay attention and finally asks for her boss. Then he suddenly leaves the office.

**HIERARCHY - HIGH POWER DISTANCE SOCIETY:** People in societies exhibiting a large degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order according to which everybody has a place and for this, there is no need for further justification. In the guest professor's imagination, it might have been unusual that a woman leads alone a big and important unit like this without having a (male) boss. He assumed that a part of the appropriate and correct reception of him would have been a male boss receiving him as a male guest professor.

**MASCULINE SOCIETY:** High differentiation based on gender. Men need to be assertive, unyielding and materially oriented whereas women need to be modest and sensitive (no leading position in professional sectors).

**VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION:** He was most probably expecting a verification of the given information from a masculine, i.e. well informed and reliable person.

**COMMUNICATION / INDIRECT:** To show his contempt the guest professor sent clear body signals that that indicated that he ignored the narrator's explanations.



BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?

OBSERVATIONS

**Gender/Sex:** How do other nationalities deal with different genders? Is it a taboo topic? Is it possible to explain to a foreign person that in Germany, men and women are equal?

**Common behaviour:** What other roles of interaction and politeness are common in different nationalities?

What other roles within the family/professional choices are common in different nationalities?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

**Hierarchy:** Maybe for the future it would help to clearly state that the department head is a woman when corresponding with someone via email, thus making it clear that she is a female leader from the very beginning (Writing "Mrs. Dr. XXX XXX), especially because, from a non-German perspective, her first name is not necessarily recognizable as being female. A picture could be attached when sending an email. The International Office could also present a leaflet with basic information about the Heads of units (men **and** women).



Critical incident

“TOO MANY  
CORRECTIONS”

(professor’s point of  
view) Germany

## The incident “TOO MANY CORRECTIONS” ( professor’s point of view)

**A critical incident told by the head of the department of German as foreign language, recorded in 2019 by JGU**

*“I am head of the German as a Foreign /Second Language department, teaching different courses at the University of Mainz. A student from the United States of America handed in her final seminar paper. I consider her an excellent student with the chance of a perfect final exam for her Master’s degree. Usually, final seminar papers are handed in, graded, and that’s it. Well, scientific papers in Germany are very special and I thought I would help her by turning it into a “perfect” seminar paper and for my digital corrections I used the word correction mode. I returned it by mail and suggested that we should meet and discuss the paper. However, I did not mention that the content itself was very good and sufficient to pass the course. Prior to our consultation meeting, she attended another one of my courses and she was behaving somewhat differently (no laughter, no smiling, and no eye contact). We had our consultation and instead of appreciation, which I expected, she was - I believe - angry, frustrated, and affected deeply by my “help”. I believe we have smoothed out the misunderstanding.*

*I am used to working with international students and it is explicitly an aim of the University to attract international students by creating a culture of welcoming others”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is German / Japanese. She is a woman around fifty years old. She belongs to the middle social class. She is a doctorate and she has been working at the university of Mainz for 30 years. She is an assistant professor and head of a department.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	At the moment of the incident the other person is around 26 years old. She is American. She currently lives in Germany and she has a student visa. Her native language is English. At the moment of the incident, she is a master’s degree student at the department of German as a foreign language for 3 semesters.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common: their gender and the university to which they are both related in a way. Differences: their age, their country of origin, their native language, their professional status in the university, the years spent in the university in question.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The situation happened in a German university
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were no other people present.

*ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR*

Embarrassed

Confused, surprised

The professor received a seminar paper from a student and gave it back with many corrections which made the student angry.

**DIRECT COMMUNICATION:** The feedback was straight and written down in the form of corrections in the document of the student. The focus was on the content. In the communication there was no small talk or some sentences to let the student know that the paper was already really good and that the comments were there to improve the paper to an even higher level. From the professor's perspective, the conversation covered not only content (facts & figures) but also the relationship (interaction, attitude, emotion).

**IDENTITY / TEACHER'S MISSION:** The professor sees it as a teacher's mission is to identify the good students and to accompany them towards success and give them feedback so that they can improve even more.

**HIERARCHY:** Professors are there to support students. They do not help them if they do not give extensive and direct feedback. Students do not necessarily need feedback to be given in a friendly "frame" that makes it sound less harsh. Besides, professors do not have the time for that.

## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

The professor received a seminar paper from a student and gave it back with many corrections which made the student angry.

**IDENTITY / THE MISSION OF A PROFESSOR:**

Teachers should focus on their students, their well-being, and their development. The “teaching mission” should consist of being a guide, a source of support for the students aiming to motivate them, to help them overcome any difficulties and not generate them. This means that feedback has to be given in a supportive and clear way.

**COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN:** There was a clear lack of communication between the teacher and the student before the feedback was given. The teacher saw the paper as very good. She thought that the paper only needed some adjustments to be a perfect paper. However, the student only saw the corrections and thought that everything was not good.

**HIERARCHY:** Teachers have to take their time to give constructive feedback in an appreciative manner to students. They always have to be aware of the fact that their feedback might be misunderstood. They are supposed to be guides for the students.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

How do you give and receive constructive feedback? How do we write a paper, how do students present their papers during a seminar, how is the constructive feedback culture (implicit / explicit, oral, face-to-face or written?), how do we communicate? Do we need more introduction courses for students about the different countries and how to work scientifically?  
How is the understanding of hierarchy within the different academic worlds / countries? What is the role of professors and what is the role of students? How is their relationship? What do international/exchange students need when arriving in a new country to be able to study well?

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Increase awareness for staff and students of the differences in Higher Education cultures worldwide. Feedback (face threats) should have been delivered with more positive reinforcements placed at the beginning of the document. In some cultural contexts, giving extra help by giving an extra feedback shows that somebody believes that the student is a very good one. In this culture if we do not like somebody personally, we would not think about giving extra feedback.



Critical incident

“TOO MANY  
CORRECTIONS”

(student’s point of  
view) Germany

## The incident “TOO MANY CORRECTIONS” (student’s point of view)

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Germany, recorded in 2019 by JGU**

*“I was a master’s student in my third semester in the German as a Foreign Language/Second Language program in Germany when the incident took place involving two parties with Professor A and Professor B.*

*After turning in my final paper I received an email from Professor A telling me that this paper was a great opportunity to practice my academic writing and that she had attached some corrections. My initial shock (as a written email of this kind is usually reserved for failing students) was then affirmed when I opened the document and saw the corrections: large sections of the introduction crossed out along with some comments on the side. It appeared to me to be an email telling me to rewrite the entire paper. This especially worried me as I had only received one grade up to this point in my studies, which was exactly from this Professor A with a note that I needed to work on my academic writing. For this reason I had already met with Professor A and felt that the meeting was largely unhelpful.*

*The next day I saw Professor A after class. I stated that I wasn't sure which aspects of my writing were weak and that I felt overwhelmed with the prospect of having to rewrite the entire paper at a time when my work load was already so overwhelming that it was starting to have a noticeable effect on my physical and mental health. Professor A explained that her intent was to help me. She felt that my excellent performance in class was not reflected in my writing. She explained that this was an opportunity for me to improve what would have otherwise been a lower grade if I simply revised the text. She also stated that if I wished she could also just give me a grade on the current paper. I felt that she did not have the adequate tools to help me improve my academic writing – I would have needed concrete suggestions: a vocabulary list, style guide, or at least more exact corrections. I felt largely frustrated. Later that same day I spoke to Professor B after her class. We went through the text and she made suggestions while reassuring me that the corrections necessary were more cosmetic than anything. After this meeting I felt less overwhelmed, went home and revised the rest of the paper that night.*

*I met Professor A next day and gave her the revised version of the text. I apologized for my behaviour the previous day, and thanked her. Professor A apologized as well and said that my corrections improved the paper significantly. She again included some small changes to the revised version, emphasizing that I did not necessarily have to make those changes. I agreed with the changes and turned in the final version of the paper later that day”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is around 26 years old. She is American. She currently lives in Germany and she has a student visa. Her native language is English. At the moment of the incident, she is a master’s degree student at the department of German as a foreign language for 3 semesters
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is German / Japanese. She is a woman around fifty years old. She belongs to the middle social class. She has a doctorate and she has been working at the university of Mainz for 30 years. She is an assistant professor and head of a department.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is: their gender and the university to which they are both related in a way. What separates them are: their age, their country of origin, their native language, their professional status in the university, the years spent in the university in question.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT****PHYSICAL  
CONTEXT**

The situation happened in a German university.

**OTHER PEOPLE  
PRESENT**

Professor B.

Professor B was not present during the conversation with Professor A, but she was an important counselor in order to deescalate the situation.

Later that same day the student spoke to Professor B about her text. She gave her concrete hints. The fact that she sat down with her and went through the paper was what really made a difference. It gave her reassurance that the paper wasn't a total failure and showed her the weaker areas of her writing by working through them together and providing explanations.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Shocked, Anxious

Insecure

Helpless, frustrated, angry

The student handed in a seminar paper and received it back with many language, style, and grammatical corrections which had a massive impact on the student's behavior towards the correcting professor.

**COMMUNICATION / FACEWORK:** Oral communication instead of long email feedback might have prevented the misunderstanding. The student would have known that the paper is good and that all the corrections were only meant to improve the text and to help her get an even higher grade. Professor A gives critical feedback, which may be a face threatening act. Professor A did not use the feedback strategies that the narrator is used to. Instead, she delivers the feedback in a clumsy way. The positive feedback was very implicit.

**IMPOSTOR SYNDROME:** It could happen that foreign students that have good notes feel like "impostors" receiving higher grades than natives, especially if they think they have lower language skills, thinking "there's no way I can keep up with native speakers". Being judged only on her grammar skills let all her fears come true, and she became very anxious on her year's final results.

**PHYSICAL AND MENTALHEALTH:** international students find themselves in a foreign country, mostly alone, without their support system (family, friends). Writing in a non-native language could be a very long, hard and stressful undertaking, and university work can add anxiety and stress to a way of life that can already be more stressful compared to a native one (dealing with VISA card, living alone for the first time, not knowing the city, not having many friends, or even all of this in one). Professors should be aware of this, without treating them differently from other students.

**IDENTITY:** The international student's academic self-assurance is not very well established, so the identity as a researcher is easily questioned; anxiety concerning the scientific career. It seemed to confirm a lot of underlying fears that a lot of foreign students usually feel – something like imposter syndrome: "my German isn't good enough/my writing is riddled with glaring mistakes," "there's no way I can keep up with native speakers," "it's immediately obvious that I don't belong here because of my language abilities," etc.

**NON-NATIVE WRITINGS (BEING TREATED AS A NATIVE):**

Receiving many corrections on the grammar and not focusing on the content let the narrator feel like she was just being corrected and not rewarded for all the efforts she made, considering she wrote the paper in a foreign language. This could be a very common issue for international students, especially when they may have to write in a totally different alphabet. She explained the emotions and the feelings that can occur when a professor harshly judges her grammar skills and when she treated her writing the same as she would for a native speaker's.

**HIERARCHY:** Extensive criticism by a professor means destructive judgment for the student.



*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

The student handed in a seminar paper and received it back with many language, style, and grammatical corrections which had a massive impact on the student's behavior towards the correcting professor.

**COMMUNICATION:** In Germany, people give very long and strict feedbacks. They do not "waste" their time by starting with the positive things. They start directly with the things that could or should be improved. But it would be more helpful to give feedback on the content first and reserving criticism of language and style for afterwards. The way of academic writing is very different and the professor finds it important to work precisely. It could be, however, important to remember the difficulties faced by international students writing in a foreign language, and that it is very hard to master the German language or to speak it on a very high level.

**HIERARCHY:** The Professor wants to communicate at eye level, the student is not used to that and misinterprets the feedback and corrections so that she thinks that her paper is a total failure. Professors should be aware of differences in social interaction and try to find the best way to deal with international students' problems (face to face interaction, after class, in the office, etc...)

**IDENTITY:** Self-Understanding of the role of a professor. How to teach students (as equals, take them seriously) and how to give feedback. Putting much time and work into the corrections of papers is meant to be helpful and not completely discouraging. The professor spends much time in the corrections and wants to support students to improve their quality of writing especially when she knows that they are already being good students and that, with some help, they could do even better.

**CORRECTION AND VALORIZATION OF ACQUAINTANCE:** For international students, it is sometimes hard to be rewarded for the many milestones they achieve. If corrections are needed and required in a HE environment, it could be helpful to add a note underlying the progresses acquainted by international students or being more specific while correcting (specifying why the corrections have been made by explaining the rules of academic writing, saying that the work was sufficient for the exam and that the academic style was excellent).

BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?

#### OBSERVATIONS

**International Student Support:** How can international and exchange students be supported and welcomed when arriving in a new country and at a new university with a different academic culture? The students often feel insecure; sometimes scared, they don't know who they can talk to, they feel lonely and overwhelmed by many different tasks. **Communication:** Between teachers and students there is a hierarchical relation. Students depend on their professors. It is important to try to avoid misunderstandings.

#### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

**International Student Support:** It is important to have student ambassadors / student assistants from different countries and continents that are present at the welcome days and even before when applying at a higher education institution. **Communication:** Between the professor and an international student the rules of communication and feedback have to be clear and understandable for everyone, maybe clarified at the beginning of their relation, at the first day of classes, and, if possible, in collaboration between students and teachers.



Critical incident

“SILENT WOMAN”

Germany

## The incident “SILENT WOMAN”

**A critical incident told by a staff member assisting families in a German university, recorded in 2019 by JGU**

*“Advice for parents is offered by the Family Services Centre that combines all the available services in this sector and acts as a central point of contact for students and employees who are looking for information and help with regard to their studies / career and family-related issues.*

*A couple came in for a consultation during our open consultation hour, which means they did not schedule an appointment with the Family Service Center in advance. At this point, I did not know the name of the couple. Each one of them introduced himself/herself. The man explained that his wife had started studying at the University of Mainz and that he (her husband) was working somewhere else off-campus. The couple had obviously an intercultural/international background since their skin was a little bit darker, they spoke with a strong accent and she wore a headscarf. For several seconds nobody said anything. Moreover, after that little pause, he began to speak to me. He asked for a kindergarten place for their youngest child (at this time, they had 3 children). I asked about the age of their children and their current school or kindergarten. Furthermore, after the husband had answered my questions, I addressed the woman directly and asked her about her subject at university and about more details about her timetable. But again, it was only the man who talked to me and gave all the answers. I was told that she had started to study pharmacy. The couple didn’t really interact with each other, neither verbally nor non-verbally. So I couldn’t tell if one of them felt uncomfortable in this situation.*

*The situation was very frustrating for me because I wanted to know more about her student life and wanted to help her to combine her student life and her family duties, to make it compatible because it is not easy to raise children while also studying at the same time. At the end of our meeting, I asked for their names and their email addresses (to stay in contact). Again, only the man reacted, writing down only his name and his email address.*

*After they left I wondered about what had happened and if there had been a conflict between the couple. Did the woman do something with which her husband did not agree? Why was he the only one who answered my questions? Why didn’t she reply to my questions? I offered at the beginning of the conversation that we could speak in English or French. The man thankfully refused, saying that his wife understands German. I try to make the consulting situation as pleasant as possible. It takes place in a small office with a meeting table, there is coffee / water / tea, etc.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is a woman around 37 years old and she is German. She has been working in a German university for nearly 15 years and currently she is in charge of personal development in the Family Services Centre.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is a Moroccan man of approximately 30 years old and he does not have a student status at the university in question.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is: their age and that they don’t have a student status. What separates them is: their nationalities, their gender, their professional status, their skin color.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT****PHYSICAL  
CONTEXT**

It was an official counseling situation in a university office.

**OTHER PEOPLE  
PRESENT**

There was also the wife of the person at the origin of the incident. She was a student at the faculty of pharmacy of the university. She did not speak even if she was the student enrolled at the university and even when the Narrator spoke directly to her, her husband was the one answering.

**LARGER SOCIAL  
CONTEXT**

Formal situation of counselling in a safe “frame”.



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Irritated, upset

Curious, Reflective

Sad

A couple came to the JGU Family Services Center to receive council concerning the kindergarten placement for one of their children due to the woman's student status. When the narrator asked both of them questions, only the man answered.

**GENDER:** Equality between men and women: The narrator's perception of equality means that both men and women have the same rights. This means that there is no hierarchy when having a conversation. Everybody may articulate their personal opinion, statements and may contribute to conversations with others. The narrator's vision of an emancipated woman is characterized by equality. She has the same rights and duties as men have. She is not reduced to certain old fashioned roles (mother, wife, daughter, housewife), but she is free and may choose her way of life.

**INDIVIDUALISM:** The narrator finds it strange that the woman does not come to see her alone, which reflects an individualistic expectation.

**HIERARCHY:** All efforts of the narrator to break the ice between her and the most important person (female student) were ignored / rejected by both husband and wife. Maybe the couple knew that they didn't depend on the narrator. The narrator is not in the position to decide whether someone will get a place in a kindergarten or not.

**COMMUNICATION:** The preferred communication style of the narrator is direct, verbal communication. The problem is the wife's non-communication. The expectation is that all people that come together in a meeting talk to each other. It is also expected that all are equal in terms of the level of participation in the communication. The narrator is too careful to either ask the question: "What is your opinion?", thereby directly addressing the female student, or to jump to the meta-level of communication by asking: "Why do you not answer my questions yourself?" Why? Because she did not want to risk that the situation escalates. Neither for her, nor for the female student.

**RECIPROCITY:** The narrator expected the wife and, not the husband, to respond to questions addressed to her. Modern western societies tend to favor immediate reciprocity. A welcome is normally answered by the other, one interaction initiative produces a reaction by the other. When the narrator asks a question and the woman does not respond this is against the rules of communication, it is interpreted as a sign of unbalance, of unusual behavior; we're not used to it.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A couple came to the JGU Family Services Center to receive counsel concerning the kindergarten placement for one of their children due to the woman studying pharmacy. The narrator asked both of them questions, only the man answered.

**GENDER ROLES:** Women are less important than men, women depend on men. Women have to do what their husbands want them to do. They are not free. They have to obey. They have to stick to traditional rules.

**HIERARCHY:** The husband was a parcel driver and his wife stayed at home with the children. The woman had already studied in her home country (we don't know if she already graduated) and decided to continue her studies in Germany. It seems that the difficulty was that a) the woman no longer stays at home with the children and b) she starts studying while he is delivering parcels.

**COMMUNICATION:** If a man (husband) is present and talks there is no need / permission for the woman to talk.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

We have to accept and understand that our definition of freedom and equality is different from others. Maybe the relationship of a couple is not the way it seems to be when they present themselves in public. Maybe the woman is happy with her life and to have the chance to study in Germany is a big step for her, even if it may seem like a little step from our perspective. There was no violence in the situation, no crying, no clear sign of feeling uncomfortable on behalf of the woman.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

There is a barrier which we shouldn't cross: To judge a woman / a couple for a behavior we just do not understand. We have to be careful before judging someone unfairly based on our western perspective on the situation. Learn more about other cultures and how to communicate in these cases. How can we change the situation? Maybe understand it first?



Critical incident

“JOKES ON HOLOCAUST”

Germany

## The incident “JOKES ON HOLOCAUST”

**A critical incident told by an German student studying in the US, recorded in 2019 by JGU**

*“During my teaching assistantship at a college in the USA, I encountered many international students and spent quite some time with them. One day, while having lunch with a couple of both international and American friends, our conversation turned to the topic of World War II and Hitler – as it often did. I feel like it is just something people like to talk about when Germans are present. I don’t mind talking about these topics as it’s important to remember that part of German history and I generally don’t feel personally attacked or offended when people point out the atrocities in the Holocaust that were committed by Nazi Germany. However, during our conversation, one Armenian and one French student started doing the Hitler salute “jokingly” to see how I would react while also asking me whether I had fulfilled my “daily quota of burning Jews” for that day already. I told them that jokes like that were in poor taste and that it’s not really respectful to talk about victims of the Holocaust like that. It wasn’t the first time they said something like that (the French student regularly started sniffing around whenever he entered my house to tell me that it smelled of burned Jew) so I got really angry when they said that it’s not that big of a deal and that I should just calm down and get over myself. I got up and left without saying anything else – I didn’t sit with them for the rest of the semester”.*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 22 years old, he is a German man whose native language is German. He is a student and a teaching assistant and he has been at the university in question for 1 year.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other two persons are respectively of Armenian and French nationality. They are 20 and 21 years old. They are both men. They are both students. The French man has been at the university for 1 year, while the Armenian has been there for 2 years.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common: their gender, their age, their student status and the years spent at the university in question. What differentiates them are: their nationalities and their native language.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Informal situation: Having lunch together as a group of young students; physical setting: a cafeteria
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were 4 other people, 1 American, 1 Greenlandic and 2 Spanish. There were no other German present. They did not react to these comments.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	There had been similar situations while the French and the Armenian guy were visiting the Narrator at his apartment.



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Angry, Fed up, curious

Disregarded

While having lunch at a university cafeteria an argument between two students and the narrator starts; a conversation about Hitler, Jews, and World War II started in which comments were made towards the German person (narrator).

**THREATENING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY:** Germans are critical about their recent history and especially about Hitler. There is a strong feeling of shame when it comes to this chapter of history and it seems that Germans are indelibly associated with this part of their history. It is a burden that makes it difficult to talk about it neutrally. Jokes with non-Germans are a taboo subject.

**RESPECT FOR THE VICTIMS:** Jokes about the Holocaust are of poor taste. It is disrespectful to talk about victims of the Holocaust like that. Anti-Semitic jokes are not tolerable.

**DIRECT / INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** The Narrator had already sent clear signs of "enough is enough". For him, the communication was not politically correct.

**POLITICALLY CORRECT SUBJECTS:** It seems like there are some taboo subjects that are, only for one specific national identity, particularly related to past historical events. This is clearly a very sensitive subject and can provoke a very strong reaction if not treated in a respectful way.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

While having lunch at a university cafeteria an argument between two students and the narrator starts; a conversation about Hitler, Jews, and World War II started in which comments were made towards the German person (narrator).

**POLITICALLY CORRECT SUBJECTS:** There are different “red lines” or taboos in different countries and for different individuals. For the non-German participants in the conversation this subject offers different sorts of jokes, and it is something they can laugh about. The perception of the subject is clearly not the same for the narrator: it is not a funny subject he can joke about, this is totally disrespectful from the perspective of the German Narrator.

**CULTURE AND INTERIORIZATION OF RACIST HUMOUR:** French have a different kind of dark humour, even among young people. Anti-semitic jokes are quite widespread and they are the symbol of a specific humour, spread by Pierre Desproges or Dieudonné. This way of making fun of almost everything and everyone without even realizing how difficult it could be for a German person makes it very difficult to establish a good relationship.

**RESPECT FOR OTHER CRITICAL MOMENTS OF HISTORY:** The students had no respect for potentially critical topics concerning the historical backgrounds of other nations. It was an uncomfortable situation, but it had no visible consequences for the narrator’s popularity.

**COMMUNICATION BOUNDARIES:** What is polite and what is provocative could need to be specified and explained when meeting someone that makes these kind of “dark humour” jokes.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**POSSIBLE  
SOLUTIONS**

Before making fun of others: Think about what possible taboos are and what critical topics and aspects in different cultures and in the nation's history are. Body language can often tell if there is an offending situation. If we listen carefully we can also read / hear between the lines.



Critical incident

“SITTING ON THE FLOOR”

Paris

## The incident “SITTING ON THE FLOOR”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“It happened on my first days of studying in France. I just got into the classroom of a theatre class in an amphitheatre – called Amphitheatre 4. The professor was already there, sitting on a chair in the middle of the scene. At the beginning, everyone else was sitting on their chairs in a circle, when all of a sudden one of the students, Fanny, decided to listen to the teacher laid down on the ground. The teacher was not bothered, or at least he did not show any sign of it. Shortly after, the other students did the same lying down on the floor or just sitting freely in the space in front of the professor, who was still seated on his chair.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

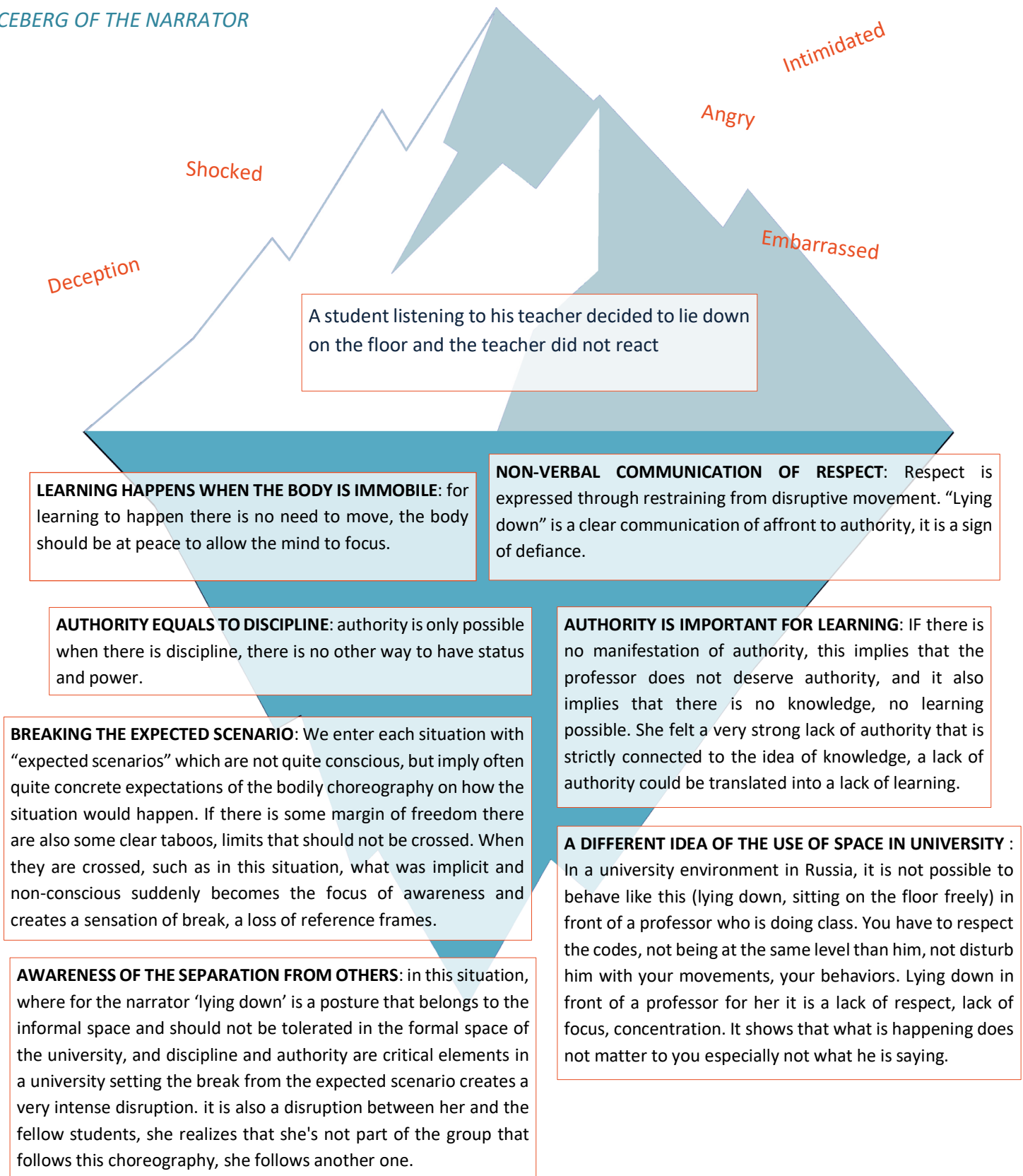
<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 24 years old, she comes from Russia. She has been in France for a year and half. She is a student in master degree of theatre
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The professor is 60 years old and has been teaching in the university for 20 years. He is French and heterosexual.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is that they are present in theatre class of university. What separates them are: their country of origin, their status (immigrant-native and student-professor) and their age.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	University context. The Amphitheatre with the stage and the stands, non-formal space to have class in. The university class was a master degree in theatre.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	A group of students of her class (more or less than 20 people) and the professor.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Faculties of fine arts and performing arts have the reputation of being more “nonconformists” less attached to the forms used in other departments.



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR



*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A student listening to his teacher decided to lie down on the floor and the teacher did not react

**LEARNING AS AN EMBODIED ACTION:** as professor of theatre, he may believe in learning as an embodied practice, he may not believe that disciplining, immobilizing the body is necessary for concentration. To the contrary, he may believe that movement, adjustment of the body is useful for helping the learning process.

**ENCOURAGING BEING PRESENT IN THE BODY, ENCOURAGING CREATIVE USE OF SPACE:** as a theatre specialists, he may encourage his students to be aware of their bodily needs and adjust to the feelings they have, using the physical environment freely.

**AUTHORITY DOES NOT DEPEND ON DISCIPLINE:** in the professors' representation, authority does not depend on disciplining the students, but on the students' recognition of his knowledge and competences. He does not need rigidity to feel he has more status.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

The observation of a behaviour unusual for the academic context an unusual such as sitting on the floor is interpreted as a lack of authority of the professor and evaluated as the lack of competences and worthiness of the professor. A difference in nonverbal behaviour is thus connected to the evaluation of the competences of a professor.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Making explicit the institutional culture of the faculty, such as behaviour rules and communication codes could help prevent such misunderstandings. Such introductions are often skipped because faculty considers them unnecessary, though as the incident demonstrates they can actually cause bigger misunderstandings.



# Critical incident

## “GO HOME!”

### Paris

## The incident “GO HOME!”

**A critical incident told by a local student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“One day in class, I was not paying attention to the teacher. When he saw me, he insisted that I went to the blackboard, and when I was there I did not know what to do because I was not understand anything. So, the teacher told me “Go back at your place (chez vous), you have nothing to do here”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 23 years girl. She is of Chinese origin and she have French nationality. She is student in bachelor’s degree. Older than her classmates as she had to repeat several years.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The teacher is a 40 years old French man.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their French nationality. What separates them are: their status (student-vs. professor), their country of origin, their age and their gender.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The regular classroom
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	The whole class: the classmates were younger around 18, keen on phonetics.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	If international students are not rarities in general in French universities, they may be more scarce in courses such as phonetics.



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Shocked  
Need to be encouraged

Humiliated  
Upset

Lack of trust

The teacher notices that a student is focusing on her phone, asks her to answer a question coming to the front of the class and when she fails, he tells her to “go home”.

**PROFESSIONNALISM AND CARING** : for the well-being of students, because the teacher did not wait until the end of class nor asked her what was wrong. It seems that in France, teacher are used to tell to students who are not having the best results, to change their mind and try another field. However, it is unusual that these kind of comments are made in front of an entire classroom.

**RESPECT** : the teacher told her something that was not supposed to be said out loud, in front of everybody. She perceived a Lack of Empathy for a student in need.

**INEQUALITY OF TREATMENT** : because, in her opinion, she would never have done that if it was a French student. This is however not clear, because of what has been said before.

## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

The teacher notices that a student is focusing on her phone, asks her to answer a question coming to the front of the class and when she fails, he tells her to “go home”.

**HIERARCHY:** teacher’s role to educate students and tell them if they are not made for university (apparently common in France). He identified a bad student with no interest in following class, so in his perspective he was just helping her to realize that this class was not good for her.

**RISK OF ‘LOSING FACE’ :** « if someone is not listening it means that I am not being respected » may led him to act quickly and aggressively ; he may felt under attack.

**ELITISM :** saying that she was not made for this university so she had no point in being there, underlining that just the good ones should be there; and Discrimination linked to Amélie Chinese origins in a phonology class (*she is not French so she will never be able to do a phonology exercise, no point in helping her and wasting time*).

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Because of being irritated by her loss of attention the teacher ends up humiliating a student in front of the entire class, with a comment that has some xenophobic undertones.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

In several countries – such as France – teachers' preparation focuses on the disciplines taught as opposed to the act of teaching. In fact it is possible to become university professor without any formal learning in pedagogy. This makes continuous training all the more necessary, in domains such as communication or relation / emotion management. so that teachers do not act upon their emotions but can become aware of their emotions and work with them in more adaptive ways.

An awareness-raising training could help teachers to avoid comments with xenophobic undertones.



# Critical incident

## “GOING TO THE TOILET”

### Paris

## The incident “GOING TO THE TOILET”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“My culture shock is from 2018, my third year in University in a Parisian suburb. One day during lunch break in my classroom, a girl stood up saying that she was going to poop. I was shocked because for me going to the toilet is personal, intimate. In particular going to poop. Basically, it’s humiliating. After that, I got used to the fact that people here say that they’re going to the toilet because here it’s not a matter of discomfort as it is at home country, Mali.”*

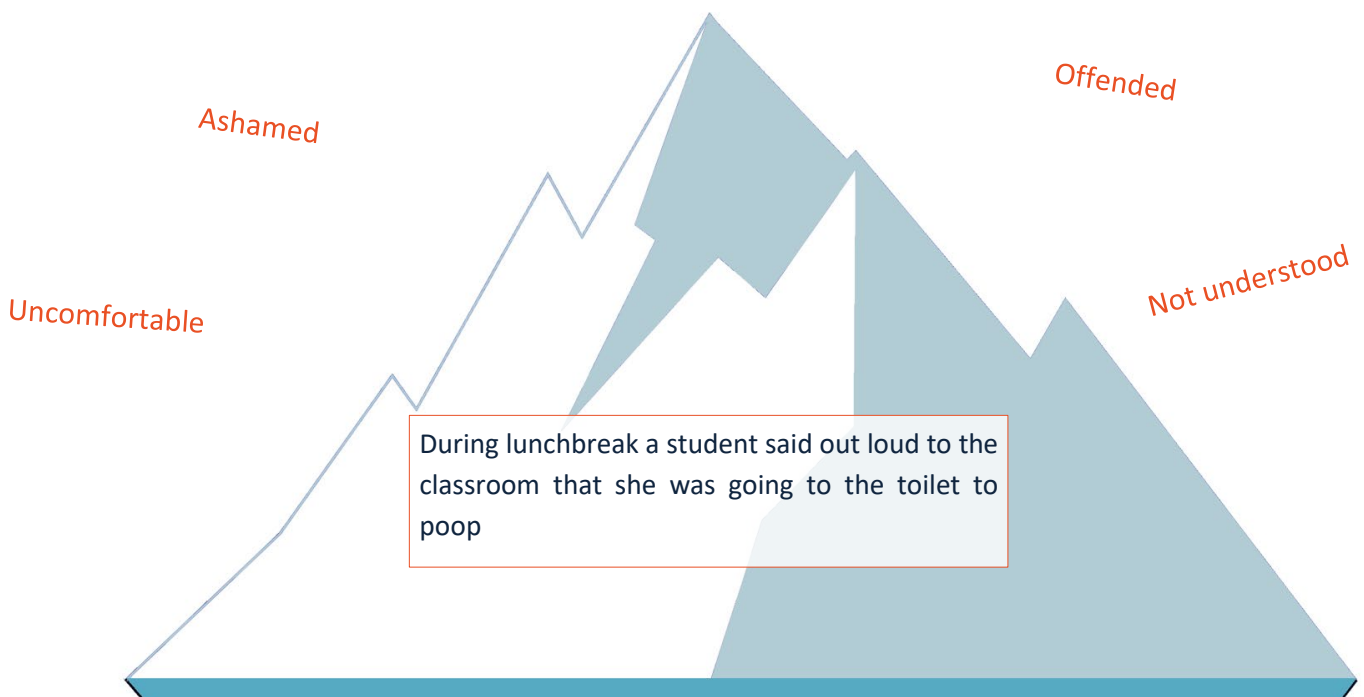
### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 21 years old, she comes from Mali. She has been in France for a year in university. She is Christian and has a student visa in France. Her mother tongue is Bamanankan. She is from middle social class.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is a 21 years old French girl. She is second year at the university and her mother tongue is French. She is from middle social class.
<b>WHAT CONNECTS THEM / WHAT SEPARATES THEM?</b>	What connects them is their gender, their age, their social class and student status. What separates them are: their country of origin, their status (immigrant-native) and their mother tongue and maybe their religion.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Classroom, during lunch break.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	A group of peers, no professor.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	The classroom did not seem to impact the incident while the moment of lunch break did. In France it could happen that lunch break take place in the classroom, while some students could go eat outside or at the canteen. However it is not rare to stay in the classroom with a home packed lunch.





**BODY FLUIDS :** For the narrator, body fluids are a taboo subject. In fact, even indirect / contextual communication about urine and excrement is avoided as much as possible. For instance, in Mali, when receiving guests, it is not unusual to wait for them to leave the house to use the toilet, so for her it was a real shock to hear somebody talking about it in such an open way.

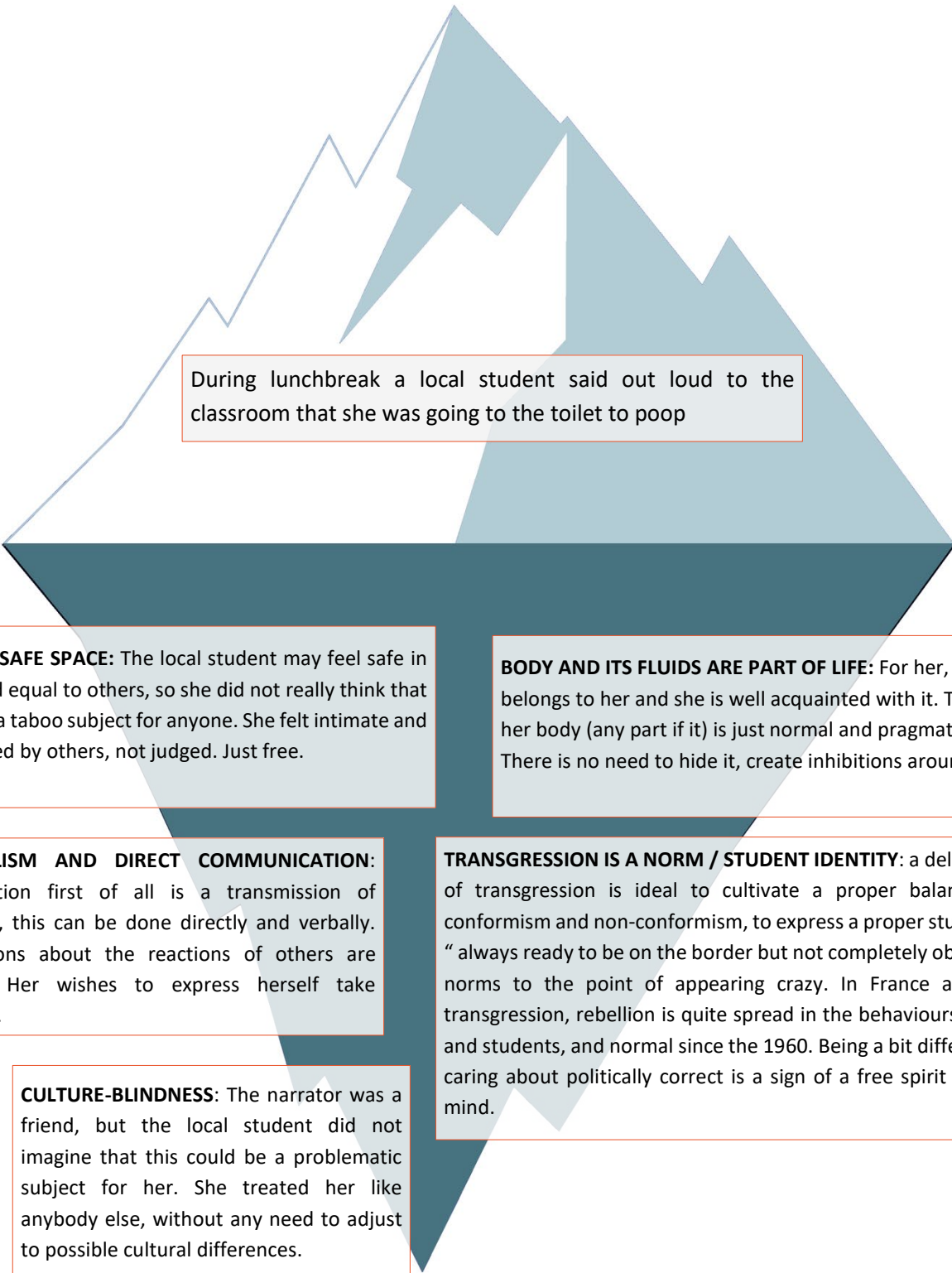
**COMMUNICATION: CONSIDERING THE REACTIONS OF OTHERS :** The narrator thought that the local student should pay attention to what she says out loud because people could get her wrong, that they could think that she is not a good girl. does not care for dignity and self-respect. When communicating in public, first of all one must reflect on the impact of the communication: how the others will receive what we say.

**LUNCH BREAK :** The juxtaposition of food and excrement is particularly uncomfortable. If the logical link is clear between them, it is a link that should be hidden, as it reduces human beings to biological entities. Such a reminder brings a feeling of shame.

**SELF-DISCLOSURE AND RESPECT:** Talking about excessively intimate subjects implies too much self-exposure, search of the attention of the others, it is the opposite of respectful humble communication. The narrator thinks that because of this intimate self-disclosureshe has no respect for herself and that she was humiliating herself.

**DIRTY LANGUAGE AND STATUS AND CONFORMITY:** Talking about poop is associated with dirty language, which is connotated with lower social status or lower social class. This is in itself a shock at university, which claims to be an institution with highly educated people (staff and students). For the narrator integration and being recognised as a normal student might be of high value, but the local student does not seem to care about these norms.

**CULTURAL ADAPTATION / RISK OF LOSING FACE:** Marie checked the reactions of the others and saw that no one else was shocked by this communication. She understood that it is not the behaviour of the local student but her own interpretation that sticks out of the context. She felt the need to adjust and did not react openly.



During lunchbreak a local student said out loud to the classroom that she was going to the toilet to poop

**SAFETY AND SAFE SPACE:** The local student may feel safe in the space and equal to others, so she did not really think that this could be a taboo subject for anyone. She felt intimate and safe, respected by others, not judged. Just free.

**BODY AND ITS FLUIDS ARE PART OF LIFE:** For her, her body belongs to her and she is well acquainted with it. Talking about her body (any part if it) is just normal and pragmatic for Julie. There is no need to hide it, create inhibitions around it.

**INDIVIDUALISM AND DIRECT COMMUNICATION:** communication first of all is a transmission of information, this can be done directly and verbally. Considerations about the reactions of others are secondary. Her wishes to express herself take precedence.

**TRANSGRESSION IS A NORM / STUDENT IDENTITY:** a delicate amount of transgression is ideal to cultivate a proper balance between conformism and non-conformism, to express a proper student identity “always ready to be on the border but not completely oblivious to the norms to the point of appearing crazy. In France a little bit of transgression, rebellion is quite spread in the behaviours of youngsters and students, and normal since the 1960. Being a bit different and not caring about politically correct is a sign of a free spirit and an open mind.

**CULTURE-BLINDNESS:** The narrator was a friend, but the local student did not imagine that this could be a problematic subject for her. She treated her like anybody else, without any need to adjust to possible cultural differences.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>	Body fluids are connected to conceptions of cleanness and purity and hence to deep taboos about what is decent and what is not. As such they can generate very deep culture shock reactions.
<b>POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</b>	Such taboos can also be tackled in a safe and even entertaining way in intercultural trainings. Precautions need to be taken so that the training does not become or is not interpreted as the teaching of “good manners” to those who do not have them, but rather an inclusive comparative analysis of different taboos to ensure that they can be respected.



# Critical incident

# “UNDRESSING”

# Paris

## The incident “UNDRESSING”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“When I had just arrived at the fine arts school in France in 2014, I saw my classmates taking off their sweaters when they were hot, in the amphitheater or outside.... More specifically, I remember a comrade (Laurene) removing her sweater in the amphitheater during art history class. She was sitting in front of me and to the left. She was often doing this gesture in her daily life. She was wearing a tank top under the sweater and I didn't know where to look and how to react to her action. At first, for me, it was a shock because in Korea, nobody takes off their sweaters. We wear a jacket, a shirt that closes with a zip or buttons. Then I thought that the act of lifting your arms and taking off your sweater in front of someone can be interpreted as a sign of provocation..”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 19 years old, she comes from South Korea, from a rural region. She has just arrived in France for the start of the academic year. She is not very religious. She belongs to the middle social class.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is a year younger than the narrator, 18 years old. She is a White French girl enrolled at the same University.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is that they are inscribed into the same university, same class. What separates them are: their country of origin, their status in France (immigrant vs. native) their skin color.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The situation took place in an amphitheater of the University while all students were looking straight ahead towards the projector of the professor.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were 40 students present as well as the professor. These tended to be French with more or less the same characteristics. The lack of any kind of reaction from the professor for the student's gesture made the narrator realize the particularity of her reaction.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Surprised,  
shocked, ashamed

A female student removed her sweater with the gesture of raising both arms in the amphitheater during class. She was wearing a tank top under the sweater.

Embarrassed, uneasy

**FORMALITY OF DRESS CODES:** In South Korea All middle school students as well as high school students wear a uniform with very strict rules: ban on varnishes, make-up and on certain hairstyle etc. The narrator who had just graduated from high school in Korea had experienced little freedom concerning her dress-code.

**SELF-EXPOSURE AND VULNERABILITY:** As arms are raised to remove the sweater, the narrator can't see the outside, she can't move. In this position she cannot see and control the impressions she makes on others.

**ASYMMETRIC GENDER ROLES :** Gender roles are very asymmetrical, with males having higher status than women who are not expected to be independent and autonomous but rather to be surrendered to male authority. The dominant value for women is modesty.

**INTIMACY / PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PART OF THE BODY :** The body is precious. It shouldn't be shown to anyone. Especially for women, the upper part of the body must be well reserved. Exhibiting parts of the body wearing a tank top is associated to the desire of attracting sexual attention of men.

**UNDRESSING IN PUBLIC IS ATTRACTING ATTENTION :** The change of clothing must be done discreetly, away from the eyes of others. One should only appear in public once the act of taking of a sweater is accomplished. Performing the process in public shows too much of one's intimacy and is associated to the desire of attracting attention and provocation.



*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A female student removed her sweater with the gesture of raising both arms in the amphitheater during class. She was wearing a tank top under the sweater.

**INDIVIDUALISM** : She does not seem to care about the judgment of others. Instead, she focuses on her needs and on her desires (she feels hot, she takes off a sweater).

**EXPOSURE OF THE FEMALE BODY** : It is accepted to show bare skin of the forearms, upper arms and shoulders. These are not considered as private parts of the body that cannot be displayed in public.

**(RELATIVE) INFORMALITY** : The hierarchy between teachers and students and in general the formality is less strict in the fine arts specialisation in comparison of other institutions. More freedom is permitted for students, also in dress code (tank top is accepted).

**LETTING THE PROCESS SEEN IS NOT A THREAT TO FACE** : Taking of a sweater or other garments are not considered as excessive display of intimacy as long as the parts considered "private" are covered. In fact French women frequently use public transport to do their make-up, and trigger little surprise amongst the viewers.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Gender, also referred to as the „taboo dimension“ (Hofstede) in intercultural contact has a great diversity of representations and approaches. Gender constructions are often connected to issues of respect, dignity, decency. For this reason they may become very sensitive and trigger conflicts or tensions.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Intercultural trainings can have modules which open up expectations and representations concerning clothing or more generally the body. These sessions should not be focused on international students only, rather become an opportunity for all the students to explore together cultural diversity in different domains of life and explore how these differences could have an impact on University life, adopting joint rules / protocols if needed.

Sessions opening up conceptions of gender would be particularly relevant as students may possibly engage in intimate relationships, or consider each-other as potential partners and the representations of appropriate behaviours and in fact gender itself are very diverse and sensitive.



Critical incident

“CHINESE PEOPLE EAT  
DOGS”

Paris

## The incident “CHINESE PEOPLE EAT DOGS”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“One day I was following a class of phonology. The teacher was trying to explain the sound [CH] and as an example she used the phrase “Les chinois mangent des chiens” [The Chinese eat dogs]. She wrote this sentence on the blackboard, and I did not really understand how and why she took this sentence as an example. So I stood up and I said out loud to the teacher that not all Chinese eat dogs, and that she had no respect for our culture. She told me to go out because I was disturbing the class.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is a 21 years woman. She is the daughter of Chinese immigrant and have French nationality. Her Mother tongue is French and Chinese. She is a student in the university for half year.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The teacher is a 45 year old French woman. Her mother tongue is French. She has been in the university for more than 1 year.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their gender and their nationality. What separates them is their status in the university, their mother langue (Chinese/French) and their age.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	A regular classroom
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	The entire class was present, 40/45 people (on the first year of class in French university we have big classes)
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	There were no other Chinese/Asian students, there were other people with African origins. Moreover, the classmates were younger than the student

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Angry and upset

De-valued

Humiliated

Disgusted

Guilty

Shocked

To illustrate the 'ch' sound in phonology class the teacher gives the example "Chinese people eat dogs"

**TEACHING RESPECT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY:** Sentences like this should not be tolerated in a university environment, especially from the teachers. Teachers should convey to students the fundamental respect of other cultures; they should not use examples from other cultures as a contrast to reinforce the superiority of or identification to French culture. This should not depend on whether or not there are students representing that particular culture.

**GENERALIZATION ABOUT OTHER CULTURES AND GROUPS OF PEOPLE IS BAD:** the sentence 'The Chinese eat dogs' is a generalization, bringing all Chinese into one category —that of dog-eaters. Even if there are some Chinese people who consider dogs as accepted animals for eating, not all Chinese would agree. Putting this sentence as such without context, supposes that all Chinese can be categorized together. Such simplistic declaration about another culture cannot be used as an example in a classroom.

**CONSTRUCTION OF OTHERNESS / DISCOMFORT OF BECOMING THE 'OTHER':** using stereotypes about culinary habits of other cultures, more concretely making statements about strange things the others eat is a standard item in the construction of otherness. Such sentences underline the differences and divide people reinforcing the separation into two categories 'us' and 'them' and constructing a very negative image of the Chinese. The other cultures present in the class made a sort of coalition against the student, because she became 'the one who eats dogs'.

**REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE, CLOSURE TOWARDS THE OTHER:** the teacher refused any possibilities of communication, dialogue with the only Chinese person in the class, to explore her point of view. This is in contrast with her expectation to grasp opportunities for learning, for deconstructing stereotypes, and correcting mistakes one makes.

## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

To illustrate the 'ch' sound in phonology class the teacher gives the example "Chinese people eat dogs"

**RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY, POLITICAL CORRECTNESS:** If the teacher is aware of such concepts, she does not think that they would be related to her mission as a teacher. She does not perceive anything wrong with using stereotypes, possibly she does not know how to reflect on them. She may live in the ignorant bliss of ethnocentrism, where strange facts about other cultures are evidences of the superiority of one's own culture.

**AUTHORITY AND THE RIGHT TO SPEAK:** The teacher could say anything while the student has been kept silent, she even had to exit the class. Students don't have the right to confront teachers directly. Teachers have the right to end or prevent dialogue by eliminating the student from the space where interaction could take place.

**ROLE OF A TEACHER / PROFESSIONAL POSTURE:** Her mission is strictly and narrowly concerning her subject matter (phonology) she does not need to present herself as a role model to students, she does not need to transmit fundamental values for a better generation of people.

**ROLE OF A STUDENT:** The role of a student is to learn from the teacher and respect her. In no way should a student have anything to teach a teacher.

**AUTHORITY AND MISTAKES:** Admitting one made a mistake is perceived as a threat to one's authority, as if the teacher should be invincible, infallible. Admitting she made a mistake would imply a loss of face and hence a loss of authority. Mistakes are perceived as stigma, as something wrong to avoid, not as inevitable occurrences in a learning process. It also reflects the image of a teacher as someone who already possesses all necessary knowledge and does not need to learn anymore.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

“Political correctness” has a bad press. It is sometimes seen as a tool in the hands of the minorities to repress and victimize members of majority. It is sometimes seen as a superficial treatment and cover-up of deep prejudice, making it impossible to express and treat questions that are relevant for all. It may be worth for university communities to make this debate explicit, exploring together what is the “ideal” positioning for the University community towards political correctness that would help create a safe space for all, and one that allows learning.

Hierarchy – or: can the teachers make mistakes? This situation is a nice illustration of how a teacher is unable to assume she made a mistake. Instead of becoming aware of the generalization she made and using the intervention of the Chinese student to rectify what happened she simply sends her out of the classroom, reflecting probably her view on the idea of mistakes. Through this action she does not only teach her class that it is OK to use stereotypes about another culture, but also the fact that when one makes a mistake it is OK to dive into an avoidant strategy.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Creation of internal division in the classroom: no matter what is their ideological position related to cultural diversity and political correctness, teachers should refrain from making comments that could create / reinforce divisions in the classroom based on culture (nationality, ethnicity, religion etc.).

The value of respect for cultural diversity and teachers’ mission: several Universities claim that the respect of diversity is one of their core values. But core values are not always well represented by individual teachers. Should this be a real value the University wishes to endorse, training sessions or guidelines could be developed to ensure its application in practice.



# Critical incident “SATISFACTION SURVEY” Paris

## The incident “SATISFACTION SURVEY”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“I had prepared a survey in order to find out solutions for small group works. Every time the teacher proposes group works, there are always a lot of problems. And then, one of the students looking at the questionnaire, throws it at me. She did not want to fill it out, which is OK, it was her choice, I did not oblige people to do anything they did not want to, but the freedom of an individual ends when the freedom of the other starts. Freedom cannot mean putting others in a humiliating situation. For me this was a total lack of respect.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 30 years heterosexual woman. She comes from Algeria and she is Muslim. She is a student in master’s degree at university for 6 months in France.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is a 23 years old French woman who is a descendent of migrant possibly from Mali. Her mother tongue is French and Soninke. She is Muslim.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common is their gender and their religion. What separates them are: their migrant status in France, their country of origin and their age.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Typical university classroom with tables and chairs.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were other students present, more or less everybody in the class was there. It was the break.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	They did not react in any way and this was not well received by the narrator. The heterogeneity of the class may have had an impact: it seemed that there was a faultline between the French and the non-French students.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Angry

Humiliated

Lack of respect

A student distributes surveys about the class she prepared about efficiency, and after reading another student throws it in her face

**AGGRESSIVE NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOUR / VIOLENCE:** Is considered impolite, lacks respect for the other.

**INTEGRATION:** Proper integration in a classroom would mean that French and non-French students work together, and that small group work is also done in heterogeneous groups. This was not the case in this class, where French students tended to work together excluding the foreign students. For Myriam inclusion, integration would be a value.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** Trying to ignore the conflict instead of assuming it and making it explicit is a form of hypocrisy. Many students privately agreed with her, but when the conflict became explicit, they did not take sides publicly. This avoidant strategy was perceived as hypocritical.

**COMMUNICATING CRITIQUE / FACEWORK:** To communicate critique about one work is possible, but ensuring that it is done in a polite respectful way.

**DIRECT COMMUNICATION:** Is preferred as a communication style, exploring explicitly the issues. When in a conflict active exploration of the subject matter is preferred to just symbolic reaction to the other, (such as throwing a paper at the other). Symbolic reaction without explanations leaves many details in implicit.

**SOLIDARITY:** People in the same class should help each other, especially when some of them are foreigners.

## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

A student distributes surveys about the class she prepared about efficiency, and after reading another student throws it in her face

**OPEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS VS DISTORTING RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR OWN AGENDA:** When one creates a satisfaction questionnaire, it should be an open inquiry about the satisfaction with a course instead of a tool to make a point or to get back at the others. This question had two biases, one in the formulation (which presupposed that there were problems) and a second in the possible answers (either 'we did find solutions' or 'you can only criticise'). This is not in line with the requirements of openness and neutrality.

**INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** It is important to signal disagreement, but it is not necessary to put into words. Signalling via non-verbal behaviour —i.e. in this case returning the questionnaire without having filled it— is as good as explaining. It should help the other reflect on their mistake / position without explicitly tackling the issue.

**RESPONSIBILITY IN INTEGRATION / CULTURE-BLIND APPROACH:** It is not the responsibility of the majority (in this context the French students of the class) to accommodate to the needs of the foreign students and to help their integration via more mixed group and more intense cooperation. When making the small groups nationality / culture is not perceived as a criteria. If this leads to homogeneous French groups, that should not be criticised, it is merely the result of spontaneous group formation.

**IDENTITY THREAT / CATEGORISATION BY NATIONALITY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED:** Not only the question was biased, but it also implicitly differentiated the French and the foreign students, by associating the French students to those who can only criticise. No one should allow themselves such differentiation.

**ASSERTIVITY / HONESTY:** It is important to express one's honest opinion, even if it goes against the opinion or preferences of others. One should not be punished for doing that.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

The incident about the survey hides an underlying conflict, the difficulty of cooperation between the French and the non-French students in class, in particular during group-work. French students often have the preference for working with other French students, which they see as more “efficient” when they optimize according to the grade they anticipate: French students will be more likely to speak and write French better, so they are considered as more useful group partners.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Group work can be a very useful element of the learning process, but teachers who wish to use this form of learning may need to give the basic principles and tools for students on how to do it. These can include the explanation of deep and visible diversity, and how to make the most of a heterogeneous work. Visible diversity implies that we can categorize team members according to visible / audible features into different subgroups. However this categorization does not imply that there are actually differences on the level of values, practices, norms. This latter is referred to as “deep diversity”.

Heterogeneous groups in the sense of “deep diversity” can be more creative and productive than homogeneous groups. However, in the short term they may face more tension, misunderstanding or conflict. In order to overcome these, they must negotiate a common work process.





# Critical incident

## “THE KISSING”

### Paris

## The incident “THE KISSING”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Paris, recorded in 2019 by élan interculturel**

*“Walking out from my classroom, I was stopped by another student, a “white” French. “Hello”, she said to me, and I answered her “Good Morning”. While I turned around, she was just behind me ready to give me “la bise”. I saw her head getting closer, her lips were getting ready. I did not understand what was going on, I did not move, my face was pale and I could not talk. She was almost getting to my face, she stopped suddenly. And with a surprised voice, she said “you do not do “la bise ?”. And I, up to this moment, did not know what “la bise” was.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 23 years old, he comes from Senegal, from a rural region. He has been in France for a year. This is first year in a French University. He is Muslim, but not very religious. He is heterosexual.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is in her early twenties; she is a White French girl enrolled at the same University.
<b>DIFFERENCES / SIMILARITIES</b>	What connects them is that they are enrolled at the same university, same class. What separates them is: their country of origin, their status in France (immigrant vs. native) their skin colour, their gender, and probably their religion.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The situation happened in the University corridor, between classes.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were other students present. These tended to be French, rather than international students. Having the other students as witnesses “looking at him” exacerbated the sensation of being out of place and making a faux pas.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	It is usual to have students from other countries with strong connections with France such as Sénégal, in this sense he was not a “rarity” in the university.

Surprise

Incomprehension

Prudishness

Modesty

Discomfort

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

A girl approaches with her lips the narrator's face in the corridor of the university, he did not know how to react.

**GREETINGS RITUALS:** In Senegal greeting is very important, there are many rituals associated with greeting, actually social life is structured around the greeting rituals as a way how to recognize the other and to establish social contact. Greeting goes through verbal, for instance a way how to greet and recognize the other one in to repeat each other's names for instance "Sané!" "Diallo!" "Sané!" "Diallo!" and then ask for many different important aspects of life such as the family, the work, health and so on. An important amount of time is spent on the greeting rituals.

**LOSS OF FACE FOR NOT KNOWING, AWARENESS OF BEING A FOREIGNER:** The narrator felt very bad when he found himself in this situation, for him unusual but at the same time not understandable for his cultural habits, incapable of decoding her behaviour while he never really felt an outsider before in France. This incident let him feel the cultural differences he was not aware of before. It seems that he was more disappointed of not being aware of this habit than mad or shocked by the situation, which was resolved very quickly after.

**KISSING AS A GREETING RITUAL:** Kissing is not considered as a primary nor a necessary form of expression of intimacy, not even amongst close family members. In general, physical contact is not the usual way to show emotional closeness, emotional closeness is shown by verbal relationship and how much time is spent in the relationship and the verbal sharing.

**PHYSICAL INTIMACY BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN:** Physical intimacy – such as the one including the lips of one adult touching the skin of another - is reserved for the private not the public sphere and it happens in intimate relationships.

An iceberg diagram with a blue outline and a light blue shaded top section. The top section is labeled 'ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON'. Below the waterline, there are four text boxes with orange borders, each containing a different aspect of the cultural analysis. The bottom section of the iceberg is dark blue.

### ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

A girl approaches with her lips the narrator's face in the corridor of the university, he did not know how to react.

**GREETING RITUALS / FORMALIST TENDENCY :** In France and more particularly Paris, there is a tendency for formalism in communication. This means that there is importance given to the form of interactions. For instance, every morning students in the same class, people working together take the time to greet each other bilaterally (instead of saying a general "hello").

**KISSING AS A GREETING RITUAL :** "La bise" or the kiss on the cheek is the accepted greeting ritual for all genders. It works as a first contact ritual and it also works in every consecutive encounter. It is not only reserved for intimate relationship, though in formal environments and in case of a stronger status difference it is perceived as too intimate. It is certainly the dominant pattern for university students who know each other..

**UNIVERSALISM AND ASSIMILATION AS GENERAL MODEL OF TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES :** In France the official / standard model of dealing with diversity is that of diminishing it or denying it to favour / strengthen the sensations of belonging to the same community. For this reason, the appropriate approach to foreigners is the same that would be for locals. Making a distinction would imply a form of discrimination.

**« YOU DON'T DO THE KISSING ? » :** The student acknowledges that he was not reciprocating her kissing motion, with a question that reveals the explanation she constructed. She does not think of an explanation that has to do with how Issa feels about her. Rather it is an explanation that suggests that for personal or most probably cultural convictions the narrator does not follow this ritual. We don't know whether she connected this incident with her preconceptions about migrants,

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**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Seemingly superficial acts such as greetings can trigger culture shock experiences when the people are not familiar with each other's politeness codes. Greeting rituals are connected to people's basic need for recognition, hence such breaks in reciprocity induce directly feelings of being disrespected.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Intercultural trainings often start with sessions about greeting rituals, as these are a very good point of entry to explore the diversity in the forms of communication, and as well as to our reactions to difference, concretely the automatic interpretation of breaks of reciprocity as the others' lack of respect or our own incompetence.



Critical incident

“ONE HOUR LATE FOR A  
PRESENTATION”

Warsaw



## The incident “ONE HOUR LATE FOR A PRESENTATION”

**A critical incident told by a Polish student studying in Warsaw, recorded in 2019 by SAN**

*“We were working on a project in a four-people team. Team members were from three different countries: Poland (me), Ukraine (two students), India (one student). I was the leader of our team. We divided tasks and met several times to discuss. On the day we were to present our project, our Indian colleague was almost 1.5 hours late. Fortunately, our teacher allowed us to give a presentation. However, we were already stressed, and it adversely affected our performance. During the break, I asked our Indian colleague why he was late knowing how important the presentation was. He told me that nothing happened, as he came, and he presented his part. He could not understand why I got nervous.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a 23 years old Polish man holding a BA degree currently enrolled as MA student in the Faculty of Management and Security Studies
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 24 years old student in the same programme coming from India.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their gender, their age, their future profession and current student status. The key element differentiating them is their nationality, and their status as member of the local society vs foreigner.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conflict emerged during class in a classroom, the following conversation took place in the corridor during the break after the presentation class.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	During the presentation the whole class was present, as well as the professor. The most involved other people are the two Ukrainian students also members of their student group.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Currently Indian students are the most represented in Polish universities amongst the international students. This does not imply however that all Polish students had previous interaction with Indian students, nor does it imply that Polish students would be systematically familiarized with cultural features of Indian students.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

disappointment

Anger

Indian team member arrived 1,5 late for the presentation of a project the narrator's team was to deliver

When asked about the delay he claimed that nothing happened and did not understand the reactions his behaviour provoked

**MONOCHRONIC/LINEAR TIME PERCEPTION:** The narrator is from the monochronic culture which, tends to place a high value on punctuality. Lack of punctuality implies a lack of respect for the joint work and the other team members.

**UNIVERSALISTIC APPROACH:** The narrator represents a more universalistic approach and believes that everyone should be treated the same way. According to him, all team members should be punctual.

**HIERARCHY – HIGH POWER DISTANCE:** The narrator is from a high power distance culture in which students treat teachers with respect reserved for people of high status. According to him being late for the presentation was a sign of lack of respect.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

Indian team member arrived 1,5 late for the presentation of a project the narrator's team was to deliver

When asked about the delay he claimed that nothing happened and did not understand the reactions his behaviour provoked

**POLYCHRONIC TIME PERCEPTION:** The student is from the polychronic culture, which ranks personal involvement and completion of tasks above the demands of the pre-set schedule.

**PARTICULARISTIC APPROACH:** The student represents more particularistic approach and believes that people should be treated differently according to their needs and evaluation of a situation may change, based on what's happening at the moment, and who's involved.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Cultural differences in time perceptions often result in one person waiting for another / others. Waiting gives a sensation of lack of respect and loss of face, hence a relatively “simple” cultural difference becomes connected to feelings of disrespect and potentially has a strong impact on the relationship.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

University needs to inform students about the importance of keeping time limits and make sure that they are aware of all deadlines. It also needs to organise workshops during which students become aware of different time perceptions (for instance, with case studies and role-plays).

It may be a good idea for teachers working with multicultural groups to help students become aware of the range of differences they could expect when initiating the group work and, as they become aware of differences, they can agree on common rules.

If the students (local and international) don’t become aware of different perceptions to time and to collaboration, and don’t learn how to negotiate common working culture they will have problems in working in an international and diverse workplace.



Critical incident

“YOU WILL COOK FOR  
ME”

Warsaw

## The incident “YOU WILL COOK FOR ME”

**A critical incident told by a staff member working at the international office, recorded in 2019 by SAN**

*"I worked as an assistant in the Warsaw branch international programmes office of the university. The office was located in the same building as the students' dormitory. Once a student from Saudi Arabia, who just started his studies, came to my office and told me - you will cook for me. I was shocked, but I asked him whether it was a joke. He repeated - you will cook for me, aren't you the students' assistant? I can pay you". I got angry, and at the same time, I felt humiliated as he treated me as a servant."*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

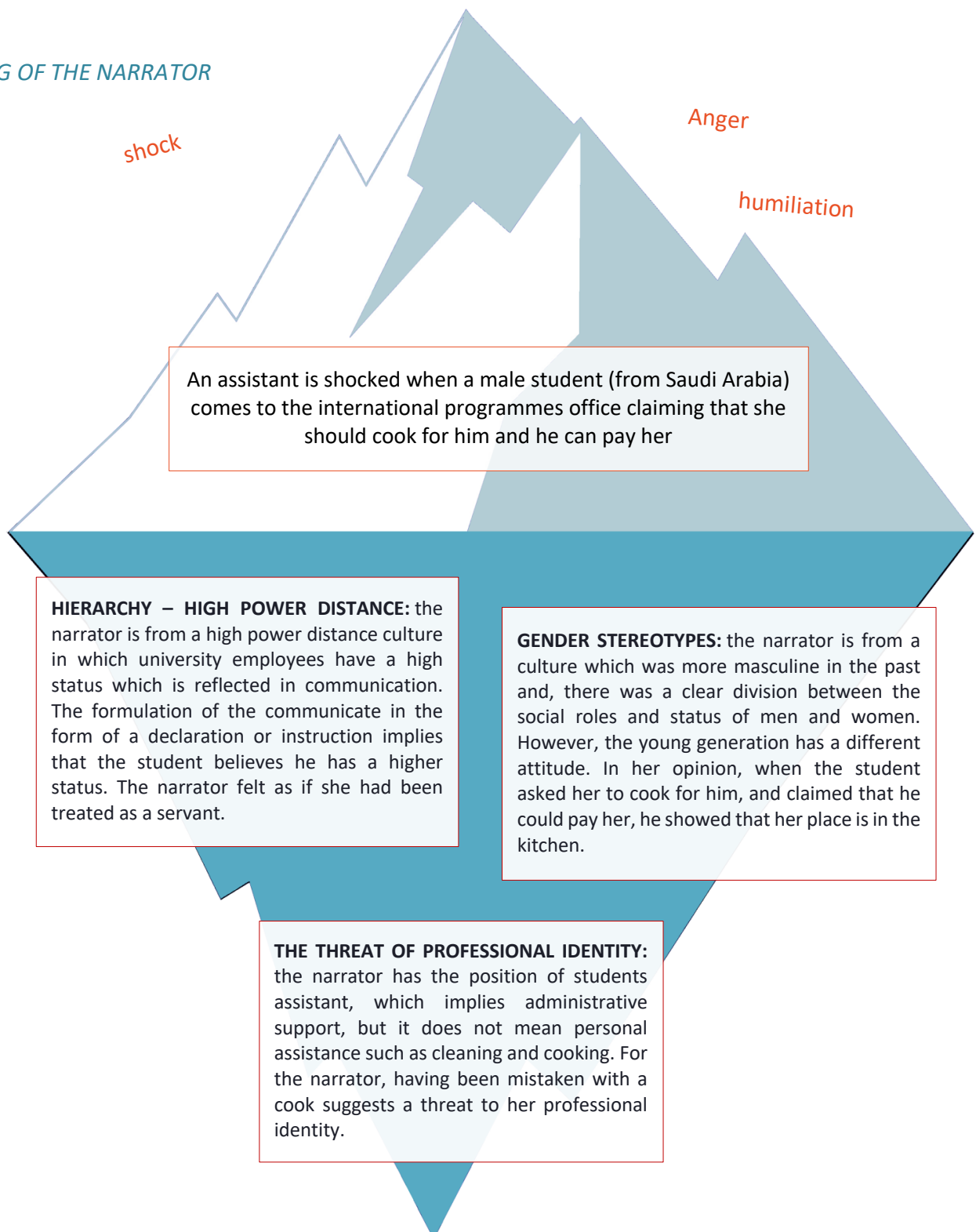
<b>NARRATOR</b>	The situation is told by a 24 years old Polish woman working as an assistant in the international programmes office of the Faculty of Management and Security Studies of a University in Warsaw.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 26 years old man from Saudi Arabia, who's enrolled as a student in the Faculty of Management and Security Studies of a University in Warsaw. He's been there for two weeks.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they share is their age, and the fact that they are connected to the same University. But their gender, roles in the University, status of local / foreigner differentiate them.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conversation took place in the international office, located in the same building as the dormitory. The location of the office could have contributed to the confusion, as the student could assume that the assistant position mentioned on the door mean student's assistant.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There was no one else present.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	The role of the assistant in the international programmes office implies administrative, legal support, not personal care.



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR



*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

An assistant is shocked when a male student (from Saudi Arabia) comes to the international programmes office claiming that she should cook for him and he can pay her

**HIERARCHY – HIGH POWER DISTANCE:** the student is from a high power distance culture in which the respect a person enjoys depends primarily on his status. According to him, the female assistant is lower in the hierarchy than a student.

**MASCULINITY:** the student is from a masculine society in which there is a clear division between the social roles of men and women (according to sharia law social roles of man and women are different). According to him, women occupy traditional roles such as cooking.

**DOMESTIC HELPERS:** in several countries for families in the middle and upper classes, the bulk of domestic chores are handled by employees hired for this effect who often lives in the household.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Gender, also referred to as the „taboo dimension” (Hofstede) in intercultural contact has a great diversity of representations and approaches. Gender constructions are often connected to issues of respect, dignity, decency. For this reason, they may become very sensitive and trigger conflicts or tensions.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

University needs to train both staff and students in cultural diversity and intercultural communication. For instance, organise workshops in different communication styles (direct vs indirect, high-context vs low context).

Intercultural training should have modules which open up expectations and representations concerning gender. These sessions should not be focused on international students only, rather become an opportunity for all the students and the staff members to explore together cultural diversity.



Critical incident

“MOVING THE DEADLINE”

Poland

## The incident “MOVING THE DEADLINE”

### A critical incident told by a university professor in Warsaw, recorded in 2019 by SAN

*"I was the teacher of the Research Methods and Strategies course. As a final assignment, each student had to prepare the report from his or her research and deliver the presentation. Students presented the outcomes of their projects in the final class of the term. Two days later, an Indian student came to my office, claiming that he would like to give the presentation and handle in the report. I explained to him that the deadline was two days ago, and I cannot accept either his paper nor his presentation. He insisted on me to take his report and claimed that he completed the project, and all the requirements are met. I told him that it was impossible, and he would need to take a retake exam. He started to get angry and raised his voice. In his opinion, I could easily move the deadline if only I would like to do it. I asked him to keep his voice down and repeated that it was impossible."*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a 41 years old Polish woman holding a PhD, working as academic teacher in the Faculty of Management and Security Studies of a Polish University.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 26 years old male Indian student holding a BA, enrolled in an MA programme at the faculty. He's been in the University for a semester (approximately 5 months).
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is the fact that they are connected to the same University. But their gender, roles in the University, former education, their status of local / foreigner differentiate them.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conversation took place in the teacher's office.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There was no one else present.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Currently Indian students are the most represented in Polish universities amongst the international students. This does not imply however that all Polish faculty members had previous interaction with Indian students, nor does it imply that they would be systematically familiarized with cultural features of Indian students.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

frustration

surprise

confusion

An Indian student came to the teacher's office, wishing to hand in a report and to make a presentation two days after the deadline

The teacher refused; the student insisted and raised his voice.

**UNIVERSALISTIC APPROACH:** the narrator represents a more universalistic approach and believes that everyone should be treated the same way. According to her, all the same rules/procedures should apply to all students, and they have to respect them. Therefore all students should complete the task on time and hand in the reports by the deadline without exception. Rules can be changed only due to important reasons (e.g. health issues, family reasons). It was not the case as the student did not bring a medical certificate or any other valid document confirming that he could not attend the class. It was not the case as the student did not bring a medical certificate or any other valid document confirming that he could not attend the class.

**HIERARCHY – HIGH POWER DISTANCE:** the narrator is from a high power distance culture in which students should treat teachers with respect reserved for people of high status. According to her, the fact that the student raised his voice on her was a sign of lack of respect.

**COMMUNICATION STYLE/EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS:** the narrator represents a rather reserved culture in which people do not express emotions, especially negative in public and raising voice is the show of disrespect.

**MONOCHRONIC/LINEAR TIME PERCEPTION:** the narrator is from the monochronic culture, which tends to place a high value on timeliness and schedule.



*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

An Indian student came to the teacher's office, wishing to hand in a report and to make a presentation two days after the deadline

The teacher refused; the student insisted and raised his voice.

**POLYCHRONIC TIME PERCEPTION:** the student is from the polychronic culture, which ranks personal involvement and completion of tasks above the demands of the pre-set schedule.

**PARTICULARISTIC APPROACH:** the student represents more particularistic approach and believes that people should be treated differently according to their needs and evaluation of a situation may change, based on what's happening at the moment, and who's involved.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**POSSIBLE  
SOLUTIONS**

The University needs to inform students about the importance of keeping time limits and make sure that they are aware of all deadlines. It also needs to organise workshops during which students become aware of different time perceptions (for instance, with case studies and role-plays).

University needs to train both academic teachers and students in cultural diversity and intercultural communication. For instance, in a different approach to the rules (universalistic vs particularistic approach) as well as different communication styles.



Critical incident

“ONE THING AT A TIME?”

Poland

## The incident “ONE THING AT A TIME?”

**A critical incident told by a university student in Warsaw, recorded in 2019 by SAN**

*“We were working on a project in a time of four people. Team members were from four different countries: Poland (me), Ukraine, Uzbekistan, India. I was the leader of our team. We divided tasks and decided about each task's start and finish date. We met once a week to work together. It was hard for me to cope with our Indian classmate as during the meetings she moved from one topic to another and sent me materials concerning different aspects of our project (not relevant at the moment). During one of the meetings, I asked her to focus on the topic of our meeting. She seemed to be offended and told me that we did not appreciate her efforts. I was surprised but told her that was not true. Then she decided to leave the apartment. I got frustrated.”*

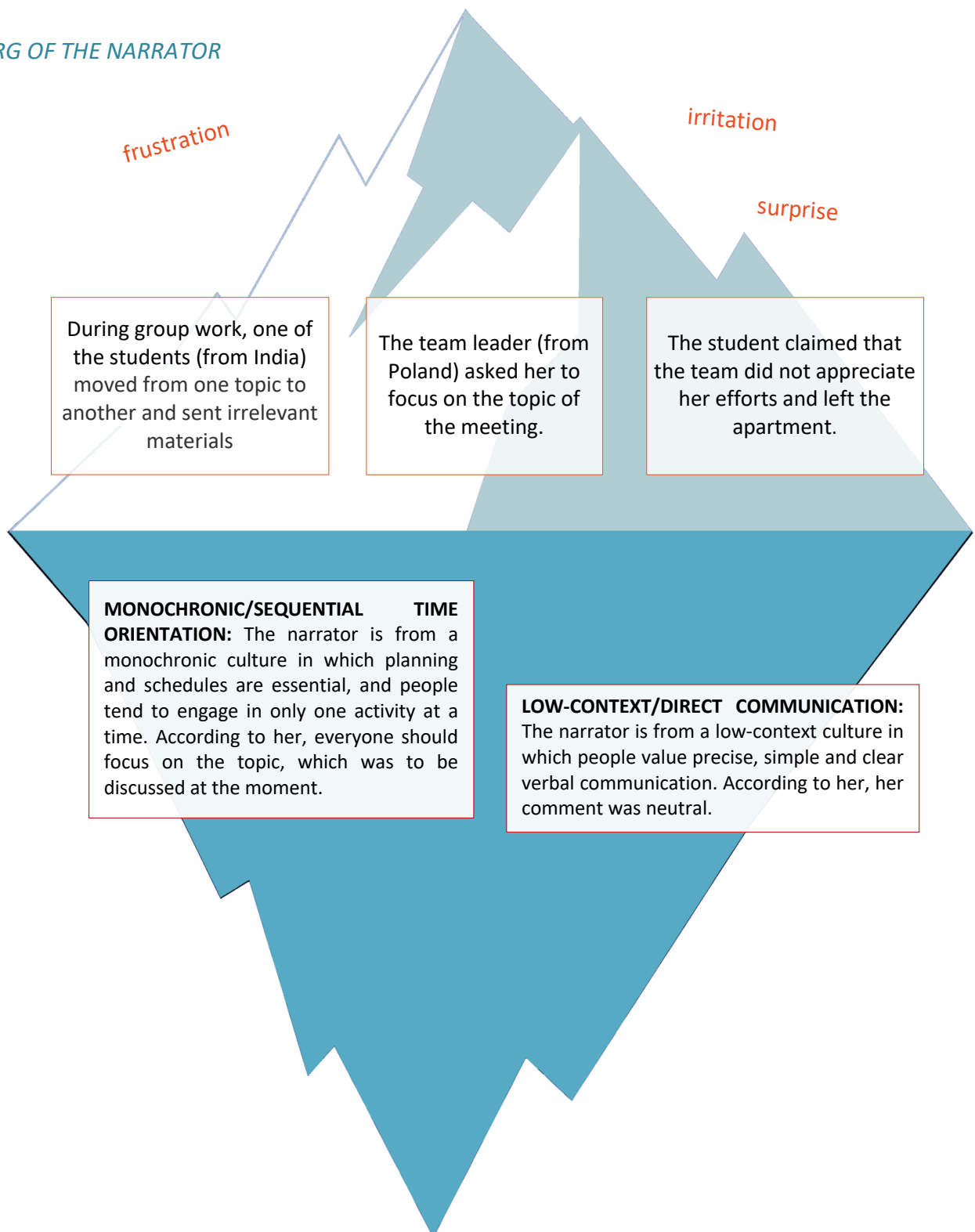
### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a 23 years old female Polish student holding a BA currently enrolled in a MA programme at the Faculty of Management and Security Studies of a Polish University. She's been at the university for 3 semesters.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 24 years old female student enrolled in the same programme coming from India. She's been at the university for 3 semesters.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their gender, their age, their future profession and current student status. The key element differentiating them is their nationality, and their status as member of the local society vs foreigner.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conversation took place in the apartment of one of the team members.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	The other team members present are two class-mates from Ukraine and Uzbekistan who knew both the narrator and the girl who felt offended.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Currently Indian students are the most represented in Polish universities amongst the international students. This does not imply however that all Polish students had previous interaction with Indian students, nor does it imply that Polish students would be systematically familiarized with cultural features of Indian students.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR



### ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

During group work, one of the students (from India) moved from one topic to another and sent irrelevant materials

The team's leader (from Poland) asked her to focus on the topic of the meeting.

The student claimed that the team did not appreciate her efforts and left the apartment.

**POLYCHRONIC/SYNCHRONIC TIME ORIENTATION:** The student is from a synchronically oriented culture in which people structure time synchronically and usually do several things at a time, allowing many things to take place simultaneously. According to her, she did a lot for the team, i.e. prepared a lot of materials.

**HIGH-CONTEXT/INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** The student is from a high-context culture in which people value formality and face-saving communication. According to her, the team leader comment was negative. The team leader claimed that she was not focused enough

**COLLECTIVISM:** The student is from the collectivistic culture in which team and teamwork play an essential role. According to her, the team did not appreciate her efforts and she felt that she was not part of the team.

**FACE-WORK:** The student is from the culture in which saving face is essential, and it is crucial to handle information sensitively without offending the other's face. According to her, due to the narrator comment that she should focus on the topic of the meeting, she lost her face as in her opinion, it meant that what she did so far was wrong.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**POSSIBLE  
SOLUTIONS**

University needs to train students in cultural diversity and intercultural communication. In this situation, training students in different time perception, communication styles could help to avoid the negative output of the situation.

It may be a good idea for teachers working with multicultural groups to help students become aware of the range of differences they could expect when initiating the group work and, as they become aware of differences, they can agree on common rules.

If the students (local and international) do not become aware of different perceptions to time and collaboration, and do not learn how to negotiate common working culture, they will have problems in working in an international and diverse workplace.



Critical incident

“YOU COULD DO IT  
BETTER”

Poland

## The incident “YOU COULD DO IT BETTER”

**A critical incident told by a Polish/American university student in Warsaw, recorded in 2019 by SAN**

*"We were to prepare team presentations for one of our courses. On the presentation day, we were to listen to several speeches. After each of the performances, we had some time for questions and comments. I told the second team leader that they could do it better. I had a chance to listen to some other presentations delivered by the same team, and in my opinion, their previous speeches were much better prepared. Suddenly he raised his voice on me and told me that I had no right to comment on his team performance as only the teacher can comment. I got surprised and irritated"*

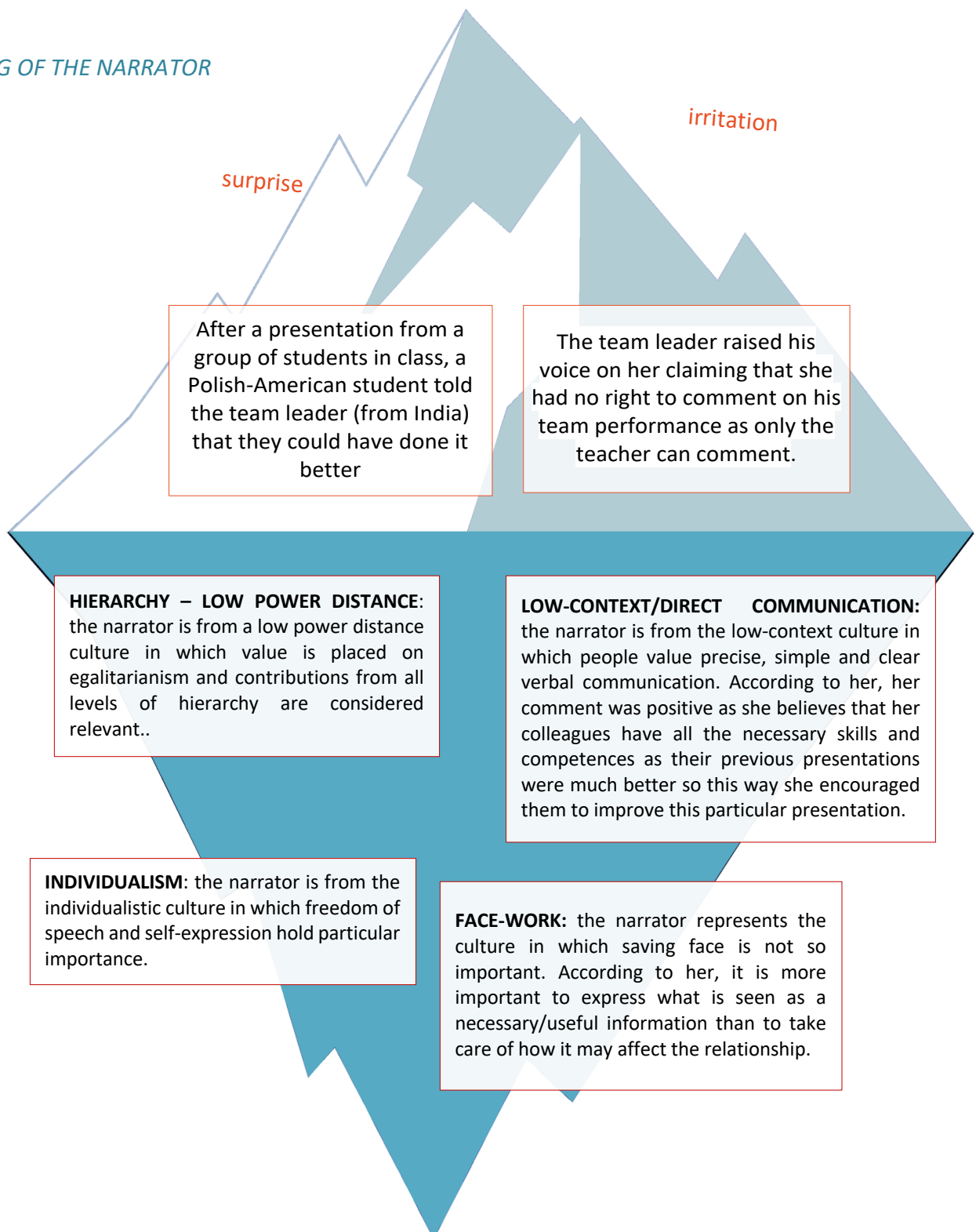
### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a 27 years old female student with double nationality (Polish-American) holding a PhD degree, currently enrolled in a MA programme at the Faculty of Management and Security Studies of a Polish University. She's been at the university for 3 semesters.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 24 years old male student holding an MA degree, enrolled in the same programme coming from India. He's been at the university for 3 semesters.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their age, their future profession and current student status. The element differentiating them are their gender, the degrees they already hold, their nationality, and their status as member of the local society vs foreigner.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conversation took place during one of the class.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were approximately 30 other students in the classroom: class-mates who knew both the narrator, the team leader and other team members. The teacher was also present.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Currently Indian students are the most represented in Polish universities amongst the international students. This does not imply however that all Polish students had previous interaction with Indian students, nor does it imply that Polish students would be systematically familiarized with cultural features of Indian students.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR



## ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON

After a presentation from a group of students in class, a Polish-American student told the team leader (from India) that they could have done it better

The team leader raised his voice on her claiming that she had no right to comment on his team performance as only the teacher can comment.

**FACE-WORK:** the student is from the culture in which saving face is essential, and it is crucial to handle information sensitively without offending the other's face. From the student perspective, due to the narrator comment "You could do it better" he lost his face. Being the team leader, he was personally responsible for the team's performance.

**HIERARCHY – HIGH POWER DISTANCE:** the student is from the high power distance culture in which students treat teachers with respect reserved for people of high status. According to him, only the teacher, who has a higher rank, can comment on his team performance.

**HIGH-CONTEXT/INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** the student is from the high-context culture in which people value formality and face-saving communication. According to him, her comment was negative and offended him and his team as, this way, she underlined that the presentation was not well done.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**POSSIBLE  
SOLUTIONS**

University needs to train students in cultural diversity and intercultural communication. For instance, organise workshops in different communication styles (direct vs indirect, high-context vs low context) and face-work concept.

University can also introduce conflict mediation procedures and experienced staff can serve as mediators in conflict situations like this between students.





Critical incident

“BUSINESS CARD IN THE  
BACK POCKET”

Poland

## The incident “BUSINESS CARD IN THE BACK POCKET”

A critical incident told by a university staff member in Warsaw, recorded in 2019 by SAN

*“I worked in the international admissions office. One time a Chinese student of the MBA programme came to the office. He was apparently in an excellent mood. He smiled a lot. The reason was that he wanted to invite me to the opening of his new business. He also gave me his business card. There were a lot of papers on my desk, so I put his business card in my back pocket. I thanked him for the invitation and told him that I would do my best to come. Suddenly I noticed that the student stopped smiling, said goodbye without looking at me and left. I was surprised.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a 25 years old Polish woman working as a specialist in the international admission office. She has an MA degree and has worked for the University for two years.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 30 years old Chinese student, holding a BA, enrolled in the MA programme. He’s been at the university for two years.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their connection to the University. Everything else differentiates them: their age, their role in the University, the degrees they already hold, their nationality, their status as member of the local society vs foreigner.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conversation took place in the international admission office
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	No one else was present.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

surprise

A Chinese student suddenly stops smiling, stops eye contact and leaves when the narrator promises to “do her best” to attend the event she’s been invited to and puts his business card in her back pocket

**LOW-CONTEXT/DIRECT COMMUNICATION:** the narrator is from the low-context culture in which people value precise, simple and clear verbal communication. According to her, her attitude towards the student was positive as he thanked the student for the invitation and promised to do her best to come to the opening of his new business. She wanted to go. She put the business card to her back pocket as there was no space on her desk; she did not even think that this gesture can have any meaning and can be misinterpreted

**POLITENESS IS IMPORTANT:** but it is expressed through verbal messages, eye contact and smiling.

**BUSINESS CARDS:** are communication tools, which bear useful and practical information. The object itself is not important, only the information inscribed on it.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A Chinese student suddenly stops smiling, stops eye contact and leaves when the narrator promises to “do her best” to attend the event she’s been invited to and puts his business card in her back pocket

**HIGH-CONTEXT/INDIRECT COMMUNICATION:** the student is from culture where high-context communication style is dominant, in which people value formality and non-verbal communication is as important in conveying a message as verbal. The student may have understood the employee’s answer as a polite rejection of his invitation, as she promised to “do her best”, which is a polite way of saying “no”.

**FACE-WORK:** the student is from the culture in which relational harmony and face-saving communication are important. This implies that polite communication puts the emphasis on the face concerns of the other person.

**BUSINESS CARDS:** represent one’s identity, and as such they must be handled with consideration and respect. Putting someone’s business card into a pocket is a clear sign of disrespect.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**POSSIBLE  
SOLUTIONS**

University needs to train both staff and students in cultural diversity and intercultural communication. For instance, organize workshops in different communication styles (direct vs indirect, high-context vs low context) and face-work concept. These sessions should not be focused on international students only, rather become an opportunity for all the students and the staff members to explore together cultural diversity.



Critical incident

“PRAISED IN FRONT OF  
CLASSMATES”

Poland



## The incident “PRAISED IN FRONT OF CLASSMATES”

**A critical incident told by a Polish university teacher in Warsaw, recorded in 2019 by SAN**

*“I was the teacher of a Global Marketing course. Students worked on individual assignments during class. Then I asked them to present results. I was thrilled by the excellent performance of a Thai student, and I praised her in front of her classmates. I was surprised by her answer “You embarrass me”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	The narrator is a 42 years old Polish woman holding a PhD, working as academic teacher in the Faculty of Management of a University in Warsaw.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is a 23 years old female student holding an BA degree, enrolled in the same programme coming from Thailand. She’s been at the university for a year.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their gender, and their connection to the University. The elements differentiating them are their age, the degrees they already hold, their nationality, their status as member of the local society vs foreigner.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The conversation took place during class.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	There were approximately 25 other students in the classroom: classmates who knew the student

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

surprise

A Thai student claimed to feel embarrassed when the teacher praised her for her excellent performance during a presentation in class.

**CHALLENGE AND RECOGNITION ARE ESSENTIAL:** The narrator is from a culture in which it is natural to praise for excellent students and students rather overrate their performance. According to her, the superb performance of the Thai student had to be appreciated, and the student should be proud of herself.

**INDIVIDUALISTIC ORIENTATION:** The narrator is from an individualistic society in which it is important to recognise individual performance. Success is most of all, a question of personal effort, which is communicated and is a source of status and pride.

**LOW-CONTEXT/DIRECT VERBAL COMMUNICATION:** Messages are communicated verbally in a straightforward way. It is natural and expected to praise excellent students directly.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A Thai student claimed to feel embarrassed when the teacher praised her for her excellent performance during a presentation in class.

**MODESTY IS ESSENTIAL:** The student is from a culture in which it is natural to praise weaker students, to encourage them, rather than openly praise good students. Students rather underrate their performance. Therefore she felt embarrassed.

**COLLECTIVIST ORIENTATION:** The student is from a culture which values more interdependence and collectivism rather than individualism. Performance and success are viewed as team efforts. Singling out individuals is a source of embarrassment, even if for a positive evaluation.

**HIGH-CONTEXT COMMUNICATION:** Messages use more non-verbal and contextual communication as opposed to direct verbal exchange.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**POSSIBLE  
SOLUTIONS**

University needs to train both staff and students in cultural diversity and intercultural communication. For instance, organise workshops in different communication styles (direct vs indirect, high-context vs low context). These sessions should not be focused on international students only, rather become an opportunity for all the students and the staff members to explore together cultural diversity.



# Critical incident

## “ADDRESSING ACADEMICS”

### Portugal

## The incident “ADDRESSING ACADEMICS”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto**

*“In the classroom, we were talking about several subjects and I mentioned the teacher by her first name. My classmate was shocked. She starts by interrupting me, saying that here in Portugal the teacher is addressed by Doctor or Professor. I got very surprised and I told her that was what I was used to, and that respect had nothing to do with that kind of formal treatment. At that time, I felt like in a theater: In coffee shops and corridors, my colleague talked about teachers with no respect, but in front of them, in the classroom, she addressed teachers by Doctor or Professor”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is a 38 years old Brazilian and Portuguese woman. She has been in Portugal for a year. Her native language is Portuguese, and she is married and has four children. She is a student in the Education department of the university.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	A 48 years old Portuguese woman. Her native language is Portuguese, and she is a student in the Education department of the university.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common is that they are enrolled into the same university, same class and their gender. What differentiates them are: their country of origin, their status in Portugal (immigrant vs. native), their age.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The situation happened in a University classroom, in between class sessions.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Other students that do not participate in the conversation.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Brazil gained independence from Portugal in 1822, and despite the strong connections maintained between the two countries, Brazil has developed independently from Portugal, with many other cultural influences. In the last ten years, a lot of Brazilian people have been immigrating to Portugal and attending courses and programmes in the Portuguese Universities. Many international students in Univ. of Porto are Brazilian. In some classes of the Education Sciences Master they are the majority



## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Awkwardness

Surprised

Feeling of inauthenticity

The narrator refers to the teacher using her first name.

A colleague points out the noncompliance of the formal way of addressing teachers.

At the same time this colleague often refers to the teacher without much respect when the teacher is absent.

**INTERPERSONAL, INFORMAL COMMUNICATION:** Addressing people by their first name (without using the “title” before the first name) is a respectful way of treating the other, it personalizes treatment. It is acceptable to drop the title from before the first name, because it makes the relationship more personal and less formal. Non formal is perceived as better, more honest and authentic by the narrator than the formal treatment creating a distance between the parties. For the narrator communication is mainly informal, she does not “need” formal rules to talk to people she is in everyday contact with. For her, the person is worth more than the position or function of the person and she respects people for who they are.

**INDIVIDUALISM:** Putting the emphasis on the person rather than the role is in line with the somewhat stronger tendency in Brazil for individualism than in Portugal (according to Hofstede’s model of cultural comparisons).

**POWER DISTANCE vs EQUALITY:** In an educational setting, particularly in a Master class on Education, power relations are less distant because there are fewer students in the Master courses, it is easier to build relationships. Also, the emphasis may be on marking equality between teachers and students as (future) colleagues rather than marking the difference in status. In this specific learning environment, relationships should not be hierarchical for the narrator.

**RESPECT:** Respect is in the attitude and not in the form (in the “theatre”). Respect does not depend on validating formally the role and position of the other, but on acknowledging the other as a person. This should not change depending on whether the other person is present or not: the narrator has and shows the same respect to the teacher in either situations. The code-shifting behaviour of other students who give all formal respect in the presence of the teachers and none of it in their absence is perceived as fake, incoherent.

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH:** For the narrator, it is important to be able to say what she thinks and to express her opinion. Her opinion is worth as much as that of her colleague, so she is not ashamed for what happened, but claims her freedom to say what she thinks.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

The narrator refers to the teacher using her first name.

A colleague points out the noncompliance of the formal way of addressing teachers.

At the same time this colleague often refers to the teacher without much respect when the teacher is absent.

**PREFERENCE FOR FORMAL COMMUNICATION:**

Different social contexts imply different rules and forms of communication, and these forms should be respected. It's not up to the individual to choose. In a professional relationship, such as a teacher-students relationship, addressing people by their first name (without using the "title") is disrespectful.

**EXPECTATION OF ACCULTURATION:** Newcomers from another culture should adapt to certain rules of the local culture and it is OK for the "natives" to help them in the process, pointing out cultural "faux pas". Indeed, for the Portuguese student, it might have been a chance to give information to the narrator or she might have felt the urge to inform her. Maybe rules of communication and addressing teachers are not known to the student, so she took her chance to quickly get it right and contribute to making the student life of the narrator easier in the future.

**RESPECT AND POLITENESS:** For the other person, the value of politeness was threatened when the narrator used the first name of the teacher. She sees it as polite to respect positions and official functions, possibly because it takes people a lot of effort to get there. In any case the title of the teacher plays an important part in the role she performs, and respectful communication implies validating the role she is playing.

**HIERARCHY:** Student-teacher relationship is an asymmetrical one, and this difference in status is important, it should not be diminished or hidden, but validated during communication. It is expected that students address teachers formally, always validating this status difference.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

The teacher of the class acted naturally, which may have legitimated the informal treatment of the narrator. This is probably a good way to encourage an approach of openness to cultural diversity in Higher Education Institutions.

The situation illustrates how different cultural expectations concerning politeness and respect, and authority, are shown and influence intercultural relationships. Many conflicts arise in cross-cultural settings because the protagonists (although feeling respect for one another) have different rules and preferences concerning the manifestation of respect.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

For heterogeneous classes it can be a practice to make a round of introduction precising what is everyone's preferred / polite way to be named.

Politeness – including greetings, addressing each other and formalities - could be part of a welcome / orientation training for international students.



Critical incident

“AFRICAN MOVIES”

Portugal

## The incident “AFRICAN MOVIES”

A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto

*“In one of the classes of the Master course, the teacher was taking notes about titles of movies that the students should present during the semester, to serve as an evaluation of the module. Each group was telling the title of a film and explaining a little about the movie’s subject, because the teacher needed to check if the movie was related to the module and if it was suitable for analysis to be presented later. Most of the films that were suggested were American, Portuguese and English. In my turn, I suggested a typical African film. As I tried to explain the movie, the teacher shouted in a strange and different tone “I do not need you to tell the whole story, if I wanted to know everything about the movie, I would watch it”. And I was shocked. Even some of my colleagues looked at me and then looked at her in a funny way to show her that she was being aggressive with me. I thought that maybe the title would’ve been enough, but the other colleagues were explaining their movies without being interrupted. They said almost everything about their films. This made me very sad and not very keen to stay until the end of that class, because I felt that she didn’t like the fact that the one that I chose had a lot to do with the African context and because the way she addressed me was very different and very strange. At the end of the class, many of the classmates sympathized with me and soon I was sure that I was not mistaken, there was an exalted approach from the teacher.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

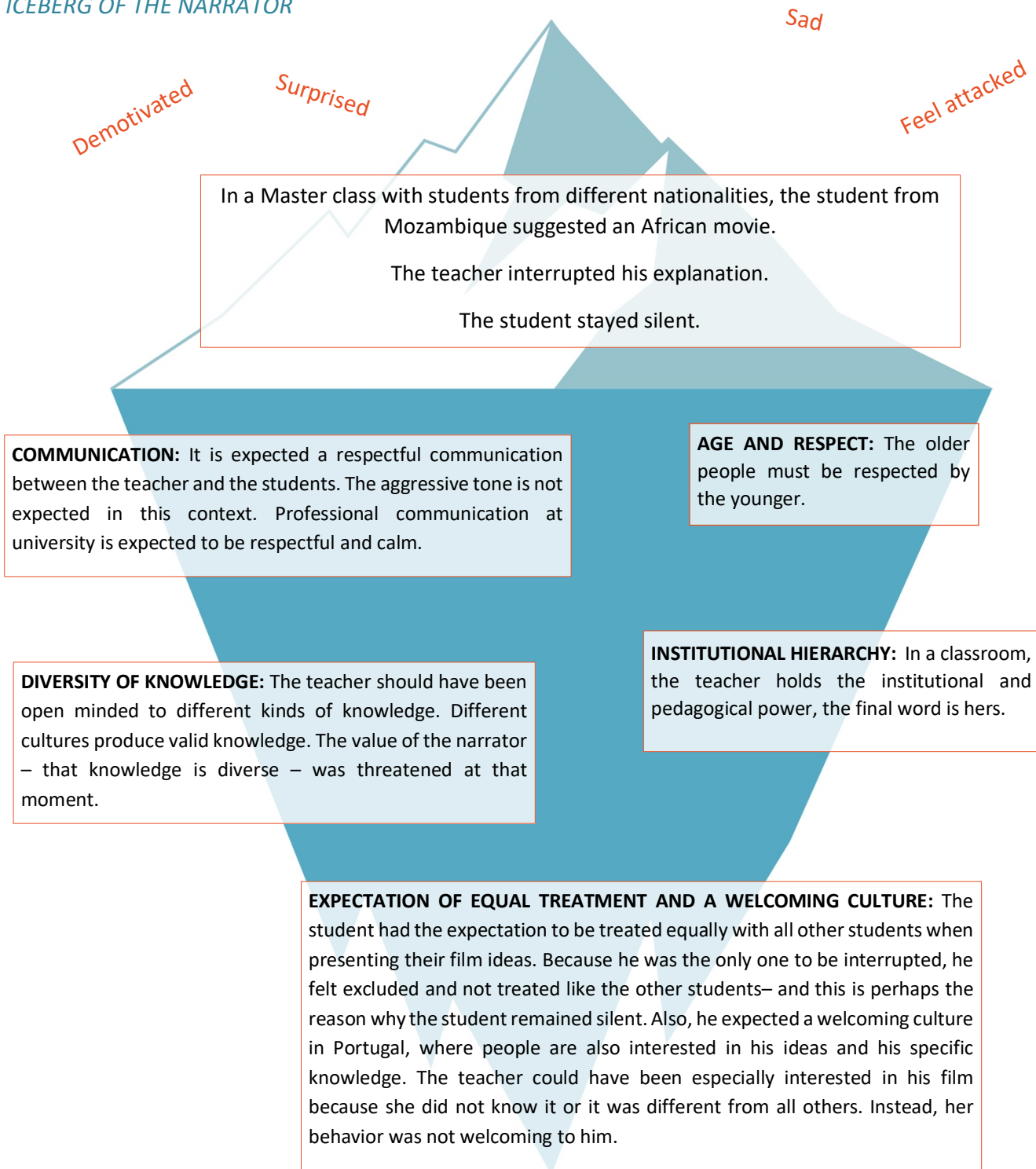
<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is a 28 years old Mozambique man. His native language is Portuguese and he has been in Portugal university for 7 months. He is a student in the faculty of education.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is an approximately 60 years old Portuguese woman. Her native language is Portuguese and she has been an education teacher and researcher in university since years.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common is their native language and the faculty of education. What differentiates them are: their country of origin, their status in Portugal (immigrant vs. native), their age, their gender, their profession and time spent in current university.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Conventional classroom. Master class with multicultural/ heterogeneous student group
<b>OTHERS PRESENT</b>	Other students from Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Ireland.



### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR





*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

In a Master class with students from different nationalities, the student from Mozambique suggested an African movie.  
The teacher interrupted his explanation.  
The student stayed silent.

**COLONIALIST FRAMEWORK:** The academia doesn't acknowledge the scientific and artistic value of non-western productions. It may be that the teacher thinks that an African movie is a bad quality film, so it doesn't contribute to scientific knowledge.

**INSTITUTIONAL HIERARCHY:** The teacher has legitimacy to set the rules and the class dynamics.

**EUROCENTRISM:** The teacher might not have been aware of other forms of knowledge from outside the Western world and thus ethnocentric.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Teachers are not reading authors from other cultural contexts and this influences the credibility the teacher gives to international students' contributions, mainly contributions from the Global South.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

It would be important to raise awareness inside the academia about the need to deal with resources and materials from other geographies.

It's urgent to pluralize knowledge and mobilize those resources and materials in Higher Education institutions.



Critical incident

“DISTORTING THE  
LANGUAGE”

Portugal

## The incident “DISTORTING THE LANGUAGE”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto**

*“We were in the middle of a Master class, in a group with great ethnic diversity. It was a little while ago when classes began, and we were still getting to know each other. During break, there were students from Cape Verde, Angola, Portugal and Brazil - I was not the only Brazilian at the time. Because we are from different countries and we all speak the same language, we started an interesting debate about the linguistic variations of each one. During the conversation, a Brazilian colleague, a teacher, mentioned she missed teaching and asked another Portuguese girl what it would take to teach in Portugal. Immediately, a boy, also Portuguese, retorted - "My son would never have a class with a Brazilian teacher!" The response generated an even greater debate than had already begun and, in the face of disagreement, some out-of-context phrases were uttered, things like "You Brazilians have distorted the language!" Between one argument and another, the weather grew heavy and we returned to the classroom, practically in silence. We were few and the teacher asked what had happened because she noticed an embarrassment in the air. The Brazilian colleague told her part of what she had heard, to which the teacher said: "Only a poorly educated person would say that." She did not know that the statements came from the students in the classroom. The class took place in a mild climate and the Portuguese language was never discussed again.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 26 years old Brazilian man. His native language is Portuguese (BR) and he has been in university for a few months. He is a 1st degree Education student in university. He is a teacher.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is approximately 29 years old Portuguese man. His native language is Portuguese (PT) and he is in 1st degree Education in university since few months. His profession is economist.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common: their field of studies, their age, their gender, their student status and the time spent in university. What differentiates them are: their country of origin, their native language and their profession.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT**

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	The CI took place in the yard, during the class break.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Other students from different nationalities – Brazilian, African and Portuguese.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Brazil gained independence from Portugal in 1822, and despite the strong connections maintained between the two countries, Brazil has developed independently from Portugal, with many other cultural influences. In the last ten years, a lot of Brazilian people have been immigrating to Portugal and attending courses and programs in the Portuguese Universities. Many international students in Univ. of Porto are Brazilian. In some classes of the Education Sciences Master they are the majority.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Discomfort

Discriminated

Undervalue

A Brazilian student asked what was needed for her to teach in Portugal. A Portuguese student said he didn't want his children to have a Brazilian teacher. The group reacted, a discussion ensued, and the Portuguese said the Brazilian people distorted the Portuguese language.

**IDENTITY THREAT:** The comment of the Portuguese student associates all Brazilians with a negative identity, that of "distorting the language". This is an identity threat for the Brazilian student in the situation and by association also for the narrator. A further threat may be a threat to future professional identity: by stating no one would have a Portuguese class with a Brazilian the fellow student puts in jeopardy a potential professional plan of teaching in Portugal.

**KNOWLEDGE DIVERSITY:** Different cultures produce valid knowledge. By devaluing the Brazilian variant of the Portuguese language, the Portuguese student somehow devalues the Brazilian culture. Language diversity is culturally explained and it doesn't determine the validity of the knowledge produced.

**LANGUAGE COLONIALISM:** The Brazilian narrator values the diversity and the evolution of the Portuguese language. Language is not static. Language is dynamic. Language hierarchies – the narrator does not see hierarchies between different versions of Portuguese but values them each as different. He accepts differences in language without applying hierarchies to them.

**COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT:** The student might have expected all students to "sit in the same boat" and to share experiences, friendship or collaboration. However, this incident shows that there was clear opposition to him as a speaker of non-Portuguese-Portuguese, so his value of collaboration might have been threatened.

**EXPECTATION OF DISCRIMINATION:** The Brazilian student might not have expected to be discriminated in a country like Portugal with the same language. Maybe he even chose to go to Portugal because of the language similarity to make his student life easier.



*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

A Brazilian student asked what was needed for her to teach in Portugal. A Portuguese student said he didn't want his children to have a Brazilian teacher. The group reacted, a discussion ensued, and the Portuguese said the Brazilian people distorted the Portuguese language.

**LANGUAGE COLONIALISM:** The Portuguese student assumes that the European Portuguese is the valid version of the Portuguese language, over other variants of the same language, which are all seen as inferior.

**KNOWLEDGE COLONIALISM:** The expression of knowledge in a different variant of the Portuguese student's language is enough for him to devalue the scientific relevance of the Brazilian teacher.

**PROTECTING HIS OWN CULTURE:** The student had the strong feeling to have to protect his own from influences from outside of the country and other language influences. He might feel his own culture threatened by immigration.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

This episode highlights the need to cultivate a multicultural awareness by local students, in a way that it deconstructs the view of themselves as being superior to the foreign students.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

It may be interesting to have some reflections on the linguistic diversity of Portuguese language in a University with so many students from former Portuguese colonies. Work would need to be done on raising awareness of the differences and in particular differences in status associated to the different language versions.



Critical incident

“YOU ARE NOT AS GOOD  
AS THE PORTUGUESE”

Portugal

## The incident “YOUR ARE NOT AS GOOD AS THE PORTUGUESE”

A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto

*“During the class, the teacher asked who had applied for a scholarship, an application that has taken place in the Faculty. I said that I had, but that I had not been evaluated and did not know why. She said it was no surprise, because my final grade was probably lower than those of the Portuguese. I was shocked with this arrogance. I told her what my grade was and stated that it was a very high grade, as I have a more experienced curriculum than my classmates. On that day some Portuguese classmates came to support me. They thought it was prejudice; it was a pre-judgment of someone who did not know my final degree, but judged it lower than that of the Portuguese.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is a 23 years old Brazilian and Portuguese woman. Her native language is Portuguese (BR) and she has been in university for 7 months. She is a master’s degree student in the faculty of Education in university of Porto.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The other person is a 60 years old Portuguese woman. Her native language is Portuguese (PT) and she is a teacher in the faculty of Education in the university of Porto. She has been at this university for a long time.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is the: faculty of Education and their gender. What separates them are: their country of origin, their native language, their profession, their age, their social status (minority – majority) in Portugal and the time spent in the current university.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Classroom.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Other students in the same class. They belong to the majority of Portuguese students.
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	In the context of the HE institution, the academic staff sometimes devalues Brazilian students, apparently due to language differences and behavior styles (in some way distant from the academic mainstream).

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Unfairness      Oppression      Humiliation      Anger/Rage

The teacher said she was not surprised by the absence of information on the narrator's grant application, because the Portuguese students have better curriculum and better grades. The narrator said she had a very good curriculum and manifested herself against the teacher's opinion.

**IDENTITY THREAT (DEPRECIATION):** The teacher seems to have negative preconceptions on Brazilian students' academic merit. This is one type of identity threat, in which an individual is considered only as part of a group that has a negative representation. In a way it is a double threat: first, the teacher assumes that, in general, Brazilian students have worse grades than the Portuguese. As such this is a negative group identity. Then, the teacher denies this student's right to be "an individual", allowing her only to be a 'Brazilian student', not even considering the possibility that she could be the "exceptionally good student".

**BELIEF IN MERIT:** The narrator believes that students should be evaluated based on their individual performance and achievements and not based on preconceptions about their group membership, for instance nationality.

**FAIRNESS:** The narrator believes that a fair evaluation should be based on the achievement and grades of the student. She felt that this was not the case, since the teacher did not even know her final grade.

**HIERARCHIES AND MODESTY:** The student wanted to be evaluated according to her achievements and thinks modestly about herself. The teacher is in a hierarchical position of power and acted arrogantly towards the student.

**POLITENESS AND CODE OF CONDUCT:** The narrator expected to be treated in a polite way. She expected the teacher to know the code of conduct and to not insult her in front of others.

**STRENGTH AND SELF-CONFIDENCE:** She felt strong and secure of her CV, stating she had experience on the field.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

The teacher said she wasn't surprised by the absence of information on the narrator's grant application, because the Portuguese students have better curriculum and better grades. The narrator said she had a very good curriculum and manifested herself against the teacher's opinion.

**PREJUDICE:** Prejudice about the academic merit of Brazilian students. Teacher seems to be convinced that a Brazilian student cannot have an excellent curriculum.

**POSITION OF POWER / ARROGANCE:** The teacher demonstrates arrogance and superiority, adhering to the European academic mainstream stereotype and taken for granted that Brazilian students are not part of this "world". She is completely in her role of an older professor, a power position, and demonstrates this to the student. She sees her opinion and judgment as part of her role, her profession and her vast experience as a teacher. She might even think that it is evidence-based.

**COMPETITIVENESS:**  
The teacher values competitiveness very highly and wants to push students towards more achievement.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Power is heavily present in the pedagogical relationship at the university, being teachers still deeply directed by stereotypical visions of student behaviour, languages and academic achievement of international students.

There is a Eurocentric vision of knowledge, and life in general, depreciating those who don't fit in this European eyes and mind figurines.

Pedagogical tradition and older academic identities are big obstacles to the inclusion of international students.



Critical incident

“BEING STEREOTYPED”

Portugal

## The incident “BEING STEREOTYPED”

A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto

*“The first year of Ph.D. In one of the disciplines, it was usual to welcome invited professors. At one point, a renowned academic from northern Europe came to talk about a set of issues concerning teaching and learning in a formal context. My class was composed of many Brazilians, as well as Portuguese, and a few Africans. As the professor spoke, two girls entered the room. He stopped talking immediately and asked if they were Brazilian. Frustrated by the fact that both were Portuguese, he amended “In Brazil, a person is never on time”. I thought it was unreasonable, but I thought it was a joke. The problem is that the teacher continued to refer to stereotypes about the country. In sequence, for a reason that I no longer remember, he said that the Brazilians never follow rules and that it was normal for them to go over the red light in the traffic.*

*In the room, it was possible to observe some discomfort, but no one dared to confront the man. And when we thought he had extinguished his repertoire, in discussing an academic issue, he decided, on his own, that it was more than time for Brazil's educational category to overcome dictatorship and bury its past. At that moment, not everyone could remain quiet, and the debate heated up a bit. At the end of the lesson, there was a great repercussion on the words and disrespect of the teacher, who assumed having knowledge of the Brazilian reality. The curious thing is that the academic position of this professor is against the denial of the other or the reinforcement of colonialism, something that he obviously could not employ in his speech as an orator. Not having confronted the scholar at that time, I opted out for a silent protest. For some time, I avoided mentioning his work, which was relevant to me, in my papers. And when I had to do it, I did it very superficially, just registering the fact of knowing it!”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 30 years old Brazilian man. His native language is Portuguese, and he has been in Portugal university for 4 years. He is a student in education, in a master’s degree in university. He is migrant and has legal status (married).
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	The person provoking the shock is an approximately 40 years old man. We don’t know his nationality, but his mother tongue is English. He is a university Professor.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What connects them is their gender. What differentiates them are: their country of origin, their native language, their age, their profession and education.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT****PHYSICAL  
CONTEXT**

Traditional university classroom. Formal setting, formal time for beginning and ending. Ph.D. class.

**OTHER PEOPLE  
PRESENT**

About 20 students.

**LARGER SOCIAL  
CONTEXT**

A Ph.D. class should imply less power distance and more dialogue, but this depends a lot on the teacher. This teacher positions himself in the traditional instructive paradigm and not on a dialogical one.

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Discomfort

Irritation

In a Ph.D. class, two students enter the room late.  
The teacher asks if they are Brazilian and they say no.  
The teacher associates the Brazilians with the non-compliance of rules (being late, disrespecting the traffic light).  
Some students reply. The narrator stays silent.

**STEREOTYPE:** The representation that the teacher and the narrator have of the Brazilians does not coincide. Teachers in HE context should not be expressing reductive / simplistic stereotypes, regardless of the fact whether the social group in question is represented or not.

**REFUSAL OF GENERALIZATION:** The experience the teacher had in Brazil cannot imply the generalization of certain characteristics to all Brazilian people.

**EDUCATION/ KNOWLEDGE:** It was expected that a higher education teacher in the field of education and social sciences would have a more informed knowledge and a more sensitive attitude to cultural issues.

**RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION:** It could be expected from a university professor to express himself always making sure that he gives the proper respect to his audience.

**HIERARCHY:** In the class, the teacher manages the power (the voice), so the student (narrator) stayed silent. Students do not step up against him.

**IDENTITY THREAT:** The professor also implies he knows better than the Brazilians what should be done. This is yet a new level of assuming power above the other, now on a symbolic level.

**NEGATIVE IDENTITY:** Not only the professor is expressing generalization and stereotype, but those depict quite a negative image of the cultural group from which the narrator comes.

**POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE:** From the postcolonial perspective of the narrator, cultural diversity is acknowledged without hierarchical constraints. In this situation, there is dissonance between the postcolonial discourse and the actions of the teacher.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

In a Ph.D. class, two students enter the room late.  
The teacher asks if they are Brazilian and they say no.  
The teacher associates the Brazilians with the non-compliance of rules (being late, disrespecting the traffic light).  
Some students reply. The narrator stays silent.

**HIERARCHY:** In the use of his professional position he assumes that his speech has legitimacy.

**STEREOTYPE - GENERALIZATIONS:** The teacher does not understand that he is expressing a stereotype, because his point of view comes from his lived experience in Brazil. Nor he can express that experience in a reflected way (for instance mentioning different approaches to the perception of time monochronic, polychronic, etc.), rather he expresses them in a simplistic vulgar form.

**DESIRE TO "EDUCATE THE BRAZILIANS" / ACCULTURATE THEM TO WESTERN MODELS:** The teacher criticizes the non-compliance of certain Brazilian behaviours concerning their societal changes. This could be a non-reflected manifestation of ethnocentrism, in which his models are considered "better" than the Brazilians.



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

The student thinks out loud about the absence of dialogue and rigidity of argumentation in this situation, stating there should be more dialogue, more openness, more listening in academia.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Even without noticing, some teachers often constrain students' participation and their disagreeing positions, because the latter are unaware of the consequences of it.

It is important to deconstruct the teachers' prejudices in the university, as well as decolonizing the curriculum (namely the teacher-students relations).



Critical incident

“US AND THEM”

Portugal

## The incident “US AND THEM”

**A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto**

*“In a master class with two schedules, the teacher allowed students to choose to register in one or another schedule – Monday or Tuesday. Most of the students chose Tuesday. Due to the imbalance in the number of students between the two schedules, the teacher asked the students to volunteer to move to the class on Monday. No one wanted to chance their choice.*

*Afterwards, the teacher said that no one would leave the classroom until that problem was solved. In an authoritarian approach, she asked each student why he/she chose Tuesday and why she/he could not attend Monday's class. The teacher had given the option to everyone to choose and now, without criteria, she would decide who could keep on Tuesday and who should go to Monday's class.*

*It was then that the group of Portuguese students soon grouped against the foreign students: “They” have no family, “they” have nothing else to do here, “they” do not work, “they” live near college, “we” have been here longer than “they”. This segregation between “us” and “them” was frequent. Not only between Portuguese and foreign students, but also between the students who attended the bachelor in the same Faculty – “students of the house” – and those who have not. For many years I was not included in the plural of the Portuguese. Although the documents give me all the rights and duties of a Portuguese, my accent denounces that I am part of a “they” that will not be part of “we”.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is 23 years old Brazilian and Portuguese woman. Her native language is Portuguese (BR) and she has been in university since 7 months. She is a student in Education Master’s degree in university.
<b>OTHER PERSONS</b>	The others are mostly in their twenties, Portuguese mostly female students. Their native language is Portuguese (PT) and they are Education student in Master degree in university since 3 years and 7 months.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common is their Education faculty, their gender, their student status and their age. What differentiates them are: their minority status in Portugal and time spent in current university.

**ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT**

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	<p>A classroom with a closed door and functioning as a private place for teachers and in some way also for students.</p>
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	<p>Other foreign students (including Brazilian ones) and teacher</p>
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	<p>Professional identity of HE teachers and respective representations of authority. The teacher, allowing students to enroll in one of two schedules (Monday and Tuesday) did not anticipate the possibility of an unequal distribution of students between them; does not assume that the proposed procedure was not adequate and refers authoritatively to the group to solve the problem that it has created.</p> <p>Creation of a minimal group situation (Henri Tajfel) - the group of Brazilian and other foreign students and the group of Portuguese students - provoking social competition for social identity (benefits).</p>

## ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

Sadness

Anger

Humiliation

Rage

Portuguese students began arguing against foreign students, defending they have more right than the foreign students to stay on Monday class, because the latter have no family and other tasks in Portugal, and have recently arrived to the faculty.

**SEGREGATION AND REJECTION OF THE FOREIGN STUDENTS:** the Portuguese students depreciate the foreign students, but also all the other students that complete the bachelor in another Faculty/university; they close inside themselves and resist to open to the “foreign”; this happens mostly with Brazilian students, which are the majority of the foreign students.

**GROUP IDENTITY:** The segregation in the faculty and in the group led to a feeling of exclusion for the narrator. She found herself as part of a group identity (they), in which she did not want to belong. The binary thinking in “we” and “they” left no space for the diversity of social groups on campus, as of course there are more groups than just two. Furthermore, such categorization denies the freedom of the student to define herself in other terms than her group identity, which is also a form of identity threat.

**EQUALITY OF CHOICE:** The narrator expected all choices of students to have equal value.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSONS*

Portuguese students began arguing against foreign students, defending they have more right than the foreign students to stay on Monday class, because the latter have no family and other tasks in Portugal, and have recently arrived to the faculty.

**IDENTITY CLOSURE:** Feeling threatened and superior, the in-group defends closing and affirms its own identity. Also, they don't perceive diversity as a value added. The separation from all the foreign students could be perceived as a loss, but they do not see it as such, suggesting that the homogeneous class may even be perceived as better.

**XENOPHOBIA:** Foreign students cannot question the rights of autochthonous people; they have not the same rights, they have fewer rights, mostly if it is necessary to share benefits with them.

**LACK OF EMPATHY:** The students might lack empathy for foreign students and what they must do. They might lack knowledge that many students have to take additional courses or receive language training in parallel and have a lot of activities.

**TRYING TO BENEFIT FROM THEIR HOME STATUS:** The students knew that there were no objective criteria to the choice, so they tried to apply other criteria (private ones) to get their way.

**NATIONALISM:** As autochthon majority, Portuguese students feel they have the power to impose their rules demonstrating the out group has better conditions to attend the Tuesday schedule using the "stereotype of foreign student".



**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

**Power** is heavily present in the pedagogical relationship at the university, being teachers still deeply directed by stereotypical visions of student behaviour, languages and academic achievement.

There is a **Eurocentric vision** of knowledge and life in general, depreciating those who don't fit in this European eyes and mind figurines.

Pedagogical tradition and older academic identities are big obstacles to the inclusion of international students.

In an **academic competitive environment**, students tend to restrict their learning to academic results, and because of that they try to have specific conditions to perform better than the others.

Students show they have a very restricted understanding of diversity in its consequences.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Intercultural / awareness raising training for all students at the beginning of the terms, regardless of whether they are local or international students.



Critical incident

“BEING ON TIME”

Portugal

## The incident “BEING ON TIME”

A critical incident told by an international student studying in Porto, recorded in 2019 by Universidade Do Porto

*“The problem started right after we began our group work in 2015 for Culture and Science Laboratory course. There were four of us and we should make appointments to talk and do the project together at a coffee shop near the faculty and the problem was “Timing”. It seemed quite impossible for my group fellows to be on time and I had to wait around 30 minutes or sometimes 1-hour for them. It happened several times and I started becoming fed up with the situation. I felt they did not respect me and my time. I sent a message to them and explained that I had my own schedule and I would wait for them and stay there just for the expected time. I left the meeting unfinished. They believed it was not friendly and they did not like it, but I did what I had to do. Now I know that when I have a meeting with Portuguese people, I should consider that they are minimum 15 minutes late and it is normal for them.”*

### PROTAGONISTS: ELEMENTS OF THE IDENTITIES OF THE NARRATOR AND THE PERSON AT THE ORIGIN OF THE INCIDENT

<b>NARRATOR</b>	At the moment of the incident the narrator is a 38 years old Iranian woman. Her native language is Persian. She is a student in art, and she has been in Portugal university for a year. She had a Bachelor of teaching English. She is Muslim and heterosexual. She is married.
<b>OTHER PERSON</b>	She is approx. 25 years old Portuguese women. Her native language is Portuguese. She is a student in art in University and had a Bachelor of Journalism. She is part-time waitress. She is Christian and homosexual. She is in a relationship.
<b>SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES</b>	What they have in common is their native language and the Art faculty, their gender, their education and student status. What differentiates them are: their country of origin, their status in Portugal (immigrant vs. native), their age, their native language, their profession, their religion, their sexual orientation and kid or people to charge.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CONTEXT

<b>PHYSICAL CONTEXT</b>	Coffee shop downtown.
<b>OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT</b>	Strangers present in the coffee shop
<b>LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>	Not very frequent cultural connections between Portuguese and Iranians, relatively few international students amongst the two countries.

### ICEBERG OF THE NARRATOR

*Annoyed*

*Irritated*

At several meetings of the group work, the Portuguese and Brazilian students kept coming late.  
The Iranian student (narrator) sent them messages and informed them not to be late and to be on time.  
The narrator decided to take action and leave the meeting unfinished at the expected time.

**UNIVERSALISM:** Same rules should apply for all, there are no reasons to make differentiations. The narrator does not expect time perception to be subject to cultural variations.

**ORIENTATION TOWARDS TASKS / WORKING COMMITMENT:** Performance and results, achieving the task, have priority over relationships and harmony between the members. The group work couldn't be done on time with the expected results, because they couldn't make it.

**COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT:** The narrator expected a collaborative spirit to do the group work, helping each other.

**LINEAR / MONOCHRONIC APPROACH TO TIME:** The narrator's time perception seems to be rather linear. This means that appointments are considered as punctual, allowing fairly small margin for delays. Precise planning is associated to efficiency and good use of time. When plans are made, they should be respected. Arriving on time is a sign of respect, delays are associated to disrespect (assuming that the other does not consider one's time precious). For this reason, delays are a form of face threatening act, when they occur it is expected that the others warn in advance and excuse themselves.

**DIRECT COMMUNICATION:** The narrator expects that when she warns the others about the time problem, they understand it and they adjust their behaviour.

*ICEBERG OF THE OTHER PERSON*

At several meetings of the group work, the Portuguese and Brazilian students kept coming late. The Iranian student (narrator) sent them messages and informed them not to be late and to be on time. The narrator decided to take action and leave the meeting unfinished at the expected time.

**RESPECT:** For the polychronic orientation not arriving precisely on time is not a sign of disrespect of the other.

**TIME ORIENTATION:** The Portuguese group seems to have a tendency for polychronic / non-linear time perception. In this orientation schedules and plans are considered approximative and negotiable, appointments are considered as respected even when arriving with delay. The working schedule is changeable without informing the group fellows, assuming everyone will adapt to the flow of events.

**WORKING AND STUDYING:** The students also worked next to their studies and might have had arrangement problems between the two sectors. They might have had other priorities or other more important courses that semester. However, they did not communicate this.

**ORIENTATION TOWARDS RELATIONSHIPS RATHER THAN THE TASKS:** In the context of group work, getting along well, creating harmony between the members seems to have priority over the execution of the task. Against this perception the exigence of the Iranian student to focus on the task and respect schedule could be perceived as unfriendly, nerdish.

**BASED ON THE ANALYSIS, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW ON THE HOSTING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OR THE TREATMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GENERAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?**

**WHAT SOLUTIONS COULD WE ENVISAGE?**

**OBSERVATIONS**

Cultural differences in time perceptions often result in one person waiting for another / others. Waiting gives a sensation of lack of respect and loss of face, hence a relatively “simple” cultural difference becomes connected to feelings of disrespect and potentially has a strong impact on the relationship.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

It may be a good idea for teachers working with multicultural groups to help students become aware of the range of differences they could expect when initiating the group work and, as they become aware of differences, they can agree on common rules.

If the students (local and international) don't become aware of different perceptions to time and to collaboration, and don't learn how to negotiate common working culture they will have problems in working in an international and diverse workplace.



