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Reader on Sensitive Zones

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Introduction

What are Sensitive Zones and why are they so 'sensitive'?

Sensitive zones (SZs) are the domains most susceptible to trigger misunderstandings, tensions and conflicts in intercultural encounter. It is important to clarify that the 'sensitive' feature is not inherent to the domain in question - i.e. there is nothing inherently sensitive in the domain of gender or sexuality.

The sensitive zones base on three steps of the method of critical incidents (1. Decentering, 2. Discovery of the cultural frame of references of the other(s), 3. Negotiation, see: URL *http://learningfromcultureshocks.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Reader-22Nov2019.pdf*, page 6).

Sensitive Zones identified in the SOLVINC research

The concept of 'culture shock' has been used in a variety of definitions and perspectives, so let us start clearing up how we understand it. Culture shock is an interaction with a person or object from a different culture, set in a specific space and time, which provokes negative or positive cognitive and affective reactions, a sensation of loss of reference points, a negative representation of oneself and a feeling of lack of approval that can give rise to uneasiness and anger. (Cohen-Emerique 2015, p. 65). The concrete experience of such a 'culture shock' we call 'critical incident' (CI).

The 35 critical incidents (CIs) collected in the SOLVINC project revolve around seven main sensitive zones: diversity, communication, hierarchy, identity, time perception, gender and colonialism. Out of 35 critical incidents the project team identified seven main critical subject areas ('sensitive zones' *http://learningfromcultureshocks.eu/*): diversity, communication, hierarchy, identity, time perception, gender and colonialism. These zones do not create completely disjunct sets of critical incidents, in fact most critical incidents touch upon several themes listed below. However, they also exemplify one or another sensitive zone more explicitly, which is what we considered for the primary classification. For instance, you may say that there is no incident that does not involve 'communication' - and you would be right. But some of the incidents are particularly helpful to point out the main cultural differences that characterise how we communicate.

The reason why areas such as 'racism', 'education', 'literacy' or 'academic culture' have not been described as a separate sensitive zone in this reader is due to the fact that we have created a theoretical background for the main conflict areas (sensitive zones) which are derived from the critical incidents we have collected.

What is the goal of the Sensitive Zones reader?

The texts collected here are intended to give the reader a summary and overview of the extent to which the 35 critical incidents presented can be analysed, systematised and theoretically substantiated.

The explanations on the individual SZs refer to the corresponding concrete CI on the one hand, and on the other hand they form a theoretical frame of reference. This should enable the reader to gain general insights into the sensitive zones beyond the concrete CI.

The reader does not aim to offer ways and solutions to tackle cultural misunderstandings in Higher Education contexts because we assume that each cultural conflict depends on the concrete situation and its context. Therefore, this reader does not offer generally applicable recipes.

Whom do we address?

This reader was created for students, faculty and staff of higher education institutions who are in some way involved with international mobility: students who are planning or living international mobility and staff who are welcoming or preparing students for such an experience. The tool is created by the team of the SOLVINC Erasmus+ project.

How to use these texts

The respective texts for the sensitive zones are structured differently. They reflect the range that has emerged in this project. The approach to the different topics was deliberately not poured into a given structure; rather, the way in which the different sensitive zones' texts were worked on should reflect the diversity of approaches in the project itself.

The content of the following texts is meant to give an introduction to the different sensitive zones. Due to their brevity, not all aspects and opinions on the sensitive zones are included. However, for further lecture we recommend the works listed in our references in the literature document on sensitive zones.

The Diversity Wheel

When dealing with diversity, the model 'The Four Layers of Diversity', also called the wheel of diversity according to Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003), has proven to be interesting in order to be able to grasp diversity more concretely. With the model of the Four Layers of Diversity, other dimensions are clearly presented in addition to personal and social influences.

According to Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003), the personality is at the centre of the model, which forms its core and is fundamental for all other dimensions. The second circle represents the inner dimensions: these aspects represent the primary categories of diversity (skin colour, gender, age, etc.). Said aspects are considered as given or static, as they can hardly or not at all be changed by the individual. The next level is formed by several external dimensions (marital status, education, religion, etc.). These are influences that become significant through an individual's own experiences as well as through social conditions. The outermost circle is formed by the institutional dimensions, which are determined by membership of an organisation or institution (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003, pp. 32; 37).

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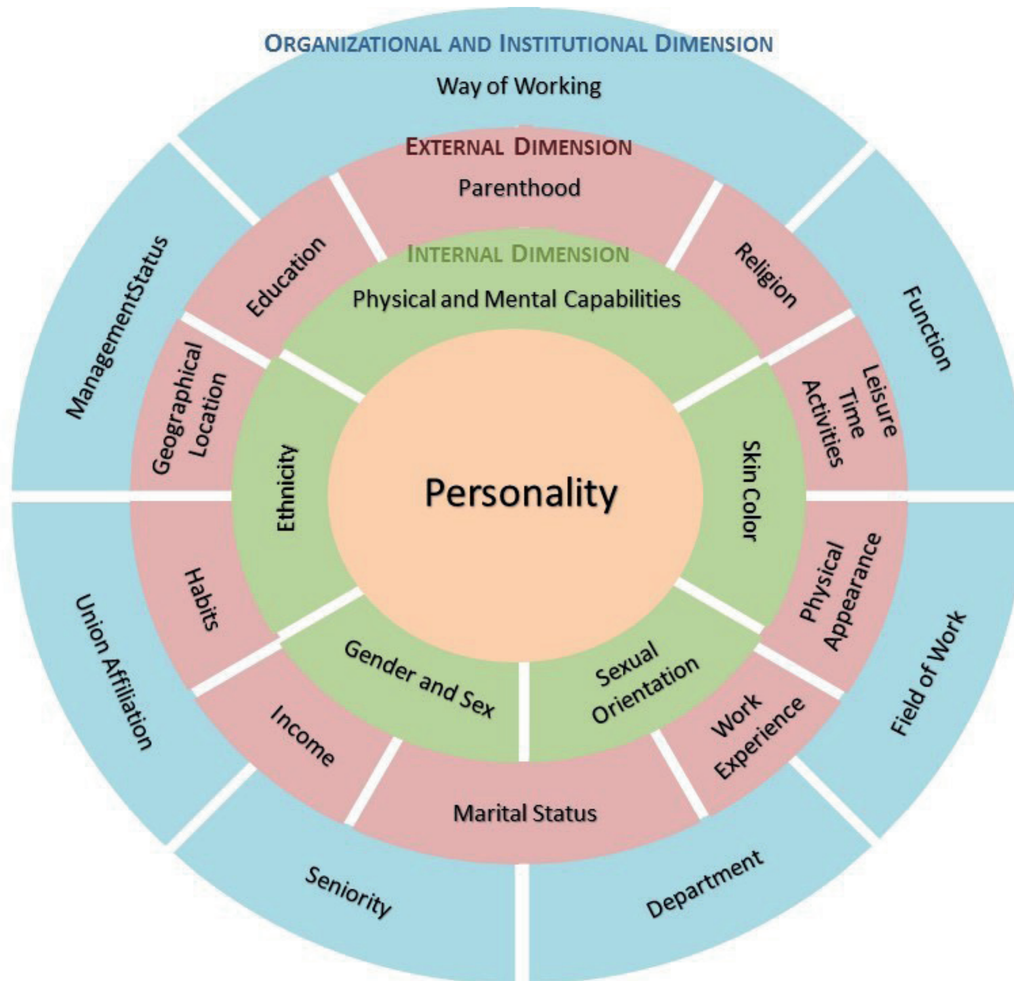

Source: Gardenswartz, L., & Rowe, A. (2003). *Diverse Teams at Work. Capitalizing on the Power of Diversity.* Society for Human Resource Management.

This Diversity Wheel can be used as a theoretical frame for the concept of sensitive zones. The terms used in this Diversity Wheel may be used as an orientation within the concept of sensitive zones. To apply this Diversity Wheel to each of the sensitive zones would go beyond the scope of this reader.

1 Diversity

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1.1. Introduction to Diversity

We live in diverse societies, sharing our lives and their multiple contexts with many different others. Differences like gender, age, religion, culture, and ethnicity – just to name some common ones – are negotiated between subjects and are structurally present in the ways people and subjectivities are formed and reformed. Negotiating difference in general, or cultural difference when that is the case, can lead to conflicts and cultural shocks. Of course, this negotiating never exists in a social vacuum and therefore, when looking at these exchanges and shocks, one must consider how other differences and inequalities are present and play a role. Conflict and injustice are often why there is a need for diversity intervention, training, or management. Regarding intercultural contexts, some culture shocks are triggered by people's reactions to cultural difference or focus on how people negotiate diversity in their daily lives. In this text we will discuss some concepts that can be useful to better understand everyday incidents of cultural shock in multicultural and diverse societies such as those in many European countries. We will look at how some of them illustrate the use of stereotypes and the dynamics of prejudice and discrimination. Some incidents point to the difficulty of moving beyond our ethnocentrism. Furthermore, we will look at how problematising difference and diversity, and the challenges it creates, can help us move to a situated, ecological and socio-political understanding of the cultural shocks and of the conflicts they express and articulate.

1.2. 'Managing' Diversity

Social psychology has been proposing concepts and processes that can help us understand how we deal with others, and how it can result in specific biases. Even though there is certainly an individual and interpersonal element to this phenomenon, contextual, social, and even institutional elements must be carefully attended as they are fundamental to fully grasp how diversity is negotiated, how conflicts emerge and how they have differential consequences to certain people and groups of people.

Understanding how things, and people, are similar or different is understood as a cognitive need of humans and therefore the process of social categorisation helps people organise and recognise others they see or meet by constructing categories, for example of age, gender and ethnicity (Fiske 1998). This categorisation process tends to exaggerate the differences between groups and to minimise the differences within groups, reinforcing the boundaries of each category. This can lead to stereotyping. As constructed categories generate associations and expectations regarding what they 'contain', the recognition of what fits the category of, for example, 'young person' or 'old person', 'migrant' or 'man' tends to be imposed on individuals who are thought to be members of those groups. They are simplifications of what people can be, or are, if they belong to a group, or even if they are only seen as belonging to said group. In that sense, they are naive theories that simplify the world (Fiske 2010)

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and they can favour the expression of prejudice – the (emotional) reaction to a person based on thoughts and feelings towards the social or cultural group of that person (Fiske 2010).

Social categorisation, stereotypes and prejudice are present in various of the collected incidents, for instance in '*Us and them (PT)*', '*You're not as good as the Portuguese (PT)*', '*Where are you from? (DE)*'. In terms of stereotypes and prejudice, the incident where the sentence 'Chinese people eat dogs (FR)' is used by a phonology teacher to illustrate a particular sound is an example of stereotype. Not only it suggests that this gastronomic feature characterises all Chinese people, it also connotes a group to something seen as negative, therefore favouring prejudice. Prejudice is also probably present in the incident '*African Movies (PT)*', where the fact that a movie is African triggers a negative assessment of the interest in the movie from the professor.

It is important that the process of categorisation, and the formation of stereotypes and expression of prejudice, does not exist in a social, cultural or historical vacuum. Historical constructions of different groups of people, and social inequalities between them, structure the interactions and possible meanings, including cultural and intercultural meanings and practices. This is also why, for some groups more than others, stereotypes and prejudice often result in denial of equal rights, on viewing people from a group as being 'less or worse than', and thus in discrimination (Fiske 2010). To understand how diversity is negotiated, and its consequences, we must consider the interplay between worldview, culture and oppression (Watts 1992). Adopting a socio-political and ecological perspective challenges us to remember inequalities and power, and the ways they operate in concrete situations, when looking at intercultural conflicts. They are often conformed by historically grounded practices and understandings that rationalise inequality. In this regard, it is useful to consider ethnocentrism – etymologically 'being centred on one's people' – a focus on one perspective which entails a difficulty to recognise and construct complex representations of difference, and a process that easily slides into the negative evaluation and consideration of others, or different, as inferior ('vulgar' 'sexist' 'disrespectful' etc.) (Cohen-Emerique 2015, p.103). That is what can be observed, for instance, in the incident '*Loud flatmate (AT)*' where the Italian flatmate is considered impolite for not having the same priority as the Austrian narrator.

The example of ethnocentrism illustrates how in face of diversity we may avoid recognising difference or recur to devalue what is different. There are other ways to act in the situation, and many diversity trainings or educational programmes focus on this, but they often underline that, in diversity contexts, when difference is expressed or made present, it becomes something to be dealt with, an issue or a problem. Difference is a problem because it is seen as the cause for conflict. As cultural shock incidents testify, difference is sometimes what frames descriptions of conflict and what needs to be addressed to resolve it. To recognise difference, understand where it comes from, value it, are all strategies seen as reducing conflict. Todd (2011) points out that since diversity is being connected to attributes of difference – e.g. culture, language, religion, etc. – '[d]iversity is shorthand for naming precisely those differences that need to be 'managed' since they create the conditions for conflicts to arise' (p.102). This means understanding diversity as a problem, a source of issues and something we need to do something about, to find strategies to address – often with educational interventions and dialogue. This dialogue is supposed to be productive and transform interactions and their outcomes.

It must contribute to the recognition of differences, to combat discrimination and incorporating more groups and people into our plural societies. This is not unworthy, although it may bring along a certain depoliticisation of the conflict underlying the differences (Todd 2011). To limit this depoliticisation, one must look at difference and consider inequality, one must look at the conflicts it brings about and see how they express injustice. Thus, difference cannot be read as neutral, away from inequality (or inequalities), or, as Jones (2006) says, '[o]nly when equality and diversity agendas problematise difference, erasing its implicit neutrality, and confront intersectionality head-on does the drive towards securing social justice a reality' (p.155). Uneasy with conflict and with power, diversity management often favours individualistic approaches and understandings (Klein 2015), and forgets the contextual and sociopolitical dimensions when it should focus precisely on them since '[m]anaging diversity (…) must also entail a commitment to challenging the structural power relations that result in inequalities.' (Jones 2006, p.151).

Finally, one needs to place socio-political and socio-cultural understandings of diversity, and its negotiation, into an ecological perspective, bringing together person and context and their mutual accommodation, to the ways of managing the outcomes of intercultural encounters (Watts 1992), while keeping social justice in sight. A situated and ecological perspective challenges fixed (and universal) responses and favours a focus on how specific events or practices occur in context, how different people and different cultural groups respond to contextual situations or to common human problems in specific but equally meaningful ways (Watts 1992), and how these interactions are only fully understood if read taking inequality – power inequality specifically – into consideration. Looking at diversity negotiation in context, as a situated process, reveals diversity negotiation as a tensional, political issue that involves everyone and not specifically individuals or groups with 'diversity needs'. We are all part of what produces differences, of the conflict and the inequalities it expresses, and more than to resolve these conflicts we need to articulate them in ways that resituate 'each of us as someone who is always already implicated in any conflict that arises with others' (Todd 2011, p.111) and further our own commitment to transformation and social justice.

Echoes of this discussion can be found in the common responses Higher Education Institutions have to diversity issues. Increases in diversity, like those brought by higher levels of enrolment of minority students or the presence of larger numbers of international students coming from different cultural backgrounds, challenge Higher Education Institutions to promote changes at different levels: of staff, faculty, and students, of learning environments and pedagogical practices, and sometimes of policies and procedures at the larger institutional level (Otten 2003).

Looking at these three levels of desirable transformation, we find a large variety of responses Higher Education Institutions have been offering, for example, facilitating opportunities for encounters between people of various cultural backgrounds and celebratory explorations of difference in order to develop intercultural awareness and competence, introducing changes in the curriculum and promoting an equity pedagogy that favours participation, collaboration and the reduction of prejudice in the classroom, and even some affirmative or social justice oriented measures (Guo & Jamal 2007; Otten 2003). When we reflect on their limitations – from a socio-political and ecological perspective on diversity and diversity negotiation – two main tensions arise: i) the need to go beyond responses

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that mainly target individuals and individual development, and ii) the need to consider responses that go beyond the walls of the university and recognise and tackle diversity issues taking into account their larger, and often structural, roots.

Responses that mainly target individuals and changes at the individual level often rest on static and depoliticised notions of difference and culture and cannot adequately facilitate transformation of the learning environments. Adopting a more systematic multicultural approach that questions the curriculum and that puts in place pedagogical practices that openly challenge stereotypes and contribute to an empowering learning culture, is important to address issues of diversity in Higher Education (Guo & Jamal 2007). But although important, it is often not enough. To address issues of structural inequality, and interconnected forms of oppression that are present in the wider society and are reproduced in Higher Education Institutions, it is necessary to act in ways that go beyond the walls of the university. A commitment to an anti-racist education 'moves beyond a narrow preoccupation with individual prejudice and discriminatory actions to challenge power differentials between sociocultural groups in society. It explicitly names the issues of race and sociocultural difference as issues of power and equity rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety' (Guo & Jamal 2007, pp.44-45), confronting the ways in which differences become inequality and stressing that, even if changes at the individual and learning environment levels may be useful, ecological transformation and social justice demand changes that challenge structures and that stretch as far as oppressions go.

1.3. Critical Incidents on Diversity

Overview table

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
Being stereotyped	Portugal	International student from Brazil	English-speaking	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, prejudice, stereotypes
The Chinese people eat dogs	France	Local student with Chinese ancestry	French	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, disrespect for other cultures, stereotypes
Us and them	Portugal	International student from Brazil	Portuguese	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, segregation of foreign students
Where are you from?	Germany	Staff	German	Job interview	Colonialism, diversity, prejudice, stereotypes
You are not as good as the Portuguese	Portugal	International student from Brazil	Portuguese	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, depreciation

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2 Communication

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2.1. Introduction: Why is Communication Relevant?

Communication is a transversal issue tackling all areas of intercultural Higher Education and campus life. International students undergo complex adjustment processes to Higher Education in their respective host countries, both academically and socially (Rienties, Tempelaar 2013). When we think of communication from the perspective of international students and their adaptation to a new university and student life, it is essential to understand the dominant style of communication in a host culture. Verbal, para-verbal, nonverbal, and physical elements are needed to decode messages of other students, professors, librarians, flatmates, and administrative staff members. This complexity of communication about academic contents in various hierarchies and relationships is often referred to as 'high-context communication' as opposed to a 'low-context' communication style, where meaning is uniquely derived on the verbal level. How do professors interact with students of different levels (BA, MA, and PhD) in the host culture? What is viewed as polite communication, and what is not? (Brown et al. 1987) When these communicative codes are not shared, intercultural misunderstandings or critical Incidents might occur. In these interactions between students, staff, and other members of different cultures, communication issues can lead to a loss of one's cultural reference frame and hinder solutions and the best possible action. Also, these communication situations can have the side effects of strong emotions such as frustration or scepticism, but also attenuated feelings such as humour or simple irritation. Lighter forms of misunderstanding are part of everyday communication and are relational by nature in all interactions.

2.2. Cultural Differences in Communication

There are three main levels of communication we would like to address here (Giles 2007, Afifi 2007): the academic content in communication, the relational aspects of communication, and finally, the means of communication (verbal, para-verbal, non-verbal). The communication of emotions seems to be a separate issue to be tackled in this chapter as well.

2.2.1. The Content – the Meaning (what?)

In the Higher Education context, communication about academic contents is predominant. The content depends on the interaction between the sender, the receiver, and the context (higher education) (Schaeper 2019). The meaning of the academic content is co-constructed and negotiated. It is essential for international students to decode the meaning of what is being said. This implies: an active role of the receiver in interpreting, giving sense to the message, the importance of filters, reference frames mobilised to give sense to communication acts, and the importance of the context of higher education. When the cultural frames of reference between the sender and the receiver differ, different meaning is constructed and a misunderstanding can arise. In the incident '*Too many corrections (professor's point*

of view) (DE)' & '*Too many corrections (student's point of view) (DE)*' it seemed impossible to talk about the academic content of a paper after a professor had given feedback to the international student, which the student interpreted as criticism.

Communication conflicts can be active and open conflicts or subtle, passive and concealed notions that something is wrong (Smyth 2012). These subtle communication conflicts can sometimes be hard to grasp and can take the form of trivialising problems, making others feel insecure, or communicating in a distant, abstract or sarcastic way (Heigl 2014). It is important to differentiate between an active conflicting behaviour and a passive form of reacting to conflicts. First, active conflicting behaviour can be, for example, doing the opposite of what you are asked to do, sabotaging others or refusing to follow instructions (e.g. '*You could do it better (PL)*'), in which a student does not allow verbal feedback from others). In the incident '*Christmas Presents for everyone(AT)*', two students have an argument over the meaning of an object: An Austrian student hands out seasonal presents to peer students, wishing them a wonderful Christmas break, which is interpreted as a verbal offence by a Muslim student who does not want to receive Christmas presents and the conflict escalates. A passive form of reacting to intercultural conflicts is not less severe, however, and can take the forms of non-humour or a general lack thereof, being late, being agitated when someone asks you to do an errand, or a general withdrawal from communication altogether (e.g. '*Loud flatmate (AT)*' in which a student from Austria withdraws from the communicative situation with her Italian flatmate because of her frustration).

2.2.2. Relationships (with whom?)

Each act of communication represents an occasion to construct, change or maintain the relationship between two involved people (e.g. student and staff or local student and international student). Even the seemingly most insignificant interaction is an occasion to confirm mutual respect and recognition – in this sense, there is no such thing as insignificant interaction. Even though this key element of reciprocity is universal – recognition is present in all cultures – the choreographies of getting there vary dramatically. The way relationships are constituted is influenced by other values and dimensions, such as the orientation towards individualism or interdependence and the acceptance of power distance. In social contexts characterised by a high acceptance of power difference, the asymmetry of the relationships is marked (by different codes of addressing each other, for example, or different gestures) whereas in more horizontal settings, speakers will try to conceal or reduce the power differences (for example both parties addressing each other with the same formality despite difference in age or status). In the incident '*No Introduction (AT)*', a student from the United States wondered about the Austrian teacher introducing himself in class, but not asking students to do so. For her, this marked a huge power difference between herself and the teacher. In any case, the different incorporation of means of communication (gestures, words, power distance…) will almost always be interpreted as information about the intentions of the other, connected to the relational level: a person stepping too close is seen as aggressive ('*The Kissing (FR)*'), a person using informal register as disrespectful etc. Because the teacher used a stereotypical example of culture in class, the student viewed the teacher as disrespectful in the incident '*Chinese people eat dogs (FR)*' and as a consequence, the relationship was destroyed – the student had to leave the classroom. In the incident '*Business card in back pocket (PL)*', a student from China felt disrespected because the administrative staff member at the university

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put his business card in his pocket, seemingly disregarding it. This is considered disrespectful in China, but not in Poland. For the Chinese student, the communication situation changed completely after this gesture.

A specific aspect of relational communication is facework (Glasl 1999; Oetzel et al. 2000). Each one of us has experienced a communication situation in our past in which we felt ashamed or embarrassed in front of others, e.g. when not knowing something, when failing a test in front of others, when being embarrassed for other reasons etc. In these situations, you lose face. The concept of facework goes back to Goffman (1955), who first introduced it. Communication situations that do not go well have an emotional effect, which may cause a student or teacher to feel stressed, ashamed, provoked, humiliated, or embarrassed in front of others. This is where relational communication and facework come in. A saved face is vital to our emotional significance and our social identity. Therefore, it is a 'precious identity resource in communication' because it can be challenged, enriched, and damaged on an emotional and on a cognitive appraisal level (Ting-Toomey, 2004, p. 218). Face can be lost when the identity is being challenged or ignored in a communication situation. Depending on various cultural communities, facework is applied differently (Ting-Toomey, 2004). In the incident '*Mohammedan (AT)*', the German student does not want to embarrass the Austrian professor in front of the other students and seeks a personal conversation with him after the formal lecture, thus applying a facework strategy: saving the other person's face. The student expressed herself freely about her concern when the hierarchical space of the university lecture was over. She respected him because of his position in the hierarchy and thus tried to save his face in front of the other students, although she was shocked about his inability to find a correct term for Muslims. In another incident, '*Satisfaction Survey (FR)*', a student throws a survey across the table towards another student because she does not want to answer it. This form of direct communication leads to a loss of face for the student responsible for the survey in front of the class.

2.2.3. Means of Communication (how?)

Verbal communication: Verbal communication can be viewed as one of the most predominant forms of communication in the Higher Education context, including things such as speech, metaphors, imagery, use of idioms, etc. The incident '*Praised in Front of Classmate (PL)*' illustrated that a Thai student felt embarrassed when the Polish teacher praised her for a very good presentation in front of the class in a Polish Global Marketing Course. For her, the presentation is team work and singling out individual students is a source of embarrassment, even if the verbal communication is positive in this case. In the German incident '*Too many corrections (student's point of view) (DE)*' a student misinterprets the intentions of the professor, who wants to give constructive feedback for a final paper, but the student feels heavily criticised instead. The verbal and non-verbal communication between them is disturbed. Also, in the case ('*You could do it better (PL)*'), a student does not agree to receive verbal feedback from a peer student, as, according to her, the other student is not qualified to give feedback – only the teacher is.

Para-verbal communication: the tone, intonation, loudness, rhythm, silences, pauses, auxiliary sounds (uh, oops…)

Non-verbal communication contains various elements such as kinesics, haptics, and proxemics (Afifi, 2007), which all affect communication.

Kinesics: Non-verbal communication involves the use of gestures or body posture, which vary across cultures. If you think about different greeting rituals in different cultures, this becomes obvious (shaking hands, kissing on the cheek, etc.) (‘*The Kissing (FR)*’). Gestures also contribute to a culture shock of a Korean student at a university in Paris in the incident ‘*Undressing (FR)*’, where a student in front of her takes off her sweater during class, thus revealing her arms, shoulders and making other parts of her body visible. The Korean student interprets this gesture as provocative, as in Korea, students dress ‘properly’ for class and do not undress. In another incident ‘*Satisfaction Survey (FR)*’, a student throws a survey across the table towards another student, because she does not want to answer it. This aggressive gesture is of course interpreted as an offence by the other student.

Proxemics: An issue of adaptation in non-verbal communication could also be the fine-tuning of physical distance in accordance with social relationship and the type of situation. Students amongst each other might be physically closer to each other in comparison to a student-teacher relationship, in which both pay attention to keep more distance. Intimate relationships require more proximity while professional ones do not. If, however, the distance is not respected by somebody, it could be perceived as an invasion of the intimate sphere, which in turn creates discomfort. In the incident ‘The Kissing (FR)’, a student from Senegal is irritated by his peer student from France, who wants to kiss him in the hallway as a means to say ‘hello’. He is unfamiliar with this ritual and feels that it is too close and intimate for him.

Also, physical appearance and presenting yourself are parts of non-verbal communication. In the incident ‘*Protected Girls (AT)*’, a group of students goes out and the female students from Iran are accompanied by a guardian who protects them from unwanted communication with male students during this pub-crawl.

2.2.4. Exteriorisation of Emotions

In every communication situation, the expression of emotions plays a role. This can happen in a verbal, para-verbal or non-verbal way, for example crying, using facial expressions, laughing, or the way people look at each other. In the Higher Education context, which is mostly perceived as a formal context, the expression of emotions is oftentimes considered a taboo. In the incident *‘Angry student (AT)*’, a student from an Arabic country was so angry towards an administrative staff member that he shouted at her and insulted her in the office when she checked the requirements for him to take an exam. The staff member immediately reacted and wrote a written protocol to her professor to document this incident. She thought his emotions were out of place.

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2.3. Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, international students undergo complex adjustment processes to Higher Education in their host country in terms of verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal communication. This results in different levels of stress while adapting to the new learning culture of the host university. Students are confronted with new tasks, requirements, communication norms, habits, and social relationships. From a micro-sociological perspective, students shift between contexts, cultures and sub-cultures, as well as roles and role requirements (Schaeper 2019).

2.4. Critical Incidents on Communication

Overview table

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
Too many corrections (student's point of view)	Germany	International student	USA	Bilateral meeting	Communication Facework – communicating and criticizing
Too many corrections (professor's point of view)	Germany	Staff	USA	Bilateral meeting	Communication Facework – communicating respect
Business card in back pocket	Poland	Staff	China	Bilateral meeting	Communication, respect
You could do it better	Poland	Canadian/ Polish student	India	Plenary class session	Communication Facework / Direct /indirect communication
Satisfaction survey	France	International student	Algeria	Classroom outside of class	Communication, aggressive gesture, facework
No introduction	Austria	International student	USA	plenary class session	Verbal communication Politeness / reciprocity Power distance
Undressing	France	International student	Korea	Plenary class session	Communication, non-verbal, gestures
Loud flatmate	Austria	Local student	Italy	Student dorm	Communication style Conflict management
The Kissing	France	International student	Senegal	University corridor	Non-verbal communication, greeting rituals
Mohammedan	Austria	Local student	Austria	Plenary class session	Facework, verbal communication

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3 Hierarchy

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3.1. Introduction: Why is Hierarchy Relevant?

Hierarchy and status play an essential role in students' life since universities are hierarchical, and many interactions are formal. When we think of hierarchy and status from the perspective of international students and their adaptation to a new environment, it is essential to understand the main factors on which status is based in a host culture. Many questions have to be answered. What factors determine people's place in the university hierarchy? How do I show respect to teachers, staff members, and colleagues? How do professors interact with students?

3.2. Cultural Differences in Attitude to Status and Hierarchy

Different cultures perceive hierarchy, power, and status in different ways. The focus will be placed on two typologies of cultures based on status-related dimension:

- G. Hofstede (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede/Hofstede/Minkov 2010) – low (small) and high (large) power distance cultures;
- F. Trompenaars and Ch. Hampden-Turner (2012) – achieved status and ascribed status cultures.

Power distance refers to the degree to which individuals, groups, or societies accept inequalities (e.g. inequalities in power, status, wealth) as unavoidable, legitimate, or functional. In other words, 'the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Institutions are the basic elements of society, such as the family, the school (from primary school to university), and the community; organisations are the places where people work' (Hofstede/Hofstede/Minkov 2010, p. 61).

In high power distance cultures, people believe that inequalities among members of the society are expected and desired. Hierarchy in organisations reflects existential disparities between more upper and lower levels. Power relations are paternalistic and autocratic. Cultures with a high power distance value status and seniority. Status is mainly ascribed and based on such factors as gender, race, parental social status, family origins, and ethnic backgrounds. Contradictory, in low power distance cultures, people believe that inequalities among society members should be minimised. Hierarchy in organisations means an inequality of roles, established for convenience. Lower power distance cultures strive more for competence and a consultative style. Status is mainly achieved and based on merit. It reflects personal skills, abilities, and efforts (Trompenaars/Hampden-Turner 1998; Hofstede/Hofstede/Minkov 2010; Daniels/Greguras 2014).

Within the Higher Education system, questions of hierarchy, power, and competences are of high importance. Universities are hierarchical and based on lots of dependencies (i.e., students from professors, professors from deans, deans from higher authorities, both students and professors

from administration). When staff and students from high and low power distance cultures interact, misunderstandings and critical incidents can occur. An example of such a situation is described in the critical incident *'Angry Student (AT)'*. The Austrian staff represented low power distance culture in which status is based upon competences and the position held. The staff was in charge of the students' exams, so she was in a position of 'power' to administer the requirements after the Studieneingangs- und Orientierungsphase (STEOP) exam. She had an official position in the university to deal with these formal requirements. The Egyptian student represented a high power distance culture in which status is ascribed and based on age and gender. The student was much older than the teaching assistant. Therefore it was a challenge for him to assume that a younger woman is competent to deal with his issue and has more status than him in this particular situation.

In high power distance cultures, the educational process is highly personalised: what is transferred is not seen as an impersonal 'truth', but as the personal wisdom of the teacher. Teachers are perceived as 'gurus'. Quality of learning depends on the excellence of the teacher, and teachers should take all initiatives. In contrast, in low power distance cultures, teachers are experts who transfer 'truths' and 'facts' that exist independently of particular teachers. Quality of learning depends on two-way communication and the excellence of students. Teachers expect initiatives from students in the class. (Hofstede/Hofstede/Minkov, 2010). Therefore a Russian student (who represented higher power distance level than her French colleagues) was surprised that they decided to lie down on the floor or sit freely in the space in front of the professor during the lecture. For he, this lack of manifestation of authority (status) implied that the professor did not deserve authority, and at the same time did not have enough knowledge to transfer it ('*Sitting on the floor (FR)*').

Similarly, the French teacher representing a high power distance culture identified a student with no interest in following the class and told her to leave. From his perspective, his role is to educate and help the student to realise that this class was not good for her. At the same time, the fact that the student was focused on her phone instead of listening to the lecture was from his perspective lack of respect to the teacher's authority ('*Go home! (FR)*').

In high power distance cultures, students speak up only when invited. While in low power distance cultures, students expect to be treated as equals and many times assume that communication should be on an equal footing. Therefore an American student was surprised when the teacher introduced himself, not giving the floor to students to do the same. Since it was her first day of class in the Master's programme, the student expected to be treated in a different and more individualistic way since her studies were advanced ('*No introduction (AT)*').

In all cultures, students are supposed to address teachers with respect. However, in some cultures, like Portugal, Poland or Austria, usage of professional titles is essential. Therefore Portuguese students were shocked when their Brazilian colleague addressed the teacher using her first name instead of using the professional title ('*Addressing academics (PT)*').

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3.3. Critical Incidents on Hierarchy

Overview table

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
Addressing academics	Portugal	International student	Brazil	Classroom outside of class	Hierarchy
Angry student	Austria	Local staff	Egypt	Bilateral meeting	Hierarchy/ gender
Sitting on the floor	France	International student	Russia	Plenary class session	Hierarchy
Go home!	France	International student	China	Plenary class session	Hierarchy
No introduction	Austria	International student	USA	Plenary class session	Hierarchy (Main topic: Verbal communication)

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4 Identity

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4.1. Why Tackle the Concept of Identity and what Does 'Identity' actually Mean?

Before we start to discuss identity, we would like to ask the reader to take a pause and write down eight answers to the question 'Who am I?' Have a look at your list. Some of the answers will probably refer to traits that make you unique, represent your personal traits and reflect your life journey (e.g. 'I am curious' 'I am an explorer' etc.). Other answers will represent you in relation to somebody else: 'I am a mother,' 'a companion,' 'a good friend' etc. Finally, some answers will refer to groups and communities that you are a member of: 'I am a migrant', 'I am a woman', 'I am an atheist' etc. Together, these three types of statements make up the mosaic of who we are, our identity. Here is a more concise definition from Vignoles et al. (Vignoles 2011, p. 3): 'Identity consists of the confluence of the person's self-chosen or ascribed commitments, personal characteristics, and beliefs about herself; roles and positions in relation to significant others; and her membership in social groups and categories (including both her status within the group and the group's status within the larger context); as well as her identification with treasured material possessions and her sense of where she belongs in geographical space.'

Clearly, there are many possible answers to the question of 'who we are', on all levels, which implies that every single individual is characterised by a multiplicity of identities. Furthermore, would your list be the same if you rewrote it while you are on holiday on a different continent? Would it be the same if you had to migrate to an unknown country whose language you do not speak? Probably not. From the sum of all our identities, different situations make some features salient: we feel more female in a party amongst men, and we feel more like a social psychologist at a conference where everyone else is a clinician. This openness to the external context already points to the fact that identity is sensitive to changes in our cultural environment, such as international mobility.

Identity gives us a sense of who we are, a sense of continuity. Yet this 'continuity' of who we are is in permanent negotiation with the social environment, and the constancy we feel is the fruit of perpetual dialectics and the integration of the new aspects – of the other – in the self (Camilleri 1990). The content of identity, which results from this negotiation, can refer to oneself as a unique individual, to roles and relationships as well as to memberships in cultural groups. For the proponents of motivated identity process theory, this negotiation follows a certain number of principles or motives that we try to satisfy through the processes of identity construction:

1. Continuity across time and situation (continuity)
2. Uniqueness or distinctiveness from others (distinctiveness)
3. Confidence and control of one's life (self-efficacy)

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4. A sense of personal worth or social value (self-esteem)
5. Belonging – maintaining feelings of closeness to and acceptance by other people (Vignoles et al. 2002; Vignoles et al. 2006)
6. Meaning – finding significance and purpose in one's life (Vignoles et al. 2002; Vignoles et al. 2006)
7. A psychological coherence motive – establishing feelings of compatibility among one's (interconnected) identities (Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010)

(Bardi et al. 2014, p. 176)

Our capacity to satisfy these motives is not independent from the external environment: freshly arriving at a new university as an international student, the chances of feeling 'belonging' are reduced, we have to redefine the identities that can help me connect to our new peer students. Breakwell (1988) talks about identity threats to denote such situations where the processes of identity construction fail to satisfy the motives behind identity. Belonging is not the only motive that can be threatened during international student mobility.

We will first explore whether there are cross-cultural differences in our ways of relating to identity, and then explore how intercultural contact and adaptation affects identity. In truth, there is no 'culture shock experience' that does not touch the identities of the protagonists. But some incidents focus precisely on identity related issues. We will use these incidents to illustrate the key concepts and at the end of the section will draw some conclusions and possible strategies that could help to avoid the escalation of identity-based conflicts and resentments.

4.2. Cross-Cultural Differences in the Construct of Identity

The individualist versus collectivist or interdependent identity orientation is probably the most researched feature of cross-cultural differences. What does this distinction mean? If we go back to our question 'who are you', members of individualistic cultures are expected to give more individual answers whereas people with collectivist orientation would define themselves more in terms of relationships and group membership. In Hofstede's definition: 'Individualism, can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families. Its opposite, Collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. A society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of 'I' or 'we.'' (Hofstede 2020). There is ample evidence for such a distinction, that like all statistic generalisation, it will not apply to every single individual.

How can such a difference trigger culture shock? Putting the individual needs behind what is good for the community often appears as threatening to individualists whose focus is on the autonomy of the individual. The incident '*Protected girls (AT)*' highlights the surprise of the narrator as he observes that the Iranian classmates are accompanied by a chaperon, sent by the community to safeguard the

respect of the community's rules and values during pub-crawling. Our identity orientation also has an impact on how we behave in conflicts: 'Our identity orientation also has an impact on how we behave in conflicts: '(...) in conflict situations, collectivists are primarily concerned with maintaining relationships with others, whereas individualists are primarily concerned with achieving justice' (Ohbuchi cited in Triandis 2002, p. 139).

4.3. The Specific Challenges of Identity Dynamics in International Student Mobility:

4.3.1. Expectation towards Identity Change and the Threat of Continuity

The traditional conceptualisation of the changes of identity at the new host university envisioned a rather linear transformation process in which the new international students slowly lose their distinguishing features as they acquire the patterns of the new cultural environment. This process is often referred to as 'acculturation'. The model proposed by Berry (e.g. 1994) is probably the most cited in the domain. He distinguishes four different 'acculturation strategies': assimilation, marginalisation, separation and integration, following the interplay of two dimensions: the continuity of one's original cultural identity and the engagement with the cultural identity of the dominant group. For instance, the assimilation strategy is based on and the adherence to the local cultural identity combined with letting go of the original identity.

Studies showed that the picture is much more complex (see Bhatia/Ram 2001). People negotiate their identities on various levels and develop a special identity-system, sometimes displaying cultural creativity to gap contradictions. In '*Protected girls (AT)*' a group of Iranian students accepts to join the colleagues on a pub crawl, but they are accompanied by a chaperone. Nevertheless, in genuine lay thinking we find that the representation of 'linear' and 'progressive' identity change persists and raises expectations towards members of minorities – and as we see even towards international students. In the situation '*Christmas presents for everyone (AT)*', a student offers gifts for all classmates, even the Muslim colleague, assuming he must have gotten used to this practice.

The lack of adaptation is sometimes interpreted as a resistance towards the host culture. At the same time, members of minorities can perceive such an expectation and experience it as a form of oppression and discrimination that does not give them the autonomy to maintain their cultural identity. For Schwartz, the expectation of the assimilation of the other is connected to 'symbolic threats that the presence of cultural minorities can pose to cultural majority members'. This is a threat of the same motive of continuity but this time of the majority's cultural identity (Schwartz et al. 2014).

4.3.2. Threat to Positive Value, Recognition

In 'The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment', Fukuyama explores how 'Thymos', the 'part of the soul that craves recognition of dignity' (Fukuymama 2018, p.12) underlies much of the identity dynamics taking place in current politics all over the world. In Identity Process Theory (IPT) this concept is connected to the motive of self-esteem, in social identity theory to the need for a positive identity. This need seems to underlie the great majority of incidents connected to identity where the narrators

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face a lack of respect and recognition for some of their identities. Sometimes, this happens seemingly without intention (such as in the '*Mohammedan (AT)*' incident) and sometimes, the malevolence of the perpetrators seems explicit ('*Jokes on Holocaust (DE)*'). The threat to the need of having positive identities irrevocably triggers negative feelings: in the incident '*Mohammedan (AT)*' a word with negative connotations is used to refer to Muslims. In '*Chinese people eat dogs (FR)*', a social group is connected to a potentially disgusting habit, while '*Jokes on Holocaust (DE)*' connects a national identity to a very negative part of history. '*Distorting the language (PT)*' points to the lower status of the Brazilian language in Portugal and hence Brazilian identity in the eyes of the Portuguese students.

Repeated episodes of such non-recognition or denigration of the identity can result in a negative social identity. In these cases, 'stigma consciousness' (Pinel 2002) can develop: when an identity is 'loaded' with negative representations, and the individual possibly has experienced several stereotypes, prejudice, acts of discrimination, s/he is 'primed' to interpret the behaviour of others as yet another experience of prejudice and discrimination. Such stigma-consciousness may explain the very intense reaction of the Muslim student in the incident '*Red Wine Cake (AT)*'.

4.3.3. Threats to other Motives

Other incidents illustrate how threats can appear on other motives of the identity of the international student:

- Belonging: the incident '*Us and them (PT)*' highlights how local students create two distinct categories, denying the international students a sense of belonging to the class. The situation '*Where are you from? (DE)*' illustrates how this seemingly harmless question positions the interlocutor outside of the majority population.
- *Distinctiveness:* on the contrary, in '*Christmas presents for everyone (AT)*' the Muslim student's particular religious identity is not recognised.
- *Self-efficacy:* in the incident '*Go Home! (FR)*', the student's competence is questioned in an episode of public humiliation.
- *Continuity:* the incident '*The Kissing (FR)*' illustrates how the incapacity of properly reciprocating a greeting ritual (that of receiving and giving a kiss on the cheek) breaks the narrator's self-perception as a polite interaction partner.

Pathways for Solutions: How to Prevent and Manage Identity Conflicts in Higher Education with International Students

The incidents show how international mobility and more largely cultural diversity stimulate and affect the identities of international and local students alike. They make salience of certain identity aspects fluctuate dramatically, making some identities available and pushing others back (Vignoles et al 2011) and they affect people's capacities to satisfy the motives behind identities, in particular positive value. Overlooking these dynamics, pretending they do not have an implication in a so called

'identity-blind[1]' paradigm may not be a plausible option, as it leaves the tensions latent, untreated to escalate invisibly. We propose to substitute the 'identity-blind' approach with an 'identity-fair' strategy, which gives visibility and recognition to the multiple identities present in the classroom without rigidifying them and enclosing students in their separate identities. A gentle form of 'identity politics' could help students and faculties to ensure that identities of all parties are recognised, in particular identities that are under the threat of negative representations, acknowledging for instance the particularities of the experiences of students from Non-Western, Non-European backgrounds, the intersections of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or economic class. We emphasise 'gentle' as opposed to rigid forms of identity politics and political correctness because they, in their effort to create safe spaces and protection for vulnerable identities and protecting them from oppression, run the risk of reinforcing separation, reducing naturally multiple identities to single story narratives and can end up cutting the spaces for dialogue and negotiation.

In terms of accompaniment trainings, a session on the challenges of acculturation and adjustment could highlight the different needs behind identity whose satisfaction become challenged in episodes of international student mobility. An awareness of the multiplicity of needs can help international students anticipate the acculturation stress and the development of adaptive strategies to face it.

4.5. Critical Incidents on Identity:

Overview table:

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
A woman in a high position	Germany	Head of Department, German	Egypt	Bilateral consultation	Threat to continuity
African Movie	Portugal	Student from Mozambique	Portuguese	Classroom	Threat to positive identity
Being stereotyped	Portugal	Student, Brazilian	Norway	Classroom	Threat to recognition
Chinese people eat dogs	France	Student, Chinese	French	Classroom	Threat to positive identity
Christmas presents for everyone	Austria	Student, Austrian	Egypt	Classroom	Threat to distinction
Distorting the language	Portugal	Student, Brazilian	Portuguese	Classroom	Threat to positive identity
Go home!	France	Student, China	French	Classroom	Threat to positive identity
Jokes on Holocaust	Germany	Student, German	French, Armenian	Informal setting	Threat to positive identity

[1] 'Identity-blind' a term coined by the author alluding to the colour-blind ideology of the 1960's emphasising that 'race' or colour should not matter.

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Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
Loud flatmate	Austria	Student, Austrian	Italian	Student residence	Individualism vs collectivism
Mohammedan	Austria	Student, Turkey	Austrian	Classroom	Threat to positive identity
Protected girls	Austria	Student, Austrian	Iranian	Public space	Expectation of acculturation / individualism vs collectivism
Red wine cake	Austria	Student, Swiss	Kosovo	Classroom	Expectation of acculturation
Silent woman	Germany	Support staff, German	Morocco	Office	Expectation of acculturation
The Kissing	France	Student, Senegalese	French	University corridor	Threat to self-efficacy
Addressing academics	Portugal	Student, Brazilian	Portuguese	Classroom	Expectation of acculturation
Us and them	Portugal	International student from Brazil	Portuguese	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, segregation of foreign students
You'll cook for me	Poland	Staff (Student Assistant), Polish	Saudi Arabia	Student residence	Threat to continuity
Where are you from?	Germany	Staff (multicultural identity)	German	Job interview	Threat to belonging

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5 Time Perception

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5.1. Introduction: Why is Time Relevant?

Time is an integral aspect of human life, and it plays a crucial role in every student's life. The usage of time by students in Higher Education Institutions is related to their daily routines and activities. Students' approach to time and time management can affect their stress level as they need to cope both with their tasks and personal achievements. They need to allocate time among all their needs and obligations and manage time efficiently to meet deadlines for assignments, exams etc. This task can become harder when students need to live and study in a different culture. When we think of international students and their adaptation to a new educational environment, it is vital to understand how time is perceived in a host culture. It is also essential to understand what the time perception of people with whom they are going to interact during the studying process is like. Many questions arise. How do they perceive time? What does it mean to be on time? Are they focused on one thing at a time or do many things at once?

5.2. Cultural Differences in Time Perception

There are two main issues we would like to address here:

- Cultural differences in the approach to time
- Cultural differences in time management

5.2.1. Cultural Differences in the Approach to Time

Cultures handle time differently, and individuals' cultural backgrounds significantly impact their conception of time. Among the main typologies of cultures based on time-related dimensions, we can enumerate:

- E.T. Hall (1959; 1973) – monochronic and polychronic cultures
- Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) – past-oriented, present-oriented and future-oriented cultures
- R.D. Lewis (2018) – linear-active, multi-active, and reactive cultures

Due to the nature of educational experience as well as usefulness, the focus will be placed on the first model. In monochronic cultures, people take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously, and they adhere strictly to plans. For them, time is money, punctuality is essential, and a lack of punctuality implies a lack of respect. In contrast, people from polychronic cultures consider time commitments as an objective to be achieved, if possible. They rank personal involvement and completion of tasks above the demands of the pre-set schedules. They change plans often and easily and have a more relaxed

approach to punctuality (Arman & Adair 2012; Bluedorn, Kaufman-Scarborough & Lane 1992; Fulmer, Crosby & Gelfand 2014; Hall 1973; M. J. Nonis, Teng, & Ford 2005).

Within the Higher Education system, approach to time is of high importance. When students representing those two different approaches to time need to work together, misunderstandings and critical incidents can occur. The example of such a situation is described in the critical incident '*One hour late for a presentation (PL)*' as an Indian student (who was late) represented the polychronic culture in which completion of tasks is more important than punctuality. He came, and he was ready to present, so he could not understand why his teammates were angry at him. Other team members (students from Poland and Ukraine) were from monochronic cultures and placed a higher value on punctuality. In their opinion, the lack of punctuality implies a lack of respect both for the joint work and them. Another example is presented in the critical incident '*Being on time (PT)*'. Since her Portuguese colleagues represented a more polychronic attitude to time and came to the meeting at least 30 minutes late, their Iranian colleague felt disrespected. At the same time, when she once left the meeting unfinished due to her schedule and time commitments, they perceived it as unfriendly behaviour as in polychronic cultures, time dedicated is based on relationships.

Different approaches to time can also be visible in attitude to deadlines. The example of such a situation is described in the critical incident '*Moving the deadline (PL)*' as an Indian student (who represented polychronic culture) wanted to give the presentation and handle in the report two days after the deadline. He believed that it was only the lack of teacher's goodwill as she could easily prolong this time if she only wanted. The Polish teacher (who represented monochronic culture) could not understand student's request as deadlines need to be met.

5.2.2. Cultural Differences in Time Management

In monochronic cultures, people view time as linear and separable, capable of being divided into units, and therefore emphasise doing 'one thing at a time'. When one task is completed, they systematically move to the next one. The time which is not spent on working on a specific task or working towards a particular goal is perceived as time wasted. Contradictory, people in polychronic cultures view time as naturally re-occurring and thus emphasise doing 'many things at one time'. For them, time cannot be wasted as multiple goals can be completed at the same time (Arman & Adair, 2012; Bluedorn, Kaufman-Scarborough & Lane, 1992; Fulmer, Crosby, & Gelfand, 2014; Hall, 1973; M. J.Nonis, Teng, & Ford 2005).

Within the Higher Education system, the approach to time management is of great importance. When students from cultures with various attitudes are working together, it can cause misunderstandings. An example of such a situation is described in the critical incident '*One thing at a time? (PL)*'. The Polish team leader (from a monochronic culture) believed that everyone should focus on the topic, which was to be discussed at the moment. Therefore it was hard for her to cope with an Indian colleague who moved from one issue to another. At the same time, an Indian student (from multi-task oriented, polychronic culture) felt that her teammates did not appreciate her efforts.

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5.3. Critical Incidents on Time Perception

Overview table

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
Being on time	Portugal	International student	Iran	Student group meeting	Time perception
One hour late for a presentation	Poland	Local student	India	Plenary class session	Time perception
Moving the deadline	Poland	Staff	India	Bilateral meeting	Time perception
One thing at a time?	Poland	Local student	India	Student group meeting	Time perception

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6 Gender

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6.1. Introduction to Gender

It is surprising: The cultural, social, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of international students have been recognised as influencing factors for the motivations, expectations, experiences, and outcomes of international students studying abroad. However, a review of this significant body of literature on international students reveals a 'blind spot' on gender in relation to the international student experience (Boey 2014, p. 1). This 'blind spot' is astounding considering that the participation of female international students in student mobility has been extensive since the expansion of the international education sector worldwide.

This text is mainly based on the authors mentioned in the references taking their opinion/statements into account. However there is a large variety of further literature on gender and interculturality.

Women's enrolment in Higher Education globally has grown almost twice as fast as the rate of male enrolment in the past four decades, primarily due to increased equity and access, enhanced income potential, and the internationally-recognised imperative to narrow the gender gap at all levels of education. Women now make up the majority of Higher Education students in 114 countries, while men outnumber women in 57 countries. Despite this progress, it has been observed that women's participation at higher academic levels (primarily at the PhD level) declines and falls behind that of men. When it comes to earning their bachelor's degree, women have reached parity with men; women are also more likely than men to earn their master's degree, with 56 percent of graduate students being female, whereas only 44 percent are male students. However, this changes at the PhD level, since men are more likely to earn doctoral degrees (56 percent vs. 44 percent), with some exceptions such as Latin American countries and the Caribbean.

As women's enrolment in Higher Education has increased overall, so has their participation in global academic mobility, albeit at a slow rate: 48 percent of women were pursuing Higher Education overseas in 2012 as compared to 44 percent in 1999. While much of the growth has come from greater gender parity across the world, the larger presence of women in international education can also be attributed to targeted scholarship and fellowship programmes that provide opportunities for women and other under-represented groups to pursue advanced studies outside their home countries.

Although female students now make up the majority of Higher Education students in 114 countries and half of them take part in international mobility programmes, experience shows: Gender is still a big issue in intercultural conflicts. When Higher Education Institutions staff or students coming from different cultures communicate, irritations may occur caused by different gender traditions or because different gender stereotypes are challenged.

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Gender affects and indeed permeates conflicts at the intercultural, societal, and individual level. Understanding the role of gender in intercultural conflicts is possible through an analysis of individual levels, interactional levels, and the societal level.

Gender in the context of international student (and staff) mobility is seen as a structural category. This means that all social, cultural, political, and norm-setting systems are 'gendered' in their formal and informal structures. Masculinity as dominance and femininity as subordination are still symbolically and actually reinforced.

How gender roles are concretely shaped depends on the cultural context (in the sense of 'doing gender' West/Zimmerman 1987). Women are still considered in their role as reproducers. Gender creates status differences.

Gender refers to the shaping of how gender is generally interpreted and lived or is to be lived in a specific culture, in a specific historical situation. Gender comprises the area of culture-, stratum- and milieu-specific standardisation of life plans and behaviour patterns.

Gender could be viewed from various perspectives, including these three scientific disciplines which are regularly dealing with gender:

- Ethnology cultural anthropology: a cultural variation of gender classification (how many genders do we conceive) and representation (what characteristics, norms we associate to each gender), ritualisation (how people of different genders should behave, their relations orchestrated)
- Historiography: Change and context of gender differentiation
- Sociology: Gender as a socio-cultural construct

In this context, following the third strategy (3. sociology) gender is mainly understood as a social construct ('Doing gender', West/Zimmerman 1987), or as social construction following the theories of Judith Butler in particular (Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, 1990).

6.2. Seven Elements of Gender as a Social Construct

What do we mean when we describe gender as socially constructed? There are seven elements of gender as a social construct (West/ Zimmerman 1987; Hirschauer 2017):

1. Classification of Sex: A taxonomy of gender includes biological classifications of a range of sexual characteristics, which develop over the course of one's life. The purely biological level of classifications includes chromosomes, which – from a mere biological point of view –categorise female sex chromosome abnormalities and male sex chromosome abnormalities. Phenomena such as intersexuality or transsexuality also belong here.
2. Perception of Gender: A perception full of prejudice searches for gender signs to the extent that viewers locate themselves in the gender scheme.

3. Presentation of Gender: Gender presentation or gender expression is one's outwards appearance, body language, and general behaviour as categorised under the gender binary by society. Internalised characteristics, norms, values are part of this presentation too.
4. Gendering of Signs and Artifacts: The most famous examples for this gendering of signs are the signs used for bathrooms for male 🚹 and female 🚺 .
5. Differentiating Gender within Social Structures: The social construction of gender is a theory authenticated by reality in feminism and sociology about the operation of gender and gender differences in societies. According to this, society and culture create gender roles, and these roles are prescribed as ideal or appropriate behaviour for a person of that specific sex.
6. Assignment of Gender (names, social conventions, segregated fields and artifacts want to decide about our sex / gender) is the determination of an infant's sex at birth. In the majority of births, a relative, midwife, nurse or physician inspects the genitalia when the baby is delivered, and the sex is assigned, without the expectation of ambiguity.
7. Cultural construction of the biological sex: Expectations about attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men – in other words, gender – are shaped by culture. Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, but also in the wider community and the workplace.

At the societal level, a world dominated by men is characterised by the historical discrimination of women and injustice reproduced in institutions and by ideologies. Assumptions about male superiority pervade until today in the western hemisphere. The life experiences on which the claims of the dominant ideologies have been founded, are those of men, not of women. Patriarchy, like dictatorships, controls reality. Women and men are socialised within rigid gender expectations. Institutions such as the church, the family, and the law reproduce these biases in cultural norms, rules, and laws. Women have historically been subjugated politically, economically, and culturally. This institutional system of oppression and injustice directly creates disputes, sustains and escalates other conflicts and invades all other human interactions.

At the interactional level, there are a number of studies which support this theory. Gender may surface in conflicts in the way that parties interpret and give meaning to the conflict. Gender role stereotypes cause problems if the stereotype has little to do with the requirements of studying or teaching at a Higher Education Institution.

The critical incidents presented concerning Gender aspects can be analysed following the seven elements mentioned above.

6.3. Challenges of Gender in International Student and Staff Mobility

In international student and staff mobility, a lot of misunderstandings concerning the differentiation of gender within social structures may occur (see point 5.). One example of such a misunderstanding is presented in *'A Woman in a High Position (DE)'*, where the problem is caused both by a different

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understanding of hierarchy as well as a different concept of gender within the social structure. The concrete role of a leading woman within a Higher Education Institution is, from the point of view of the visiting professor, not appropriate. The expectation of only men being allowed and being able to be leaders in Higher Education is predominant in this CI. Something similar happens in the CI '*Angry Student (AT)*': The older, male student from an Arabic country did not associate competence and status with the young female student assistant. Also, it may have been a challenge to assume a younger woman has a higher status than him in the given situation. And as presented in the CI '*Writing about Own Achievements (DE)*', the respect for an academic hierarchy dominated by males and the power of academic staff is high in some countries. Women consequently underlie two disadvantages: as a student, because they are on a lower level within the academic hierarchy, and as females.

In the CI '*Protected Girls (AT)*' a male chaperone was there to observe female students from Iran when going out with peer students and to make sure they do not have indecent contact with other Europeans. This situation reveals a specific dominant role of the man (a protector of their honour, a guardian) and the 'protected', in other words: suppressed women (weak, naive, not able to take care of themselves). But the interpretation of the question if the girls feel 'protected' or 'suppressed' is also a question of the self and ideal self-description of both, the man and the women. Masculinity and femininity are cultural concepts, just like gender stereotypes are (Hofstede 1998). Also, in the CI '*You Will Cook for Me (PL)*', we may observe how gender stereotypes appear as a sign of an unequal balance of power between men and women, which has to be considered as a reflection of a concrete different cultural perception of gender roles and masculinity and femininity in a certain nation (Hofstede 1998, chapter 5: The cultural construction of gender). There is a clear division between the social roles and status of men and women. When the student from Saudi Arabia asks a Polish woman to cook for him and claims that he could pay her, the woman is reduced to a servant's role and a kitchen maid. The CI '*Silent Woman (DE)*', where, following the narrator's perception, the question of equality between men and women arises, is concerned with this issue as well: For the German consultant, the female international student has the same rights and duties as men have. She is not reduced to certain private roles (mother, wife, daughter, housewife), but she is free and may choose her own way of life, even in public.

The critical incidents mentioned above happen in different contexts. There are office situations, a teaching situation, an informal situation and a consulting situation. Nevertheless, in each situation the perception of masculinity and femininity, of gender roles and stereotypes circles around power, hierarchy and dominance.

Let us go deeper and have a closer look at gender issues of international students in a counselling situation like in the CI '*Silent Woman (DE)*'.

In '*Silent Woman (DE)*' the assignment of gender (see point 6.) and the cultural construction of biological sex (see 7.) are crucial for the silence of the woman. According to social conventions, she is not expected to talk while her husband is present, especially in an official consultant office in a Higher Education Institution. This case reveals certain expectations about the relations between women and men – in other words, gender – which are shaped by culture. This CI '*Silent Woman (DE)*' describes a consulting situation. Concerning gender aspects in consulting relationships, researchers found out that female consultants are closer to their clientele because they establish emotional contact with those seeking

advice. The disadvantage, however, is that men assume that they are less competent and thus behave accordingly.

Research shows that German men actually get into contact with counsellors more easily and are more likely to open up to them. 'However, it is not certain whether this also applies to men with a different cultural background who are seeking advice, especially those from countries where women are particularly discriminated against' (Vogt 2014, p. 213). If women advise men from male-dominated cultures, this can hinder the counselling process and, in some cases, lead to failure. Women are more sensitive to the setting in which counsellings take place than men (see page 215).

6.4. Possible Solutions and Measures: Towards a better Understanding of Gender Concepts in Counselling Situations at Higher Education Institutions

Sometimes, the misunderstanding in consulting situations is very easy to solve:

Exercising language sensitivity with respect to how to address the interlocutor (using titles and correct form of address for men and women), speed, and clarity of expression can be very helpful, for example. Some care must also be taken that a gender-sensitive language is used, but not in such a way that it is exaggerated or aggressive. When offering counselling sessions, we have to consider the setting and cultural backgrounds. Certain gender-critical behaviour that irritates the staff member should not automatically be seen as a discourtesy or an attack, but must be viewed in the context of the socio-cultural background of the international student receiving the counselling.

Dignity and attitude must be respected, even if the gender perception shows that the international student behaves in accordance with a different gender scheme. To avoid quick judgement by categorising people ('He is a macho'), the consideration of the particular situation in which the international students find themselves in may help: What about cultural background, habits, livelihood security, residence security, migration experiences? In the concrete CI '*Silent Woman (DE)*', the husband works as a parcel deliverer. If his wife decides to study again, there is no one at home to take care of the children, which is supposed to be her role, following the social structure in their home country. There is also an aspect of male humiliation (the man working in a low-wage job and the woman studying to get an academic degree).

This kind of situation could possibly be avoided in order to reduce the inhibition threshold for counselling if university staff offered group counselling together with other international students. This could be offered as long as the group members experience themselves as equal (for example couples from similar cultures).

Being aware of the contradictions between the personal lifestyles of staff members and international students requires the ability of introspection and flexibility. Counter-transferences correspond to the respective life story and are 'disturbances'. These conflicts can be based on different values and norms with regard to gender roles and the relationship between the sexes at the institutional level. Inconsistent, antagonistic gender attributions, intercultural conflicts have a deep impact on the formation of the psyche of staff members and international students. Narrow, one-dimensional and

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internalised images of women's and men's roles strongly limit the action opportunities and only allow potential for change in the relationship if they are made explicit. Staff members must always be aware that their interpretation competence makes them active co-constructors of a conflict and its solution.

6.5. Critical Incidents on Gender

Overview table

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
Writing about own achievements	Germany	Staff	Columbian	Service Centre for Equality and Diversity in a university	Gender and self-description
A Woman in a High Position	Germany	University staff	Egyptian	Office of the Head of the Centre of a university	Gender and status
Silent woman	Germany	University staff	Moroccan	university office	Gender and hierarchy
Angry Student	Austria	Austrian student	Egyptian	small office of the dean at the university	Gender and hierarchy
Protected Girls	Austria	International student	Iranian students	public space, in a city in Hungary	Gender and role
You will cook for me	Poland	staff member	Saudi Arabian	international office in a university	Gender and role

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7 Colonialism

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7.1. Theoretical and Political Assumptions on Diversity and Colonialism Coming from Relevant Literature

This text aims to describe the sensitive zone of colonialism, which could be considered an aspect of diversity. The two zones could be considered together. However, to describe them as an entity would be to reduce the importance of the specificity of the manifestations of colonialism in the contemporary academic world. In the analysis that follows, the specific aspects of colonialism will be addressed. More detailed information on diversity can be found in the first chapter.

Modern 'North-centric thought [...] is based on three great pillars: rationalism, the idea of progress, and universalism' (Santos 2017, p. 281). In fact, the colonial University is self-centred – be this centre in Europe (Eurocentric), the North (North-centric) or the West (western) – and takes as universal the 'principles which [...] only apply to the metropolitan [i.e., dominant, colonising] side of the abyssal line' (Santos 2017, p. xii). The link between eurocentrism, cultural coloniality and the rationality of modernity becomes clear when one thinks about the subject-object perspective that underlies the relationship between European culture and other cultures. For centuries, the Western paradigm of modern science saw knowledge as a product of a subject-object relation. According to Quijano (2007), this influenced the Eurocentric epistemological perspective on other cultures:

> *(...) only European culture is rational, it can contain 'subjects' – the rest are not rational, they cannot be or harbor 'subjects'. As a consequence, the other cultures are different in the sense that they are unequal, in fact inferior, by nature. They only can be 'objects' of knowledge or/and of domination practices. From that perspective, the relation between European culture and the other cultures was established and has been maintained, as a relation between 'subject' and 'object'. (Quijano 2007, p. 174).*

Using an organismic analogy, it works as if Europe is the brain and the rest of the world the arms (Quijano 2007). The outcome is a unidimensional view of the world where plurality has no place. Power is a monopoly of the dominators over the dominated.

This assumption is underpinned by the underlying idea of superiority regarding other cultures and other people. It is commonly thought that *this* is the right side of history and the best – if not 'blessed' – place on the globe, where the 'greatest' and 'correct' values and thoughts were allegedly born and are most developed. Europe is thought of as the single foundation of what is 'civilised' as opposed to 'primitive' (Quijano 2007; Stein/Andreotti 2017). For Max Weber (1930/2005, p. xxviii), whose statement from 1930 is still representative for the present day, 'Only in the West does science exist at a stage of development which we recognise to-day as valid'. The same can be said of law, art, architecture, social institutions and societal organisation, *inter alia* (Weber 1930/2005).

This presumed superiority is associated with the non-recognition of what happens beyond the 'abyssal line', and this non-recognition can take different forms: ignorance, forgetfulness, rejection, devaluation or practices such as teaching, catechising or converting. Weber, for instance, was aware of (some of) the achievements of the non-western world, as he cites several examples to argue that none of them are comparable to Western achievements, both in the way of methods as well as outcomes. This view of history is not neutral and tends to devalue what is done and achieved in the 'rest' of the world – and no, the world is not 'the West and the rest', to use Scruton's (2002) words or, as Edward Said (1979) proposed, the cleavage between the West (us) and the East (others) that represents the border between valid knowledge and invalid knowledge (epistemology), good and evil (ethics) or beauty and its opposite (aesthetics). Further and abundant examples could be: the first universities were not founded in Europe and therefore they are not an exclusively European idea: Nalanda, India, 5th century; Kairouan, Tunisia, 7th century; Fez, Morocco, 9th century; Cairo, Egypt, 10th century; and, finally, the first European University: Bologna, Italy, 11th century. The sea route to the Americas was not 'discovered' by Portuguese and Spaniards (the Chinese had already arrived there, across the Pacific), paper, the printing press, and gunpowder were discovered by the Chinese. Even in regards to the social solidarity or the ecological footprint it is not true that modern Western societies, which are highly individualised, constitute the maximum exponent of progress (an ideological category of westernism), when compared, for instance, with indigenous people from less powerful countries. Democracy and freedom are also not exclusive to the Western world, nor is globalisation 'a contribution of Western civilisation to the world' (Sen 2007, p. 125). People immigrating to Europe often need to learn a lot about the West, but 'there is still extraordinarily little recognition of the importance that should be attached to the need for the 'old Brits', 'old Germans', 'old Americans', and others to learn about the intellectual history of the world' (Sen 2007, p. 183) or to be aware that what is considered Western culture was born outside the West in Mesopotamia, some 7000 years ago.

In other words, the Eurocentric history that is often taught and learned with the intention of naturalising and legitimising the idea of *our* own superiority is often inaccurate. Anyway, the colonial project entails the construction of a single dichotomous narrative on the meanings of colonisation, a discursive device that renders any possibility of a reasonable mutual recognition very difficult.

> *Even the collective memory that we call 'our memory' and which seems to overlap with others, is not anything real or concrete. On the contrary, 'our memory' is also a narration, a story of 'arrival' and the resulting construction of memories (history, community, etc.) articulated within present power relations. The integration of memories into a whole occurs through political filter managed by political memory; or rather, by the 'officially' established bodies of power (Meneses 2012, p. 133).*

Indeed, despite the end of Europe's formal political domination of Latin America, Africa, and Asia (colonialism), social and cultural control prevails long after the immediate and direct repression of the western colonisers over the dominated cultures have ceased. Coloniality 'is still the most general form of domination in the world today' (Quijano 2007, p. 170). Since reality is socially constructed (Berger/Luckmann 1966/1991), the way one refers to 'reality' has consequences (Watts 1992). One should recall, for example, how countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are designated. It 'is

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almost scandalous' to describe countries with such 'a long history' as 'emerging' countries (Santos 2017, p. 287).

Quijano (2007), in turn, highlights the importance of intersubjectivity, heterogeneity, diversity, and historicity as connected elements of reality and pillars to the production of knowledge. The author calls for epistemological decolonisation, thus liberating the production of knowledge from coloniality. This should enable real intercultural communication and an exchange of experiences and meanings as the foundations of another rationality. The liberation of knowledge and intercultural relations from the cage of coloniality is a way of contributing to the social liberation from 'all power organised as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and as domination' (Quijano 2007, p. 178).

Nevertheless, the occidental university is still a central field of reproduction of inequalities inextricably linked to modern hierarchies of knowledge, notably through 'a strong version of the hidden curriculum' which reproduces gender and ethnic inequalities (Margolis/Romero, 1998) and forms of social, cultural and political discrimination. Although students also develop confrontational strategies (and not only suffer the effects of inequalities present in the curriculum), curricula are of particular importance, notably concerning the selection of publications, contents, and inspiring authors – which must include knowledge produced by and in the epistemic but also geographic South (Amorim/Pais/Menezes/Lopes 2019).

7.2. The Critical Incidents and the Issue of Colonialism/Diversity in Students' day-to-day Experience

The representation of superiority is present, actually, in several critical incidents that were collected in the scope of this project, such as when one verifies that 'foreign' students (i) are not considered as good as the 'locals' (e.g., '*You are not as good as the Portuguese (PT)*'), (ii) are expected to distort the 'pure' and 'correct' language of 'metropolitan sociability' (e.g., '*Distorting the language (PT)*'), and (iii) are judged for supposedly not complying with social norms such as schedules (e.g., '*Being stereotyped (PT)*').

The CIs also show a relationship of disinterest, rejection, ignorance, and disrespect with the cultures, the knowledges (in plural), the people beyond the 'abyssal line' (e.g., '*African movies (PT)*' and '*Chinese people eat dogs (FR)*'). There are several examples of prejudices and stereotypes in the critical incidents: '*Chinese people eat dogs (FR)*'; Brazilians (but they could also be Latinos, the countries of southern Europe, among many other examples) do not stick to the schedule. What could be the influence of the association between terrorism and Islamism (reinforced repeatedly by the mass media) in the fear felt by the college employee towards the '*Angry student (AT)*'? Would she have felt the same if the student was read as white (see Carr/Rivas 2018)?

As Bauman (2008, pp. 87-88) stated in 'Liquid Times', the 'attraction of a 'community of sameness' is that of an insurance policy against the risks with which daily life in a polyvocal world is fraught.'

These prejudices and stereotypes are rooted in 'the danger of identitarian reductionism' (Santos 2017, p. 367, the 'solitarist approach' (Sen 2007, p. xii) or the 'one-dimensional man' (Marcuse 1964). For Sen, 'many of the conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of

a unique and choiceless identity' (Sen 2007, p. xv). In Europe, presently, the one-dimension policies of impoverishment of the European citizens have adopted a new significant, TINA (there is no alternative). In sum: present and sophisticated forms of colonisation decrease diversity, reducing it to the politics of the unique thinking.

It is important to stress, however, that the arrogance of modern science does not refer only to people from other latitudes, geographical locations or languages. In fact, the locations in this discussion are often more symbolic and epistemic than really geographical: if 'the South of the epistemologies of the South is epistemic rather than geographical' (Santos 2017, p. 355), the same happens with the North (is the south of Europe more an epistemic North than Australia or New Zealand?) or the West (which is the most western country: Brazil or Portugal?). It would thus be important to consider the extent to which English is a tool at the service of 'academic imperialism'. Is it an insignificant advantage to have English as a mother tongue, nowadays? Especially since this is the language of academic communication (which is different from a *lingua franca*, which should be different from the mother tongue of those in communication) and the production of 'measurable' – therefore valued – knowledge, a sort of 'raw material' whose sole possibility of existence, construction, and use is discursive.

Thus, colonialism does not refer only to countries with a colonial past. On the contrary, colonialism is

> *a structure, a culture, and a power based on the abyssal inequality between human beings; in other words, inequality that presupposes the sub-human nature of one of the parties involved in the particular social relation. Thus understood, the concept of colonialism includes coloniality as it has been discussed in decolonial literature (Santos 2017, p. 310).*

Not less important is the colonisation of the imagination of the dominated – resonating Paulo Freire's (1972) idea of 'adhesion', through which the oppressed consciousness hosts the oppressor consciousness –, which acts on a deeper level of the identity and self-perception of the colonised people, reinforcing the belief in the hierarchical construct of superior (western) and inferior (non-western) cultures (Quijano 2007). That is to say that 'academic imperialism' (Santos 2017, p. 326) has many facets and excludes and discriminates people based on socio-economic status, age, colour of skin and ethno-cultural features, gender, and sexual self-definition.

Such epistemological politics tend to reinforce the vision of minorities as problematic groups and to handle minority problems in such a way as to minimise them and never question their historical roots, forms of social construction and representation, experience, and knowledge on being victims of domination nor the historical heritage of colonialism and slavery (Boidin/Cohen/Grosfoguel, 2012).

Also, because it is multidimensional, it is not surprising that colonialism covers the different areas of university activity: 'access to the university (for students) and access to a university career (for faculty); research and teaching contents; disciplines of knowledge, curricula, and syllabi; teaching/learning methods; institutional structure and university governance; relations between the university and society at large' (Santos 2017, p. 332).

Indeed, massification of the access to Higher Education (Trow 1973) and the subsequent increase in the diversity of the student population have been challenging the colonial, elitist University, which

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has been oriented towards an 'excellence' of some results (number of papers, impact factor, volume of funding attracted) to the detriment of others (number of students from underrepresented groups, progression of so-called 'non-traditional' students) and fundamental processes such as democratisation, decolonisation, and emancipation of patriarchal logics and of market politics, governance practices expected outcomes and staff reification.

These logics should be extended into considering how diversity must enter the construction of knowledge and disciplines (Watts 1992) and how they incorporate tensions that should make an effort to retain the consideration of the challenges, conflict, and plurality that some considerations of diversity appear wanting to eliminate (Todd 2011).

In fact, these people – migrant and minority students, mature students, women, first-generation students, disabled students, students from rural areas, among many others – hitherto invisible, have made visible that the colonial theories are 'not sufficient [...] to understand the diversity of this world' (Santos 2017, p. 288). Very often, the University does too little to reduce inequality. On the contrary, it not only reproduces but also amplifies social inequalities, aggravating the gap between the most and the least powerful, reinforcing the privileges of the elites and preventing the subaltern to speak, to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's words (1988).

Before closing, it is important to launch the debate in relation to a particular critical incident, '*Where are you from? (DE)*'. This case shows how this zone, composed of the colonialism/diversity dyad, is truly sensitive. Indeed, curiosity about the personal or family origin of a person read as having a diverse origin was taken as racism. This topic is not taboo. On the contrary, it must be discussed, people who feel discriminated must be heard. It is not taboo, but extremely sensitive – and perhaps more so nowadays, with the increase in xenophobic and racist speeches and actions that have taken over the public space. It is possible, nonetheless, and necessary to resist these phenomena, in the name of a diversity that enriches everyone – and not just minorities (Amorim/Pais/Menezes/Lopes 2019). As such,

> *the mutual enrichment of different knowledges and cultures is the* ***raison d'être*** *of the epistemologies of the South. The point is not to search for completeness or universality, but rather to strive for a higher consciousness of incompleteness and pluriversality (Santos 2017, p. 371).*

7.3. Final Considerations towards Post-Colonial Universities

It is true that the voice of the University is still predominantly male, white, conservative (Margolis/Romero 1998), Anglo-Saxon, protestant or catholic, with high socioeconomic status... But it is a factor of hope to think that it is becoming increasingly socially responsible, polyphonic, diverse.

Some authors have defended the transmutation of the university into pluriversity (Boidin/Cohe/Grosfoguel 2012; Mbembe 2016). The pluriversity is the post-colonial (and post-capitalist and post-patriarchal) University (Santos 2017). This 'polyphonic university' is 'engaged in social struggles for a more just society' (Santos 2017, p. 377) and 'open to epistemic diversity' (Mbembe 2016, p. 37). For this reason, and given the increase in international student mobility and the impact it has on students,

particularly those from the Global South and/or ethnic minorities, this sensitive area is of utmost importance when thinking about possible solutions to intercultural conflicts with international students.

In sum, we hope to have justified the idea that colonialism and diversity compose a single and inseparable sensitive zone that is challenging the University – and those who think that it can play a part in making the world a better place, meaning fairer, more truthful and more diversely rich.

7.4. Critical Incidents on colonialism

Overview table

Title	Country	Narrator	Other person	Situation	Topic
African Movie	Portugal	International student from Mozambique	Portuguese	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, depreciation
Angry Student	Austria	Staff member	Egyptian	Bilateral meeting	Islamophobia
Distorting the language	Portugal	International student from Brazil	Portuguese	Yard, during the class break	Colonialism, diversity, prejudice, and stereotypes
You are not as good as the Portuguese	Portugal	International student from Brazil	Portuguese	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, depreciation
Chinese People eat Dogs	France	Local student with Chinese ancestry	French	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, disrespect for other cultures, stereotypes
Where are you from?	Germany	Staff	German	Job interview	Colonialism, diversity, prejudice, stereotypes
Being Stereotyped	Portugal	International student from Brazil	English-speaking	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, prejudice, stereotypes
Us and them	Portugal	International student from Brazil	Portuguese	Classroom	Colonialism, diversity, segregation of foreign students

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Conclusion

This reader intended to give you a summary and an overview of the extent to which all of the 35 CIs presented can be analysed, systematised and theoretically substantiated. They should have enabled you to gain general insights into the sensitive zones which go beyond the concrete CIs.

In summary, it can be said that the different sensitive zones cannot be sharply separated from each other. There are many overlaps. For example, the sensitive zone Communication extends into all areas, because in all cases it is always also about communication. The situation is similar with the sensitive zones Diversity and Identity. These topics are also so broadly defined that they are included in all cases at least as a cross-cutting theme. Nevertheless, there are sensitive zones in the CIs which are the linchpin of the conflict. This is why we grouped seven main sensitive zones, which does not mean that there are not more of challenging issues involved (like religion, ethics etc.).

Since this reader is about people working within the academic world, the texts tell us a lot about methods and strategies of adapting to the new learning culture of a host university. Students are confronted with new tasks, requirements, norms, habits, and social relationships. From a micro-sociological perspective, students shift between contexts, cultures and sub-cultures, as well as roles and role requirements. The other side of this coin is the target group of academic staff. They also struggle with new opinions, values and behaviours etc.

What we tried to offer with this reader is a way of expanding awareness of ‘the other’. For example, we collected some CIs about ethnocentrism. With the theoretical debate grounding the corresponding Cis, we tried to show that we are able to recognise differences or recur to devalue what is different. The main message is therefore: There are ways to deal with that ‘Otherness’! To recognise and to accept difference, we have to understand where it comes from, value it, and have to develop strategies for reducing the conflict. This reader wants to support you in doing so.

For those who are interested to go deeper into the theory connected with the sensitive zones and the CIs, we collected a total number of 27 references. These relevant literature sources connect the concrete CIs with a larger theoretical background. To make reading this literature easier for you, we prepared a template which gives you the most important information about the literature sources at a glance. Each template also summarises the most important points in a nutshell.

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