



Culture in the Classroom: Tough Questions about International Diversity

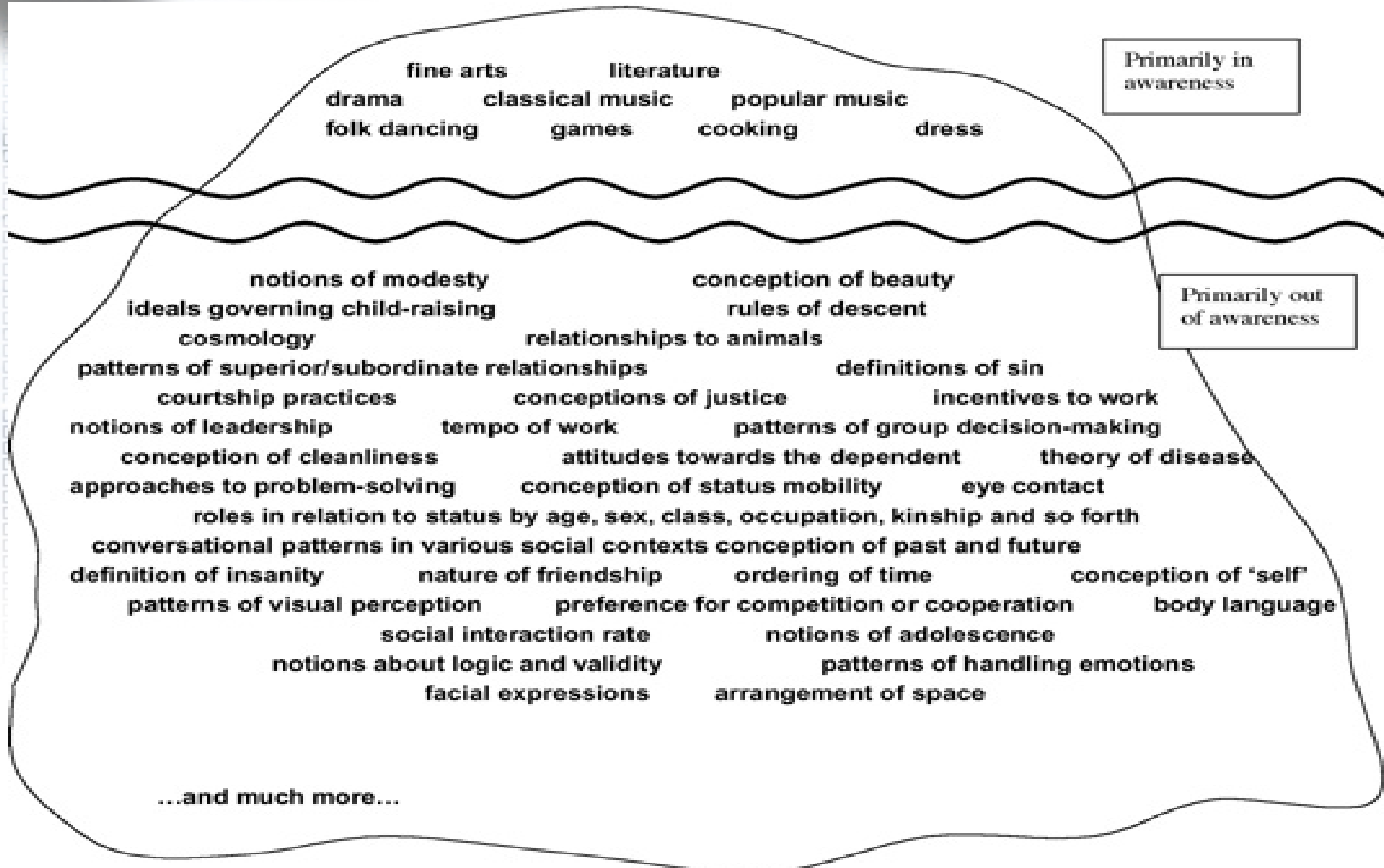
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An Iceberg Model of Culture



“Levels” of Culture

(Kim, 1984)



Macro-Regional

Regional/National

Co-Cultural

Organizational

**Indivi
-dual**



Defining Culture

Hall, 2005

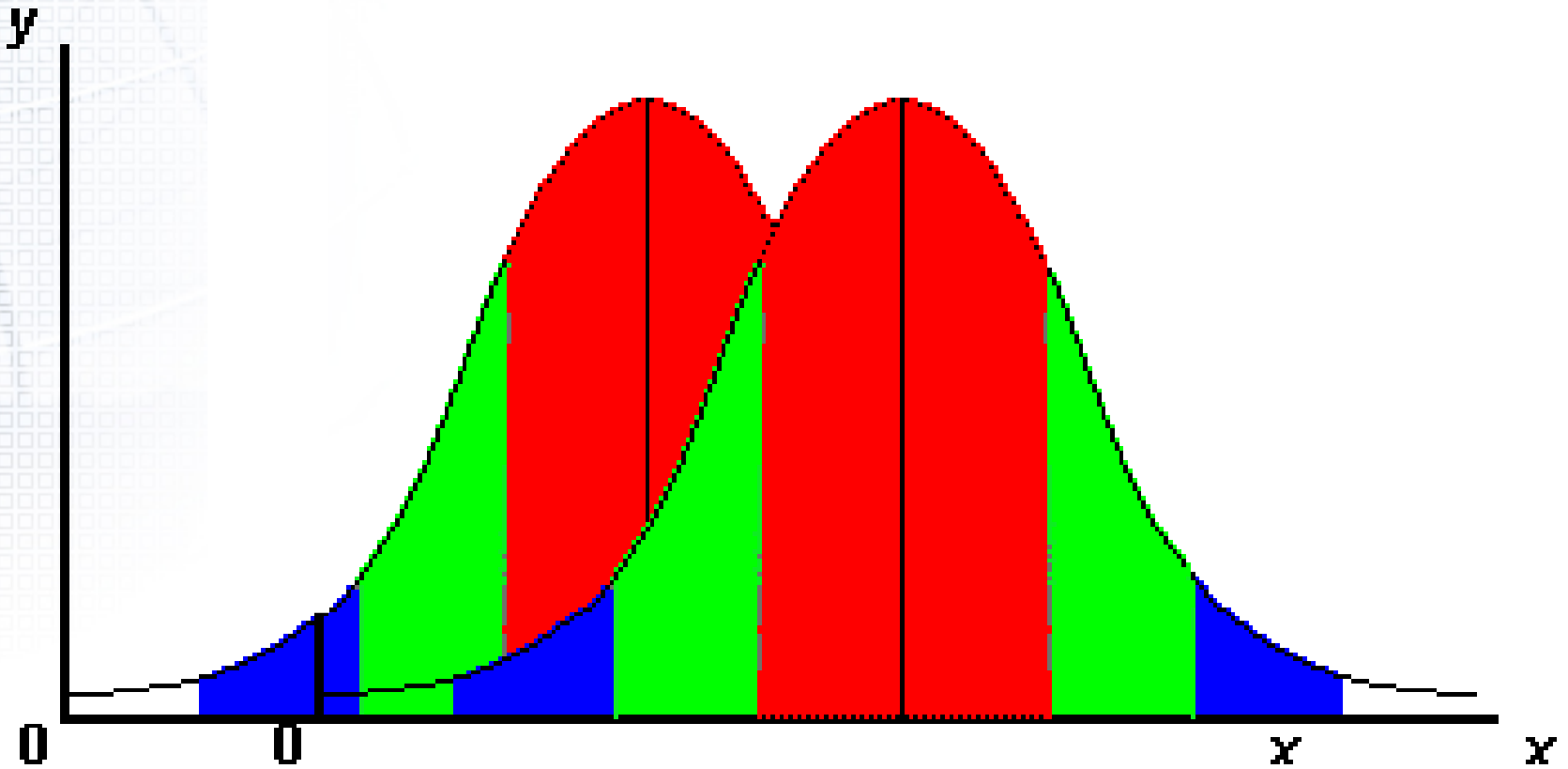
“A historically shared system of symbolic resources through which we make our world meaningful”

(Hall, 2005, p. 4)

- Selection
- Organization
- Evaluation
- [Attribution]



The Notion of Cultural Difference





Value Dimensions

High & Low Context

(E. T. Hall)



Photo courtesy of Kathryn Sorrells, 1998

Low Context

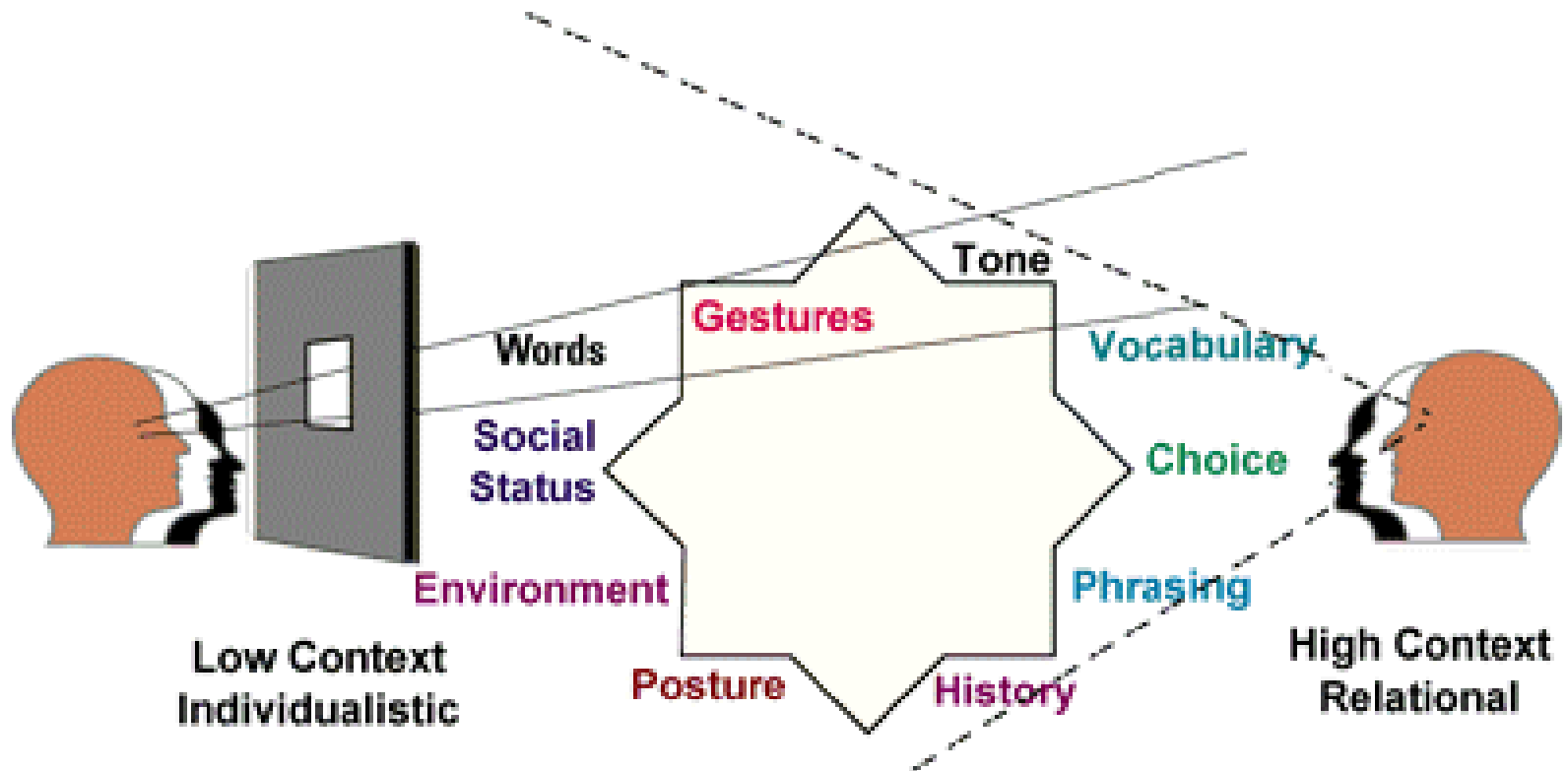
Meaning is in the explicit codes (that is, words)

High Context

Meaning is embedded within the communicators (that is, in roles, situation, relationships—not spelled out): → nuance, nonverbal

Low Context/High Context Cultures

Individualistic/Relational Cultures

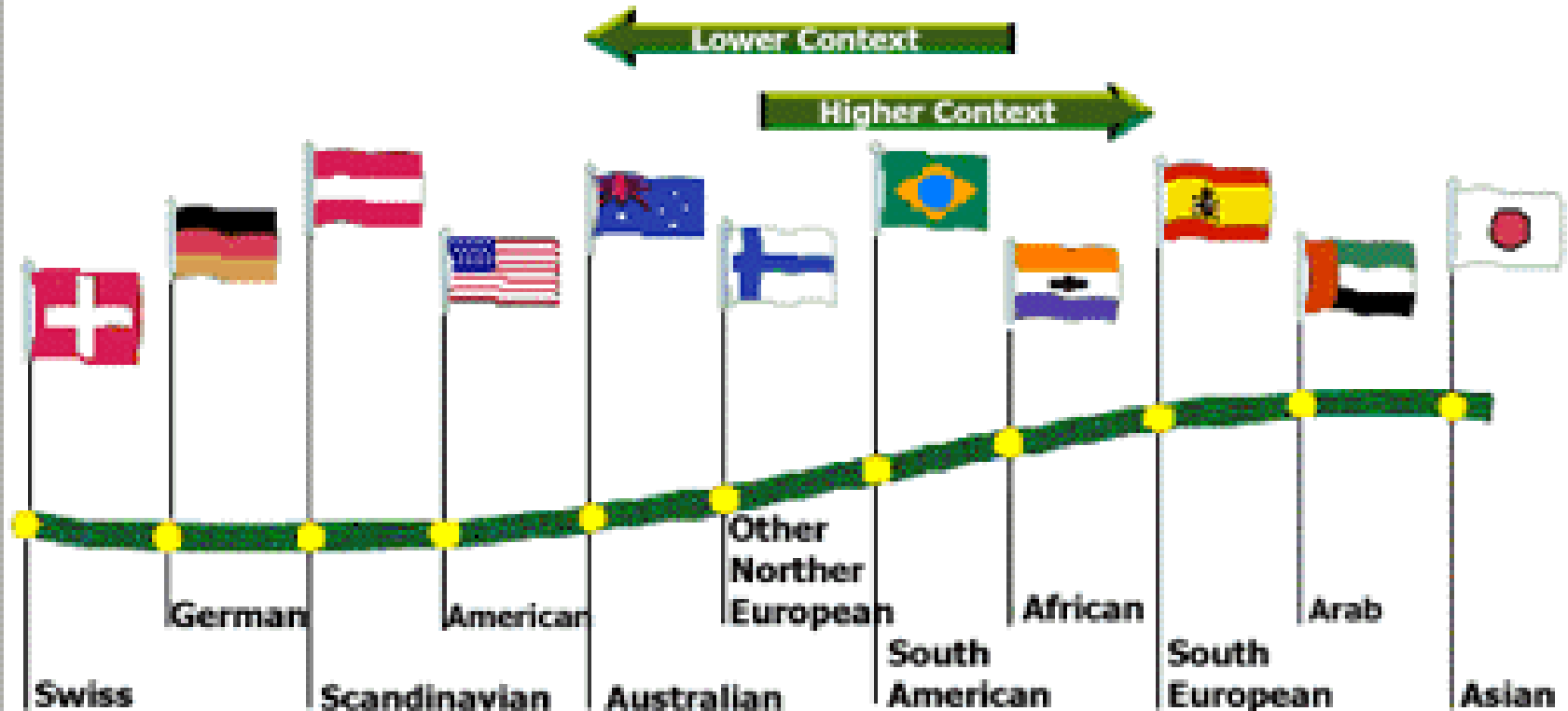


Adapted from *'Managing Intercultural Differences'* by Claire B. Anderson



High/Low Context: Who's Which?

To give an idea of where different cultures fall on the context scale, diversity specialists often organize them in a loose linear format like the one below. Experts also find that Cultures tend to have certain defining characteristics in relation to the high/low monochronic-polychronic concept (see lists below).





Value Dimensions

Hofstede's Dimensions

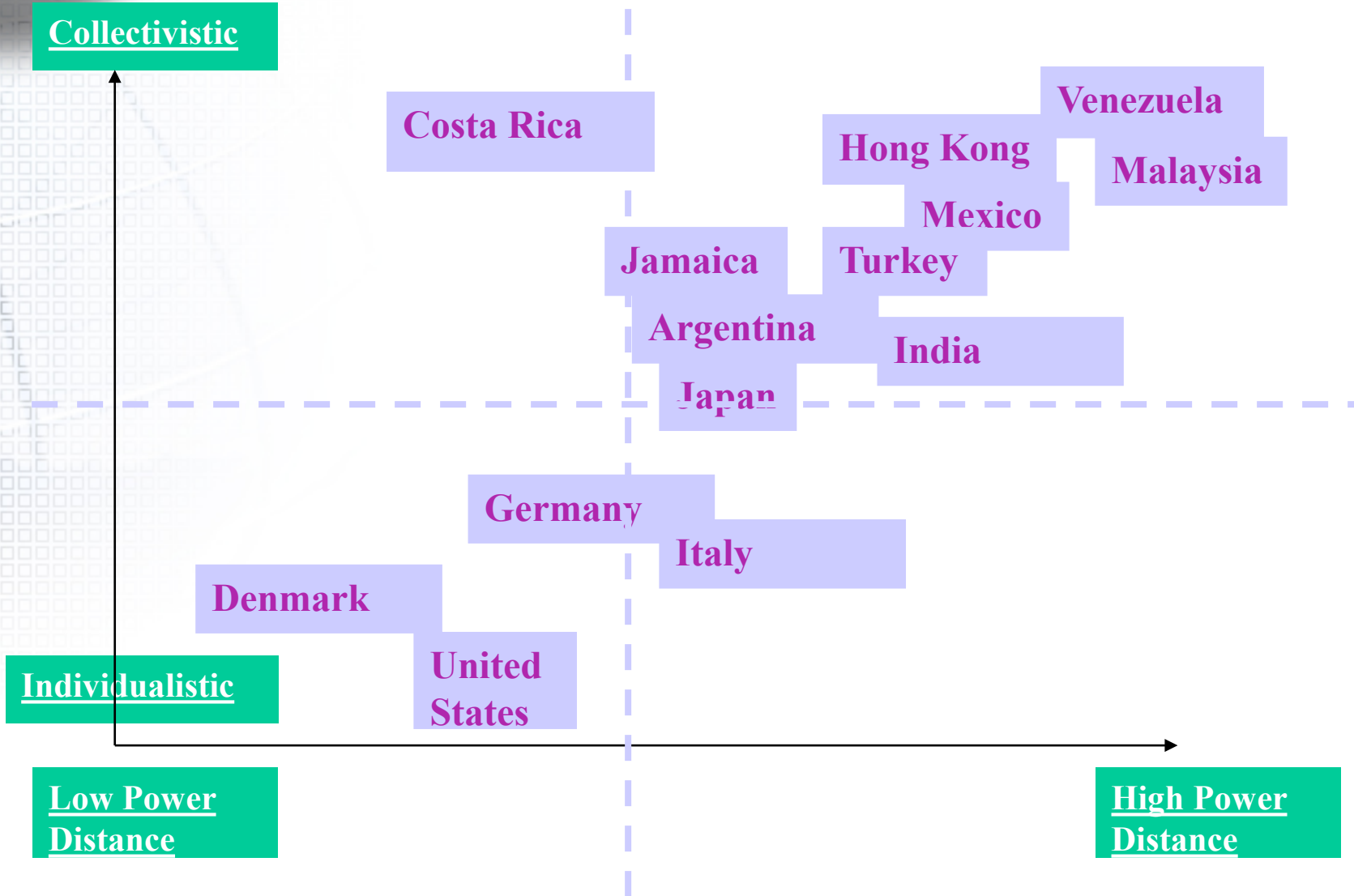
- Individualism/ Collectivism
- Power Distance
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Masculinity/ Femininity
- Long-Term Orientation (Confucian Work Dynamism)





Value Dimensions

Hofstede, 1984





Value Dimensions

Parson's Pattern Variables

Affectivity	↔	Affect Neutrality
Universalism	↔	Particularism
Diffuseness	↔	Specificity
Ascription	↔	Achievement
Instrumental Orientation	↔	Expressive Orientation



Value Dimensions

Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck's Value Dimensions

Orientation	A	B	C
Human Nature	Evil	Good	Good + Evil
Person-Nature	Subject	Harmony	Master
Time	Past	Present	Future
Activity	Being	Being-in-becoming	Doing
Relational	Lineality	Collaterality	Individualism



Cognitive Styles

- **Logical Approaches:**
 - **Intuitive-Expressive**
 - **Axiomatic-Deductive**
 - **Factual-Inductive**
 - **Cyclical**
- **Left/Right-Brained**
- **Field Dependent/Independent**
- **Reflective/Impulsive**



Influence on the classroom?

Style	Influence
	Detail on assignments?
	Seeking and giving feedback?
	Expectations for assignments?
	Motivating students
	Student challenges, misunderstandings?
	Etc.



Specific Values

(Vander Zanden, 1965; Patai, 1976)

American Values

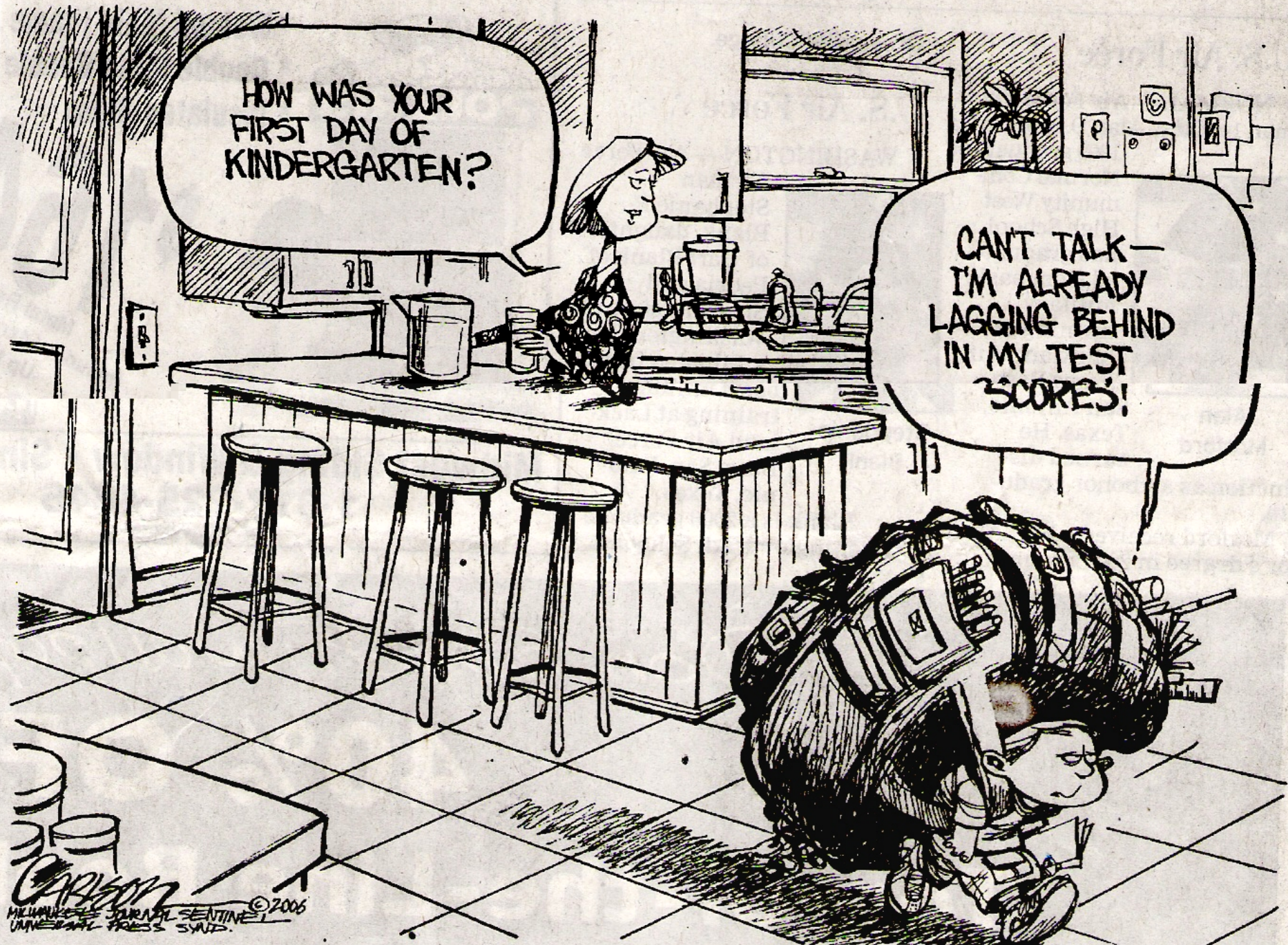
- Materialism
- Success
- Work & Activity
- Progress
- Rationality
- Democracy
- Humanitarianism

Middle Eastern Values

- Hospitality
- Generosity
- Courage
- Honor
- Self-Respect

HOW WAS YOUR
FIRST DAY OF
KINDERGARTEN?

CANT TALK—
I'M ALREADY
LAGGING BEHIND
IN MY TEST
SCORES!





Values → Communication

“American” Communication

- Direct**
- “Elaborated”**
- Informal**
- Low context**
- Less
differentiated
codes**

Middle Eastern Communication

- Indirect**
- Emphatic**
- Formality**
- High context**
- More
differentiated
codes**



World View → Communication

The Impact of Confucianism

(Yum, 1991)

East Asian	North American
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process orientation (expressive)• Differentiated linguistic codes• Indirect• Receiver-centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outcome orientation (instrumental)• Less differentiated codes• Direct communication• Sender-centered



Confucianism → Relationships

(Yum, 1991)

East Asian

- **Particularistic**
- Long-term, asymmetrical reciprocity
- Sharp in/out-group distinctions
- Informal intermediaries
- **Personal/public relationships overlap**

North American

- **Universalistic**
- Short-term, symmetrical reciprocity
- In/out group distinction not sharp
- Contractual intermediaries
- **Personal/public relationships more separate**



German & American “Management”

<i>American</i>	<i>German</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business is impersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business is not as impersonal
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to be liked	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to be credible
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assertiveness, Direct Confrontation, Fair Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assertiveness, Sophistication, Direct Confrontation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Besprechung</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal Culture



Some Classroom Issues

- **Dress and Address**
 - What should students call you?
 - How should students address you?
 - Direct, to the point (Indian/English)
 - Face-saving
 - Teacher as “expert” or as “facilitator”?
 - “Informality”—confused with “friendship”?
- **How should you address students?**
 - Public praise
 - “Can I be frank?...”



Expectations: Who Adjusts to Whom?

- **Participation and discussion format**
- **Argumentation style in paper (inductive? Aristotelian?)**
- **Plagiarism and independent thought**
- **Writing quality**
- **Motivation v. Initiative**
- **Internet/Web-board**
- **Preview questions**
- **Clear expectations**
- **Flexibility**
- **UCLA**
- **Reading one another's papers**
- **"Formative" grading**
- **Your expectations**
- **Study students' culture!**



Conclusion: Hints...

- **Describe, don't evaluate**
- **Recognize value differences**
- **Be aware of attribution**
- **Be aware of stereotypes (yours & theirs!)**
- **Be aware of different meanings**
- **Know yourself!**
- **Look for similarities (too)**
- **Don't confuse people with cultures**
- **Talk...the American solution**



Any questions?

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