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### The authenticity of intercultural communication

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### Abstract

This article presents some critical reflections on the question of whether authentic intercultural communication is possible across cultures which have very different normative discourses. It responds to the somewhat sceptical view of David Corson in his article published in this journal (Corson, 1995: IJIR, 19, 183–195) who suggests that there is little likelihood of achieving authentic intercultural communication across very different cultures, except at a rather superficial level. But authenticity in a communicative situation is not superficial or easily come by. It is an honourable kind of conversation, based on mutual trust and respectful sharing of intended meanings. This article puts forward arguments why the concept of cultural incompatibility could be construed as a Eurocentric view which tends to lead to stereotyping, and the continued marginalisation, of non-European cultures. It also contends that compatibility cannot be explained through commonly accepted theories of effective cross-cultural adaptation, or adaptation to a host culture. One-way adaptation is not the same as authentic intercultural interaction. This article explores a three-tier model of intercultural

communication, showing how successful, authentic intercultural communication is indeed possible in complex areas. It shows how people with perhaps contrastive world views, or possibly even fairly similar world views, can bridge deep chasms of discursive difference if they work together to create intercultural communicative situations. The article concludes by stressing how urgent it is in today's world to develop the capacity to communicate interculturally.



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