



The Discursive Construction of Intercultural Understanding in China: A Case Study of an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (Emerging Perspectives on Education in China)

Wang Xi

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This book represents an ethnographic study of an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program in a school in mainland China, serving Chinese students and staffed by teachers from a variety of origins. It offers in-depth descriptions of the way in which students, teachers, and managers interact and communicate with one another in a variety of school activities. Through the communication process, cultural experiences and understandings are negotiated constantly among school participants. The ethnographic study also has a critical intention. Going beyond description, the author discusses the extent to which networks of social relationships in the case are imbued by asymmetries in power, and how this leads to people's inability, unwillingness, and unawareness to interact with those from different cultural backgrounds. As research findings reveal, where the construction of meaning is less equally available to each participant, prejudice and exclusiveness are more likely to be assumed, impeding individuals' intercultural learning. The key is to empower those less privileged, giving them legitimacy to come to voice in an institutional context on the one hand, and protecting their reflections on hegemonic discourse meticulously on the other hand.

Since the research explores the complexities and subtleties of the communication process that are bound to particular contexts, like most ethnographic studies, it aims at adding a body of experience and humanistic understanding of cultures, rather than testing theories. Although the IB Program being studied can hardly be representative of the overall development of international education in China, the detailed description of contextual issues of the case and the research procedures could facilitate the readers to vicariously experience these events, thus they can make their own decisions about the transferability of the research to their own unique situations.

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