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978-0-521-62303-2 - Questions of Competence: Culture, Classification and Intellectual Disability

Edited by Richard Jenkins

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## Questions of Competence

*Culture, Classification and Intellectual Disability*

Intellectual disability – more commonly described as ‘mental retardation’ or ‘learning difficulties’ – is a socially constructed phenomenon that varies in important respects cross-culturally. This collection of original essays examines the classification of people as competent and incompetent in the United States, England, Wales, Greece, Greenland, Uganda and Belize. The contributors, anthropologists and sociologists, argue that it is time for a new understanding of intellectual disability. In contrast to medical and psychological models, a social model of intellectual disability emphasises the cultural and individual variability of incompetence, the intimate relationship between cultural categories of competence and incompetence, and the role of social interaction and networks in its social construction. This book is a timely and original contribution to ongoing theoretical and policy debates about disability.

RICHARD JENKINS is Professor of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. He is the author of *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids* (1983), *Racism and Recruitment* (1986), *Pierre Bourdieu* (1992), *Social Identity* (1996), and *Rethinking Ethnicity* (1997). He has done anthropological fieldwork in Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Denmark.

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521623032](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521623032)

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First published 1998

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Questions of competence: culture, classification and intellectual disability / edited by Richard Jenkins; [contributors, Michael Angrosino . . . et al.].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 62303 0 (hb)

1. Mentally handicapped – Cross-cultural studies. 2. Learning disabled – Cross-cultural studies. I. Jenkins, Richard, 1952– . II. Angrosino, Michael V.

HV3004.Q47 1998

362.3 – dc21 98-3022 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-62303-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-62662-0 Paperback

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## Contributors

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