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978-0-521-84924-1 - The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology

Edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry

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The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology

In recent years the topic of acculturation has evolved from a relatively minor research area to one of the most researched subjects in the field of cross-cultural psychology. This edited *Handbook* compiles and systemizes the current state of the art by exploring the broad international scope of acculturation. A collection of the world's leading experts in the field review the various contexts for acculturation, the central theories, the groups and individuals undergoing acculturation (immigrants, refugees, indigenous people, expatriates, students and tourists) and discuss how current knowledge can be applied to make both the process and its outcome more manageable and profitable. Building on the theoretical and methodological framework of cross-cultural psychology, the authors focus specifically on the issues that arise when people from one culture move to another culture, and the reciprocal adjustments, tensions and benefits involved.

David L. Sam is Professor of Cross-Cultural Psychology in the Schools of Psychology and Medicine at the University of Bergen, Norway. He has published extensively on young immigrants' adaptation and received the 2004 Early Career Award from the International Academy for Intercultural Research (IAIR) for his contributions to the field.

John W. Berry is Professor Emeritus at the Department of Psychology, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. He is the co-author of *Cross-cultural psychology: research and applications* (2002) and *Human behaviour in global perspective* (1999), and the recipient of the Lifetime Contribution Award from the International Academy for Intercultural Research (IAIR) in 2005.

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Edited by

DAVID L. SAM

University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

JOHN W. BERRY

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada



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Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| List of figures | page viii |
| List of tables | ix |
| List of boxes | x |
| Notes on the contributors | xi |
| Foreword | xx |
| <i>Jean S. Phinney</i> | |
| Acknowledgments | xxii |
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| <i>David L. Sam & John W. Berry</i> | |
| Part I Theories, concepts and methods | |
| 2 Acculturation: conceptual background and core components | 11 |
| <i>David L. Sam</i> | |
| 3 Contexts of acculturation | 27 |
| <i>John W. Berry</i> | |
| 4 Stress perspectives on acculturation | 43 |
| <i>John W. Berry</i> | |
| 5 Culture learning approach to acculturation | 58 |
| <i>Anne-Marie Masgoret & Colleen Ward</i> | |
| 6 Ethnic identity and acculturation | 78 |
| <i>Karmela Liebkind</i> | |
| 7 Development and acculturation | 97 |
| <i>Brit Oppedal</i> | |
| 8 Personality and individual factors in acculturation | 113 |
| <i>Ankica Kosic</i> | |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 9 Design of acculturation studies | 129 |
| <i>John W. Berry</i> | |
| 10 Assessment of psychological acculturation | 142 |
| <i>Judit Arends-Tóth & Fons J. R. van de Vijver</i> | |
| Part II Research with specific acculturating groups | |
| 11 Immigrants | 163 |
| <i>Jan Pieter van Oudenhoven</i> | |
| 12 Sojourners | 181 |
| <i>Stephen Bochner</i> | |
| 13 Refugees and asylum seekers in societies | 198 |
| <i>James Allen, Aina Basilier Vaage & Edvard Hauff</i> | |
| 14 Refugees in camps | 218 |
| <i>Giorgia Donà & Lisanne Ackermann</i> | |
| 15 Indigenous peoples | 233 |
| <i>Siv Kvernmo</i> | |
| Part III Acculturating contexts: societies of settlement | |
| 16 Acculturation in Australia and New Zealand | 253 |
| <i>David L. Sang & Colleen Ward</i> | |
| 17 Acculturation in Canada | 274 |
| <i>Kimberly A. Noels & John W. Berry</i> | |
| 18 Acculturation in Israel | 294 |
| <i>Gabriel Horenczyk & Uzi Ben-Shalom</i> | |
| 19 Acculturation in the United States | 311 |
| <i>Huong H. Nguyen</i> | |
| 20 Acculturation in European societies | 331 |
| <i>Karen Phalet & Ankica Kosic</i> | |
| 21 Acculturation in Francophone European societies | 349 |
| <i>Colette Sabatier & Virginie Boutry</i> | |
| 22 Acculturation in the Nordic countries | 368 |
| <i>Charles Westin</i> | |

-
- | | |
|---|------------|
| 23 Acculturation in the United Kingdom | 385 |
| <i>Lena Robinson</i> | |

Part IV Applications

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 24 Acculturation of immigrant children and women | 403 |
| <i>David L. Sam</i> | |
| 25 Acculturation and the school | 419 |
| <i>Paul H. Vedder & Gabriel Horenczyk</i> | |
| 26 Immigrants in the labor market | 439 |
| <i>John E. Hayfron</i> | |
| 27 Acculturation and health | 452 |
| <i>David L. Sam</i> | |
| 28 Immigration and resilience | 469 |
| <i>Esther Ehrensaft & Michel Tousignant</i> | |
| 29 Intercultural relations in plural societies | 484 |
| <i>Colleen Ward & Chan-Hoong Leong</i> | |
| 30 Intercultural training | 504 |
| <i>Dharm P. S. Bhawuk, Dan Landis & Kevin D. Lo</i> | |
| 31 Conclusions | 525 |
| <i>John W. Berry, David L. Sam & Amanda Rogers</i> | |
| Author index | 529 |
| Subject index | 545 |

Figures

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 2.1 A framework for conceptualizing and studying acculturation | <i>page</i> 21 |
| 3.1 Two implicit models of culturally plural societies | 28 |
| 3.2 Varieties of groups in plural societies | 30 |
| 3.3 Acculturation strategies in ethnocultural groups and the larger society | 35 |
| 3.4 Locus of acculturation strategies | 39 |
| 4.1 Factors affecting acculturative stress and adaptation | 45 |
| 5.1 The ABC model of culture contact | 59 |
| 5.2 Interactive model of foreign-language proficiency, communication competence, effective intercultural interaction and sociocultural adaptation | 61 |
| 7.1 A dynamic contextual model of acculturation development | 100 |
| 10.1 Framework of acculturation variables | 143 |
| 11.1 Percentage of self-labels used by Frisian immigrants from three immigration countries | 167 |
| 11.2 Subjective ethnic identity and acculturation strategies of Frisian immigrants | 169 |
| 11.3 Sympathy scores (1 = low; 5 = high) depending on the target's nationality, religion and employment status | 172 |
| 13.1 The role of acculturation processes within an integrated human rights conceptual framework for refugee individuals and groups (adapted from Silove, 1999) | 202 |
| 13.2 A preliminary framework for understanding refugee acculturation within an integrated human rights conceptual framework: cultural and psychological levels (adapted from Berry, 2003) | 204 |
| 26.1 Hypothetical age–earnings profile | 441 |
| 30.1 A model of acculturation and the intercultural behavior process (adapted from Landis & Bhawuk, 2004) | 510 |

Tables

| | |
|--|----------------|
| 3.1 Dimensions of cultural variation in plural societies that are important in acculturation | <i>page 32</i> |
| 10.1 A classification of acculturation models: domain specificity and dimensionality (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2004) | 146 |
| 11.1 Correlations between attachment styles and positive and negative feelings towards adaptation strategies | 176 |
| 16.1 Top ten source countries of immigrants to Australia | 256 |
| 21.1 Results of “continuous tracking” surveys of European opinion | 354 |
| 21.2 Feeling of disturbance | 354 |
| 22.1 Sweden: foreign citizens, foreign-born and first and second generation immigrants in 2003 | 371 |
| 22.2 Main sending countries, first- and second-generation migrants in Denmark | 372 |
| 22.3 Main sending countries, first and second generation, Norway | 374 |
| 22.4 Foreign citizens in Finland in 2003 | 376 |
| 29.1 Theoretical approaches to the study of intercultural relations in plural societies | 485 |
| 30.1 Comparison of the Bennett and Berry models | 509 |
| 30.2 Relationship of acculturative strategies and psychological antecedents | 515 |
| 30.3 Order of affective, cognitive and behavioral training approaches as a function of acculturative strategy | 519 |
| 30.4 Suggested training techniques as a joint function of acculturative strategy and best training approach | 519 |

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Edited by David L. Sam and John W. Berry

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Boxes

| | | |
|------|---|-----------------|
| 10.1 | Examples of acculturation measurement methods | <i>page</i> 150 |
| 10.2 | Procedures to transform the two dimensions into Berry's four acculturation strategies | 152 |
| 10.3 | Examples of life domains relevant in acculturation | 154 |
| 10.4 | Examples of measures of acculturation aspects using the two-statement method: measuring the mainstream dimension | 155 |

Notes on the contributors

LISANNE ACKERMANN obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Oxford. Ackermann's research interests are located on the border area between sociology and social anthropology. She is interested in a number of forced migration and development issues, particularly refugee reintegration, gender, participation in community development, social change, and identity transformation. Her ethnographic interest lies in Mexico and Central America, particularly with the Mayan population in Guatemala where she conducted her doctoral fieldwork. Lisanne worked as College Lecturer at the University of Oxford, and is at present a part-time lecturer at the Free University of Berlin.

JAMES ALLEN is Professor of Psychology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. His contribution to this volume was written while he was Fulbright Lecturer/Researcher at the Psychosocial Centre for Refugees, University of Oslo. Allen's interests are in cultural and community psychology, and human rights issues relevant to indigenous people, refugees and other groups undergoing involuntary migration, and the seriously mentally ill. Recent research includes publication in the areas of the adjustment of refugees during resettlement, multi-cultural psychological assessment, cross-cultural and participatory research methodologies, alcohol use and sobriety among Alaska Natives, and culturally grounded services for Alaska Native children.

JUDIT ARENDS-TÓTH is currently a post-doctoral research fellow at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. Her Ph.D. thesis aimed to examine and integrate conceptual and methodological issues associated with the measurement of acculturation of Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands. Her current post-doctoral research project focuses on assessment of acculturation and on markers of ethnic identity of immigrants in the Netherlands. Her main research interests include cultural differences in behavior, psychological assessment of acculturation, and ethnic identity. She has published several articles on acculturation.

UZI BEN-SHALOM completed his Ph.D. on the acculturation and adaptation of immigrant soldiers in Israel at the School of Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in 2002. He is the head of Behavioural Sciences Research in the Field Command of the Israeli Defence Forces, and a Post Doctoral Fellow

at the Department of Psychology, Bar Ilan University. His research interests include cultural transition and military psychology.

JOHN W. BERRY is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Queen's University, Kingston. He obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland). He has received Honorary Doctorates from the University of Athens, and Université de Genève, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Academy for Intercultural Research. He has published over thirty books in the areas of cross-cultural, social and cognitive psychology, including co-authoring the textbook *Cross-cultural psychology: research and applications* (Cambridge, 2002), and co-editing the three-volume *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology* (1997). His main research interests are in the areas of acculturation and intercultural relations, with an emphasis on applications to immigration, educational and health policy.

DHARM P. S. BHAWUK is a professor of management, and culture and community psychology, University of Hawaii at Manoa. His research interests include cross-cultural training, intercultural sensitivity, and political behavior in the workplace. He has published several papers in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *Applied Psychology: An International Review* and *Journal of Management*. He has also published a number of book chapters and is a co-editor of the book *Asian contributions to cross-cultural psychology* (1996). He has received many awards and honors including Distinguished Scholar Award, Management Department, College of Business Administration (2000), the Distinguished Service Award from the East–West Center (1989), and the Lum Yip Kee Outstanding MBA Student Award from the College of Business Administration, University of Hawaii (1990). He is a founding fellow of the International Academy of Intercultural Research.

STEPHEN BOCHNER is currently a visiting professor in the School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney (Australia). From 1987 to 1997, he was the Director of the graduate Applied Psychology program at UNSW. He is currently dividing his time between teaching and research at the University and working as a psychological practitioner in applied organizational settings. His major research interest is the psychology of culture contact. Bochner has an international reputation as an applied cross-cultural psychologist, with a special interest in managing interpersonal relations in culturally diverse workplaces including international education, and has published widely in these areas. His most recent book is *The psychology of culture shock* (2001), co-authored with Ward and Adrian Furnham. Extended sojourns abroad have included visiting fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge universities and the East–West Center at the University of Hawaii.

VIRGINIE BOUTRY is currently finishing her Ph.D. at Université Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2, France. Her research focuses on family dynamics and

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acculturation processes and their impact on the adaptation of preadolescents living in Moroccan and Comoran communities in France, where she has already published a paper on friendships and attitudes of these two Muslim groups.

GIORGIA DONÀ is Senior Lecturer and member of the Refugee Research Centre at the University of East London. She received her MA and Ph.D. in Psychology at Queen's University (Canada) and obtained her M.Phil. in social anthropology at Cambridge University. She has conducted research and professional work with refugees in Central America and Africa. Her main research interests are in the areas of adaptation and wellbeing, psycho-social issues in forced migration, humanitarian assistance, and children in need of protection. She has co-authored *Rebuilding society's social fabric: a critical look at humanitarian assistance* (1999, in Spanish), *Psychology in humanitarian assistance* (1998), *Overview of the conditions of children outside parental care in institutions and communities* (2003) and *The Rwandan experience of fostering separated children* (2001).

ESTHER EHRENSAFT is Adjunct Professor in the Department of Psychology of Alliant International University, San Francisco, California. She specializes in child development, trauma, and resilience in cross-cultural contexts. Ehrensaft is also in private practice as a child and adolescent clinical psychologist.

EDVARD HAUFF undertook his medical studies at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, his specialist certification in psychiatry in Norway, and obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Oslo. He is presently Professor of Trans-cultural Psychiatry at the University of Oslo and is the Director of Psychiatric Education, Ullevål University Hospital. He has also a part-time private practice in psychotherapy. He is an advisor to the Cambodian National Mental Health Programme and Temporary Advisor to the WHO in Indonesia and in other countries. He is also the Vice-President of the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR) with responsibility for the European region. His professional and research interests include: trans-cultural psychiatry, especially mental health in low-income countries; traumatic stress, including refugee mental health and the treatment of survivors of torture and other forms of organized violence; community-based rehabilitation (CBR); medical education; and narrative medicine.

JOHN E. HAYFRON holds a doctorate in economics from the University of Bergen, Norway, and is currently Assistant Professor in Economics at Western Washington University, Bellingham. He also taught labor economics at Coquitlam and Douglas Colleges in Vancouver, Canada. He is affiliated to the Vancouver Centre of Excellence on Immigration at Simon Fraser University where he is a senior researcher. His fields of interest are applied labor economics and economics of immigration. He has published a number of articles in international journals.

GABRIEL HORENCZYK is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and the Melton Centre for Jewish Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His teaching and research areas include: the psychological study of cultural and ethnic identity; education and immigration; cultural identity processes during inter-group contact; acculturation and identity processes among immigrants. He has recently co-edited two books: *Language, identity, and immigration* (with E. Olshtain), and *National variations in Jewish identity* (with S. Cohen).

ANKICA KOSIC has a doctorate in social psychology from the University of Rome “La Sapienza” where she also worked as a research fellow from 1999 to 2001. Since 2001 she has been working as a research fellow at the European University Institute, Florence, Italy, where she has been involved in a number of large-scale research projects. Her research interests are the issues of immigrants’ integration, inter-group relationships, prejudice, and social representation. She has published articles in Italian and international journals. Some of her recent articles appeared in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Social Psychology*, *International Journal of Psychology* and *International Migration Review*.

SIV KVERNMO is Associate Professor at The Institute of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, at the University of Tromsø in Norway. She is also the Head Consultant and Leader of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Out-patient Clinic at The University Hospital in North Norway in Tromsø. She has performed epidemiological research in multiethnic areas in North Norway, and is the manager of several adolescent health surveys in this area. Kvernmo is also the head of a clinical multicenter study of young psychiatric patients in North Norway. She is interested in cross-cultural and ethnocultural psychiatry with a special focus on indigenous and Sami mental health issues. Her medical specialty is child and adolescent psychiatry.

DAN LANDIS is Affiliate Professor of Psychology at the University of Hawaii; Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Director Emeritus, Center for Applied Research and Evaluation, University of Mississippi; and President, D. K. Research and Consultation Group. He is a past Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Mississippi, Chair of Psychology at Indiana University–Purdue University at Indianapolis; and Founder of the Center for Social Development at the University City Science Centre in Philadelphia. Dr. Landis is the author/co-author of over 100 books, articles, technical reports and presentations in areas such as: the measurement of the equal-opportunity climate in military and other organizations, racial discrimination, perception, statistics, sexual behavior and attitudes, and cross-cultural psychology and training. He is the founding and continuing editor of the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, the co-editor/author of *Ethnic conflict* (1985) and the co-editor of *Handbook of intercultural training*, now in its third edition (2004).

CHAN-HOONG LEONG recently completed his Ph.D. at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand under the supervision of Professor Colleen Ward. Chan-Hoong obtained his Master of Arts degree from the University of Queensland. His Ph.D. thesis involves a multi-level analysis of hosts' attitudes towards Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. His research interests include the assessment of intercultural competence and communication, host nationals' perceptions of immigrants and immigration policies, and Singaporeans' perceptions of citizenships and intention to emigrate. Chan-Hoong is currently employed as a Teaching Fellow at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, and he has just embarked on a new line of research to study the perception of corruption as a form of cultural script.

KARMELA LIEBKIND is Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research interests are in inter-group relations, ethnic identity, racism and acculturation processes. She has studied various immigrants, refugees and other minority members in Finland and Sweden, and the attitudes of majority members towards these. She edited and contributed substantially to *New identities in Europe: immigrant ancestry and the ethnic identity of youth* (1989), authored the chapter on "Acculturation" in the *Blackwell handbook of social psychology*, Vol. IV (2001), and has published extensively on ethnic identity, acculturation and inter-group relations in various scientific journals.

KEVIN LO is a doctoral student in international management at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His research interests include international organizational behavior, cross-cultural training, and China-US comparative management. Prior to entering his doctoral program, he taught Chinese at Iolani School in Honolulu, Hawaii, as well as several different business and communication courses at Chaminade University. He has lived and worked in both Beijing and Taiwan.

ANNE-MARIE MASGORET worked for her doctorate at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, and is currently a Lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington and a Research Fellow of the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, New Zealand. Her research interests include acculturation, with a focus on the social psychological processes of second/foreign language learning, intergroup relations, prejudice and discrimination. Her research has been recognized by the International Academy for Intercultural Research and the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. She is currently the Executive Officer representing Australasia for the International Association of Language and Social Psychology.

HUONG H. NGUYEN is an assistant professor at Brandeis University (USA) in the Institute for Children, Youth, and Family Policy at the Heller School of Social Policy and Management. She received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Michigan State University, with a specialization in children and families.

Her research centers on the processes of how immigrants become both American and “ethnics” over time, and of their social, psychological and academic adjustment as a result of these processes. She studies the cultural and structural mechanisms that affect children of immigrants, particularly mechanisms that relate to their acculturation, identity and oppression (such as racism, and poverty).

KIMBERLY A. NOELS is an associate professor in the social and cultural psychology area of the Department of Psychology at the University of Alberta, Canada. Her research concerns the social psychology of language and communication processes, with a focus on intercultural communication. Her publications include articles on motivation for language learning, the role of communication in the process of cross-cultural adaptation, the association between language and ethnic identity, and intergenerational communication from a cross-cultural perspective. Her research has been recognized through awards from the Modern Language Association, the International Association of Language and Social Psychology, and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

BRIT OPPEDAL has a doctorate in psychology from the University of Oslo. She is currently Project Manager at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, where she is doing research on the mental health of children and adolescents. Her research focus is on children in immigrant families, and she is particularly interested in how migration and acculturation experiences affect family interaction and the development of children and adolescents. She also has extensive cross-cultural clinical experience, both as a school psychologist in Norway and as a family therapist among Latin-American immigrants in the USA.

KAREN PHALET is a professor of cross-cultural studies and a permanent staff member of the European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER) at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She has been doing cross-cultural research on immigrant families, cultural values, acculturation, ethnic relations and school achievement in various immigrant communities and host countries. She is also an associate editor of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* and has published extensively in international journals and in edited volumes. Some of her recent publications include K. Phalet, I. Andriesen and W. Lens (2004). How future goals enhance motivation and learning in multicultural classrooms. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(1), 59–89, and K. Phalet and A. Orkeny (eds.), *Ethnic minorities and interethnic relations in context* (2001).

LENA ROBINSON is Professor in Psychology and Social Work at the University of Paisley, Glasgow. She is the author of *Psychology for social workers: black perspectives* (1995); *Race, communication and the caring professions* (1998) and *Cross-cultural child development for social workers* (in press). She has researched on issues related to acculturation and immigrants in Britain.

AMANDA ROGERS is in the write-up stage of her Ph.D. in the area of gambling, with the University of Western Australia, Perth. Since moving from Australia to Norway two years ago she has developed research interests in cross-cultural psychology and has been working as a part-time researcher at the University of Bergen, Norway.

COLETTE SABATIER is Professor of Psychology at Université Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2, France. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Quebec in Montreal with a thesis on mother–infant relationships in an immigration context. Her post-doctoral research at Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) was on the acculturation of immigrant adolescents. Before coming to Bordeaux, she was a faculty member at Université de Haute-Bretagne (Rennes) and Université de Paris X. Her special interest is adolescent and child development within different cultural contexts, and in particular within immigrant families. Her research focuses on socialization, enculturation and acculturation from the points of view of both the child and the parents. She has edited several books on cross-cultural psychology in French and published several chapters in French and in English on this topic.

DAVID L. SAM is Professor of Cross-cultural Psychology at the University of Bergen (Norway), where he divides this position between the Schools of Psychology and Medicine. He teaches courses in developmental psychology, cross-cultural psychology and medical anthropology. His research interests include psychology of acculturation, and the role of culture in health and human development. He has published extensively on young immigrants' adaptation, and in recent years this interest has adopted a more comparative point of view. He was the recipient of the 2004 Early Career Award from the International Academy for Intercultural Research for his contributions to the field of intercultural research.

DAVID SANG, a Vietnamese Australian, has been teaching and researching in cross-cultural and health psychology for the last ten years at the University of Western Australia. As a registered psychologist, he has been involved in the Australian Government's Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care and Counselling Initiative.

MICHEL TOUSIGNANT worked for his doctorate in human development at the University of Chicago. He has taught community psychology at the University of Quebec at Montreal since 1975. He is currently doing research on suicide and culture among Aboriginal peoples of Canada and on the community response to the contagion of suicide. His other interest is the process of resilience after a serious suicide attempt. He has published more than seventy-five articles, and authored or edited six books in France, Canada and the USA. In line with these interests is his book *Ethnicity, immigration and psychopathology* (co-edited with I. Al-Ihsa, 1997).

AINA BASILIER VAAGE was trained as a nurse and worked in the Paediatric Department, Ullevål University Hospital (Norway). Later, as a physician, she obtained specialist certification in psychiatry and in child and adolescent psychiatry. Working with refugee children and families has been a substantial part of her role as a Senior Consultant in Stavanger (Norway). Her main research interests are in trans-cultural psychiatry, particularly in trans-generational transmission of trauma, traumatized refugee children and the mental health services to these groups of children and families. She is currently a research fellow at the Regional Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, the University of Bergen, in cooperation with the University of Oslo.

FONS R. VAN DE VIJVER teaches cross-cultural psychology at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. His research interests are methodological aspects of inter-group comparisons, acculturation, and cognitive differences and similarities of cultures. He is editor of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. With Kwok Leung, he has published a chapter in the second edition of the *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology* (1997) and a book on methodological aspects of cross-cultural studies, *Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research* (1997).

JAN PIETER VAN OUDENHOVEN is Professor of Cross-cultural Psychology at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands). After working in two psychiatric hospitals (the UNESCO in Latin America, and an Institute for Welfare Training), he joined the University of Groningen. His dissertation dealt with linguistic achievement of disadvantaged students. He has published widely in the areas of educational psychology, inter-group relations and cultural diversity. He has written several books, on group dynamics, management development, cross-cultural psychology and ethnic minorities. His current interests are international attitudes, cultural diversity and immigration issues.

PAUL VEDDER received his doctorate in developmental psychology from Groningen University in the Netherlands in 1985. His thesis was entitled "Cooperative learning: a study on processes and effects of cooperation between primary schoolchildren." Currently he is a professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction at Leiden University, the Netherlands, with a special focus on learning and development in a multi-cultural society. His research focuses on cooperative learning, social competence, multilingualism and inter-ethnic relationships.

COLLEEN WARD is Professor of Psychology, and received her doctorate in social psychology from the University of Durham, England. She has held teaching and research positions in Trinidad, Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand. She is currently the Director of the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. She is past Secretary-General of the International Association for Cross-cultural

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Psychology and is currently the President of the Asian Association of Social Psychology. Her research interests are broadly in cross-cultural psychology with particular interests in acculturation. She is co-author, with Bochner and Adrian Furnham, of *The psychology of culture shock* (2001).

CHARLES WESTIN is Professor of Migration and Ethnicity Studies and Director of the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Stockholm University, Sweden. He trained as a psychologist. In his research he has dealt with issues relating to acculturation, integration, identity, ethnicity, discrimination, racism and citizenship.

Foreword

Jean S. Phinney

If you ask the average person the meaning of the term *acculturation*, the most likely response will be with reference to immigrants from developing countries arriving in an industrialized country and faced with the need to learn a new language, develop an understanding of new customs, and interact with people whose values and beliefs differ from their own. This image is perhaps the prototypical view of acculturation.

However, as readers of this book will discover, this image is just the tip of the iceberg. Acculturation processes, which encompass the many changes that occur when people from differing cultures come into contact with each other, can be observed among a wide range of people in addition to immigrants, such as refugees forced to leave their home countries, people living abroad as foreign students or as employees of international companies, and aboriginal peoples dealing with the encroachment of other cultures. All such people face challenges, stresses and opportunities that lead to changes in their lives and wellbeing, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. The ways in which the processes of change unfold vary widely depending on one's culture of origin and current cultural context, as well as on personal characteristics such as age, gender, place of birth, and education, and the characteristics of one's group, such as size, structure, status, values and beliefs.

The varied experiences resulting from cultures in contact have been evident throughout human history and have been written about by observers from ancient times to the present. Scholars from a variety of fields of study have taken differing approaches to understanding acculturation. Sociologists, anthropologists, historians and political scientists, among others, have addressed the topic. Psychologists, with their focus on individuals, have only recently become interested in the subject, in part because acculturation is generally thought of in terms of groups of people. However, since the mid-1980s, psychological interest in acculturation has burgeoned from a few studies and reviews to an extensive literature on the subject. There is increasing recognition that acculturation is a worldwide phenomenon that affects the individual lives of millions of people. This expanding field has in fact become a broad area of study in psychology. Many different theoretical and empirical approaches are being used across a wide range of geographic areas to address the psychological issues raised by cultures in contact. Therefore, an overview of psychological acculturation, as provided in this *Handbook*, is most timely.

How is it possible to make sense out of such a broad topic in today's increasingly complex and culturally intermingled world? The editors of this *Handbook* have taken the approach of assembling an outstanding group of scholars to review their particular areas of expertise. The result is a rich smorgasbord of fascinating information that will be eye-opening to anyone who thinks of acculturation in terms of one particular setting or type of culture contact. In addition to the presentation of a number of broad theoretical frameworks for studying acculturation, there are detailed descriptions of particular types of acculturating individuals, including immigrants, sojourners, refugees and indigenous people. Information is provided as well on methods for designing studies and measuring acculturation. The focus is on acculturation in European and European-origin industrialized countries, but the book includes chapters dealing with variability among these countries; these chapters provide absorbing insights into the very different experiences of acculturating people depending on a particular country's history, ethnic and racial makeup, and policies for dealing with cultural diversity. The reader who peruses the *Handbook* will be rewarded with a sense of the immensity and variety of the topic of acculturation and of the highlights of current thinking on the subject.

Furthermore, the appetites of researchers interested in studying acculturation will be whetted by the many issues and questions raised by the authors. In addition to specific questions posed, gaps in our understanding are revealed by the absence of information on particular aspects of the topic; for example, relatively little is known about acculturation in parts of the world not included in this overview or about changes in existing societies as a result of contact with newcomers. Because population shifts throughout the world will continue to bring new groups of people into contact, the study of acculturation will be important for psychologists for the foreseeable future. This *Handbook* is an excellent starting point in providing an overview of our current understanding of psychological acculturation and suggesting future directions for our efforts to better understand our diverse and changing world.

Jean S. Phinney
Los Angeles, California

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

This book represents the growing effort on the part of a number of international scholars who see the need to understand human behavior from a more global perspective. These scholars also consider that theories and research findings are culturally situated and that no one theoretical viewpoint will fully capture the understanding that we desire to gain about human behavior. The opportunity to work with such people has been very inspiring and stimulating for both of the volume editors.

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[More information](#)

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