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Attaching cultures

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CHAPTER 1

General Introduction



When I was about 15 years old, I had a heated discussion with friends about immigrants and asylum seekers. One friend was -in my eyes- remarkably negative about people with a different cultural background. She said for instance that the Netherlands were too lenient towards immigrants: immigrants should be forced to give up their heritage culture in order to be permitted to stay in the Netherlands. Besides, she argued that the Netherlands were much too helpful to asylum seekers: they had more luxurious rooms in the asylum seekers' centres than the average Dutch in their homes. I was very disappointed in her and reacted furiously, also because I had friends with a non-Dutch background, and held a long speech about why I absolutely did not agree with her. After my plea, another friend suggested that I should become a lawyer. That did not happen, I became a social psychologist, but my passion for the subject never decreased. Watching television, reading the newspaper or talking to others, I often wondered why some people think positively about cultural diversity and others negatively. So, when I got the chance to study the (correlates of) attitudes of Dutch majority members towards people with different cultural backgrounds, I seized this opportunity with both hands. With my research, I hope to contribute to better relations between majority and minority members in the Netherlands.

In the following sections, I give some background information about immigrants in the Netherlands, and I describe my research questions and the theories I used in my research.

Immigrants in the Netherlands

The number of immigrants in the world has increased substantially in the last few decades. According to the United Nations, in 1960 75 million people lived outside their country of birth. This number has increased to 191 million people in 2005 (United Nations, 2006). Also in the Netherlands, the number of immigrants is higher than ever before. Currently, 3.2 million immigrants (that is: people who were born outside the Netherlands, or of whom at least one of the parents was born in another country) live in

the Netherlands, which is 19.7% of the total Dutch population (Statistics Netherlands, 2008a).

In the last 60 years, three important immigration waves have contributed to this high number of immigrants, and momentarily a new wave of immigrants is being formed. The first wave consisted of immigrants from the former Dutch colonies of Indonesia and Surinam (between 1945-1980) who came to the Netherlands after their countries became independent. Next, on the initiative of the Dutch government, in the 50's and 60's many immigrants from Mediterranean countries, such as Spain, Greece, Italy, Turkey and Morocco came to the Netherlands as 'guest workers', as there was a shortage of low-skilled laborers in the industrial sector. In contrast to what was expected, especially guest workers from Turkey and Morocco did not leave the country after a few years of work, but they stayed and their families from their home country came over to live with them. The third wave (from the mid 80's onwards) was formed by refugees and asylum seekers from countries that are or were politically unstable, such as former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Afghanistan. Finally, in the last couple of years, a fourth immigration wave is being formed. Since several eastern European countries such as Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007, many immigrants from these countries come to the Netherlands to find a job. The number of these immigrants continues to increase.

As a consequence of these immigration streams, Dutch society faces the task to incorporate different cultural groups in society. This is not an easy task, as is proven by the tensions that exist in the Netherlands between various cultural groups. In Dutch media and politics, nowadays the adaptation of immigrants to Dutch society is subject of heated debates.

Research Questions

The present dissertation focuses on the perspective of Dutch majority members (native host society members) on immigrants' acculturation. More precisely, I studied the attitude of Dutch majority members towards the acculturation of immigrants to the Dutch society. Secondly, the influence of an important individual variable, attachment style, on these acculturation attitudes of majority members is examined. Is there a link between our general style of relating to other people and the attitudes we have towards acculturation strategies of immigrants? Knowledge about relations between attachment styles and the acculturation attitudes of Dutch majority members, can contribute to the improvement of the relations between host society members and immigrants. As

attachment styles can be influenced by for instance parents, they might provide the basis for interventions aimed at improving intercultural contacts.

Acculturation

As the Netherlands become increasingly multi-cultural, the cultural context of Dutch society is changing for immigrants as well as for majority members. The process that individuals undergo in response to a changing cultural context is known in the literature as *acculturation*. The anthropologists Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) were the first to describe this process, and they stated that acculturation comprises of “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p.149). Later, Graves (1967) coined the term *psychological acculturation* which refers to changes experienced by an *individual* whose cultural group is collectively experiencing acculturation.

Over the years, several models which describe the acculturation process have been developed. Although acculturation is a process of mutual influence between two cultural groups, the first acculturation models focused primarily on the acculturation experience of immigrants, as their culture was assumed to change the most (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987). Of these models, Berry’s model (e.g., Berry, 1990; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989) of psychological acculturation of immigrants is the most widely used model. Thus far, acculturation models presumed that immigrants move along a continuum over time with cultural maintenance and adoption of the host culture as opposite ends of the dimension. So, these models argued that immigrants progressively let go of their original culture as they adapt to the host culture (e.g., Gordon, 1964).

Berry, however, regarded cultural maintenance and adoption of the host culture as two separate and independent attitudinal dimensions. This implies that one can very well adapt to the host culture and at the same time maintain one’s original culture. This bi-dimensionality of Berry’s model and its convenient arrangement of the acculturation strategies described along the two dimensions, made that many researchers used this model of acculturation in their studies. Below, the model is described in more detail.

According to Berry (e.g., 1997), immigrants have to deal with two issues in their daily encounters with majority members in the host society. On the one hand, immigrants have to decide whether or not it is valuable to maintain their traditional culture. On the other hand, immigrants have to decide whether or not it is valuable to have positive relations with the larger society. Combinations of reactions to the two issues yield the

following four acculturation attitudes, later called strategies (Berry, 1997) (see Figure 1.1): *integration* (both maintenance of original culture and positive relations with the host culture are important to the immigrant); *assimilation* (only positive relations with the host society are of value); *separation* (only maintenance of the heritage culture is seen as important); and *marginalization* (neither positive relations with the host society nor maintenance of heritage culture is important). Berry notes that these strategies are not discrete and static: immigrants may switch from one strategy to another.

Figure 1.1

Classification of Acculturation Strategies (e.g., Berry, 1997).

		Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's identity and characteristics?	
		Yes	No
Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with the larger society?	Yes	Integration	Assimilation
	No	Separation	Marginalization

For a long time, Berry's model has dominated the field of acculturation research. However, the model has met some criticism such as the emphasis on immigrants' acculturation orientations. Researchers came to recognize that the acculturation orientations of the majority members, partly influence the use of certain acculturation strategies by immigrants (e.g., Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997; Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). For instance, one can easily imagine that immigrants who perceive negative attitudes of majority members towards contact with them, may not want to participate in the society and consequently choose for separation. Although Berry did acknowledge this influence of majority members' acculturation orientations, his research primarily focused on immigrants. A model based on Berry's model that clearly takes the acculturation orientations of both immigrants and majority members into account is the Interactive Acculturation Model of Bourhis et al. (1997). This model describes how different combinations of the preferred acculturation strategies by both groups can result in either consensual, problematic or conflictual relational outcomes. In the present dissertation I only focused on the attitudes of majority members towards acculturation strategies of immigrants. As Berry's model does acknowledge the

influence of majority members' acculturation orientations and has been used in other research on majority members' orientations (e.g. Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998), I decided to use Berry's acculturation model in the present dissertation.

Besides examining how majority members value the different strategies, it is important to know what factors influence these acculturation attitudes. This knowledge can be used for developing interventions aimed at improving the relations between host majority members and immigrants. Through the years, acculturation attitudes of majority members have been related to various factors, such as cultural distance, perceived threat, and intergroup anxiety (e.g., Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdržálek, 2000; Rohmann, Florack, & Piontkowski, 2006; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). Yet, the influence of personality factors on acculturation attitudes of *majority* members has hardly been studied up to now (see Bakker, Van Oudenhoven, & Van der Zee, 2004, for application of attachment theory to the acculturation of immigrants). In the present dissertation, I introduce attachment styles as a relevant individual difference factor to the field of acculturation research. In the following section, attachment theory and its link with acculturation attitudes are discussed.

Attachment

John Bowlby is the pioneer of attachment theory, which he published in the trilogy "Attachment and Loss" (1969/1982; 1973; 1980). His work on attachment started roughly six decades ago, as he wondered why the mother is so important to the child in the first few years of life. His studies eventually led to his pioneering assumption that the strong bond between the child and its mother has its roots in evolution theory. Because the attachment bond makes the child seek proximity to the caregiver in order to get protection in times of stress, the child has a heightened chance of survival.

Based on the reactions of the caregiver to proximity seeking behavior of the child, three attachment styles were distinguished in early attachment research (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). A *secure* attachment style is developed when children perceive their caregiver as available and responsive. In contrast, children develop an *ambivalent* or *avoidant* style when they perceive their caregiver as either inconsistently responsive or unavailable and not responsive. These mental representations of the relationships with the caregivers are also called internal working models of relations.

Bowlby has identified two key aspects of these internal working models. Firstly, *model of self*, that is the self is seen as worthy of love and support or not; and secondly *model of others*, that is others are seen as trustworthy or not. These working models are believed

to function as a framework to interpret experiences with others, thereby affecting later relationships. For instance, individuals with a *secure* working model of relations seek and expect encouraging and satisfying experiences with old and new social partners. Because of these expectations, they behave in a positive and open way which elicits these satisfying experiences. Consequently, these individuals will continue to be securely attached. This continuing effect of attachment styles on relationships, made attachment researchers to extend their studies to adults. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) for instance, developed a theoretical model of attachment which has proven to be applicable to adults (Feeney, 2002; Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994). They distinguished four attachment styles based on the two dimensions, model of self and model of others (see Figure 1.2) already put forward by Bowlby. I will further refer to the latter dimension as *trust in others*.

Figure 1.2

Bartholomew and Horowitz' (1991) *Theoretical Model of Attachment Styles*.

		Model of Self	
		Positive	Negative
Model of Others / Trust in Others	Positive	Secure	Preoccupied
	Negative	Dismissing	Fearful

A *securely* attached person has a positive image of the self and trusts others. Social interactions are faced with confidence. In contrast, a *fearfully* attached person has a negative image of the self and distrusts others. Fearfully attached people avoid personal contacts. *Dismissingly* attached people have a positive image of the self, but they distrust others. These individuals do not have strong needs for social contacts. Finally, a *preoccupied* attached person has a negative image of the self, but he/she trusts others. Preoccupied people often wonder whether they are interesting or friendly enough to others.

Acculturation Attitudes and Attachment Styles

Why do I relate acculturation attitudes of majority members to their attachment styles? Attachment styles in adulthood have been found to be related to several aspects of

novelty seeking, such as level of curiosity (Johnston, 1999), social exploration, i.e. the desire to meet strangers (Green & Campbell, 2000), and the need for sensation and adventure (Carnelly & Ruscher, 2000). In addition to novelty seeking, research showed that attachment styles are also related to *dealing with novelty*, as indicated by for instance the reaction to strangers (Roisman, 2006) and the adjustment to new situations, i.e. the emotional and academic adaptation of first-year students to college life (e.g., Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Rice, FitzGerald, Whaley, & Gibbs, 1995). For majority members, the acculturation process also implies exploring new cultures, dealing with strangers and adapting to a new situation, that is different cultures. Therefore, we assumed the acculturation attitudes to be associated with attachment styles.

Overview of Chapters

A first aim of the present research project was to map the attitudes of Dutch majority members towards the acculturation of immigrants. A second aim was to examine the role of attachment styles in the acculturation attitudes of majority members. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 address these two objectives, using different measures for acculturation attitudes and different samples. In order to be able to examine the relation between attachment styles and acculturation attitudes, a third goal of the present dissertation was to develop a new instrument to measure attachment styles of adults. In Chapter 2 this instrument is presented. Below, the content of the different chapters is discussed in more detail.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, the development process of the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ) is described. Previous instruments to measure attachment suffered from low internal consistencies; used only one item to measure attachment style; measured relationship-specific attachment; or categorized respondents into mutually exclusive attachment categories. I aimed to develop a reliable, multiple-item questionnaire which measures non-relationship specific attachment using continuous scales. First, I provide a historical overview of different approaches to the measurement of attachment that serves as the theoretical background for the development of the ASQ. Second, the internal structure, the stability, and the construct validity of the ASQ, which were measured among three groups of respondents with a total of $N = 3533$, are discussed.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, a longitudinal study among Dutch university students on the way acculturation attitudes relate to attachment styles is presented. More precisely, the effect of attachment styles after a period of roughly one year on acculturation attitudes is examined. In order to measure the acculturation attitudes, a questionnaire was used with fictitious statements of immigrants of whom the cultural background was not specified, about their adaptation to the new culture (e.g., “I prefer to be with Dutch people, rather than with people from my own country”). Participants had to indicate whether they thought these statements to be desirable.

Chapter 4

Research on acculturation attitudes has mainly focused on adults and not on adolescents, whereas the latter are in an important phase in life in which attitudes towards and opinions about societal issues are formed. Therefore, Chapter 4 studied the acculturation attitudes of adolescents and compared these with the acculturation attitudes of a more representative sample of adults. The acculturation attitudes towards Surinamese immigrants were examined, as these immigrants form one of the largest immigrant groups in the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands, 2008b). Different from Chapter 3, a scenario approach was used in this chapter to measure acculturation attitudes. The scenarios were fictitious newspaper articles about an integrating, assimilating, separating or marginalizing Surinamese immigrant. Participants had to read one of the four scenarios and had to give their responses to questions that measured their affective reaction to the scenario.

In addition to the affective reactions to the acculturation strategies, the estimated prevalence of the acculturation strategies used by immigrants was studied among adolescents and adults. This way, *preferred* acculturation strategies could be compared with *perceived* acculturation strategies.

Finally, the relations between attachment styles on the one hand and the affective reactions to, and the estimated prevalence of the acculturation strategies on the other hand were studied. Again, these relations were investigated among adults and adolescents.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 again investigated the attitudes of adult majority members (Dutch university students) towards acculturation strategies of immigrants using the scenario

approach as used in Chapter 4. However, in Chapter 5 a Moroccan immigrant was the main character in the scenarios. Just like Surinamers, Moroccans also constitute one of the largest groups of non-western immigrants in the Netherlands (Statistics Netherlands, 2008b). It is interesting to study the attitudes towards this group of immigrants as the Moroccan culture is very different from the Dutch culture, more so than the Surinamese culture. Additionally, Dutch majority members in general have more unfavorable attitudes towards Moroccan immigrants than towards Surinamese immigrants (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2004).

Furthermore, the relations between attachment styles and acculturation attitudes were again investigated. To further test the relevance of attachment styles in acculturation research, the additional value of attachment styles beyond the Big Five personality traits and intercultural traits in predicting the *attitude* towards the acculturation strategies and the degree of *contact* majority members have with immigrants, was studied.

Chapter 6

In the final chapter, the results of the studies are summarized and further discussed. Besides, some practical implications are given.

As the chapters are written in such a way that they can be read independently, some overlap, particularly in the introduction sections, was unavoidable. Furthermore, it should be noted that the studies described in the following chapters were conducted in cooperation with several others. So, I use the term 'we' instead of 'I' when I refer to the researchers.

