

# Fons van de Vijver, PhD

## *In Memoriam*

It was with a great deal of sadness that I was informed (June 1, 2019) of the very untimely and sudden death of Professor Fons van de Vijver, my friend and colleague for going on 25 years now! Alphonsius (Fons) Josephus Rachel was born on October 4, 1952 in Koewacht, The Netherlands. He earned his Ph.D. in psychology at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, where he remained as a faculty member for the major portion of his career. He held a Chair in cross-cultural psychology as well as an Extraordinary Chair at North-West University, South Africa, and the University of Queensland, Australia. Over the years, Fons held a variety of important leadership positions at Tilburg University, authored or co-authored over 400 publications - mainly in the domain of cross-cultural psychology, served recently (2016-2018) as president of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology, and was a former president of Division 2 (Assessment and Evaluation) of the International Association of Applied Psychology as well as a former President of the European Association of Psychological Assessment.

The primary topics in Fons' research involved bias and equivalence, psychological acculturation and multiculturalism, similarities and differences in the cognitive domain, response styles, translations and adaptations. His work on analytic approaches and conceptualization of acculturation and multiculturalism led to the development of the South African Personality Scale (SAPI), an indigenous personality scale relevant to 11 South African languages, and formed the basis of his work with Ron Hambleton, Jose Muniz, Jacques Gregoire, Dave Bartram and other members of the International Test Commission (ITC) in developing a detailed set of guidelines appropriate for the adaption of educational and psychological tests for use in other languages and/or cultural contexts. Dr. van de Vijver supervised approximately



35 PhD studies and 6 post-doctoral students at Tilburg University. Among the books he wrote include the following: *Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research* (both individually and with Kwok Leung), *Cross-cultural survey methods* (with Janet Harkness and others), and *Cross-cultural research methods in psychology* (with David Matsumoto). Indeed, he has been one of the most frequently cited cross-cultural psychologists in Europe, if not worldwide.

Fons presented invited keynote addresses and lectures at a vast number of conferences and offered workshops worldwide. He was a member of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, International Association of

Applied Psychology, European Association of Psychological Assessment, International Academy for Intercultural Research, and the ITC. He is the former editor of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, the *European Journal of Personality Assessment*, and the *ITC Bulletin*, forerunner of the current *International Journal of Testing* which at that time, existed as a separate section in the *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*. Finally, Fons was the 2013 recipient of the American Psychological Association's Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology (for his contributions to international cooperation and to the advancement of knowledge of psychology) and the 2014 recipient of the International Association of Applied Psychology Fellows Award (for contributions to applied psychology).

I now wish to present you with my personal perspective of Dr. Fons van de Vijver. I first met Fons in 1995 at the ITC meeting in Athens, Greece at which time it was my first as a member of the ITC Council. I was totally fascinated with Fons' work in the area of cross-cultural psychology and over the years, found myself constantly intrigued by how I might be able to apply my own specialty area of structural equation modeling within a cross-

cultural perspective. From Day 1, Fons became my number one go-to person in answering my many questions concerning cross-cultural issues! In addition to being a brilliant scholar and educator, I found Fons to be an exceptionally kind and thoughtful human being – never too busy to answer a question, to discuss an idea, or to explain a complex cross-cultural issue in down-to-earth terms. Indeed, I consider myself to have been so fortunate in having published several articles with Fons as my co-author! One of my fondest memories will forever be that of my few weeks spent at Tilburg University in 2007 working with Fons in trying to resolve problems associated with testing for invariance across numerous

cultural groups, a complex issue that is still not fully resolved! To me, Fons was truly a very special person and now, when I read and reference his many papers and books, it will forever remind me of my great fortune in having known and shared ideas with this outstanding, yet forever humble icon in cross-cultural psychology!

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