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For Marlein and Wies
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Preface

This book emerged from a research programme at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES), University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The objective of this programme is to describe, analyse and explain the social and economic transformations that cities in advanced economies are currently undergoing and their impact on the socioeconomic incorporation of immigrants, in particular their self-employment. One project in this programme focuses on immigrant businesses in manufacturing. The central research covers such topics as changes in the international division of labour and their impact on the location of production sites, the institutional framework and its political environment, the management strategies of entrepreneurs, labour relations and so on. As these topics indicate, the programme crosses disciplinary boundaries as it combines the insights of economics, sociology, cultural anthropology, political science, geography and law.

Since its establishment in 1994 the IMES has endeavoured to carry out interdisciplinary research, since it believes that such research is most rewarding. A seemingly simple topic such as immigrant businesses can be examined more fruitfully by employing numerous angles, leading to more meaningful results when combined with deliberation. This admittedly is a truism, but one cannot find many instances of broad interdisciplinary research. It is obvious that many academic practitioners find it extremely difficult to step beyond their disciplinary boundaries. In order to promote the crossing of disciplinary boundaries and explore the possibility of a broad and theoretically grounded research programme of immigrant businesses, an international workshop was held in September 1995 at the University of Amsterdam. Experts from Europe and the United States, each representing different scientific disciplines, took part in this scientific journey to bridge the gap between the various disciplinary boundaries.

This book evolved out of this undertaking. It contains a selection of the papers presented at the workshop and a number of papers by other authors who were invited to contribute. The contributors have backgrounds in economics, sociology, cultural anthropology, political science, geography and history. Their contributions serve two aims: to present a pronounced theoretical position on the topic of immigrant businesses, and to contribute to an interdisciplinary
research programme. Of course, since it is neither possible nor desirable to straitjacket the authors or to ignore theoretical debates, the book as a whole does not represent a single theoretical view. The authors do, however, show an interest in the advancement of theory and interdisciplinary research.

It goes without saying that this book is not the product of a single person, even though there is only one name on the cover. My deep appreciation goes to the organisations that supported our work on immigrant businesses and helped make this book possible: the Committee for Social Oriented Research (CMO), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO/ISW), the Amsterdam Municipality, the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW) and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) at the University of Amsterdam. I owe a special debt to those academic colleagues who have given me help and support, in particular Marja Dreef, Robert Kloosterman, Adem Kumcu, Ivan Light, Rinus Penninx, Stephan Raes and Flavia Reil. My thanks also go to Frans Lelie, Cathelijne Pool, Sanna Ravestein-Willis and Heleen Ronden, who provided technical support in the editing process.

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Trevor P. Jones and others, including Giles A. Barrett, has been funded by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) (UK), the Economic and Social Research Council (UK), the Commission for Racial Equality (UK) and the Canadian High Commission in London. He was awarded the TIEM Canada prize for best paper at the 32nd World Conference of the International Council for Small Businesses.

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