

EDITED BY

**ALEXANDER-STAMATIOS ANTONIOU  
CARY COOPER**



# **New Directions in Organizational Psychology and Behavioral Medicine**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF RISK**

# New Directions in Organizational Psychology and Behavioral Medicine

*Edited by*

ALEXANDER-STAMATIOS ANTONIOU  
*University of Athens*

CARY COOPER  
*Lancaster University*

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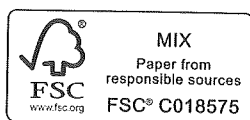
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# Immigration, Acculturation and Responses to Perceived Employment Discrimination: A Study of Albanian and Bulgarian Immigrants in Greece

*Marina Dalla and Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou*

## Introduction

The process of immigration involves acculturation to changes resulting from the contact of immigrants with the host population and intergroup relations that arise from the reciprocal presentation of views held by the contact groups (Berry, 2003). In general, acculturation is based on two dimensions of change: one refers to the extent to which the culture of origin is being maintained or preferred, and the other refers to the extent to which the new host culture is adopted. On the basis of the interaction between these two dimensions, four different acculturation strategies can be employed: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.

Assimilation is the strategy that relinquishes the ethnic heritage and substitutes it with the new, acquired cultural identity. Integration refers to the preservation of the heritage together with the acquisition of some characteristics of the host culture, while separation involves maintaining the culture of origin and rejecting the culture of settlement. Marginalization refers to a rejection of both the culture of settlement and the culture of origin (Berry, 2003). In all cases, integration is the most preferred acculturation strategy and demonstrates

the strongest relationship with positive adaptation. Marginalization is the least beneficial strategy for adaptation, while assimilation and separation are intermediate (Liebkind, 2001).

Intergroup relations encompass intergroup attitudes and behavior, including phenomena such as social discrimination directed by the dominant group or society toward the immigrant groups (Liebkind, 2001). The concept of social discrimination is described as inappropriate treatment towards individuals, owing to their group membership (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, and Gaertner, 1996) and correspondingly is connected to notions of justice and equality (Mummendey and Otten, 2001). Perceived discrimination is an individual's perception that he/she is treated differently or unfairly because of his/her group membership (Sanchez and Brock, 1996).

Dion (2002) presents an important psychological reality for immigrants regardless of their status as a social indicator of actual discrimination or intolerance. It elicits cognitive appraisals of threat that are exacerbated by the fact that discrimination is arbitrary and often unpredictable. One important response to the stress associated with discrimination is the strengthening of ingroup identification (Dion, 2002). For immigrants, this may take the form of separation from, or of heightened identification with, the heritage culture. Living in close proximity to members of one's own group, offers a form of social support in response to stress created by the rejection associated with discrimination.

Empirical studies (e.g., Hayfron, 2006) have shown that immigrants are likely to experience periods of unemployment, especially in times of economic hardship which may give rise to hiring discrimination or nepotism. Native-born employment seekers may be given priority even though immigrant job seekers might have similar human capital (Hayfron, 2006). According to Intergroup Emotions Theory (Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000), in situations such as these, when events or decisions affecting ingroup members are appraised as unfair, or violating principles of equity or justice, or obstructing goals, the dominant emotional responses triggered are anger and disgust. Research addressing responses to such perceived discrimination has also found preferences for different strategies that may be categorized as individualistic versus collectivistic and as behavioral versus cognitive (Mummendey and Otten, 2001). According to Moghaddam (1998), individuals first attempt to achieve mobility on an individual basis, and only resort to collective action when they perceive the system to be closed and the path to the advantaged group to be blocked.

Despite the fact that perceptions of discrimination have direct, negative effects on psychological and behavioral reactions of individuals or groups, this relationship is often complicated by acculturation strategies. Sanchez and Brock (1996) found that employees with higher levels of acculturation perceived less race-based discrimination than their counterparts who scored lower. A high level of acculturation is related to collective strategies such as the readiness to participate in social protest when an immigrant attempts to achieve social mobility within mainstream society but does not achieve the goals that are acceptable to the majority group (Moghaddam, 1998). The perception of such discrimination against one's group is likely to result in negative reactions among group members. However, this effect seems to be dependent on the specific ethnic group. The external attribution of a personal drawback may be easier for culturally more distant groups than for culturally proximal groups (Liebkind, 2001).

The two immigrant groups studied in this research are Albanian and Bulgarian. In the past 20 years Greece has become host to a number of immigrants (IMEPO, 2004), the majority of them coming from Eastern Europe. More than half of all immigrants in Greece are from Albania (Migration Information Programme, 1995), while the second largest immigrant population is from Bulgaria (which is very different from the first group). Other economic migrants and asylum seekers have been arriving from other countries in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and several Asian and African countries (IMEPO, 2004).

Economic and employment constraints in their own countries have prompted a number of Albanian and Bulgarian groups to emigrate to Greece (Kasimati, 2000). Like all migrants in a new country, they are prone to experience many barriers, often in the form of exclusion from the labor market, or from key social and legal institutions. Employment discrimination poses a most serious problem.

In Greece, Albanians are predominantly engaged in construction, while Eastern Europeans (e.g., Bulgarians) are mostly concentrated in the domestic services (Glystos, 2005). However, a number of negative attributes towards immigrants have been identified, especially towards Albanians. Albanians are often viewed as a low status and inferior group, who deprive native people of material resources, jobs, wages, social benefits, and services (Constantinidou, 2001). Hence, Albanian immigrants in Greece often change their names and religion, and baptize their children in order to be more rapidly integrated and

to strengthen the opportunities for future generations. In the case of Bulgarians, cultural distances are much narrower and easier to overcome because of their Orthodox faith which they have in common with the Greeks (Nikova, 2002).

## The Present Study

### STUDY AIMS

1. To understand acculturation processes among two immigrant groups, and to test the hypothesis that integration is the most preferred acculturation option for Albanian and Bulgarian immigrants in Greece.
2. To identify emotional and behavioral responses following the perception that an ingroup member has been treated unfairly. It is hypothesized that an increased sense of injustice and more intense negative emotional and behavioral reactions will be experienced among immigrants as a consequence of often being viewed as a distant, low status group (Constantinidou, 2001).
3. To identify which strategies of acculturation are associated with emotional and behavioral responses to perceived discrimination. It was expected that assimilation would be related to more negative emotional reactions and active responses to a situation of perceived injustice (Moghaddam, 1998).

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

A total of 130 immigrant adults in the wider region of Athens, aged between 18 and 62 years participated in the study. The sample included 66 (50.8%) males and 64 (49.2%) females with a total mean age of 36.45. The ethnic composition of the sample consisted of 50.8% (66) Albanian immigrants and 49.2% (64) Bulgarian immigrants. Over 27.8% (36) of immigrants have a higher educational degree, 72.1% (80) have completed secondary education, and 10.1% (13) have completed primary education.

## PROCEDURE

### *Acculturation*

To measure general acculturation attitudes of both the host majority and immigrant groups, four questions, based on the Berry acculturation model and adapted from Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, and Senecal (1997) were asked. These items were "immigrants should try to live according to their customs," "immigrants should try to live according to the customs of the host country," "immigrants should try to maintain their heritage and to adopt important features of the majority culture," and "immigrants should be deported to their country of origin." Participants had to indicate, using a five-point scale, the degree of their *agreement* (5) or *disagreement* (1). The scenario and the questionnaire were administered in Greek, Albanian, and Bulgarian. They were translated using a forward translation from Greek into both Albanian and Bulgarian, followed by back translations into Greek, and reconciliation procedures.

### *Scenario of discrimination*

A modified version of a procedure introduced by Devos, Silver, Mackie, and Smith (2002) was applied. Participants read a scenario in which they were asked to imagine that an acquaintance had called them relaying that, despite her excellent academic credentials, the ministry to which she had applied for a job had turned down her application (see Appendix). In her mind, the ministry had given priority to less qualified applicants. Two variables were manipulated in the scenarios. A *situation of discrimination* manipulation involved an interview for a job for which the applicant has the necessary qualifications (*employment*). The second manipulation was the *level of discrimination because of their group membership—immigrant or native* (see the Scenario in the Appendix). After reading this account, participants completed measures assessing their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to the situation.

### *Emotional reactions*

Participants indicated to what extent emotional terms such as "angry," "disgusted," "upset," "indifferent," "repulsed," or "unmoved" captured how the situation made them feel. Responses were provided on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("very much") (items = 12, Cronbach  $\alpha = 0.83$ ).



### *Behavioral intentions*

Participants reported to what extent they would engage in specific actions on the basis of this person's experiences. Items were inspired by previous work on behavioral responses to discrimination (Lalonde, Stronk, and Aleem, 2002). Some items reflected an active or confrontational way of dealing with the situation, such as writing a letter of support, consulting a lawyer, taking legal action (items = 3,  $\alpha = 0.82$ ). Other items (reversed for coding) expressed a lack of action or resignation, such as to do nothing, to be indifferent about or accept the decision (items = 3,  $\alpha = 0.72$ ). Responses were provided on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("very much").

### *Perceived injustice*

The focus here is on the extent to which the decision was construed as an act of discrimination, injustice, or an intransparent decision (items = 3,  $\alpha = 0.73$ ). Responses were provided on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

## RESULTS

Separate two-way MANOVAS were performed on measures of acculturation, perceived injustice, and responses to perceived injustice using ethnicity (Albanian vs Bulgarian) and gender (male vs female) as the independent variables.

Results from the acculturation measures indicated that Albanian immigrants preferred the integration orientation  $F(1, 117) = 30.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 19.4\%$ . Furthermore, they scored lower than Bulgarians with regard to the exclusionist orientation concerning conflictual relations with the native culture  $F(1, 117) = 10.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 7.9\%$ . Regarding appraisals of discrimination, Albanian immigrants perceived the manipulated situation as an act of injustice  $F(1, 117) = 25.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 17.1\%$  and discrimination  $F(1, 117) = 33.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 21.1\%$ , more than the Bulgarian immigrants. In terms of responses concerning perceived injustice, Albanian immigrants indicated higher scores of negative emotions  $F(1, 117) = 49.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 30.4\%$  and lower scores of unassertive behavior  $F(1, 117) = 42.97$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 27.4\%$  than Bulgarians. (See Table 20.1.)

Regression analysis was used, in order to test the predicted pattern of behavior responses to discrimination (active reaction, no reaction). Step 1 of the

**Table 20.1** Acculturation, perceived injustice and responses to perceived injustice as a function of ethnicity and gender

	Ethnicity				Gender			
	Albanian		Bulgarian		Male		Female	
	M	M	F	$\eta^2$	M	M	F	$\eta^2$
<b>Acculturation</b>								
Integration	3.83	2.67	30.39***	0.194	3.23	3.27	0.300	0.009
Assimilation	3.78	3.60	0.81	0.005	2.60	2.80	0.817	0.000
Separation	3.28	3.05	1.04	0.008	3.19	3.14	0.795	0.001
Marginalization/exclusion	2.04	2.75	10.79***	0.079	1.94	2.24	0.152	0.016
<b>Perceived injustice</b>								
Act of injustice	4.14	2.90	25.59***	0.171	3.37	3.67	1.576	0.013
Act of discrimination	4.07	2.78	33.15***	0.211	3.34	3.51	0.557	0.004
No transparent decision	3.92	3.55	2.81	0.022	3.75	3.73	0.008	0.000
<b>Responses to perceived injustice</b>								
Negative emotions	3.93	3.04	49.69***	0.304	3.41	3.57	1.575	0.014
Active reaction	2.98	2.93	0.04	0.000	3.03	2.88	0.461	0.004
Lack of action	1.78	2.90	42.97***	0.274	2.29	2.40	0.453	0.004

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

model included Ethnicity, with Gender entered at Step 2, Perceived Injustice at Step 3, Negative Emotions at Step 4, Acculturation variables at Step 5 and Interaction of Ethnicity with Acculturation at Step 6.

Appraisal of the situation as an act of discrimination predicted the intention to engage in active or confrontational behaviors  $\beta = .373$ ,  $t = 2.804$ ,  $p < .01$ , Total  $R^2 = 19.5\%$ . Separation was generally related to less active behavior toward discrimination  $\beta = -1.05$ ,  $t = -2.169$ ,  $p < .05$ , Total  $R^2 = 3\%$ . Low negative emotions were significantly related to high levels of passive reaction towards discrimination  $\beta = -.281$ ,  $t = -2.429$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = 5\%$ .

Under high separation, both groups showed low levels of active reaction. But under low levels of separation, Albanian immigrants were more active than Bulgarian immigrants  $\beta = 1.21$ ,  $t = 2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ , Total  $R^2 = 3.8\%$ .

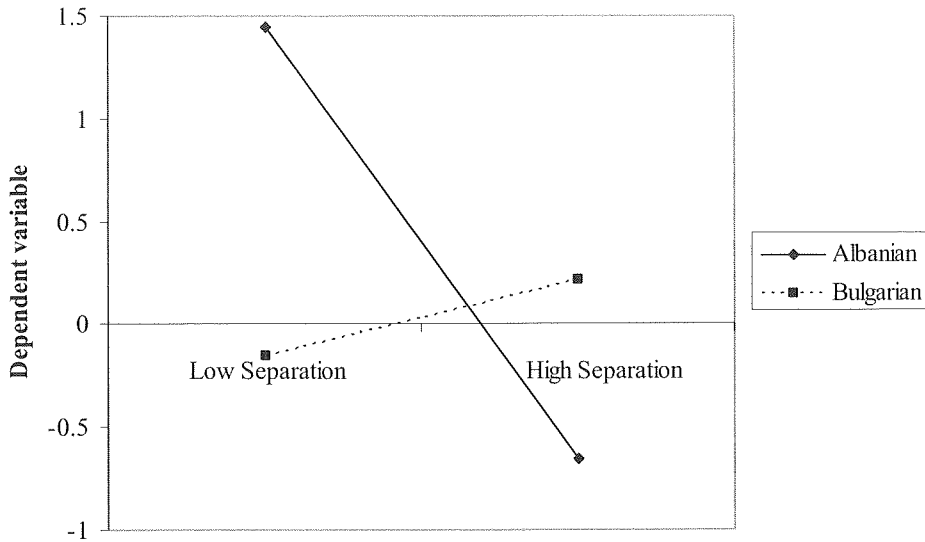
**Table 20.2** Hierarchical regression for the prediction of behavior reaction to discrimination from perceived injustice and acculturation

Prediction variables	ACT			NOA		
	$\beta$	t	R2	$\beta$	t	R2
1. Ethnic group	-0.182	-0.433	0.001	0.430	1.149	0.269
2. Gender	-0.073	-0.804	0.001	0.081	1.057	0.004
3. Perceived injustice			0.195			0.094
3a. Act of injustice	0.114	0.958		-0.141	-1.351	
3b. Act of discrimination	0.373**	2.804		0.044	0.394	
3c. No transparent decision	0.000	0.004		-0.008	-0.090	
4. Negative emotions	0.076	0.560	0.015	-0.281*	-2.429	0.050
5. Acculturation			0.030			0.051
5a. Assimilation	-0.163	-0.341		0.073	0.178	
5b. Integration	0.528	0.974		0.597	1.302	
5c. Separation	-1.051*	-2.169		-0.214	-0.523	
5d. Exclusion	0.130	0.271		-0.147	-0.360	
6. Ethnicity Acculturation			0.038			0.018
6a. Ethnicity $\times$ Assimilation	0.331	0.652		-0.217	-0.502	
6b. Ethnicity $\times$ Integration	-0.388	-0.791		-0.515	-1.234	
6a. Ethnicity $\times$ Separation	1.214*	2.332		0.145	0.327	
6b. Ethnicity $\times$ Exclusion	-0.085	-0.155		0.387	0.819	
Total R2			0.282			0.487

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## Conclusions

It is observed that Albanian immigrants strongly favor integration which is based on two identifications, one with their heritage culture and one with the host country. Accordingly, Albanians are more likely than Bulgarians to reject exclusion from the host society. By using integration as an adaptation strategy, and rejecting exclusion from the host country, it appears that Albanian immigrants are able to adapt to a new society, both culturally and socially. Because the majority of Albanians face harsher conditions in their home country



**Figure 20.1** Interaction of separation by ethnicity in predicting active reaction toward discrimination

in comparison to Bulgarians, they are perhaps more willing to remain in the host country regardless of the immigration difficulties (Dragoti, Dalla, and Pavlopoulos, 2006). The integration and adaptation of immigrants in general, and Albanian immigrants in particular, is an issue of great importance for the future of Greek society.

As predicted, Albanian immigrants viewed the hypothetical situation of a friend's job application being turned down as a case of ethnic discrimination and as a violation of principles of equality, more so than Bulgarians. They expressed greater feelings of anger and disgust, and a greater desire to engage in confrontational or active ways of dealing with the situation. However, it appears that the perceived appropriateness of responses to discrimination may differ depending on the social standing of the perceiver, at least from a majority/minority perspective as defined by group size.

Several authors have suggested that ethnic prejudice and discrimination against specific outgroups increase with relative group size (Kosic, and Phalet, 2006). They argue that sizeable immigrant groups are more visible, and are therefore perceived as a potential threat to the native population in terms of economic and political power. It seems that high levels of perceived discrimination exacerbates feelings of group threat that reinforces emotional

reaction and collective behavior when discrimination takes place. Furthermore, the relative density of ingroup members provides immigrants with the necessary social support to cope with disadvantages (Liebkind, 2001).

Previous research suggests that social identification is often a prerequisite to negative emotions and confrontational methods of dealing with injustice, and indicates the relationship between acculturation and reaction to perceived discrimination (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, and Gaertner, 1996; Mummendey and Otten, 2001). According to the results, separation is linked to lower subjective perceptions of collective behavior as a reaction to injustice. Previous studies have found support for the theory that individuals who possess a strong sense of ethnic identity are at greater risk for negative outcomes as the result of perceived discrimination. Other studies have found that strong ethnic identity can serve as a buffer between perceived discrimination and psychological distress. It is possible that currently unidentified moderating and mediating factors are present which impact the effects of acculturation on individual responses to perceived discrimination (Verkuyten, and Nekuee, 1999).

To conclude, our study aims and hypotheses were confirmed to a large extent. It appears that preference of integration as an acculturation option is more prevalent in the Albanian immigrants. As expected, an increased sense of injustice, and more intense negative emotions were identified in the Albanian group. Finally, behavioral intentions following a hypothetical situation were predicted by appraisal of the act of discrimination, separation, and negative emotions, in terms of whether or not to take action. The findings may provide useful to Greece, and to other countries experiencing influxes of immigration, in terms of methods of acculturation and predictors of behavioral intentions in different migrant groups.

### **Appendix 1: Hypothetical Scenario Given to Participants**

Remember I told you that I was applying to the Ministry of Education? Well, guess what? I just found out I was not accepted! I was shocked when I received a letter of rejection! I was certain I was going to be accepted. As you know, I was a pretty good student. My grade point average was excellent. I had other qualifications as well. Can you believe they rejected me in spite of all my qualifications?

I contacted the Ministry to find out what happened. The only explanation I received was that the positions were already filled. I did some research and found out that the requirements for admittance to the Ministry are considerably less than I can fulfill. I truly feel I have been treated unfairly. The Ministry responded that the procedure was meritocratic and moreover that they are proud to hire people coming from immigrant groups. Nonetheless, I feel I am one who has been treated unfairly.

Anyway, I just wanted to keep you informed. Take care.

S.

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# New Directions in Organizational Psychology and Behavioral Medicine

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## About the Editors

**Dr Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou** is a Lecturer of Psychology at the University of Athens, Greece and has undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (masters and two PhDs) from universities in the UK and in Greece. He also teaches in undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the School of Medicine, the National School of Public Health and the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. His publications include research papers and chapters in academic journals, books and edited volumes. His main research interests include occupational stress and burnout, leadership, work values, organizational politics and communication networks. He has coordinated National and European research programs and presented papers at many international conferences. He acts as a consultant and he is also a frequent contributor to national newspapers and television radio programs.

**Professor Cary Cooper** is Distinguished Professor of Organizational Psychology and Health, and Pro Vice Chancellor at Lancaster University in the UK. He is the author/editor of over 120 books (on occupational stress, women at work and industrial and organizational psychology), has written over 400 scholarly articles for academic journals, and is a frequent contributor to national newspapers, television and radio. Cary Cooper holds or has held high office in many academic and professional bodies worldwide and holds several honorary doctorates. Amongst many other positions, he is shortly to become Chair of the UK Academy of Social Sciences.

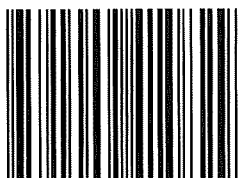
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