

# **Perceived Underemployment, Perceived Accent Discrimination, and Job Attitudes Among Immigrants: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support**

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*Although immigrants have become an integral part of the U.S. workforce, they are conspicuously absent in diversity research. Immigrants often face underemployment and discrimination, which lead to negative job attitudes, yet, the mechanism of such relationships is hardly understood. Using social exchange theory, the present study tested perceived organizational support (POS) as a potential mediator of a relationship between perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination, and job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective commitment, turnover intention) among 256 immigrant workers. Results showed that POS fully and partially mediated such relationships. Theoretical and practical implications of the results are discussed.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Immigrants have contributed markedly to the growth of the population in the United States (U.S.), representing 13% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Current trends in immigration project that immigrants will comprise about 20% of the nation's population by 2050 (Pew Research Center, 2008). Immigrants have also become an integral part of the American workforce (Bell, Kwesiga, & Berry, 2010), making up about 17% of the U.S. labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

These trends strongly indicate that immigrants play a crucial role in the U.S. economy and labor force, however, they do not seem to fare well in our society. Immigrants often suffer from underemployment and discrimination. Underemployment is defined as holding a job that is somehow inferior or of lower quality, relative to some standard (Feldman, 1996). Although underemployment exists in every stratum of society, immigrants are one of the groups that are most susceptible to underemployment (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). For example, approximately 26% of adult foreign-born workers are underemployed compared to 15% of native-born workers (Slack & Jansen, 2007). A variety of factors have been identified as contributing to the underemployment of immigrants, including their poor language proficiency, fewer social and professional networks to find better jobs, and lack of recognition for their foreign credentials and work experiences within the host country, and/or employer discrimination (De Jong & Madamba, 2001; Pearson, Hammond, Heffernan, & Turner, 2012).

Although it is illegal to discriminate someone based on his or her national origin or accent, growing evidence shows that immigrants face discrimination in housing, employment, education, and the judicial system (e.g., Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). For example, the U.S. General Accounting Office (1990), using data from a nationwide stratified random sample of U.S. employers, found that 10% of them (i.e., 461,000 employers) reported that they discriminated on the basis of a person's foreign appearance or accent.

Both underemployment and discrimination have been shown to have serious psychological, physical, and economic ramifications to employees. For example, underemployment is linked to poor job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment), intention to leave a job, withdrawal behaviors (e.g., absenteeism, turnover), poor psychological and physical health, and conflict with family members (e.g., Maynard & Feldman, 2011; Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). There is also a wage penalty associated with underemployment, and this penalty can continue to depress an individual's earnings for years afterward (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). It takes an average of 12 to 21 years for immigrants to earn as much as native-born Americans (De Jong & Madamba, 2001). Likewise, more recent meta-analyses on perceived discrimination (e.g., sex, race, disability) have clearly established that those who feel discriminated against not only display poor job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment), job behavior (e.g., performance), physical withdrawal (e.g., absenteeism, lateness), but also suffer from mental and physical health (e.g., depressive symptoms, psychological distress, heart disease) (e.g., Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Thus, the risks and costs associated with underemployment and discrimination are serious.

Unfortunately, past research has rarely investigated the potential consequences of underemployment and discrimination on job attitudes and behaviors among immigrant workers (Erdogan, Bauer, Peiró, & Truxillo, 2011; Slack & Jensen, 2007). Indeed, Bell et al. (2010) have contended that immigrants are conspicuously absent in diversity research and hence, called for more research attention to them. Furthermore, research on both underemployment and employment discrimination has exclusively focused on their main effects on job attitudes and behaviors. Although more recent research started identifying factors that might mitigate the negative effects of underemployment (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013) and perceived discrimination (e.g., Pascoe & Richman, 2009), the potential psychological mechanisms underlying these relationships have been studied less frequently.

Therefore, in light of the growing importance of immigrants to the U.S. labor force and economy, and negative economic, social, and psychological consequences associated with underemployment and discrimination, it is important to understand a potential intervening variable in these relationships among immigrant workers. Specifically, we explored POS as a possible intervening variable. POS refers to employees' general beliefs that their organizations value and care about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). We argue that when individuals perceive that they are placed in a job that requires fewer skills, abilities, and knowledge than they have and/or that they are discriminated against due to their foreign accents, they might not feel that the organization values them and cares about their well-being. Consequently, they respond to such perceived unfavorable treatment by reducing their efforts to help the organization reach its goals in the form of decreased job satisfaction and affective commitment, and increased intention to leave their job.

Using social exchange theory, this study seeks to expand both the underemployment literature and the employment discrimination literature by identifying a potential psychological process (i.e., mediator) that explains the relationship between perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination, and job attitudes among immigrant workers. In the following sections, research on the consequences of perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination is reviewed, followed by the rationale for POS as a mediator of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job attitudes. Finally, the hypotheses tested are presented.

### **Consequences of Perceived Underemployment**

Typically, researchers interested in underemployment focus on two of the five dimensions of underemployment that Feldman (1996) conceptualized – possessing surplus education and surplus skills/work experiences. These two dimensions of underemployment are also collectively referred to as overqualification (e.g., Maynard et al., 2006). Although underemployment can be measured both objectively and subjectively, most researchers have measured it subjectively (Erdogan et al., 2011). Kristof (1996) has asserted that measuring subjective perceptions might be the most effective approach for predicting job attitudes and performance, mainly because individuals are likely to feel and act based

on their perceptions of their employment situation, whether their perceptions are accurate or not (Zalesny & Ford, 1990).

Consistent with this assertion, some researchers (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2011; Maynard & Feldman, 2011) argue that the subjective measures of underemployment tend to be better predictors of employee attitudes and behaviors than objective measures. Therefore, the present study measured the perception of underemployment, which refers to the degree to which employees believe that they have more skills, abilities, and work experiences than their job requires. Several researchers have used perceived underemployment and perceived overqualification interchangeably (Ergogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard & Ferdman 2011).

Several theories have been used to explain the consequences of underemployment, however, person-environment (P-E) fit theory (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005) seems to be the dominant theoretical framework of underemployment (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011). P-E fit refers to the degree of congruence between individuals and aspects of their work environment (Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005). P-E fit is a multidimensional construct and one dimension of it is person-job (P-J) fit, which is referred to as the congruence between a person's characteristics and those of a specific job. There are two types of P-J fit; demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit. Demands-abilities fit is referred to as the compatibility between employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and the requirements of a job, whereas needs-supplies fit captures how well the environment meets individuals' needs, desires, or preferences (Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005). P-J fit theory predicts that a greater degree of fit between a person and his or her job leads to more positive individual and organizational outcomes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Indeed, in a more recent meta-analysis, Kristoff-Brown et al. established the direct relationship between P-J fit and important individual (e.g., job satisfaction, strains) and organizational (e.g., organizational commitment, intention to quit, job performance) outcomes.

In an underemployment context, perceived underemployment can be considered a poor P-J fit because employees feel that they have more KSAs than a job requires and that their desires and needs are not met (Maynard et al., 2006). Consistent with P-J fit theory, perceived underemployment has been negatively related to work attitudes. In a more recent meta-analysis on underemployment (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011), overall results showed that underemployment was negatively related to employees' job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective commitment), displayed mixed results in job performance (i.e., in-role performance and extra-role behavior), and was positively linked to employee withdrawal (i.e., intention to quit, turnover). Underemployment was also related to poor psychological well-being (i.e., psychosomatic symptoms, depression) and reduced health. These results clearly indicate that underemployment is linked to a variety of negative outcomes for both employees and organizations.

As mentioned earlier, there is a paucity of studies that have examined the outcomes associated with perceived underemployment among immigrant workers. An exception to this is Hamilton (2011) who examined the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes among immigrant employees in Canada and found that immigrant employees who perceived that they were more underemployed were less satisfied with their jobs and expressed a higher intention of quitting their jobs.

### **Consequences of Perceived Accent Discrimination**

A non-native accent is one of the most salient attributes of people from other countries who come to live, work, or study in a host country, and serves as a cue that they are not a native speaker (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). An accent is defined as "a manner of pronunciation with other linguistic levels of analysis (grammatical, syntactical, morphological, and lexical) more or less comparable with the standard language" (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010, p. 215). An accent constitutes an important part of a speaker's social identity and conveys a considerable amount of social information (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Available, but limited research shows that a foreign accent serves as a stigma. A stigma refers to an attribute of a person that is deeply discrediting, which in others' mind reduces that person "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman, 1963, p.3) and conveys a social identity that is devalued in social contexts. Members of many stigmatized groups (e.g., women, ethnic minorities) are often subject to stereotypes and discrimination (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006).

Social psychological research on accent has shown that an accent is a potent cue for a listener to categorize, stereotype, and form impressions (Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert, & Giles, 2012). For example, in a more recent meta-analysis, Fuertes et al. (2012) have demonstrated that individuals with non-standard accents are evaluated more negatively on social status-related attributes (e.g., intelligence, competence) and solidarity-related attributes (e.g., likeability, friendliness) compared to those with standard accents. They also reported that standard accents were favored in formal and high stake settings such as employment ( $d = .53$ ) and sales ( $d = 1.59$ ) compared to non-standard accents. Given these findings, Fuertes et al. (2012) have concluded that (a) accented speech acts as an immediate marker for listeners to downgrade a non-standard-accented speaker, (b) accents represent nothing less than a considerable handicap, and (c) accents are likely to lead to discrimination and other negative social consequences. These findings clearly show that use of a non-standard accent negatively affects evaluations and contribute to decisions that are discriminatory and possibly even illegal (Fuertes et al., 2012).

Non-native accents are likely to instigate discriminatory behaviors against accented speakers and such behaviors have been documented in various settings such as work, school, and judicial contexts (Fuertes et al. 2012). For example, in a survey of European Union countries, 34% of a representative sample of respondents reported that a job candidate's foreign accent would put him or her at disadvantage compared to an equally qualified, non-accented candidate. This number went up to 45% among managers who were often in a position of hiring (European Commission, 2008). Furthermore, foreign-accented job applicants have been found to be more likely to be selected for low status jobs and less likely to be selected for high status jobs than standard-accented job applicants (e.g., Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012).

Although there is growing evidence that perceived discrimination is associated with negative job attitudes, work behaviors, and increase in psychological problems (e.g., depression) (Ragins & Cornwell 2001), research on the work-related consequences of perceived accent discrimination is limited, and available evidence is somewhat mixed. For example, Wated and Sanchez (2006) found that possessing a non-native accent served as a significant predictor of job satisfaction and work tension above and beyond role stressors (i.e., role ambiguity and role conflict) among Hispanic workers in the U.S. However, Hamilton (2011) did not find a significant relationship between perceived discrimination based on language and job satisfaction and turnover intention among immigrant workers in Canada.

### **A Mediator of the Relationship Between Perceived Underemployment and Perceived Accent Discrimination, and Job Attitudes**

An important gap in the underemployment and accent discrimination literature is the lack of attention to a psychological process (i.e., mediator) of how perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination are related to important job attitudes and behaviors. This section provides the rationale for the potential mediator of POS as a potential mediator on these relationships.

POS refers to employees' beliefs that their organization values their contributions and cares about them (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). According to organization support theory, employees view the organization as having humanlike characteristics through a personification process and take their favorable treatment or unfavorable treatment as an indication that the organization favors or disfavors them as an individual (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Consistent with social exchange theory, POS invokes the norm of reciprocity, which produces a felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help it reach its goals (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). Consequently, employees with high POS feel obligated to respond favorably to the organization in the form of positive attitudes, increased efforts, and performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Furthermore, POS helps to fulfill socio-emotional needs of employees (e.g., needs for esteem, affiliation, emotional support). For example, high POS conveys to employees that the organization judges them as superior performers, is proud of their accomplishments, is committed to them, and provides understanding and material aid to them to deal with stressful situations at work or home (Rhodes & Eisenber, 2002). Consequently, employees with high POS tend to express strong feelings of affiliation and loyalty to their organizations (Loi, Hung-Yue, & Foley, 2006). Finally,

POS strengthens employees' beliefs that the organization recognizes and rewards their increased performance.

All of these signal to employees that they are valued members of the organization and help them develop a trusting relationship with their organizations. Consequently, high POS is likely to lead to positive work attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, two recent meta-analyses show that POS is related positively to job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, job involvement) and behaviors (e.g., in-role performance, extra-role performance), and negatively to withdrawal behaviors (e.g., turnover) and strains (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002; Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009).

To the author's best knowledge, there are no studies that have investigated the relationship between perceived underemployment and POS and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and POS; however, there is indirect evidence that shows that both perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination might be negatively related to POS. For example, several studies (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) have examined the potential antecedents of POS and found that fairness perception, among others, was a strong predictor of POS. Applying these findings, those who perceive that they are underemployed and/or that they are discriminated against due to their foreign accents might feel that they are treated unfairly upon hiring as well as post-hiring. Indeed, several researchers (e.g., Goldman et al., 2006) have stated that organizational justice and perceived discrimination are strongly related. Hence, perceived accent discrimination could be thought of as a form of perceived injustice (treating a person unfairly because of his or her foreign accent).

Furthermore, Gillet, Colombat, Michinov, Pronost, and Fouquereau (2013) demonstrated that justice perceptions (i.e., procedural justice) were related to POS, which, in turn, was related to job satisfaction, in-role performance, and organizational identification. Similarly, Loi et al. (2006) reported that POS was a mediator of the relationship between justice perceptions (procedural and distributive justice), organizational commitment, and turnover intention.

Applying these findings, those who perceive that they are underemployed and that they are discriminated against because of their foreign accents might feel that they are treated unfairly upon hiring (i.e., distributive injustice, procedural injustice) and do not think that their organization appreciates them as valuable members, recognizes and rewards their performance, and provides them with support and resources (e.g., monetary rewards, developmental opportunities, promotions) when needed (Gillet et al., 2013). Consequently, these employees might reciprocate the lack of POS via reduced job satisfaction and affective commitment, and increased turnover intention. Thus, we propose that POS might be an important intervening variable for the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job attitudes among immigrant workers. Hence, the following hypotheses were tested.

*Hypothesis 1: POS will mediate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction (H1a), affective commitment (H1b), and intention to leave (H1c) among immigrant workers.*

*Hypothesis 2: POS will mediate the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job satisfaction (H2a), affective commitment (H2b), and intention to leave (H2c) among immigrant workers.*

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

A total of 256 foreign-born workers (122 men and 134 women) participated in the study. The sample was diverse in terms of its ethnic composition: 41.4% Asian (n = 106), 24.6% White (n = 63), 22.7% Latino/a (n = 58), 1.2% Black (n = 3), and 10.2% Other (n = 26). Participants reported that they had immigrated from a total of 52 different countries (e.g., Mexico, China, India, Turkey, Philippines). Participants' age varied widely. The length of time they had been living in the U.S. ranged from 1 to 70 years (M = 18.94, SD = 11.63). Most of the participants (57.4%, n = 147) were naturalized citizens,

followed by green card holders (26.6%,  $n = 68$ ), non-immigrants (e.g., H1 visa holder) (10.9%,  $n = 28$ ), and other (i.e., undocumented immigrants) (4.7%,  $n = 12$ ). We included H1 visa holders in the study because many of them apply to a legal immigrant status (i.e., green card) while holding H1 visa status. About 40% of participants ( $n = 103$ ) were single (e.g., single, separated, divorced, widowed) and 60% ( $n = 152$ ) were married (e.g., married, living with a partner). A total of 112 (44%) participants obtained a bachelor's degree or higher education in the U.S. and 111 (43.3%) had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher education outside the U.S. Participants worked between 1 month and 37 years ( $M = 6.81$ ,  $SD = 7.63$ ) for their current job in a variety of industry. About 40% of the participants ( $n = 101$ ) were in supervisory positions. Although participants' wages ranged widely, over 22% ( $n = 58$ ) of the participants made more than \$100,000. Table 1 shows the distributions of the regions of origin, participants' age and wages.

## **Procedures**

Data were collected using an online survey or a paper version. The online survey link was accompanied by an introductory message that was sent via-email to employees meeting the criteria, using the researcher's personal contacts, professional networks, and mailing links. Criteria to participate in the study were that participants were foreign-born and were employed at the time of data collection. Participants were shown a brief description of the study and were asked to provide their consent for the study after they selected the survey link. The survey started with questions about demographic information, followed by the sections on participants' attitudes toward their current job, including their perception of underemployment and accent discrimination, overall job satisfaction, affective commitment, turnover intention, and POS. At the end of the survey, the participants submitted their survey online and were thanked for their participation.

For the questionnaires, a personal network of the researcher and snowball sampling were used. Several instructors in the psychology department at the university where the data were collected agreed to distribute the questionnaires to their students who were foreign-born and working as well as instructed their students to distribute the questionnaires to their acquaintances (e.g., co-workers, friends, parents) who were foreign-born and currently employed.

## **Measures**

Unless it is specified, all the variables were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

### *Perceived Underemployment*

Perception of underemployment was measured with five items from a 6-item scale used by Hamilton (2011). Sample items include "I am overeducated for this job," and "I feel overqualified for my current job." Higher scores indicate more perceived underemployment ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

### *Perceived Accent Discrimination*

Perceived accent discrimination was measured with 13 items from the Perceived Discrimination Based on Accent Scale (Wated & Sanchez, 2006) and the Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination Inventory (James, Lovato, & Cropanzano, 1987). Items taken from James' et al. were modified so that the word "race/ethnicity" was replaced with the word "accent." Sample items include "My accent is a limitation at work," and "At work, I feel that others exclude me from their activities because of my accent." Higher scores indicate more perceived accent discrimination ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

### *POS*

POS was measured with the 12 items from the short version of the original Perceived Organizational Support scale (Eisenberger et al., 1986). A sample item is "The organization strongly considers my goals and values." Higher scores indicate more POS ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

**TABLE 1**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS**

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Region of origin		
Northern Asia (e.g., Russia)	1	.4
Southern Asia (e.g., India)	37	14.5
Eastern Asia (e.g., China)	30	11.7
Southeastern Asia (e.g., Philippines)	40	15.6
Southwestern Asia (e.g., Azerbaijan)	1	.4
West Central Asia and the Middle East (e.g., Turkey)	60	23.4
North America (e.g., Canada)	3	1.2
South America (e.g., Columbia)	7	2.7
Central America (e.g., Mexico)	49	19.1
Caribbean (e.g., Cuba)	2	.8
Eastern Europe (e.g., Bosnia)	2	.8
Southern Europe (e.g., Greece)	3	1.2
Northern Europe (e.g., UK)	4	1.6
Western Europe (e.g., Germany)	8	3.1
Western Africa (e.g., Liberia)	1	.4
Eastern Africa (e.g., Ethiopia)	2	.8
Northern Africa (e.g., Egypt)	3	1.2
Oceania (e.g., Australia)	3	1.2
Age		
19 or under	4	1.6
20 - 24	39	15.2
25 - 29	31	12.1
30 - 34	44	17.2
35 - 39	19	7.4
40 - 44	24	9.4
45 - 49	28	10.9
50 - 54	35	13.7
55 - 59	18	7.0
60 and over	13	5.1
Wage before taxes and deductions		
< \$20,000 year	42	16.4
\$20,001 - \$30,000 year	27	10.5
\$30,001 - \$40,000 year	33	12.9
\$40,001 - \$50,000 year	17	6.6
\$50,001 - \$60,000 year	29	11.3
\$60,001 - \$70,000 year	10	3.9
\$70,001 - \$80,000 year	15	5.9
\$80,001 - \$90,000 year	10	3.9
\$90,001 - \$100,000 year	8	3.1
> \$100,000	58	22.7

*Note.* *N* ranges from 236 to 255.

### *Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction was measured with three items developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979). A sample item is “All in all I am satisfied with my job.” Higher scores indicate more satisfaction with a job ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

### *Affective Commitment*

Affective commitment was measured with a 6-item scale developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). A sample item is “I really feel as if my organization’s problems are my own.” Higher scores indicate more affective commitment ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

### *Turnover Intention*

Turnover intention was measured with four items (Adams & Beehr, 1998). A sample item includes “I am planning to leave my job for another in the near future.” Higher scores indicate higher intention to quit a job ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

### *Demographic Information*

Participants were asked to indicate their age, sex, ethnic background, marital status, and wage. They were also asked to indicate the country where they were born, the length in the U.S., their immigrant status (i.e., non-immigrant, immigrant, naturalized citizen, and other), the highest level of formal education obtained in the U.S. and/or outside the U.S., job title, and organizational tenure.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, Cronbach’s alphas, and intercorrelations of the measured variables. All Cronbach’s alphas are in acceptable ranges (between .78 - .93). Consistent with the predictions, perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination were negatively related to job satisfaction and affective commitment, and positively related to turnover intention. Both perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination were negatively related to POS. POS was positively related to job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, and negatively to turnover intention.

Although some of the demographic variables (i.e., education in the U. S., education outside the U.S., length in the U.S., wage) were related to perceived underemployment, the majority of them were rarely related to any of the job attitude variables. Thus, we did not include these variables as control variables in our analyses in order to preserve power (Becker, 2005).

**TABLE 2**  
**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS AMONG THE MEASURED VARIABLES**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived underemployment	2.72	.79	(.78)					
Perceived accent								
2. discrimination	2.02	.72	.12	(.92)				
3. POS	3.50	.71	-.37***	-.41***	(.92)			
4. Job satisfaction	3.73	.86	-.40***	-.19**	.61***	(.87)		
5. Affective commitment	3.19	.80	-.26***	-.21***	.68***	.64***	(.85)	
6. Turnover intentions	2.62	1.12	.34***	.17**	-.58***	-.72***	-.65***	(.93)

*Note.* *N* ranges from 236 to 255. The numbers in the parentheses are Cronbach's alpha.

\*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Tests of Hypotheses

Each hypothesis was tested using a simple mediation with the *MEDIATE* macro from Hayes and Preacher (2014). We used bootstrapping to calculate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) to assess the significance of an indirect effect because this approach has better performance and statistical power compared to other mediation approaches (e.g., Sobel test, the Baron and Kenny method) (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). An indirect effect is significant if zero is not contained in the confidence interval (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). Following their recommendation, the bootstrap estimates were based on 10,000 bootstrap samples.

Hypothesis 1 stated that POS would mediate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction (H1a), affective commitment (H1b), and intention to leave (H1c). A simple mediation analysis was conducted for each outcome variable. Table 3 shows unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors (SE), t-values, and p values. As expected, perceived underemployment was negatively related to job satisfaction ( $c1 = -.46, p < .001$ ) and affective commitment ( $c2 = -.27, p < .001$ ), but positively related to turnover intention ( $c3 = .51, p < .001$ ). Perceived underemployment was negatively associated with POS ( $a = -.33, p < .001$ ). POS was positively related to job satisfaction ( $b1 = .64, p < .001$ ) and affective commitment ( $b2 = .77, p < .001$ ), but negatively related to turnover intention ( $b3 = -.83, p < .001$ ) after controlling for perceived underemployment (see also Figure 1).

With respect to the significance of indirect effects, results showed that all of the three bias-corrected bootstrap CIs did not contain zero. These results indicate that POS is a significant mediator of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction (point estimate =  $-.21$ , BC95% CI =  $-.31$  to  $-.13$ ), affective commitment (point estimate =  $-.26$ , BC95% CI =  $-.36$  to  $-.16$ ), and turnover intention (point estimate =  $.27$ , BC95% CI =  $.17$  to  $.40$ ). However, perceived underemployment was still directly related to job satisfaction ( $c1' = -.25, p < .01$ ) and turnover ( $c3' = .24, p < .01$ ) after controlling for POS. Perceived underemployment and POS together explained 41% of the variance in job satisfaction [ $R^2 = .41, F(2, 228) = 78.47, p < .001$ ], 45% of the variance in affective commitment [ $R^2 = .45, F(2, 227) = 94.36, p < .001$ ], and 36% of the variance in turnover intention [ $R^2 = .36, F(2, 229) = 63.13, p < .001$ ]. These results support Hypotheses 1a-1c. That is, POS partially mediated the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction, and turnover intention, but it completely mediated the relationship between perceived underemployment and affective commitment.

Hypothesis 2 stated that POS would mediate the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job satisfaction (H2a), affective commitment (H2b), and intention to leave (H2c). Again, a simple mediation analysis was conducted for each outcome variable. Table 4 shows unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors (SE), t-values, and p values. Consistent with the prediction, perceived accent discrimination was negatively related to job satisfaction ( $c1 = -.20, p < .05$ ) and affective commitment ( $c2 = -.22, p < .01$ ), but positively related to turnover intention ( $c3 = .24, p < .05$ ). Perceived accent discrimination was negatively related to POS ( $a = -.40, p < .001$ ). POS was positively related to job satisfaction ( $b1 = .79, p < .001$ ), affective commitment, ( $b2 = .84, p < .001$ ), but negatively related to turnover intention ( $b3 = -1.02, p < .001$ ) after controlling for perceived accent discrimination (see also Figure 2).

As regards to the significance of indirect effects, results showed that all of the three bias-corrected bootstrap CIs did not include zero. These results indicate that POS was a significant mediator of the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job satisfaction (point estimate =  $-.32$ , BC95% CI =  $-.45$  to  $-.21$ ), affective commitment (point estimate =  $-.34$ , BC95% CI =  $-.46$  to  $-.23$ ), and turnover intention (point estimate =  $.41$ , BC95% CI =  $.28$  to  $.56$ ). The direct effect of perceived accent discrimination on each of outcomes was no-significant after controlling for PS, indicating that POS completely mediated the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and each of the job attitudes. Perceived accent discrimination and POS together accounted for 38% of the variance in job satisfaction, [ $R^2 = .38, F(2, 218) = 68.02, p < .001$ ], 48% of the variance in affective commitment [ $R^2 = .48, F(2, 216) = 99.14, p < .001$ ], and 35% of the variance in turnover intention [ $R^2 = .35, F(2, 228) = 59.13, p < .001$ ]. These results support Hypotheses 2a-2c.

Overall, perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination were linked to job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intention indirectly through POS. Perceived underemployment was still directly related to job satisfaction and turnover intention.

**TABLE 3**  
**RESULTS OF MEDIATION ANALYSES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND EACH OF JOB ATTITUDES**

	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>		
Variables for H1a: Perceived underemployment (PE), POS, job satisfaction (JS) ( <i>n</i> = 231)				
PE - JS (path <i>c</i> <sub>1</sub> )	-.46 (.07)	-7.04***		
PE - POS (path <i>a</i> )	-.33 (.05)	-6.15***		
POS - JS (controlling for PE) (path <i>b</i> <sub>1</sub> )	.64 (.07)	9.40***		
PE - JS (controlling for POS) (path <i>c</i> <sub>1</sub> ')	-.25 (.06)	-4.13**		
			LL BC95% CI	UL BC 95% CI
Indirect effect ( <i>ab</i> <sub>1</sub> )	-.21 (.04)	-.31		-.13
Variables for H1b: Perceived underemployment (PE), POS, affective commitment (AC) ( <i>n</i> = 230)				
PE - AC (path <i>c</i> <sub>2</sub> )	-.27 (.06)	-4.22***		
PE - POS (path <i>a</i> )	-.33 (.05)	-6.21***		
POS - AC (controlling for PE) (path <i>b</i> <sub>2</sub> )	.77 (.06)	12.59***		
PE - AC (controlling for POS) (path <i>c</i> <sub>2</sub> ')	-.02 (.05)	-.29		
			LL BC95% CI	UL BC 95% CI
Indirect effect ( <i>ab</i> <sub>2</sub> )	-.26 (.05)	-.36		-.16
Variables for H1c: Perceived underemployment (PE), POS, turnover intention (TI) ( <i>n</i> = 232)				
PE - TI (path <i>c</i> <sub>3</sub> )	.51 (.09)	5.84***		
PE - TI (path <i>a</i> )	-.33 (.05)	-6.05***		
POS - TI (controlling for PE) (path <i>b</i> <sub>3</sub> )	-.83 (.09)	-8.97***		
PE - TI (controlling for POS) (path <i>c</i> <sub>3</sub> ')	.24 (.08)	2.97**		
			LL BC95% CI	UL BC 95% CI
Indirect effect ( <i>ab</i> <sub>3</sub> )	.27 (.06)	.17		.40

Notes. \* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01. \*\*\* *p* < .001.

**TABLE 4**  
**RESULTS OF MEDIATION ANALYSES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED**  
**ACCENT DISCRIMINATION AND EACH OF JOB ATTITUDES**

	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>		
Variables for H2a: Perceived accent discrimination (PAD), POS, job satisfaction (JS) ( <i>n</i> = 221)				
PAD - JS (path <i>c</i> <sub>1</sub> )	-.20 (.08)	-2.47*		
PAD - POS (path <i>a</i> )	-.40 (.06)	-6.54***		
POS - JS (controlling for PAD) (path <i>b</i> <sub>1</sub> )	.79 (.07)	11.24***		
PAD - JS (controlling for POS) (path <i>c</i> <sub>1</sub> ')	.12 (.07)	1.71		
			LL BC95% CI	UL BC 95% CI
Indirect effect ( <i>ab</i> <sub>1</sub> )	-.32 (.06)	-.45	-.45	-.21
Variables for H2b: Perceived accent discrimination (PAD), POS, affective commitment (AC) ( <i>n</i> = 219)				
PAD - AC (path <i>c</i> <sub>2</sub> )	-.22 (.08)	-2.89**		
PAD - POS (path <i>a</i> )	-.40 (.06)	-6.61***		
POS - AC (controlling for PAD) (path <i>b</i> <sub>2</sub> )	.84 (.06)	13.53***		
PAD - AC (controlling for POS) (path <i>c</i> <sub>2</sub> ')	.12 (.06)	1.97		
			LL BC95% CI	UL BC 95% CI
Indirect effect ( <i>ab</i> <sub>2</sub> )	-.34 (.06)	-.46	-.46	-.23
Variables for H2c: Perceived accent discrimination (PAD), POS, turnover intention (TI) ( <i>n</i> = 222)				
PAD - TI (path <i>c</i> <sub>3</sub> )	.24 (.11)	2.22*		
PAD - TI (path <i>a</i> )	-.40 (.06)	-6.54***		
POS - TI (controlling for PAD) (path <i>b</i> <sub>3</sub> )	-1.02 (.10)	-10.53***		
PAD - TI (controlling for POS) (path <i>c</i> <sub>3</sub> ')	-.17 (.10)	-1.76		
			LL BC95% CI	UL BC 95% CI
Indirect effect ( <i>ab</i> <sub>3</sub> )	.41 (.07)	.28	.28	.56

Notes. SE = standard error. \* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01. \*\*\* *p* < .001.

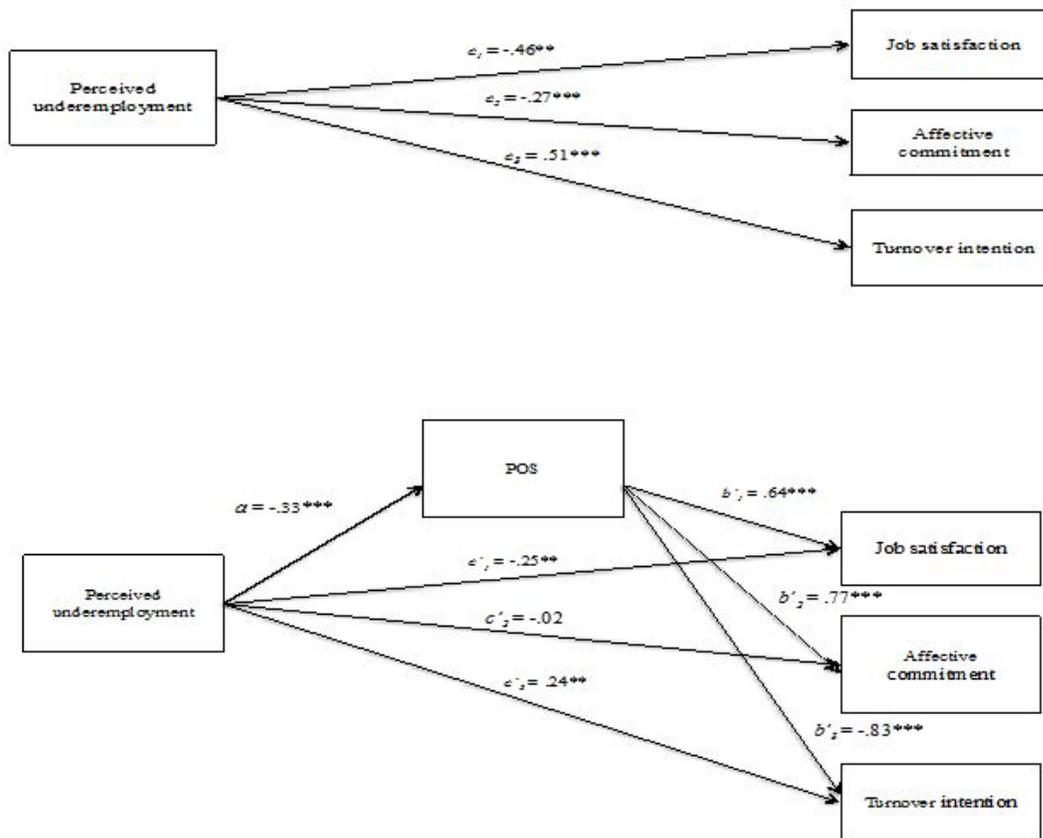
## DISCUSSION

Despite the important role that immigrants play in the U.S. labor force and economy, little research attention has been paid to them. Yet, immigrants have been identified as one of the groups that are most

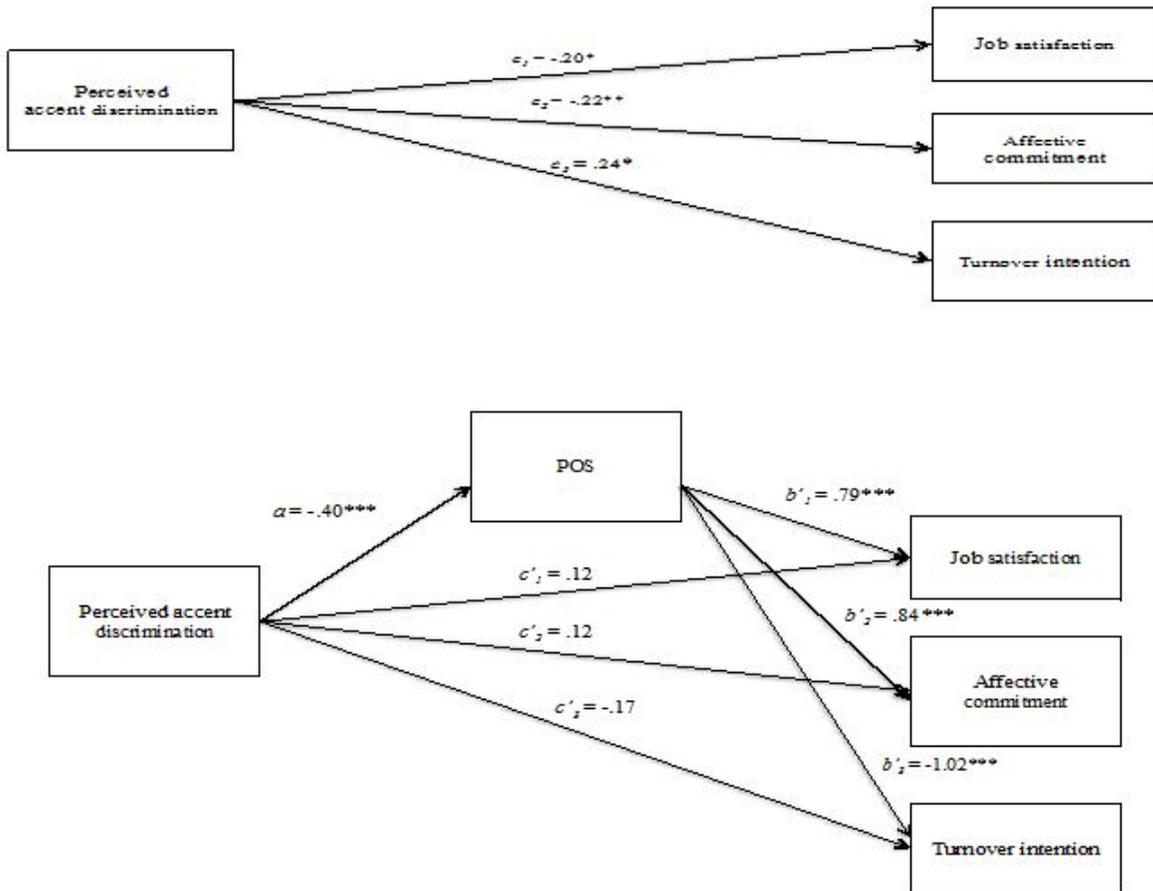
susceptible to underemployment and have often been the targets of accent discrimination. Given the negative economic, social, and psychological and physical consequences associated with underemployment and discrimination, the present study, using social exchange theory, investigated POS as a mediator of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intention) and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and these job attitudes.

Results show that perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination were related to the job attitudes indirectly through POS among immigrant workers. To the author's best knowledge, the present study is the first to provide support for the mediating role of POS on the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and the job attitudes among immigrant workers. Overall, findings reveal that immigrant workers who thought that they were underemployed and/or that they were discriminated against because of their foreign accents were less likely to develop a belief that they were supported by their organizations, which then led them to have more negative job attitudes. These findings contribute to the literature by providing a glimpse into how immigrant workers' perceptions of underemployment and accent discrimination relate to how they feel about support from their organization, as well as how that comes to relate to their work attitudes.

**FIGURE 1**  
**MEDIATING ROLE OF POS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND JOB ATTITUDES**



**FIGURE 2**  
**MEDIATING ROLE OF POS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED ACCENT DISCRIMINATION AND JOB ATTITUDES**



**Theoretical Implications**

There are several theoretical implications in the present study. First, the potential negative outcomes of perceived underemployment were replicated using immigrant workers. Perceived underemployment was still directly related to job satisfaction and turnover intention, even after controlling for POS. These results are consistent with past research linking perceived underemployment (or perceived overqualification) to unfavorable outcomes. Second, bivariate correlations showed that perceived accent discrimination was significantly related to job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intention. These findings are consistent with Wated and Sanchez (2006) who found that perceived accent discrimination was related to job satisfaction. However, these significant relationships became non-significant with the inclusion of POS as a mediator. Perhaps, perceived accent discrimination relates to these job attitudes only indirectly through a mediator (POS) in the mediation analyses. Third, the present study clearly demonstrated that POS led to beneficial outcomes for immigrant workers and the organization (i.e., increased job satisfaction and affective commitment, and reduced turnover intention). These results are consistent with past research that has demonstrated that when employees feel valued by their organizations, positive outcomes occur. Our findings provide additional evidence on the positive outcomes associated with POS among immigrant workers, indicating that the predictions of organizational support theory are robust.

The main contribution of the present study is the investigation of POS as an intervening variable of the relationship between perceived underemployment and important job attitudes and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and these job attitudes. Although past research has mainly looked at the direct relationship between perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination, and various job outcomes, our results confirm that POS relates to these relationships indirectly. The present study contributes to previous research in the sense that POS appears to be a powerful psychological mechanism of why perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination relate to important job attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment.

### **Practical Implications**

The present findings have some practical implications for promoting immigrant workers' job attitudes. Specifically, our findings indicate that both perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination are likely to decrease their perceptions of organizational support, which in turn, leads to reduced job satisfaction and affective commitment, and increased turnover intention. In light of these findings, it appears important for researchers to identify potential factors that help to reduce perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination and/or identify potential factors that mitigate the negative relationship between perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination, and POS.

Several researchers (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2011; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013) asserted that organizations might need to train managers and supervisors on how to best utilize the skills and knowledge of underemployed workers (Erdogan et al., 2011). In particular, Maynard and Parfyonova (2013) argued that supervisors might be able to handle perceived underemployment among their subordinates in several ways, including using idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) (Hornung Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010) to allow them to take more challenging tasks and/or providing more developmental opportunities and autonomy in performing their tasks.

Erdogan et al. (2011) also argue that organizations should be prepared to provide additional opportunities and rewards for those underemployed workers to gain the greatest advantage from them. Moreover, from underemployed workers' perspectives, there are many factors that might mitigate the negative consequences of underemployment, thus, organizations should be aware of what underemployed individuals may gain from the employment relationship and support these to the fullest extent possible (Erdogan et al., 2011). Finally, organizations should provide training to underemployed workers in areas that will help them progress (e.g., managerial position). These strategies are also likely to increase the perception of organizational support.

Furthermore, organizations need to take steps to reduce the perception of accent discrimination among immigrant workers and create an atmosphere where they feel that they are valued and supported. Organizations should pay particular attention to maintaining fair environment to avoid discrimination incidents, perhaps through creating a supportive climate for diversity (Volpone & Avery, 2013). This can be done by creating policies to discourage discrimination or offering supervisor training on diversity. These are important considerations, given that the economy is becoming increasingly global. Businesses are focusing on global markets and greater numbers of companies are going international. Consequently, native speakers of English will be required to interact and work with those who speak English as a non-native language on a regular basis.

Finally, instead of making immigrant workers believe that their foreign accents are a disadvantage or challenge that needs to be overcome, organizations need to make a conscious effort to view foreign accents as an asset. For example, many immigrant workers often speak two or more languages and have an understanding of cross-cultural differences. These factors may contribute to the success of organizations. Indeed, Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) argue that because speaking a non-native language constitutes a unique identity, foreign-accented speakers should be considered as a multicompetent speaker. Such a view might lead immigrant workers to believe that they are valued and supported by their organization.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

Despite the several theoretical and practical contributions of the present study, it is not without limitations. First, because our study is cross-sectional in design, we are not able to determine the causality of our findings. Furthermore, our reliance on cross-sectional data opens the possibility that the true nature of the relationship described in this study is represented by the other causal pattern than the one we described. Additionally, due to the nature of the present study, all the variables were measured from the same source in the single survey. Because all the variables were based on individual workers' perceptions and attitudes instead of objective measures, self-report questionnaires were the most appropriate data collection method. However, this might have entailed common method bias. Consistent with Erdogan and Bauer's (2009) recommendation, future research could include a time lag between the measurement of perceived underemployment, perceived accent discrimination, POS, and job attitudes in order to establish the causal relationship between the variables and reduce this potential source of bias.

Second, because our sample was diverse in terms of the countries that the participants immigrated from, our results might be generalizable among the immigrants of many different countries. However, future research should investigate whether immigrants from particular countries might perceive more underemployment and discrimination, compared to immigrants from other countries, and/or study whether the consequences of perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination might be stronger for particular immigrant groups as opposed to other immigrant groups. For example, Slack and Jensen (2011) reported that the prevalence of underemployment was about twice as high among Blacks and Hispanics compared to Whites and Asians between 1999 and 2009 in the U.S. Although Slack and Jensen did not differentiate them in terms of immigrant status, these findings might indicate that some groups of immigrants are more subject to perceived underemployment compared to other groups of immigrants.

Likewise, because there is a hierarchy of preferences among foreign accents in the U.S. such that Western European accents are favored over Latino or Asian accents, the strength of the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job attitudes might differ among different immigrant groups. Therefore, future research should pay more attention to perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination among differing groups of immigrant workers. Finally, because the present study focused on the consequences of perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination on job attitudes via POS, future research might examine whether perceived underemployment and perceived accent discrimination might relate to work behaviors such as in-role performance and extra-role performance through POS.

## **Conclusion**

This study extended knowledge on the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes and the relationship between perceived accent discrimination and job attitudes by studying foreign-born workers. Furthermore, the study shed light on the mechanism of these relationships by providing evidence for POS as a potential mediator. Results showed that those immigrant workers who perceived to be more underemployed and/or to be more discriminated against because of their foreign accents felt less supported by their organizations, which then led to the experience of lowered job satisfaction and affective commitment and more intention to turnover.

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