

## Perceived Underemployment Among Immigrants in Canada: Predictors and Consequences

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### Outline

- “ Prevalence of underemployment among immigrants
- “ Conceptualizing underemployment
- “ Past research on underemployment
- “ The current research
- “ Practical implications

### Prevalence of Underemployment among Immigrants

- “ Immigrants experience underemployment at rates substantially higher than non-immigrants (Galarneau & Morissette, 2004; Gilmore, 2009; Li et al., 2006)
- “ In 2008, the proportion of immigrants with a university degree who were working in a job that required only a high school education was 68% (compared to 41% of their non-immigrant counterparts) (Gilmore, 2009)

### Conceptualizing Underemployment

#### Dimensions of Underemployment (Feldman, 1996)

1. Person possesses more formal education than the job requires.
2. Person possesses higher-level work skills and more extensive work experience than the job requires.
3. Person is involuntarily employed in a field outside his/her area of formal education.
4. Person is involuntarily engaged in part-time, temporary, or intermittent employment.
5. Person earns wages 20% or less than in previous job.

### Conceptualizing Perceived Underemployment

- “ A psychological construct involving the perception that one is employed in a lower quality job than one's pre-migration job

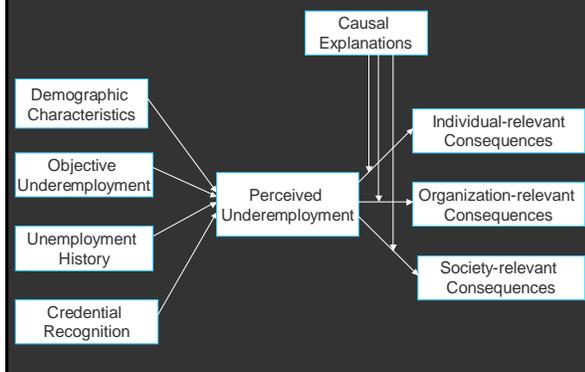
## Past Research on Underemployment Among Immigrants

- “ Researchers have mainly focused on examining the prevalence of underemployment among different groups (De Jong & Madamba, 2001; Slack & Jensen, 2007)
- “ Researchers have conducted cross-national comparisons of immigrant success (Reitz et al., 2011)
- “ There has been some use of qualitative approaches (Dean & Wilson, 2009; Este & Tachble, 2009; Krahn et al., 2009)

## Overview of the Current Research

- “ Goal: To develop and test a comprehensive model of perceived underemployment among immigrants

## Potential Predictors & Consequences



## Broad Research Questions

**Question 1:** What are the predictors and consequences of perceived underemployment?

**Question 2:** Is perceived underemployment the path through which objective indicators of underemployment lead to negative consequences?

**Question 3:** Do the causal explanations that people make for their underemployment determine whether they experience negative consequences?

## Respondents

- “ All respondents were recent immigrants
- “ Average age: 39 years
- “ Highly educated
- “ Study 1: 190 respondents
- “ Study 2: 199 respondents
- “ Study 3: 75 respondents

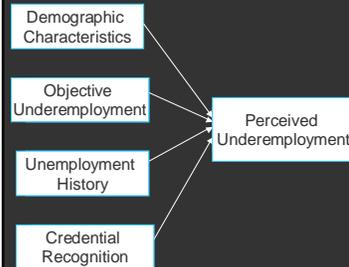
## Measure of Perceived Underemployment

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

1. I feel overqualified for my current job.
2. I am overeducated for this job.
3. I feel underemployed on this job.

**Research Question 1:**  
What are the predictors and consequences of perceived underemployment?

## Potential Predictors of Perceived Underemployment



## Demographic Characteristics

- ~ Gender ❌
- ~ Age ❌
- ~ Length of residency in Canada ❌
- ~ Region of origin ❌

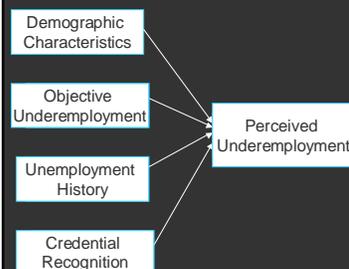
## Objective Underemployment

- ~ Involuntary part-time status ✔️
- ~ Industry match ✔️
- ~ Skill level change ✔️
- ~ Wages ✔️

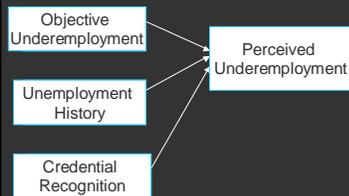
## Unemployment History and Credential Recognition

- ~ Unemployment history ✔️
- ~ Credential recognition ✔️

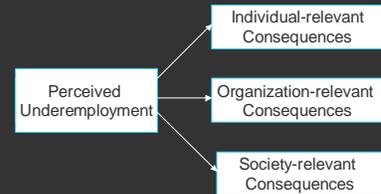
## Potential Predictors of Perceived Underemployment



## Predictors of Perceived Underemployment



## Potential Consequences of Perceived Underemployment



## Individual-relevant Consequences

- ~ Perceptions of justice \*
- ~ Satisfaction with immigration decision ✓

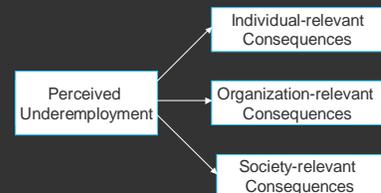
## Organization-relevant Consequences

- ~ Turnover intentions ✓
- ~ Job search behaviour ✓
- ~ Job satisfaction ✓
- ~ Organizational commitment ✓

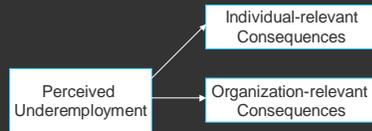
## Society-relevant Consequences

- ~ Intentions to leave Canada \*

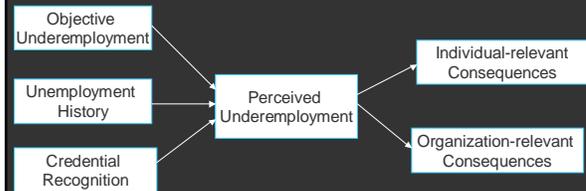
## Potential Consequences of Perceived Underemployment



## Consequences of Perceived Underemployment



## Model of Perceived Underemployment



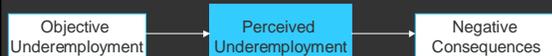
### Research Question 2:

Is perceived underemployment the path through which objective indicators of underemployment lead to negative consequences?

## Model of Perceived Underemployment



## Model of Perceived Underemployment



### Research Question 3:

Do the causal explanations that individuals make for their underemployment determine whether they experience negative consequences?

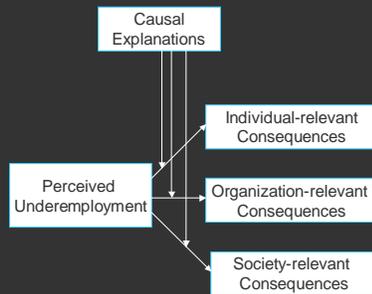
## Role of Causal Explanations

- ~ Attribution theory: People strive to understand the world around them by making causal explanations
- ~ **Controllability**: is the cause uncontrollable or is it under personal control?

## Role of Causal Explanations

- ~ Causal explanations influence emotions and behaviour
- ~ Altering individuals' explanations for failure from uncontrollable to controllable results in positive behaviour change

## Role of Causal Explanations



## Role of Causal Explanations

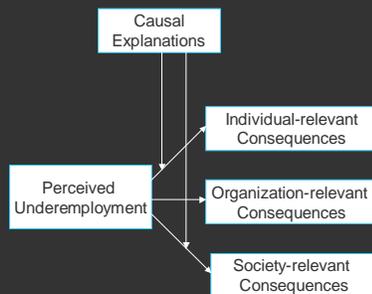
When individuals **DO NOT** believe that their situation is personally controllable:



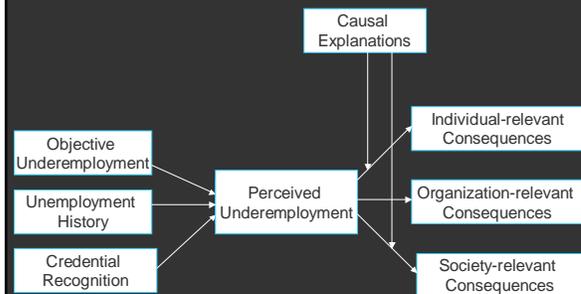
When individuals **DO** believe that their situation is personally controllable:



## Role of Causal Explanations



## Conceptual Model



## Practical Implications

- “ Importance of individuals' perceptions of underemployment
- “ Individuals' causal explanations for their underemployment influence their reactions
- “ Managing individuals' expectations
  - . Overseas orientation
  - . Settlement information
  - . Municipal portals

## Thank you

- “ Victoria Esses
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