

TOO OVERQUALIFIED TO CARE: THE EFFECT OF CYNICISM ON  
OVERQUALIFICATION AND COMMITMENT

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

Of Psychology

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Arts

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By

Azeez Oki

Dec 2013

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to understand the underlying process that takes place in the overqualification and commitment relationship. Based on conservation of resources theory and relative deprivation theory, I expected cynicism to mediate the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment, and relative deprivation to mediate the relationship between overqualification and cynicism. By using the job-demands resources model and equity theory, I also hypothesized that perceive organizational support would moderate the relationship between overqualification and cynicism, and that entitlement, benevolence, and equity sensitive would moderate the relationship between overqualification and deprivation. Results from 590 staff members at a southern university demonstrated that cynicism was shown to partially mediate the overqualification and affective commitment relationship, and relative deprivation showed to partially mediate the overqualification and cynicism relationship. Results for the moderation hypotheses were not supported. Implications and future directions are also discussed.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Too Overqualified to Care: The Effect of Cynicism on Overqualification and Commitment**

“We try not to hire people who are desperate for work. If I run an ad in the paper, I get a great many résumés from overqualified people if the positions are in general service and administration. I send such people a no-interest letter, for once the labor market opens up, they will leave the company (Bewley, 1999, p. 284).”

Coined “The Great Recession”, the labor market (number of available jobs) has been deteriorating in the United states since 2007 (Elsby, Hobijn, & Sahin, 2010, p). To avoid falling into dire economic hardships, many individuals have sought employment in areas for which they may be overeducated, over skilled, or overqualified. According to Green and McIntosh (2007), between a quarter and a third of employees are overqualified in their respective professions. Also, they found that from 1997 to 2001 the percentage of overqualified applicants increased from 32 to 37%. With the declining economy, there is reason to believe that this trend could possibly continue to increase as the years pass. However, as overqualification gains more interest in the workplace, its coverage in the literature has been limited.

The above quote was taken from a compensation manager from a manufacturing company. His aim, like most managers, was to avoid overqualified applicants if possible because he feared those employees would not be committed to staying with the organization. The manager believes an overqualified applicant is desperate for work and will not remain with the organization if other opportunities present themselves (Bewley, 1999, p.286). According to Bewley’s (1999, p. 287) study on employer reactions to overqualified applicants, out of 128 businesses surveyed, 88 responded “they will be totally unwilling to hire them” and 13 responded “they would be partially unwilling to hire them.” Moreover,

when asked why they were reluctant to hire overqualified applicants, 78% of the respondents said they were concerned “that applicants would quit for better jobs as soon as possible” and 50% said “they had concerns that the applicant would be unhappy with the job” (Bewley, 1999, p.287).

The manager’s concern of overqualified employees lacking commitment has been demonstrated in the literature. For example, a few studies have found that overqualified employees are less likely to be affectively committed to the organization (Johnson, Morrow, & Johnson, 2002; Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006; Mead & Lobene, 2010). However, there are also positive outcomes associated with being overqualified. For example, overqualified employees receive higher performance ratings from their supervisor (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Fine & Nevo, 2008). This shows that overqualified employees are worthwhile to employ and could benefit an organization. However, because overqualified employees are also likely to be high turnover risks (because of their low affective commitment), it is necessary to understand why they lack commitment and what organizations can do to increase their commitment in order to fully realize the advantages of having overqualified employees. Thus, I seek to expand previous literature in two ways. First, by examining the underlying process that explains why overqualification is associated with affective commitment. Second, I examine the moderating effects of specific employee traits (equity sensitivity) and perceived organizational support on the aforementioned relationship.

The general purpose of this study is to understand the underlying psychological process of being overqualified and how that affects employees’ subsequent attitudes (commitment). I examine overqualification within a stressor-strain framework (Beehr &



Newman, 1978). Specifically, I suggest that being overqualified may serve as a potential stressor that leads to various strain outcomes. In particular, I suggest that it is through the psychological strain of cynicism that overqualified employees become less committed to their organization. Cynicism, one of the subsets of burnout, is defined as having indifferent or distant work attitudes (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). I also examine potential moderators of this mediated relationship, specifically perceived organizational support and equity sensitivity. By showing support to employees, organizations may be able to prevent an overqualified employee from becoming cynical. I also examine whether individual differences in equity sensitivity may help further distinguish who is more likely to develop cynical feelings. This study can help strengthen the growing literature on overqualification and provide more insight on the mindset of an overqualified employee for managers and researchers alike.

The current paper is structured in the following way. First, I review the literature on the perceived overqualification and commitment relationship. I then introduce the attraction-selection-attrition framework and aspects of person-job fit to help explain the hypothesized negative relationship between overqualification and affective commitment (Kirstof, 1996; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). I briefly review stressor-strain models and explain how the perception of overqualification can be considered a stressor which would cause an employee to become cynical, and in the end, less committed. Furthermore, I clarify my rationale for the stress component using conservation of resources theory, and relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976; Hobfoll, 1989; Stouffer, Suchman, Devinney, Star, & Williams, 1949). Next, I utilize a combination of theories to help explain my potential moderators, specifically, through social exchange theory, and equity theory (Blau, 1964;

Adams, 1965). Finally, I discuss the results and present a discussion of the findings of the study.

### **Overqualification**

A strong theoretical framework for overqualification has been lacking in the organizational literature. One reason is because of the difficulty in defining the term. Researchers have been debating what constitutes overqualification and have defined overqualification in numerous ways. For example, overqualification is often related to the term underemployment which was first defined by Feldman (1996). He conceptualized underemployment into five dimensions: 1) possessing more education than needed for a job, 2) possessing more skills/experience than necessary for a job, 3) involuntary (working out of necessity not desire) employment in a field outside of area of education, 4) involuntary employment in part-time or temporary job, or 5) receiving low pay for a job. Khan and Morrow (1991) focused on the difference between objective underemployment and subjective underemployment. They defined objective underemployment as the discrepancy between years of college completed and years of college necessary for the job. Subjective underemployment was defined by two independent measures: perceived overqualification (which reflects educational disparity and skill underutilization) and no growth (which was operationalized as having the ability to grow and learn new things in the current job).

The second reason overqualification has lacked a strong theoretical framework is because of difficulty in its operationalization or measurement. Johnson and Johnson (1996) combined the first two dimensions of Feldman's aforementioned conceptualization of underemployment and labeled it mismatch. Mismatch, which is similar to Khan and Morrow's (1991) perceived overqualification dimension, refers to perceptions of excess

education and experience relative to what is required for the job. They also added a no-growth dimension that was constructed from Kahn and Morrow's secondary measure of subjective underemployment. The no-growth dimension is defined as an employee's perception of opportunities to learn, grow, and change in their current job (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). However, Johnson et al. (2002) conducted a factor analysis on the two aforementioned dimensions. They found that both dimensions were empirically distinct from each other. The authors stated that the no-growth dimension may in fact tap something completely different from overqualification. Moreover, internal consistencies for the four item measure of mismatch yielded values of .70 and .73 at different points. Because a values of .70 or higher are considered marginally acceptable, the modest reliabilities of Johnson and Johnson's (1996) scale raised concerns about its quality. As a result, Maynard et al. (2006) developed a new overqualification scale that utilizes only the previously defined mismatch dimension. Maynard et al. (2006) compared internal consistencies between their newly developed scale and Johnson and Johnson's scale. Maynard et al.'s scale showed greater internal consistency on time 1 and time 2 (.92 both times) than Johnson and Johnson's mismatch (.78) and no growth (.64) scales. Maynard et al.'s scale also demonstrated a strong test-retest reliability ( $r = .89$ ) from time 1 to time 2. Finally, Maynard et al.'s scale also demonstrated a high correlation (.70) with the mismatch dimension of Johnson and Johnson's scale. This demonstrates that both scales tap a similar mismatch construct. In light of this evidence, the current study uses the scale developed by Maynard and colleagues which uses a unidimensional conceptualization of perceived overqualification. That is, in the current study, overqualification is defined as having more education, skills, and/or experience than is necessary for the job.

## **Overqualification and Outcomes**

Research has sought to understand the different attitudes and behaviors that relate to an employee being overqualified. Fine (2007) used a cognitive oriented measure of overqualification (having a higher level of cognitive ability than required for the job) and demonstrated that overqualified employees had higher levels of job performance in comparison to well-qualified employees. The study also showed that a combination of openness to experience and general mental ability was the best predictor of an individual feeling they were overqualified. Fine and Nevo (2008) found similar results; being overqualified was associated with negative attitudes but not necessarily poor performance.

Johnson and Johnson (2000) examined the relationship between the two dimensions of overqualification (no growth, mismatch) and facets of job satisfaction. Results showed that the mismatch dimension was associated with more dissatisfaction with pay, supervision, and promotion opportunities; these relationships were not significant for the no-grow dimension. Overqualification has also been studied in the health and well-being domain. Johnson and Johnson (1996) studied the effect of overqualification on psychological well-being. Their results showed that as overqualification increased, psychological well-being decreased. Later, Johnson and Johnson (1997) studied the relationship between the two dimensions of overqualification and a global view of overall health. Results showed that the mismatch dimension had a strong negative relationship with health, but the no-grow dimension, once again, did not demonstrate significant findings. These relationships were moderated by emotional support in such a way that the negative relationship between overqualification and health outcomes was stronger for individuals with low levels of emotional support.

Overqualification has also been linked to negative job behaviors such as turnover and counterproductive work behaviors (Luksyte, Spitzmueller, & Maynard, 2011; Maynard et al., 2006). That is, overqualified employees are more likely to turn over and to engage in counterproductive behavior (cyber-loafing). Luksyte et al. (2011) was one of the first studies to examine overqualification using mediation analysis. Using the unidimensional perceived overqualification scale, they found that cynicism (a facet of burnout) mediated the relationship between overqualification and counterproductive work behaviors. That is, their results suggest that the reason that overqualified employees engage in counterproductive work behavior is because of their cynical attitudes.

In summary, the research evidence supports the concerns that managers have about a lack of commitment being a major issue with overqualified employees. The research also suggests that mismatch, in comparison to no growth, better captures overqualification as it relates to important work outcomes. In the following sections, I briefly review the organizational commitment literature and describe the theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between commitment and overqualification.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment has been a widely examined construct in the literature (Morrow, 1983; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Steers, 1977). There have been two prominent definitions of organizational commitment. Porter Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974, p. 64) defined organizational commitment as “the strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. However, Becker (1960) defined organizational commitment as “the tendency to engage consistent lines of activity because of the perceived cost of doing otherwise” (p. 33). From these two definitions, the

construct was divided into an attitudinal and calculative component (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Attitudinal commitment is defined as a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership with the organization. Calculated commitment is defined as a structural phenomenon which occurs as a result of individual-organizational transactions and alternations in side-bets or investments over time, meaning employees cannot afford to separate from the organization (Mathieu, & Zajac, 1990).

However, within the past few decades, organizational commitment has been reconceptualized into three dimensions. Meyer and Allen (1987) labeled the three dimensions of organizational commitment as affective, normative, and continuance commitment. An employee who is affectively committed identifies with is involved in, has an emotional attachment to, and enjoys membership in the organization. An employee who is continuously committed remains with the organization because the perceived loss from leaving the organization is too great. These losses can be social (friendships with coworkers) and/or financial (medical benefits, supporting a family). Finally, a normatively committed employee remains with the organization because of felt obligation to the organization (Meyer & Allen 1990).

The current study focuses solely on the affective component of commitment. In comparison to the other forms of commitment, affective commitment has been linked to more desirable work outcomes, such as increased performance, decreased turnover intentions, and decreased absenteeism (Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Luchak & Gellatly, 2007) compared to normative and continuance commitment. For example, Meyer, Punonen, Gellatly, Gofin, and Jackson (1989) studied the relationship between managers' performance

and their commitment. They found a strong positive relationship between affective commitment and job performance, but a strong negative relationship between continuance commitment and job performance. Moreover, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) conducted a meta-analysis on the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of affective commitment, continuance, and normative commitment. Their results showed that affective commitment had stronger relationships with five dimensions of satisfaction (supervisor, coworker, pay, promotion, and work), justice (procedural, distributive, and interactional), and organizational citizenship behaviors compared to normative and continuance commitment. For the above stated reasons, I focus on only the affective portion of commitment for the current study.

### **Perceived Overqualification and Affective Commitment**

Job stressors, lack of support, and individual differences are related to an individual's affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). However, the relationship between perceived overqualification and affective commitment has not been studied extensively. To date, only a few studies have examined this relationship, and the results suggest that there is a negative relationship between overqualification and affective commitment (Johnson et al., 2002; Lobene & Mead, 2010; Maynard et al., 2006). I explain the hypothesized negative relationship between the two constructs using the attraction-selection-attrition (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995) and person-job fit (Kristof, 1996) theoretical frameworks. The person-job fit framework has been used in previous literature to help explain the commitment and overqualification relationship (Maynard et al., 2006); however, the attraction selection attrition framework has not been used before to explain overqualification and commitment. Therefore, I begin with a discussion of the attraction-selection-attrition framework.

The attraction-selection-attrition theoretical framework (Schneider et al., 1995) explains how people have preferences when choosing organizations, and how organizations have preferences when choosing people. Schneider et al. (1995) defined the attraction process as a person's preference for particular organizations that are based on an implicit estimate of the congruence between their own personal characteristics and the attributes of the potential work organization. Next, the organization uses formal and informal selection procedures in the recruitment and selection of people who possess the attributes the organization desires. Finally, the attrition process refers to the idea that people will leave an organization that they do not fit (Schneider et al., 1995).

Naturally, if an employee feels he/she is overqualified for his/her job, this would mean he/she would fall on the attrition side of the framework. One might wonder why an applicant would have been selected if it was apparent there was a lack of fit between the organization and the employee. The answer to this could be for a plethora of reasons. One example, as Schneider (1995) pointed out, managers and top executives can struggle to have a clear cut definition of the organization's goals which results in confusion when selecting applicants. Also, the attraction-selection-attrition framework seems to neglect the role that external aspects could play in whether or not an employee is attracted to an organization or decides to leave it. Due to the current economy, in which there is a shortage of jobs and high unemployment, an individual's priority may be to obtain a stable job. For this reason, it is understandable why overqualified applicants can get hired in situations wherein their set of characteristics and values are not shared with their employers. The result of this is poor a fit with the organization.



Understanding that overqualified employees have a bad fit with their organization lends some credence to the notion that overqualified employees have lower commitment. However, there are different types of fit (e.g., person-job fit, person-organization fit), each with its own distinct outcomes and definitions (Judge & Ferris, 1992). Because overqualification has been defined as a mismatch between the educational experience and skill of the individual and those required of the job, person-job fit is the most relevant. Edwards (1991) defined person-job fit as the fit between the abilities of a person and the attributes of the job (demand/ability), and the desires of a person and that attributes of a job (need/supplies). Job demands are defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required to perform a job at an acceptable level. An example job demand could be to know how to use a computer or understanding basic algebra. Job supplies are general characteristics of jobs or organizations that help promote employee effectiveness and well-being. Example job supplies include autonomy and performance feedback (Kristof, 1996). Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson (2005) conducted a meta-analysis on person-job fit and found that higher levels of person-job fit were related to lower levels of intention to quit, better satisfaction with coworkers and supervisors, a decrease in perceptions of strains, and higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment. June and Mahmood (2011) analyzed 300 mail-in questionnaires from service sector employees and found a strong relationship between person-job fit and job performance. Finally, Behery (2009) collected data from over 960 employees across 16 companies. He found that person-job fit was highly related to affective commitment.

With these findings, it is evident that having a high person-job fit is ideal for maximal productivity and well-being. However, according to Edwards' (1991) definition of person-job

fit, an overqualified employee would not fit the mold of someone who has high person-job fit. Overqualified employees have too much ability relative to what the job requires, and the demands put on them are not high enough. Moreover, they have specific needs and desires that the organization may not be able to fulfill. Rose (2005) noted that when individuals go through higher education, they are more likely to desire higher prestige, higher status, better social relationships, and better treatment by the organization. However, not all jobs are able to satisfy these needs. The combination of poor demand for ability and high needs but low supplies should lead to low affective commitment among overqualified employees.

Consistent with the attraction-selection-attrition framework, the person-job fit literature, and previous empirical findings (Johnson et al., 2002; Maynard et al., 2006; Mead & Lobene, 2010), I make the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Overqualification is negatively related to affective commitment.

### **Overqualification as a Stressor**

Simply understanding that there is a negative relationship between perceived overqualification and affective commitment does not fully capture the underlying process in the mind of an overqualified employee. That is, there may be some missing attitudinal component in the aforementioned relationship that employees go through before not being affectively committed. Meyer and Allen (1990) defined affective commitment as being involved in, identified with, emotionally attached to, and enjoying your job. Although person-job fit and the attraction-selection-attrition framework help explain some of the issues regarding overqualification, understanding overqualification as a stressor can best explain the negative overqualification and affective commitment relationship. To help explain this process, I provide detail regarding the stressor-strain relationship.

Job stressors are defined as environmental situations that present demands which exceed a person's capabilities and resources for meeting the demands (McGrath, 1976). Beehr and Newman (1978) defined job strains as reaction to stressors; strains can be behavioral (decreased performance, absenteeism), psychological (depression, frustration), or physiological (increased heart rate, decreased appetite). According to Glazer and Beehr (2005, p. 468), the basic premise of the relationship is "certain work characteristics are stressors that lead to both personal and organization-relevant strains. Although some of the more common stressors are role conflict, role ambiguity, or role overload (Glazer & Beehr, 2005), I believe overqualification can be better conceptualized as a stressor by using conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989).

Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) has been used to explain stressor-strain models. The basic premise of the theory states that a loss or lack of resources leads to higher susceptibility to strain outcomes, such as burnout. According to According to Hobfoll (1989), resources are 'those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies' (p. 516). The more resources an individual has, the more he/she can cope when faced with stressful situations. However, when resources are threatened, strain outcomes such as burnout can result (Hobfoll, 1989).

Conservation of resource theory has been used in a wide variety of areas and professions such as education (as a way to help explain test performance through test anxiety), human resource (as a way to see how human resource practices can influence emotional exhaustion), and professions, such as social work (how child welfare cases can impact emotional exhaustion) and government employees (relating coping strategies to

emotional exhaustion) (Buchwald, 2010; Ito & Brotheridge, 2003; Smtih & Clark, 2011; Sun & Pan, 2008). One area that could benefit from the use of this theory is the overqualification literature. I utilize the basic components of this theory to help explain how being overqualified (a stressor) can lead to higher levels of cynical attitudes (strain). I first review the literature on burnout, and then explain its relationship with overqualification.

### **Burnout as a Strain**

“I never interview overqualified job applicants... People don’t give up what they had before, if they can help it. The cost of living is too high now to allow them to go down to less .... An overqualified employee would be frustrated and unhappy ---- all that life’s training for nothing” (Bewley, 1999, p. 285).

The above statement was made by the president of a large manufacturing company. The president of the company briefly touches on a process that overqualified employees may experience once hired. These symptoms, as the president mentioned, could be a precursor to burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2008) defined burnout as a psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to chronic stressors on the job. Burnout has been conceptualized with three dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Exhaustion is the feeling of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources. Cynicism or disengagement reflects indifference or a distant attitude towards the work. Finally, inefficacy represents the self-evaluation dimension and refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement at work (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

Burnout is a troubling state that has many negative outcomes for employees and organizations. For example, Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) state that burnout is

associated with forms of withdrawal, intention to leave, lower productivity, and reduced commitment. Moreover, employees who display burnout symptoms can deplete their colleagues' resources and cause them to display burnout symptoms through a contagion effect (Bakker, Schaufeli, Sixma, & Bosveld, 2001). An overqualified employee, by definition, believes the demands of his or her job are well beneath his/her capabilities. Examples of job demands include time pressure, physical workload, etc. Because an abundance of workload / overall high demands may not be relevant for overqualified employees given their ability to perform at relatively high levels (e.g., Bolino & Feldman, 2000), I chose not to utilize the emotional exhaustion component of burnout as a possible underlying factor. However, insufficient job resources such as poor support, lack of job control, and lack of rewards may be especially likely to affect cynicism among overqualified employees. For this reason, I only focus on the cynicism aspect as a mediator between overqualification and affective commitment relationship.

One aspect of conservation of resources theory states then when individuals are ill equipped to gain resources, they are likely to be vulnerable to strain outcomes and use self-protection styles to protect their resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Having an excess of skill or education can be considered a personal resource. If an overqualified employee cannot use their previously learned education or skill on the job, then the longer they remain employed in that job, the more likely it is that they will lose those valued resources. For example, if an employee has his/her masters in engineering yet he/she is working in customer service at Target, the information learned through the many years of education will be gradually lost due to the lack of applicability on the job. If an overqualified employee sees the lack of opportunity to use valued skills as a potential stressor and perceives that he/she is losing

resources daily without the ability to quit because of lack of options, then according to conservation of resources theory, the employee would develop feelings of burnout. In particular, I expect that overqualified employees would develop a cynical attitude towards the job.

Lee and Ashforth (1996) described depersonalization (cynicism) as a form of defensive coping. According to the Lee and Ashforth (1996), employees who engage in defensive coping will detract themselves from their current situation to cope with the undesirable situation. For example, they may isolate themselves from coworkers and supervisors or otherwise withdraw and disengage from their job duties. However, according to conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this form of coping will actually lead to more resources being lost, due to energy loss, and a potential hit to self-esteem. That is, employees who consistently have a cynical attitude toward their jobs may not actively search for or find a solution for the stressor. Such employees may continue talking about the organization in a negative manner and disengaging from their environment, but, in the end, their work environment would not change. This could lead to energy loss because employees expend a great deal of energy into coping efforts that do not ultimately affect the source of their stress (i.e., they invest resources without any return on the investment).

Hobfoll (1989) also states that people invest resources to gain resources. There is a long-term expectation that their investment will produce a payoff in terms of returns, and when it does not, people will experience this as a loss of the expected gain (Hobfoll, 1989). This loss of expected gain could lead to decreased psychological well-being and frustration. As previously stated, the more qualified an employee is, the more likely he/she will desire a higher status and prestige in his/her job position (Rose, 2005). Overqualified employees have

invested their time and effort into their education and skill training, but when they do not receive adequate compensation (a better job), they are likely to feel the years of education and training were in vain. This could result in depression symptoms, frustration towards oneself for not being able to find a better job, or frustration at the job for not providing enough resources to fit the employee's level of qualification.

Moreover, Hobfoll (1989) states that when people must behave or experience themselves in a way dissonant to their view of the world (i.e., they must act according to demands of their situation rather than their core belief system), they are likely to experience frustration and develop negative attitudes about the situation. Overqualified employees have invested a large quantity of resources into their education, training, and skill development. For this reason, one could assume that overqualified employees value knowledge and surplus skill, and ideally, see themselves in a position or profession wherein they are able to utilize those skills and educational training. However, they are unable to use their excess skill and knowledge on their current job and are forced to act in a manner which is discordant from their core value system. This level of dissonance, as previously stated, could lead to psychological distress. For this reason, overqualified employees may become cynical towards the workplace because their investment may not yield any returns in their current job, which may result in them becoming less affectively committed to the organization. Therefore, in light of the evidence presented above, I present the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** Cynicism mediates the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment.

Furthermore, relative deprivation theory (Stouffer, Suchman, Devinney, Star, & Williams, 1949) also describes a similar process. The concept of relative deprivation was

first used by Stouffer et al. (1949) as a way to explain why soldiers' job satisfaction did not line up with their objective job conditions. Relative deprivation theory explains the difference between people's subjective feelings and their objective situations (Crosby, 1976). Crosby (1982) stated that at a point in time, people might desire more than they have and feel they have less than they feel they are entitled to have. The result of this feeling of deprivation could be anger, moral outrage, and resentment (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). According to Mummendey et al. (1999) there are two types of deprivation: egoistical and fraternal. Fraternal relative deprivation compares one's own social group with another relevant social group. Egoistic deprivation happens when you compare yourself with other individuals. Relative deprivation has shown to be a mediator between underemployment and psychological well-being (Feldman, Lena, & Bolino, 2002). Consistent with the theory, employees who feel they are overqualified may believe that they should be put in a position which is congruent with their level of achievement. When they are not in their ideal situation, they are likely to feel deprived, the result of which will be negative attitudes and behaviors.

Applying conservation of resources theory, I expect overqualified employees to develop a cynical attitude because of a loss of expected gain and from acting in a manner which is conflicting from their true nature. Also, by using relative deprivation theory, I expect an overqualified employee to feel deprived from his/her current job conditions because of his/her heightened feeling of self-worth, thus leading to a cynical attitude (see Figure 1 for hypothesized model). For the above stated reasons, I make the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Relative deprivation mediates the relationship between overqualification and cynicism.



## **Equity Sensitivity**

As previously stated, overqualified employees invest a large quantity of resources into education and skills refinement. When they do not see a return on their investment, they may experience a state of inequity. However, employees' reaction to this state of inequity could be different depending on how they perceive the social exchange process. Adams (1965) developed equity theory as a way to better understand the social exchange process. There are three main components to equity theory. First, equity theory states that individuals evaluate their relationships with others by assessing the ratio of the outcomes they receive to the inputs they put in against the outcome/input ratio of a co-worker or peer. Second, if the perceived outcome/input ratios of the individual and comparison other are perceived to be unequal, then inequity exists. Lastly, this inequity causes tension or frustration of under-reward or guilt of over-reward (Miles, Hatfield, & Huseman, 1994). From this theoretical framework, the concept of equity sensitivity was created. Huseman, Hatfield, and Miles (1987) described that individuals can be placed in three categories regarding their perception of equity: benevolent, entitled, and equity sensitive. Huseman et al. (1987) defined entitled workers as those who prefer their outcome/input ratio to exceed others. In contrast, benevolents desire their inputs to exceed their outcomes as compared to others. Finally, equity sensitives prefer equality of their input and outcome ratio compared to others.

The combination of these three components has been used to explain why employees react differently in situations regarding equity. For example, Shore (2004) conducted a study on equity sensitivity and reactions to being under rewarded. The findings showed that benevolents are more likely to be satisfied with their pay, perceive their pay as fair, and have lower turnover intention in comparison to those who identified as equity sensitive or entitled.

King, Miles, and Day (1993) conducted two studies to test differences among the three components of equity sensitivity as it relates to exchange ideology, being over/under rewarded, and satisfaction with pay and the work itself. Their findings showed that benevolents reported higher levels of satisfaction when in the under reward condition, and reported higher satisfaction in the over reward condition in comparison to equity sensitives. Under-rewarded entitlements reported lower satisfaction in comparison to under-rewarded equity sensitives. Finally, results showed entitlements placed a stronger importance on pay than benevolents, whereas benevolents placed a stronger importance on the work itself.

However, not all research on equity sensitivity has yielded expected findings. O'Neill and Mone (1998) tested the moderating role of equity sensitivity on the relationship between self-efficacy and both satisfaction and intention to leave. Their results showed that the negative relationship between self-efficacy and intention to leave was stronger for benevolent individuals compared to entitlements. The study also found that the negative relationship between self-efficacy and satisfaction was stronger for those who are benevolent in comparison to entitled individuals. Restubog, Bordia, and Bordia (2009) also found their results were not in the anticipated direction when looking at equity sensitivity as a moderator to the contract breach and affective commitment relationship. The authors hypothesized that the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment would be stronger for those low on equity sensitivity (entitled) in comparison to those high on equity sensitivity (benevolents). The results of the study showed the opposite. The negative relationship was stronger for benevolents and weaker for entitlements. However, these surprising findings could be a result of the measurement of equity sensitivity which has been widely criticized.

While equity sensitivity has contributed to the understanding of individual differences in social exchange relationships, there has been cause for concern regarding its measurement. Most commonly, the Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI) is used for measuring the construct. Huseman et al. (1987) developed this five-item forced choice instrument. Each item has two questions, one that measures benevolence, and one that measures being entitled. Participants are asked to divide 10 points per item. Only the benevolent scores are tallied. The authors then decided that to classify individuals among the three groups, the mean of the sample's benevolent score should be taken, and breakpoints established at half a standard deviation below and above the sample mean. Half a standard deviation below would represent entitled individuals, between half a standard deviation below and high would represent equity sensitive, and finally, over half a standard deviation would represent the benevolents.

Sauley and Bedeian (2000) noted a few issues with the ESI. First, they stated that there should be a universal cut score and not sample-specific cut scores as the instrument requires. Secondly, they argued that equity sensitive (the middle between benevolent and entitled) should be represented in the instrument as a choice option. Finally, the authors proposed there should be a judge or panel for item development purposes; they were wary if each item on the questionnaire represents the desired equity sensitivity facets. Davison and Bing (2008) also had these concerns, as well as concerns that the original ESI was sample dependent, meaning that what is considered benevolent for one group would be different for another. The authors adapted their scale from the ESI, but translated each item into a single stimulus response item. Thus, instead of dividing points between the benevolent and entitled items, each item has its own response scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

For these reasons and other studies which have criticized the instrument, I utilized an altered version of the original ESI called the Triadic Measure of Equity Sensitivity (TMES, Clark et al., 2010). The TMES uses a forced-choice format similar to the ESI, but adds equity sensitive as a third choice. This helps prevent equity sensitive scores from being sample dependent on the basis of deviations from the mean. However, I altered the TMES so that each item has its own single response from 1-5 (Likert format) as seen in the Davison and Bing (2008) study; a rating of a 1 represents strongly disagreeing with the statement, and a score of 5 represents strongly agreeing with the statement. Davison and Bing (2008) found that a single stimulus response item had incremental validity in predicting money obsession over the original equity sensitivity instrument. Based on their findings, I believe altering the scale better captures the three dimensions of equity sensitivity. This revised scale adapts some components from the original ESI, while also adding an equity sensitive measure to give participants a chance to answer all three dimensions. Moreover, the revised scale is not sample dependent because of arbitrary cut scores. It is fair to assume that certain employees are not inclined to be more benevolent or entitled, but desire an equity balance. The instrument for the current study allows respondents to describe themselves on all three dimensions and not require them to allocate points to only two of them.

To date, no current research has looked at how perceptions of overqualification could interact with equity sensitivity, although individual differences in equity sensitivity may affect how overqualified employees feel about their jobs. One reason for the lack of literature on overqualification and equity sensitivity may be due to how equity sensitivity is often studied. Researchers on equity sensitivity often define “input” in terms of the amount of work an employee does on the job, and “output” as what an employee receives in return.

However, by taking a slightly different approach to the input and output ratio for someone who is overqualified, this link can be made more clear.

As previously stated, one component of equity theory is that individuals evaluate their input/outcome ratio in comparison to the ratios of their coworkers or peers. To an overqualified employee, the input/outcome ratio may not specifically be related to the job. I suggest that an overqualified employee may view his/her “input” as the amount of time and years invested in education or training, and their outcome as the job position and/or pay that they receive. This comparison is not only made with fellow coworkers in the same job in which they feel overqualified, but also with employees who share similar educational or skill-set backgrounds as the overqualified employee. From this perspective, one can understand how overqualified employees would react if they identified with each dimension of equity sensitivity. Those who are entitled would feel cheated or deprived from their current conditions. Those who are equity sensitive (balanced) would also feel deprived because they value an equal input/outcome ratio and being overqualified demonstrates imbalance. Finally, those who are benevolent would not have a negative reaction because they feel that their input should outweigh their outcome, which describes their current situation. It is for this reason that I make the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4:** The relationship between perceived overqualification and relative deprivation will be moderated by equity sensitivity, such that the hypothesized positive relationship will be stronger when entitlement is high (a), stronger when equity sensitive is high(b), and weaker when benevolence is high (c).

### **Perceived Organizational Support**

Perceived organizational support is defined as the degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Hunington, Hunington, & Sowa, 1986). Eisenberger et al. (1986) described this concept utilizing organizational support theory. According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), employees personify their organization by holding it responsible legally, morally, and financially for the actions of its agents. The organization is personified by setting organizational precedents, traditions, norms, and policies which provide continuity and role behaviors. Perceived organizational support has been shown to lead to many positive outcomes for employees such as increased commitment, positive affect, involvement, and job satisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Perceived organizational support has also been shown to be related to lower withdrawal behaviors, and increased employees' felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help the organization reach its objectives (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001).

According to the job-demand resource model, by increasing resources, an employee's level of cynicism can decrease (Demerouti et al., 2001). According to Demerouti et al. (2001), social support can be considered a type of desirable resource. Organizational support, as a form of social support, should be especially imperative to the well-being of overqualified employees. Overqualified employees, as previously stated, have invested a large quantity of resources in their education or previous work-related training. Their prior work and educational experiences are not utilized in their current job conditions due to the mismatch of job demands and employee ability. However, an organization that supports its employees could possibly attenuate the cynical attitude that I hypothesize is associated with being overqualified. For example, a supportive organization could demonstrate they

understand the value of overqualified employees' prior experience and value the unique contributions they could bring to the organization. Thus, overqualified employees who feel supported and valued by their organization should develop less cynicism in comparison to overqualified employees for whom this level of support is absent.

Similarly and consistent with organizational support theory and social exchange theory, having support from the organization should lead to a felt obligation from the employee to look out for the organization's best interest. Cynical employees may not perform the necessary tasks to ensure their role in maintaining organizational effectiveness. Instead, they may talk about the organization in a derogatory manner and be disengaged from their tasks. If an organization shows support to such employees, those employees are more likely to have a more supporting attitude towards the organization. That is, employees who perceive they have support from their organization will not want to do anything that could damage the organization due to the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964). For this reason I make the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5:** The positive relationship between overqualification and cynicism will be moderated by perceived organizational support, such that the relationship will be weaker when perceived organizational support is high.

## **Chapter II**

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Participants were staff members at a large southern university. A total of 3,583 staff members were recruited to participate in a web-based survey via email. Of those, 590 took the survey for a response rate of 16%. Staff members worked in a variety of jobs such as, business administrator, admin/clerical staff, technical and service craft, etc., and had an average tenure of about 9 years. Participants had to be over 18 years old and work a minimum of 20 hours per week to participate in the study. Approximately 37% of participants identified themselves as male, while 15% identified themselves as females. The remaining participants chose not to disclose their gender.

#### **Procedure**

Staff members were recruited to participate in the study via e-mail. The e-mail included a link to a web-based survey hosted on SurveyMonkey.com. Participants were sent two additional reminder e-mails in the two weeks after the initial e-mail was sent out. Staff members had unlimited time to take the survey, and their responses were completely anonymous.

#### **Measures**

**Equity sensitivity.** To measure equity sensitivity, I revised a scale created by Davison and Bing (2008) to incorporate the third dimension (equity sensitive). Original items from the triadic measure of equity sensitivity scale required a forced choice distribution of 10 points to the 3 responses. However, I altered these items to suit a Likert response scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”. There were 15 items in all and five items measuring each dimension of equity sensitivity. Sample items include: “it would



be most important for me to get from the organization”, “It would be most important for me to give to the organization”, and “It would be most important for me to give as much to the organization as I get from it”. These items represented entitled ( $\alpha = .75$ ), benevolence ( $\alpha = .66$ ), and equity sensitive ( $\alpha = .46$ ) respectively. Due to a low alpha value, the equity sensitive subscale was not included in any analysis. A complete list of items can be found in Appendix A.

**Perceived overqualification.** I measured perceived overqualification using Maynard et al.’s (2006,  $\alpha = .92$ ) Scale of Perceived Overqualification. The nine item measure contained items such as: “Someone with less education than myself could perform well on the job”, “My job requires less education than I have”, and “My previous training is not being utilized on this job”. Each item was rated on a 5- point scale with 1 representing a “strongly disagree”, and 5 representing “strongly agree”. Perceived Overqualification obtained a high level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ). A complete list of items can be found in Appendix B.

**Perceived organizational support.** Perceived organizational support was measured using Eisenberger et al.’s (1997) eight- shortened version of the original perceived organizational support questionnaire (Eisenberger, 1986). Sample items from the questionnaire included: “My organization really cares about my well-being”, “My organization strongly considers my goals and values”, and “My organization cares about my opinions”. Participants responded using a 7 point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to a 7 = “strongly agree”). Perceived organizational support demonstrated also demonstrated a high level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .92$ ) A complete list of the items can be found in Appendix C.

**Affective commitment.** Affective commitment was measured using six items from Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) affective commitment scale. Sample items from the questionnaire include: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization", "The organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me", "I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization (R)". Participants responded using a 7 point scale, with 1 meaning "strongly disagree" and 7 meaning "strongly agree". Affective commitment displayed a high level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .86$ ). A complete list of the items can be found in Appendix D.

**Cynicism.** Cynicism was measured using five items from The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). A sample item from the questionnaire is: "I have become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything". Participants responded using a 7 point frequency scale, with 1 representing "never" and 7 representing "every day". Cynicism displayed a good level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .84$ ). A complete list of the items can be found in Appendix E.

**Relative deprivation.** Relative deprivation was measured using an altered version of the Personal Relative Deprivation Scale (Callan, Olson, & Shead, 2011). The scale was altered to reflect deprivation in relation to the job rather than deprivation in life. For example, a sample item from the original measure "I feel deprived when I think about what I have compared to what other people like me have" was altered into "I feel deprived when I think about the job I have compared to what other people of my level of qualification have". Participants responded using a 5 point Likert scale, with 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". Relative deprivation showed strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Due to the high correlation between cynicism and relative deprivation (.59), factor analysis was

conducted to determine if these two constructs are distinct. Results of the varimax-rotated principal components analysis demonstrated that cynicism and relative deprivation load on two different factors. A complete list of the items can be found in Appendix F.

### Chapter III

#### Results

Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations are presented in Table 1. I used correlational analysis to test hypothesis 1, which proposed that overqualification would be negatively related to affective commitment. As hypothesized, overqualification was negatively related to affective commitment ( $r = -.35, p < .001$ ).

Hypothesis 2 stated that cynicism would mediate the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment. To test this hypothesis, I used the Process macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2012). This method allows for multiple tests to capture the mediation effect, such as the casual step approach, the Sobel test, and the bootstrapping procedure (Hayes, 2012). First, by using the casual step procedure (Baron & Kenny, 1986), I detected the specific effects of each relationship. Figure 2 depicts specific path labels and values for hypothesis 2. The “a” path, which represents the relationship between the independent variable, overqualification, to the mediator, cynicism, was significant ( $b = .70, p < .001$ ). The “b” path, which represents the relationship between cynicism and the dependent variable, affective commitment, was also significant ( $b = -.52, p < .001$ ). The  $c'$  path, which indicates the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment when controlling for cynicism, also was significant ( $b = -.19, p < .05$ ). The “c” path, also called the total effect (i.e., the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment without the inclusion of cynicism) was significant ( $b = .55, p < .001$ ).

The indirect effect was tested using the bootstrapping procedure. This procedure is considered the best approach to testing indirect effects because: a) the data associated with the analysis does not have to meet any assumptions of normality, b) it can still ensure high enough power in small sample sizes, and c) bootstrap confidence intervals tend to be

asymmetric, which more closely resembles the true sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2010). This procedure produces k number of resamples for the indirect effect and provides confidence intervals of the effect to determine significance. Table 2 presents the bootstrapped intervals and indirect effect. The results of 1000 resamples produced a statistically significant indirect effect ( $b = -.36, p < .05$ ). The 95% confidence interval did not contain 0, which shows support that cynicism partially mediates the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment (hypothesis 2). Full mediation was not detected because overqualification was still significantly related to affective commitment even with the presence of cynicism.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that relative deprivation would mediate the relationship between overqualification and cynicism. To test this hypothesis, I used the previously mentioned Process macro for SPSS. Figure 3 presents the path estimates for hypothesis 3. As shown there, the “a” path between overqualification and relative deprivation, was significant ( $b = .57, p < .001$ ). The “b” path between relative deprivation and cynicism was also significant ( $b = .67, p < .001$ ). The “c” path, which is the relationship between overqualification and cynicism without the inclusion of cynicism was significant ( $b = .77, p < .001$ ). The c’ path, which is the relationship between overqualification and cynicism when controlling for relative deprivation, was also significant ( $b = .38, p < .01$ ). By subtracting the “c” path from the “c’” path, or the total effect from the direct effect, I discovered that the indirect effect was .38. To test to see if this indirect effect was significant, I, again, utilized the bootstrapping procedure. Table 2 presents the results from the bootstrapping analysis. The result from 1000 resamples produced a significant average indirect effect ( $b = .39, p < .05$ ).

The 95% confidence interval did not contain 0, which indicates that relative deprivation partially mediates the relationship between overqualification and cynicism (hypothesis 3).

To test whether the three components of equity sensitivity (benevolence, entitled, equity sensitive) moderated the relationship between overqualification and relative deprivation (hypothesis 4a-c), I utilized the bootstrapping procedure from the SPSS Process macro. Specifically, model seven (Hayes, 2012) tests for moderation of the “a” path of the mediation model and indicates the conditional indirect effect of overqualification on affective commitment through relative deprivation (i.e., moderated mediation). Moderated mediation assumes that the effect of the mediation differs on values of the moderator. To examine the conditional indirect effects, I analyzed the indirect effect at values at the mean and  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the moderators. Table 4 provides the indirect effect for different values of entitlement and benevolence, respectively. However, I did not investigate the equity sensitive subscale as a moderator because it had a Cronbach’s alpha of .46. According to rules of thumb provided by George and Mallery (2003) values below .5 should be considered unacceptable for inclusion in any analysis. Moreover, according to Briggs and Cheeks (1986) mean inter-item correlations for scales should fall between .2-.4. While benevolence and entitlement met this requirement, .38 and .28 respectively, equity sensitivity did not meet this requirement (.147). For these reasons, I did not include the equity sensitive subscale in the moderation analysis (H4b).

Hypothesis 4a stated that entitlement would moderate the relationship between overqualification and relative deprivation. Table 3 presents the values for the interaction hypothesis. I ran the complete moderated mediation model using the bootstrapping procedure (1000 resamples). As shown in Table 3, the overqualification-entitlement product term was

not significant ( $b = .12$ , n.s.). While this does not support Hypothesis 4a, the magnitude of the indirect effects at different values of entitlement was in the predicted direction (see Table 4). The indirect effect of overqualification and cynicism through relative deprivation appeared stronger for those individuals who were high on entitlement ( $b=.39$ ,  $p < .05$ ) than those who were low on entitlement ( $b=.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Hypothesis 4c stated that benevolence would moderate the relationship between overqualification and relative deprivation. Table 5 presents the values for the interaction hypothesis. The overqualification-benevolence product term was not significant, ( $b = -.17$ , n.s.). Thus, Hypothesis 4c was not supported. Furthermore, there was no evidence for a conditional indirect effect; however, the values were in the predicted direction (see Table 4). The indirect effect of overqualification to affective commitment through relative deprivation appeared stronger for those low on benevolence ( $b = .48$ ,  $p < .05$ ) than those high on benevolence ( $b = .36$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

To test whether POS moderated the relationship between overqualification and cynicism (H5), I utilized the same procedure stated above. Table 6 presents the values for this interaction hypothesis. While POS did not moderate the relationship between overqualification and cynicism ( $b = -.14$ ,  $p = .09$ ), there was evidence for a conditional indirect effect of overqualification on affective commitment through cynicism. Table 7 presents the indirect effect of cynicism on the overqualification and affective commitment relationship at different values of perceived organizational support. The indirect effect of overqualification and affective commitment through cynicism was significant at low values of POS ( $-.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but not significant at high values of POS ( $b = -.09$ , n.s.). Further interpretation of this finding is provided in the discussion section.

## Supplemental Analysis

My theoretical framework of deprivation theory and conservation of resource theory implies that the two mediators (relative deprivation and cynicism) may operate in a serial fashion. This means that an overqualified employee feels deprived about his/her current job situation which results in the employee developing cynical attitudes towards the job, and finally, becoming less affectively committed to the organization.

The complete path analysis is presented in Figure 4, and Table 8 presents each path's indirect effect as well as bootstrapped confidence intervals. This model follows the IV– M1- M2 – DV model in a serial fashion. That is, it presents regression coefficients for the path of overqualification (IV) to relative deprivation (M1) to cynicism (M2) to affective commitment (DV). The serial mediation path of overqualification to relative deprivation to cynicism to affective commitment was found to be significant ( $b = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

While my theoretical framework implies that overqualified employees become deprived and cynical, it is important to understand which effect is stronger or if the effects are statistically different from each other. Moreover, when dealing with similar stress-related concepts, it is important to define which one accounts for more variance in the analysis. It is possible that one of mediators does not make a significant contribution with the other's presence. Finding significance in a simple mediation analysis is not the same as finding significance in a multiple mediator model. Significance in a multiple mediator model suggests that the indirect effect mediates the IV to DV relationship even in the presence of other mediators in the model. Preacher and Hayes (2008, p. 881) stated that "The effects of the mediators are often attenuated to the degree to which the mediators are correlated, a phenomenon that can compromise the significance of particular indirect effect".



Because relative deprivation and cynicism were highly correlated (.58), I tested both mediators at the same time to see if their high correlation with each other attenuated the significance of their indirect effects. To test whether relative deprivation mediates the overqualification and affective commitment relationship, and if this relationship is of higher magnitude than the hypothesized mediation through cynicism, I utilized the bootstrapping procedure using the INDIRECT multiple mediation macro (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Table 8 presents the bootstrapped results for the multiple mediation analysis, while Figure 6 presents the path coefficients for the model. To test the magnitude of the effect when cynicism is also plugged in the mediation, I inserted cynicism as the second mediator. This method produces the indirect effects of each mediator conditional on the presence of the other mediator and also produces pairwise comparisons to see if the effects are significantly different from each other. Table 2 presents the bootstrapped results of the simple mediation model, and Figure 5 presents the path coefficients for the model. I first tested to see if relative deprivation mediated the overqualification and affective commitment relationship. After 1000 resamples using the bootstrapping procedure, the results produced a significant confidence interval for the indirect effect ( $b = -.28, p < .05$ ). Because the 95% confidence intervals did not contain 0, I concluded that relative deprivation mediates the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment. Next, I included both mediators in the analysis to test the effect relative deprivation had with the presence of cynicism. After 1000 resamples using the bootstrapping procedure, the indirect effect of overqualification to affective commitment through cynicism was significant ( $b = -.13, p < .05$ ). This demonstrated that even with the presence of relative deprivation, cynicism still had a significant indirect effect. However, the effect of relative deprivation was not significant ( $b = -.10, n.s.$ ). Since

the confidence interval contains 0, I can conclude that with the presence of cynicism, relative deprivation does not have significant explanatory power for the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment. Finally, I tested to see if the effects of the two mediators were significantly different from each other. This is done by subtracting the indirect effects from each other and treating this new value as a separate indirect effect with its own set of confidence intervals. The effect of the contrast was not significant ( $b = .02$ , n.s.). This shows that there is not a statistically significant difference between both indirect effects. An explanation as to why the comparison effect could come out non-significant when one effect is significant and the other is not is presented in the discussion section.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to understand the underlying process that explains why overqualified employees tend to report low affective commitment to their organizations. More specifically, I integrated and applied relative deprivation theory, conservation of resources theory, the job-demand resources model, and equity theory (Adams, 1965; Crosby, 1976; Demerouti et al., 2001; Hobfoll, 1989) to understand if employees become less affectively committed through the development of cynical attitudes, and to what extent support from the organization could attenuate these cynical attitudes. Also, I examined whether overqualified employees became cynical through feelings of deprivation on their job, and whether individual differences in equity sensitivity moderated the relationship between overqualification and deprivation. All mediation hypotheses were supported, but the moderation hypotheses were not. Specifically, cynicism partially explained the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment, and relative deprivation partially explained the relationship between overqualification and cynicism. Also, the relationship between overqualification and cynicism did not vary depending on the level of POS, and the relationship between overqualification and relative deprivation did not vary depending on the level of entitlement or benevolence. I discuss the results of the hypotheses, the implications, and some strengths and limitations of the study in the following sections.

### **Mediation Results**

**Cynicism.** Consistent with the attraction selection attrition and person-job fit frameworks (Edwards, 1991; Schneider, 1995), and other studies (Johnson et al., 2002; Lobene & Mead, 2010; Maynard et al., 2006), I found that overqualification and affective commitment were negatively related. Furthermore and as predicted, the results indicate that

cynicism partially explains the negative relationship between overqualification and affective commitment. This finding suggests that cynical attitudes are but one of the reasons why overqualified employees have low affective commitment. The finding also builds on the stressor-strain framework (Beehr & Newman, 1978) by being one of the first studies to provide evidence that being overqualified is associated with strain outcomes (i.e., cynicism). Overqualified employees have invested a large amount of time and effort in their education/training, and when they work in jobs that do not allow them to use this resource, they may lose it. According to conservation of resources theory, this net loss leads to potential negative attitudes because of the loss of expected gain (Hobfoll, 1989). The finding that cynicism mediated the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment suggests that models of job stress may be useful for explaining the impact of overqualification on employee attitudes and outcomes.

**Relative deprivation.** Next, I found support for relative deprivation as a mediator of the relationship between overqualification and cynicism. This suggests that one possible reason why overqualified employees develop cynical attitudes is because of feelings of deprivation. Consistent with relative deprivation theory, the difference between someone's subjective feelings and objective conditions could result in feelings of deprivation, which could in turn result in the development of negative attitudes. Thus, my results suggest that the reason overqualified employees develop cynical attitudes towards their workplace is because of feelings of deprivation that may develop as a result of working in jobs that may not meet their expectations.

### **Moderation Results**

**Equity sensitivity.** Benevolence, equity sensitive, and entitlement, were hypothesized to moderate the relationship between overqualification and relative deprivation. Equity sensitive was not used in any analyses because of the scale's poor alpha value and inter-item correlations. Consistent with equity theory (Adams, 1965), I suspected that those high in benevolence would not mind being overqualified because giving more than they receive is their form of equity; thus, they would feel less deprived when overqualified. Also, I predicted that overqualified individuals who were also high on entitlement would feel higher levels of deprivation than those who are lower on entitlement. Because individuals who are entitled conceptualize equity as receiving more in comparison to what they contribute, when they are in a situation wherein they give more than they receive (overqualified), they should experience higher levels of deprivation. Neither of these hypotheses was supported. One possible explanation for the lack of significant findings could be the low alpha values of the entitlement (.75) and benevolence (.66) scales. While these values are considered acceptable for analysis, they are still not strong indicators of reliability, especially for benevolence. The low reliabilities may have attenuated the interaction results.

Another explanation for the lack of significant findings could be other variables playing a stronger role in how deprived an overqualified employee feels. There are many other factors that could affect whether a person feels deprived or not, even if they identify himself/herself as having high levels of entitlement or benevolence. Examples of these could include, family income, reason for taking the job, other personality traits, anticipated promotion, and future career, etc.

**POS.** I tested to see if the relationship between overqualification and cynicism varied at different levels of POS. Specifically, I hypothesized that the negative relationship between

overqualification and cynicism would be weaker when POS was high. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Consistent with the job-demand resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), I expected POS to act as a resource that decreases levels of cynicism in overqualified employees. One possible explanation for the lack of a significant finding is that perhaps organizational support is not a resource that can offset the strain of overqualification. In other words, even if an organization shows a lot of support to overqualified employees, it does not change employees' feelings of being overqualified; thus, negative attitudes would still develop. It is possible that psychological support indicated by high POS may not be enough, but more tangible support would be more effective. For example, unless an employer can offer an employee a new position, salary, or a job requirement that is congruent with his/her previously obtained skills, education and training, it may be difficult to attenuate the development of cynical attitudes.

While POS did not moderate the relationship between overqualification and cynicism, at high levels of POS, cynicism's effect as a mediator was no longer significant. This means that when an organization shows support to its employees, the explanatory power cynicism has on why an overqualified employee becomes less affectively committed is non-existent. A significant effect for moderated mediation is usually found only when the moderation is significant. It is possible that because POS was "marginally significant" ( $p < .1$ ) as a moderator, a non-significant indirect effect at high levels of POS was found. However, because the moderation results were not significant, I am unable to distinguish the effect of cynicism at the three levels of POS. Meaning, while the effect of cynicism at high levels of POS was not significant and the low and average levels were significant, they are not statistically different from each other.

## Supplemental Analysis

Although I did not hypothesize a serial path model, my theoretical framework implies serial mediation of overqualification-relative deprivation- cynicism- affective commitment. This path model was found to be significant ( $p = .04$ ). The inclusion of both mediators almost brings the relationship between overqualification and affective commitment to non-significance, which would yield full mediation. There are other possible explanatory variables that could fit in this path model, but understanding that relative deprivation and cynicism play a role adds a more heightened understanding of the underlying process that transpires in an overqualified employee and the development of low affective commitment.

Finally, to see which mediator had a more significant impact on the overqualification and affective commitment relationship, I used the multiple mediator approach (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Because it is impractical for organizations to try and mitigate all issues with its employees, I believe it is of interest to see whether deprivation or cynicism plays a stronger role on the overqualification and affective commitment relationship. By establishing which one of these variables has higher explanatory power, organizations could focus their attention on ways to offset that specific variables' effect.

Simple mediation analysis demonstrated that both variables had significant explanatory power on the overqualification - affective commitment relationship (see Table 2). However, when both variables were examined in a parallel mediation model, results showed that cynicism was still significant in the presence of relative deprivation, but relative deprivation was not significant with the presence of cynicism. However, when a pairwise contrast was conducted between the indirect effect of cynicism and deprivation, the confidence interval of the contrast effect was non-significant. This means that even though

one effect is significant and the other is not, they cannot be distinguished in terms of magnitude. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008, p. 886) “such apparent paradoxes can occur when one of the specific indirect effects involved in the contrast is not sufficiently far from zero”. Looking at the confidence intervals reveals that both indirect effects overlap substantially, and their upper bound confidence intervals, while different, are not far from zero. This shows that both cynicism and relative deprivation tell similar stories and do not significantly differ in explanatory power.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study lend support for conceptualizing overqualification using a stressor-strain framework. Specifically, my results suggest that conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is a useful framework for understanding how and why overqualification is associated with various outcomes. Overqualified employees appear to be less committed to their organizations because of cynical attitudes that they develop, and one possible reason they develop cynical attitudes is because of feelings of deprivation. This study shows that several factors of conservation of resource theory can help explain why being overqualified leads to strain (cynicism) and low commitment. First, overqualified employees may have fewer resources because of loss of expected gain. Overqualified employees invested time and effort in their education and skills training, but are not in a position where they can fully utilize their expected returns. Secondly, an overqualified employee has to act in a way not congruent with his/her value system. Overqualified employees value the education or skills that they have acquired over the years, but being in a job position which does not acknowledge those values can cause added stress and later strain.



Finally, being unable to gain resources at their current job can lead to more strain outcomes for overqualified employees and negative forms of coping (cynicism).

This study also lends support to relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976) and its use in the overqualification literature. While relative deprivation has been shown to be a mediator to psychological well-being (Feldman et al., 2002), this is the first study to show that relative deprivation mediates the relationship between overqualification and cynicism. These findings support relative deprivation theory because it shows that when an individual feels deprived, more negative attitudes (i.e., cynicism, low affective commitment) develop. Also, this is important because it demonstrates that feelings of deprivation can be a precursor to burnout, which is an important outcome for theory and practice.

### **Practical Implications**

This study provides organizations and managers with a more complete understanding of why overqualified employees become less affectively committed. Hiring managers, like the one quoted at the beginning of this paper, make quick decisions based on stereotypes. They feel like they understand what is going to happen, but do not understand why. If managers understand how an employee is feeling and why they are feeling that way, they are in a better position to offer the necessary assistance to help attenuate these negative attitudes. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), providing social support, feedback and supervisory coaching should reduce cynical attitudes due to increasing the employees resources. Also, as stated before, it is possible that more tangible resources may be important for overqualified employees. It is possible that if managers can provide more opportunities for job enrichment to overqualified employees, they could decrease feelings of deprivation

and cynicism. Future research should seek to examine the relationship resources provided by the supervisors have on the overqualification and negative attitudes relationship.

Taking action to increase affective commitment among overqualified employees could also lead to potential positive outcomes for organizational performance. As previously stated, overqualified employees tend to be better performers (Bolino & Feldman, 2000; Fine & Nevo, 2008); however, a constant issue with hiring overqualified employee is a fear that the negative attitudes will overshadow the benefits of a better performer. If an organization is able to identify and attenuate the cynical or deprived attitudes that develop, they may be able to employ the best type of workers.

### **Strengths & Limitations**

One strength of this study is the measured population. Specifically, this study sampled a diverse population of university staff members who varied in age and job tenure and worked in a variety of different types of jobs (e.g., managers, directors, academic advisors, librarians, receptionists, technical support, and administrative support). Having a diverse sample is important because the results are generalizable to a wider range of occupations, as well as to employees of different tenure and age-range. Although the generalizability is limited to employees working in higher education, staff members at a university are a good population in which to examine overqualification. Due to constant budget cuts, lack of vertical promotion, and most jobs requiring only a high school degree (which would make those employees with advanced degrees feel more overqualified), feelings of being overqualified are especially prominent.

One limitation of this study was the self-report nature of the survey and concerns of common method variance. Common method variance is the bias that occurs when variables

are related because of similarity in the way they are assessed. Essentially, this means that some of the significant findings could be a result of variables being measured in a similar fashion and by a similar source instead of reflecting the true relationship among constructs. Ideally, data should be collected from multiple sources to control for common method bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Spector, 2006). However, the nature of the constructs measured may be better captured using self-report. For example, it may be irrational and potentially biased to ask a manager or co-worker whether an employee feels overqualified or if they feel deprived. Future research should seek to collect data from multiple sources, or use different techniques such as qualitative ways to capture the variables of interest.

Another limitation was the low alpha value of the equity sensitive variable. Because the internal consistency value was so low, I did not include it in any analyses. Future research should seek to improve the design of the equity sensitive questions so that they better reflect the latent construct. For example, it is possible that equity sensitive should not be treated as a stand-alone construct, but should be treated as product of benevolence and entitlement. Future research should test Davison and Bing's (2008) conceptualization of equity sensitive as those high in entitlement and benevolence.

Another potential limitation of the current study was the representativeness of the sample. It is possible that the staff who took the survey differs from the rest of the population of employees at the university. Because I did not provide any incentives for completing the survey, it is possible that those who participated were generally more committed to the organization than those who ignored the initial e-mail. Having a restricted range of participants could alter some findings and the magnitude of specific effects.

Finally, the study was cross-sectional in nature. While cross sectional data is useful due to the ease of gathering large amounts of data, I was unable to establish any causal relationships among variables. Moreover, the findings of the study could be a result of some unmeasured variable. If possible, future research should conduct studies of this nature using an experimental design. Also, future research should collect data in multiple time periods. This would help researchers see how stable some of the effects are over-time, and conclude that any differing effect is not due to a change in the sample.

### **Future Research**

Future research on overqualification should focus on its definition as a construct. As currently constructed, overqualification combines an abundance of work experience, KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities), and education into a single construct. It is possible that while these three forms represent overqualification in some fashion, they all could yield potentially different outcomes. To test this, I parsed out each component and re-analyzed my hypotheses and supplemental analyses with each component serving as a separate independent variable. While the majority of the results were similar to results using the original overqualification variable, two of the tests became significant. First, there was a significant interaction between entitlement and having an abundance of KSAs ( $b = .19$ ,  $p = .05$ ). As entitlement increased, feelings of deprivation were much stronger. Also, there was a significant interaction between POS and having an abundance of KSAs ( $b = -.13$ ,  $p = .05$ ). At high levels of POS, the relationship between having an abundance of KSAs and cynicism was weakened. These results suggest that having an abundance of KSAs is associated with different results than having an abundance of education or work experience. Having an abundance of KSAs may reflect more of a subjective belief whereas being overeducated or

over experienced for a job is likely to be based on more objective information (e.g., possession of an advanced degree, previous job titles, job tenure). These findings suggest that while the perceived overqualification scale (Maynard et al., 2006) may still be the best scale available, future research should attempt to parse out the three different factors and test them individually because they may lead to different results.

Future research should also seek to identify other possible mediators that could explain why an overqualified employee is not affectively committed to the organization. Luksyte et al. (2011) tested whether the two facets of person-job fit (need-supplies, demand-ability), the other two facets of burnout (emotional exhaustion, inefficacy) and psychological contracts, mediated the relationship between overqualification and counterproductive work behavior. Similar frameworks can be used to help better understand why overqualified employees generally have low affective commitment.

Finally, future research should examine the potential positive outcomes associated with overqualification. Fine and Nevo (2008) found that overqualified employees received better performance ratings. This is one of the few studies that have focused on the positive outcomes associated with being overqualified. Research should see if being overqualified makes people more likely to partake in citizenship behaviors, become better supervisors, or make them more engaged on the job. Also, research should examine whether certain aspects of personality can moderate the relationship between overqualification and outcomes. Fine and Nevo (2007) showed that those who are more likely high on openness are also likely to feel more overqualified. Future research should examine if other facets of the Big Five might affect the way people respond to being overqualified. It is possible that only overqualified employees who are high on extraversion, who tend to be more direct, or low on emotional

stability, who may not react well to stress, or low agreeableness, who may be cold and uncooperative, are more likely to develop these negative attitudes compared to others.

## **Conclusions**

The current study reveals possible reasons why overqualified employees generally lack affective commitment. Overqualified employees are more likely to experience feelings of deprivation which may lead to cynical feelings and consequently, low affective commitment. While POS, benevolence, and entitlement did not moderate the hypothesized relationships, the findings of this study should help managers and practitioners alike understand the underlying processes which leads an overqualified employee to be less committed to the organization.

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Table 1  
*Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities*

Variable	Mean	Standard dev	AC	BEN	CYN	ENT	OQ	POS	RD
Affective commitment	4.86	1.34	(.86)						
Benevolence	3.78	.51	.18**	(.66)					
Cynicism	2.65	1.39	-.62	-.17**	(.84)				
Entitled	3.12	.66	-.32	.18**	.28**	(.75)			
Overqualification	2.86	.83	-.35	.06	.39**	.16**	(.88)		
POS	4.84	1.34	.61**	.13*	-.57**	-.38**	-.34**	(.92)	
Relative Deprivation	2.57	.94	-.47**	-.17*	.59**	.43**	.52**	-.60**	(.85)

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Reliabilities are in parenthesis. AC = affective commitment, BEN= benevolence, CYN = cynicism, ENT= entitlement, OQ = overqualification, POS = perceived organizational support, RD= relative deprivation.

Table 2

*Simple mediation effects and confidence intervals*

Simple Mediation	Effect	SE	95%CI	
			LL	UL
OQ-CYN-AC	-0.36 <sup>*</sup>	0.08	-0.56	-0.24
OQ-RD-CYN	0.39 <sup>*</sup>	0.08	0.25	0.56
OQ-RD-AC	-0.28 <sup>*</sup>	0.09	-0.45	-0.12

Bootstrapped confidence intervals were constructed using 1000 resamples. \* Values that do not contain 0 within the intervals yield significant effects. OQ = overqualification, CYN= cynicism, AC= affective commitment, RD = relative deprivation, SE= standard error, LL= lower limit, UL= upper limit.

Table 3

*Interaction of overqualification and entitlement predicting deprivation*

	B	SE	p
Constant	2.57	.06	.00
Overqualification	.50 <sup>*</sup>	.07	.00
Entitlement	.49 <sup>*</sup>	.09	.00
Overqualification*Entitlement	.12	.11	.28

N= 168. \*= p<.05. B= unstandardized coefficient. SE= standard error.

Table 4

*Bootstrapped indirect effects of overqualification on cynicism via relative deprivation at specific values of entitlement*

Moderator	Mod value	Effect	SE	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Entitlement	-.64	.29*	.08	.15	.49
Entitlement	.00	.34*	.07	.22	.51
Entitlement	.64	.39*	.09	.24	.58
Benevolence	-.52	.48*	.10	.30	.70
Benevolence	.00	.42*	.08	.28	.61
Benevolence	.52	.36*	.09	.21	.56

N=168. Mean approach represents -1/+1 SD and the mean value of the moderator. Bootstrapped confidence intervals were constructed using 1000 resamples. \* Significant confidence interval. SE= standard error, LL= lower limit, UL = upper limit.

Table 5

*Interaction of overqualification and benevolence on deprivation*

	B		
	SE	p	
Constant	2.59	.06	.00
Overqualification	.59*	.07	.00
Benevolence	-.26*	.12	.03
Overqualification*Benevolence	-.17	.12	.18

\*= p<.05. B= unstandardized coefficient. SE= standard error.

Table 6  
*Interaction of overqualification and POS on cynicism*

Variables	B	SE	p
Constant	2.51	.09	.00
OQ	.36*	.11	.00
POS	-.53*	.07	.00
OQ*POS	-.14	.08	.09

\*= p<.05. B= unstandardized coefficient. SE= standard error, POS = Perceived organizational support, OQ= Overqualification, POS\*OQ = interaction between perceived organizational support and overqualification.

Table 7

*Bootstrapped indirect effects of overqualification on affective commitment via cynicism at specific values of POS*

Moderator	Mod value	Effect	SE	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Low POS	-1.35	-.27*	.11	-.46	-.05
Med POS	.00	-.18*	.06	-.32	-.05
High POS	1.35	-.09*	.07	-.22	.05

N=168. Mean approach represents -1/+1 SD and the mean value of the moderator. Bootstrapped confidence intervals were constructed using 1000 resamples. \* Significant confidence interval. SE= standard error, LL= lower limit, UL = upper limit. POS = perceived organizational support.



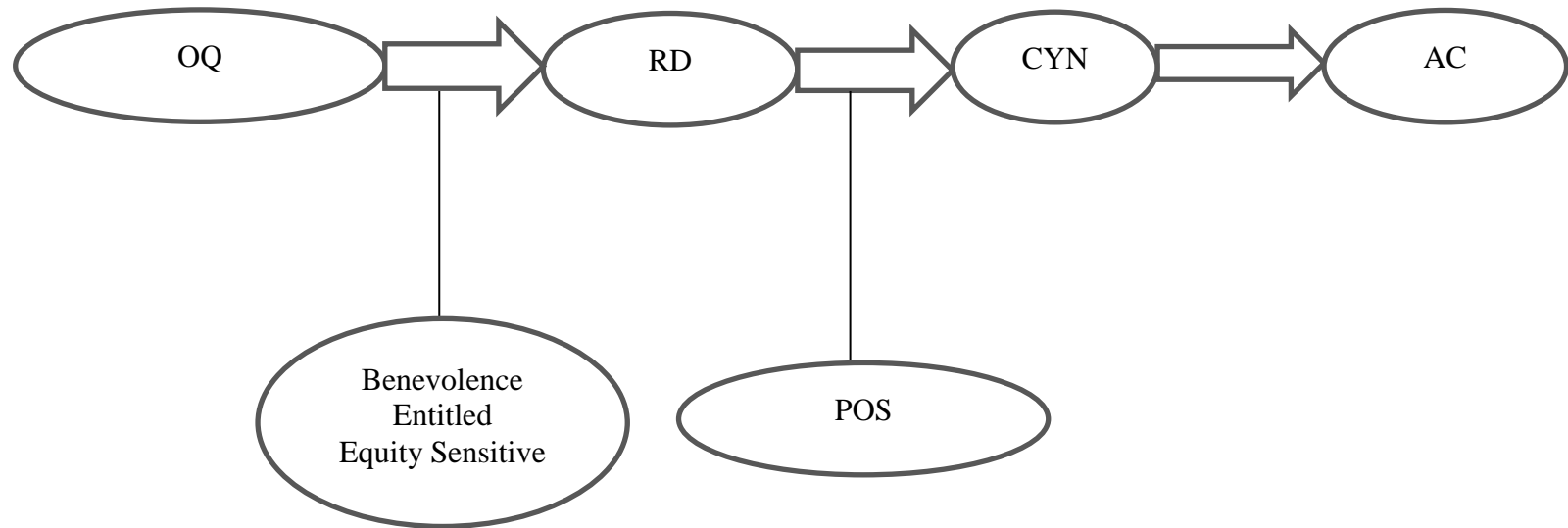
Table 8

*Indirect effects and confidence intervals of serial/multiple mediation path.*

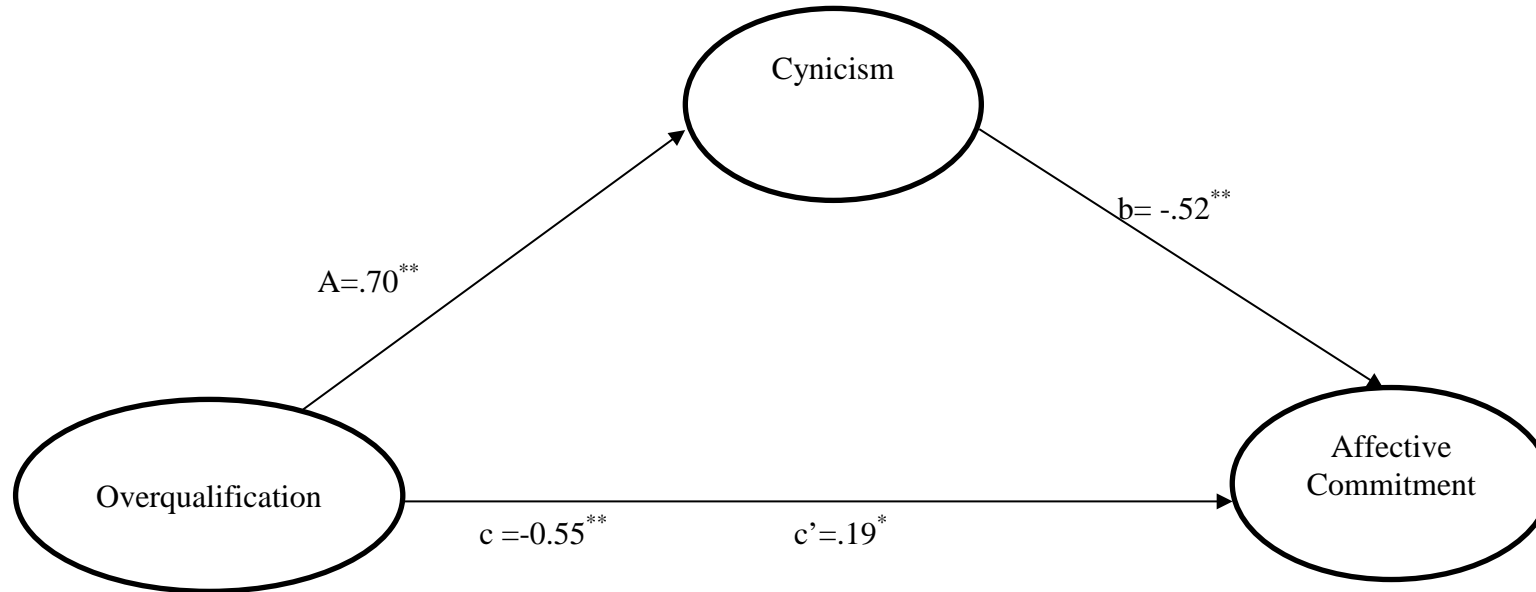
	Effect	SE	95%CI	
			LL	UL
Total:	-.40 <sup>*</sup>	.10	-.61	-.21
OQ-RD-AC	-.11	.09	-.31	.06
OQ-RD-CYN-AC	-.15 <sup>*</sup>	.05	-.27	-.08
OQ-CYN-AC	-.13 <sup>*</sup>	.07	-.28	-.03
(Contrast)	.02	.13	-.20	.28

Bootstrapped confidence intervals were constructed using 1000 resamples. N =136. OQ = overqualification, RD = relative deprivation, CYN = cynicism, AC= affective commitment. Confidence intervals that do not contain 0 are deemed significant. Contrast = difference of indirect effect of OQ-RD-AC and OQ-CYN-AC. LL = lower limit, UL= upper limit, SE= standard error.



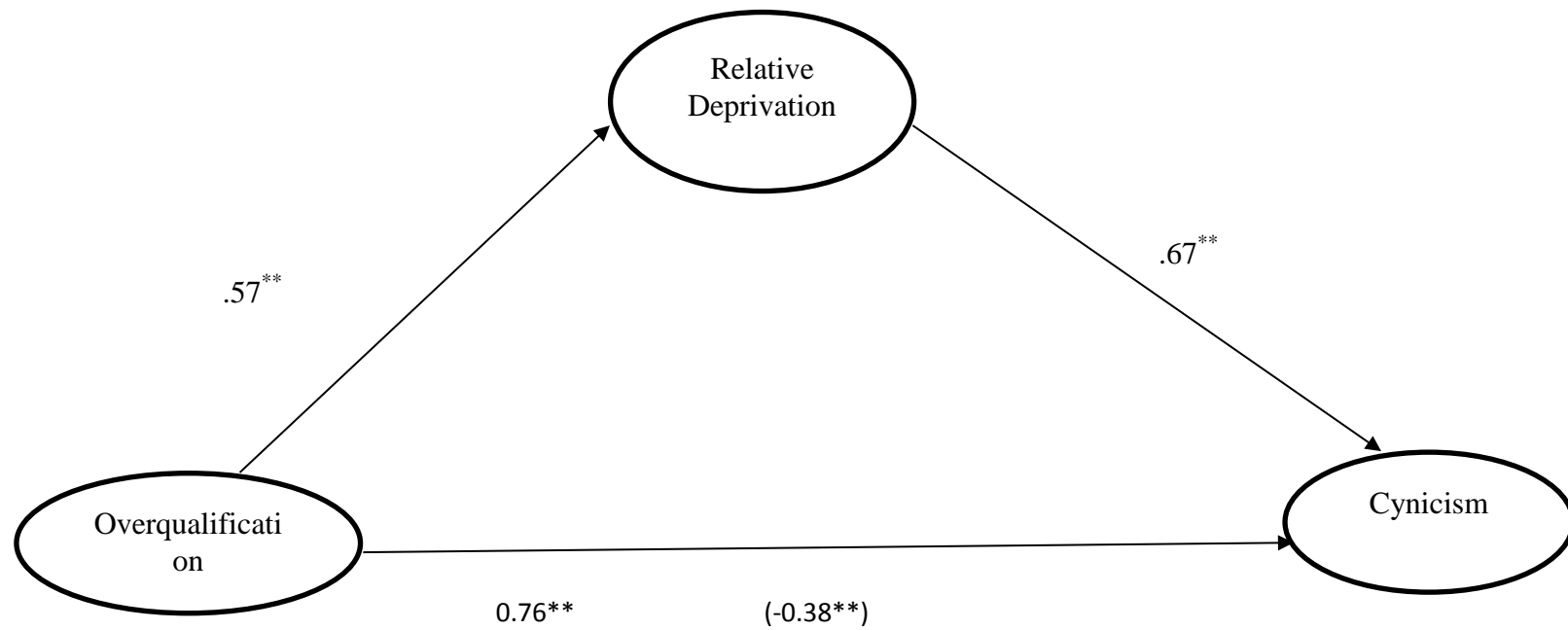


*Figure 1.* The hypothesized model

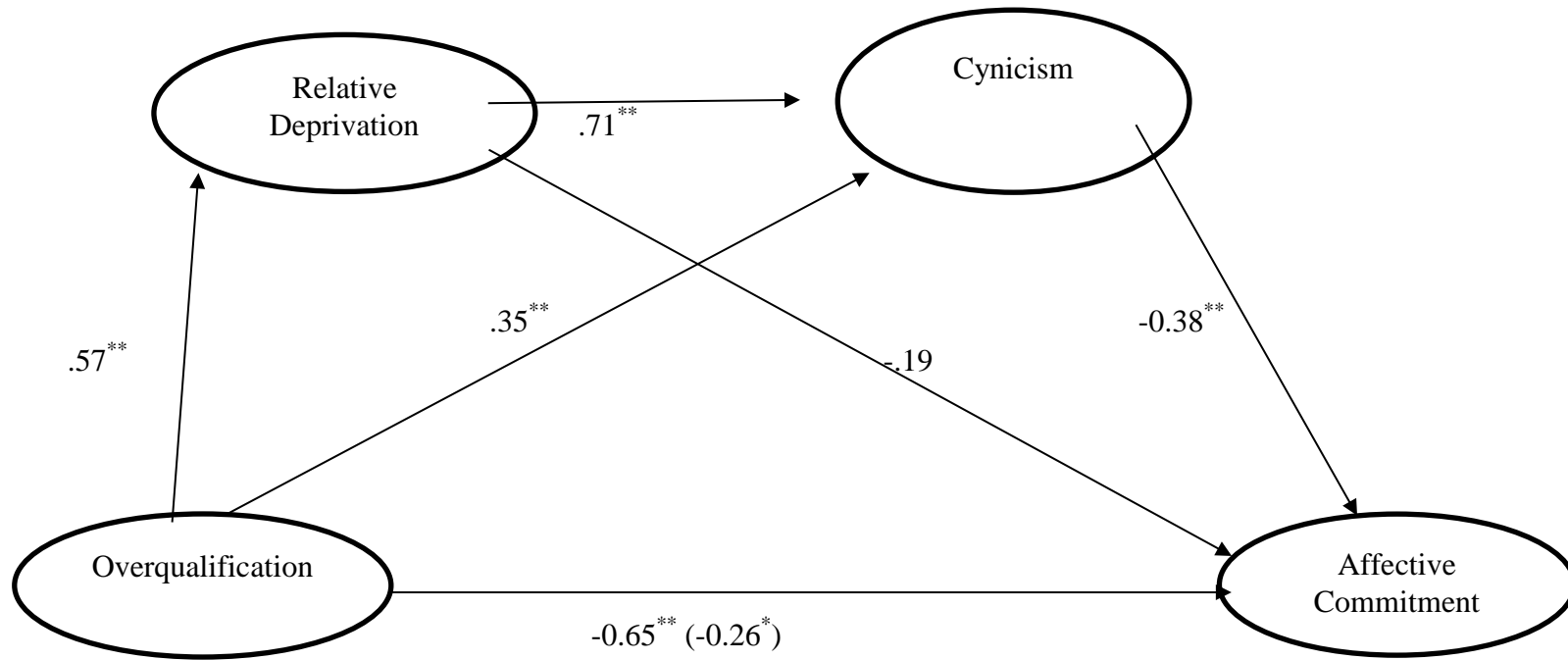


*Figure 2.* Unstandardized path coefficients for OQ to AC through cynicism.

Note: Direct effect presented in parenthesis.  $N=225$   $^{**}p<.01$ .

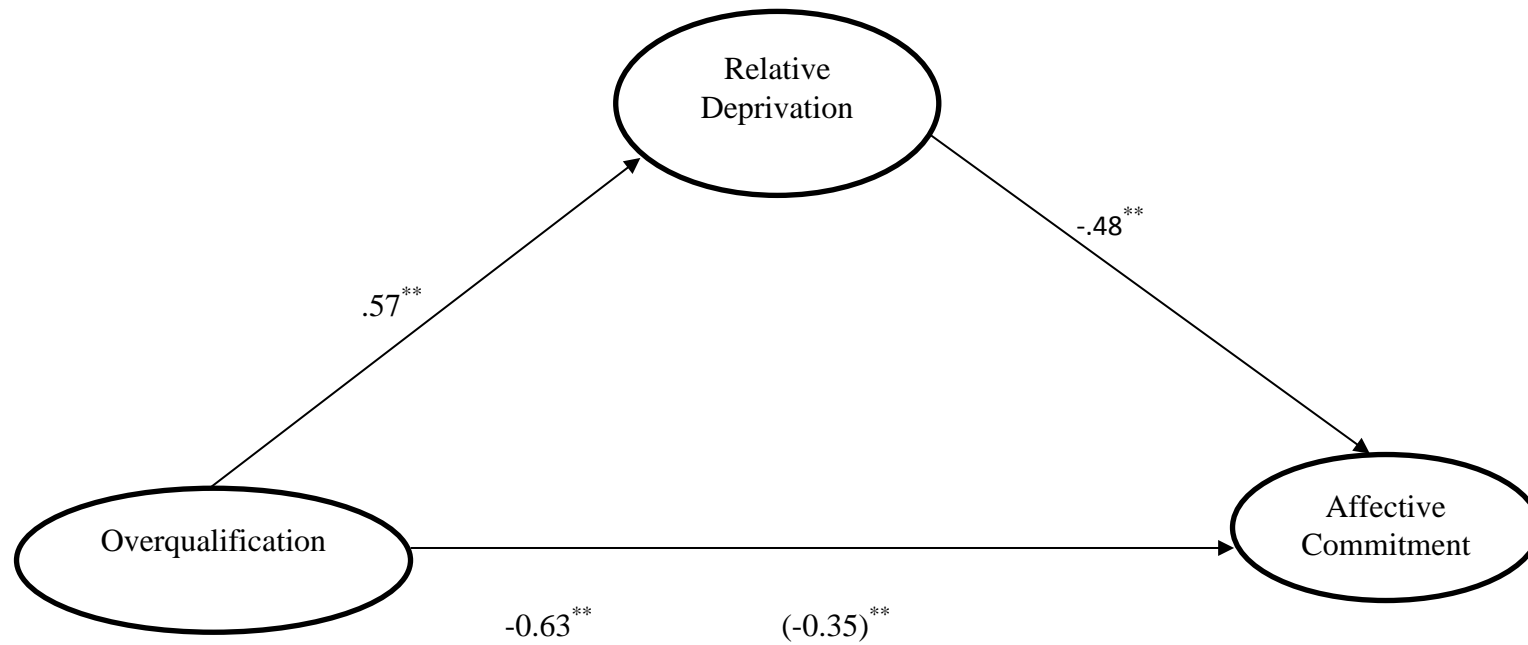


*Figure 3.* Unstandardized relative deprivation path coefficients for OQ to CYN through relative deprivation.  
 Note: Direct effect presented in parenthesis \*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .  $N = 171$

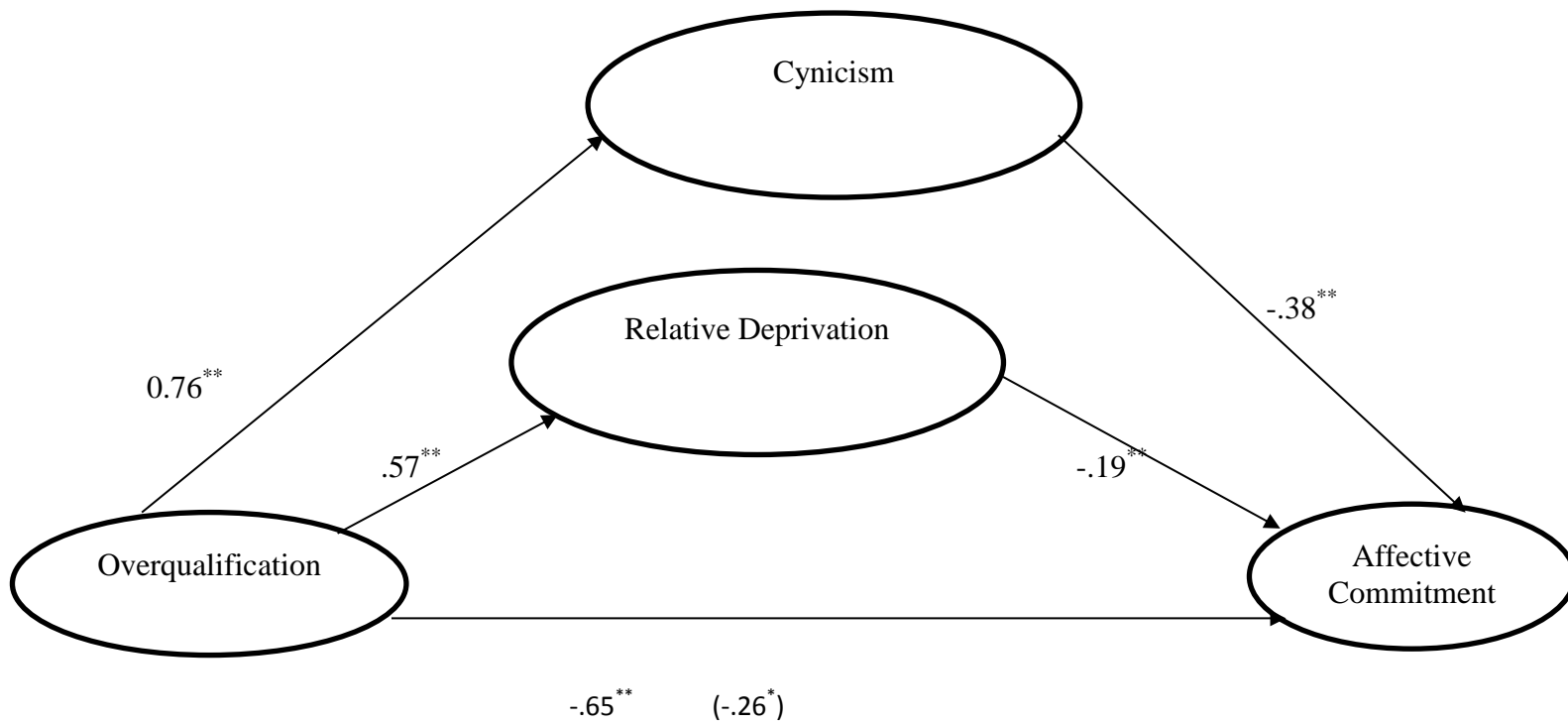


*Figure 4.* Unstandardized path coefficients for serial mediator model OQ-RD-CYN-AC.

Note: Direct effect presented in parenthesis.  $^{**}$   $p < .01$ ,  $^*$   $p < .05$ .  $N=136$ .



*Figure 5.* Unstandardized path coefficients for OQ to AC through relative deprivation.  
Note: Direct effect presented in parenthesis. N=140.  $**p < .01$ .



*Figure 6. : Unstandardized path coefficients for multiple mediator model.*

Note: Direct effect presented in parenthesis \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . N=136



## Appendix A

### **Benevolent**

1. In any organization I might work for it would be most important for me to give to the organization.\*
2. In any organization I might work for it would be most important for me to help others.\*
3. I would be most concerned about what I contributed to the organization.\*
4. The hard work I would do should benefit the organization.\*
5. My personal philosophy in dealing with the organization would be it's better for me to give than to receive.\*

### **Entitled**

1. In any organization I might work for it would be most important for me to get from the organization.\*
2. In any organization I might work for it would be most important for me to watch out for my own good. \*
3. I would be most concerned about what I received from the organization.\*
4. The hard work I would do should benefit me.\*
5. My personal philosophy in dealing with the organization would be it's better for me to receive than to give

### **Equity Sensitive**

1. In any organization I might work for it would be most important for me to give as much to the organization as I get from it.\*\*
2. In any organization I might work for it would be most important for me to help others while taking care of my own needs.\*\*
3. I would be most concerned about what I received from the organization being equal to what I contributed to the organization.\*\*
4. The hard work I would do should benefit me and the organization equally.\*\*
5. My personal philosophy in dealing with the organization would be: there should be an equal give and receive relationship

\*Single stimulus measure (Davis & Bing, 2008).

\*\* Altered version of the TMES (Clark et al., 2010).

## **Appendix B**

### **Scale of perceived overqualification (Maynard et al., 2006)**

1. My job requires less education than I have
2. The work experience that I have is not necessary to be successful on this job
3. I have job skills that are not required for this job
4. Someone with less education than myself could perform well on my job
5. My previous training is not being fully utilized on this job
6. I have a lot of knowledge that I do not need in order to do my job
7. My education level is above the education level required by my job
8. Someone with less work experience than myself could do my job just as well
9. I have more abilities than I need in order to do my job

## **Appendix C**

### **Perceived organizational support scale** (Eisenberger et al., 1997)

1. My organization cares about my opinion\*.
2. My organization really cares about my well-being.
3. My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
4. Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
5. My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part.
6. If given the opportunity, my organization would take advantage of me. (R.)
7. My organization shows very little concern for me. (R)
8. My organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor.

## **Appendix D**

### **Affective organization commitment scale (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993)**

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
3. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
5. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
6. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

## **Appendix E**

### **Cynicism** (Schaufeli et al., 1996)

1. I have become less interested since I started my job.
2. I have become less enthusiastic about my work.
3. I just want to do my job and not be bothered.
4. I have become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything.
5. I doubt the significance of my work.

## **Appendix F**

### **Personal relative deprivation scale (altered version of Callan, Olson, & Shead, 2011)**

1. I feel deprived when I think about the job I have compared to what other people who have similar qualifications as me have.
2. I feel privileged to have this job when compared to other people who have similar qualifications as me. (R)
3. I feel resentful when I see how prosperous other people who have similar qualifications as me seem to be.
4. When I compare my job with what others who have similar qualifications as me have, I realize that I am quite well off. (R)
5. I feel dissatisfied with what I have in my current job compared to what other people who have similar qualifications as me have.