Goal striving, idiosyncratic deals, and job behavior

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Summary

Two important gaps remain to be filled in the idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) literature. First, it is unclear which employees are predisposed to seek and receive i-deals. Second, it is unclear how employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals affect their own i-deal experiences. This study proposed a theoretical model suggesting that (a) three key motivational goals identified in human development research, that is, achievement, status, and communion striving, predispose employees to seek and receive i-deals; (b) employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals moderate these relationships; and (c) employees’ i-deals are related to their job behavior. Data collected from more than 400 working adults in Italy showed that employees’ motivational goals (particularly achievement and status striving) were positively related to the levels of i-deals they received, and that these i-deals were in turn positively related to supervisors’ assessments of their in-role job performance, voice behavior, and interpersonal citizenship behavior. High perceptions of the extent to which coworkers received i-deals further strengthened the relationship between status striving and employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, highlighting a trait-situation interactionist perspective on employees’ i-deal experiences. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: idiosyncratic deals; goal striving; job performance

The granting of “idiosyncratic deals” (i-deals) as a human resource strategy for enhancing employee loyalty and performance has gained considerable attention over the past decade. In short, i-deals are employment arrangements that are tailored to the personal preferences and needs of employees (Lawler & Finegold, 2000; Miner, 1987; Rousseau, 2005), such as special on-the-job or off-the-job training opportunities and flexible work schedules that match employees’ personal preferences (Rosen, Slater, Chang, & Johnson, 2013). Although limited empirical evidence has been produced to date, researchers have observed that employees generally respond positively when offered these special employment arrangements (e.g., Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008, 2009).

Despite the growth of the i-deals literature, two important gaps remain. First, what kind of person is more likely to seek and receive i-deals? Although researchers have documented some contextual antecedents of i-deals (Hornung, Glaser, Rousseau, Angerer, & Weigl, 2011; Hornung et al., 2008), the individual difference variables that predispose some employees to acquire i-deals more intensely and frequently remain largely unknown. Uncovering these individual differences is important, as researchers who are unaware of the dispositional traits that predispose some individuals to seek and receive i-deals miss an important line of inquiry that may explain why i-deal experiences differ between individuals. In other words, to the extent that i-deals are granted to address employees’ individual needs and preferences (Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006), it is important to identify the dispositional sources of those different needs and preferences.

Second, little attention has been paid to the effects of employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals. Much of the research has focused on employees’ own i-deals (e.g., Liu, Lee, Hui, Kwan, & Wu, 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2015; Rosen et al., 2013). However, individuals also pick up cues from their external social environments to make better sense of their social reality (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), and a few researchers have observed that employees indeed consider whether to accept their coworkers’ i-deals (Lai, Rousseau, & Chang, 2009).

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According to Rousseau (2005), whether i-deals eventually improve the effectiveness of an organization as a whole is influenced by a triangle of relationships involving the i-deal recipients, employer, and coworkers whose employment conditions differ from those of the i-deal recipients. Rousseau’s (2005) observation suggests that a fuller understanding of the effects of i-deals on employees must consider the effects of both receiving i-deals and witnessing coworkers’ i-deals.

To address the first gap, we propose that three key motivational goals identified in human development research, that is, achievement, status, and communion striving (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002; Chiaburu & Carpenter, 2013), affect the extent to which employees receive i-deals. By relating these three types of motivational goals to i-deals, we contribute to the literature by uncovering why some individuals are predisposed to receive i-deals that affect their job behavior. To address the second gap, we propose that the three types of motivational goals and employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals interact to affect the employees’ i-deal experiences, a dynamic that has been largely overlooked in the literature. We also extend our first contribution by advocating a trait-situation interactionist perspective (Tett & Burnett, 2003), that is, that the dispositional influences of motivational goals on one’s i-deal experiences depend on contextual factors such as the perceived amount of coworkers’ i-deals. Figure 1 depicts the proposed theoretical model.

**Theoretical Background**

*The nature of i-deals*

I-deals are granted to employees to better fulfill their needs and preferences, thereby promoting their work motivation and productivity. An i-deal is “a non-standard, personalized work arrangement negotiated between an individual worker and his/her employer” (Rousseau, 2005). Examples of i-deals include overseas training opportunities, tailored work hours, and expanded telecommuting opportunities (Rosen et al., 2013). Because our study focused on employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals and their perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals, a self-perceptual approach was considered most appropriate. It was consistent with the majority of studies conducted
in this area, which have also considered the self-perceptual perspective (e.g., Hornung et al., 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2015; Rosen et al., 2013; Rousseau, Hornung, & Kim, 2009).

It is important to note that i-deals are different from psychological contracts, which refer to employees’ beliefs related to their mutual obligations with their employers (Rousseau, 1989, 1995; Shore & Barksdale, 1998). Unlike psychological contracts, which are often implicit in nature (Rousseau, 1989), i-deals involve tangible employment conditions or arrangements that are explicitly negotiated. In addition, these two constructs may affect each other; some employees may expect to receive i-deals and thus consider them part of their psychological contracts. For instance, Ng and Feldman (2010, 2012) examined employees’ expectations of idiosyncratic arrangements from their employers and found that those expectations affected their organizational commitment.

**Motivational goals and i-deals**

Some studies have identified several antecedents of i-deal receipt. Hornung et al. (2008) found that work structures affected i-deal receipt and that those employees who worked part time and needed to telecommute were more likely to receive them. Collins, Cartwright, and Hislop (2013) similarly found that homeworkers were more able to negotiate scheduling flexibility i-deals. Leadership also affects the i-deals that employees receive; studies have shown employees’ perceptions of leader consideration and leader–member exchange quality to be positively associated with the i-deals they receive (Hornung, Glaser, Rousseau, Angerer & Weigl, 2011, 2010). Finally, Hornung et al. (2009) found that supervisors’ perceptions of unfilled promises made to employees were reasons to grant them i-deals. All of the preceding antecedents of i-deals are contextual in nature. In contrast, studies examining the dispositional antecedents of i-deals have been rare. The closest inquiry was conducted by Hornung et al. (2008), who found that individual differences in personal initiative determined the levels of i-deals received; those who took more initiative in the workplace were more likely to receive i-deals.

We argue that employees’ dispositional tendencies to pursue certain goals affect the extent to which they receive the valuable resources provided by i-deals as a means to fulfill those goals. Researchers have observed that goal pursuit is central to enhancing an individual’s happiness (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Individuals who are able to successfully meet their personal goals have reported greater subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Diener & Fujita, 1995; Emmons, 1986). Researchers have suggested that there are three key motivational goals that most individuals pursue: achievement, status, and communion goals.

First, individuals have career achievement goals and strive to reach positions that match their capabilities (Barling, Kelloway, & Cheung, 1996). Researchers have argued that achievements are core life goals of every human being (Lee, Sheldon, & Turban, 2003). The salience of achievement grows continuously onward from childhood and throughout one’s life (Feld, 1967). Second, individuals have status (or agency) goals, in that they strive to control the external environment and have an effect on others through dominance, assertiveness, and decisiveness. These qualities are particularly important for promoting career success (Abele, 2003). Third, individuals have communion goals in that they strive to integrate themselves into the broader social unit through such communal qualities as care, warmth, expressiveness, friendliness, cooperativeness, and respect (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007).

Organizational researchers have examined these three disposition-related motivational goals to explain employees’ job behavior (e.g., Barrick et al., 2002; Chiaburu & Carpenter, 2013). According to Barrick et al., *achievement striving* refers to actions directed toward completing work tasks, *status striving* refers to actions directed toward obtaining power and dominance within an organization, and *communion striving* refers to actions directed toward obtaining acceptance in personal relationships and getting along with others at work. Barrick et al. found these three types of motivational goals to be empirically distinctive. Furthermore, there are three sub-dimensions of each type of striving: attention and direction, intensity and persistence, and arousal.

The three major motivational goals of achievement, status, and communion striving exhibit individual differences. In addition, individuals with stronger motivational goals are more likely to gather the resources necessary to attain those goals, as goal accomplishment improves well-being and satisfaction (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Based on these
premises, we propose that individuals with higher levels of achievement, status, and communion striving are more likely to seek and receive i-deals, which often contain valuable resources that satisfy the three types of striving.

First, i-deals that involve giving employees more career development opportunities (e.g., overseas educational programs, off-the-job training) directly satisfy employees’ achievement needs because they grant them more chances to improve their skills and attain greater success in their careers. I-deals that grant employees flexible work hours also allow them to arrange their priorities more easily and juggle their career demands. In addition, individuals with higher achievement striving hope to receive i-deals because these special treatments signal that the individuals are competent workers with a high potential to excel. The inherent expectation associated with i-deals is that recipients reciprocate by increasing their productivity. For example, Hornung et al. (2009) found that supervisors increased their performance expectations for employees who were granted i-deals. Thus, employees’ achievement striving is likely to be positively related to the extent of the i-deals they receive.

It is also likely that status striving is positively related to i-deal receipt. Studies have shown that individuals choose to join and stay with organizations that provide both instrumental (e.g., pay and security) and symbolic (e.g., pride in affiliation) value (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Van Hoeye & Saks, 2011). As valuable resources, i-deals may also carry symbolic value beyond their instrumental value. They may suggest to employees that they are considered core organizational members and future elites of the organization. Thus, individuals with higher status striving are more likely to seek and receive i-deals, as i-deal receipt signals that an individual is a valued member of an organization with a high status in its hierarchy. For example, individuals with higher status striving are more interested in gaining power over others (Marszal-Wisniewska & Siembab, 2012). Because i-deal recipients may perceive themselves as having more power at work (as they can successfully negotiate i-deals), those who pursue status striving should be more interested in receiving these deals.

Finally, there should be a positive relationship between communion striving and i-deal receipt. Some i-deals may help to satisfy individuals’ communion goals, leading us to expect that individuals with higher communion striving are more likely to receive i-deals. For instance, i-deals that involve off-the-job training opportunities allow employees to meet with new colleagues outside of their own departments or units. I-deals that involve flexible work schedules also allow employees to participate more readily in social activities at work. Furthermore, those with higher communion striving may enjoy more supportive social networks, making it easier for them to receive i-deals from supervisors and the approval of colleagues for those special arrangements. For instance, researchers have found that individuals who are highly agreeable are more likely to occupy central nodes in social networks (Liu & Ipe, 2010). In some sense, an individual’s communion striving may preemptively soften the negative reactions that others may have about his or her i-deals, navigating him or her to obtain those deals more easily. As researchers have noted (Anand, Vidyarthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010; Rousseau et al., 2006), i-deal recipients may need to skillfully cope with the social consequences of receiving i-deals because they know that their own i-deals may upset their colleagues. In summary, we propose the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses 1 to 3: Employees’ achievement striving (H1), status striving (H2), and communion striving (H3) are positively related to their perceptions of i-deal receipt.

Idiosyncratic deals and job behavior

Granting i-deals to employees is considered a value-adding human resource practice because such deals should enhance employees’ overall productivity. We examined three different types of job behavior that corresponded to the three types of motivational goals discussed earlier. In so doing, we examined the mediating roles of employees’ i-deals in the relationships between different motivational goals and types of job behavior. Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) argued that achievement, status, and communion striving were likely to relate to different types of job behavior. We examined in-role job performance, as excelling in one’s job may be the most direct and logical way to attain
one’s achievement goals (Judge & Cable, 2004; Judge, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Bretz, 2004). Furthermore, we examined voice behavior, in which employees may engage to influence others and gain power and dominance (status striving). For instance, Chiaburu and Carpenter (2013) found status striving to be positively related to taking initiatives at work. Finally, because employees with strong communion striving aim to develop satisfying social relationships with colleagues (Barrick et al., 2002), we examined interpersonal citizenship behavior as an outcome variable.

I-deals are likely to be positively related to in-role job performance. This relationship is best explained by the norm of reciprocity in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). This norm suggests that one party in the exchange reciprocates positively to the other party when the latter makes a move to improve the quality of the relationship (e.g., by doing a favor) (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). Because i-deals entail special and valuable resources, employees should see a need to reciprocate to an employer for receiving positive treatment (Anand et al., 2010). The most direct way to reciprocate is to work harder on in-role tasks and enhance individual productivity.

Voice behavior is a type of constructive, change-oriented communication intended to improve workplace practices and procedures or identify workplace problems (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Voice is often considered a form of citizenship behavior because its goal is to maintain and strengthen an organization’s operating and social systems (Organ, 1988; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). I-deals are likely to positively relate to voice behavior for several reasons. First, as noted previously, the norm of reciprocity is likely to govern the relationship between employees and employers (Anand et al., 2010); employees may reciprocate to their employers for receiving i-deals by making more constructive suggestions. Second, receiving i-deals enhances one’s self-evaluation (Liu et al., 2013). As such, i-deal recipients may become more confident in voicing suggestions. Third, i-deals may serve an unfreezing function by signaling to employees that flexibility is encouraged in their approach to work (Ng & Feldman, 2015). Such an unfreezing function of i-deals may motivate employees to suggest more constructive changes to their supervisors and organizations.

Finally, i-deals are likely to be positively related to interpersonal citizenship behavior. This behavior is directed toward enhancing the well-being of others at work (Williams & Anderson, 1991). The reciprocity argument again applies here. I-deal recipients may engage in interpersonal citizenship behavior such as helping others, doing favors for others, and covering for absent coworkers to reciprocate to the organization in exchange for the i-deals received. Hence, they are treated as good citizens and should behave as such. In addition, Rousseau et al. (2006) noted that i-deal recipients should become more alert to the importance of maintaining high-quality relationships with their coworkers because the former know that their i-deals may upset the latter. According to Anand et al. (2010), because i-deals may shift some burdens onto their coworkers (e.g., less desirable work shifts), i-deal recipients should try harder to advance the interests of their colleagues in other ways. The foregoing discussion leads us to propose the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 4: Employees’ perceptions of the i-deals they receive are positively related to their in-role job performance.

Hypothesis 5: Employees’ perceptions of the i-deals they receive are positively related to their voice behavior.

Hypothesis 6: Employees’ perceptions of the i-deals they receive are positively related to their interpersonal citizenship behavior.

These hypotheses together imply that i-deals mediate the relationship between motivational goals and job behavior. First, individuals who are motivated to achieve more are likely to seek and receive i-deals. Doing so helps to increase their in-role job performance, which is likely to be rewarded. Second, individuals who are motivated to
strive for higher social status are likely to seek and receive i-deals, which increases their social influencing behavior such as voice behavior. Third, individuals who are motivated to develop higher-quality relationships with their colleagues are likely to seek and receive i-deals, which increases their interpersonal citizenship behavior. These mediating hypotheses are summarized as follows.

**Hypothesis 7:** Employees’ perceptions of the i-deals they receive mediate the positive relationships between achievement striving and in-role job performance (H7a), status striving and voice behavior (H7b), and communion striving and interpersonal citizenship behavior (H7c).

**The roles of perceptions of coworkers’ i-deals**

To make sense of their work environments, employees look around and formulate perceptions of what their coworkers have and do not have (Weick et al., 2005). People have strong tendencies to engage in social comparisons that help them to verify or enhance their self-concepts (Kaplan, 1982). One’s perception of whether a coworker is receiving i-deals plays two important roles in our theoretical model. First, an employee’s perception of whether a coworker is receiving i-deals is a direct positive predictor of the employee’s own i-deals. This relationship is best explained from the perspective of equity theory (Adams, 1965). Individuals who perceive that their coworkers are receiving more rewards and resources than they are themselves receiving (assuming similar levels of input) are motivated to rectify the unfair situation by trying to increase their own rewards and resources (Greenberg, Roberge, Ho, & Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau, 2001). This is especially true when organizational resources are limited, in which case, one’s receipt of i-deals may mean fewer resources available for others.

In addition, witnessing coworkers receiving a high level of i-deals signals to employees that supervisors and organizations are willing to grant such deals to employees. The behavior of coworkers provides clues that individuals can use to construct social norms. Thus, when coworkers ask for and receive i-deals, the perceived norm that such behavior is acceptable and normal is created. Hornung et al. (2008) noted that a workplace full of idiosyncratic arrangements could “promote the negotiation of i-deals by conveying a normative message to both workers and supervisors that idiosyncrasy in employment terms is legitimate” (p. 656). Finally, witnessing coworkers receiving a high level of i-deals gives employees the confidence to ask for their own idiosyncratic arrangements without worrying about making their coworkers upset or jealous. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 8:** Employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals are positively related to their perceptions of their own i-deals.

Employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals also play a moderating role in our theoretical model. Such perceptions are likely to enhance the effects of employees’ motivational goals on i-deal receipt (cf. Hypotheses 1–3) largely because of (a) the stronger implied competition for workplace resources and (b) the stronger perceived norm for obtaining i-deals. From a resource competition perspective, when coworkers are perceived as receiving a high level of i-deals, the focal employees may believe that their coworkers are receiving more support from senior management and are likely to continue to receive such support in the future, representing a threat to the attainment of their goals. Consequently, employees may perceive an imminent need to acquire more resources (by obtaining i-deals) to achieve those goals. From a normative perspective, employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals are the bases for constructing a social norm that approves the seeking and granting of i-deals. This perceived norm acts as a catalyst for the effects of motivational goals on i-deals, as employees find it less difficult to obtain the i-deals. As such, when employees perceive their coworkers as receiving a high level of i-deals, the effects of their motivational goals on their own i-deals should be stronger.

For instance, employees with higher achievement goals are likely to be more concerned about being outperformed by their coworkers. As such, the motivation of achievement-oriented individuals to obtain i-deals is
likely to intensify if they perceive that their coworkers are receiving i-deals, which makes them competitors for the career rewards available at work (e.g., promotional opportunities, salary raises). Indeed, wanting what a coworker has may motivate an employee to work harder (Tai, Narayanan, & McAllister, 2012; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2011). Employees’ perception that coworkers are receiving a high level of i-deals also indicates that it is acceptable for the employees to try to negotiate such deals. Thus, achievement striving may have a stronger effect on employees’ seeking and receipt of i-deals when they have a higher perception that their coworkers are receiving i-deals.

Employees with higher status striving are concerned about their social status in the workplace (Barrick et al., 2002). Coworkers perceived as receiving a high level of i-deals may be considered to have heightened social status and power. To remove that status and power difference, employees may seek and obtain i-deals for themselves more actively. Thus, status striving is likely to have a stronger effect on employees’ interest in obtaining i-deals if they perceive their coworkers who are receiving a high level of i-deals as competitors for higher social status in the workplace. A high perception that their coworkers are receiving i-deals also signals to employees that it is socially acceptable to receive i-deals to fulfilltheir status striving.

Finally, as mentioned previously, employees with higher communion striving may be more motivated (because i-deals present opportunities to expand their social activities) and able (because they handle social resistance to i-deals more skillfully) to obtain i-deals. When employees with higher communion striving have a high perception that their coworkers are receiving i-deals, they are even more motivated to obtain i-deals because they are more inclined to look to the behavior of others as the guiding norm for their own behavior (Barrick et al., 2002). In addition, when coworkers are perceived as receiving a high level of i-deals, employees can devote their social efforts to the acquisition of i-deals rather than dealing with upset and jealous coworkers, as coworkers who have also received i-deals should be ready to accept the employees’ i-deals. In summary, we make the following hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 9:** Employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals moderate the positive relationships between achievement striving (H9a), status striving (H9b), and communion striving (H9c) and employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, such that the relationships are stronger when the employees have a high (vs. low) perception that their coworkers are receiving i-deals.

**Method**

**Research design**

We collected data from employees working in a wide range of occupations. We invited 82 managers from 59 organizations in a variety of industries (public and private) in Italy to participate in the study. We communicated with these managers, some of whom mentioned that i-deals were indeed offered in their organizations (e.g., in the form of flexible schedules and overseas MBA education). Each manager was instructed to invite his or her direct reports (or employees) to participate in the study. The participants were provided with either online electronic or paper surveys and given stamped envelopes they could use to return their evaluations directly to the researchers. The direct reports were asked to assess their motivational goals, their own i-deals, and their perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals, and their supervisors were asked to assess their employees’ job behavior. The employees were assured that all of the data, including the performance ratings provided by their supervisors, would only be used for research purposes. We received 406 matched responses from 406 employees and 82 supervisors. Each supervisor had an average of five direct reports.
Sample characteristics

The average age of the employees was 42 (range = 18 to 63, SD = 9.6). Furthermore, 43% were women, 65% were married, and 42% had a college degree or higher. In terms of the work history variables, the average organizational tenure was 13.4 years, and the average job tenure was 9.2 years. The participants worked in a wide variety of industries in the public sector (chambers of commerce, city councils, national social insurance agencies, hospitals) and private sector (food and beverage, manufacturing, wholesale of pharmaceutical goods, financial services and banks).

The average age of the supervisors was 46 (range = 24 to 70, SD = 9.9). Furthermore, 27% were women, 83% were married, and 55% had college degrees or higher. Their average organizational tenure was 17.0 years, and their average job tenure was 11.4 years.

Measures

The survey items were measured on 5-point Likert scales. Except where otherwise noted, the response scales ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were originally written in English and then translated into Italian (Brislin, 1980). Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables.

Achievement striving

We measured the first independent variable, achievement striving, according to six items adapted from the scale used by Barrick et al. (2002) in a study conducted in the USA. The original scale was quite lengthy. We shortened it by using the two items with the highest loadings from each of the three sub-dimensions (attention and direction, intensity and persistence, and arousal) as reported in the study by Barrick et al. Example items included “I put a lot of effort into completing work assignments” and “It is very important to me that I complete a lot of work.” The coefficient alpha was .81. Shortening the final scale in this way allowed us to keep the survey length manageable. However, we shortened the scales based on the factor loadings reported by Barrick et al. As that study was conducted in the USA, the shortened scale might not have captured the most relevant items for use in Italy. This limitation also applied to the other two striving scales, discussed as follows.

Status striving

We measured the second independent variable, status striving, according to six items adapted from the scale used by Barrick et al. (2002). We again shortened the scale by using the two items with the highest loadings from each of the

Table 1. Means, SD, and correlations among the study variables (N=406).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Achievement striving</td>
<td>(.81)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. Status striving</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Communion striving</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>(.96)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Perceptions of coworkers receiving i-deals</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. In-role job performance</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7. Voice behavior</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>(.90)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Interpersonal citizenship behavior</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.54**</td>
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<td>3.07</td>
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<td>2.69</td>
<td>3.97</td>
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<td>SD</td>
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<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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Note. I-deals = idiosyncratic deals; SD = standard deviation.

*p < .01; *p < .05

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three sub-dimensions, including items such as “I focus my attention on being the best employee in the office” and “I get excited about the prospect of being the most successful employee.” The coefficient alpha was .92.

Communion striving
We measured the third independent variable, communion striving, according to six items adapted from the scale used by Barrick et al. (2002). We again shortened the scale by using the two items with the highest loadings from each of the three sub-dimensions. Example items included “I spend a lot of time contemplating whether my co-workers like me” and “I expend a lot of effort developing a reputation as someone who is easy to get along with.” The coefficient alpha was .88.

Employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals
We measured the study’s mediation variable, employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, according to six items adapted from the scale used by Hornung et al. (2008). Four items from the scale captured career development i-deals (e.g., “I successfully negotiated individual arrangements different from my peers in terms of training opportunities”) and two items captured scheduling flexibility (e.g., “I successfully negotiated individual arrangements different from my peers in terms of flexible working hours”). Rosen et al. (2013) found that career development and scheduling flexibility i-deals were much more frequently negotiated than other types of i-deals. Hence, our focus on these two types of i-deals was justifiable. Indeed, this scale has been widely used in other i-deal studies (e.g., Anand et al., 2010; Bal, De Jong, Jansen, & Bakker, 2012; Hornung et al., 2009; Rousseau et al., 2009). We observed that the two types of i-deals (development and scheduling i-deals) were strongly correlated (r = .87, p < .01). In addition, we conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of these six items and found that all of them loaded on one factor (extracted variance = 83 percent). Thus, we largely treated employee i-deals as a unidimensional construct in our data analyses. The coefficient alpha for this scale was .96. The mean of the i-deal scale was 2.47 (SD = 1.14), suggesting that the employees perceived a moderately low level of i-deals on average. We found that 31 percent of the employees agreed (or strongly agreed) that they had successfully negotiated i-deals with their employers.

Employees’ perceptions of coworkers receiving i-deals
We measured the study’s moderator, employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals, according to six items modified from the aforementioned i-deal scale, including items such as “Some of my coworkers have successfully negotiated training opportunities that are different from what I have” and “Some of my coworkers have successfully negotiated flexible working hours that are different from what I have.” Similar to the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, we observed that the employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving development and scheduling i-deals were strongly correlated (r = .87, p < .01). We conducted EFA of these six items and found that all of them loaded on one factor (extracted variance = 81 percent). Thus, we also largely treated the employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals as a unidimensional construct. The coefficient alpha for this scale was .95. The mean of the scale was 2.69 (SD = 1.07), suggesting that the employees had moderately low perceptions of their coworkers receiving i-deals on average. Furthermore, 32 percent of the employees agreed (or strongly agreed) that their coworkers had received i-deals from their employers.

In-role job performance
We measured the first dependent variable, in-role job performance, according to five items adapted from the scale used by Williams and Anderson (1991). We removed two reverse-coded items from the original seven-item scale, as mixing positively and negatively worded items in a single scale might have artifactualy created two factors (Spector, Van Katwyk, Brannick, & Chen, 1997). The supervisors were asked to provide ratings of their subordinates’ in-role job performance. Example items included “This employee meets the formal performance requirements of the job” and “This employee adequately completes his/her assigned duties.” The coefficient alpha for the scale was .87.
Voice behavior
We measured the second dependent variable, voice behavior, according to the five-item scale used by Liang, Farh, and Farh (2012). The supervisors were asked to rate their subordinates’ voice behavior based on items such as “This employee raises suggestions to improve the unit’s working procedure” and “This employee proactively develops and makes suggestions for issues that may influence the unit.” The coefficient alpha for the scale was .90.

Interpersonal citizenship behavior
We measured the third dependent variable, interpersonal citizenship behavior, according to six items from the scale used by Williams and Anderson (1991). The supervisors were asked to rate their subordinates’ interpersonal citizenship behavior. Because we were interested in citizenship behavior directed at coworkers, we removed one item that referred to citizenship behavior directed at supervisors. The items included statements such as “This employee helps others who have been absent” and “This employee takes time to listen to his/her coworkers’ problems and worries.” The coefficient alpha for the scale was .90.

Data analysis strategies
To examine the main effect hypotheses (i.e., Hypotheses 1–6 and 8) and the interaction effect hypotheses (i.e., Hypotheses 9a–9c), we specified the proposed model in a structural equation model. The creation of this interaction effect model was guided by Ping’s (1995) proposed procedures. First, we tested the interaction effect of two variables by adding a latent construct representing the product of the two variables and examining whether the latent construct had significant effects (in the expected direction) on the hypothesized outcome variable. As suggested by Ping (1995), we used a single indicator to represent the latent interaction construct. That indicator was the product of the sum of the mean-centered indicators of each component construct. We used mean-centered indicators to decrease any nonessential multicollinearity between the latent interaction construct and constituent component constructs (Cortina, Chen, & Dunlap, 2001). For example, the interaction effect of employees’ achievement striving and perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals was represented by the product of (a) the sum of the mean-centered indicators of employees’ achievement striving and (b) the sum of the mean-centered indicators of the employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals. Cortina et al. (2001) found the use of such a single indicator for the latent interaction construct to be sufficient. Next, we created two additional interactional constructs (status striving × employees’ perceptions of coworkers receiving i-deals and communion striving × employees’ perceptions of coworkers receiving i-deals) to test the two remaining posited interaction effects. Finally, we specified these three latent interaction constructs to have direct effects on the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals.

We followed the approach recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) to examine the mediation effects posited in Hypothesis 7. Using this approach, a mediation effect was confirmed if the bootstrapping bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect of motivational goals on job behavior (via the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals) did not include the value of zero. This approach has been recommended over Baron and Kenny’s (1986) method because it has greater power and better controls for Type I errors (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002).

Results

Confirmatory factor analyses
Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommended that researchers conduct confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) before testing a structural model to determine whether the measurement models of the key variables have acceptable fits.
The variables we included in our CFAs were achievement striving, status striving, communion striving, employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, employees’ perceptions of coworkers receiving i-deals, in-role job performance, voice behavior, and interpersonal citizenship behavior. These eight variables were specified as latent constructs represented by their corresponding measurement items. Each measurement item was permitted to load only on the construct it was supposed to represent. The inter-correlations among all of the constructs could be freely estimated.

We evaluated the fit of the model according to the various fit indices recommended by Hu and Bentler (1998): the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Bollen’s Fit Index (BL89), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA). These fit indices have been recommended in maximum-likelihood-based applications of covariance structure modeling because they are sensitive to model misspecification. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the TLI, CFI, and BL89 should be close to 0.95 and the RMSEA should be close to 0.06 before a model can be considered to fit the data well.

The overall CFA model had an acceptable fit. The chi-square value was 2325.86 (df=961). The TLI, CFI, and BL89 were 0.96 and the RMSEA was 0.06, all of which met the cutoff values suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). Because the fit of the proposed model was largely acceptable, we used the parameter estimates to test our hypotheses. Figure 2 presents these estimates. The inter-correlations among all of the constructs could be freely estimated.

Hypothesis results

The fit indices of the proposed interaction effect model were largely acceptable. The chi-square value was 3073.36 (df=1117). The TLI was 0.94, both the CFI and BL89 were 0.95, and the RMSEA was 0.07. All of these results met or closely approached the cutoff values suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). Because the fit of the proposed model was largely acceptable, we used the parameter estimates to test our hypotheses. Figure 2 presents these estimates.

Hypotheses 1–3 predicted that achievement striving (H1), status striving (H2), and communion striving (H3) would be positively related to the employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received. As shown in Figure 2, both achievement striving (β=.09, p<.05) and status striving (β=.17, p<.01) were indeed positively related to the employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received and communion striving was not. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported, but Hypothesis 3 was not.

Hypotheses 4–6 predicted that the employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received would be positively related to in-role job performance (H4), voice behavior (H5), and interpersonal citizenship behavior (H6). As shown in Figure 2, the employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received were indeed positively related to in-role job performance (β=.28, p<.01), voice behavior (β=.26, p<.01), and interpersonal citizenship behavior (β=.26, p<.01). Thus, Hypotheses 4–6 were supported.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that the employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received would mediate the positive relationships between achievement striving and in-role job performance (H7a), status striving and voice behavior (H7b), and communion striving and interpersonal citizenship behavior (H7c). Following Preacher and Hayes’s (2008) approach, we identified two significant mediating effects. First, we found that the indirect effect of achievement striving on in-role job performance through the mediating effect of employees’ perceptions of i-deals received was 0.08 (the 95% bootstrapping confidence intervals were 0.04 and 0.13) in the presence of a significant direct effect. Second, the indirect effect of status striving on voice behavior through the mediating effect of employees’ perceptions of i-deals received was 0.07 (the 95% bootstrapping confidence intervals were 0.03 and 0.11) in the presence of a significant direct effect. On the contrary, the indirect effect of communion striving on interpersonal citizenship behavior through the mediating effect of employees’ perceptions of i-deals received was 0.01.
(the 95% bootstrapping confidence intervals were $-0.02$ and $0.04$). Thus, Hypotheses 7a and 7b were supported but Hypothesis 7c was not.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that the employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals would be positively related to their perceptions of their own i-deals. As shown in Figure 2, this was the case ($\beta = .67$, $p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 8 was supported.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that the employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals would interact with achievement striving (H9a), status striving (H9b), and communion striving (H9c) to influence the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, such that the three types of motivational goals would have stronger relationships with the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals when they had high (vs. low) perceptions that their coworkers were receiving i-deals. As shown in Figure 2, the latent interaction construct, which represented the interaction effects of status striving and the employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals, had a significant and positive effect on the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals ($\beta = .12$, $p < .01$) over and above the main effect constructs. This significant interaction effect is plotted in Figure 3.

As shown in Figure 3, the positive relationship between status striving and employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals appeared stronger when they had high (vs. low) perceptions that their coworkers were receiving i-deals. The post-hoc analysis results suggested that the positive relationship between status striving and employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals was indeed significantly stronger ($p < .01$) for the employees who reported high (1 SD above the mean) perceptions that their coworkers were receiving i-deals than their counterparts who reported low perceptions (1 SD below the mean). These results fully supported Hypothesis 9b. On the contrary, Hypotheses 9a and 9c were not supported, as the corresponding latent interaction constructs were not significantly related to the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals.
Discussion

Contributions of this study

Although i-deal studies have shown that employees who receive i-deals display more positive job attitudes and behavior (e.g., Hornung et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2015), it remains unclear which employees are predisposed to seek, negotiate, and receive i-deals in the first place. Because i-deals may benefit both employees and organizations, the individual differences deserve more research attention. This study sought to fill this gap in the literature by providing direct evidence that employees’ motivational goals, especially achievement and status striving, were related to the level of i-deals they received.

This study also sought to make up for the lack of research attention given to employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals. The literature in this area has predominantly focused on employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals. This study contributed to the literature by showing that (a) employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals were positively related to their perceptions of their own i-deals and that (b) the extent to which employees’ motivational goals (particularly status striving) affected their perceptions of the i-deals received depended on the extent of the employees’ perception that their coworkers were receiving i-deals. According to our results, i-deal studies should consider the amount of resources provided by employees’ own i-deals and the amount of resources the employees perceive their coworkers are receiving. That is, they should not neglect the influences of the social cues that employees pick up from their social environments about their coworkers’ i-deals. Furthermore, i-deal theories should more frequently consider a trait-situation interactional perspective of employees’ i-deal experiences.

This study also contributes to the literature by showing that motivational goals related to job behavior through the mediating effects of employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received. Although research has shown that employees react positively to i-deals, most investigations have been limited to job attitudes or self-rated job behavior (Hornung et al., 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2015). Our study was the first to show that employees’ perceptions of the i-deals received were positively related to supervisors’ ratings of multiple types of performance behavior and mediated the effects of motivational goals (particularly achievement and status striving) on those measures. It appears that i-deals can provide appreciable returns to employers, that receiving these deals benefits different performance areas, and that employees tend to pursue their goals through seeking and obtaining i-deals.

Finally, our study pointed to several null findings that deserve further theoretical development. First, we found that communion striving was not related to employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals (cf. Hypothesis 3) and that employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals did not moderate the relationship between...
communion striving and employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals (cf. Hypothesis 9c). One possible explanation is that individuals with higher levels of communion striving worry that their receipt of i-deals upsets their colleagues. For instance, a strong interpersonal orientation has been found to be a liability in successful negotiation (Barry & Friedman, 1998). This concern might have counteracted the positive main and moderating effects we posited. Another explanation is based on the attraction-selection-attrition paradigm (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995), that is, those with communion striving may choose to join an organization that is less competitive and emphasizes fair and standardized treatments. As such, those with higher levels of communion striving do not receive more i-deals. On the contrary, individuals with higher achievement and status striving receive more i-deals because they are attracted to and join organizations that offer such arrangements.

The lack of a significant moderating effect of employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals on the relationship between achievement striving and the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals comprised another null finding (cf. Hypothesis 9a). One possible reason is that employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals only affect motivational goals that involve a direct social comparison with coworkers (status striving). In this case, whether coworkers are perceived to be receiving i-deals influences the effects of status striving, as the social environment affects the accomplishment of this motivational goal. In retrospect, achievement striving is a largely internal process, and thus, employees with a higher level of achievement striving need not compare themselves with their coworkers. Instead, they compare their internal goals with their objective attainments in striving for greater achievements. Their perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals play a limited role in this internal process.

Implications for future research

This study highlights multiple ways in which current i-deal studies may be extended. First and most importantly, the characteristics of employees who receive i-deals deserve more attention, as people with different motivation goals receive different levels of i-deals. It is important for future research to go beyond the current focus on identifying contextual antecedents to consider the dispositional characteristics (e.g., personality traits, values, intelligence) that predetermine the level of i-deals an individual is likely to receive. For instance, the three types of motivational goals studied herein were at the core of three of the big five personality traits. Achievement striving is a core component of conscientiousness (Moon, 2001), status striving is a core component of extraversion (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001), and communion striving is a core component of agreeableness (Ward, Thorn, Clements, Dixon, & Sanford, 2006). Our results implied that conscientiousness and extraversion were important determinants of employees’ i-deal experiences. Agreeableness also requires additional attention to resolve the mixed arguments. As previously alluded, communion striving may have both positive and negative effects on i-deal experiences. Although those with higher communion striving may receive more i-deals because they can successfully navigate and overcome the social barriers surrounding those i-deals, they may be inclined to hold back their efforts to obtain i-deals because they are concerned about those i-deals upsetting their social relationships.

Second, our study highlights the importance of examining the roles of employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals in the nomological network of employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals. Researchers may extend the current study by addressing the psychological and emotional reactions involved in witnessing others receive a high degree of i-deals. Researchers have suggested that these reactions are often negative rather than positive and therefore ultimately undermine rather than promote organizational effectiveness (Greenberg et al., 2004; Rousseau, 2001). As predicted by equity theory, employees who feel that they are as deserving of i-deals as others try to obtain i-deals for themselves to increase their outcome/input ratio and may create a competitive and stressful workplace in the process. Researchers should investigate the cognitive (e.g., fairness perceptions, perceived peer competition, subjective norms) and emotional (anger, envy, stress) reactions that follow employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals.
Third, in relation to the preceding point, future research should address how employees judge whether an arrangement is idiosyncratic. More specifically, this study was largely interested in the extent to which employees perceived whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals. Future research may focus on the perceived distinctiveness of coworkers’ i-deals. For instance, in most organizations, a three-month sabbatical to perform pro bono work in the community is considered quite distinctive. Being allowed to telecommute full time also represents a distinctive arrangement. Therefore, employees may formulate perceptions of not only the level of i-deals they and their coworkers receive but also of the degree of distinctiveness of those i-deals. These differences in perception remain largely unaddressed. Disentangling the different reactions to the “level” and “distinctiveness” of i-deals should help clarify the cognitive processes underlying employee judgments of the specialness of i-deals.

Fourth, this study found a high correlation between employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals and whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals (.68). As previously noted, a selection or sorting effect may occur in which people with higher achievement and status striving are likely to seek organizations that offer such deals. Employees working in such organizations are likely to perceive that both they and their coworkers are receiving i-deals. The high correlation may also indicate a strong competition norm in the workplace, in which case one employee who is receiving i-deals motivates others to seek the same arrangement. Although this study largely focused on a dispositional view of employees’ i-deal experiences, future research should consider the contextual factors that help explain why the i-deal experiences of employees and coworkers converge or diverge. Future research should also examine the psychological and social mechanisms according to which employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals affect their perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals, as this study illustrated only a direct effect between these two types of perceptions (cf. Hypothesis 8).

Fifth, this study did not differentiate between subtypes of i-deals because the measurement items of development and schedule flexibility i-deals loaded on one factor, as previously noted. However, Rosen et al. (2013) showed that there were at least four areas in which i-deals could be offered: career development, scheduling, work location, and compensation. Future research should identify the unique correlates of each type of i-deal. For instance, individuals with higher achievement striving may especially value task or career development i-deals. In addition, different types of i-deal may have different effects on performance effectiveness. For instance, career development i-deals may especially facilitate in-role job performance because these deals often involve activities that improve employees’ job skills. Therefore, we urge researchers to continue to link measures of effectiveness and career success (e.g., salary, promotion, tenure) to employees’ i-deal experiences to demonstrate the values of (different types of) i-deals.

Sixth, future research should examine the causal relationships between employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals, perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals, and motivational goals. Motivational goals predispose some individuals to seek and obtain more i-deals. However, employees who have successfully negotiated i-deals may have even higher motivational goals, as i-deals entail valuable resources that allow them to set more ambitious goals. This reasoning implies a dynamic reciprocal relationship between motivational goals and i-deals. Furthermore, witnessing others receiving high levels of i-deals may promote feelings of stress and unfairness (Greenberg et al., 2004), thereby lowering the effects of employees’ motivational goals. This reasoning suggests that the relationship between motivational goals and employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals may be negatively (rather than positively) moderated by their perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals. Collecting repeated data from employees over time would be particularly useful for disentangling the reciprocal relationships between these variables.

Finally, future research should apply the theoretical approach used in this study to understand employees’ i-deal experiences. The current study largely relied on the reciprocity argument of social exchange theory to explain the relationship between employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals and performance behavior and on the fairness argument in equity theory to explain the effects of witnessing whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals on the employees themselves. These approaches could be further extended to address other dynamics. For instance, the social exchange theory perspective could be extended by considering coworker exchange quality as an important social exchange variable, that is, employees may react more negatively to their coworkers’ i-deals if the employees...
already have strained relationships with those coworkers. However, the i-deals of others may be perceived as fair if the quality of the coworker exchange is high, as the evaluation of the outcome/input ratio may be more lenient for close colleagues. Thus, the equity theory perspective can also be extended in other ways to consider whether employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals matter to the employees.

**Limitations of this study**

Future research should address some of the methodological constraints in this study. First, we collected data from only one country (Italy), and whether our findings are fully generalizable to other cultures should be tested more fully in future studies. However, the acceptable fit indices associated with our theoretical model illustrated that the proposed theoretical relationships when taken together were at least preliminarily supported by the data we collected. Second, although we collected data from both supervisors and employees, our research design did not allow for definite causal inferences because the employee and supervisor data were collected at around the same time. Third, although we relied on social exchange and equity theories in developing our hypotheses, direct measures of the social exchange variables and fairness perceptions would have been more desirable and provided a more robust test of those theories. Fourth, some of the effect sizes were small. However, because the fit indices for the proposed model indicated an acceptable fit, the overall flow of events implied by the proposed model was reasonable, especially for a complex structural model that contained both main and interaction effects. Fifth, we treated i-deals largely as unidimensional constructs, as our EFAs showed that the measurement items loaded on only one factor. However, Rosen et al. (2013) showed that there were different subtypes of i-deals. Future research could expand the current findings by making more fine-grained comparisons between the subtypes of i-deals. Extending our study, researchers should also develop improved measures of i-deals to better capture the different motivational goals that individuals may have in their careers.

**Implications for management practice**

Although studies have revealed to managers the potential organizational benefits of granting i-deals to employees (e.g., Hornung et al., 2008; Rosen et al., 2013), little evidence has indicated who is more likely to receive these i-deals in the first place. The current study identified the sources of individual differences in determining the levels of i-deals received by employees. By relating three types of motivational goals to i-deals, it demonstrated that individuals who had stronger motivation goals (particularly achievement and status striving) were more likely to negotiate and obtain i-deals, which helped them attain their goals. Thus, to maximize the utility of i-deals and ensure more appreciable returns on this type of human resource investment, managers should understand the motivational goals of employees and grant i-deals to those employees who would value them the most.

In addition, our findings illustrated that the use of i-deals in the workplace affected not only the i-deal recipients but also others who witnessed these i-deals. For instance, we found employees’ perceptions of whether their coworkers were receiving i-deals to be directly and positively related to the employees’ own i-deal perceptions. In addition, employees’ perception that their coworkers were receiving i-deals further strengthened the effects of status striving on the employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals. Thus, managers should be cognizant that employees pick up cues from their coworkers. When they see that coworkers are receiving i-deals, they are very likely to ask for such deals for themselves out of a concern for fairness. A high level of perception that coworkers are receiving i-deals also creates a social norm that approves the requesting and granting of i-deals.

The interaction effects identified in this study should indicate to managers that it is advisable to adopt a trait-situation interaction perspective to manage i-deals. Although some employees are predisposed to seek and obtain more i-deals, the situational factors in the social environment affect that intensity. Thus, employees’ motivational goals and perceptions of whether their coworkers are receiving i-deals do not work independently, but rather jointly...
affect the likelihood that the employees are receiving i-deals. This interactionist perspective is especially useful for workplaces in which i-deals are widely available. Managers can more easily discern why some individuals are motivated to obtain i-deals and why some are hesitant to do so.

In addition, this study highlights that i-deals can bring concrete benefits to organizations. We found employees’ perceptions of their own i-deals to be positively related to supervisors’ ratings of the employees’ in-role job performance, voice behavior, and interpersonal citizenship behavior. Our findings also suggested that i-deals could mediate the effects of motivational goals on performance behavior. This may explain why employees with greater motivational goals are often more productive in different performance areas. There are good reasons for organizations to continue to offer such arrangements to employees and to meet their employees’ idiosyncratic preferences and needs.

Finally, we presented a largely positive view of the effects of i-deals. Those with greater motivational goals are more likely to seek i-deals, and i-deals are likely to benefit job performance. However, we also alluded to some of the potential downsides of using i-deals in the workplace. For example, we found that communion striving had null effects on the receipt of i-deals, perhaps because individuals with higher communion striving were concerned that seeking i-deals would backfire on their interpersonal relationships with their coworkers. Having to compete with coworkers for valuable resources can be stressful. There may be negative social consequences to using i-deals in the workplace that counteract some of the positive effects identified in this study. Thus, it is imperative for managers to offer i-deals while also appeasing those employees who do not receive them.

Conclusion

Individual differences in motivational goals affect the degree to which employees perceive they are receiving i-deals. Employees who have high achievement and status goals are more likely to report receiving i-deals. In addition, when employees witness their coworkers receiving i-deals, they are more likely to seek i-deals for themselves, and their status striving goals are likely to have even stronger effects on whether they receive i-deals. Finally, i-deals affect important job behavior and mediate the effects of motivational goals on such behavior. In summary, we hope that this study stimulates more research that identifies the dispositional antecedents of i-deal experiences, encourages researchers to consider the social cues that employees pick up from their coworkers’ i-deals, and promotes a trait-situation interactionist view of employees’ i-deal experiences.

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