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What is This?
Let’s Make a Deal: Development and Validation of the Ex Post I-Deals Scale

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Idiosyncratic deals (or i-deals) are mutually beneficial, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature that are negotiated between individual employees and their employers. This article outlines the development of a 16-item measure of i-deals negotiated by job incumbents. Across four studies, the authors developed a reliable scale with a multidimensional factor structure that replicated across three separate samples. Study 1 was aimed at verifying that they had appropriately specified the domains across which i-deals are negotiated. In Study 2, the authors developed a measure of i-deals and confirmed its reliability and factor structure. Studies 3 and 4 provided further evidence for the psychometric properties of the i-deals measure and examined antecedents and outcomes of i-deals. Overall, the results indicate that employees negotiate i-deals across four content domains (i.e., schedule flexibility, location flexibility, task and work responsibilities, and financial incentives) and that i-deals have important implications for work attitudes.

Keywords: i-deals; idiosyncratic deals; political skill; social exchange; work attitudes

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The legal and social contexts of employment have created a system that favors uniformity and consistency in employment practices (Greenberg, Roberge, Ho, & Rousseau, 2004). However, employers may not be as rigid in their employment arrangements as is often perceived, and standardization may not always lead to optimal outcomes. Greater demand for knowledge workers with distinctive competencies (Rousseau, 2001a) and labor market characteristics (Capelli, 1999) may pose problems for many organizations in attracting and retaining employees.

In an attempt to counter the effects of an increasingly transactional labor market, firms have begun negotiating employment conditions to suit the needs and preferences of highly valued employees (Rousseau, 2001a; Shore et al., 2004). As a result, employee–organization exchange relationships are shifting to a more balanced state in which employees have greater latitude to craft their jobs and negotiate various aspects of their employment (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Rousseau, Ho, and Greenberg (2006: 978) referred to this phenomenon as *idiosyncratic deals*, or *i-deals*, which they define as “voluntary, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature negotiated between individual employers and their employees regarding terms that benefit each party.” Rousseau and colleagues (Greenberg et al., 2004; Rousseau, 2001a; Rousseau et al., 2006) proposed that i-deals are negotiated across many diverse resources that workers value and that i-deals can be used to attract, retain, and motivate employees. Supporting this perspective, empirical research (see Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008; Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigel, 2010; Rousseau, Hornung, & Kim, 2009) has shown that (a) employees negotiate i-deals that are both extrinsic (e.g., compensation) and intrinsic (e.g., flexibility of work hours) to their work and (b) successful negotiation of i-deals relates to outcomes such as heightened organizational commitment, initiative, and work engagement.

The present study builds on this emerging stream of research in several ways. In particular, we provide a review of the literature and use this review to identify resources that are commonly included in i-deals. This is an important contribution, as previous empirical studies have not fully considered the types of i-deals that are negotiated across different employment settings. For example, Rousseau and Kim’s (2006) research, which relied on interviews with hospital workers to identify three domains (i.e., workload, development opportunities, and job flexibility) across which i-deals are negotiated, has influenced how i-deals have been operationalized in subsequent research (e.g., Anand, Vidyardthi, Liden, & Rousseau, 2010; Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008, 2009). However, research (Hornung et al., 2010; Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006) suggests that i-deals are commonly negotiated across other resources, some of which (e.g., location flexibility) may not be relevant to the sample of hospital workers used in Rousseau and Kim’s study. Thus, our literature review served to identify resources that are commonly exchanged in i-deals across different jobs, and Study 1 was aimed at (a) verifying that employees negotiate i-deals across these domains and (b) ensuring that no relevant dimensions were omitted.

Beyond identifying resources exchanged in i-deals, the primary contribution of this research is that we develop a measure that can be used to study this phenomenon in future research. To date, empirical studies have generally measured i-deals using a variation of Rousseau and Kim’s (2006) scale, and researchers have focused on a subset of the dimensions they identified, making it difficult to evaluate the psychometric properties of Rousseau and Kim’s scale.
Moreover, recent conceptual work suggests that Rousseau and Kim’s measure may not accurately reflect the types of i-deals negotiated across different employment settings. Therefore, drawing from our literature review and from the Study 1 findings, we modified Rousseau and Kim’s scale to include four dimensions (i.e., schedule flexibility, location flexibility, task and work responsibilities, and financial incentives) that represent resources commonly negotiated across jobs. In Study 2, we develop a measure of i-deals and examine its factor structure. Studies 3 and 4 were aimed at confirming the factor structure of the i-deals measure and provided evidence regarding the reliability, validity, and nomological network of i-deals. Below, we review the literature and distinguish i-deals from related constructs.

Background and Theory

I-deals have only recently emerged as a phenomenon of interest in the organizational sciences (Rousseau, 2001a). Therefore, we begin by providing a review of the construct. In this section, we discuss (a) the theoretical foundations of i-deals, which can be traced to the social exchange and psychological contract literatures; (b) the characteristics that distinguish i-deals from other constructs; (c) who negotiates i-deals and when; and (d) the content of i-deals.

Theoretical Foundations

Social exchange refers to voluntary actions that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring from others (Blau, 1964). As noted by Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997: 1092), “In a social exchange relationship, the inducements an employer offers go beyond short-term monetary rewards. They include an extended consideration of an employee’s well-being as well as an investment in the employee’s career within the firm.” In contrast to economic exchanges, social exchanges entail unspecified obligations that are long term and open ended (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006). Additionally, while the initial act of contribution in social exchanges is voluntary and reciprocation is expected, it is not prespecified or enforceable. Rather, these exchanges are based on what each party has to offer the other (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For example, employees may contribute effort and loyalty to their organizations, while employers may provide compensation, recognition, and career advancement opportunities.

The influences of social exchange theory are evident throughout the i-deals literature (Greenberg et al., 2004; Rousseau, 2001a). First, social exchange theory posits that employees who make distinctive voluntary contributions may not be guaranteed any explicit reciprocation but may be motivated to contribute by expected future returns (Blau, 1964). Consistent with this aspect of social exchange theory, ex post (following employment) i-deals are not guaranteed prior to employment and are not made explicit until after employees have demonstrated their worth to their organizations. Second, social exchange relationships often develop because the employer and employee are interdependent, with each party playing a role in helping the other achieve goals (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Similarly, i-deals develop because they are mutually beneficial to the employee and the organization. Finally, research indicates that
employees’ perceptions of the quality of their social exchange relationships are related to work attitudes and behaviors (see Shore et al., 2004). Drawing from the social exchange literature, Rousseau and colleagues (Rousseau, 2001a; Rousseau et al., 2006) suggested that i-deals have the potential to influence employee attitudes and behavior because they signal that the organization is committed to maintaining a high-quality exchange relationship.

The psychological contracts literature has also contributed to our understanding of i-deals. The psychological contract is “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party” (Rousseau, 1989: 123). Interactions between employees and their organizations provide input for the content of psychological contracts (Shore et al., 2004). Antecedents of psychological contracts are, to a large extent, activated through pre-employment experiences, recruiting practices, socialization, and later experiences that occur in the employment relationship (Rousseau, 2001b). However, the content of psychological contracts often differs among coworkers in the same position, and these differences may be due to a variety of reasons, including differences in hiring practices between managers and the time at which an employee was hired (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Moreover, as perceived obligations are met (or unmet) by organizations, psychological contracts may be revised. As such, the psychological contracts literature introduces the notion that individualized exchange arrangements and perceptions of reciprocity are important to understanding employee–organization exchange relationships. I-deals reflect (and, to a certain extent, explain) the concept of individualized reciprocity that has emerged in the psychological contract literature, as by definition i-deals are of a non-standard nature and tailored to the preferences of the employee.

**Distinguishing Characteristics of I-Deals**

There are four features that distinguish i-deals from other exchange arrangements (Rousseau et al., 2006). First, *i-deals are individually negotiated*. Some employees carry more value than others based on their contributions, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics. As employees recognize their value, they may be more inclined to negotiate specific arrangements with their employers. Second, *i-deals are heterogeneous*. That is, i-deals reflect arrangements that differ from those of other employees performing similar work (Rousseau, 2001a). Third, *i-deals are mutually beneficial*. For example, i-deals typically involve a negotiation process whereby an employee asks for, and receives, a desired arrangement. In return, the organization motivates or retains the valued employee. Because both parties have varying preferences, individual negotiation provides the opportunity for a win-win outcome in which both parties are satisfied (Thompson, 2001). I-deals are, thus, distinguishable from questionable arrangements, such as preferential treatment based on nepotism (e.g., promoting a relative instead of a more qualified candidate) or unauthorized conduct (e.g., using a company copier for personal copies), because i-deals benefit both employees and employers (Rousseau, 2004). Finally, *i-deals vary in scope*. Some employees may alter only a single aspect of their employment, while others may negotiate everything from salaries and schedules to work responsibilities and location.
In addition to differentiating i-deals from other exchange arrangements, these characteristics can be used to distinguish i-deals from related constructs. For example, organizational support is clearly related to i-deals, but at the same time it can be distinguished from i-deals. Organizational support theory (OST) suggests that employees form perceptions, termed *perceptions of organizational support* (POS), about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). According to OST, employees who perceive higher levels of support feel an increased sense of obligation toward helping the organization reach its objectives and hold more favorable evaluations of the organization. Moreover, OST suggests that the discretionary nature of favorable organizational treatment is what leads employees to experience the positive outcomes of organizational support.

Similar to support, i-deals have a discretionary component. In particular, agents of the organization have latitude to determine whether to grant i-deals. Thus, consistent with OST, it would be expected that organizations that engage in these discretionary activities that benefit employees would be appraised more favorably. However, this does not mean that i-deals and support are redundant concepts. Rather, i-deals may be viewed as a condition that contributes to POS, as i-deals represent individually negotiated, discretionary arrangements that communicate to employees that they are valued. Moreover, organizations can be supportive without allowing employees to negotiate i-deals, as organizations can show a positive orientation toward employees by providing nonidiosyncratic arrangements. In particular, supportive practices may or may not require negotiation and are often made available to a group of employees (e.g., allowing web developers to work from home) or the entire organization (e.g., providing all employees with an unexpected cost-of-living adjustment). Thus, individual negotiation and heterogeneity serve to distinguish i-deals from broader concepts such as POS.

**Participants and Timing of I-Deals**

Individually tailored work arrangements are available to high performers, experienced veteran employees, and other valued workers (Rousseau et al., 2006). Many employees may be in a position to negotiate the conditions of their employment. For example, frontline employees may ostensibly perform the same duties, but workers who make themselves stand out from the crowd by offering more valued and significant contributions than those of their coworkers are more likely to successfully negotiate i-deals (Rousseau, 2001a). Therefore, employees who have some knowledge or skill that is difficult to replace are most likely to negotiate i-deals, which implies that employee characteristics are important for determining i-deals.

It should also be noted that exchanges do not take place between an employee and an abstract entity but between the employee and an agent of the organization. The agent may include the employee’s immediate manager, senior executives, or team members (Shore et al., 2004). We posit that i-deal exchanges typically take place between an employee and an immediate manager who serves as the representative for the firm. This proposition is consistent with the work of Greenberg et al. (2004); they suggested that the employee’s manager is the same individual to whom the employee reports and with whom the i-deal is negotiated.
Regarding the timing of i-deals, idiosyncratic arrangements may be negotiated ex ante or ex post (Rousseau et al., 2006). Ex ante i-deals are negotiated prior to employment and are based on qualifications and marketability. Ex ante i-deals are generally attributed to contextual features, such as the labor market. Candidates who possess more marketable knowledge, skills, and abilities may be able to negotiate more desirable employment terms, which hiring managers may simply grant as a way of attracting the candidate. In contrast, ex post i-deals are negotiated by incumbent employees, and thus these arrangements include an employment relationship history. Though market forces may influence ex post i-deals, especially monetary ones, it is more likely that ex post i-deals are relationally attributed. That is, ex post i-deals are more likely to communicate information regarding the strength and quality of the employee–employer exchange relationship (Rousseau et al., 2006). Therefore, our focus is on ex post i-deals.

Content of I-Deals

Rousseau suggested that to be a candidate for an i-deal, a resource must be included in the zone of negotiability, which refers to “the conditions of employment available for negotiation by workers and their employer” (Rousseau, 2001a: 264). Within the zone of negotiability, resources can be categorized as concrete, having a broadly shared meaning, versus intangible, having a meaning that is particular to a specific individual (Rousseau et al., 2006). The former are more objective and can be exchanged independent of the employee–employer relationship and include monetary resources (e.g., pay). In contrast, particularistic resources are often more subjective and derive value from the relationship between the giver and receiver (e.g., providing flexibility based on an understanding of one’s family situation). Rousseau and colleagues’ descriptions of i-deals have ranged from arrangements that are specific to a particular situation (e.g., providing an executive with a sabbatical to pursue photography interests) to ones that are more general and relevant across a variety of employment situations (e.g., work schedules).

Unfortunately, Rousseau’s (2001a) explanation of the zone of negotiability and subsequent research examining i-deals do not offer much clarity in terms of identifying resources that are commonly negotiated, as resources that are exchanged may vary greatly depending on the job. Moreover, the breadth of the zone of negotiability continues to expand with decreases in government regulation and collective bargaining and increases in tolerance for differential treatment of employees (Rousseau, 2001a), which has made it difficult to identify the resources exchanged in i-deals. Study 1 attempts to address these concerns by identifying i-deals that are common across jobs and then examining the relative frequency with which these i-deals occur.

Study 1

Almost any monetary or nonmonetary resource that is valued by an employee can be negotiated in an i-deal (Rousseau, 2005). One of the primary goals of the current research is
to develop a measure that can be used to study the antecedents and outcomes of i-deals. Therefore, we draw from conceptual and empirical research to identify resources that are commonly negotiated across jobs. Conceptually, i-deals are purported to attract, retain, and motivate employees by improving quality of life off the job, promoting work–family balance, providing recognition of one’s value, and allowing employees to customize jobs around their skills and career aspirations (Greenberg et al., 2004; Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006). Thus, primary candidates for resources exchanged in i-deals are those that promote work–life balance, those that convey status or value, and those associated with job crafting and career advancement. As discussed below, empirical studies have generally focused on i-deals that promote work–life balance or that shape employees’ jobs to fit their preferences and needs.

One of the first empirical studies to investigate i-deals was conducted by Rousseau and Kim (2006), who used information from interviews with hospital employees to identify domains across which i-deals are negotiated. Based on their interviews, Rousseau and Kim identified three dimensions of i-deals: work hour flexibility, which pertained to flexibility of work schedules and the number of hours worked; workload i-deals, which were associated with negotiation of reduced work demands and work hours; and career development opportunities, which were associated with skill development opportunities, performance goals, and career development trajectories. Regarding the structure of their measure, Rousseau and Kim posited that individuals negotiate discrete i-deal terms (e.g., an individual may negotiate work hours but not career development opportunities). As such, Rousseau and Kim modeled the content dimensions of i-deals separately, an approach taken in subsequent research.

In general, research has focused on one or more of Rousseau and Kim’s (2006) dimensions. For example, Hornung et al. (2008) and Rousseau et al. (2009) examined flexibility and development i-deals, which were consistent with Rousseau and Kim’s work hour flexibility and career development dimensions. Hornung et al. (2009) examined development, flexibility, and workload i-deals, the three types of i-deals identified by Rousseau and Kim, from the perspective of supervisors. Finally, Hornung et al. (2010) examined task i-deals, which are similar to the career development i-deals described by Rousseau and Kim. However, to make this dimension more consistent with the theoretical perspective that i-deals represent a hybrid (i.e., not an entirely top-down or bottom-up) form of job redesign, the focus of Hornung et al.’s (2010, Study 2) task i-deals measure was on job content (i.e., negotiating challenging work tasks, special job duties, and activities suited to the individual employee’s skills and preferences) as opposed to career development in a broader sense.

Thus, research has generally focused on i-deals associated with work hour flexibility, workload, and aspects of job content related to career development and job redesign (e.g., Hornung et al., 2008, 2009; Rousseau et al., 2009). These dimensions are consistent with the notion that i-deals are typically negotiated to help employees achieve work–life balance and/or are associated with job crafting, through which employees customize the content of jobs to fit their skills and career aspirations. However, two other domains—location flexibility and financial incentives—have been identified but not investigated in the literature (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau et al., 2006). It is surprising that these domains have received little attention because location flexibility promotes work–life balance (i.e., it allows employees to live with their families and cuts down on commute times), and allowing employees to negotiate the terms of their compensation plans is a concrete way that organizations recognize an employee’s value.
I-Deals Dimensions

Drawing from the preceding review, we propose four primary content dimensions of i-deals. These include Rousseau and Kim’s (2006) dimensions, but with some modifications. First, we retained Rousseau and Kim’s work hour flexibility dimension, calling it instead schedule flexibility, and we dropped their workload dimension. Second, we combined Rousseau and Kim’s career development dimension with the task dimension identified by Hornung et al. (2010) to create a single task and work responsibilities dimension. Finally, we identified two new dimensions (i.e., financial incentives and location flexibility) that were not included in Rousseau and Kim’s scale.

We combined the career development and task i-deals dimensions into a single dimension (i.e., task and work responsibilities) because Rousseau and colleagues’ (Hornung et al., 2010; Rousseau & Kim, 2006) career development and task i-deals dimensions both pertain to the negotiation of what an employee does on the job. As noted by Hornung et al. (2010), the primary difference between the task and career development dimensions assessed in previous work is that the career development dimension taps into why job content is negotiated (i.e., for career advancement purposes), whereas task i-deals are focused on the actual job contents that are negotiated. Thus, by focusing on what is negotiated (i.e., job content) as opposed to why it is negotiated, we feel that we can better assess the resources included in this i-deal. We dropped the workload dimension because it overlaps substantially with the schedule flexibility and job tasks and responsibilities dimensions identified previously (see Hornung et al., 2009; Rousseau & Kim, 2006). The financial incentives and location flexibility dimensions were added because (a) these have been identified in past research as common domains across which i-deals are negotiated, (b) these domains satisfy the criteria for being included as part of i-deals (i.e., they are mutually beneficial, support work–life balance, and/or they convey recognition of an employee’s value), and (c) research on telecommuting and compensation suggests that flexibility in work location and financial incentives are commonly negotiated aspects of employment.

Thus, we propose that i-deals are typically negotiated across four dimensions. These dimensions are associated with when (schedule flexibility), where (location flexibility), why (financial incentives), and what (task and work responsibilities) employees do on their jobs. The study described below is aimed at verifying that these dimensions represent common i-deal categories and ensuring that no relevant dimensions were omitted. In addition, we consider the frequency with which these i-deals occur, as the pervasiveness (or lack thereof) of i-deals speaks to the potential impact that such deals may have in the workplace.

Method

Participants were recruited using several methods. First, employed students were recruited from evening and weekend business and psychology courses (41%). Second, we recruited full-time workers who were not enrolled in university courses but who were acquaintances of other participants (37%). Third, we recruited full-time university employees (e.g., administrative and human resources staff; 22%). Student participants received extra credit in
exchange for participation. In total, we received data from 257 participants. Participant demographics were as follows: 64% were female; their average age was 30.4 years ($SD = 12.6$); they were mostly Caucasian (59%), African American (18%), or Hispanic (17%); they had an average job tenure of 47.9 months ($SD = 64.1$); they worked an average of 35.2 hours per week ($SD = 12.8$); and they were employed primarily in retail/service (43%), managerial (17%), professional (16%), and clerical (11%) positions.

We provided participants with a description of i-deals (see the appendix) and asked them whether they had negotiated an i-deal within the past year and if so how many. We asked participants to specify the content of each i-deal using the content dimensions previously discussed (i.e., task and work responsibilities, financial incentives, schedule flexibility, and location flexibility). We also presented an “other” option with space provided for participants to explain any arrangements that did not fall into one of the specified content dimensions, thus allowing us to identify any additional content domains.

**Results and Discussion**

In total, 56% of participants reported successfully negotiating at least one i-deal within the past year. Among those 56% employees who negotiated i-deals, the average number negotiated within the past year was 2.82. These results indicate that i-deals were negotiated by a majority of the participants on a frequent basis. When we explored the content of negotiated i-deals, we found that schedule flexibility i-deals were the most common (52%), followed by task and work responsibilities (38%), financial incentives (28%), and location flexibility (22%).

Eight participants used the “other” option to categorize the content of their i-deals. In each case, the explanation provided was compatible with one of the predefined dimensions. For example, “other” explanations included “preschool discount” and “use of company vehicle for personal use including paid gas,” both of which fit under the financial incentives domain. Other explanations fit under the schedule flexibility domain, such as “employer let me be taken off the schedule for a set amount of time during school” and “lunch and breaks can be taken whenever I choose.” Overall, the “other” option was used by only 3% of the participants, and those who did provided an explanation compatible with one of the predefined domains.

**Study 2**

Findings from Study 1 indicate that i-deals are a frequently occurring phenomenon and that it is appropriate to consider i-deals that pertain to task and work responsibilities, schedule flexibility, location flexibility, and financial incentives in future research. Therefore, in Study 2 we focused on developing an instrument for assessing i-deals.

**Scale Development**

Items were written to tap into the four content domains of i-deals identified in Study 1. Seven items were written to assess task and work responsibilities (e.g., “I have negotiated
with my supervisor for tasks that better fit my personality, skills, and abilities”), six items were written to assess financial incentives (e.g., “After my initial appointment, I negotiated with my supervisor to develop a financial incentives plan that rewards my unique contributions”), five items were written to assess schedule flexibility (e.g., “At my request, my supervisor has accommodated my off-the-job demands when assigning my work hours”), and four items were written to assess location flexibility (e.g., “I have negotiated a unique arrangement with my supervisor that allows me to complete a portion of my work outside of the office”).

Method

To assess the dimensionality and internal consistency of the I-Deals Scale, we administered the 22 items to a sample of part- and full-time workers. We recruited full-time employees via business contacts and university alumni lists (73%). We also recruited full- and part-time employed students who were enrolled in evening and weekend psychology and business courses (27%). Students received extra credit in exchange for completing the survey. In total, survey data were collected from 412 participants, which exceeded Hinkin’s (1998) recommended item-to-response ratio. Participants were primarily female (71%), their average age was 26.3 years ($SD = 9.6$), they were mostly Caucasian (67%) or Hispanic (14%), they had an average job tenure of 32.0 months ($SD = 58.26$), they worked on average 30.8 hours per week ($SD = 12.9$), and they were employed predominantly in retail/service (64%; e.g., bank teller) and professional (20%; e.g., accountant) industries. Participants responded to all items using a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Results and Discussion

The 22-item scale was submitted to an exploratory factor analysis. Principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation was used to examine the factor structure (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). Following Hinkin’s (1998) recommendation, we used the following criteria to determine the number of factors: eigenvalue greater than 1 and the scree test of the percentage of variance explained (Cattell, 1966). Based on these criteria, a four-factor solution was identified. We then examined the factor loadings and cross-loadings of the items. Items were retained if (a) they had high loadings on their primary factor (i.e., $\lambda > .40$) and (b) they had low cross-loadings on any other factor (i.e., cross-loadings were less than half of their primary loadings; Hinkin, 1998). Two items (one from the task and work responsibilities subscale and one from the financial incentives subscale) were removed because they did not load adequately on any factor, and four items (two from the schedule flexibility subscale and two from the location flexibility subscale) were removed because of high cross-loadings (cross-loadings ranging from .34 to .39, while the loadings on the primary factors ranged from .42 to .52).

The remaining 16 items were then subjected to a second principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation. Results showed that a four-factor solution fit the data. The eigenvalues for
the four factors were 5.81, 1.96, 1.51, and 1.28, respectively, and they accounted for 65% of the variance, which met the standard proposed by Hinkin (1998). The final set of items—six for task and work responsibilities ($\alpha = .83$), five for financial incentives ($\alpha = .86$), three for schedule flexibility ($\alpha = .78$), and two for location flexibility ($\alpha = .89$)—and their factor loadings are listed in Table 1. We were encouraged by the findings of Study 2, which paralleled

| Table 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results of I-Deals Measure |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                  | I                | II               | III              | IV               |
| Task and work responsibilities | **5.81** | 1. I have successfully asked for extra responsibilities that take advantage of the skills that I bring to the job. |  .77 .03 .03 .01 |
|                  |                  | 2. At my request, my supervisor has assigned me tasks that better develop my skills. |  .76 .05 .07 .01 |
|                  |                  | 3. I have negotiated with my supervisor for tasks that better fit my personality, skills, and abilities. |  .69 .04 .04 .00 |
|                  |                  | 4. My supervisor has offered me opportunities to take on desired responsibilities outside of my formal job requirements. |  .61 .07 .02 .03 |
|                  |                  | 5. In response to my distinctive contributions, my supervisor has granted me more flexibility in how I complete my job. |  .49 .05 .05 .03 |
|                  |                  | 6. Following my initial appointment, my supervisor assigned me to a desirable position that makes use of my unique abilities. |  .43 .05 .05 .03 |
| Schedule flexibility |                  | **1.96** |                  |                  |
|                  |                  | 1. My supervisor considers my personal needs when making my work schedule. |  .00 .83 .01 .01 |
|                  |                  | 2. At my request, my supervisor has accommodated my off-the-job demands when assigning my work hours. |  .07 .75 .02 .08 |
|                  |                  | 3. Outside of formal leave and sick time, my supervisor has allowed me to take time off to attend to non-work-related issues. |  .00 .61 .01 .08 |
| Location flexibility |                  | **1.51** |                  |                  |
|                  |                  | 1. Because of my individual needs, I have negotiated a unique arrangement with my supervisor that allows me to complete a portion of my work outside of the office. |  .02 .01 .95 .01 |
|                  |                  | 2. Because of my particular circumstances, my supervisor allows me to do work from somewhere other than the main office. |  .05 .05 .83 .05 |
| Financial incentives |                  | **1.28** |                  |                  |
|                  |                  | 1. My supervisor has ensured that my compensation arrangement (e.g., hourly vs. salaried) meets my individual needs. |  .05 .02 .04 .80 |
|                  |                  | 2. Because of my personal circumstances, my supervisor has created a compensation arrangement that is tailored to fit me. |  .09 .11 .12 .73 |
|                  |                  | 3. Because of my unique skills and contributions, my supervisor has been willing to negotiate my compensation. |  .15 .01 .00 .68 |
|                  |                  | 4. Beyond formal policies, my supervisor has raised my pay because of the exceptional contributions that I make to the organization. |  .05 .05 .10 .65 |
|                  |                  | 5. After my initial appointment, I negotiated with my supervisor to develop a compensation plan that rewards my unique contributions. |  .11 .14 .01 .65 |

Note: $N = 412$. Primary factor loadings are shown in bold.
our multidimensional conceptualization of i-deals and resulted in a set of items that is appropriate for administration to employed participants, which we did in the next two studies.

**Study 3**

Study 3 considers the validity of the i-deals measure by examining a nomological network that links i-deals to theoretically relevant antecedents and outcomes (Hinkin, 1998). In particular, we identify antecedents that predict successful i-deal negotiation, and we examine how different types of i-deals relate to work attitudes. To mitigate common method variance (CMV) and to be consistent with the presumed causal relationships among the variables, antecedents were measured prior to i-deals, whereas outcomes were measured after i-deals.

**Antecedents to I-Deal Negotiation**

Two qualities of i-deals—*that they are negotiated* and *that they are used to retain valued employees*—are useful for identifying antecedents to i-deal negotiation. In particular, these characteristics suggest that employees who (a) are more valuable, (b) have better negotiation skills, and/or (c) are in a better position to negotiate will be more likely to negotiate i-deals. Below, employee tenure, political skill, and leader–member exchange (LMX) are identified as antecedents to successful i-deal negotiation, as these tap into an employee’s value (e.g., tenure) and also assess an employee’s ability, based on the employee’s predisposition (e.g., political skill) and positioning within the work group (e.g., LMX), to negotiate with the employer.

*Tenure.* Employees who have longer tenure typically have more training and experience relative to other workers. Moreover, employees who have been with their organizations longer have demonstrated their loyalty to their employers and represent a source of institutional knowledge, such that there are considerable costs associated with losing these workers. Therefore, an employee who has been with the organization longer may represent a valued resource, one that firms strive to retain. Thus, we hypothesize that tenure is positively associated with i-deal negotiation, as organizations are more likely to grant i-deals to longer tenured employees as a means of retaining experienced and talented workers.

*Hypothesis 1:* Employee tenure will be positively related to i-deal negotiation.

*Political skill.* Political skill is an individual difference that is associated with one’s “ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004: 311). Politically skilled employees possess a high degree of interpersonal influence and social astuteness. Therefore, we suspect that politically skilled employees are more willing and able to successfully negotiate i-deals. As such, we hypothesize that political skill will be positively related to i-deal negotiation.

*Hypothesis 2:* Political skill will be positively related to i-deal negotiation.
Leader–member exchange. LMX theory suggests that supervisors form relationships of differential quality with subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Research has established that subordinates in high-quality exchanges form relationships characterized by mutual trust, loyalty, and reciprocation, whereas low-quality LMX subordinates tend to receive less assistance (e.g., fewer resources and information) from supervisors (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). LMX quality should be positively associated with successful i-deal negotiation because employees who have high-quality LMX relationships have more access to supervisors and more latitude to negotiate work roles (Graen & Scandura, 1987), including idiosyncratic work arrangements (Rousseau & Kim, 2006). Supervisors may also use i-deals as a way of maintaining high-quality LMX relationships with subordinates, as i-deals are one way of communicating to employees that they are valued. Therefore, we propose that LMX will have a positive relationship with i-deal negotiation.

Hypothesis 3: LMX will be positively related to i-deal negotiation.

Outcomes of I-Deals

Employee–organization relationships can be characterized as based on either social or economic exchanges between employees and employers (Coyle-Shapiro, Shore, Taylor, & Tetrick, 2004). Social exchanges are indicative of an employee–organization relationship that is based on mutual contributions, trust, and voluntary reciprocity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rousseau et al., 2009). Economic exchanges, on the other hand, reflect beliefs in employment as an impersonal market-based transaction, which is limited to an exchange of specific, tangible resources (e.g., pay for performance). High-quality employment relationships are characterized by higher levels of social, and lower levels of economic, exchange, which serve to enhance employee evaluations of their employers (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2004; Rousseau et al., 2009).

Though i-deals are generally thought to relate positively to employee outcomes (Rousseau et al., 2006), the effects are likely to vary depending on the content of each i-deal, as the content of an i-deal communicates information about the quality of the employee–organization exchange relationship (Hornung et al., 2008; Rousseau et al., 2009). Rousseau et al. (2006) suggested that the content of an i-deal could be categorized based on the extent to which it is concrete and universal (i.e., tangible and not dependent on an existing relationship) versus abstract and particularistic (i.e., open ended and dependent on an existing relationship). These characteristics determine whether an i-deal is viewed by the recipient as a market transaction (i.e., an economic exchange) versus a socioemotional exchange that is driven by the ongoing relationship that the recipient has with his or her employer.

Concrete and universal i-deals tend to be more transactional and market driven and, relative to more abstract and particularistic i-deals, are less likely to signal the presence of a high-quality employment relationship (Rousseau et al., 2009). For example, accommodations regarding pay can be provided with minimal interaction and are more likely to be attributed to equity issues (internal or external) as opposed to an employer’s socioemotional concerns for an employee (Rousseau et al., 2006). On the other hand, more abstract and particularistic i-deals tend to communicate that an employer is concerned about the well-being of an employee,
as these arrangements are often more personalized, open ended, and focused on helping an employee in the long term. For example, i-deals pertaining to work assignments that provide on-the-job training foster employees’ beliefs that they have a relationship with their organization that is characterized by mutual commitment (Rousseau et al., 2006), as such arrangements require an investment of time and effort by both parties, which enhances beliefs regarding the quality of the exchange relationship.

Of the four i-deals dimensions that we identified, i-deals involving financial incentives most clearly reflect economic conditions of employment (i.e., they are concrete, universal, and tied to monetary consequences). Task and work responsibilities i-deals exist on the other end of the continuum, corresponding more closely with relational aspects of employment (i.e., these arrangements are more particularistic, abstract, and associated with fulfilling socioemotional needs for personal growth and recognition) and indicating the presence of a high-quality exchange relationship. Schedule and location flexibility i-deals fall in the middle of this continuum, as accommodations that pertain to schedule and location flexibility reflect that the organization recognizes an employee’s personal needs (e.g., employees may ask to work from home so that they can cut down on their daily commute), but at the same time these arrangements are also more transactional than i-deals associated with tasks and responsibilities, as they are more concrete and universal and often have direct, immediate monetary consequences (Golden, 2006; Rousseau et al., 2009). In the following sections, we draw from this discussion to describe the relative importance of each of the four different types of i-deals to work attitudes.

Organizational commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed that there are three forms of organizational commitment: affective, normative, and continuance. Affective organizational commitment (AOC) refers to emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Normative organizational commitment (NOC) refers to employees’ feelings of obligation to remain with the organization. Continuance organizational commitment (COC) refers to commitment based on the costs that are associated with leaving the organization. As discussed below, we suspect that each type of i-deal will relate to the three types of commitment, but to varying degrees depending on their content.

I-deals that are associated more with social, rather than economic, exchanges should have the strongest relationship with affective and normative commitment. In particular, employees are more likely to experience positive affect, and thus be more emotionally attached to their organization, when their employer demonstrates concern for their long-term well-being. Similarly, arrangements that communicate that an employer is committed to addressing the socioemotional needs of employees are more likely to engender a sense of loyalty within employees such that they feel obligated to reciprocate by remaining with their organization. Thus, we suspect that i-deals pertaining to task and work responsibilities will demonstrate the greatest relative importance with regard to explaining variance in AOC and NOC, as these arrangements support the growth and development of employees and require an ongoing investment and commitment by both parties.

On the other hand, i-deals that pertain to financial incentives are much more concrete and less relational, which diminishes the extent to which these arrangements elicit positive affect or emotional attachment to an organization. Moreover, due to their transactional nature,
financial incentive i-deals are not as likely to elicit strong feelings of obligation toward the organization. Finally, arrangements concerning schedule and location flexibility demonstrate that an organization is concerned about meeting employee needs, but i-deals that pertain to flexibility in when and where work is performed are not as personalized as task and work responsibilities i-deals and are also not driven as much by the ongoing employee–employer relationship (Rousseau et al., 2009). Thus, compared to task and responsibility i-deals, i-deals pertaining to location flexibility, schedule flexibility, and financial incentives are likely to elicit weaker positive ties to employers, which suggests that the relative importance of these i-deals (i.e., location flexibility, schedule flexibility, and financial incentives) for explaining variance in AOC and NOC is lower than that of task and work responsibilities i-deals.

In addition to communicating information about the quality of exchange relationships, the content of an i-deal also determines its transferability (i.e., the extent to which a new employer is likely to replicate an i-deal), which is likely associated with the relative strength of the relationship between different types of i-deals and continuance commitment. In particular, the cost of leaving a company goes up when an employee negotiates an i-deal that is difficult to secure in another organization. Resources that are monetary, concrete, and universal are relatively easy to transfer to a new job or to negotiate ex ante, as these resources are easy to specify and can be implemented without interrupting existing practices. However, more abstract and particularistic resources lack fixed metrics, making their exchange more difficult to standardize and govern (Rousseau et al., 2006). As such, it is more difficult to transfer i-deals that pertain to particularistic and abstract resources to new employment situations, which implies that nonmonetary i-deals will have stronger relationships with COC. Therefore, we posit that task and work responsibilities i-deals will demonstrate the greatest incremental and relative importance with regard to COC, as these i-deals are the most difficult to replicate in a new employment setting. Schedule and location flexibility i-deals are expected to demonstrate positive relationships with COC, but their relative importance will not be as great as task and work responsibilities. Financial incentives, because they are the easiest to replicate, should demonstrate the lowest relative importance. Thus, based on the preceding discussion of how i-deals relate to AOC, NOC, and COC, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: I-deals pertaining to (a) task and work responsibilities, (b) schedule flexibility, (c) location flexibility, and (d) financial incentive will demonstrate positive relationships with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 5: Task and work responsibilities will demonstrate the highest relative importance in terms of explaining organizational commitment.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can be defined as a positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one’s job (Locke, 1969). Organizational scholars have provided evidence that several exchange relationship–based constructs (e.g., LMX, POS, and organizational justice) predict job satisfaction. A common thread among these predictors is that each is purported to relate to job satisfaction in part because it demonstrates that the organization is concerned about the socioemotional needs of employees (Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005). Therefore, we would expect that i-deals
that are more relationship oriented (i.e., those that fall on the abstract and particularistic side of the continuum) will have the greatest effect on job satisfaction, as such i-deals are most likely to lead employees to construe that they have high-quality relationships with their employers.

In addition, other aspects of i-deals may clarify how each type of i-deal relates to job satisfaction. In particular, i-deals allow employees to craft their jobs, through negotiation with their employers, to meet their individual needs. For example, i-deals such as schedule flexibility, location flexibility, and task and work responsibilities are associated with negotiation of where, when, and what employees do on their jobs, all of which are associated with autonomy (Bailyn, 1994; Hackman & Oldham, 1976), a job characteristic that has strong ties to job satisfaction (Loher, Noe, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985). As such, i-deals that generate a sense of autonomy should also demonstrate greater relative importance.

Thus, with regard to job satisfaction, we expect that i-deals pertaining to task and work responsibilities will demonstrate the highest relative importance, as these i-deals provide employees with control over what they do on their jobs and allow employees to choose to do tasks that match their skills. Similarly, we expect that location and schedule flexibility i-deals will demonstrate positive relationships with job satisfaction, but the relative importance of these i-deals should not be as great as task and work responsibilities i-deals, as i-deals pertaining to location and schedule flexibility provide employees with control over when and where they do their work, but they do not provide employees with a sense of control over what they do. Finally, we expect that financial incentive i-deals will have the lowest relative importance, as these arrangements are the most extrinsic to work (i.e., they do not pertain to when, where, or what employees do on the job). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 6:** I-deals pertaining to (a) task and work responsibilities, (b) schedule flexibility, (c) location flexibility, and (d) financial incentive will demonstrate positive relationships with job satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 7:** Task and work responsibilities will demonstrate the highest incremental and relative importance in terms of explaining job satisfaction.

### Method

**Participants and Procedure**

Employed undergraduate business students were recruited to participate in this research. To reduce the effects of CMV (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), participants completed two surveys spaced 10 weeks apart. We measured the following: i-deals at both Time 1 and Time 2, antecedents (tenure, political skill, and LMX) at Time 1, and outcomes at Time 2 (AOC, NOC, COC, and job satisfaction). Participants completed surveys in an on-campus research laboratory, and they received US$5 and course credit for participating.

A total of 280 participants completed both surveys, yielding a completion rate of 80%. Of the participants, 51% were female, their average age was 21.4 years ($SD = 3.9$), they were mostly Caucasian (82%) or African American (6%), their average job tenure was 16.2 months ($SD = 21.4$), they worked on average 20.0 hours per week ($SD = 9.7$), and they were employed predominantly in retail/service (82%) and professional (7%) industries.
Measures

Participants completed the scales measuring antecedents (i.e., tenure, political skill, and LMX) and i-deals at Time 1 and questions assessing outcomes (i.e., AOC, NOC, COC, and job satisfaction) and i-deals at Time 2. Unless otherwise noted, participants responded to all items using a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

I-deals. Participants completed the newly developed 16-item I-Deals Scale at both times. To further validate the factor structure, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with data from the two administrations separately. CFA results indicated that the four-factor structure fits the data well—$\chi^2 = 198.14$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .94, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .93, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .05 for Time 1 administration; $\chi^2 = 188.26$, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .06, and SRMR = .04 for Time 2 administration—the factors loaded on their respective items, and all loadings were significant. We conducted additional CFAs for the Time 1 and Time 2 data to compare alternative three-, two-, and one-factor structures (see Table 3). As indicated by $\Delta \chi^2$, the four-factor model had the best fit with the data compared to the alternative factor structures. The CFA results for the Time 2 i-deals data resembled this pattern. In addition, all subscales demonstrated adequate internal consistency across both time periods (task and work responsibilities: Time 1 $\alpha = .80$ and Time 2 $\alpha = .85$; financial incentives: Time 1 $\alpha = .78$ and Time 2 $\alpha = .84$; schedule flexibility: Time 1 $\alpha = .80$ and Time 2 $\alpha = .83$; location flexibility: Time 1 $\alpha = .83$ and Time 2 $\alpha = .90$).

Political skill. Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar, and Ferris’s (2005) 18-item Political Skill Inventory was used to measure political skill ($\alpha = .90$). An example item is “I am good at building relationships with influential people at work.”

Leader–member exchange. The seven-item LMX-7 (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001) was used to measure subordinates’ perceptions of the relationships that they have with their leaders ($\alpha = .92$). An example item is “I feel that my immediate supervisor completely understands my problems and needs.”

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was assessed using Meyer, Allen, and Smith’s (1993) affective ($\alpha = .80$; “My organization has a great deal of meaning to me”), normative ($\alpha = .85$; “This organization deserves my loyalty”), and continuance ($\alpha = .80$; “It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to”) commitment subscales. Each subscale has six items.

Job satisfaction. Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh’s (1979) three-item scale ($\alpha = .89$) was used to measure job satisfaction. A sample item is “All in all, I am satisfied with my job.”

Results and Discussion

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics, internal consistencies, and correlations among all variables.
Table 2
Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency, and Correlation Coefficients Among Focal Variables in Studies 3 and 4

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<td>.92</td>
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<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 280 for Study 3; N = 196 for Study 4. Correlations above the diagonal are from Study 3. Correlations below the diagonal are from Study 4. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
Contrary to expectations, tenure at Time 1 was negatively related to task and work responsibilities ($r = -0.12, p < 0.05$) and financial incentive ($r = -0.15, p < 0.01$) i-deals at Time 2. However, political skill at Time 1 was positively related to all four dimensions of i-deals (rs ranging from .13 to .33) at Time 2, and LMX at Time 1 was significantly related to three of the four i-deals dimensions ($r = 0.37, p < 0.001$, for task and work responsibilities i-deals; $r = 0.26, p < 0.001$, for financial incentive i-deals; $r = 0.27, p < 0.001$, for schedule flexibility i-deals) at Time 2. Path analysis (see Figure 1) with manifested variables was conducted to further delineate relationships between the proposed antecedents and the four dimensions of i-deals. We included all the antecedents and four dimensions of i-deals in the model simultaneously. The three antecedents were allowed to freely covary, while relationships between the residuals of the i-deals dimensions were set to zero. When all three antecedents were
considered together, tenure was only a significant predictor for financial incentive i-deals ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$), suggesting that longer tenure was related to fewer i-deals negotiated concerning target employees’ compensation. Political skill was a significant predictor of task and work responsibilities ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) and location flexibility ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) i-deals, indicating that employees with higher political skill were more likely to successfully negotiate i-deals, which is consistent with Hypothesis 2. Finally, LMX was a significant predictor of task and work responsibility ($\beta = .27, p < .001$), financial incentive ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), and schedule flexibility ($\beta = .25, p < .001$) i-deals. This is supportive of Hypothesis 3, as it indicates that employees who have a better relationship with their supervisors are more likely to negotiate i-deals.

Regarding outcomes, i-deals pertaining to tasks and work responsibilities at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .20, p < .001$), AOC ($r = .30, p < .001$), and NOC ($r = .17, p < .01$) at Time 2; financial incentive i-deals at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .14, p < .01$) and AOC ($r = .21, p < .001$) at Time 2; and schedule flexibility i-deals at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .24, p < .001$) and AOC ($r = .13, p < .05$) at Time 2. Thus, there was preliminary support for Hypotheses 4 and 6, as our results indicated that i-deals have significant relationships with both organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Therefore, we further considered the relationships between i-deals and outcomes using path analysis with manifested variables (see Figure 2). Similar to the predictor model, the i-deals dimensions were allowed to freely covary, whereas the residuals of the outcomes were set to be independent of one another. The four i-deals dimensions and the outcomes were included in the model. When examined together, job satisfaction was predicted by task and work responsibilities ($\beta = .12, p < .05$) and schedule flexibility i-deals ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). AOC was predicted by task and work responsibilities i-deals ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), COC was predicted by task and work responsibilities ($\beta = .16, p < .05$) and financial incentive ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$) i-deals, and NOC was predicted by tasks and work responsibilities i-deals ($\beta = .14, p < .05$).

To evaluate the relative importance of the four dimensions of i-deals in predicting outcomes, we conducted relative weights analysis. This allowed us to determine the unique contribution of each type of i-deal to the overall variance accounted for in a given attitudinal variable while taking into consideration the other three i-deals dimensions (LeBreton, Hargis, Griepentrog Oswald, & Ployhart, 2007). Results of the relative weights analysis are presented in Table 4. For job satisfaction, these results indicated that schedule flexibility i-deals were the most important predictor (relative weight $[RW] = .05$), followed by task and work responsibilities (RW = .02), financial incentive (RW = .01), and location flexibility (RW = .00) i-deals. Also reported are rescaled relative weights (i.e., RW divided by overall variance accounted for), which indicated the percentage of predicted criterion variance that is attributed to each predictor. In this case, schedule flexibility accounted for over 50% of the variance explained in job satisfaction, and i-deals pertaining to task and work responsibilities accounted for almost 30% of the variance explained in job satisfaction. In terms of AOC and COC, task and work responsibilities and financial incentive i-deals contributed to the majority of the variance explained by i-deals. Finally, task and work responsibilities i-deals were the most important predictor of NOC, contributing to more than half of the variance explained.
All in all, these results indicate that, after controlling for the effects of other types of i-deals, task and work responsibilities was a consistent, positive predictor of attitudes. Schedule flexibility i-deals also had a clear relationship with job satisfaction (in fact, this relationship was relatively stronger than the one for task and work responsibilities) but not with the other attitudes that were measured. Interestingly, i-deals pertaining to location flexibility and financial incentives were the weakest in terms of predicting attitudes. These findings provide partial support for Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, and 7, which specified that i-deals would have positive relationships with work attitudes and that, of the four i-deals dimensions examined, task and work responsibilities would demonstrate the highest degree of relative importance. Thus, Study 3 provides initial evidence that the relationship between i-deals and work attitudes depends on the type of i-deal that is negotiated. In Study 4, we attempt to replicate these findings.
Study 4

Study 3 participants, who were recruited from undergraduate business classes, tended to be younger employees who worked predominantly part-time and in lower level jobs. These sample characteristics may affect the way that participants perceive and experience their jobs, in which case our results would be biased. To address these concerns, in Study 4 we utilized a more experienced sample of full-time employees who had longer tenure in their organizations.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited from the StudyResponse service (www.studyresponse.com), which is a nonprofit, academic service that matches researchers to participants who have signed up to complete online surveys (Stanton & Weiss, 2002). Participants completed two surveys spaced five weeks apart. We measured the following: i-deals at both Time 1 and Time 2, antecedents (tenure, political skill, and LMX) at Time 1, and outcomes (AOC, NOC, COC, and job satisfaction) at Time 2. Participants received gift cards valued at $20 in exchange for completing both surveys.

One hundred and ninety-six participants completed both parts of the study, yielding a completion rate of 94%. Of the participants, 50% were female, their average age was 43.02 years ($SD = 10.8$), they were mostly Caucasian (86%) or African American (3%), they had an average job tenure of 110.9 months ($SD = 102.0$), they worked on average 40.6 hours per week ($SD = 8.7$), and they were employed predominantly in professional (55%) and retail/service (17%) industries.

Measures

Participants responded to all survey items using a 5-point Likert-type scale with anchors ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Participants were administered the same scales as in Study 3 to measure i-deals and their antecedents and consequences but with one exception—political skill was measured with Ahearn et al.’s (2004) abbreviated six-item measure. A sample item is “I am good at getting others to respond positively to me.”

Similar to Study 3, separate CFAs were conducted on the i-deals measure using data from the two administrations. Results indicated that the four-factor structure fits the data well—$\chi^2_{(98)} = 223.81$, $CFI = .94$, $TLI = .93$, $RMSEA = .06$, and $SRMR = .05$ for Time 1; $\chi^2_{(98)} = 192.94$, $CFI = .95$, $TLI = .94$, $RMSEA = .06$, and $SRMR = .06$ for Time 2. The factors loaded on their respective items, and all loadings were significant. Similar to Study 3, we conducted additional CFAs to compare the hypothesized four-factor model against alternative factor structures. Results were similar to those reported in Table 3, indicating that the four-factor model for i-deals measured at Times 1 and 2 fit the data the best. The alphas for all four subscales
at both times were acceptable (task and work responsibilities: Time 1 $a = .90$ and Time 2 $a = .90$; financial incentives: Time 1 $a = .91$ and Time 2 $a = .89$; schedule flexibility: Time 1 $a = .79$ and Time 2 $a = .83$; location flexibility: Time 1 $a = .93$ and Time 2 $a = .92$).

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics, internal consistencies, and the correlations between all variables.

Tenure at Time 1 was negatively related to financial incentive i-deals ($r = -.16$, $p < .01$) at Time 2, political skill at Time 1 was positively related to task and work responsibilities ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) at Time 2, and LMX at Time 1 was significantly related to all four i-deals dimensions ($r = .53$, $p < .001$, for task and work responsibilities; $r = .46$, $p < .001$, for financial incentives; $r = .54$, $p < .001$, for schedule flexibility; $r = .22$, $p < .01$ for location flexibility) at Time 2.

Path analysis with manifested variables was conducted to evaluate antecedents of the four dimensions of i-deals (see Figure 3). Similar to Study 3, all variables were included in the model simultaneously and only exogenous variables were allowed to covary. When all three antecedents were considered together, tenure predicted financial incentive i-deals ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .01$).
This finding ran counter to Hypothesis 1 but was consistent with Study 3, indicating that longer tenure was related to fewer compensation-related i-deals. Also consistent with Study 3, political skill predicted location flexibility i-deals ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). Finally, LMX was a significant predictor of all four dimensions of i-deals: task and work responsibilities i-deals ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$), financial incentives i-deals ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$), schedule flexibility i-deals ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$), and location flexibility i-deals ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$). Thus, consistent with Hypothesis 3, our results indicate that employees who have better relationships with their supervisors are more likely to negotiate i-deals.

Turning to the outcomes, task and work responsibilities i-deals at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .31$, $p < .001$), AOC ($r = .42$, $p < .001$), and NOC ($r = .39$, $p < .001$) at Time 2; financial incentive i-deals at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .17$, $p < .05$), AOC ($r = .27$, $p < .001$), and NOC ($r = .30$, $p < .001$) at Time 2; schedule flexibility i-deals
at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .31, p < .001$), AOC ($r = .39, p < .001$), COC ($r = .17, p < .05$), and NOC ($r = .33, p < .001$) at Time 2; and location flexibility i-deals at Time 1 were related to job satisfaction ($r = .15, p < .05$), AOC ($r = .17, p < .05$), and NOC ($r = .18, p < .05$) at Time 2. Relationships between i-deals and outcomes were further explored using path analysis with manifested variables (see Figure 4). Results indicate that job satisfaction was predicted by task and work responsibilities ($\beta = .29, p < .01$) and schedule flexibility ($\beta = .24, p < .05$) i-deals. This finding was consistent with the pattern found in Study 3. Time 2 AOC was predicted by task and work responsibilities ($\beta = .36, p < .001$) and schedule flexibility ($\beta = .23, p < .05$) i-deals. COC was predicted by schedule flexibility i-deals ($\beta = .21, p < .05$). Finally, NOC was predicted by task and work responsibilities i-deals ($\beta = .32, p < .01$), which is also consistent with Study 3.

*Note: $N = 196$. Path coefficients are standardized.*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. 

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**Figure 4**

Path Model of Time 1 I-Deals and Time 2 Outcomes for Study 4
Relative weights analysis (see Table 4) showed that for job satisfaction, task and work responsibilities and schedule flexibility i-deals were the most important predictors, accounting for 86% of the variance explained by the i-deals measure, which is similar to Study 3. For AOC, task and work responsibilities and schedule flexibility i-deals were also the principal predictors. Interestingly, schedule and location flexibility i-deals emerged as important predictors for COC, which was different from Study 3. Finally, for NOC, task and work responsibilities i-deals remained the most important predictor, which was also consistent with Study 3.

Thus, results from Study 4 further supported the factor structure of the newly developed i-deals measure. In addition, correlational and path analyses also provided support for several of the proposed antecedents and outcomes. Comparing findings from Studies 3 and 4, many similarities emerged, such that LMX and political skill were important antecedents of certain types of i-deals (Hypotheses 2 and 3) and that i-deals concerning task and work responsibilities were generally the most important dimension of i-deals with respect to employee attitudes (Hypotheses 5 and 7). In addition, results provided partial support for Hypotheses 4 and 6, indicating that task and work responsibilities i-deals and schedule flexibility i-deals had significant, positive relationships with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Below we summarize our findings and discuss their research and practical implications.

### Table 4

Relative Weights (RW) Analysis of the I-Deals Dimensions

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<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
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<th>NOC</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>RW %</td>
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Note: $N$ = 280 for Study 3; $N$ = 196 for Study 4. AOC = affective organizational commitment; COC = continuance organizational commitment; NOC = normative organizational commitment.

### General Discussion

The topic of i-deals is relatively new to the organizational sciences. Our purpose in the present study was to systematically investigate i-deals, with a focus on developing a reliable and valid measure to investigate i-deals that employees negotiate at work. The results presented herein support the psychometric properties of the ex post I-Deals Scale,
and our findings are consistent with the view that i-deals have important implications for employees.

Drawing from our literature review, we identified four dimensions (i.e., task and work responsibilities, financial incentives, schedule flexibility, and location flexibility) across which i-deals are generally negotiated. We then conducted a study aimed at verifying that these categories adequately represented the i-deals that are commonly negotiated. Results indicated that these four types of i-deals are prevalent in organizations, with the majority of employees sampled indicating that they each had negotiated at least one i-deal in the previous year. Study 1 also demonstrated that the four content dimensions were each empirically represented in our sample and that no pertinent domains were excluded. Therefore, we conducted three additional studies (Studies 2, 3, and 4) aimed at developing a measure of i-deals. Across three separate samples, the psychometric properties of the ex post I-Deals Scale were supported, as demonstrated by the stability of its factor structure and internal consistency. In addition, in Studies 3 and 4 we examined the nomological network of the different types of i-deals, with a specific focus on theoretically derived antecedents and attitudinal outcomes.

Consistent with the notion that employees who have better negotiation skills and who are in a better position to negotiate will be more likely to ask for and receive i-deals from their employers, Studies 3 and 4 indicated that LMX and political skill have positive relationships with i-deals. Interestingly, tenure demonstrated a negative relationship with financial incentive i-deals in both studies, which was in contrast to what was predicted. Nonetheless, our findings were fairly consistent, with Studies 3 and 4 indicating that employees who have higher quality exchange relationships with their leaders are more likely to negotiate i-deals across several domains. There is also evidence that politically skilled employees may have an advantage in negotiating i-deals, especially those that pertain to location flexibility or task and work responsibilities. Finally, it does not appear that employees who have been with their organizations longer have any advantage in terms of i-deal negotiation, as our results indicate that tenure may put employees at a disadvantage for negotiating certain i-deals.

Regarding outcomes, a similar pattern also emerged across studies. Specifically, i-deals pertaining to task and work responsibilities demonstrated positive relationships with at least three out of four of the attitudinal outcomes included in both studies (i.e., AOC, NOC, and job satisfaction); schedule flexibility i-deals demonstrated moderate, positive relationships with job satisfaction; and neither financial incentives nor location flexibility i-deals were related to work attitudes in either study. Consistent with the notion that i-deals have different relationships with outcomes, depending on their content, Studies 3 and 4 indicated that task and work responsibility i-deals demonstrated the highest relative importance in terms of explaining variance in AOC and NOC. The relative weights analyses were, however, more mixed for job satisfaction, as task and work responsibilities and schedule flexibility i-deals demonstrated comparable levels of importance in terms of explaining variance in job satisfaction. Even so, the results were fairly consistent across studies, indicating that of the four types of i-deals, task and work responsibility and schedule flexibility i-deals were the most relevant to work attitudes.

Taken together, these results speak to the practical importance of i-deals, both for organizations and individuals. Although research on i-deals is still at a nascent stage, findings suggest
that allowing individuals to negotiate i-deals, specifically those that pertain to what employees do (e.g., task and work responsibilities) and when they do it (e.g., schedule flexibility), is beneficial to fostering positive work attitudes, which have been shown to have relationships with performance, turnover, and absenteeism (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). Therefore, researchers may wish to focus on the longer term outcomes of i-deal negotiation to identify whether i-deals have a link to desirable (or undesirable) employee behaviors. In addition, it is also important for researchers to explicitly consider how i-deals compare and relate to other common predictors of employee outcomes, as this will allow researchers to understand the relative importance of i-deals to understanding employee behavior.

In this vein, the three antecedents (LMX, tenure, and political skill) and four outcomes (AOC, NOC, COC, and job satisfaction) represent only a sampling of theoretically relevant antecedents and outcomes to which i-deals should relate. However, our purpose was not to list all the outcomes with which i-deals should be related. Rather, we intended to use a subset of constructs to provide support for the validity of the ex post i-deals measure. Having established a psychometrically sound measure, we encourage researchers to examine other antecedents, outcomes, and complex relationships (e.g., mediated and/or moderated) that may exist between the four types of i-deals that we identified and behavioral (e.g., turnover, task performance, citizenship behavior), exchange relationship (e.g., psychological contract breach, organizational justice, organizational support), and work–family balance constructs. For example, future research should seek to verify that i-deals are rewarded to high performers (Rousseau, 2005) by examining performance as an antecedent to deal making, and empirical studies should also more directly evaluate the extent to which different types of i-deals relate to social-versus economic-based exchange relationships between employees and employers.

Future studies should also consider the theoretically relevant boundary conditions of the nomological network of i-deals. For example, i-deals represent a resource that is allocated at the discretion of supervisors. Therefore, a resource perspective suggests that the availability of resources would play a role in determining whether an employee could successfully negotiate a particular i-deal. For example, even when LMX is high, the resources that supervisors have may limit how likely they will be to make i-deals with individual employees. Similarly, the context in which a particular i-deal is granted may also determine the type of exchange relationship information that is conveyed by a particular i-deal, which has implications for how i-deals relate to outcomes. For example, when a supervisor grants a financial incentive i-deal because of a high-quality LMX, the context of the arrangement (i.e., it is granted due to the quality of an employee’s relationship with his or her supervisor) may transform the meaning of a primarily economic and transactional i-deal into one that is more socioemotional and relational. Similarly, the extent to which a negotiated i-deal is associated with treatment that differs from official regulations and standards applying to work peers may also influence how such an arrangement is interpreted, as employees may perceive that their organization is more concerned for their well-being when they are granted an i-deal that is well outside of what is provided to other employees. Therefore, we suggest that future researchers consider how (a) the availability of different resources places boundary conditions on i-deal negotiation and (b) the context influences the meaning of i-deals.

Although most of our hypotheses received at least partial support, tenure did not predict i-deals in the way that was anticipated, neither financial incentive nor location flexibility
i-deals related to work attitudes, and relationships involving COC were inconsistent across studies. One explanation for the failure of tenure to predict task and work responsibilities, schedule flexibility, and location i-deals is that it did not serve as an adequate proxy for the value of employees to their organizations. For example, oftentimes high-performing and highly valued employees voluntarily leave their organizations to pursue opportunities elsewhere, which suggests a nonlinear relationship between employee value and tenure (Jackofsky, 1984). Thus, future research should focus on more directly assessing how human capital and employee value (e.g., training, skills, and experience) predict i-deals. With regard to the negative relationship between tenure and financial incentive i-deals, compensation is a particularly salient aspect of one’s job that is likely negotiated early in the employment relationship. Moreover, employees who do not receive the compensation that they desire are likely to leave their organizations to pursue other opportunities. Thus, the negative relationship between tenure and financial incentive i-deals may be a reflection of this process, wherein longer tenure employees are likely to have fixed their compensation concerns, especially those pertaining to arrangements that are based on their value to the organization, earlier in employment. However, our data prevent us from testing this post hoc explanation; thus, further research is necessary to improve our understanding of the potentially complex relationship that exists between tenure and financial incentive i-deals.

Although the null relationships of financial incentive and location flexibility i-deals with outcomes ran counter to our hypotheses, this finding is consistent with the idea that relationships of i-deals with work attitudes depend on the content of the i-deal. In particular, i-deals that are more relationship driven and less transferable across organizations will have the strongest effects. Our results provided support for this perspective, indicating that task and responsibility i-deals, which we identified as being both difficult to replicate and relationship driven, generally had the strongest relationships with criteria. Financial incentives were at the other end of the continuum, being both highly transactional in nature and easy to replicate. Although financial incentive i-deals demonstrated significant correlations with commitment and satisfaction across studies, these i-deals failed to explain unique variance in attitudes incremental to other i-deals.

Regarding the nonsignificant relationships between location flexibility i-deals and attitudes, negotiation of these arrangements may be occupation specific, such that either (a) it is impossible to negotiate location flexibility in some jobs (e.g., emergency room nurse, food service) or (b) it is the norm to have location flexibility in certain occupations (e.g., professor). When location flexibility is not possible or is freely available to everyone, i-deals of this sort will be valued less by employees and have minimal influence on their attitudes and behaviors. Thus, another direction for future research is to investigate how occupational categories and norms influence the effects of i-deals on employee outcomes.

Finally, inconsistent findings were also observed in the case of COC. In Study 3, task and work responsibilities i-deals were positively related to COC, whereas financial incentive i-deals were negatively related to COC. In Study 4, however, schedule flexibility was the only i-deal that was related to COC. A potential reason for these mixed results is the multidimensional nature of COC. Employees with strong COC stay with their employers because they are unwilling to forfeit valued financial incentives or because they have no employment alternatives (McGee & Ford, 1987; Taing, Groff, Granger, Jackson, & Johnson, in press).
The nature of the relationship between i-deals and COC may therefore depend on the basis of employees’ COC. For example, the ability to negotiate task and work responsibilities may increase employees’ COC because they may view it as an incentive that they are unwilling to lose. However, the ability to negotiate may also be unrelated to employees’ COC if this type of commitment derives from the number of jobs available at other organizations. Thus, depending on the basis of COC, task and work responsibilities i-deals may be positively related or unrelated to COC. The negative relationship observed between financial incentive i-deals and COC in Study 3 was also unexpected. Although the bivariate correlation for this relationship was nonsignificant, the beta weight for financial incentives i-deals was negative and significant when COC was regressed on the set of i-deals. This suppression effect may be spurious owing to multicollinearity among the i-deals variables, yet it may also reflect a peculiarity of the Study 3 sample. The majority of employees in this sample were mobile part-time workers who, upon successfully negotiating a financial incentives i-deal, may have interpreted this successful outcome to mean that they are valuable employees. Believing that they are valued may lead such employees to perceive more job opportunities for themselves, thus reducing their sense of COC or being “stuck” with their current employers.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite these contributions, the current research also has limitations that must be acknowledged. First, many of the participants in Studies 1, 2, and 3 were employed university students. The reliance on a younger sample with modest job tenure may place boundary conditions on the generalizability of our findings or, in the case of Study 1, may not provide an accurate estimate of the occurrence of different i-deals in the broader working population, as employers who hire working students may have more flexibility in providing i-deals relative to employers who hire primarily full-time employees. Thus, because the samples were not representative of the population, we suggest that caution is used when interpreting our results. Nonetheless, an advantage of these samples is that participants were from a variety of organizations and occupations (e.g., customer service representatives, restaurant managers, and nurses), which is encouraging with regard to the generalizability across jobs. This limitation was also explicitly addressed in Study 4, which used a full-time professional sample to examine the nomological network of i-deals. In addition to providing psychometric evidence (e.g., the factor structure, internal consistency reliabilities, correlations among dimensions) that was consistent with the other studies, the results of the path and relative weights analyses of Study 4 also appeared to converge with Study 3, providing evidence that the status of our participants (students vs. nonstudent) did not bias our results in a meaningful way.

A second limitation pertains to the use of self-report data. When self-reported data are used, CMV may bias observed relationships between variables. We attempted to reduce CMV by gathering data over multiple time periods in Studies 3 and 4 (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Nonetheless, we encourage researchers who use this scale in the future to gather data from multiple sources (e.g., self, supervisor, and coworker) to assess relationships between the various antecedents and outcomes of i-deals. Furthermore, future research should examine the correspondence between self-reported negotiation and supervisor-reported granting of i-deals to determine if the phenomenon is viewed in the same way by both parties.
Finally, our scale does not allow researchers to fully consider several issues pertaining to time. Although assessing measures at different points in time allowed us to address CMV-related issues, it did not preclude the possibility that the i-deals being reported were made prior to the measurement of antecedent variables, as the ex post i-deals measure that we present is retrospective, with an unspecified time continuum. Thus, readers should use caution when inferring causal relationships from our data. A related issue is that our scale does not differentiate between i-deals that are short term versus those that are long term. As such, we cannot examine whether shorter term i-deals (e.g., work at home on a particular day for one day) have different effects on outcomes relative to longer term arrangements (e.g., work at home on a particular day every week). Thus, future research using the ex post i-deals measure developed in this study should be more explicit with regard to the specific time frame involved, and researchers should consider whether acute i-deals have different effects on employees relative to longer term arrangements.

**Summary**

In recent years, organizations have moved toward idiosyncrasy in employment. Our studies suggest that certain employees (e.g., those who are politically skilled or who have better relationships with their supervisors) are more likely to negotiate idiosyncratic arrangements. Our studies also indicate that certain i-deals, such as those that pertain to job tasks and work responsibilities or work schedule flexibility, have the potential to influence work attitudes. Taken together, these findings indicate that this is an important concept for future research. Thus, we hope that the measure of i-deals that we developed in this study will facilitate future research and that researchers will use our measure to investigate i-deals in their own research areas.

**Appendix**

The purpose of this survey is to improve our understanding of the idiosyncratic work arrangements (also called idiosyncratic deals) that you have negotiated with your supervisor. An idiosyncratic work arrangement is a voluntary, personalized agreement of a nonstandard nature that is negotiated between an employee and his or her supervisor. Such arrangements are mutually beneficial to employees and their organizations and may include adjustments in pay, re-assignment to different tasks, flexibility in work hours, and flexibility in work location (e.g., working from home). The following are key characteristics of idiosyncratic deals:

1. They are individually negotiated after the employee is on the job—not before being hired.
2. The conditions that are negotiated are usually not available to everyone else that performs a similar job as you.
3. The new arrangement is good for both the employee who negotiates the deal and the organization as a whole. For example, the employee may receive a more manageable work schedule and the organization would get to retain a valued employee.
4. The new arrangement is negotiated based on the employee’s contributions and preferences. For example, a high-performing employee seeking new job tasks is able to negotiate for new responsibilities because of their contribution as a high performer.
References


