

THE CONSEQUENCES OF IDEA THEFT

By

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29% of employees report having had an idea stolen by a colleague, at least once (Forbes, 2016). Despite the prevalence of idea theft throughout creative work, there is a paucity of scholarship on this phenomenon. As such, in this dissertation, I study the consequences of idea theft. I begin this work by first defining idea theft and illustrating the different forms it has taken in prior research. Next, across six empirical studies, I investigate the relative interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas compared to money. In these studies, I show that individuals who steal ideas are judged to have worse character than those who steal money (i.e., Study 1). Studies 2a and 2b show this is because people form stronger internal attributions in the case of idea theft than money theft. Studies 4 and 5 address a compelling alternative explanation for these effects—that idea theft is judged more harshly because ideas are thought to be of more value than money. I test this alternative hypothesis by first measuring the subjective value of the stolen idea and stolen money (Study 4); second, I hold the value of the stolen idea and money fixed at \$1,000 (Study 5). The results of these studies provide no support for this alternative explanation. Next, I demonstrate the interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas in terms of coworker support (Study 3) and coworker selection (Study 6). Finally, I explore two boundaries of the consequences of idea theft—the creativity of the stolen idea (Study 7) and organizational culture (Studies 8-10). In Study 7, I show that individuals judge a thief who has stolen a creative idea more harshly than one who has stolen a practical idea. In Studies 8-10, I demonstrate that priming collectivistic cultural values results in more lenient judgments and punishment for idea theft. I argue this is due to collectivistic organizational cultures drive weaker theories of idea ownership—I find support for this hypothesis

in Study 9. Finally, in Study 10, I find that weaker theories of ownership also increase individuals' willingness to emulate idea theft behaviors. Taken together, the body of this work posits that idea theft is an understudied and consequential phenomenon with significant implications for knowledge work.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lillien Montanye Ellis earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University in 2014, graduating with honors and distinction for completing a senior thesis on masculine overcompensation and creativity. In August 2015, she entered the MS/Ph.D. program in the Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) School at Cornell, joining the Organizational Behavior department. Lillien's research program focuses on idea theft in knowledge work within organizations as well as entrepreneurship. She is particularly interested in the potential (mis) judgment of idea theft as an inconsequential phenomenon.

DEDICATION

Just to Ruby.

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It takes a village to raise a dissertation and I would not have been able to raise this one without the mentorship, friendship, and support of many individuals:

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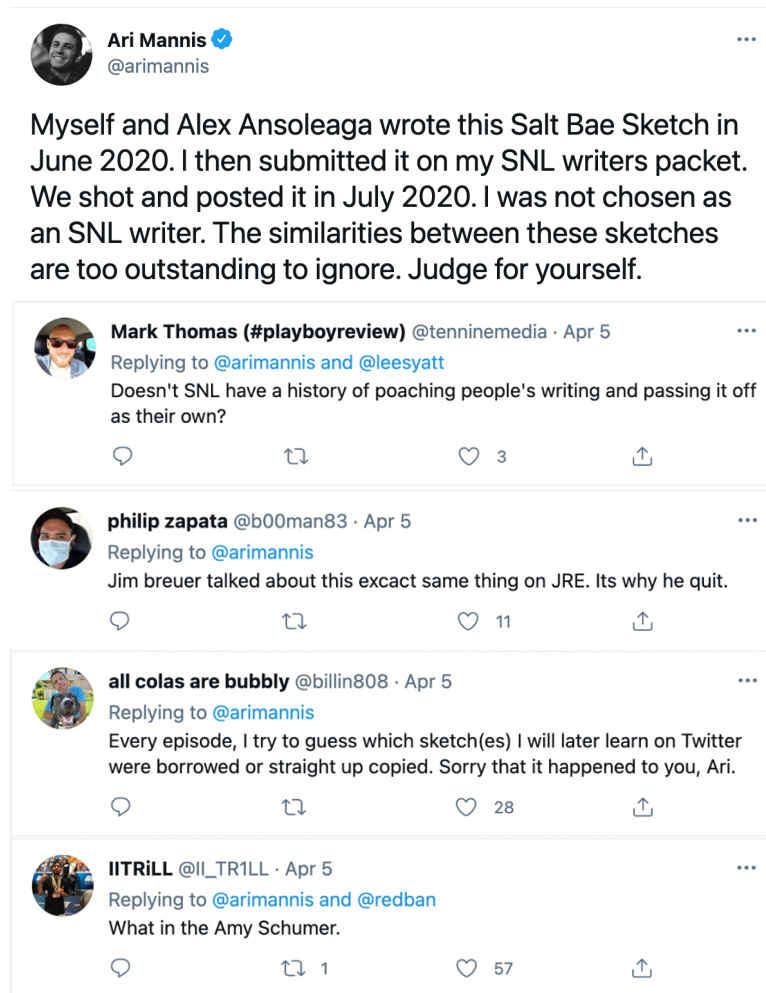
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Figure I: Ari Mannis Tweet and four follower comments, 2021 (this tweet is now unavailable)

Figure I



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the knowledge economy grows, the value of creative ideas and their vulnerability to theft becomes increasingly salient. Creativity is often considered the engine of scientific discovery (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010) and a driving force for positive change (George, 2007). As such, organizational scholars have built a rich body of literature identifying the antecedents of creative idea generation (e.g., Zhou & Hoever, 2014) to help organizations espouse practices that increase the number of creative ideas their employees produce (e.g., Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). However, creativity is not limited to generating ideas—

ideas must also be shared (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009; Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). Sharing ideas is a notoriously imperfect process (Hargadon & Sutton, 1997), which may explain knowledge workers' burgeoning concern that their ideas will be stolen. These concerns may not be unfounded, as 29% percent of employees report having had an idea stolen by a colleague at least once (Forbes, 2016). Further, popular press sources and recent scholarly work highlight that across diverse industries—research and development (R&D), music, comedy, marketing, and even academia—knowledge workers are keenly aware of the threat of idea theft and keep a close watch on those with a reputation for stealing ideas (i.e., Reilly, 2018). Thus, as the demand for creativity grows, so too may the prevalence and fear of idea theft behaviors.

In the public domain, there is great disagreement on whether the stealing of ideas warrants recognition as a negative phenomenon. The notion of “idea theft” calls to mind a host of controversial events—such as Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook, Steve Jobs and Xerox, Led Zeplin and ‘Stairway to Heaven,’ among many others—which, at first pass, may suggest that stealing ideas has severe consequences. That said, idea theft has received little recognition from the academic community, leaving room for pontification and contention in the evaluation of idea theft. Scant empirical attention has left individuals to rely on industry discourse and the media to inform their beliefs on the degree to which idea theft warrants concern. What’s more, these sources tout dogmatic, yet polarized, opinions grounded in anecdotal evidence, leaving the severity of consequences for stealing ideas merely speculative and unclear.

Some individuals maintain idea theft has significant consequences—that it spurs public outrage and damages the thief’s reputation. To illustrate, in the case of Ari Mannis calling out Saturday Night Live (SNL) on Twitter for stealing his pitch for the “Salt Bae” sketch, community members flocked to Mannis’ defense and declared disapproval of SNL’s behavior. Many

commenters expressed distaste for SNL’s long-standing practice of stealing ideas. One shared, “I try to guess which sketch(es) I will later learn on Twitter were borrowed or straight-up copied. Sorry that it happened to you, Ari” (@Billin808, 2021). Another revealed that the frequency of idea theft at SNL was the cause of well-known comedian Jim Brewer leaving the show (@B00man83, 2021). Additionally, one commenter referenced Amy Schumer, who was accused of joke theft in 2016, implying that the reputational consequences for stealing ideas may persist over time (@II_Trill, 2021). These responses to Mannis’ experience indicate that—even when consequences exist solely in the court of public opinion—idea theft may not be as harmless as others would suggest.

While the harsh judgment of idea theft appears commonplace in some communities, like comedy (Reilly, 2018), others claim idea theft is a trivial offense and even encourage it as a mechanism for achieving creative ambitions (i.e., Kleon, 2012). This perspective contends that idea theft is, at worst, a necessary evil in an increasingly cut-throat creative economy (i.e., *The Cut*, 2016) and at best, fundamental to the creative process. For nearly a century, creative geniuses have conflated idea theft with inspiration, citing it as instrumental to their many successes (McCole, 2018). T.S. Elliot’s (1921) dictum reveres idea theft as a signal of a refined craft, positing “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.” This sentiment parallels the attitudes of other highly regarded creative minds like Pablo Picasso, who argued that stealing ideas is the mark of a great artist. Echoing this point of view, American business magnate Steve Jobs (2010) famously announced that Apple Inc. has “always been shameless about stealing great ideas.” Together, statements like these may foster the belief that idea theft carries few consequences for the thief and may even *increase* their creative output.

Complimenting the suggestion that idea theft can be practical—germane to the creative process and a signal of artistic acuity—industry discourse often belittles those who report having experienced idea theft, associating such claims with pettiness and naïveté (i.e., Alter, 2015). Reinforcing this notion, a prominent management scholar recently discredited knowledge workers who fear idea theft, claiming that “people who live in fear of others stealing their ideas generally don’t have many good ideas” (Grant, 2020). While empirical evidence has yet to draw connections between fears of idea theft and creative performance, one qualitative study of video game developers found that attachment to one’s ideas is the result of a natural psychological process occurring during the generation and nurturing of one’s idea (Rouse, 2013). This may run counter to the claim that fearing idea theft is associated with having bad ideas, given Rouse (2013) found feelings of idea ownership are simply a reflex of engaging in creative work.

Taken together—and in the context of such contrasting opinions—scattered anecdotal evidence and a lack of empirical work make it difficult to parse out the consequences of idea theft. Fortuitously, the uncertainty surrounding this phenomenon offers the academic community a prosperous direction for future scholarly efforts.

In this dissertation, I investigate the consequences of idea theft. I begin this work by first defining idea theft and illustrating related constructs within academic research. Second, I explore the judgment of idea theft behaviors compared to money theft behaviors, to understand the relative judgments and interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas. To this end, I conducted six studies (Studies 1-6) to test the degree to which stealing ideas influences judgments of the thief’s character; the mechanism by which these judgments form; and the severity of interpersonal consequences that result.

Given the present work is among the first attempts to study idea theft empirically, there are a host of exciting questions about this phenomenon and a wealth of opportunities for academic scholarship. For example, to what degree do characteristics of a stolen idea influence the judgment of idea theft behaviors? Additionally, what role does context play in the consequences of idea theft? More specifically, how do cultural values alter the validity of ownership claims and, in turn, ameliorate potential consequences for stealing ideas? As such, in addition to defining idea theft and testing the relative judgment of idea versus money thieves, I explore two boundaries of the consequences of idea theft. First, in Study 7, I test the degree to which the creativity of a stolen idea influences the judgment of the theft behavior. In Studies 8 and 9, I examine the effect of organizational culture—specifically, the individualism-collectivism cultural dimension—on theories of idea ownership, as well as the judgment and punishment of idea theft. Finally, in Study 10, I analyze the severity of social consequences—i.e., the social contagiousness of idea theft behaviors—associated with idea theft when individualistic versus collectivistic cultural values are made salient.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING IDEA THEFT

The term “idea theft” has thus far been treated as a colloquial term to describe several different phenomena in academic research spanning diverse disciplines and levels of analysis. For example, legal scholars and economists have made great strides in the study of intellectual property theft, which concerns the theft of legally protected ideas that can be used in commerce (e.g., Halbert, 2016; Piquero, 2017). Within cognitive psychology, memory scholars investigate cryptomnesia, an unconscious type of idea theft wherein an individual miscategorizes the process of recalling an idea as the process of generating it (Brown & Murphy, 1989). While these and other types of idea theft have marked differences—in terms of theoretical scope and empirical study—each type involves the same fundamental action: theft of an idea

Previous management scholarship suggests that when fundamentally similar constructs are identified, providing an overarching term that unifies constructs makes a significant contribution to academic research (Capelli & Keller, 2013). Scholars explain that an overarching term can make assembling relevant findings more manageable and simplify empirical research by providing clarity on when—and to what extent—insights gleaned through the study of one type of a phenomenon might be applied to others. Given the fundamental similarities across several constructs involving the stealing of ideas, I propose “idea theft” as one such overarching term and define it as pursuing—or taking credit for—an idea that is perceived to be owned by someone else.

In the section below, I provide an overview of the different types of idea theft studied by the broader scientific community and then discuss an understudied type with particular relevance to organizational life: interpersonal idea theft.

Types of Idea Theft

Idea Theft as Intellectual Property Theft. Intellectual property, as defined by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), refers to “creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs and symbols, names, and images used in commerce.” As such, intellectual property theft (IP theft) involves the stealing of—or infringement on—ideas that have been accorded property rights by institutions such as the United States Patent and Trademark Office. These organizations do not extend property rights—and thus intellectual property protection—unless an idea meets the minimum standard for being granted a patent or trademark. Among other stipulations, this minimum standard requires that the idea can be used in commerce. In the academic domain, IP theft is conceptualized and operationalized as criminal behavior (e.g., Eastbrook, 1990). Previous work has explored how IP theft affects public and economic policy (Besen & Raskind, 1991; Sell, 2004), firm performance (Bader, 2008), and national security (Levine, 2012). This and other research highlights two fundamental aspects of IP theft scholarship: first, it is studied as an illegal behavior involving stealing an idea that has met the criteria for property protection; second, it is traditionally studied across several disciplines at the macro level of analysis.

Idea Theft as Plagiarism. Plagiarism is traditionally theorized and operationalized in terms of literary theft; it is most commonly studied by scholars in the field of education. This work investigates the phenomenon of students copying words, sentences, and paragraphs from a copywritten text without citing the source (Park, 2003), as well as copying other students’ schoolwork (e.g., multiple students submitting the same essay). In illustrating the antecedents and consequences of plagiarism in an education setting, this research seeks to help educators predict the conditions under which students are most likely to plagiarize (Pennycook, 1996) and how best

to discourage it (e.g., Maxwell, Curtis, & Vardanega; Houtman & Walker, 2010). Like IP theft, plagiarism concerns the theft of intellectual property (i.e., literary works). However, while this property is afforded legal protections, plagiarism is more commonly discussed as a violation of academic integrity and therefore punished through official channels within the confines of the academic institution (Devlin, 2006). In other words, unlike IP theft, plagiarism is not considered to be—or discussed theoretically as—a criminal behavior.

Idea Theft as Cryptomnesia. Cryptomnesia—when an individual unconsciously steals an idea—occurs when a person miscategorizes the process of remembering an idea as the process of generating an idea (Brown & Murphy, 1989). As such, this type of idea theft is accidental in nature. The theoretical precepts of cryptomnesia come from the literature on source monitoring errors, which are thought to occur because ideas are more salient than their sources (Johnson, Hashtroudi, & Lindsay, 1993). In other words, an individual is more likely to remember an idea than the person who shared it. As this phenomenon concerns the relationship between attention allocation and memory, psychologists have focused their empirical efforts on understanding the observable characteristics that make individuals who share ideas more (or less) memorable than others (e.g., Perfect & Stark, 2012). That is, the focus is less on the thieves than on the sharer.

Idea Theft as Scooping. The academic community has long grappled with scooping, quietly debating whether it is intentional or unintentional, or if it results from the structured nature of human imagination, which can result in the simultaneous generation of ideas (Ward, 1994; Kortge & Okonkwo, 1989). While there is little empirical or theoretical research on scooping, it has been defined as to claim priority of an idea—through publishing or presentation—that another individual has also been working on (Laine, 2017). An essential part of this description is that the claimant (i.e., the scooper) does not need to know that the other individual has also been working

on the idea. In other words, one individual can “scoop” another intentionally or, like cryptomnesia, unintentionally. While scooping is more commonly applied as a colloquialism within the academic community, scholars with interest in open science have investigated the consequences of this phenomenon. Rodrigues (1998) explains that fears of being scooped can inhibit the free flow of ideas, discourage and interfere with replication efforts, and ultimately impede the expansion of human knowledge.

Idea Theft as Taking Credit. Taking credit involves claiming responsibility for another’s work activities (Graham & Cooper, 2013). Research shows that credit can be taken by—and taken from—individuals, as well as organizations (Massa, Reuter, & Zitzewitz, 2010; Graham & Cooper, 2013). In their seminal article, Graham and Cooper (2013) explain that claims of responsibility for work efforts are justified if the claimant is genuinely responsible for the work efforts, in whole or even in part (i.e., contributed to the work in some way), and unjustified if the claimant has exaggerated their contribution or has played no role whatsoever in the job done. While the authors discuss credit-taking as a strategic behavior rooted in opportunism, they also posit that it can result from an imagined sense of having contributed to work efforts. In either case, such unjustified claims are considered unethical and judged negatively. Human development research shows that children as young as three form negative judgments when a target actor falsely claims credit for another’s original work (e.g., Olson & Shaw, 2011; Shaw & Olson, 2015), and adults make similar judgments about such behavior in the workplace.

Idea Theft as Interpersonal Idea Theft. Interpersonal idea theft occurs when one individual intentionally pursues or takes credit for an idea that is perceived to be owned by someone else. Given this type of idea theft is interpersonal in nature, it occurs when both of the parties involved (i.e., the idea owner and idea thief) are individuals, not organizations. However,

this type is particularly relevant in the context of interpersonal dynamics within organizations (Forbes, 2016). An example of this type of idea theft—shared by Karen Leland, CEO of Sterling Marketing Group—is when an employee shares an idea with their coworker while out to lunch, and then the coworker speaks up at the weekly brainstorming meeting with the boss, pitching the idea as their own. There are other instances wherein employees share their ideas with a few colleagues for feedback, and then, as in Leland’s example, one of those colleagues takes the idea to the boss and pitches it as their own. In this example, both the victim of theft and other members of the department—who are aware of the idea’s origin—recognize that the idea did not originate from the individual who pitched it to the department head and thus may consider it a case of idea theft. While industry discourse indicates that this type of idea theft is commonplace within organizations (Forbes, 2016), interpersonal idea theft has thus far received little attention from management scholars.

"It's not yours and as interesting as you think it is or as much as you may like it, it's wrong. Period." —Peg Fitzpatrick, author

CHAPTER 3

INTERPERSONAL CONSEQUENCES FOR IDEA THEFT: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION & LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the increased attention surrounding idea thieves, there is yet a paucity of research on the perception of individuals who steal ideas and the interpersonal consequences that follow. In this chapter, I focus on the degree to which individuals are judged negatively for engaging in *interpersonal idea theft* and the consequences that follow these judgments. I explore these negative judgments in terms of the evaluation of an idea thief's character—e.g., their morality, sincerity, likability, and helpfulness (Cohen & Morse, 2014; Goodwin, 2015; Abele et al., 2016)—and consider the implications of these character judgments for coworker support.

While idea theft may bear negative connotations, it is not so sure that individuals elicit negative judgments for stealing ideas. On the one hand, stealing ideas may have negligible or even positive consequences for the thief. As discussed in Chapter 1, creative geniuses like Pablo Picasso and Steve Jobs famously identified idea theft as a deliberate strategy behind their many successes. Bold statements like "We have always been shameless about stealing great ideas" (Jobs, 2010) reinforce the notion that stealing ideas indicates one's ability to recognize profitable opportunities and thus reflects business acumen rather than poor character. Further, while some ideas are specific and full-fledged enough to be protected by intellectual property legislation, others do not meet the criteria for intellectual property protection (e.g., an idea for decorating one's office) or are never patented for strategic reasons (Khessina, Goncalo, & Krause, 2018). Thus, if ideas are so amorphous that they often cannot be legally protected, then stealing ideas should have a negligible

effect on how an idea thief's character is evaluated. Additionally, employees in contemporary organizations routinely build off of each other's work, making it difficult to judge who initiated or owns an idea (Rouse, 2018). Taken together, scattered anecdotal evidence suggests that the interpersonal consequences for idea theft may be somewhat benign.

On the other hand, it may not be the case that individuals are permitted to steal ideas with impunity. Decades of research illustrate a host of interpersonal consequences for stealing (e.g., Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Moreover, while previous theft scholarship has typically focused on stealing money and other illegal forms of theft, research on organizational culture shows that individuals face significant consequences for engaging in legal but morally suspect behavior (e.g., Reilly, 2018)—especially when that behavior is attributed to internal characteristics, like self-interest (e.g., O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). Many studies have demonstrated that when a behavior is judged to be rooted in self-seeking motivations, individuals readily punish the target actor, as the behavior is thought to violate cultural norms (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986; Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2002). Further, Turillo et al. (2002) showed that individuals judge self-interested actors negatively and are willing to dispense punishments at their own expense, even when they have no prior knowledge of the perpetrator. Research on person-perception shows that such negative judgments and interpersonal consequences have significant implications for employees and can influence critical work outcomes like selection and promotion (e.g., Cuddy, Glick, and Beninger, 2011). Accordingly, individuals may in fact experience significant interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas, and perhaps even more so than individuals who engage in other theft behaviors, like stealing money.

I contend that more insight into the judgment of idea thieves can be gleaned by comparing an individual who has committed idea theft to one who has committed a different form of theft, rather than no theft at all (Cooper & Richardson, 1986). Given the preponderance of academic research on money theft (e.g., Greenberg, 2002; Zizzo, 2004; Greenberg & Tomlinson, 2004), and the broader notion that stealing money is universally frowned upon, I investigate the interpersonal consequences for idea theft, relative to money theft.

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I develop a novel theoretical perspective on the judgment of—and consequences for—stealing ideas. I posit that idea thieves are judged to have worse character and suffer more severe interpersonal consequences than thieves who steal money. I explain that the attributions individuals form when evaluating an idea or money thief underlie these character judgments, such that idea theft is more strongly attributed to internal characteristics than money theft. Given creative ideas are strongly associated with maintaining a competitive edge (Sutton & Hargadon, 1996), internal attributions, like self-interest (Kelley & Michela, 1980), should be particularly strong in the case of idea theft. In addition, given there may be fewer plausible motivations for stealing an idea compared to money, internal attributions should be particularly strong in the case of idea theft—having fewer salient explanations for a behavior results in stronger internal (versus external) attributions (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Taken together, I argue that individuals form relatively stronger internal attributions for idea theft than money theft and that these attributions result in a more negative perception of the idea thief's character.

Attributions of Theft and Character Judgements

Scholars conceptualize character judgments as impressions—which are formed by a “perceiver”—of a subset of personality traits belonging to the individual being judged (e.g., Cohen et al., 2014). Personality here refers to an individual's typical patterns of thoughts, feelings, and

behavior (Funder & Fast, 2010). Impressions of a target's character are essential, as they have implications for a variety of consequential outcomes, including those specific to the workplace, such as the likelihood of being selected for a job (Cable & Judge, 1997; Parsons, Linden, Bauer, 2001) or receiving a promotion (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011; Louvet, 2007). Previous research shows that when judging a target, perceivers search for indicators of character because they believe it predicts future behavior (e.g., Todorov, 2008; Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011). In the legal system, for example, if a target is accused of a crime, both the judge and members of the jury may seek out information from witnesses about the character of the accused and, in turn, use this character testimony to make determinations of guilt and punishment. However, while testimony may not always be available, research shows that individuals naturally engage in a cognitive process of attribution formation, wherein they evaluate a target's behavior and draw conclusions—i.e., this behavior is a reflection of the target's character or their circumstances—in an effort to make accurate judgments of the person (i.e., Kelley, 1967; Kelley & Michela, 1980). This body of work is known as attribution theory.

Attribution theory is the study of how individuals interpret the causes of other people's behavior (Kelley, 1967). Research shows this psychological process is automatic, given that merely knowing that a behavior occurred is neither satisfying nor sufficient—people want to know *why* the behavior happened (Reeder & Trafimow, 2005), the driving forces behind the action. Decades of previous work has investigated the attributions individuals form when evaluating a behavior as either driven by internal characteristics—stable features of the target person's character—or external characteristics—features of the target person's situation or circumstances (i.e., Kelley, 1967; Kelley & Michela, 1980). This rich body of research shows that attributions are consequential because they exert significant influence over how perceivers judge and interact

with a target. For example, Reeder et al. (2002) show that when aggressive behavior is attributed to internal characteristics like self-interest, the aggressor's character is judged more negatively than when they are perceived to be motivated by external characteristics like threatening stimuli.

Attributions to internal and external characteristics are often determined by the information perceivers have about a given behavior, event, or actor. For example, studies have found that knowing the sex of a target can significantly influence the motives ascribed to their behavior (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). For example, these scholars show that when women get angry in the workplace, their outbursts are attributed to internal characteristics (e.g., a bad temperament), whereas when men get angry, their outbursts are attributed to external characteristics (e.g., a frustrating situation). These same studies show that the attributions made about the target's anger influence the degree to which the target is judged negatively.

Drawing from these findings, I propose that similar attributions may affect the judgment of idea thieves. In other words, individuals may hold beliefs about why a person would steal an idea, and these assumptions might differ from those which govern attributions for other behaviors like money theft. I discuss the nuances of the different attributions below.

Creativity is most commonly described as a mechanism for achieving workplace success (e.g., Hennessey & Amabile, 2010) as it is a primary dimension of the modern conception of job performance (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). As such, employees can make themselves more desirable—and more competitive—by increasing their creative output. Decades of research on workplace creativity speaks to the organizational desirability of creative ideas, illustrating the positive relationship between generating good ideas and succeeding at work (Amabile, 1998). Given the relationship between creativity and positive individual-level outcomes, when an individual steals an idea from a colleague, one compelling explanation is that they did so as the

result of self-interest. Given self-interested behaviors are said to be a reflection of an individual's internal characteristics (Kelley & Michela, 1980), attributions for idea theft may be strongly internal.

Theft scholars illustrate many compelling explanations—reflecting both internal and external attributions—for why individuals steal money. Previous research shows that stunted cognitive moral development—an internal driver of behavior—is a reliable determinant of an individual's propensity to steal (Tomlinson-Keasey & Keasey, 1974). In addition, greed is often referenced as a characteristic that increases an individual's willingness to steal money (e.g., Wang, Malhotra, & Murningham, 2011). In contrast, organizational scholars highlight the material role of situational characteristics in motivating the theft of money. This work attributes theft behaviors to desperation resulting from poverty (Block, 2001; Hannon, 2002), addiction to illicit drugs and gambling (Yeoman & Griffiths, 1996), lack of education (Gross-Schaefer, Trigilio, Negus, & Ro, 2000), and perceptions of inequality (Greenberg, 2002). In sum, when forming attributions for an incident of money theft, individuals may consider a host of potential explanations for why the theft occurred.

Attribution theory states that the more possible explanations available for why a behavior occurred, the weaker the internal attributions associated with the behavior (Kelley & Michela, 1980). In other words, Kelley and Michela (1980) explain that when there are more potential causes for a given behavior, individuals will be less likely to attribute the behavior to the internal characteristics of a target and thus more likely to form external attributions. As such, given theft scholarship presents many compelling explanations for an individual stealing money, attributions for money theft may be strongly external rather than internal.

In this thesis, I posit that idea thieves suffer more negative character judgments than money thieves. The logic underlying this position derives from attribution theory, and my reasoning is twofold. First, creative ideas have positive implications for job performance, which may result in idea theft being attributed to self-seeking motivations—an internal attribution. Second, theft scholarship presents a host of salient causes of money theft, which scholars suggest should result in weaker internal attributions. Taken together, I argue that idea theft may result in stronger internal attributions than money theft. Further, if stealing an idea is thought to reflect the thief's internal characteristics, the theft behavior should be more reflective of their character than their circumstances. Therefore, I argue that stealing an idea engenders internal attributions—to a greater degree than stealing money—which will result in the idea thief being judged to have worse character than a thief who has stolen money.

Hypothesis 1

Participants will report lower character judgment ratings when evaluating a thief who has stolen an idea relative to one who has stolen money.

Hypothesis 2

Participants will report higher internal attributions ratings when evaluating a thief who has stolen an idea relative to one who has stolen money.

Hypothesis 3

Internal attribution ratings will mediate the relationship between idea theft and character judgments such that participants will report higher internal attribution ratings when evaluating an idea thief compared to a money thief, and this will negatively influence the character judgment ratings of the idea thief.

The Interpersonal Consequences of Theft: Coworker Support

A host of previous studies have shown that participants' impressions of a target's character—such as their warmth, sincerity, trustworthiness, morality, helpfulness, and likability (e.g., Fiske et al., 2002; Cohen et al., 2014)—significantly influence their tendency and willingness to interact with the target (e.g., Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011). These character judgments should also impact the severity of interpersonal consequences faced by an individual who commits a form of theft (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011). In other words, if a thief steals an idea and is judged to be of worse character than a thief who steals money, the idea thief should be subjected to more severe interpersonal consequences than the money thief.

Coworker support is considered one of the most consequential forms of interpersonal behavior in organizational settings (Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fischer, 1999; Halbesleben, 2006). In an office setting, bad impressions can often decrease coworker support for a given employee. Reduced coworker support has been shown to have severe consequences for individuals in several domains. Indeed, not only does coworker support impact task-related performance outcomes, including work attitudes and effectiveness (Chibauru & Harrison 2008), but it is also strongly linked to physical health and well-being (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1989). This research thus illustrates how poor character judgments can lead to significant consequences for a thief. Here, I argue that character judgments affect an individual's willingness to engage in supportive coworking behaviors. I hypothesize that idea thieves will be judged to have a worse character than money thieves, and thus coworkers will be less willing to provide support.

Hypothesis 4

Participants will report less willingness to engage in supportive coworker behaviors when evaluating a thief who has stolen an idea relative to one who has stolen money.

Hypothesis 5

Character judgment ratings will mediate the relationship between idea theft and participants' willingness to engage in supportive coworker behaviors such that lower ratings of the idea thief's character will result in less willingness to provide coworker support to the thief.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPERSONAL CONSEQUENCES FOR IDEA THEFT:

EMPIRICS

Across a series of studies, I tested the theory that individuals who steal ideas are judged to have worse character than those who steal money (Studies 1-6). I also tested the hypothesis that these differences in character judgment are the result of individuals forming stronger internal attributions in the case of idea theft relative to money theft (Studies 2a and 2b). Furthermore, I tested the interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas versus money by investigating participants' willingness to engage in supportive coworking behaviors toward the thief (Study 3) and whether they preferred an idea or money thief as a coworker companion in a forced-choice, decision-making game context (Study 6). In addition, in Studies 4 and 5, I explored a critical alternative explanation for the hypothesized effects: that the value of the stolen idea or money drives differences in character judgments. In Study 4, I investigated this alternative explanation by measuring participants' perceptions of the subjective value of the stolen idea versus the stolen money. In Study 5, I again tested this alternative hypothesis, this time by holding constant the monetary value of the stolen idea and stolen money.

Study 1

Method

Study 1 tests Hypothesis 1—that idea thieves will be judged to have significantly worse character than money thieves. Because the theft incidents in this study may not always be publicized through official channels, employees must rely on the informal disbursement of oftentimes limited information about the incident from colleagues. Therefore, Experimental Vignette Methodology (EVM) was the most appropriate methodological approach for comparing

the character judgments of these two types of thieves. EVM is an established method for effectively measuring the causal effect of events on individuals' attitudes (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). The vignettes employed by this study were designed using best practices established by previous scholars (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). In addition, this study was pre-registered on As-predicted.org.

Participants: One hundred and two undergraduate students at a private northeastern university in the United States participated in this study in exchange for extra credit in an introductory course in organizational behavior. All participants successfully completed an engaged-subjects task, and therefore these analyses were conducted on the full sample of participants, $N = 102$ (62 % Female; 89 % Caucasian; M age = 19).

Procedure and Materials: Participants were told that they would be asked to read a vignette about a workplace incident and then evaluate an employee involved in that incident. Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In both conditions, participants read that they had recently begun an HR internship at a Research and Development (R&D) firm and that one day at work, they overheard that a product specialist, John, recently stole either an idea for a new product (coded as condition "1") or money (coded as condition "0") from one of his coworkers (Appendix 1). After reading the vignette, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on what they had learned about the target. Next, participants were asked to rate John on six characteristics and then complete a brief demographics questionnaire that concluded the study.

Character judgments: A 6-item Character Judgements Scale ($\alpha = .92$) was adapted from previous research on both social (e.g., warmth, likability) and moral (e.g., morality, trustworthiness) character impressions (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu, 2002; Cohen, Panter, & Turan, 2012; Goodwin, 2015). This previous work shows that good character—often operationalized as morality and warmth (Goodwin, 2015; Abele, Hauke, Peters,

Louvet, Szymkow, & Duan, 2016)—can be captured by a number of related, yet distinct, traits. Here, I measure character judgments by asking participants to rate the target on six such related character traits: warmth, likability, trustworthiness, morality, helpfulness, and sincerity. Participants rated the target on each trait using a 7-point bipolar Likert Scale (1 = *extremely cold*; 7 = *extremely warm*).

Results

To test my first hypothesis—that idea thieves suffer more negative character judgments than money thieves—I conducted an independent-samples t-test. In support of this first hypothesis, the t-test revealed that when the target thief stole an idea, he was judged to have significantly worse character ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .99$) than when he stole money ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.15$); $t(100) = -2.25$, $p = .02$, 95% CI $[-.90, -.05]$, $d = .44$.

Study 2a

Method

Study 2a builds on the initial findings of Study 1—that idea thieves are judged to have significantly worse character than money thieves (H1). In this study, I explored the hypothesized psychological mechanism of this effect: internal attributions. Here, I sought to capture the implicit theories individuals develop when evaluating an idea thief and their motives for taking ideas or a money thief for taking money. I hypothesized that participants would form stronger internal attributions for idea theft compared to money theft (H2). I further hypothesized that these stronger internal attributions for idea theft mediate the difference in character judgments between idea and money thieves (H3). To test these hypotheses, I followed the general protocol of Study 1 with three differences. First, the vignette employed by Study 1 was adapted such that participants did not assume the role of an HR intern. Second, after reading the randomly assigned vignette, participants

were asked to describe their reactions to the theft behavior in a free-response question format. Their responses were later coded for attributions by two independent raters. Finally, considering sample determination recommendations set forth by previous work (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn 2011), I collected a larger sample here than in Study 1 ($N = 102$).

Participants: Four hundred and two participants were recruited to participate in this study for pay from an online subject recruitment tool, TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016). Exclusion criteria were applied such that participants were excluded from the analyses if they failed the engaged-subjects task used in Study 1; those who failed an attention check at the end of the study were also excluded. In addition, given this study explored attributions for theft, participants were excluded if the independent coders determined they had not provided an interpretable response to the question (i.e., “If the participant did not respond to the question or wrote gibberish.”) Fourteen participants were excluded for failing the manipulation check, five for failing the engaged-subject task, and eight for not providing a response to the free-response attribution measure. All subsequent analyses were conducted on the remaining 376 participants (66.5% Female; M age = 37.7; M full-time work experience = 6.5 years). The final panel of participants represents 25 industries, including Technology, Research & Development, Marketing, and Financial Services.

Procedure and materials: As in Study 1, participants were informed that they would read a brief description of an employee’s behavior and then be asked to report their evaluations of that employee’s character. Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: idea theft or money theft. Following random assignment, participants read one of two variations on a vignette: “John works for a research and development firm. Recently, he took credit for his coworker’s idea for a new product.” (In the other vignette, John stole money.) After reading this

brief vignette, participants were asked to share, in a free-response format, their beliefs about what drove John to steal the idea—what reasons he could have for stealing the idea versus money. Finally, participants provided their character evaluations for John and completed a brief demographics survey.

Character judgments: Character judgments were measured using the same 6-item scale used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .92$).

Internal Attributions: Internal attributions were measured using an open-response formatted question, wherein participants were asked to provide written descriptions of what they believed drove John to steal. To assess these responses, two coders who were blind to the experimental conditions and the hypotheses of the study coded each response on the degree to which it reflected internal attributions to the theft, defined as reflecting internal characteristics (i.e., the thief's personality or disposition) rather than external characteristics (i.e., the thief's circumstances or environment). Prior to this coding assignment, coders were trained to understand that these internal-external ratings should reflect the degree to which attributions demonstrated a belief that the cause for the behavior was located “inside” the person or “outside” the person as described by Kelley and Michela (1980). Each coder was then given a scale of 1-7 (*1 = extremely external, 7 = extremely internal*). I have provided below example responses from both conditions that were rated by both coders as 7 = extremely internal or 1 = extremely external.

1. Idea Theft Condition

Internal: “I think what motivated John is that he is a very selfish, self-centered person. I think he could also be the type that enjoys depriving someone of something that's theirs. He could be sadistic like this.”

External: “He has been feeling that he might lose his job and that if he does he is terrified of becoming homeless. He stole the idea because he feels that his situation is completely desperate.”

2. Money Theft Condition

Internal: “[John] could be dishonest and greedy. Maybe that is why he stole it.”

External: “Maybe John was having money problems himself, and needed to desperately pay his rent or he’d be evicted. He also could be an addict stealing to support his addiction.”

Given the inter-rater correlation was significant ($ICC = .83, p < .001$), the attribution scores of both coders were averaged together ($M = 3.73, SD = .34$).

Results

To once again test Hypothesis 1—that idea thieves are judged to have significantly worse character than money thieves—I conducted an independent-samples t-test. Replicating the results of Study 1, this t-test revealed that when the target thief stole an idea, he was judged to have significantly worse character ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.11$) than when he stole money ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.08$); $t(374) = -3.33, p = .001, 95\% CI [-.60, -.15], d = .34$.

To test my second hypothesis—that idea thieves engender stronger internal attributions relative to money thieves—I looked to the coded open-response data. Using these data, I conducted an independent-samples t-test to investigate Hypothesis 2—that when a thief steals an idea, individuals will form stronger internal attributions than when a thief steals money. In support of my second hypothesis, this t-test revealed a significant difference in the internal attributions formed in the case of idea theft versus money theft, such that when a thief stole an idea, internal

attribution ratings were significantly higher ($M = 4.83$; $SD = 1.47$) than when he stole money ($M = 2.69$; $SD = 1.66$); $t(374) = 13.136$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[1.81, 1.45]$, $d = 1.36$.

To test my third hypothesis—that internal attribution ratings mediate the relationship between idea theft and character judgments—I conducted mediation analyses using Model 4 of PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), bootstrapping 10,000 iterations. The effect of idea theft on internal attributions ($b = 2.13$, $p < .001$) and the effect of internal attributions on character judgements ($b = -.13$, $p < .001$) were both significant. Furthermore, the effect of idea theft on character judgments reached nonsignificance ($b = -.08$, $p = .53$) once internal attributions were included in the model. The indirect effect of the model was $b = -.29$, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from $-.45$ to $-.14$, demonstrating statistical significance.

Study 2b

Method

Study 1 supports Hypothesis 1 by establishing a main effect of idea theft on more negative character judgments. Study 2a offered preliminary support for the hypothesized mechanism that idea theft results in stronger internal attributions than money theft (H2), which mediates the differences in character judgment ratings (H3). Study 2b provides a direct replication of the findings from Study 2a using a new measure of internal attributions.

Participants: A panel of 403 participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016) for this study. As in Studies 1 and 2a, rigorous screening criteria were applied to the sample. Twenty-three participants were excluded for failing a manipulation check, and four participants were excluded for failing an engaged-subject task. All analyses were conducted on the remaining 376 participants (65% Female; M age = 37.6; M full-time work experience = 14.9 years). Twenty-five industries were represented in this participant panel,

including business (10.3%), Tech (7.1%), Education & Training (9.3%), and Accounting/Financial Services (7.1%).

Procedure and material: As in earlier studies, participants read a vignette about a thief who stole either an idea or money from a coworker—the same vignettes employed by Study 2. Next, participants completed a measure of internal attributions drawn from previous research (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008; Burton, Taylor, & Barber, 2014), tailored to this study’s vignette. Finally, participants provided character judgments for the target, utilizing the same measure from Studies 1 and 2a, and then completed a demographics questionnaire.

Internal Attributions for Theft: Internal attributions for theft were measured on a 4-item scale adapted from previous work (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008; Burton, Taylor, & Barber, 2014). Following previous research, all attribution items were measured on a 9-point Likert scale. Two items were designed to measure internal attributions for theft (e.g., “John is the type of person who steals from others”), and four items measured external attributions for theft (e.g., “John was driven to steal by the situation he was in”). External attribution items were reverse-coded, and a composite scale was created to measure internal attributions ($\alpha = .78$).

Results

Replicating the results of Studies 1 and 2a, and confirming Hypothesis 1, the idea thief was judged to have significantly worse character ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .92$) than the money thief ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.0$); $t(382) = -3.654$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-.55, -.16]$, $d = .40$. Study 2b also supported Hypothesis 2 in that participants formed stronger internal attributions when a thief stole an idea ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.18$) than when he stole money ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.18$); $t(382) = 5.064$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[.37, .85]$, $d = .50$. In addition, Study 2b supported Hypothesis 3, such that internal attributions mediated the effect of idea theft on character judgements. Mediation analyses were

conducted using Model 4 of PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), bootstrapping 10,000 iterations. The effect of idea theft on internal attributions ($b = .61, p < .001$) and the effect of internal attributions on character judgements ($b = -.45, p < .001$) were both significant. Furthermore, the effect of idea theft on character judgements reached nonsignificance ($b = -.08, p = .34$) once internal attributions were included in the model. The indirect effect of the model was $b = -.28$, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from $-.40$ to $-.16$, demonstrating statistical significance.

Study 3

Method

Study 1 established a main effect of idea theft on character evaluations, while Studies 2a and 2b explained this effect as being driven by internal attributions for theft. Study 3 tests the fourth and fifth hypotheses—that participants are less willing to engage in supportive coworking behaviors when a thief has stolen an idea versus money (H4); and that character judgments mediate this effect, such that idea thieves will be judged to have worse character and thus participants will be less willing to provide coworker support (H5). Study 3 contributes to the previous findings by investigating downstream interpersonal consequences—less coworker support—for stealing ideas. To this end, Study 3 utilized a measure of supportive coworking behaviors adapted from Chiaburu & Harrison (2008).

Using a new vignette manipulation, Study 3 also replicates my previous findings. In Studies 1 and 2, participants were presented with very little information about the context within which the theft incident occurred. While scholars suggest this lack of context can benefit experimental vignette methodology—allowing researchers to isolate a phenomenon of interest (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014)—it can detract from the realism of the experimental manipulation. As

such, for this study, I designed a richer and more immersive vignette which I describe in more detail below.

Participants: For this study, a panel of 401 participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016). As in Studies 1 and 2, ten participants were excluded for failing a manipulation check, and fifteen participants were excluded for failing the engaged-subject task. All subsequent analyses were conducted on the remaining 376 participants (58.5% Female; M age = 35.7; M full-time work experience = 6 years.) Twenty-five industries were represented in this panel, including Education (15.4%), Medical (12%), Tech (9%), and Law (5.3%).

Procedure and materials: The general protocol of this study followed that of Studies 1 and 2. Participants were randomly assigned to the idea or money theft condition and then presented with a vignette. In this new vignette, participants were asked to assume the role of a product development specialist working at a successful research and development firm (R&D) in Chicago, IL. They received information about their department and role, including performance evaluation criteria and office layout. Finally, participants were told that during lunch with a friend from work, they learned of a theft incident that happened between two of their colleagues in the department. Participants in the idea theft condition were told that “your colleague John stole all the credit for a product idea he’d been working on with your other colleague, Dave.” In the money theft condition, participants were told that “your colleague John stole a bunch of money from your other colleague, Dave.” Finally, participants were informed that given their lunch companion would have only shared this information if they knew it to be true. After reading the vignette, participants underwent three rounds of comprehension testing. Following comprehension testing, participants reported their judgments of the target thief’s character—the same measured employed by Studies 1 and 2—

and then completed an adapted version of the Chiaburu & Harrison (2008) supportive coworking behavior measure.

Supportive Coworking Behaviors: Participants' willingness to engage in supportive coworking behaviors toward the thief was measured using an adapted scale from Chiaburu and Harrison (2008). This scale ($\alpha = .94$) included six supportive coworking behaviors; participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they were willing to: (1) help the coworker with a difficult task, (2) share information with the coworker, (3) cheer the coworker up, (4) show understanding if the coworker is struggling, (5) invite the coworker to collaborate on a project relevant to their expertise, and (6) invite the coworker out to lunch.

Results

Study 3 provides further support for Hypothesis 1 in that idea thieves were judged more severely ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 1.29$) than money thieves ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.43$); $t(374) = -3.58$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-.78, -.22]$, $d = .36$. It also supports Hypothesis 4 in showing that idea theft led to less supportive coworking behaviors for idea thieves ($M = 3.31$; $SD = 1.50$) relative to money thieves ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.51$); $t(374) = -4.53$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-1.01, -.40]$, $d = .46$. In addition, Study 3 supports Hypothesis 5 in that character judgements partially mediated the effect of idea theft on supportive coworking behaviors. Mediation analyses were conducted using Model 4 of PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), bootstrapping 10,000 iterations. The effect of idea theft on character judgements ($b = -.50$, $p < .001$) and the effect of character judgements on supportive coworking behaviors ($b = -.71$, $p < .001$) were both significant. Furthermore, the effect of idea theft on supportive coworking behaviors became less significant ($b = -.38$, $p = .003$) once internal attributions were included in the model. The indirect effect of the model was $b = -.32$, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from $-.50$ to $-.14$, demonstrating statistical significance.

Study 4

Method

Previous work asserts that the value of the stolen materials can play an important role in how people assess wrongdoing (Howe & Brandau, 1988). This suggests that the comparative values of the stolen object—the idea or the money—could explain the effects found in my earlier studies. To this point, I have provided no explicit information about the value of the stolen idea or money in an effort to control for the effect of value on my hypothesized main effects. However, it may be that participants perceive ideas and money—even without explicit information—to be of different value. Furthermore, the participants may have perceived the stolen idea to be worth more than the stolen money, thus influencing participants' assessments of the target thief's character as well as their willingness to provide coworker support. Therefore, Study 4 builds on my previous findings in two ways. First, I examine value as an alternative explanation of my earlier findings. To do this, I measure participants' perceptions of the subjective value—i.e., their ratings of value on a 9-point scale—of the stolen idea or stolen money, depending on the experimental condition. Second, this study tests a direct replication of the results found in Study 1.

Participants: Three hundred and ninety-five participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016) to complete this study for pay. Four subjects were excluded for failing an engage-subjects task. All subsequent analyses were conducted on the remaining $N = 391$ participants (62% female; 71% Caucasian; M age = 35; M full-time work experience = 13.69).

Procedure and Materials: Study 4 closely followed the protocol of Study 1. First, participants completed an engaged-subjects task and then were randomly assigned to the idea or money theft condition. Next, participants read the vignette employed by Study 1. Following

comprehension testing and using the same measures as earlier studies, I asked participants to report their judgments of the target thief's character ($\alpha = .94$). Finally, participants reported the degree to which they perceived the stolen idea or stolen money to be valuable. They rated the value of the stolen idea or money on a bipolar, 9-point Likert Scale (i.e., 1 = *Has no value*; 9 = *Extremely valuable*).

Results

The results of Study 4 indicated no support for subjective value as an alternative explanation for why idea theft engenders more negative character judgements than money theft. A stolen idea was not perceived as significantly more valuable ($M = 7.43$, $SD = 7.59$) than stolen money ($M = 7.59$, $SD = 1.52$), ($p = .28$). Providing support for earlier findings, Study 4 showed a significant difference in the judgement of the two types of thieves, with idea thieves judged more negatively ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.32$) than money thieves ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.27$); $t(389) = -2.448$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-.57, -.06]$, $d = .24$.

Study 5

Method

Study 5 further investigated value as an alternative explanation for the difference in character judgments and participants' willingness to provide coworker support to an idea thief versus a money thief. In Study 4, I measured participants' perceived value of the stolen idea or money and found there was no significant difference in the subjective valuation of the two. Study 5 adopted a new approach to assess the role of value in judging the characters of idea and money thieves. Here, I attached a fixed, objective monetary value to what was stolen. In each condition, the value of the stolen idea or money was said to be \$1,000. Therefore, Study 5 extends the findings of Study 4 by exploring the role of objective value in the relationship between idea theft (versus

money theft), character judgments of a thief, and participants' willingness to provide coworker support. In addition, this study further replicates my previous results.

Participants: A panel of 404 participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016) to participate in this study. Eight participants were excluded for failing an engaged-subjects task, and twelve were excluded for failing a comprehension measure, resulting in a final sample of 382 (56% Female; M age = 35; M full-time work experience = 13.6 years). Twenty-five industries were represented by this sample, including Education & Training (11.3%) and Business Development (9.4%), and Medical/Health (7.9%).

Procedure and materials: The procedure of this study closely followed that of Study 1, and the vignette used in Study 1 was adapted for this study. The primary adaptation was informing participants that either an idea worth \$1,000 or \$1,000 in cash had been stolen. Character judgments and supportive coworking behaviors were measured using scales from earlier studies.

Results

Study 5 provides no evidence for value as an alternative explanation for the effects found in earlier studies. Replicating the results of Studies 1-4, Hypothesis 1 was supported, such that idea thieves were judged to have significantly worse character ($M=2.39$, $SD=1.04$) than money thieves ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.27$); $t(369.83) = 5.601$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] [-.90, -.43], $d = .57$. In support of Hypothesis 4, participants were significantly less willing to engage in supportive coworking behaviors toward the idea thief ($M = 2.40$; $SD = 1.36$) compared to the money thief ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.61$); $t(372.88) = -8.185$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] [-1.54, -.94], $d = .83$, even though the value of the stolen material was the same.

Study 6

Method

To this point, I have provided support for Hypotheses 1-3, such that idea thieves are judged to have significantly worse character than money thieves (H1) and that these more negative character judgments are the result of participants forming stronger internal attributions in cases of idea theft relative to money theft (H2 and H3). Also, I find support for Hypotheses 4 and 5—participants were less willing to provide coworker support to an idea thief (H4), and this effect was driven by the idea thief being judged to have significantly worse character (H5). In addition, I have tested the alternative explanation that value drives the effect of idea theft on character judgments in two studies—one measuring the perceived value of the stolen object and the other holding the monetary value of the stolen idea and money constant. Study 6 builds off of these previous findings by providing further evidence for idea theft resulting in severe interpersonal consequences. This study immersed participants in a coworker selection game, asking them to choose an idea thief or a money thief to accompany them while they completed a series of tasks. Participants were incentivized to think carefully about their choice of a coworker and told they could win a bonus if they completed all of the study’s tasks successfully, but that their choice of coworker could influence the likelihood of their success.

Participants: Two hundred participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016) to take part in a coworker selection game. Six participants were excluded for failing an engaged-subjects task, resulting in a final sample of 194 (62% Female; M age = 36.82; M full-time work experience = 14.69 years).

Procedure and materials: For this study, participants were told they would be playing a game and that their game character was a designer at a research and development (R&D) firm. Participants—referred to here as “players”—were told that winning the game would result in a financial reward (i.e., a “bonus”). Next, players were told they would be asked to complete two

tasks. First, players were asked to select a coworker to accompany them during the game as a member of their department at the firm. Furthermore, they were told that, as in a traditional workplace setting, the coworker they selected could influence their game environment—for instance, by creating unforeseen problems as they completed tasks. More specifically, players were told that surprise challenges would pop up during the game and that these challenges could help or hinder them. Players were also told that these challenges would be uniquely related to the coworker they chose and thus that they should think carefully about whom they added to their department. Next, players were informed they would have a choice between two potential coworkers—both of whom had recently engaged in workplace misconduct. After completing a series of game comprehension tasks, players were introduced to the two potential coworker characters: (1) John, who had recently stolen an idea from a colleague, and (2) Dave, who had recently stolen money from a colleague. These potential coworker characters were presented in random order. Next, players made their choice—add John or Dave to their department. After making their choice, players completed a brief demographics survey. Finally, players were told they could win the bonus and complete the game early by successfully completing a task—properly identify two images. After completing this task, the game ended, and all participant players received the bonus.

Coworker Selection: Coworker selection was measured by having participants complete one forced-choice coworker selection question—they could select the idea thief or the money thief as their coworker in the game. This study used the same descriptions of thieves from Study 1. In other words, the idea thief was described as an individual who had recently stolen a colleague's new product idea, and the money thief as an individual who had recently stolen money from a colleague. No other information was provided to describe the potential coworkers.

Results

In Study 6, a greater proportion of participants chose to work with the money thief ($n = 132$, 66%) than the idea thief ($n = 68$, 34%). A binomial test revealed these proportions were significantly different from chance ($p < .001$). Thus, Study 6 provides further evidence that idea theft carries more significant interpersonal consequences than money theft.

Discussion of Results

These studies were conducted to explore the severity of interpersonal consequences individuals face for stealing ideas. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I argued that idea thieves—compared to money thieves—suffer more negative character judgments and interpersonal consequences. Further, I asserted that the strength of internal attributions associated with idea theft versus money theft drives these differences, such that idea theft is more strongly attributed to characteristics of the thief than their situation. I tested these arguments across six empirical studies. As predicted, I found that idea thieves were judged to have significantly worse character than money thieves. Results showed that strong internal attributions for idea theft help to explain this effect. In terms of downstream interpersonal consequences, I found that poor character judgments were a driver of individuals being less willing to provide coworker support to an idea thief relative to a money thief. In addition, I found that given a choice to work with someone who has a reputation for stealing money or ideas, participants preferred to work with the thief who had stolen money.

CHAPTER 5:

STEALING CREATIVE OR PRACTICAL IDEAS

Idea generation is an important part of the creative process (e.g., Perry-Smith & Manucci, 2017). However, not all ideas are considered creative. Creativity scholars define creative ideas as those that are both novel and useful (Amabile, 1988). While all ideas—even those that are useful but not novel—are a product of the creative process and thus relevant to understanding creativity in organizations (Loewenstein & Mueller, 2016; Cronin & Loewenstein, 2018), the novelty element is what typically makes creative ideas so coveted (e.g., George, 2007; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010).

Given the importance of novelty in the evaluation of creativity, it may be intuited that those who steal creative ideas are judged to have a worse character than those who steal practical—i.e., useful but not novel—ideas. Novel ideas can be rare and irreplaceable, and thus their theft may be deemed particularly egregious. Additionally, in the case of stealing creative ideas, there may be a more personal element to the theft. Previous studies have found that doing creative work can feel like a form of self-disclosure—individuals believe their creative ideas reflect who they are as a person (Goncalo & Katz, 2020). Such strong ties between individuals and their creative ideas may influence the judgment of a thief because the idea theft behavior is perceived to be an especially personal affront.

Here, I expand on the theoretical perspective that idea theft carries significant interpersonal consequences by investigating the severity with which an idea thief's character is judged for stealing a creative or practical idea. Put differently, to what extent does the creativity of a stolen idea influence the interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas? I argue that given creators form strong psychological attachments to their ideas (Rouse, 2013), and these attachments can be

stronger for novel ideas (Goncalo & Katz, 2020); therefore, stealing a creative idea should warrant harsher judgments than stealing a practical one, even if the person evaluating the idea thief is not the victim of the theft. In Study 7 of this dissertation, I investigate the degree to which the creativity of a stolen idea influences the judgment of the idea thief. I hypothesize an idea thief who steals a creative idea will be judged more harshly than one who steals a practical idea.

Hypothesis 6

Participants will report lower character judgment ratings when evaluating an idea thief who has stolen a creative idea relative to one who has stolen a practical idea.

Study 7

Method

Study 7 contributes to the empirical efforts of this dissertation in two critical ways: (1) I consider whether stealing a creative (i.e., novel and useful) idea versus a practical idea affects how the thief is judged while holding constant the degree to which the idea is received positively and (2) I explore these judgments in a new industry setting (consulting for an airline company during a global pandemic). This study was pre-registered on Aspredicted.com.

Participants: Four hundred participants were recruited from Prolific Academic to complete this study. Three participants were excluded for failing an engaged-subjects task, resulting in a final sample of 397 (64% Female; 83% = Caucasian; M age = 46).

Procedure and materials: For this study, participants were instructed to read a vignette in which they were an account manager at a consulting firm specializing in helping companies generate revenue (adapted from Mueller, Goncalo, & Kamdar, 2011). Participants read that a large international airline company had recently solicited their organization to come up with ideas to generate revenue during the global pandemic. Next, participants were randomly assigned to the

creative idea theft condition or practical idea theft condition. In the creative idea theft condition, participants read that their colleague, Sam, had recently pitched an idea at a department meeting. The idea Sam pitched was “very creative,” which I defined for participants as an idea that is both novel and useful (Amabile, 1988). In the practical idea theft condition, participants read that the idea Sam shared was “very practical,” which I defined for participants as an idea that is useful, but not novel. In both conditions, participants read that the head of the department liked Sam’s idea. Finally, participants read that it was later discovered that Sam had actually taken the idea from another colleague. After reading the vignette, participants were given a chance to reflect on what they had read. Next, they were asked to evaluate Sam’s character. Finally, participants completed a manipulation check and then provided demographic information.

Character judgment: Participants rated Sam, the target, using the Character Judgements Scale from previous studies ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

To test the manipulation of creativity, I asked participants to rate the degree to which the stolen idea was creative on a bipolar Likert Scale (1 = *not at all creative*; 7 = *extremely creative*). An independent-samples t-test revealed that the stolen idea was rated as significantly more creative in the creative idea theft condition ($M = 6.07$; $SD = 1.03$) than in the practical idea theft condition ($M = 2.89$; $SD = 1.74$); $t(395) = -22.098$, $p < .001$; Cohen’s $d = 2.21$.

Next, I tested Hypothesis 6, that participants would report lower character judgment ratings in the case of an individual stealing a creative idea compared to a practical one.

To test this hypothesis, I conducted an independent-samples t-test analyzing the differences in character judgment ratings across the two conditions. In support of Hypothesis 6, I found that when the target idea thief stole a creative idea, they were judged to have worse character ($M = 2.96$; SD

= .96) than when they stole a practical idea ($M = 3.18$; $SD = .86$); $t(395) = 2.358$, $p = .01$; Cohen's $d = .24$.

Discussion of Results

In this chapter, I posited that stealing a creative idea engenders more severe interpersonal consequences than stealing a practical idea (H6). The logic underlying this argument is that, as previous research shows, creative ideas are intimately tied to the self (Rouse, 2013) to the extent that sharing an idea feels like revealing a part of one's self (Goncalo & Katz, 2019). Therefore, if an individual steals a creative idea, they should be subjected to more negative character judgments and interpersonal sanctions than if they steal a practical idea, given it may seem to be an even more egregious form of idea theft. In Study 7, I found support for Hypothesis 6, such that when a thief stole a creative idea, they were judged to have significantly worse character than a thief who stole a practical idea.

CHAPTER 6

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & IDEA THEFT

To this point, I have argued that individuals face significant interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas—above and beyond those associated with stealing money. Across six studies, I show that idea thieves are judged to have worse character and are less likely to receive coworker support relative to an individual who has stolen money. Further, Study 7 shows that these interpersonal consequences are particularly severe when an idea thief steals a creative idea (versus a practical one). Across these studies, I illustrate a pattern of interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas, such that idea theft is judged and punished harshly—even more so than the theft of money. That said, it may not be universally true that idea theft is subject to severe judgment in all cases and under all circumstances. Chapter 6 of this dissertation investigates the role of organizational culture in the judgment, punishment, and emulation of idea theft behaviors.

A rich history of management scholarship shows that culture is a powerful force affecting nearly every aspect of organizational life (i.e., O'Reilly & Chatman, 1991; Chatman & Spataro, 2005; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). One of the most important functions of organizational culture is to help individuals define what is—and what is not—acceptable behavior (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). As such, when an individual's behavior is thought to be ill-fitting cultural norms, informal sanctions are swiftly dispensed (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). As I posit in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, while interpersonal idea theft poses no legal issue, it may yet be punished via informal mechanisms for social control. As such, the cultural lens through which idea theft is viewed may influence the degree to which it is judged and punished.

While there are several dimensions of organizational culture that may influence the judgment of idea theft, the individualism-collectivism (IC) dimension is argued to have the greatest

impact on cross-cultural psychology and is considered the most significant difference among cultures (Triandis, 2001). Goncalo and Staw (2006) explain that individualistic organizational cultures are those that value individual autonomy, the pursuit of personal goals, and defining one's self as distinct from other members of the group. In contrast, collectivistic cultures prioritize group harmony, the pursuit of collective interests, and a stronger identification with the group itself rather than one's unique contributions.

While individualism-collectivism is intimately tied to organizational scholarship on behavioral ethics (i.e., Chen, Chen, Meindl, 1998) and creativity (i.e., Goncalo & Staw, 2006), it is not readily apparent that idea theft is more egregious in one cultural setting than the other. On the one hand, given collectivists hold such strong group-oriented values, an easy case could be made for idea theft provoking greater backlash when collectivistic norms are salient. For example, stealing an idea from a colleague is the antithesis of promoting group harmony, and therefore punished to the same extent as other counternormative behaviors (Vardi & Weiner, 1996). In addition, if idea theft is associated with a self-seeking orientation, it violates yet another cultural value or collectivism—the prioritization of group over personal goals—and should engender harsh judgment and social sanctions (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996).

On the other hand, members of individualistic cultures value independence, uniqueness, and personal achievement, which may color their interpretation of idea theft a particularly dark shade. Given creativity is so commonly revered as a key indicator for success (Tierney & Farmer, 2002), idea theft may be interpreted as a direct attack on one's ability to capitalize on their own efforts. In addition, individuals develop close psychological bonds with their ideas (Rouse, 2013) and, in sharing their creative ideas with others, experience self-disclosure (Goncalo & Katz, 2020). Consequently, idea theft may seem to violate individualistic norms twofold. First, it interferes with

others' ability to engage in normative behavior—to demonstrate uniqueness and individuality (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Second, it provides evidence of inauthenticity, which carries particularly negative consequences in contexts wherein individuals are celebrated and respected for their creativity (Reilly, 2018). Finally, research shows that collaboration can make attributing idea ownership to one individual difficult and messy (Rouse, 2013). As such, given individualistic cultures place such a premium on independence from the group, it may be easier to attribute idea ownership to one individual. In other words, if collaboration occurs less frequently within individualistic organizations, idea ownership claims may be granted more merit.

I posit that organizational culture—specifically, the individualism-collectivism dimension—shapes implicit theories of idea ownership which, in turn, influences the judgment and punishment of idea theft behavior. I argue that collectivistic values and norms, like cooperation (Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016), result in weaker theories of idea ownership and thus more lenient judgment and punishments associated with idea theft. Conversely, individualistic values will bolster theories ownership, resulting in harsher judgments and more severe punishments for idea theft behaviors. In addition, previous scholarship explains that the mechanisms underlying the judgment and punishment of an unethical act can also influence the diffusion of that behavior—i.e., the unethical behavior is more socially contagious (Wiltermuth, Vincent, & Gino, 2017). If such is the case, individuals should demonstrate a greater willingness to emulate idea theft behaviors when cultural cues facilitate weak theories of idea ownership. Therefore, I propose that when collectivistic values are made salient, individuals hold weaker theories of idea ownership which increases their willingness to emulate idea theft.

Hypothesis 7

When collectivistic values are primed, participants will rate idea theft as less unethical than when individualistic values are primed.

Hypothesis 8

When collectivistic values are primed, participants punish idea theft more leniently than when individualistic values are primed.

Hypothesis 9

When collectivistic values are primed, participants report weaker theories of idea ownership than when individualistic values are primed.

Hypothesis 10

Theories of idea ownership will mediate the effect of cultural values on judgments of idea theft unethicality, such that priming collectivistic values will result in weaker theories of ownership, leading to idea theft being judged as less unethical than when individualistic values are primed.

Hypothesis 11

Theories of idea ownership will mediate the effect of cultural values on the punishment of idea theft, such that priming collectivistic values will result in weaker theories of ownership, leading to idea theft being punished more leniently than when individualistic values are primed.

Hypothesis 12

When collectivistic values are primed, participants report higher rates of intent to emulate idea theft behaviors than when individualistic values are primed.

Hypothesis 13

Theories of idea ownership will mediate the effect of cultural values on the punishment of idea theft, such that priming collectivistic values will result in weaker theories of ownership, leading to higher reports of idea theft emulation than when individualistic values are primed.

Study 8

Method

In Study 8, I tested Hypothesis 7—that when collectivistic values are primed, participants will rate idea theft as less unethical than when individualistic values are primed. As in previous studies, here, I employ Experimental Vignette Methodology, immersing participants in the role of an employee at a successful R&D firm, and then priming individualistic and collectivistic values using manipulations from Goncalo and Staw (2006). The vignettes employed by this study were designed using best practices established by previous scholars (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). In addition, this study was pre-registered on As-predicted.org.

Participants: For this study, N = 445 participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016). Three participants were excluded for failing an engaged-subject task, and eight participants were excluded for failing a manipulation check. All subsequent analyses were conducted on the remaining 453 (49% Female; M age = 33; M full-time work experience = 13 years.)

Procedure and materials: For this study, participants completed an engaged-subjects task and then read a randomly assigned vignette similar to those employed by my previous studies. In this study, participants read an adapted version of Vignette 2, wherein they were asked to assume the role of a product developer at a successful R&D firm in Chicago, IL, and then provided with a series of details about their role and department. Next, participants underwent three rounds of comprehension testing to confirm they understood the details of the vignette before progressing. In this adaptation (see Vignette 3 in Appendix to review in full), participants received two pieces of information not included in Vignette 2. First, based on random assignment to either the collectivistic (coded as condition “0”) or individualist (coded as condition “1”) organizational

culture condition. The description of each culture was designed modeling the definitions of individualism and collectivism applied by Goncalo and Staw (2006):

Individualistic Culture Condition:

“Your department has a culture that emphasizes its value of individual autonomy, the prioritization of personal goals over group goals, and the definition of one’s self in terms of one’s individuality and uniqueness from the group.”

Collectivistic Culture Condition:

“Your department has a culture that emphasizes its value of group harmony, the prioritization of collective goals over personal goals, and the definition of one’s self in terms of groups or teams one belongs to.”

Next, participants were told they would be reviewing a workplace misconduct claim filed by one of their colleagues and then asked to complete an incident evaluation, including their reactions and recommendation for punishment. Participants were informed this was the usual protocol for resolving conflict between two department employees. See below for this description:

“In the event that there’s conflict between members of the department, the protocol is for two product specialists—who are not directly involved in the conflict—to meet and propose an appropriate resolution. Both product specialists are given information about the reported incident and then asked to complete an Incident Evaluation Form.”

After receiving this information, participants were informed of the complaint they were to evaluate. Specifically, participants were told:

“One day, the head of your department asks you and another product specialist into their office to discuss a complaint that was recently filed. One of your colleagues, Sam, reported that another one of your colleagues, Avery, has been taking credit for their product ideas during pitch meetings.

Your department head has asked you to complete an Incident Evaluation Form to share your thoughts on the reported incident and recommendations for potential action.”

Finally, after reviewing the incident, participants were asked to complete an incident evaluation form created using measures of immorality (i.e., immorality; unethicity) and punishment (i.e., punishment severity; punishment harshness), both adapted from Wiltermuth, Vincent, and Gino (2017).

Unethicity: Unethicity was measured using a 2-item scaled employed by previous scholars (Wiltermuth, Vincent, & Gino, 2017). For this measure, participants were asked to rate how unethical and how immoral the idea theft behavior was, using a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = *extremely ethical*; 7 = *extremely unethical*). These two items were combined to form a composite measure ($\alpha = .80$)

Punishment: Punishment was measured using a 2-item scaled employed by previous scholars (Wiltermuth, Vincent, & Gino, 2017). For this measure, participants were asked to rate how severely and how harshly the idea theft behavior should be punished using a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = *extremely leniently*; 7 = *extremely severely*). These two items were combined to form a composite measure ($\alpha = .93$).

Results

Study 8 provides support for Hypothesis 7 in that participants randomly assigned to the collectivistic organizational culture condition judged the idea theft behavior to be less unethical ($M = 5.73$; $SD = 1.06$) than participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 6.03$; $SD = .83$); $t(441) = 3.254$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [M diff] [.12, .47], $d = .31$. In addition, this study supports Hypothesis 8, such that participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition recommended more lenient punishment for the idea theft behavior ($M = 4.55$; $SD = 1.21$) than participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 4.96$; $SD = 1.16$); $t(441) = 3.675$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] [.19, .64], $d = .35$.

Study 9

Method

Study 8 provided initial support for the hypothesis that when individualistic values are primed, participants view idea theft as less unethical (H7) and punish the behavior more leniently (H8). Study 9 builds on these findings by investigating a mechanism of this effect—implicit theories of idea ownership. In this study, I test hypotheses 9, 10, and 11 such that making collectivistic cultural values salient results in weaker theories of idea ownership (H9) relative to individualistic cultural values and that these idea ownership beliefs mediate the relationship between unethicality judgments (H10) and punishments for idea theft (H11). In addition, Study 9 tests a direct replication of the results found in Study 8. As such, the protocol for this study closely follows that of Study 8 with one exception: prior to the incident evaluation report, participants were asked to complete a survey on their perceptions about the department. This survey was a 6-item measure of theories of idea ownership developed using theoretical descriptions of idea ownership in organizations provided by Hannah (2004). Finally, this study was pre-registered on As-predicted.org.

Participants: For this study, a panel of 400 participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016). As in Studies 1 and 2, thirteen participants were a manipulation check or the engaged-subject task. All subsequent analyses were conducted on the remaining 387 participants (53% Female; M age = 34; M full-time work experience = 13 years.)

Procedure and materials: As in Study 8, participants completed an engaged-subjects task and were then randomly assigned to the role of a product specialist working in an R&D department with a collectivism-oriented culture or one with an individualism-oriented culture. Next, participants underwent three rounds of comprehension testing to make sure they understood the

details provided in the vignette and were paying attention. Finally, participants completed a 6-item measure of ownership beliefs and then the same measures of unethicity and punishment employed by Study 8.

Theories of Idea Ownership: This construct was measured using six items developed from a qualitative study on employees' idea ownership beliefs in organizations (Hannah, 2004). In this paper, the author makes several recommendations for how organizations can manipulate employees' psychological ownership of ideas by instilling and reinforcing beliefs like, "all ideas generated in the workplace belong to the organization," and "the ideas would have been developed without the training, support, and resources of the organization." Thus, a measure of individuals' theories of ownership was developed to model these sentiments. The scale includes three items measuring the belief that ideas belong to the creator of the idea (e.g., "These ideas belong to Sam"), and three reverse-coded items measured the belief that ideas belong to the organization (e.g., "These ideas belong to the department."). Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely disagree*; 7 = *extremely agree*). These items were combined to create a composite measure of participants' theories of idea ownership ($\alpha = .79$).

Unethicity: Study 9 employed the same measure of unethicity judgments used in Study 8 ($\alpha = .82$).

Punishment: Study 9 employed the same measure of punishment recommendations used in Study 8 ($\alpha = .95$).

Results

Study 9 provides a direct replication my previous findings—supporting Hypotheses 7 and 8—as and also provides evidence for Hypotheses 10 and 11. To test hypotheses 7-9, I conducted a series of independent-samples t-tests. In support of Hypothesis 7, the first t-test revealed that

participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition judged the reported idea theft behavior as less unethical ($M = 5.46$; $SD = 1.18$) than the participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 5.86$; $SD = .86$); $t(385) = -3.792$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-.61, -.19]$, $d = .39$. In support of Hypothesis 8. A t-test showed that participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition recommended more lenient punishment of the idea theft behavior ($M = 4.16$; $SD = 1.37$) than participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 4.85$; $SD = 1.18$); $t(385) = -5.287$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-.94, -.43]$, $d = .53$. Finally, providing evidence to support Hypothesis 9, an independent-samples t-test showed such that when collectivistic values are primed, participants report weaker theories of idea ownership ($M = 3.77$; $SD = 1.01$) than when individualistic values are primed ($M = 4.58$; $SD = 1.01$); $t(385) = -7.859$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-1.01, -.61]$, $d = .79$.

To test Hypotheses 10 and 11—that theories of idea ownership mediate the effect of organizational culture on unethicity judgments and recommendations for punishment—I conducted two mediation analyses, both using Model 4 of PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), bootstrapping 10,000 iterations. In the first analysis, testing theories of idea ownership as a mediator of unethicity judgments, I found that the effect of organizational culture on theories of idea ownership ($b = -.80$, $p < .001$) and the effect of theories of idea ownership on judgments of idea theft unethicity ($b = .12$, $p = .01$) were both significant. Furthermore, the effect of organizational culture on judgments of unethicity became less significant ($b = -.29$, $p = .009$) once the theories of ownership measure was included in the model. The indirect effect of the model was $b = -.10$, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from $-.19$ to $-.02$, demonstrating statistical significance.

In the second mediation analysis, testing theories of idea ownership as a mediator of punishment recommendations (H11), I found that the effect of organizational culture on theories of idea ownership ($b = -.80, p < .001$) and the effect of theories of idea ownership on punishment recommendations ($b = -.23, p < .001$) were both significant. Furthermore, the effect of organizational culture recommendations for punishment became less significant ($b = -.49, p < .001$) once the theories of idea ownership measure was included in the model. The indirect effect of the model was $b = -.19$, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from $-.32$ to $-.08$, demonstrating statistical significance.

Study 10

Method

To this point, I have found evidence to support Hypotheses 7 and 8 in both Studies 8 and 9. In addition, in Study 9, I found support for Hypothesis 9, such that when collectivistic cultural values were primed, participants reported weaker theories of idea ownership. Finally, the results of Study 9 provided evidence for my hypothesized mechanism, theories of idea ownership. Further, Study 9 showed that theories of idea ownership mediate the role of organizational culture on both unethicity judgments (H10) and recommendations for punishment (H11), such that participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition reported weaker theories of idea ownership, which, in turn, led to lower unethicity ratings for idea theft behavior and more lenient punishment recommendations. The purpose of Study 10 is to extend these findings by exploring the role of organizational culture in the social contagiousness of idea theft behaviors. In this study, I test participants' intentions to emulate idea theft behaviors (H12), as well as whether theories of idea ownership mediate this potential effect (H13). Study 10 follows the general protocol of Study 9 with one primary exception: participants were asked to indicate their intent to emulate idea theft

behaviors. A measure of social contagiousness—operationalized as *emulation* of the target behavior (Wiltermuth, Vincent, & Gino, 2017)—was adapted from previous research to fit the vignette employed by Studies 8 and 9 (Vignette 3). This study was pre-registered on As-predicted.org.

Participants: For Study 10, 398 participants were recruited from TurkPrime (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2016). Following pre-registered criteria for inclusion, 10 participants were excluded for failing the engaged-subject task or a manipulation check. All subsequent analyses were conducted on the remaining 388 participants (48% Female; M age = 33; M full-time work experience = 12 years).

Procedure and materials: As in Studies 8 and 9, participants completed an engaged-subjects task and were then randomly assigned to the role of a product specialist working in an R&D department with a collectivism-oriented culture or one with an individualism-oriented culture. Next, once again, participants underwent three rounds of comprehension testing to make sure they understood the details provided in the vignette and were paying attention. Finally, participants completed the same measures of theories of idea ownership, unethicity judgments, and recommendations for punishment employed by Study 9. Finally, participants completed a measure of idea theft behavior emulation.

Theories of Idea Ownership. Study 10 employed the same measure of theories of idea ownership that was used in Study 9 ($\alpha = .85$).

Unethicity: Study 10 employed the same measure of unethicity judgments used in Studies 8 and 9 ($\alpha = .76$).

Punishment: Study 10 employed the same measure of punishment recommendations used in Studies 8 and 9 ($\alpha = .95$).

Emulation: To measure emulation, I followed a similar protocol as Wiltermuth, Vincent, and Gino (2017). I presented participants with a brief scenario explaining, “we'd like you to imagine that while working in your department you overhear one of your colleagues briefly mention an idea for a creative new high-tech appliance. Thinking to yourself about the idea, you come up with a really creative way to present the idea at the upcoming pitch meeting.” Next, I asked participants how likely they were to (1) move forward with the idea and develop the pitch and (2) present the idea during the upcoming pitch meeting. These two items were measured using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *extremely unlikely*; 7 = *extremely likely*) and together formed a measure of idea theft emulation ($\alpha = .94$)

Results

Study 10 provides a direct replication the results found in Studies 8 and 9, and additional evidence for hypotheses 7-9. First, in support of Hypothesis 7, an independent-samples t-test showed that participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition judged the reported idea theft behavior as less unethical ($M = 5.54$; $SD = 1.03$) than the participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 5.79$; $SD = 1.02$); $t(396) = 2.354$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [M diff] [.10, .04], $d = .23$. In support of Hypothesis 8, a t-test demonstrated that participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition recommended more lenient punishment for the idea theft behavior ($M = 4.09$; $SD = 1.32$) than participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 4.85$; $SD = 1.16$); $t(396) = 6.106$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] [.51, 1.01], $d = .61$. Also, providing evidence to support Hypothesis 9, a t-test showed such that when collectivistic values are primed, participants report weaker theories of idea ownership ($M = 3.71$; $SD = 1.16$) than when individualistic values are primed ($M = 4.60$; $SD = 1.16$); $t(396) = 7.616$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] [.65, 1.11], $d = .76$. Finally, in support of Hypothesis 12, Study 10 demonstrated that

participants in the collectivistic organizational culture condition indicated a greater intent to emulate idea theft behaviors ($M = 3.82$; $SD = 1.92$) than participants in the individualistic organizational culture condition ($M = 3.01$; $SD = 1.86$); $t(396) = -4.239$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [M diff] $[-1.17, -.43]$, $d = .42$.

To test the mediating role of theories of idea ownership in the relationship between organizational culture and participants' intentions to emulate idea theft, I used Model 4 of PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), bootstrapping 10,000 iterations. The results of this analysis showed the effect of organizational culture on theories of idea ownership ($b = .93$, $p < .001$) and the effect of theories of idea ownership on participants' intent to emulate idea theft behaviors ($b = -.23$, $p = .004$) were both significant. Furthermore, the effect of organizational culture on intent to emulate idea theft behaviors became less significant ($b = -.67$, $p = .001$) once the theories of ownership measure was included in the model. The indirect effect of the model was $b = -.21$, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from $-.39$ to $-.05$, demonstrating statistical significance.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of these studies was to understand the role of organizational culture—individualism-collectivism, specifically—on the judgment, punishment, and emulation of idea theft behaviors. Across three studies, I show that when collectivistic cultural values are made salient, participants judge idea theft as less unethical, punish idea theft behaviors more leniently, and report a greater intent to emulate idea theft. In addition, in two of these studies (Study 9 and 10), I show that theories of idea ownership mediate these effects. In other words, collectivistic values translate to weaker theories of idea ownership—i.e., participants are less willing to assign ownership to the individual who came up with the idea—which drives the effect of organizational culture on the three outcomes of interest in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this dissertation is to define idea theft, illustrate the different phenomena it encompasses, and begin the empirical study of the consequences of interpersonal idea theft behaviors. I define idea theft as: pursuing—or taking credit for—an idea that is perceived to be owned by someone else. Further, I propose this as a unifying term, encompassing several phenomena involving the stealing of an idea. For example, in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I outline a series of types of idea theft, including those that involve error-prone unconscious processes resulting in someone claiming ownership of an idea they didn't come up with (cryptomnesia, Brown & Murphy, 1989); infringement on intellectual property (IP theft); and an individual intentionally pursuing or claiming credit for another individual's idea (interpersonal idea theft). These and other types illustrate an opportunity for a more organized program of scholarship on the stealing of ideas and draws attention to the paucity of research on one type of idea theft with particular relevance to interpersonal dynamics in organizations—Interpersonal idea theft. Each of the 12 studies in this chapter focuses on the judgment of, and consequences for, interpersonal idea theft.

This dissertation is among the first theoretical and empirical attempts to understand the types of idea theft, the severity of consequences it engenders, and the boundaries of these consequences. As such, following the delineation of the types of idea theft, I turn my attention to a series of empirical questions, which in broad terms begins to inform individuals on the degree to which idea theft warrants concern.

In Chapter 3, I build a novel theoretical perspective grounded in attribution theory (Kelley, 1967) on the judgment of idea thieves versus money thieves. Stealing money served as a

compelling comparison to stealing ideas, given its long-standing history in the academic study of deviant workplace behaviors and moral judgment (e.g., Greenberg, 2002; Wiltermuth, Vincent, & Gino, 2017). In this chapter, I posit that idea theft is perceived to be more reflective of the thief—internal attribution—than their circumstances—external attributions. Further, I argue that stronger internal attributions in the case of idea theft result in more negative judgments of a thief's character, resulting in an idea thief being judged to have worse character than a thief who has stolen money. Moreover, based on previous research illustrating the consequences of negative impressions on interpersonal behavior (i.e., Fiske 2018), I suggest that given idea theft evokes more negative character judgments, individuals are less willing to provide coworker support to someone who steals and compared to someone who steals money.

In Chapter 4 of my dissertation, I test this theoretical account—as well as a compelling alternative explanation that an idea is more valuable than money—across six studies. The results of these studies provide consistent empirical support for my hypotheses. In Studies 1-2 (both a & b), I found that idea thieves were judged to have significantly worse character than money thieves (H1); Studies 2a and 2b showed that idea theft was more strongly attributed to internal motivations than money theft (H2); these two studies also showed that internal attribution ratings mediated the effect of idea theft and character judgments (H3). Study 3 extended these findings by replicating the results of Study 1 while also testing the effect of idea theft on individuals' willingness to provide coworker support to an idea thief relative to a money thief. This study showed that individuals were significantly less willing to provide coworker support to an idea thief than a money thief (H4) and that harsher judgment of idea thieves mediated this effect (H5). Additionally, Study 6 provided more evidence for the interpersonal consequences of stealing ideas by showing

that given a choice to work with someone who has a reputation for stealing money or ideas, individuals preferred to work with the thief who had stolen money.

In addition to testing Hypotheses 1-5, it was necessary to consider an important alternative explanation for this pattern of results. Previous research suggests that the severity with which a deviant behavior—like theft—is judged can be driven by the value or amount of what was stolen (Howe & Brandau, 1988). While value serves as a compelling alternative explanation, I argued that it was not the driver of these effects. I addressed this alternative explanation by investigating the effect of the value of the stolen object—perceived value (Study 4) and objective value (Study 5)—on character judgments and coworker support in two experiments. First, in Study 4, I measured the perceived value of the stolen idea and stolen money and analyzed the differences in perceived value across the idea theft and money theft condition. Next, in Study 5, I equated the monetary worth of both the stolen idea and stolen money—each worth \$1,000. In Study 4, I found no effect of what had been stolen on the perceived value of the stolen object. In other words, the stolen idea was not perceived to be significantly more valuable than the stolen money. In Study 5, I found that when the monetary value of the stolen idea and stolen money were held fixed, the previous findings held such that idea thieves were judged to have worse character and participants were less willing to provide them coworker support. In sum, across these two studies I found no evidence for value as an alternative explanation for the effect of idea theft on character judgments.

In addition to defining an overarching term of idea theft (Chapter 2) and exploring the gravity of interpersonal consequences thieves face for stealing ideas compared to money (Chapters 3 and 4), in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis I investigated some of the many potential boundaries that govern the consequences for idea theft. In Chapter 5, I explored the notion that it may be worse to steal and creative idea than a practical one. For this chapter, I tested the effect of the stolen

idea's creativity on the judgment of the idea thief's character. I hypothesized that stealing a creative idea should magnify the interpersonal consequences, resulting in harsher judgments. The logic underlying this argument is that, as previous research shows, creative ideas are intimately tied to the self (Rouse, 2013) to the extent that sharing an idea feels like revealing a part of one's self (Goncalo & Katz, 2020). Therefore, if an individual steals a creative idea, they should be subjected to more negative character judgments and interpersonal sanctions than if they steal a practical idea, given it may seem to be an even more egregious form of idea theft. In this study—Study 7 of this dissertation—I found that idea thieves faced significantly worse judgment for stealing a creative idea than a practical one.

In Chapter 6, I sought to explain the role of organizational culture in consequences—judgment, punishment, and social contagion—associated with idea theft. Organizational culture is one of the most important lenses through which employees discern between acceptable and unacceptable behavior (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). Further, if an individual's behavior is thought to be ill-fitting the cultural setting, members of the group may dispense severe social punishments (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). In this chapter, I argued that collectivistic values would ameliorate the judgment and punishment of idea theft but also increase individuals' willingness to emulate idea theft behaviors. I posited that given collectivism values collaboration, group cooperation, and identification with the group vs. one's self (Goncalo & Staw, 2006), individuals primed with collectivism would form weaker theories of idea ownership; in turn, these weaker theories of ownership should result in more lenient judgments and punishment of idea theft, while increasing relative social contagion given the behavior is viewed less negatively than when ideas are stolen in the context of individualism.

I tested these arguments across three studies—Studies 8-10 of this dissertation. In Study 8, I found that individuals primed with collectivistic cultural values judged idea theft behaviors to be *less* unethical and recommended more lenient punishments than individuals primed with individualism. In Study 9, I replicated the results of Study 8; found that collectivism engendered weaker theories of idea ownership than individualism; and that individuals' theories of idea ownership explained the relationship between organizational culture and the judgment and punishment of idea theft behaviors. Finally, in Study 10, I replicated the findings of Studies 8 and 9; found that individuals primed with collectivism reported greater intent to engage in idea theft behaviors; and that theories of ownership explained this effect.

In sum, across ten empirical studies, I investigate the interpersonal and social consequences for idea theft. These studies illustrate the severity of consequences for stealing ideas by comparing it to stealing money and also shed light on how idea theft is interpreted (i.e., as behavior indicative of the individual's internal motivators). I further build upon these findings by showing that stealing creative ideas is worse than stealing practical ideas and also that collectivistic cultural values may mitigate the judgment and punishment of idea theft given weaker theories of ownership while also increasing the emulation of idea theft behaviors. The following sections will describe the theoretical contributions of this work, its limitations, and some of the many opportunities for future academic scholarship.

Contribution to Theory

This dissertation contributes to the field of organizational behavior in several ways. First, I provide an overarching term of idea theft and a structured delineation of types. While scholars in diverse fields study phenomena that fall within the broader notion of idea theft, these literatures have yet to cross paths, thus limiting the insights that can be gleaned through the consideration and

comparison of these interrelated constructs (Capelli & Keller, 2013). In an effort to simplify the research process for those who wish to study the stealing of ideas, in Chapter 2, I review phenomena—the types of idea theft—that all concern the taking of, or taking credit for, ideas that are perceived to be owned by someone else. By identifying these types and illustrating their fundamental unifying characteristic, I provide an overarching term and facilitate a beginning to an organized study of idea theft. Further, by delineating these types, I draw attention to the nuances of idea theft and highlight opportunities for future theoretical and empirical efforts. I elaborate more on these opportunities in our discussion of future research directions.

The second contribution of this work is that it explores the consequences for interpersonal idea theft—an idea theft incident occurring between two individuals. While surveys show that this form of idea theft frequently occurs in the workplace (Forbes, 2016), the degree to which stealing an idea from a colleague results in interpersonal consequences is yet unclear. In this dissertation, I investigate the severity of consequences people face for stealing ideas by comparing an idea thief to one who has stolen money. In addition to illustrating the severity of these consequences, I inform the literature's understanding of individuals' beliefs surrounding why people steal ideas. I theorize and demonstrate that when evaluating a case of idea theft, individuals believe that it is a behavior driven by stable features of the self. These internal attributions inform the degree to which the theft reflects poorly on the thief's character. Such negative character judgments, in turn, decrease others' willingness to provide the thief with coworker support.

The third contribution of this work is its illustration of a psychological process by which individuals evaluate different types of theft. In this study, I explore how the object of theft affects the attributions formed to explain the incident, which can influence the severity of consequences the thief experiences. Further, this theoretical perspective explains that the object of

theft informs attributions for the behavior and accounts for the degree to which a thief's character is judged negatively. By illuminating this process, the present work contributes to both the academic and legal community's understanding of how different forms of wrongdoing may carry different degrees of consequences (e.g., Pittarello, Rubaltelli, & Motro, 2016).

In addition, this work contributes to the field by demonstrating that the severity of judgments for stealing a creative idea is not the same as stealing a practical one. This work runs parallel to previous findings suggesting that creativity is an intimate experience resulting in close psychological bonds with one's idea (Rouse, 2013). In addition, previous work argues that sharing creative ideas is to disclose more about one's self than sharing practical ideas (Goncalo & Katz, 2020). My research echoes these findings by suggesting that stealing creativity may be perceived to cause more harm than stealing an individual's practical contributions. That said, more research should be done on this topic, and I expand on these ideas in the section on future research. Another contribution of this dissertation is that it illustrates the role of organizational culture on the consequences of idea theft. Given that culture is a powerful force behind nearly every aspect of organizational life (i.e., O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996), an important beginning in the study of idea theft is to understand the role of cultural context. The present work shows that cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, specifically, shape individuals' theories of idea ownership. These theories of ownership contain judgments of whether employees own the creative ideas they generate or if they instead belong to the organization. Further, my research explains that these theories of ownership the consequences associated with idea theft—i.e., judgments and punishments—but may also influence the frequency with which idea theft behaviors occur.

Limitations

One limitation of this work is the experiments are based on vignettes, which could influence the degree to which participants believe such a theft actually occurred. While this method could influence the believability of the claim, information about one's coworkers' behaviors and transgressions is often gained through informal channels like gossip—a form of communication which could be said to resemble the vignette structure (Beersma, Van Kleef, & Dijkstra, 2019). In addition, accusations, whether true or false, can have far-reaching consequences for the accused's reputation (e.g., Jordan, 2018). In other words, merely the perception that a theft occurred can have significant interpersonal consequences for the accused. Therefore, while the present work may not fully capture the responses of individuals witnessing idea theft firsthand, it may capture the perspective of a potentially larger audience group—those who hear about it after the fact.

A second limitation of this work is the lack of information given about the thief, even in our more immersive vignette (Vignette 2). A more realistic description of the incident might, for example, include more information about the thief's interactions with colleagues in the past—not just that they had previously stolen an idea. Thus, this limitation introduces several potential boundary conditions for the findings of this work (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). While these potential boundary conditions raise questions of when or whether the effects of idea theft on interpersonal consequences manifest, I chose this approach to facilitate an understanding of how individuals react to idea theft behaviors, absent additional information. In other words, this empirical approach isolates the effect of stealing ideas on the judgment of an individual's character. Given the lack of prior research on this phenomenon, isolating this effect may provide a starting point from where future research efforts can explore the boundaries of the interpersonal consequences for stealing ideas.

A third limitation of this dissertation is its need for follow-up studies on how the creativity of a stolen idea influences consequences for the thief. While Study 7 demonstrates that an idea thief who steals a creative idea is judged more harshly than one who steals a practical idea, there is much room here to expand upon this finding. Therefore, the claims that can be made about why it's worse to steal a creative idea—i.e., that ideas are more personal—are limited by a lack of empirical support. However, this limitation provides a fruitful direction for future research efforts and paves the way for a meaningful contribution to the creativity literature and the study of idea theft.

Future Directions

Given the paucity of research on interpersonal idea theft in organizations, there are myriad—and important—future directions for this stream of academic scholarship. First, the role of organizational context in the judgment of idea theft and thieves should be further explored. While research suggests that individuals are keenly aware of the threat of idea theft (Reilly, 2018; Forbes, 2016), it is not clear if this threat is as salient in some organizational contexts but not others. For example, the present research suggests that idea theft isn't perceived as negatively in collectivistic organizational cultures as it is in individualistic ones. While this may be the case for third-party observers—as the participants in this study played the role of a third-party evaluator—individuals may still fear having their ideas stolen, even while holding collectivistic values. In other words, the perspective of the perceiver—victim or third party—may influence how idea theft is interpreted. What's more, while a victim of idea theft may be quite disturbed by the experience, if it occurs in a collectivistic environment, their concerns may be more easily dismissed than if it occurred in an individualistic environment.

Building off of this, it is important to understand the role of cultural values in the conception of idea theft and whether it is considered a form of wrongdoing. Put differently, organizational culture may influence what constitutes idea theft and what does not. There may be higher standards for idea theft claims when the group emphasizes collaboration and the pursuit of group goals, as is the case in collectivism (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Taken together, an important next step for this work is to explore how characteristics of the environment in which idea theft occurs—like cultural setting—influence how it is interpreted by the actors involved, as well as the consistency of these interpretations across actors' perspectives.

While the characteristics of the context in which idea theft occurs may influence the judgment of stealing ideas, future research should also consider how individuals judge this transgression based on the characteristics of the victim. For example, did the idea thief steal from someone of higher or lower status (i.e., subordinate or supervisor)? Given that leaders typically have the ability to exert power over their subordinates (e.g., Magee & Galinsky, 2008), idea theft may be seen as an abuse of that power and thus judged more harshly. Conversely, individuals may at times be incapable of, or uninterested in, seeing an idea through to completion (Girotra, Terwiesch, & Ulrich, 2010)—if perceivers believe it is likely that the stolen idea would have been abandoned, the thief may be judged less severely. Furthermore, if a thief is seen to have pursued an abandoned idea, it may actually have positive implications for their reputation.

In addition, attributes of the idea thief may also influence the way idea theft is interpreted and judged. For example, if the thief has a reputation for successfully championing good ideas, like Steve Jobs, perceivers may be more lenient given the idea is more likely to benefit the organization if it comes to fruition. Furthermore, if the idea thief is known for creative work, perceivers could assume the thief was confident in their ability to build on it in their own way

(Gough, 1979), to the extent that the thief's final product would no longer resemble the idea they "stole."

In sum, when considering what might influence the judgment of idea theft, characteristics of the context, victim, and idea thief present a plethora of opportunities for future research. In addition, while understanding the judgment of idea theft is a meaningful first step for this research agenda, there are many worthwhile directions for this work relating to other aspects of organizational life. For example, future work should consider the psychological toll it takes to experience idea theft. Other work should investigate both the antecedents and consequences of knowledge workers fearing idea theft. Even further, scholars should explore the mindset and perspective of those who willingly engage in idea theft to gain insight on—for instance—when what types of ideas are most vulnerable to being stolen.

Practical Implications

The findings of this dissertation suggest that idea theft carries significant consequences for coworker interactions, which are linked to organizational effectiveness and success (e.g., Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). This work cuts against common assumptions made about idea theft. For example, one perspective on interpersonal idea theft disregards its potential consequences, arguing that it may not matter where an idea originates so long as the champion (possibly a thief) intends to use the idea to better the organization (*The Cut*, 2016). The present work paints a very different picture of how idea theft might play out in the workplace. While organizations may ultimately benefit from stolen ideas, the indirect costs associated with idea theft could be even more interpersonally destructive than employees stealing money from one another. In short, these findings indicate that practitioners should take this form of workplace misbehavior very seriously.

Conclusion

Amidst the rapid growth of the knowledge economy, organizations and individuals alike are constantly seeking new and more efficient mechanisms for achieving creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1988; Lum Akinola, & Mason, 2017; Acar, Tarakci, & van Knippenberg, 2019). That said, as more ideas are generated are shared (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009; Uzzi & Spiro, 2005), individuals may have more opportunities to steal ideas or have their ideas stolen. Recent surveys show that idea theft is commonplace in organizations (Forbes, 2016), and the same is true for other creative industries, like comedy (Reilly, 2018). Thus far, there has been a paucity of research on idea theft and its implications for knowledge workers and organizations. While mixed public opinions and salient anecdotes suggest that idea theft warrants little concern, the empirical findings of this dissertation suggest otherwise. Across ten studies, I illustrate several interpersonal and social consequences for idea theft behaviors, including judgments of the thief, supportive coworking behaviors, and punishment recommendations. Further, the present work extends these findings by showing there are more severe interpersonal consequences for stealing creative versus practical ideas and that organizational culture plays a prominent role in the judgments and punishments for idea theft behaviors. Taken together, this body of work demonstrates that idea theft is a relevant and consequential organizational behavior worthy of continued scientific exploration.

APPENDIX

Vignette 1:

*"John works for a research and development firm. Recently, (**"he took credit for his coworker's idea for a new product."** OR **"he stole some money from his coworker."**)*

Vignette 2:

You are a product development specialist at a successful R&D firm in Chicago, IL. Your department is responsible for designing toys for children between the ages of 12 and 16.

Your performance is primarily measured by the number of successful products you create per quarter. While performance is measured at the individual level, some department members (i.e., you and your colleagues) will work together on projects and share the credit.

Your department is made up of 20 product specialists, like yourself, and two supervisors. The office space is an open floorplan, so everyone has their own unique workspaces, but only the supervisors have offices with doors that close and lock.

*As is the case in most workplace settings, incidents involving colleagues occur, and people tend to hear about it through the grapevine. While having lunch with a friend from work, you hear that your colleague: (**"John stole all the credit for a product idea he'd been working on with your other colleague, Dave."** OR **"John stole a bunch of money from your other colleague, Dave."**)*

Given the history you have with this friend, you believe they would only share this information with you if they knew it to be true.

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