HUNGRY HUNGRY COWORKER: THE IDENTIFICATION OF LUNCH THEFT AS A FORM OF PERSON-DIRECTED COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

Of Psychology

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Cody J. Bok

May 2016

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ABSTRACT

Theft is a widely studied phenomenon in the workplace. However, much of this research focuses on organizational theft (i.e., stealing from the company), and no studies to date have investigated coworker lunch theft, although preliminary research indicates it may be a chronic problem for employees. The goal of my study is to examine lunch theft in the workplace and establish it as a person-directed counterproductive work behavior. The present study investigates what motivates a lunch thief to steal fellow coworkers' food and/or drink that they brought to work using the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to explain the occurrence of lunch theft behavior. This research will help identify lunch theft as a new form of counterproductive work behavior and lead to future research identifying the impact this behavior has on victims and organizations as a whole.

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Introduction

Research in the field of workplace theft has primarily focused on organizational theft, the stealing of property that belongs to the organization, such as supplies, equipment, merchandise, or cash (e.g., Greenberg, 1990; Poulston, 2008; Wimbush & Dalton, 1997). However, little research has examined lunch theft; this may be due in part to the perception among managers that its impact on the organization is improbable. Despite the seeming insignificance of this form of theft to organizations, lunch theft may indirectly impact organizations through the chronic stress and distraction that it may cause employees. For example, an indirect effect of lunch theft on the organization may be manifested in the disruptions caused by not having lunch and the distraction of finding food and/or the individual responsible for the theft.

A Google search with the terms "lunch," "theft," and "work" yields 23.1 million results. Many of the primary hits include forums of individuals discussing how a lunch thief has impacted their work day for the worse. According to Pounds (2012), 31% of employees have experienced lunch theft up to three times per week. Although these examples suggest that lunch theft is a widespread phenomenon, no empirical studies to date have investigated this frustrating problem. However, past research has shown that other minor forms of mistreatment (e.g., incivility) are associated with poor employee outcomes such as decreased mental and physical health (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008), decreased pay, benefit, and supervisor satisfaction (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), and decreased job satisfaction in general (Penney & Spector, 2005). Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that employees who are victims of frequent lunch theft at the hands of others at work may experience similar negative outcomes. As such, an understanding of why lunch theft occurs is needed to reduce any costs, both to employees and by extension organizations, associated with it.

The purpose of this study is to introduce the concept of employee lunch theft as a new form of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) and to identify the antecedents of employee lunch theft in order to better understand and prevent this insidious form of CWB. Although typical forms of employee theft (i.e., theft of organizational property) are generally explained via social exchange theories which focus on retaliation for injustice, I argue that those theories are insufficient for explaining employee lunch theft. Instead, I will use the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to explain the motivation and underlying decision-making process used by a potential lunch thief. This theory focuses on how attitudes toward the act, subjective norms established by work peers, and perceived behavioral control over the situation impact an individual's intentions to engage in a specific behavior (e.g., lunch theft). By applying each of these aspects to a potential thief's thought process, I will better understand lunch theft behavior.

In the following sections, I first review CWB and how lunch theft fits within this framework and yet is novel to the literature. Next, I will discuss the theory of planned behavior and how it can be used as the foundation of the mechanism for lunch theft. Finally, the methods for the study will be explained along with my rationale for why these methods will help me understand the lunch theft process.

Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

CWB is defined as a "behavior that harms organizations or organizational stakeholders" (Spector & Fox, 2010, p. 133). CWB is considered to be a behavioral strain that occurs in response to stressful working conditions (Spector & Fox, 2005), and it has been linked to negative effects on employees and their productivity (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). Although CWB is a general construct, it can be split into two distinct facets. Certain CWBs may impact the organization; these are labeled organization-directed CWBs (CWB-O). Other CWBs are aimed

toward specific persons; these are labeled person-directed CWBs (CWB-P; Oh, Charlier, Mount, & Berry, 2013). CWB-Os consist of employees wasting company time via long breaks, deliberately slowing their pace of work, being tardy and/or absent, or damaging company equipment (Kessler, Bruursema, Rodopman, & Spector, 2013). CWB-Ps include employees making threats, spreading rumors, ostracizing others, and attempting to damage a coworker's career (Raver, 2013).

Lunch theft is defined as "the appropriation of food and/or beverage items belonging to other employees from a common food storage area (e.g., break-room, kitchen, lunchroom) in the workplace" (Penney, 2014). Solely examining the definition of CWB, a clear case can be made for including lunch theft as a person-directed CWB as any harm it inflicts affects individuals. Specifically, lunch theft harms employees by depriving them of their property and needed sustenance. Moreover, having one's lunch stolen may also require employees to expend time and effort finding replacement food or go without a meal altogether, both of which could negatively impact their well-being and productivity.

To date, the study of employee theft has generally focused on employees stealing property from the organization. Organizational theft is typically viewed through the lens of equity theory (Adams, 1965) and distributive justice. According to equity theory, individuals compare their efforts (inputs) and subsequent rewards (outputs) with those of others to determine if equity is present or not (Adams, 1965). When employees feel as though they have experienced inequity (e.g., a pay cut), they may attempt to restore equity by finding other ways to increase their rewards (Meier & Spector, 2013). For example, in Greenberg's (1990) seminal article, employees who felt as though they were underpaid (underpayment inequity) were more likely to steal items from the company than employees who were not underpaid.

From equity theory evolved the concept of distributive justice, which is the perception of a fair appropriation of rewards and resources (Homans, 1961). The justice literature generally frames theft as driven by a desire for retaliation in alignment with rules of social exchange (Blau, 1964). A key feature of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is the rule of reciprocity, which is when repayment in-kind is given (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For example, when employees feel supported by their supervisor, they will reciprocate the feeling via supporting the supervisor and expressing positive attitudes about the organization. Likewise, when there is a perception of low distributive justice – i.e., when employees feel they are underpaid given their efforts – employees may reciprocate by engaging in organizational theft (Greenberg, 1993). Reciprocity is also viewed as a "folk belief" wherein people get in return what they deserve (i.e., "reap what they sow") which can be both positive and negative (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For example, an individual may steal a lunch from a fellow employee because that employee hurt them in the past; this would be an example where both pieces of the exchange are negative.

In keeping with social exchange theory, it is plausible that lunch theft is also targeted reciprocation. For example, an individual may get upset at a coworker for not staying late to help with a project, so they reciprocate by taking some of that coworker's food the next day. However, the mechanisms of organizational theft may not be sufficient to explain lunch theft for at least two reasons. First, lunch theft may or may not be directed toward a specific individual target, particularly in the case of unmarked property. Thus, rules of reciprocity and social exchange cannot apply if a thief is unaware of who owns the food. Second, lunch theft does not target the organization but an individual, and as such, different processes may apply. In fact, Greenberg (2002) argued that employees would be less apt to steal from coworkers than from their company due to greater empathy toward another individual as opposed to a faceless

corporation. In his study, employees took a generic survey and were given $2 for their participation. The first group was told that the $2 came from the organization and the second group was told that the $2 came from the personal funds of a few managers from the local office. Employees were instructed to count out $2 in pennies on their own after they were told who sponsored the survey (i.e., the company or a few managers). Greenberg's (2002) results confirmed that employees stole more money from the organization than from individual managers.

Although Greenberg's (2002) study provides evidence that employees may be reluctant to steal from other people as opposed to their organization, employees may yet steal from others under certain conditions. For example, Greenberg's study examined theft of money and not other property as is the case in lunch theft. Recent research suggests that that individuals' willingness to steal non-cash items can be very different from their willingness to steal cash. Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008) conducted several experiments to investigate the conditions under which individuals would be more likely to engage in dishonest behavior. They introduced the idea of self-concept maintenance whereby individuals must balance their motivation to attain something of value through dishonest means and their desire to retain a positive self-concept by behaving honestly. One such way to achieve this balance is to reframe dishonest actions via morally compatible terms and rationalizations (Mazar et al., 2008). They argued that dishonest actions that can be easily reinterpreted in a more positive and self-serving manner are considered malleable (Mazar et al., 2008). For example, participants in their study were given a task for which they would receive compensation based on self-reported performance and randomly assigned to either be compensated with cash or tokens that could be exchanged for cash. They reasoned that tokens would provide a greater opportunity for participants to categorize their

actions as morally acceptable because they had no real world value. They found that more participants lied about their performance to increase their compensation in the token condition versus the cash condition. Their study suggests that claiming non-cash items can be more readily justified in a way that reduces moral apprehension than claiming money. In this way, a lunch thief may claim someone else's lunch without strong moral apprehension. Thus, traditional predictors of employee theft may be insufficient to fully explain lunch theft, and different mechanisms and factors may influence whether employees decide to steal lunches from coworkers. I explore some possibilities in the following sections.

To understand how the antecedents of lunch theft may be different, I turn to the existing literature surrounding petty theft which Silberman (1976) defines as stealing something worth less than $50. In general, there are three components that constitute the decision of whether or not to engage in petty theft: a motivated perpetrator, a suitable target, and a lack of guardianship (Cohen & Felson, 1979). A motivated perpetrator is required as no theft would occur without an individual who is motivated to steal. Motivation for theft and petty crime may stem from a desire for status, material goods, or excitement seeking (Farrington, 1990). A suitable target represents an opportunity for theft. For example, an unmarked lunch in a shared work fridge would be a suitable target in the case of lunch theft. Guardianship is the presence of ordinary individuals going about routine activities (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Though it appears unrelated to theft, guardianship is strongly negatively related to occurrences of illegal acts. A study by Burns, Kinkade, and Bachmann (2012) looked at petty theft of change left in cars at a local car wash. Cars brought through a car wash had a known amount of change left in the cup holders and were turned over to a full service car wash. The 'customer' then either waited inside or outside, with the outside 'customer' representing the guardianship condition. They found that car wash

employees stole more change when there was no guardian present. Thus, guardianship may be relevant to employee lunch theft as an employee may be less likely to steal food when others are present.

In sum, the literature on petty theft indicates that such theft requires a suitable target, lack of guardianship, and a motivated perpetrator. However, little research on petty theft has focused on what motivates perpetrators. The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) is a motivational theory that may help to fill in gaps in the petty theft literature. This theory examines attitude, perceived control, and norms in predicting intention to perform a behavior. I explain how the theory of planned behavior can be used to explain lunch theft in the following sections.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) stems from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) which is a motivational theory that demonstrates that the best predictor of a given behavior is one's intention to perform that behavior. According to TRA, intentions are a determined by two key variables: one's attitude toward a given act and a subjective norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitude toward the act is defined as one's believed likelihood of how favorable the consequences of performing the action will be given a specific situation. For example, employees would have a positive attitude toward taking a coworker's lunch if they believed it would make them full, be a type of food they enjoy, and have no allergens in it. Subjective norms are comprised of what peers would expect the individual to do in a particular situation. For example, if an individual believed that their supervisor and coworkers believed that stealing others' food was wrong and would not condone lunch theft, then the individual would feel pressure to not steal food. TRA also assumes that individuals have high volitional control over their behavioral decisions (i.e., ability to choose to perform or refrain

from a behavior) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This assumption indicates that every action is possible and that it is up to the individual to decide to engage in the behavior or not. However, successfully performing a behavior is not always this simple. The concept of actual control, which includes the resources and opportunities available to individuals, is more predictive of whether or not an individual performs a behavior (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

The Theory of Planned Behavior builds on the TRA by adding a third component – perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control is an individual's belief about their resources, abilities, and opportunities that would affect their ability to perform the behavior and overcome obstacles to performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The two primary aspects to perceived behavioral control are self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993), which is an individual's judgment about how well he or she can perform a given action in a particular situation, and controllability, which is a person's perceived resources and ability to perform a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, the TPB combines both motivation to perform a given behavior and having sufficient resources (i.e., ability) to succeed in the behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The TPB/TRA framework has been supported in a number of studies examining positive behaviors such as attending college (Harrison, Thompson, & Rodgers, 1985), losing weight (Schifter & Ajzen, 1985), not eating fast food (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013), and even deciding to stay at green hotels (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2009). TPB has also been supported in a number of studies examining negative behaviors. For example, Beck and Ajzen (1991) conducted a study on negative behaviors including cheating, shoplifting, and lying. They found that intentions to perform each of these behaviors were highly correlated with attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Beck & Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, Chang (1998) demonstrated that TPB predicted unethical behavior (e.g., stealing, cheating, lying) above and beyond the

theory of reasoned action. As TPB appears to be a strong predictor of unethical behavior in general (Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Chang, 1998), I expect TPB to also be applicable to lunch theft in the workplace. Therefore in the following sections, I provide a more thorough discussion of the factors involved in the TPB framework and how I will apply them to stealing lunch from coworkers.

Attitude

The first major variable in the TPB is attitude. Within the TPB framework, an individual's attitude is the level of favorability, from unfavorable to favorable, in regards to the behavior being examined as well as the outcomes associated with performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). For example, one may have a strong positive attitude toward exercising and also believe that the results of exercise (i.e., staying fit and healthy) are positive. Whereas other definitions of attitudes may focus on specific *targets* or entities (e.g., shoes, the Grand Canyon, one's employing organization), the TPB focuses on attitudes toward a *behavior* (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). This distinction is important because although an individual may have a positive attitude toward a specific target, it does not necessarily mean they will engage in a particular behavior toward that target. For example, an individual may really like food (attitude towards a target), but when opportunities arise to steal food (behavior related to a target), he or she does not steal. This may be so due to the outcomes associated with stealing food. For example, a person may find the thought of stealing food to be too risky, and thus does not steal the food. In this case, the attitude toward behaving in a risky way may prevent stealing food despite the positive attitude toward food. Instead, he or she may go buy another food item from a near-by shop. This still indicates a positive attitude toward food, but it manifests differently from theft behavior. This study will focus on the attitude toward the specific behavior of stealing someone

else's lunch and the outcomes perceived from performing this behavior. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1977), a behavior can be viewed as involving an action directed at a target, performed in a given context, at a certain point in time. In this study, the action will be theft which is directed toward food left in a break-room or similar common area, performed in the work place during work hours.

Furthermore, an attitude can be described as a function of an individual's assessment of the potential outcomes associated with the behavior and their degree of significance (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In the case of employee lunch theft, a worker may believe that taking a coworker's food would relieve their hunger, be quite delicious, provide more time at work as opposed to going out for food, and cause minimal harm. Generally, a person will process the types of outcomes associated with a behavior before acting on them to know what costs and benefits may be related with the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005). An attitude will be regarded as positive when the associated consequences are perceived as positive, and a positive attitude improves the likelihood of an individual performing that behavior (Han et al., 2009).

In essence, TPB argues that a person who has a positive attitude toward a behavior will be more likely to perform a given behavior than a person with a negative attitude toward the same given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, in accordance with TPB, I present the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1. Positive attitudes toward lunch theft behavior is positively related to lunch theft behavior.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Despite having a positive attitude toward a behavior (i.e., lunch theft), not having the necessary resources or opportunities can prevent someone from engaging in the behavior. The

perceived behavioral control component of the TPB can be defined as individuals' perceptions of how simple or difficult a behavior would be to perform (Ajzen, 1991). In essence, perceived behavioral control is made of two parts: perceived obstacles/opportunities and self-efficacy. Availability of opportunities and number of obstacles constitute an individual's actual control over performing the behavior and dictate the probability of successfully executing the behavior (Ajzen & Madden, 1985). Whereas actual control refers to the objective presence of obstacles or opportunities for a given behavior, the TPB focuses on individuals' *perceptions* of those obstacles or opportunities as an important determinant of intentions to perform a given act. In the case of lunch theft, possible factors that may limit or promote the behavior are guardianship (i.e., the presence of other people), location of a shared lunchroom, and whether or not there is food in the lunchroom. For example, the location of a shared fridge may prove to be an obstacle if it is in an open area where there are many people around.

The second major determinant of perceived behavioral control is an individual's confidence in the skills they have or the skills they believe they have. Ajzen (1991) states that perceived behavioral control is very similar to the concept of self-efficacy, i.e., how well a person believes they can perform certain actions (Bandura, 1982). For example, an individual who is athletic may be confident in her potential skill to play football. Although never having played, she may feel as though she will easily learn by putting her natural athletic ability to use. Thus, the self-efficacy component of perceived behavioral control is an amalgam of actual control, past experience of the individual, and an individual's confidence in performing a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

In sum, when individuals believe they possess the necessary resources and opportunities and perceive few challenges, they will have higher perceived behavioral control (Ajzen &

Madden, 1985). In the current study, an employee's perceived ability to successfully steal food from a common area is the targeted behavior about which perceived behavioral control is measured. Applying the TPB, I expect that individuals who believe it will be easy for them to successfully nab food and who perceive ample opportunity and few obstacles to lunch theft (e.g., high perceived behavioral control) will be more likely to engage in lunch theft than those who do not have these resources or control beliefs.

Hypothesis 2. Perceived behavioral control over lunch theft is positively related to lunch theft.

Subjective Norms

One of the original determinants of intention in the TRA as well as the TPB is subjective norm. Subjective norms are the social pressures an individual perceives regarding certain behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms are a function of two components; 1) normative beliefs, which indicate the degree to which a significant influence (e.g., peers, supervisors) would condone or not condone the behavior, and 2) motivation to comply, which is the individual's desire to adhere with the referent's belief about the action (Miniard & Cohen, 1981). For example, most coworkers have negative opinions of theft and would not condone such behavior. Thus, if employees felt a strong urge to comply with their coworkers' beliefs, then they would be unlikely to steal someone's lunch.

However, subjective norms have been shown to be the weakest predictor of behavioral intention (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Conner & Armitage, 1998; Godin & Kok, 1996; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). In a review of TPB, Godin and Kok (1996) found that as predictors of behavior, subjective norms were significant less often than the other two factors of the TPB model and, when significant, had a lower statistical weighting than attitude and

perceived behavioral control. Conner and Armitage (1998) suggested that the consistent weakness in subjective norm across studies may be attributable to the operationalization of the construct. The most general operationalization of subjective norms is, "most people who are important to me think I should/should not perform behavior X" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 302). Implicit in this operationalization is that individuals are "motivated to comply with important others" (Miniard & Cohen, 1981, p. 319). Essentially, the subjective norms construct is forced to play a role as both a perceptual component (normative beliefs) and a motivational component (motivation to comply). Results are thus ambiguous because it is difficult to parse out the individual effects of normative beliefs and motivation to comply on subjective norms.

Another issue with subjective norms that is specific to the study of negative behaviors is anticipated range restriction of measures of subjective norms because of social desirability. In general, society has a negative perception of theft and thieves. Given this, it is likely that participants would indicate that their significant peers would not support lunch theft, resulting in little to no variance in a measure of subjective norms.

Despite these issues surrounding subjective norms, it may be possible that certain positive norms around the lunch room may have formed. For example, it may be agreed that a coworker may take an item (e.g., a can of Coke) from the fridge as long as they plan to replace it or have a similar item of their own that they are willing to share (e.g., coffee creamer). In this way, it may be possible that subjective norms influence lunch room behaviors of interest to the study. Thus, in keeping with the TPB and the above logic, individuals with strong subjective norms around lunchroom behaviors may be positively related to lunch theft behavior.

Hypothesis 3. Subjective norms around lunch room behaviors is positively related to lunch theft.

Despite the possibility of subjective norms' influence over behavioral intentions, alternatives to subjective norms are presented based on prior research suggestions in this area. As research has shown subjective norms to be the weakest factor of TPB (e.g., Armitage & Conner, 2001) particularly when investigating negative behaviors like theft, I use additional alternatives to the TPB. In order to measure both aspects of subjective norms, normative beliefs and motivation to comply, while simultaneously reducing the anticipated range restriction from social desirable responding, I incorporate two constructs: moral norms and group cohesion. Moral norms will be used as an indicator of the normative beliefs component of subjective norms, and group cohesion will be used to indicate the motivation to comply aspect of subjective norms.

Moral Norms

In research examining negative behaviors such as cheating, lying, and theft, moral norms have been used as a replacement for, or supplement to, subjective norms (e.g., Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Kurland, 1995; Raats, Shepherd, & Sparks, 1995). Moral norms consider personal sentiment in regards to certain behaviors, moral obligations, and responsibilities (Ajzen, 1991). Sparks (1994) defines moral norms as the perception of moral correctness or incorrectness of performing a certain behavior. Moral norms are different from subjective norms in that they are not social pressures but personal feelings that an individual has regarding moral and ethical aspects of behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998). The performance of behaviors that have a moral or ethical dimension are especially influenced by moral norms. For example, given an opportunity to steal lunch from an unguarded fridge in a break-room, an individual who holds that feeding the hungry outweighs any moral impediment against stealing may engage in lunch theft.

The idea of moral norms also provides a clearer interpretation of the perceived behavioral control and attitude constructs in the TPB. Moral norms are distinct from perceived behavioral control in that moral norms indicate values held about distinct behaviors whereas perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived control one has over a distinct behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998. However, the operationalization of these constructs can appear very similar, so care must be taken in the measurement of these constructs as they may be misinterpreted on several levels. For example, if an item for perceived behavioral control states, "For me, stealing other people's food is (easy – difficult)," it could be interpreted as controllability (i.e., the individual has the number of available resources to steal food), self-efficacy (i.e., the individual has the skills and confidence to steal food), or moral pressure (i.e., the individual's moral perception of making the decision). The operationalization of these constructs must be developed so that they are distinct and explicit. For example, Beck and Ajzen's (1991) study examining both constructs measured perceived behavioral control with items stating, "If I want to, I can cheat on a test or exam." (p. 293) and moral obligation with items stating, "It would be morally wrong for me to cheat on a test or exam." (p. 293). By using explicit items, the distinction between perceived behavioral control and moral obligation will be clear. Similarly, Godin, Conner, and Sheeran (2005) distinguish moral norms from attitudes in that moral norms are core self-expressions whereas attitudes are likelihood estimates of outcomes concerning the performance of a behavior.

In a review of TPB, Conner and Armitage (1998) suggest that adding moral norms to the TPB is a "useful addition" that will likely improve upon the model's prediction of behaviors that involve a moral component. Indeed, research indicates that moral norms explain incremental variance in behavioral intentions even when all of the TPB is taken into account (Godin et al.,

2005). Moral norms are generally operationalized as individual moral obligations regarding the behavior under investigation. Moral obligations refer to an individual's belief about whether or not a certain behavior should or should not be performed (Beck & Ajzen, 1991). Sparks and Guthrie (1998) also found that moral obligations have independent predictive effects that improve upon the TPB model. Their study included a measure of perceived moral obligation around eating a diet high in animal fats that significantly predicted intentions to eat a diet low in animal fats. A study by Beck and Ajzen (1991) found that subjective norms (i.e., whether individuals believed others condoned such behavior) had no effect on predicting individuals' intent to perform negative behaviors including cheating, shoplifting, and lying; however moral obligations (i.e., an individual's own beliefs about the appropriateness of such behavior) significantly impacted the prediction of each of these behaviors. Because lunch theft is an act of stealing and thus provides a moral dilemma, moral norms are likely to be a relevant predictor of lunch theft behavior. Thus, in keeping with the TPB and past research, I present the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. Moral obligations regarding lunch theft is negatively related to lunch theft.

Group Cohesion

The other factor that may be an antecedent to lunch theft in place of subjective norms is group cohesion. Cohesion, as defined by Summers, Coffelt, and Horton, is "… the degree to which group members are attracted to other group members and are motivated to stay in the group" (1988, p. 627). Individuals in a cohesive group enjoy interactions with coworkers and feel as though their coworkers are genuinely interested in them (Price, 1997). Cohesion is comprised of interpersonal attraction, task commitment, and group pride (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003). Interpersonal attraction constitutes a general positivity and attachment to

other group members. An individual's level of attraction to a group dictates his/her desire to be accepted by the group and subsequently remain in the group (Carless & De Paola, 2000). Task commitment is how much the work task assists the group in achieving goals or how much shared commitment to the task exists. Group pride pertains to how much the group members show fondness toward the group and its status. For example, groups that are high in group pride are likely to appreciate the group and take pride in their group.

Group cohesion can be viewed as the motivation to comply component of subjective norms. If employees wish to maintain good standing in their group, then they will be more motivated to follow norms set by the group to maintain their status and position within the group (Carless & De Paola, 2000; Miniard & Cohen, 1981). For example, highly cohesive groups have norms of fondness and respect for members, and thus are unlikely to condone stealing from fellow group members. Therefore, employees in highly cohesive groups are unlikely to risk losing their position within the group by engaging in behaviors, like lunch theft, that could potentially hurt or show disrespect to group members.

Additionally, groups provide strong cues pertaining to the acceptability of anti-social behavior (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). These cues may be strong enough to elicit or restrict lunch theft behavior depending on group norms as employee behavior is influenced by the information they obtain from their workplace's environment (social information processing theory; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Thus, a low level of group cohesion would indicate that employees do not care for each other or "watch each other's backs". This could create an environment that is conducive to lunch theft. For example, a group that hardly interacts with each other and refrains from interpersonal interactions with other members may be more likely to engage in lunch theft.

Hypothesis 5. Group cohesion is negatively related to lunch theft.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The study targeted a diverse sample of employed adults across industries. I recruited participants via snowball techniques using social media. Participants were recruited via social media posts (e.g., Facebook and Reddit) that provided a brief study description and link to the online survey. All data were collected through Qualtrics.com. Participants were not compensated. Participants were told that in order to be eligible to participate they needed to be 18 years or older, work at least 20 hours/week, and have worked in their current job for at least 6 months.

A total of 204 individuals agreed to participate in the survey, but 15 were dropped for failing to meet the eligibility requirements (i.e., were less than 18 years of age, worked less than 20 hours/week, worked in their current job for less than 6 months, or did not give consent). Additionally, 72 participants were dropped for insufficient data (i.e., skipped more than 20 items). The final sample size was 117.

Participants indicated their age (M=37.5 years, SD=13.1), tenure with employer (M=6.4 years, SD=8.3), gender (71.1% female), ethnicity (86.3% white, 5.1% Hispanic, 3.4% African American, 2.6% Asian, Other 0.9%), and supervisor status (40.7% supervisors). The participants also worked in a wide variety of occupations and industries (e.g., education, health care, technology, chemicals, retail, higher education, oil and gas, legal, entertainment).

Predictor Measures Refinement

First, I conducted a principal components analysis (PCA) on each of the scales (i.e., attitudes, PBC, subjective norms, and moral obligation) created for the study. Each scale PCA

was run separately to best assess if the items loaded properly onto one factor (see Tables 1-4). Item loadings needed to reach or exceed .40 to be kept. The PCA was set to a promax rotation, and items were dropped if they had cross-loadings of .32 or greater (Costello & Osborne, 2005). All items that were initially a part of the study can be viewed in the appendices with the kept items in bold (see the measures section for the corresponding appendix for each scale).

Next, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the four predictor scales together in SPSS AMOS. The results of the initial CFA model showed poor fit with the data, $\chi^2(129) = 213.7$ (p=.00). Data indicated that twelve items (subjective norm items 4 & 5; attitudes 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, & 18; PBC items 1, 2, & 3; and moral obligation item 1) caused the poor model chi-square because they all had values below .5 on the squared multiple correlation values, which indicate how much variance is accounted for by each item. A squared multiple correlation value below .5 indicates that the factor explained less than 50% of the variance of the items (Kline, 2011). Once these twelve items were removed, the fit indices of the model improved. The new CFA model showed good fit with the data, $\chi^2(29)= 29.59$ (p=.43); RMSEA = .01; CFI = .99. These CFA results fall within the good range for model fit indices suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). See Table 5 for the standardized and unstandardized loadings.

Criterion Measure Refinement (Behavioral Intentions and Lunch Theft)

After running the CFA on the predictors of the model, I then put the researcher-created dependent variable scales through the same process (see Tables 6 and 7). Before running the PCA for lunch theft, I had to drop item 7 because it had zero variance which prevented the PCA from executing. When running the initial CFA, two behavioral intentions items (1 & 2) also had to be removed due to low, near zero, variance which prevented the program from fully executing the analyses. After cutting the items that did not have sufficient variance from the CFA, the CFA

model fit was poor, $\chi^2(19)$= 98.02 (p=.00); RMSEA = .18; CFI = .79. These initial results fell within the poor range suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). After dropping the items that had a squared multiple correlation below .5, I ran another CFA on the two scales and used the same criteria for fit and inclusion as with the predictor variables (i.e., non-significant chi-square, RMSEA < .1, and CFI > .95). The model statistics indicated good fit with the data, $\chi^2(1)$ = 0.03 (p=.87); RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 1.00. However, the low variance within all of the lunch theft and behavioral intention items warrants caution in interpretation of the results. See Table 8 for the standardized and unstandardized loadings. The next section provides information on the final scales used for the study.

Measures

Attitude. I measured attitude toward lunch theft with a 3-item researcher developed scale (α=.86). The three items were, "The food that other people leave in the lunchroom can be used to relieve hunger in a pinch," "The drinks that other people leave in the lunchroom are a good way to quench your thirst in a pinch," and "Drinking a beverage that someone else left in from the lunchroom would help me work better for the rest of my workday." The response scale ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree." All original items can be found in Appendix A, and the final items appear in bold type.

PBC. I measured perceived behavioral control with a 2-item researcher developed measure (α=.88). The two items were "It would be easy for me to take food or drinks from the lunchroom without being caught," and "I expect that I can successfully take food or drinks from the lunchroom without anyone knowing." The response scale ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree." All original items can be found in Appendix B, and the final items appear in bold type.

Subjective norm. I measured subjective norms around lunch theft with a 3-item researcher developed scale (α=.86). The three items were, "Most people where I work approve of sharing food and drink in the lunchroom," "My supervisor approves of a work environment where individuals share food and drink," and "The people I work with don't mind sharing their food or drink." The response scale ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree." All original items can be found in Appendix C, and the final items appear in bold type.

Moral obligation. I measured moral obligation with a 2-item scale (α=.89) adapted from the Beck and Ajzen (1991) study on negative behavior prediction in the TPB framework. The items were "Taking food or drink from the lunchroom goes against my principles," and "It would be morally wrong for me to take food or drink from the lunchroom." The response scale ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree." All original items can be found in Appendix D, and the final items appear in bold type.

Group cohesion. I measured group cohesion using the 6-item measure by Coyle-Shapiro and Morrow (2003; α=.92). The response scale ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree." A sample item is "There is a strong team spirit in my group." All items can be found in Appendix E.

Lunch theft. I measured the performance of lunch theft with a 2-item, researcher developed measure (α=.64). Participants received a prompt that states, "In your present job, how often have you…" and the items were "Consumed someone else's food at work without their permission." and "Taken food from the lunchroom that had been left there for a long time." The response scale options include: (1) Never; (2) Once or twice; (3) Once or twice a month; (4) Once or twice a week; (5) Every day. All original items can be found in Appendix F, and the final items appear in bold type.

Behavioral intentions. I measured intentions to engage in lunch theft with a 2-item researcher developed measure (α=.43). The two items were "I plan to consume someone else's food at work at least once in the next month," and "I plan to consume someone else's drink at work at least once in the next month." The response scale ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree." All original scale items can be found in Appendix G, and the final items appear in bold type.

CWB. I measured CWB with a 12-item measure using the 10-item CWB checklist short form by Spector, Bauer, and Fox (2010) along with two additional petty theft items (α=.67). The scale prompt was, "How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?" The response scale ranged from 1 "Never" to 5 "Every day." Some sample items are "Insulted or made fun of someone at work" and "Stolen something worth less than $10 from someone at work." All items can be found in Appendix H.

Results

The descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, and sample size), alpha reliability estimates, and intercorrelation matrix are included in Table 9. All but three scale reliabilities were above .70, indicating that the intrascale reliabilities were adequate (George & Mallery, 2003). Two of the three scale reliabilities (CWB and lunch theft) were close to .7: CWB α=.67 and lunch theft α=.63. However, the behavioral intentions scale reliability was .43, indicating that the scale items did not correlate very well together.

Control Variables

I investigated if using tenure, hours worked, and supervisor status as control variables would be appropriate for the study. In order to see if these variables should be used as controls, I followed the suggestions of Spector and Brannick (2011) on testing whether control variables

should be included in analyses. I also ran all of my analyses with and without the controls and found that they did not impact the findings. Thus, for the sake of parsimony I only report the findings without the controls.

Convergent Validity

Prior to hypothesis testing, I assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of the new lunch theft CWB scale (Hinkin, 1998). In order to establish convergent validity, overlap in variance must be demonstrated between one scale and alternative measures of the same construct (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Thus, I examined the correlation of the new lunch theft CWB scale with Spector, Bauer, and Fox's (2010) shortened CWB scale. The scales were positively correlated (r=.31, p=.001), which suggests that the constructs are related but not overlapping entirely. This supports the convergent validity of the lunch theft measure with the general CWB measure.

Discriminant Validity

In order to test discriminant validity of the lunch theft scale, I compared the correlations between each form of CWB (e.g., general CWB and lunch theft) with the TPB scales (e.g., attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and moral obligations). Each of the TPB constructs was expected to relate more strongly with lunch theft than with general CWB. Using the Hotelling-Williams test for correlations between correlated variables (Williams, 1959), I found that attitudes were not more strongly related to lunch theft (r = .312) than general CWB (r = .167), $t(114) = 1.39$ (p = .17, *ns*), although the difference was in the predicted direction. I also found that PBC was not more strongly related to lunch theft (r = .176) than general CWB (r = .108), $t(114) = 0.63$ (p = .53, *ns*). However, subjective norms were more strongly related to lunch theft (r = .178) than to general CWB (r = -.101), $t(114) = 2.62$ (p = .01). Similarly, moral

obligations were also more strongly related to lunch theft (r = -.290) than to general CWB (r = -.020), $t(114) = -2.57$ (p = .011). These tests provide some support for the discriminant validity of lunch theft CWB.

Hypothesized Analyses

To test the original TPB hypotheses (Hypotheses 1-3), I ran Pearson correlations (see Table 9) and regression analyses, where all three TPB predictors (attitudes, PBC, & subjective norms) were entered at the same time, (see Table 10). Due to the low sample size, I adjusted the alpha from the traditional .05 to .10. This adjustment assists in detecting relationships that would not otherwise be noted due to the low power of the small sample.

Hypothesis 1 stated that lunch theft attitudes would be positively related to lunch theft. The correlation between lunch theft attitude and lunch theft was positive and significant (r=.312; p<.001). The regression analysis for Hypothesis 1 also indicated that attitude was significantly, positively related to lunch theft (β = .198, p= .07); thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Hypothesis 2 stated that PBC around lunch theft would be positively related to lunch theft. The correlation between PBC and lunch theft was positive and significant (r=.176; p=.058). The regression analysis for Hypothesis 2 indicated that PBC was significantly, positively related to lunch theft (β = .153, p= .09); thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Hypothesis 3 stated that subjective norms would be positively related to lunch theft. The correlation between subjective norms and lunch theft was positive and significant (r=.178; p=.055). However, the regression analysis for Hypothesis 3 indicated that subjective norms were not significantly related to lunch theft (β = .07, p= .51; *ns*); thus Hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.

For Hypotheses 4 and 5, I also conducted Pearson correlations and regression analyses. Hypothesis 4 stated that moral obligation would be negatively related to lunch theft. The

correlation between moral obligation and lunch theft was negative and significant (*r*= -.29; *p*=.002). Hypothesis 5 stated that group cohesion would be negatively related to lunch theft. The correlation between group cohesion and lunch theft was non-significant (*r*= -.04; *p*=.688; *ns*).

Because moral obligation and group cohesion are novel to the TPB, I wanted to examine whether these two scales would improve upon the original measures in the TPB, most notably over subjective norms. Out of concerns that subjective norms would exhibit range restriction due to social desirability and in order to better capture the two facets of subjective norms (i.e., normative beliefs & motivation to comply), I measured moral obligation to assess the normative beliefs facet and group cohesion to assess the motivation to comply facet.

I first regressed lunch theft onto all of the predictors in a single step for an omnibus test (see Table 11). Subjective norms, moral obligation and group cohesion were not significant (β = .07, *p*= .51, *ns;* β = -.15, *p*= .15, *ns;* and β = -.03, *p*= .79, *ns*; respectively). For the second regression model (Table 12), attitudes, PBC, and subjective norms were entered into the first regression step, and moral obligation and group cohesion were added in the second step to see if they predicted variance in lunch theft above and beyond the original TPB constructs. Again, neither subjective norms (step 1 β = .08, *p*= .41; *ns,* and step 2 β = .07, *p*= .51; *ns*), moral obligation (β = -.16, *p*= .15; *ns*) nor group cohesion were significantly related to lunch theft (β = -.03, *p*= .77; *ns*). Thus, moral obligation and group cohesion added no incremental validity above and beyond subjective norms. Finally, I ran a regression model wherein moral obligation and group cohesion were entered at step one and the attitudes, PBC, and subjective norms scales were entered at the second step. The results of this analysis did not differ from either of the other two. Moral obligation was not significantly related to lunch theft (step 2 β = -.15, *p*= .15; *ns*) and

neither was group cohesion (step 2 β = -.03, *p*= .79; *ns*). Thus, hypothesis 4 was only partially supported and hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Additional Analyses

Behavioral intentions as a mediator. Though not in the proposed model, including behavioral intentions as a mediator is traditional in the TPB because it is more proximal to the behavioral predictors (i.e., attitudes, PBC, subjective norms) than behavior. In keeping with the TPB, I examined whether behavioral intentions fully mediated the relationship between the IVs (attitude, PBC, subjective norm, moral obligation, and group cohesion) and lunch theft. In order to test this, I conducted a path analysis in SPSS AMOS (see Figure 2). The fit indices were all borderline or inadequate, and the model showed poor fit with the data, $\chi^2(5)= 16.5$ (p=.01); RMSEA = .14; CFI = .84. In the path analysis, the relationships between each of the IVs and behavioral intentions were all non-significant, with the exception of subjective norms (β = .223, *p*= .03). The relationship between behavioral intentions and lunch theft was positive and significant in the path analysis (β = .19, *p*= .04). Given these model fit indices, the following results should be interpreted with caution.

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to establish workplace lunch theft as a new form of CWB and examine factors that contribute to it using the TPB. Specifically, I examined whether attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC around lunch theft contributed to predicting employee lunch theft behavior. Additionally, I attempted to extend the TPB to include new, construct relevant, measures (i.e., moral obligation and group cohesion) that would also predict workplace lunch theft above and beyond the traditional TPB constructs. To test my hypotheses, I recruited a sample of 117 employed adults who completed an online questionnaire. I found some evidence

supporting the construct validity of employee theft as a form of CWB. Convergent validity was established as lunch theft was related to CWB, and some discriminant validity was established as lunch theft related more strongly to two constructs (subjective norms and moral obligation) than CWB. Moreover, the results of the study suggest that attitudes and PBC predicted workplace lunch theft behavior. That is, employees who perceived positive outcomes associated with, and who had confidence in, stealing others' food engaged in more lunch theft. The results also provide modest support for subjective norms and moral obligation as predictors of lunch theft. However, group cohesion did not predict of lunch theft (i.e., not correlated to lunch theft nor was it related in the regression models).

In line with the TPB and previous studies examining negative behaviors within the TPB framework (e.g., Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Kurland, 1995; Raats, Shepherd, & Sparks, 1995), this study demonstrated that attitudes toward lunch theft and PBC significantly predicted lunch theft behavior. Thus, employees who associated stealing others' food with positive outcomes were more likely to engage in lunch theft than employees who had few positive associations with stealing food. Similarly for PBC, employees who perceived few obstacles and believed in their ability to successfully steal food reported more lunch theft than employees who perceived many obstacles and lacked confidence. This finding is consistent with the petty theft literature which suggests that guardianship (i.e., people going about routine business near a theft target) can reduce a potential thief's confidence in stealing.

The results for subjective norms were somewhat mixed. Consistent with TPB, the subjective norms scale was significantly and positively correlated with lunch theft but was not related to lunch theft in any of the regression models. That is, subjective norms did not predict any unique variance in lunch theft beyond attitudes and PBC. This was not entirely unexpected

as past research has shown that subjective norms has been the weak link in the TPB when predicting negative behaviors because of range restriction resulting from participants' reluctance to endorse unpopular norms (e.g., Beck & Ajzen, 1991). In the current study, I found a positive correlation between subjective norms and lunch theft. However, this may have been an artifact of the scale design as I designed the subjective norms scale to prevent socially desirable responding by framing the taking of others' food in a more positive light. Specifically, instead of traditional subjective norms items that ask about the expected reactions and support an employee would receive around taking others' food without permission, my measure of subjective norms asked about perceived positive norms around food sharing and replacement. Thus, the observed positive correlation between lunch theft and subjective norms suggests that individuals who perceive norms of sharing were more likely to steal others' food than those who do not perceive sharing norms. However, this relationship was not supported in any of the regression analyses that included other predictors.

As I had suspicions that subjective norms would not perform well in predicting lunch theft based on the results of prior studies using the TPB to predict negative behaviors (e.g., Kurland, 1995; Raats, Shepherd, & Sparks, 1995), I included moral obligation and group cohesion as alternative operationalizations of the subjective norms facets. I reasoned that moral obligation and group cohesion would be less subject to methodological issues that were a concern for subjective norms. Specifically, because moral obligations are personal evaluations of the ethics of certain behaviors and are not based on social pressures like subjective norms (Conner & Armitage, 1998), I expected it to be less susceptible to social desirability. Consistent with my predictions, moral obligation was negatively correlated with lunch theft. This suggests that when employees feel that engaging in lunch theft would go against their moral code that

they are less likely to steal coworkers' food. However, moral obligation did not predict any unique variance in lunch theft beyond the traditional TPB constructs (i.e., attitudes, PBC, and subjective norms). One possible explanation for this finding is that moral obligation was highly correlated with attitudes (r= -.56, p = .00). Both attitudes and moral obligation assess thoughts and evaluations around the action of lunch theft (i.e., beliefs around whether lunch theft leads to positive outcomes and whether lunch theft violates one's personal values). Due to the construct overlap, when both attitudes and moral obligation are in the regression model, neither explained lunch theft as well.

In regards to group cohesion, I found that it did not significantly relate to lunch theft in any of the performed analyses. There are at least two possible explanations for this finding. First, group cohesion may not be an adequate predictor of lunch theft because it does not sufficiently capture the motivation to comply aspect of subjective norms. Because group cohesion assesses the degree to which individuals wish to remain in the group, I expected it to indicate motivation to comply. For example, if employees want to stay in their group, then avoiding actions that would jeopardize membership (i.e., stealing others' food) would be vital. However, group cohesion may not be the best indicator of motivation to comply as group cohesion does not address group norms explicitly. A second potential reason why group cohesion and lunch theft were not related may lie in how lunch theft was measured. The lunch theft measure did not assess how many different people use the lunch area. For example, if multiple groups use the lunch room, employees could take food from the other group's members and not risk losing status in their group. Thus, if the lunch area was also used by individuals outside one's group, it would be possible for employees to steal food and not risk losing their group membership.

Although group cohesion was not related to lunch theft, it was negatively related to CWB (r= -.35, *p* = .00). This suggests that employees who stick together and value their group are less likely engage in CWBs including those directed at coworkers (e.g., “Insulted or made fun of someone at work”). Given the preliminary evidence demonstrating that lunch theft may also represent a form of CWB, group cohesion may, by extension, also be related to lunch theft. However, the current sample may not have been robust enough to demonstrate the relationship between group cohesion and lunch theft.

To fully examine the TPB model, I ran additional analyses to examine whether behavioral intentions mediated the relationship between the TPB predictors and lunch theft behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This analysis revealed that only subjective norms related to the intention to engage in lunch theft; none of the other TPB measures were significantly associated with intentions. However, behavioral intentions was significantly and positively related to lunch theft. However, due to poor model fit and the low reliability of the behavioral intentions measure, these results are speculative at best. One key reason for such poor results may be the low scale reliability demonstrated by the behavioral intentions measure. One possible explanation for the low scale reliability is that each item assessed theft of a different object, food and drink, respectively. Even though the phrasing of the items was nearly identical, the difference between food and drink may have been enough to cause the items to not "hang together." Future researchers could create more items for the behavioral intentions measure that focus on the act of lunch theft more broadly to obtain a better scale reliability. A better intentions scale might enable researchers to determine whether behavioral intentions mediate the relationship between the TPB predictors and actual lunch theft behavior.

On the surface, my data indicate that lunch theft may only be a slight issue. The average score for lunch theft was 1.1 (SD = .26), indicating that lunch theft may be a rare occurrence. However, similar values were found for general employee theft as measured by the CWB scale, with a mean of 1.1 (SD = .30). Both general employee theft and lunch theft were measured via self-report which is undoubtedly influenced by social desirability. Thus, actual lunch theft rates may be higher. Despite the low prevalence rates found in this study, lunch theft is a completely novel research area and should not be dismissed based on the results of a single study. More research needs to be done to determine how impactful lunch theft is. Additionally, because lunch theft is convergent with CWB and has similar prevalence rates, the potential impact of lunch theft could also be similar to that caused by CWB. For example, being the target of other interpersonal CWB, such as incivility, is associated with both physical and psychological strain (Cortina, 2008), so too could lunch theft impact the victim. For example, an employee who has their food stolen may feel both hungry (a physical outcome) and upset (a psychological outcome). However, more research must be done to establish this relationship.

Overall, the TPB proved to be a good framework for lunch theft prediction. The fact that attitudes and PBC predicted lunch theft despite low prevalence supports this. The TPB helped to explain the cognitive process behind lunch theft by providing insight into why lunch thieves decide to steal food by examining their attitudes and PBC. This study demonstrated that if employees have positive attitudes and high PBC around lunch theft, then lunch theft is more likely to occur. This is consistent with TPB research and suggests that the TPB is a solid framework for lunch theft research.

Practical Implications

Despite the low base rate of lunch theft behavior in this sample, employee attitudes and PBC around lunch theft were critical predictors of whether or not lunch theft occurred. By believing that taking coworkers' food will result in positive outcomes, a lunch thief may be more inclined to steal food at work. Azjen (1991) notes in the TPB that positive outcomes for behavior have to be greater than the negative outcomes in order for individuals to engage in specific behavior. Thus, organizations that wish to prevent lunch theft should make it explicit that such behavior will not be taken lightly and that engaging in this behavior will have repercussions. One possible way to change a thief's attitude around lunch theft is to instill a policy deterring it. A policy may cause thieves to consider possible negative outcomes associated with lunch theft thereby reducing the likelihood of lunch theft. Another way to reduce lunch theft could be to emphasize the negative effect it has on fellow coworkers. By having employees empathize with the victim, there may be fewer instances of lunch theft as potential thieves better understand how it harms others.

Additionally, my results indicate that if employees perceive that they have high control over the situation (i.e., PBC), then they are also more likely to engage in lunch theft. Although supervisors cannot control employees' self-efficacy around stealing food, there are still steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of lunch theft. For example, a supervisor can arrange more workspaces near the lunch room so that there is built-in guardianship. When a thief perceives guardianship (i.e., the presence of others), they are less inclined to perform the behavior (e.g., Cohen & Felson, 1979; Kinkade & Bachmann, 2012). Features that introduce more obstacles to lunch theft or ways to diminish resources used to achieve lunch theft could be effective in

mitigating the behavior. For example, an organization could place surveillance cameras in the lunch room to act as an additional guardian and obstacle to thieves.

Finally, although subjective norms and moral obligation did not predict unique variance in lunch theft, both demonstrated significant correlations with lunch theft. For subjective norms, when employees believe that food sharing is a part of the workplace culture, reports of lunch theft increase. Given this relationship, supervisors may decide that it is necessary to explicitly state the parameters of the food sharing norm, noting that lunch theft is not appropriate and that thieves will be punished. However, lunch theft may not be perceived as negatively in food sharing cultures, and thus may not be as impactful when it occurs. Individuals may understand that food is sometimes taken when it was not meant to be and thus react less strongly than individuals not in food sharing cultures. This, of course, is speculation and should be examined in future studies. Moral obligation, on the other hand, had a negative relationship with lunch theft. This indicates that employees who report that lunch theft goes against their principles are less likely to steal others' meals. And although supervisors may not have as much control over employees' perceived moral obligation, they may be able to influence employees by providing strong ethical leadership. By demonstrating ethical leadership, supervisors may be able to inspire their subordinates to consider the moral implications of their actions. As more employees morally evaluate their actions, reports of stolen food may be reduced.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study has a few strengths to note. First, this study includes participants from a wide variety of different professions. Although the final sample size was not large, many careers were represented and the sample also had a large range in tenure (between 6 months and 50+ years) suggesting that the results may generalize across occupations and organizational

tenure. This study is also the first known empirical study of workplace lunch theft and opens the door to research in this area. Although some findings were modest, they nonetheless indicate that there is plenty of promise and room to build upon this new area of research.

Despite the interesting findings, this study also had some limitations. First, the most notable limitation is the sample size. There were only 117 usable cases for this study which severely restricted the analyses that were run and limited power. For example, according to Kline (2011), a major error can occur when conducting CFAs if the sample size is below 150 cases. Kline (2011) says that this error indicates that the items and latent factor may not be accurately represented by the results, thus providing improper solutions. Others (Matsunaga, 2010) warn that to run a CFA or any other factor analysis, the minimum sample should start at around 300 total participants. The usable sample for this study was nearly one third of that recommendation.

The next limitation concerns the cross-sectional format of the study which limits the extent to which causality and directionality may be interpreted. That is, it is not possible to say whether variables like attitudes or PBC actually caused lunch theft. It is equally likely that individuals who successfully steal food gain more confidence in their ability to steal and justify their theft by emphasizing positive outcomes associated with stealing food. Future studies will be better able to tell if attitudes and PBC cause lunch theft by collecting data at multiple time points in a longitudinal design.

Another limitation is that the results are based on single-source, self-report data. This raises concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Common method variance suggests that when the source of ratings are similar, then there can be an artificial inflation of the observed relationship between variables. However, Spector (2006) states that common method variance is not as large of a problem as others would suggest,

and artificial inflation effects are exaggerated. Although Spector suggests that common method variance is not as big of an issue as it is made out to be, the topic is still debated and it is still considered a limitation to studies.

Another limitation with the format concerns the snowball sampling technique. Because the snowball technique is a non-probability sampling method, the representativeness of the sample is not guaranteed. Often, sampling bias occurs as subjects tend to share the study with others that they know extremely well and with whom they are likely to be very similar. In the current study, it is possible that the snowball sample comes from a morally sound subpopulation that would not consider stealing others' food.

A major limitation to this study involves the researcher created scales. Although they were made following theory and an in-depth qualitative analysis of lunch theft findings gathered from the internet, more work needs to be done to create stronger and more predictive measures. After the factor analyses, most scales only had two items which may not accurately represent the underlying constructs despite the favorable results (Kline, 2011). This issue creates issues similar to having a low sample size, in that improper solutions can manifest and cause interpretation errors (i.e., Type 1 error).

One reason that the scales had so few items is that many of the items had little variance. Low variance creates range restriction, a phenomenon that limits the accuracy of results interpretation. For example, the variance for the lunch theft scale was 0.07, indicating that most participants answered the same for those items. In this case, nearly everyone indicated that they have never engaged in lunch theft. This could be due to the fact that no one taking the survey would engage in lunch theft and were reporting the truth. Social desirability could also have influenced participants' responding. This may also explain why the reliability coefficients were

so low for both lunch theft (.64) and, in particular, behavioral intentions (.43). These low reliabilities likely impacted the observed relationships between the predictors (e.g., attitudes, PBC, moral obligation) and these two outcomes. Creating better measures that are less prone to socially desirable responding and include more than two items per construct would be immensely beneficial to future studies.

A final limitation of the researcher created scales concerns the subjective norms measure. My measure does not conform to the traditional TPB definition of subjective norms (i.e., the perceived support of important others around a specific behavior). Instead of asking participants if coworkers and managers support stealing others' food, the items asked if their culture supports borrowing and replacing food items. This strays away from referencing lunch theft. To more accurately follow the TPB, each of the TPB constructs should reference the same behavior in order to provide consistency and accuracy in the prediction of the behavior under study. However, based on previous studies that used the TPB to predict negative behavior, subjective norms would not likely have been a significant predictor of lunch theft if it were constructed traditionally. I suspected that the traditional construction of subjective norms items (e.g., "My supervisor thinks that I should/should not steal my coworkers' food") would result in socially desirable responding. Thus, I chose an alternative approach to avoid the range restriction associated with socially desirable responding. In light of this change, I found that when employees have a culture of food sharing, lunch theft is more prevalent. This unique finding may be a topic for future research.

Directions for Future Research

The exploratory nature of this pioneering study opens many possible avenues for future research. One avenue could examine the impact of lunch theft on victims. For example,

investigating whether lunch theft has a similar impact as interpersonal CWBs could alter how organizations view lunch theft. For example, victims of lunch theft may experience similar levels of stress as those who are targeted by CWB-Is, in that they may experience physical and/or mental strain due to resource loss. Another avenue may be to examine lunch theft from a stressor-strain framework. Previous studies have demonstrated the relationship between stressors (e.g., incivility, interpersonal conflict, and organizational constraints) and CWB (e.g., Penney & Spector, 2005). For example, employees who get into arguments with other coworkers or perceive a slight are more likely to steal something or insult back than those who do not experience these stressors. Similarly, employees who experience incivility or conflict may also retaliate by stealing their coworkers' food.

Another possible direction is to build on the current study and enhance it to make it stronger. Some potential ways to achieve this are to invest more work into the measures until there are more items that fully capture the construct of interest. Additionally, improvements on the study design can be made by incorporating a longitudinal design, using more objective reports of lunch theft, and increasing the sample size. For example, recruiting multiple organizations to participate in a longitudinal study that spanned at least six months would assist with both sample size and causality. Also, incorporating hidden cameras to document when lunch theft occurs would ensure an objective report. Lastly, it would be interesting to perform the study in multiple types of organizations (e.g., corporate offices, service industries, and factory settings) to see how lunch theft prevalence differs between organization type.

Also, it would be interesting to see if lunch theft fits more closely with incivility than with CWB as incivility can also cause stress and resource loss (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Lunch theft may be more accurately categorized as incivility as it is generally

seen as a mild form of deviant behavior and may be ambiguous as to whether or not the perpetrator intended to harm the victim. Additionally, incivility revolves around breaking workplace norms more than direct policy violations, which may fit with lunch theft. Although this study holds lunch theft more in line with CWB, I believe it may be worth investigating if lunch theft relates to incivility and if it could be considered an act of incivility.

This study opened the door to lunch theft research and invites others to begin research in one of the various avenues suggested. Investigating the impact on victims or further identifying the antecedents to lunch theft are wide open possibilities that have not been investigated. The TPB helped to start this research, but other theories may be incorporated to further explain this phenomenon. Research has indicated that lunch theft is truly an organizational problem, with 31% of employees reporting that they have experienced lunch theft (Pounds, 2012). My study suggests key predictors of lunch theft include attitudes toward lunch theft behavior and PBC. By furthering the understanding of lunch thieves, more antecedents can be identified and further precautions can be taken to prevent the occurrence of lunch theft. Hopefully, the results of this study not only generate more research in this area but also convince organizations and supervisors that lunch theft is an issue that organizations should take seriously before it has a negative impact on their subordinates.

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Table 1. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation of Attitudes Scale

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Attitude 14	**.796**	.275	.269	-.048	.001
Attitude 12	**.795**	.218	.192	-.103	-.136
Attitude 18	**.780**	.094	.165	-.080	-.214
Attitude 6	**.750**	.147	-.011	-.318	-.243
Attitude 15	**.749**	.226	.122	.048	-.114
Attitude 16	**.742**	.193	.264	-.114	.108
Attitude 10	**.731**	.194	.064	-.103	.098
Attitude 13	**-.681**	.393	.301	-.029	.244
Attitude 9	**.658**	.240	-.205	.174	.343
Attitude 8	**-.649**	.241	.280	.026	.252
Attitude 5	**.606**	.298	.155	-.245	.182
Attitude 2	**-.595**	-.008	.501	.011	.085
Attitude 4	**-.581**	.351	.537	-.107	.123
Attitude 3	**.494**	.478	-.258	.415	.300
Attitude 19	-.462	**.661**	-.021	.255	-.386
Attitude 17	-.373	**.641**	-.427	-.263	.030
Attitude 11	-.417	**.601**	.022	.268	-.505
Attitude 7	-.392	**.508**	-.379	-.360	.249
Attitude 1	.437	.027	.082	**.699**	.178

Table 2. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation of PBC Scale

	Component	
	1	2
PBC_5	**.933**	-.011
PBC_6	**.930**	-.029
PBC_3	-.075	**.900**
PBC_2	.063	**.719**
PBC_1	.079	**.708**
PBC_4	.362	.186

Table 3. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation of Subjective Norms Scale

	Component	
	1	2
Subjective Norms 6	**.876**	-.201
Subjective Norms 2	**.828**	-.123
Subjective Norms 1	**.811**	-.294
Subjective Norms 5	**.661**	.160
Subjective Norms 4	.229	**.871**
Subjective Norms 3	.536	.395

Table 4. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation of Moral Obligation Scale

	Component
	1
Moral Obligation 2	**.933**
Moral Obligation 3	**.888**
Moral Obligation 1	**.685**

Table 5. Unstandardized and Standardized Factor Loadings from Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Independent Variables

Parameter	Standardized	SE	Unstandardized
Attitudes			
Attitude 10	0.751		1.000
Attitude 14	0.980	0.109	1.098
Attitude 16	0.778	0.098	0.864
PBC			
PBC 5	0.810		1.000
PBC 6	0.966	0.717	1.195
Subjective Norms			
Subjective Norm 1	0.828		1.000
Subjective Norm 2	0.823	0.099	0.926
Subjective Norm 6	0.837	0.113	1.065
Moral Obligation			
Moral Obligation 2	0.898		1.000
Moral Obligation 3	0.902	0.123	1.160

Note. PBC = Perceived behavioral control, SE= standard error. All factor loading estimates are statistically significant at $p < .01$.

Table 6. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation of Lunch Theft Scale

	Component	
	1	2
Lunch Theft 5	**.835**	-.189
Lunch Theft 4	**.715**	.052
Lunch Theft 2	**.711**	.239
Lunch Theft 1	**.542**	-.132
Lunch Theft 3	-.305	**.881**
Lunch Theft 6	.281	**.794**

Table 7. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation of Behavioral Intentions Scale

	Component
	1
BhvIntnt_1	**.944**
BhvIntnt_2	**.944**
BhvIntnt_4	**.769**
BhvIntnt_3	**.499**

Table 8. Unstandardized and Standardized Factor Loadings from Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Dependent Variables

Parameter	Standardized	SE	Unstandardized
Lunch Theft			
Lunch Theft 2	1.207		1.000
Lunch Theft 4	0.391	0.286	0.376
Behavioral Intentions			
Behavioral Intentions 3	0.402		1.000
Behavioral Intentions 4	0.823	0.574	1.068

Note. SE= standard error. All factor loading estimates are statistically significant at $p < .01$.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Reliabilities, and Correlation Matrix

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Attitudes	1.78	.84	(.86)							
2. PBC	3.19	1.28	.04	(.88)						
3. Subjective norms	2.91	.89	.29**	.11	(.86)					
4. Moral obligation	4.29	.92	-.56**	-.04	-.28**	(.89)				
5. Group cohesion	3.60	.89	-.09	-.05	.24*	-.01	(.92)			
6. Behavioral intentions	1.03	.19	.12	.05	.26**	-.12	.10	(.43)		
7. Lunch theft	1.08	.26	.31**	.18†	.18†	-.29**	-.04	.19*	(.64)	
8. CWB	1.49	.32	.17†	.11	-.10	-.02	-.35**	.09	.31**	(.67)

Note. N ranged from 111 to 117. Numbers in parentheses along the diagonal are estimated (α) reliabilities.

PBC = Perceived behavioral control, CWB = Counter-productive work behaviors.

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 10. Results of Simple Regression of Lunch Theft on attitudes, PBC, and subjective norms

Variable	Standardized Coefficient
Attitudes	0.28**
PBC	0.16†
Subjective norms	0.08

Note. All values reported for model variables are standardized coefficients. PBC = Perceived behavioral control.

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 11. Results of Simple Regression of Lunch Theft on Attitudes, PBC, Subjective Norms, Moral Obligation, and Group Cohesion

Variable	Standardized Coefficient
Attitudes	0.19†
PBC	0.15†
Subjective norms	0.07
Moral obligation	-0.15
Group cohesion	-0.03

Note. PBC = Perceived behavioral control.

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 12. Results of Two Step Regression of Lunch Theft on Attitudes, PBC, Subjective Norms, Moral Obligation, and Group Cohesion

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Attitudes	0.28**	0.20†
PBC	0.16†	0.15†
Subjective norms	0.08	0.07
Moral obligation		-0.16
Group cohesion		-0.03
R^2	0.13**	0.15
Adjusted R^2	0.11	0.11
ΔR^2		0.02

Note. All values reported for model variables are standardized coefficients. PBC = Perceived behavioral control.

† $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

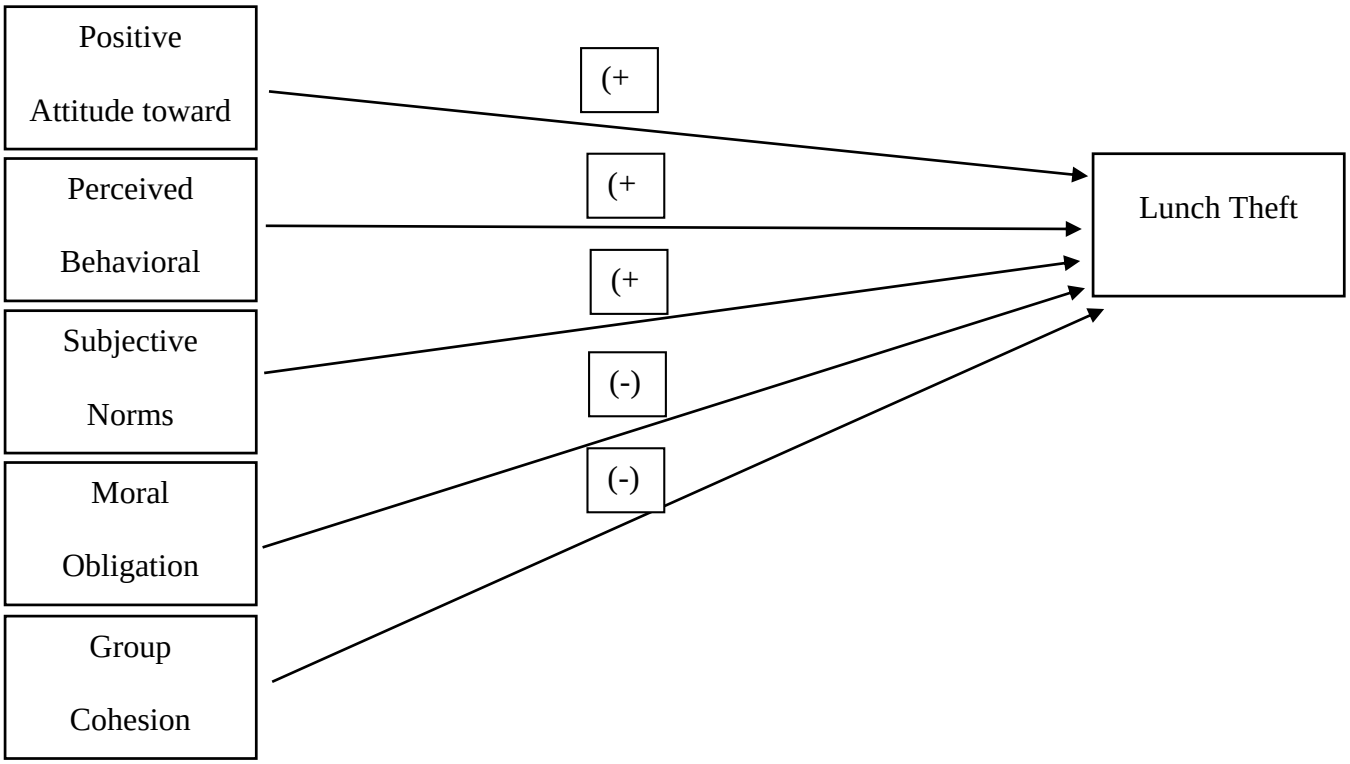

Figure 1. Proposed model.

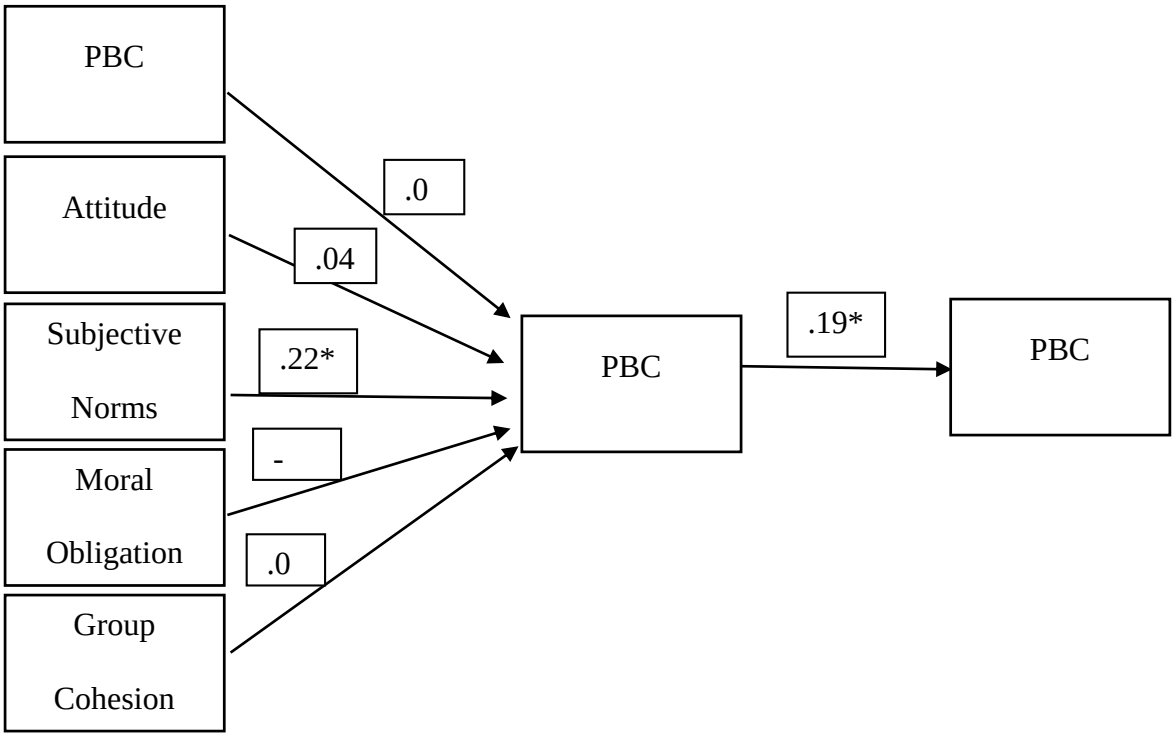

Figure 2. Path analysis of behavioral intentions mediating the relationship between the IVs and lunch theft.

Appendix A

Attitude Toward Lunch Theft Behavior Scale

Favorability of behavior:

1. People who leave drinks in a public area at work should not be surprised if someone else takes one.
2. Getting caught with a coworker's food would be bad.
3. All food left in lunchrooms is meant to be shared with others.
4. It is likely that I would be given the cold-shoulder if caught with someone else's food.
5. Eating food that someone else left in the lunchroom would help me work better for the rest of my workday.
6. It's not a big deal to take someone else's food from the lunchroom.
7. The penalty for taking drink from the lunch room would be severe.
8. Getting caught with a coworker's drink would be bad.
9. All drinks left in lunchrooms are meant to be shared with others.
10. **The food that other people leave in the lunchroom can be used to relieve hunger in a pinch.**
11. It is likely that my manager would give me a warning for taking others' food.
12. There is nothing wrong with helping yourself to drinks left in the lunchroom.
13. It is likely that I would be given the cold-shoulder if caught with someone else's drink.
14. **The drinks that other people leave in the lunchroom are a good way to quench your thirst in a pinch.**
15. There is nothing wrong with helping yourself to food left in the lunchroom.

16. **Drinking a beverage that someone else left in from the lunchroom would help me work better for the rest of my workday.**
17. The penalty for taking food from the lunch room is severe.
18. Sometimes it is better to help yourself to someone else's food than to starve while at work.
19. It is likely that my manager would give me a warning for taking others' drinks.

Appendix B

Perceived Behavioral Control Scale

1. Most of the time, there is no one in the lunchroom.
2. The lunchroom is out of view from other work areas.
3. The lunchroom is often unattended or empty outside of normal lunch hours.
4. I can easily access the lunchroom when it is empty.
5. **It would be easy for me to take food or drinks from the lunchroom without being caught.**
6. **I expect that I can successfully take food or drinks from the lunchroom without anyone knowing.**

Appendix C

Subjective Norms Scale

1. **Most people where I work approve of sharing food and drink in the lunchroom.**
2. **My supervisor approves of a work environment where individuals share food and drink.**
3. It is understood that if food or drink is taken from the lunchroom that it will be replaced.
4. When it comes to taking food or drink, I want to do what the people I work with think I should do.
5. It's okay to take food or drink from someone as long as you replace it.
6. **The people I work with don't mind sharing their food or drink.**

Appendix D

Moral Obligation Scale (Adapted from Beck & Ajzen, 1991)

Moral obligation:

1. I would *not* feel guilty if I took food or drink from the lunchroom.
2. **Taking food or drink from the lunchroom goes against my principles.**
3. **It would be morally wrong for me to take food or drink from the lunchroom.**

Appendix E

Group Cohesion Scale (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2003)

Group cohesion:

1. There is a strong team spirit in my group.
2. There is a lot of co-operation in my group.
3. The people in my group are willing to put themselves out for the sake of the group.
4. People in my group work together effectively.
5. The performance of my group is important to me.
6. The people in my group encourage each other to work as a team.

Appendix F

Lunch Theft Scale

In your present job, how often have you have …

1. Taken someone else's food/drink without permission.
2. **Consumed food or drink at work that was not yours.**
3. Purposely taken food/drink that was clearly marked with another's name.
4. Helped yourself to food/drink in a community fridge at work even though you did not bring it.
5. Used drink enhancement items (e.g., creamer, sugar packets, tea bags, milk) that were not yours.
6. **Taken food/drink from the lunchroom that has been left there for a long time.**
7. Taken food/drink from the lunchroom that was not labeled.

Appendix G

Behavioral Intentions Scale

1. I intend to take someone else's food from the workplace lunch room at least once in the next month.
2. I intend to take someone else's drink from the workplace lunch room at least once in the next month.
3. **I plan to consume someone else's food at work at least once in the next month.**
4. **I plan to consume someone else's drink at work at least once in the next month.**

Appendix H

Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist – Short Form (CWB-C; Spector, Bauer, & Fox, 2010)

How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?

1. Purposely wasted your employer's materials/supplies
2. Stolen something worth less than $5 from someone at work
3. Complained about insignificant things at work
4. Told people outside the job what a lousy place you work for
5. Came to work late without permission
6. Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't
7. Insulted someone about their job performance
8. Stolen something worth less than $10 from someone at work
9. Made fun of someone's personal life
10. Ignored someone at work
11. Started an argument with someone at work
12. Insulted or made fun of someone at work

Appendix I

Demographic Items

Demographics:

1. Please indicate your gender.
2. What is your age (in years)?
3. Please indicate your race/ethnicity.
4. What is your current employment status?
5. On average, how many hours do you work per week?
6. How long have you been employed at your current job (please indicate years followed by months)?
7. Please indicate whether there is a shared lunchroom at your current company.
8. Please provide a rough estimate (in percentage, %) of how many employees bring food/drinks to work.
9. Please indicate whether you are a full time or part time employee.