Gentzy H. Franz

Class: Senior
Major: Psychology
Minor: Organizational
Communication

Employers routinely identify oral (which includes listening) and written communication as skill sets necessary for successful on-the-job performance, promotion and effective management. In this paper, I develop the FILA Hypothesis as an extension of Discrepancy Arousal Theory, and apply the Cognitive Dissonance Theory to explain the connection between effective listening, role ambiguity and job performance. By conducting this research, I have developed a greater understanding of human communication in organizational life; knowledge that will benefit me as I pursue a graduate degree in labor and industrial relations.

ABSTRACT

What is the Impact of Effective Listening on Job Performance and Role Ambiguity?

This study explores the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity. Existing variables are identified and analyzed as they relate to the field of organizational communication. The theories of *Cognitive Dissonance* and *Discrepancy Arousal* have been utilized. The study finds that effective listening reduces role ambiguity thus leading to the likelihood of improved job performance.

FACULTY MENTOR

Lou Davidson Tillson, an associate professor in the Department of Organizational Communication, teaches the department's Senior Seminar. In this class students are required to develop a paper that addresses an original research question. "It has been a wonderful experience for me to watch my students move from accepting information at face value to questioning, evaluating and creating scholarship. When the light bulb switches on for them, it becomes a wonderful "a-ha" moment for student and professor alike! For me, the research by Michael Burkeen and Gentzy Franz is evidence that MSU students are '*committing acts of scholarship!*'"

What is the Impact of Effective Listening on Job Performance and Role Ambiguity?

As the training manager briefs David and the other new hires on the content of the upcoming training session, she explains what will be expected of them and what the nature of their work will be in their new positions. She explains the precise nature of the job and the minimal degree of error that exists within the tasks they will be performing. She reveals that they will be evaluated twice a month for the next three months and the opportunity for quick promotion will rest solely on the success achieved between each evaluation. As the training session begins, it is quite obvious that many of the new employees are beginning to lose focus on the content of the training material; material that is extremely relevant to the tasks that they will be performing. As the meeting continues, it is apparent to David that the amount of listening is minimal and the "sender" is the only individual actively taking part in this communication transaction.

The story above illustrates a common occurrence during many orientation sessions in today's organizations. More and more information is being disseminated, but the question remains: are those receiving that information prepared to receive it? As the quantity of information increases, the capacity and ability to decode that information efficiently must likewise increase. If messages are conveyed to incompetent receivers, the message that is "received" may be quite contrary to what was initially desired. At the very core of decoding information is listening; this is the process by which the receiver aurally receives the message that is being transmitted by the sender. If there is a breakdown in listening, it is probable that the receiver in the transaction will miss certain (potentially vital) points of the originally intended message.

The question, "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity?" will be examined by looking at the research that has been conducted on the variables, effective listening, job performance and role ambiguity. This will be followed by a careful analysis of two relevant organizational theories, *Discrepancy Arousal Theory* and *Cognitive Dissonance Theory,* in order to answer the question that has been postulated.

All aspects of the question and consequent analysis will be related to the field and study of organizational communication. Miller (2003) defines organization as, "a group of people in which activities are coordinated in order to achieve both individual and collective goals" (p. 1). Miller states that, "communication is a process that is transactional and symbolic" (p. 1). Therefore, we can accurately define organizational communication as, the symbolic and transactional process used by a group of people in order to achieve both individual and collective goals. This definition will be used to show the relationship of the variables in the research question to the field of organizational communication. An in-depth understanding of all three variables will offer researchers and practitioners an opportunity to maximize organizational communication potential by starting at the rudimentary basics of the transaction process.

Literature Review

Before answering the question "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and reducing role ambiguity?," the three variables effective listening, job performance and role ambiguity will be carefully probed. In order to achieve a greater understanding of these variables, each factor will be thoroughly investigated according to the applicable current research.

Effective Listening

To remain as objective as possible when deciding what makes a listener truly "effective," the term "effective" must be operationally defined according to its representation in previous research. Indeed, it may seem quite simple to define such a quotidian concept; however, under examination will be some of the challenges that listening researchers face in their quest to arrive at an accurate conceptualization of what is effective listening. It is also important to come to an understanding of the relevance that listening has in an organizational and communicative context. After a review of the research illustrating these points, an inquiry will be made into the field of listening study to see how it is being represented in the circulating literature.

Studies have shown that in the course of one work day, an average of 45 percent of the hours in the office is spent listening (Huseman, Lahiff and Penrose, 1991). Indeed, it is logical to assume that 45 percent of the literature devoted to workplace communication would focus on listening. However, Fitch-Hauser and Hughes (1992) point out that "inadequate attention has been paid to the development of a consensus regarding the conceptualization of the theoretical concept/entity of listening" (p. 6). More recently, researchers have concluded that "the division between what communication scholars propose to know about the listening process, versus what is currently available in the scholarly literature on listening, is greater than one might expect" (Halone, Cunconan, Coakley and Wolvin, 1998, p. 12). Another difficulty that has arisen in the field of listening research deals with the fact that many of the participants in the listening studies have been measured in an environment that is quite different from the everyday situations in which listening occurs (Bentley, 1997). Despite these challenges, multiple researchers have attempted to define listening as, "that communicative phenomenon that is enacted 'in-relationship'" (Halone and Pecchioni, 2001, p. 66), the ability to completely understand the perspective and intent of the message sender (Huseman et al., 1991), and the use of elaboration and interest management to focus on the message being received (Imhof, 2001). Although this research is helpful in the overall understanding of what makes an effective listener, all of the research has failed to operationally define the term "effective listening" although almost all of the research makes reference to it. Furthermore, the areas of listening that have been studied deal with intimate relationships or educational settings rather than workplace environments (Adelmann, 2001; Halone and Pecchioni, 2001; Pecchioni and Halone, 2000), thus making it difficult to find a definition that would be appropriate for the current research. For the purpose of this research, then, "effective listening" will be defined as the process in which the receiver is sincerely and actively engaged both cognitively and physically in accurately interpreting the sender's message. Although this may be a verbose definition, it is important to include all facets of listening that are important in an organizational setting.

Understanding the perception of listening behavior is beneficial when looking at its impact in the organization. Seibert (as cited in Canary and Cody, 2003) found that employers consistently labeled listening as the most important skill or ability. Also, Goby and Lewis (as cited in Canary and Cody, 2003) found that even outside of the United States listening was rated as having greater importance than other administrative and communicative abilities. Other non-traditional approaches have identified "interpretive listening" as facilitative to the interactive components of managerial communication (Bokeno, 2002). Interpretive listening is not utilized to gather factual information but rather to involve both parties so they may arrive at innovative ideas and strengthen the relationship which already exists (Bokeno). It is fairly logical to assume that we like people better when we think they are listening to us; in the organizational environment it looks as if there is no exception to this assumption.

So how is listening being researched? It has been established that the research itself has limitations (Bentley, 1997; Fitch-Hauser and Hughes, 1992; Halone, Cunconan, Coakley and Wolvin, 1998); however, this makes the field ripe and rather fruitful to researchers eager to delve into a topic that has not been thoroughly over-examined. Wolvin, Halone, and Coakley (1999) identified the five most prevalent sub-fields in which listening is being given scholarly attention in the *International Journal of Listening.* Listed from most attention to the least, these five subfields are: listening research, listening practice, listening assessment, listening instruction, and listening theory. These findings reveal many of the problematic areas that exist within the study of listening. It is encouraging that the majority of the publications deal with research (assuming it is scientifically sound). However, the fact that listening theory is receiving the least amount of publication space only emphasizes the fact that listening is still quite an ambiguous "communicative phenomenon" (Halone and Pecchioni, 2001, p. 66). With listening instruction as a sub-field that is also receiving relatively little scholarly attention, it is obvious that the practical implications of listening research have yet to reach their potential as well; without instruction on how to apply the research that has been done, how will success and progress within the field be measured? Indeed the very purpose of their research was to, "enhance the amount, level and quality of dialogue that occurs on behalf of its (the field of listening) scholarly community" (Wolvin, et al., 1999, p. 114).

It is quite obvious that the study of listening has enormous potential and immeasurable possibility in the impact it could have on organizational issues. The importance of identifying this variable and exposing it from these various angles has been four-fold: to show the limitations and problems that exist within the field of

listening study, to operationally define the term effective listening, to assess how listening applies to the organizational environment, and to examine the different ways in which listening is being studied by scholars. By understanding what effective listening is and how it has been examined by scholars, it will be easier in the future to determine the consequences of such behavior and what its effect may be on other important organizational issues, such as job performance.

Job Performance

In almost all social climates, evaluations are made. Humans evaluate their own performances as well as others then assess whether or not the observed behavior was a positive or negative performance. In an organizational setting (work-place specifically), workers are constantly being evaluated and judged by their superiors; this being done to ensure that all workers are competent and "performing" to the best of their ability. This evaluation is often the basis for employee compensation, raises, discipline or termination (Huseman, Lahiff and Penrose, 1991). Due to the importance of job performance and its appraisal, this variable will be examined by looking at how it is measured and how goal setting, self-efficacy and performance are interrelated variables critical to any organizational setting.

The way in which job performance is measured is usually by means of some subjective interview process referred to as a performance appraisal interview (Huseman et al., 1991). In this interview, the person conducting the interview asks certain questions of the employee, learns about the employee's background, asks open-ended questions about the employee's own feelings about performance, and sets goals ("Conducting Effective," 2004). While it is important to use certain "tools" when assessing job performance in an appraisal interview, what is of most import is the manner in which the person conducts the interview and not the system that he or she uses (McAdams and Barilla, 2003).

One variable that has been consistently noted as a significant factor in determining competent job performance is the practice of goal setting ("Conducting Effective," 2004; Huseman et al., 1991; McAdams and Barilla, 2003; Phillips and Gully, 1997). Simply stated, this is the process in which a supervisor makes a goal with an organizational member and then establishes this as the criteria by which a person measures his or her success (Phillips and Gully). However, it appears that goal setting by itself may not have as big

an impact as was originally thought. Potosky and Ramakrishna (2002) studied the principle of self-efficacy as the missing link between the correlation between goal setting and more efficient job performance. The principle of self-efficacy, as outlined by Bandura, consists of an individual's intended effort to attain a desired level of performance; a principle that has received empirical support in cross-cultural contexts as well (2002). Bandura (as cited in Potosky and Ramakrishna, 2002) explains that self-efficacy is surmised by relying on multiple sources: past performance, psychological state, vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion. In essence, the role self-efficacy plays is a sort of inner-voice to the individual indicating whether or not the individual can achieve the goal that was established. The findings from the work of Potosky and Ramakrishna show that "self-efficacy beliefs about learning new job-related things provide a potentially important link to work-related performance" (p. 291). This is again extremely important to organizational communication scholars because it points to the importance of communicating a need for goals among organizational members as well as a need to teach the members self-efficacy and how to hear the inner voice of "I know I can" rather than "I think I can't" when dealing with the goals that have been established.

In this section, job performance has been examined by looking at two vital aspects: how it is measured and how certain antecedents such as goal setting and self-efficacy may have an impact on performance. The goal of any organization should be to maximize productivity by achieving the productive potential of each member. If job performance is the measure of that productive potential, then it can be assumed that knowledge of its causes and other correlates need to be examined and revealed in order to ensure that performance continues to remain at a high level. It could be assumed that certain elements may take away from the level of job performance; job stressors, such as role ambiguity, are factors that must be identified and resolved to ensure the overall effectiveness of any organization.

Role Ambiguity

In this section, the discussion will turn to role ambiguity as an important and relevant factor in organizational study. In order to effectively look at the pertinent principles in role ambiguity, the research will focus on the following areas: the definition of role ambiguity, the reasons it arises, how it is dealt with, and what organizational factors may increase or decrease its effects.

Role ambiguity is simply the state of an organizational member wherein he or she does not know what to do (Bliese and Castro, 2000). That being said, it is easy to speculate as to the various situations in which this job stressor may arise: new job, organizational change, new management, etc. In times of low role ambiguity (referred to as role clarity), organizational members have been found to show low negative strain and, thus, higher rates of productivity (Bliese and Castro, 2000; Fried, Ben-David, Tiegs, Avital and Yeverechyahu, 1998). Recognizing this role stressor early and being prepared to cope with it is of greatest importance.

The manner in which individuals cope with stress has long been an area of interest for organizational stress researchers (Shimazu and Kosugi, 2003). The effects of stress can be seen at the macro level in the success of the company as a whole as well as at the micro level concerning the overall well-being of the individuals who make up the organization. The strategy used to cope with this stress can be broken down into two different techniques: active coping, which deals with the individual attempting to remove the stressor by engaging in related activities; and non-active coping, which the individual uses to momentarily forget about the stressor at hand (as cited in Shimazu and Kosugi). It has been found that active coping tends to be more effective in dealing with the stressor given that the individual has some control over the situation (Vitaliano, DeWolfe, Maiuro, Russo and Katon, 1990). Although research has been done to show that active coping is indeed negatively related to role ambiguity, the effect of active coping on role ambiguity was weaker than other psychological stressors (Shimazu and Kosugi). The reason for this is that "role ambiguity is considered to be an unpredictable stressor in that it does not offer clear indicators for action" (Shimazu and Kosugi, p. 48). While the results from the Shimazu and Kosugi study are a little disheartening, they give way to another aspect of the organization that may have a more significant impact in the reduction of role ambiguity: leadership.

The importance of social support is an obvious and well-documented issue. It can be assumed that social support will only enhance the positive experience in almost all cases. When looking at role ambiguity, it is important to distinguish it from work overload; work overload is having too much to do, which can be stressful if the work is coupled with role ambiguity (Bliese and Castro, 2000). However, role clarity has been shown to buffer the effects of work overload; or in other words, the stress is not too much even if the individual has excessive work, as long as he or she knows how to do it (Bliese and Castro). Bliese and Castro's research focused exclusively on seeing whether or not low role ambiguity would indeed alleviate the stress caused by work overload. Interestingly enough, they found that it only acted as a buffer if there was supportive leadership (Bliese and Castro, 2000). It is obvious that leaders play a vital role in the success of the collective organization; however, this research shows that leadership also has a significant impact on a very micro issue such as work stress. So, if the leadership support is low, it can be concluded that regardless of role clarity, high-pressure work will always be stressful (Bliese and Castro).

Role ambiguity is a relevant organizational topic for the following reasons: to ensure that expectations of role clarity are realistic, to understand how to increase the consequences of role clarity, and to prepare scholars to study the topic in depth as it relates to other organizational issues. After defining role ambiguity, examining why it arises, looking at how people deal with it in organizational settings, and analyzing organizational factors that may increase or decrease its effects, it is obvious to see why it has been such an important and relevant topic to organizational stress scholars.

In this section, the three variables that make up the content of the research question at hand have been identified and examined: effective listening, job performance and role ambiguity. A more comprehensive understanding of these terms allows the research question of "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity?" to be analyzed and answered more intelligibly and with more accuracy.

Analysis

To answer the question, "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity," two important theories will be explained and discussed in some detail. The two theories to be examined will be Discrepancy Arousal Theory and Cognitive Dissonance Theory; both of which have been applied by communication scholars and by scholars in other academic fields.

Discrepancy Arousal Theory

The first theory that will be used to address and answer the research question is that of the Discrepancy Arousal Theory (DAT). This theory was proposed by Cappella and Greene in 1982 (as cited in Heath and Bryant, 1992), and looks at the communication process as it unfolds moment to moment.

One of the key points of the DAT is the fact that it involves both the sender and receiver and looks at the interplay that exists in the communication process. The theory holds that "arousal-positive or arousal-negative feelings result from any discrepancy between one person's expectations of what the other's actions should be and what those actions are" (Heath and Bryant, 1992, p. 189). Therefore, if one individual (the receiver, or for application to this study, the listener) receives a message that contradicts the previous notion of what the message may be, he or she will have a negative reaction because of the discrepancy. This negative reaction may include, but is not limited to, pauses, vocalizations, body language, and social distance (Heath and Bryant). Although it may be an assumption, it would be safe to include a lack of listening in the list of negative reactions to messages that are significantly discrepant when compared with expectation. This point will be explored later in the paper. Already it should be clear that the DAT is applicable to all types of communication interactions; in relationships, in friendships, and in the organization.

From an organizational standpoint, the implications of the DAT are quite obvious. This will be illustrated using a hypothetical example applicable to most organizations. When a prospective member first joins an organization, there is normally some sort of orientation or training. During this period of time, the new member is primarily engaged in a strictly "receiver" role: receiving directions regarding new responsibilities, receiving information about benefits, etc. According to the DAT, if at any point during this exchange (as the trainer is debriefing the new members) there is a discrepancy between what the new member expects and what is actually transmitted, arousal will occur and the listener will begin to take part in either reciprocal activities or compensatory activities (Heath and Bryant, 1992). As Heath and Bryant point out, "the determining factor of acceptance is the amount of arousal that will be tolerated before it leads to aversion" (p. 190). In the organizational example, it will be assumed that some of the information being shared with the new member is "arousing"

enough that it cannot be tolerated anymore and therefore aversion must take place. For the purpose of this paper, the "aversion" technique being used is to simply stop listening (thus negating the possibility that effective listening will occur). It is easy to speculate what may be the consequence of this aversive technique during a training session; however, in order to speculate more accurately, the DAT will be applied specifically to the question of the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity.

Earlier in this paper, effective listening was defined as the process in which the receiver is sincerely and actively engaged both cognitively and physically in accurately interpreting the sender's message. It is clear from this definition that effective listening requires a type of interest and personal involvement on the side of the receiver. According to the DAT, if there is a dicrepancy between the expectation of the receiver and the message received, some type of aversion will take place (Heath and Byrant, 1992). Even though the individual may know that the absence of listening may have a negative impact on his or her organizational performance, the arousal caused by the discrepancy will almost single-handedly cause the person to react regardless of the conscious realization of consequences; the removal of the arousal is of most importance at that point in the interaction. If the individual stops listening, it can be assumed that many aspects of the organizational responsibilities will be missed and the person will be left not knowing what to do. This state of "not knowing what to do" is the way in which role ambiguity has been operationally defined (Bliese and Castro, 2000). So, when the absence of listening is used as an aversion technique, the likelihood of role ambiguity will increase, leaving the person without a clear understanding of what to do. At this point, it could be hypothesized that a person not knowing what to do would demonstrate poor job performance; however, beyond that notion, there is research that considered role clarity (the opposite of role ambiguity) as an enhancement of job performance (Fried et al., 1998). If the role ambiguity is present in a situation in which an individual failed to listen effectively, it will make good job performance difficult. To explain this organizational phenomenon, the author has created the *FILA* (Franz's Ineffective Listening as Aversion) *Hypothesis*. Simply put: If the expectation of the receiver is not met by the message of the sender, the receiver will become aroused beyond the tolerance level leading to a need for aversion, which in this case is to stop listening effectively. This action leads to increased role ambiguity, which will 1) lead to poor job performance and 2) not be available

to act as a buffer to the negative effects of work-overload, should the amount of work become an issue (Bliese and Castro). Using this model to answer the question, "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity?" it could be concluded that effective listening enhances the likelihood of quality job performance because it reduces the probability of role ambiguity. Therefore, listening is the foundation upon which this organizational dynamic rests; if listening is effective in the beginning of communication, then it is more probable that role clarity and job performance will be effective as well.

By analyzing the research question according to the DAT, a very solid and concrete answer is presented. This answer gives credence to the notion that although Cappella and Greene proposed this as an interpersonal communication theory in 1982 (Heath and Bryant, 1992), it can also be used to explain phenomena that arise in organizational communication situations. However, the DAT is not the only theory that is helpful in solving the problems present in the research question; there are countless other theories which could and should be used to promote and influence scholarship in the field of organizational communication.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance Theory is one of the most influential theories in Social Psychology (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999). Although originally a psychological theory, its prevalence in fields such as organizational communication gives credence to the notion that it is a very versatile and applicable theory.

To explain the concept of *cognitive dissonance*, Festinger (as cited in Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999) used a very vivid and parabolic illustration. He stated that a woman who smokes (behavior) is also likely to know that it is bad for her (attitude or belief), therefore causing dissonance (or discrepancy) between what she is doing and what she knows to be true. Because of this dissonance, a feeling of negative arousal will set in causing her to want to change one of the elements (behavior or attitude) in order to have consonance between the two, thus relieving her of the negative tension and arousal caused by the dissonance. It has been shown that to reduce this type of dissonance, the female smoker may adopt a new attitude ("smoking is not *that* bad" or,""everyone is going to die anyway") (Heath and Bryant, 1992). In this state of cognitive tension or dissonance, people restore consonance by

"shifting" the element (either the behavior or the attitude) that requires the least amount of effort (Rosenberg and Abelson, 1960, as cited in McGregor, Newby-Clark, and Zanna, 1999). If the dissonance can truly be resolved by means of an attitude change (presumably the "least amount of effort" option because the behavior has already taken place and cannot be taken back), it is unlikely that the individual will employ other means to restore the desired consonancy (Leippe and Eisenstadt, 1999). By understanding why dissonance occurs and by what means people restore consonancy, it is easier to apply the theory to practical and everyday situations.

Because listening is such an important aspect in the "transactional process" that makes up organizational communication (Miller, 2003), it is logical that its absence would have a devastating effect. To illustrate how the Cognitive Dissonance Theory can be used to solve the problem the research question presents, another hypothetical situation will be employed. A new employee has just been assigned a rather difficult and challenging new project; the employee is excited about having the responsibility of the project and knows of its importance to the organization. The employee knows that she will be subjected to a rather lengthy instructional period in which the details of the project shall be explained. As the manager begins to give her the instructions, she is amazed at how boring and monotonous the content of the material is. She is cognitively aware that her listening efforts are far from effective, yet she cannot muster the strength to continue concentrating on the sender, despite the knowledge that the message is important. At this point cognitive dissonance occurs; she knows the information is important (attitude), yet she refuses to listen to what is being presented out of pure boredom (behavior). In order to decrease the negative tension and arousal caused by the discrepancy between her attitude and her behavior, she chooses to restore consonance by thinking, "this project isn't *that* important anyway, I'll be able to figure it out once I get started." Her consonance is restored, and she continues the session in a very "non-effective listening" manner. Although this situation does not delve into the actual job performance or role ambiguity that follows, we can speculate about the result due to the quality of the listening. Because the employee was being an ineffective listener, we can suppose that because of this ineffectiveness, she missed out and simply does not know what to do (Bliese and Castro, 2000). Due to this high level of ambiguity, we expect (due to the relevant research) that a poor job performance evaluation will follow (Fried

et al., 1998). To answer the research question, effective listening (whether caused by a need to reduce dissonance or from interest in the topic) reduces the likelihood of role ambiguity, which increases the probability of a positive job performance.

By explaining the theory of cognitive dissonance and how it relates to organizational communication, the question of "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity?" has been answered according to the principles established by Leon Festinger. It is interesting that cognitive dissonance can be used in almost every situation; interpersonal relationships, persuasive situations, etc. However, Cognitive Dissonance Theory is important here because it is relevant to many different aspects of the organizational setting.

By analyzing both the Discrepancy Arousal Theory and the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, it has been possible to intelligibly and accurately support the answer to the research question that is presented in this paper. In both cases, the conclusion that effective listening is key to quality job performance and reducing role ambiguity has been supported. However, although the research has been done and the findings have been presented, the results have shortcomings that require further research involving the inclusion of other variables.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been two-fold: identify and examine the variables involved in the research question, "What is the impact of effective listening on job performance and role ambiguity?," and answer the question using two significant communication theories. To conclude this paper, the following will take place: the variables and some of their key points will be reviewed, followed by the theories and how they were used to answer the question posed by this paper. After these reviews, the limitations of this study will be identified along with future research that may be relevant not only to the discipline of organizational communication but also to listening research as it applies to the organization more specifically.

The variables that were examined in this paper were effective listening, job performance and role ambiguity. Effective listening was defined as the process in which the receiver is sincerely and actively engaged both cognitively and physically in accurately interpreting the sender's message. Although the research reveals that there is much to learn about listening as a communication concept, enough research has been done to show that this is an area ripe for scholarly examination. Job performance is a fairly easy concept to grasp. It is simply the execution of the task to which an organizational member has been assigned. Research performed on this topic allows for greater profit and effectiveness in the corporate organization. However, what may be of interest to future scholars is the study of job performacnce in the non-profit sector wherein evaluations are not as driven by capital gain. Role ambiguity is the opposite of role clarity and was explained as simply not knowing what to do in a particular organizational responsibility (Bliese and Castro, 2000). It was identified as a work stressor and leads to detrimental aspects, such as burnout, poor job performance and adverse health conditions (Fried et al., 1998). Although this condition was considered primarily as a result of poor employee listening, another perspective would be to examine how the organization or management could ensure that role ambiguity is minimized. Finally, according to both the Discrepancy Arousal Theory and the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, the answer to the question was resounding; not only does effective listening enhance both job performance and reduce role ambiguity, it is imperative to the organizational communication process that this transaction effectively occurs in order to attain individual and collective goals (Miller, 2003). Each of these variables (and theories) is quite complex and could be used exclusively in a research paper; however, for the purpose of this analysis, the variables were examined and identified to the best of the author's ability.

Our friend David, from the beginning of this paper, is presented with an interesting dilemma. He is not opposed to any of the information and, although he is quite bored by the content of the meeting, he realizes it may be an asset when he officially begins his role in the organization. David decides to continue listening; his fellow employees on the other hand, continue their lethargic and carefree attitude. Relative to David's appraisal, they do not fare as well in their first evaluation and many have decided to look for a job that is, as they have said, "easier to understand." Hearing this comment, David just smiles and instantly remembers an old Buddhist expression "there is a truth the words cannot reach" (as cited in Samovar and Porter, 2004). "However," he adds to this adage, "there is immeasurable truth to be found, if we let the words reach us."

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