ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? AN INVESTIGATION OF EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF LISTENING

by

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Are You Listening to Me? An Investigation of Employee Perceptions of Listening

Abstract

By

TIFFANY SCHROEDER

Modern organizations rely on individuals to speak up with ideas, concerns, and suggestions. In short, they require employees to be proactive not just in the actions that they take, but in their communications as well. An accumulation of evidence from the areas of employee voice, silence, and issue-selling suggests that perceptions of listening are important for the open sharing of thoughts, concerns, and suggestions relating to the ongoing flow of work in organizations. Still, research lags when it comes to understanding the experience of listening and the path to its workplace outcomes. Specifically, there are a multitude of terms used to describe listening whereas there are few rigorous attempts to examine the process and properties from the perspective of the person who speaks up. This dissertation explores listening perceptions from multiple angles. First, drawing from interdependence theory I offer a conceptual explanation for how and why perceptions of listening are formed. Then, I draw on organizational support theory to suggest that listening is a powerful but missing predictor of perceived organizational support. To test the relative strength of perceived listening as a predictor of perceived organizational support I compared it against other well-known predictors using dominance analysis. Results from the analysis of survey data from 120 adults working in various fields suggest that perceived listening is an even more powerful

predictor than was expected. Specifically, it completely dominated both leader-member exchange and perceived supervisor support in the prediction of perceived organizational support. Finally, I present the results of a qualitative study of 42 in-depth interviews with bank employees to address the research question 'How do employees perceive and engage in workplace listening experiences?' From these data I build a process model of listening perceptions. This model sheds light on the situations in which employees attend to listening, the people they see as key listeners, and the process through which they construct assessments of listening.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The notion of listening to employees is deeply, if implicitly, embedded in the history of organizational behavior. During the past century we have seen many changes occurring as the conceptualization of the workplace has evolved from the bureaucratic form of organizing to more relational forms (Gittell & Douglass, 2012). Early scholars like Mary Parker Follett and Elton Mayo (O'Connor, 1999; Parker, 1984) pushed in the direction of relational organizing, igniting a human relations movement that has greatly shaped our notions of work and organizing. As relationships have come into focus and organizations have shifted away from traditional bureaucracies, a general trend can be observed toward treating employees as social, emotional beings and *valuing* them for their unique contributions. Indeed, findings from the organizational support literature point toward the understanding that when employees feel that the organization values them and cares for their well-being, they are able to engage more fully in that relationship and give more of themselves at work. These relationships are of utmost importance for employees' organizational experiences and behaviors, and healthy relationships built on feelings of value, self-worth, and mutual responsiveness typically rely in some way on the ability to listen and perceive listening.

I define perceived listening as the subjective, global evaluation by the speaker of the extent to which another takes in, understands, and appropriately responds to the needs of the speaker in response to a speaker's acts of sharing. The process of listening has been suggested as a key interpersonal process responsible for shaping one's self-concept (Pasupathi, 2001), respectfully relating to others (Dutton, 2003), showing compassion (Frost et al., 2006), and meeting interpersonal needs (Reis & Clark, 2013). Within the

workplace specifically, the perception of listening has been suggested as factor responsible for promoting employee voice (Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009). For all of these reasons employees are likely to pay attention to the listening behaviors of interdependent others, yet the perception of listening (perceived listening) has rarely been given focused attention within organizational studies.

The lack of attention to perceived listening is troublesome. Gallup reports that small changes in the number of employees who feel that their opinions count can be tied to a 6% difference in firm productivity due to impact on productivity, employee retention, safety, and customer experience (Gallup, 2013). And within the voice and silence literatures, an estimated 17-25% of failures to speak up can be accounted for by feelings of futility around one's voice having any impact. Anecdotally, these feelings of futility have been linked to the listening behavior of others, such as in this quote from an employee working in the entertainment industry: "It's not so much that I can't communicate than [it is] their inability to hear me. There are different degrees of listening and hearing. If they are not hearing – how hard do you push?" (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003, p. 1464). While this likely involves more than just listening (i.e., the ability to do something about what's being said), perceptions of listening certainly seem to play a role in these larger calculations. And it's not just employees who are evaluating and assessing leaders' listening - a 2013 survey on CEO performance evaluations revealed that the CEO'S listening skills was rated as a top deficiency by board directors 20. 7% of the time. The other top deficiencies were all relational issues that seem to require listening as well: Board relationship and engagement; mentoring

skills; sharing leadership; conflict management skills (Larcker, Miles, Tayan, & Guttman, 2013).

When organizational leaders and managers do attend to listening, they may not understand how their listening behaviors are perceived by others. The aforementioned CEO study found that 11. 3% disagreed with the board's assessment of their listening skills, and a study of hospitality managers found that 94% who had been placed in the bottom quartile of listeners by their subordinates had described themselves as either "good" or "very good" listeners (Brownell, 1990). Indeed, there is little scholarship to point toward in guiding organizational agents as to how employees see listening.

A likely reason for the neglect of scholarly attention to listening is that there is no commonly accepted definition for what it means to listen or to perceive another's listening. Generally, when listening is mentioned it is in the context of its presumed importance to things like voice, the achievement of high-quality relationships, and effective leadership. These discussions lack overt attention to listening as well as solid theory around what it is or how it has an impact. Further, when listening is discussed it is often marred by fuzzy boundaries around where one construct ends and another begins. In this dissertation I attempt to advance the study of listening by offering three separate but interrelated papers which are intended to advance understanding of listening within organizations.

In Chapters II and III I empirically examine the notion that perceived listening might play a role in the unfolding of organizational relationships and have an impact on employee outcomes. In Chapter II I introduce listening as a concept relevant to conversations in the literature around the employment relationship, particularly around

the formation of perceptions of organizational support. My main argument in these chapters draws on and extends organizational support theory, which asserts that employees gauge organizational concern in order to determine the benefits of putting in additional work effort. Organizational support theory provides a framework for understanding how employees come to engage actively in the work relationship, but previous work has not fully explored the process through which employees form perceptions of organizational support (Eisenberger, Jones, Aselage, & Sucharski, 2004). I extend this discourse by proposing that listening signals to employees that they are valued by the organization and thus informs their understanding of the employee-organization relationship. Next, in Chapter III I test the relative importance of perceived listening against other well-known predictors of perceived organizational support. Findings from this study are then discussed for their contributions to organizational support theory, the emerging class of relationship theories, and managerial practice.

In Chapter IV I, I present a study in which I draw on 42 in-depth interviews with employees in the banking industry in order to address the research question 'How do employees perceive and engage in workplace listening experiences?' Based on the data I then present a process model of listening perceptions, which sheds light on situations in which employees attend to listening, the people they see as key listeners, and the process through which they assess listening. In Chapter V I build on all of this work to offer a detailed and theoretically-grounded definition for perceived listening as it relates to interdependent work relationships. I start by briefly reviewing areas in which listening is discussed or implied and how it is conceptualized in these areas. I then build on these and draw on communications and social psychological research offer a definition of

perceived listening. Then, I present an interdependence theory of listening in which I argue that people pay attention to listening, that their perceptions of listening should be episodic in nature in that they are shaped more in some situations than others, and offer I offer a theoretically-grounded account for linking perceived listening to new outcomes.

Finally, in Chapter VI I offer a general discussion aimed at tying these various perspectives together into a more integrated picture of perceived listening and its role as a relational practice for fostering strong, healthy organizational citizens and relationships.

Listening in Organizational Studies – An Overview

Perceptions of listening have been mentioned most frequently within the areas of employee voice and silence. In these literatures listening is viewed as either a reaction to employee voice, or as an antecedent of it such that when one perceives that authority figures are listening, they are more likely to express voice. An emphasis is often placed on a generalized perceived willingness for top management to listen rather than the actual behaviors associated with listening in a given situation (e.g., Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubio, 2002). Sometimes referred to as openness, or consideration, listening within this literature is typically represented as the perceived amount of consideration given to employee ideas and suggestions (e.g., Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998).

Listening has also been discussed within the realm of leadership. As Ashford and colleagues note, "Although listening might be one of the most important things that leaders do, it also is one of the most difficult things for them to do. It goes against their training and upbringing within the organization." (Ashford et al., 2009: 190). This observation suggests a general bias toward highlighting the extraverted and charismatic

qualities of effective leaders. But more recently a subset of scholars has been arguing that a quieter form of leadership can be just as effective, one that comes with a greater sense of humility and a willingness to speak less and listen more (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013; Schein, 2013). In this way listening is increasingly becoming of interest to leadership scholars. In addition listening is an explicit part of one leadership theory. Servant leadership theory lists listening as one of the primary dimensions through which leaders promote organizational growth and wisdom. Still, one pair of scholars who attempted to examine listening as a separate dimension of the servant leadership style found too much overlap with other aspects, concluding that "listening and empathy appear to be skills that aid all aspects of effective leadership and are not unique to servant leadership." (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006: 319). Thus, whether or not it is explicitly discussed as such, listening is likely present to some degree within all forms of leadership. Within the realm of leadership listening is typically viewed as a skill or ability possessed by the leader that can be deployed to a greater or lesser extent in various relationships and situations. It is marked by a displayed willingness to concede actual talking time to followers, and to consider what they have to say.

Listening has also been discussed with regard to compassion (Frost et al., 2006). Frost and colleagues offer no specific definition of listening, but describe it as "a process for gaining a cognitive and emotional understanding of the state of others as well as providing a means for sensing and feeling the pain of another person." Here, listening is one of several tools for the facilitation of healing by means of connecting compassionately with another individual. The focus is not on listening, but on compassion. In this sense good listening is thought to convey empathy and openness,

marked primarily by non-judgmental and empathetic responses and the display of cognitive and emotional attention.

Finally, listening has been discussed within the area of relationships more broadly. Dutton sees listening as one of five strategies for respectful engagement (Dutton, 2003). Ed Schein sees attention to listening as a tool that individuals use in order to gauge another's interest and investment in really hearing what another has to say (Schein, 2013). In this way he suggests that listening acts as a relational cue and also as a signal to go on. Research on narratives provides some support for this suggestion. In a series of studies, Monisha Pasupathi and colleagues (e.g., Pasupathi & Rich, 2005; Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2010) have found that narrators' storytelling ability is significantly enhanced by the presence of attentive listeners. This is because the listeners provide telling cues (termed backchannel) that show comprehension of the story and encourage the speaker to go on. In this way, good listening may facilitate both interpersonal relationship building and the self-integration (personal growth) of the speaker by enabling the focal individual to connect while composing meaningful narratives around their experiences. Thus, in this sense listening is thought to be a behavior that occurs within specific dyads that helps to develop both the relationship and the individuals, while also offering an invitation to be open in that particular dyad.

While the above areas all consider listening to be important, listening does not take a center stage, save for Pasupathi's and Bavelas's work, in any of these perspectives. I put listening center stage as I argue that listening perceptions shape individual cognition, affect, and behavior while also shaping relationships within organizations. I will be concentrating on the perception of being listened to (perceived listening) rather

than on listening accuracy (e.g., recall) because I am interested in the interpersonal effects of listening in the domain of workplace relations. People process and respond to interpersonal interactions based on their perceptions and interpretations of those interactions (Arriaga, 2013). Therefore in order to best understand impacts on workplace relationships it is important to understand the subjective experience of the person being listened to.

CHAPTER II. PRELIMINARY STUDY[1]

Perceived listening is thought to be an important basis for building solid relationships (Bodie, Worthington, Imhof & Cooper, 2008), but does it actually impact how employees come to view and engage in their relationship with their organizations? If it does, what types of employee outcomes might be impacted by being perceived listening? Having a better understanding of the impact of perceived listening in organizations is important because of its potential influence on supervisory relationships, work performance and organizational outcomes.

Listening has been primarily studied in the fields of psychology, counseling psychology, and communications. Because this dissertation is focused on a subjective appraisal of how well another listens based on dyadic exchanges in an ongoing relationship, I will primarily concentrate my literature review on research focused on the impact of listening on interpersonal relationships. Much of this work has been conducted in the realm of marital relationships, where the research has demonstrated mixed results. At one end of the spectrum, John Gottman and colleagues, as a part of a larger set of studies widely acknowledged for their accuracy in predicting divorce rates, have argued that listening is not an important predictor of long-term marital quality and that active listening techniques should be abandoned in marital therapy (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). Others have found that interventions involving an active listening component have a positive impact on long-term relationship quality (e.g., Markman, Floyd, Sanley, & Storaasli, 1988).

[1] The preliminary study was conducted as a part of the author's degree requirements prior to starting this dissertation work, and is currently a work in progress, coauthored with former advisor Diane Bergeron. A poster version of this paper was presented at the 2013 Positive Organizational Scholarship conference (Schroeder & Bergeron, 2013).

Part of the reason for these mixed results stems from different conceptualizations and measurements of listening (Hafen & Crane, 2003). Further, all of these studies tend to be rooted in and focused on active listening techniques and their observable application. When it comes to ongoing relationships it may be difficult to judge effective listening through observation of specific behaviors, as there may be a loose coupling between listening behaviors, actual listening, and the feeling of being listened-to. For example, research shows that as some relational partners become more familiar with one another over time, they become more economical in their listening behaviors (Pasupathi, Carstensen, Levenson, & Gottman, 1999). That is, they are able to retain their ability to take in and respond appropriately to message content even as they display fewer outward signs of listening. Thus, behaviors and techniques employed as people "listen" may not be the best indicators of listening within ongoing relationships (Hafen & Crane, 2003).

Tyler (2011) takes this one step further to argue that the more overt, behavioral indicators of listening often simply represent the functional *impression* of listening, or perhaps an understanding of the words spoken, rather than getting at the deeper level of connecting to and understanding the meaning of communicator. It is listening at this more personal, situated, level, he notes, that Carl Rogers had originally theorized as having the power to transform people and relationships. It seems, then, that the objectively observable behaviors, and the display of accurate understanding for what another has said, are not actually the best indicators of listening when it comes to impact on relationships. On the other hand, there is strong evidence to indicate that the *perception of being understood* (in a more holistic way, going beyond what is verbally conveyed) makes a difference when it comes to people's level of engagement within a

relationship (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011). In a longitudinal study of newlywed couples, Pollman and Finkenauer (2009) found that the feeling of being understood by a partner was more important to long-term relationship quality than was actual accuracy of understanding. Thus, whereas "listening behaviors" may not be reliably linked to relational outcomes, feeling listened to on a subjective, situated, level seems to make a difference, and may then serve as an indicator for understanding how people will see and engage in that relationship.

According to Rogers (1989/1959), listening can signal empathetic understanding of another person's internal frame of reference and unconditional positive regard - elements thought to be powerful building blocks for transformational change in individuals and relationships (Carmeli & Russo, 2016). Research has indeed shown that listening can facilitate changes in self-perception (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005; Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011), and capitalization on positive experiences (Reis, et al., 2010). Listening can also benefit individuals by validating their social worth and providing a fertile ground for the growth of relationships. Speakers are attuned to the listening behaviors of others because other's responsiveness signals that the speaker's experience is worthy of attention, even if the listener disagrees with the meaning of the message (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2000). On the other hand, a lack of responsiveness can signal rejection (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005). The very act of listening shows valuation of the person because attention is diverted from other possible activities and focused on the speaker.

Listening, Perceived Organizational Support, and the Employee-Organization Relationship

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is a general perception that employees form about the organization's orientation toward them. This encompasses both how much the organization is thought to value their contributions and how much it cares about their well-being. In a supportive organization, employees are viewed and treated as individuals worthy of the organization's investment. In contrast, in unsupportive organizations, employees are viewed and treated as replaceable robots filling a given position (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

Research has identified many antecedents of POS. They fall into the following broad categories: fairness (procedural justice, politics), supervisor support, organizational rewards and job conditions (e.g., pay, job security, role stressors), person characteristics (personality), and demographics (e.g., age, tenure). Rhodes and Eisenberger (2002) conducted a meta-analysis on POS and found that fairness, supervisor support, and rewards and job conditions were all strongly related to POS, whereas person characteristics and demographics were only weakly related to POS.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976) is the main theoretical framework that explains why employees look for signals of organizational support and how those perceptions of support lead to favorable outcomes (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Blau defines social exchanges as "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others" (1964: 91). Social exchange relationships are marked by trust and a long-term perspective, enabling employees to focus on contributing to the organization without having to worry that the organization will take advantage of their efforts. A basic principle of social exchange theory is that

relationships with others develop and are solidified by certain 'rules' of exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). One of the main rules governing these exchanges is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which states that receiving a favor generates an obligation to 'return the favor' on the part of the recipient (Blau, 1964a; Gouldner, 1960).

Socioemotional resources are among the resources reciprocated in social relationships, and partners in social exchange relationships can generally be counted on to reciprocate contributions in the long-term (Foa & Foa, 1980). The same holds true in the relationship between the employee and his or her organization. Employees are attuned to signals sent by representatives of the organization that it cares about them and values their contributions. This attunement is adaptive because it gives them comfort in their continuing "investments" in the relationship with the organization. In other words, when employees feel that the organization cares about and thinks highly of them, they can trust that their contributions will be reciprocated (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Blau, 1964; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Gouldner, 1960). In this way, perceived support contributes to the formation of a reciprocal relationship between the employee and the organization. It can also be argued that employees who feel valued may also become more motivated to contribute to the organization due to enhanced feelings of social worth. Social worth promotes the belief on the part of employees that their actions will be accepted and viewed as valuable by beneficiaries (e.g., the organization) rather than being rejected and viewed as worthless by the organization (Batson, 1998; Grant & Gino, 2010). Consistent with these accounts, POS has been linked to employee reciprocation in the form of affective commitment

(Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997), and positive behavioral outcomes such as higher job performance and organizational citizenship behavior, lower withdrawal behavior, and increased safety, among other outcomes (see reviews by Baran, Shanock & Miller, 2012; Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002).

Although various antecedents have been studied as being influential in how employees form their perceptions of organizational treatment (i.e., POS), an important element has been left out, namely, indications that the organization or its representatives are interested in understanding the personal perspectives of the employee. Listening sends this signal and is thus an important part of the process of feeling valued and cared about. Listening can value the employee by privileging that exchange over other competing attentional demands and also by showing interest in the employee's unique perspective. This places emphasis on the person as an individual rather than on the role being filled by the person. As a result, employees within the organization see themselves not as interchangeable role inhabitors fulfilling a task but rather they come to feel recognized as visible beings with thoughts, needs and feelings—a concept central to the notion of the supportive organization. Further, listening conveys positive regard (Rogers, 1989/1959). Positive regard has recently come garnered attention in management literature as Carmeli and Russo (2016) have drawn on Carl Rogers' writings and other scholars' work to argue that small actions conveying positive regard can have a large impact when it comes to individuals' ability to feel connected in organizational relationships. The small acts, or "micro-relational moves" that Carmeli and Russo put forth include acts of gratitude, compassion, and emotional expression, but in a return to

the theory's Rogerian roots, I would add listening to that list. Thus, the perception of listening, and particularly when the listeners are those perceived to represent the organization, may be an important factor that employees consciously or subconsciously take into consideration when forming perceptions of organizational support.

H1: Perceived listening will be positively related to perceptions of organizational support.

Relationships between Listening and Employee Outcomes

Impact of listening on organizational citizenship behavior. A main tenet of social exchange theory is that relationships are based on a series of reciprocal exchanges. When employees feel listened to, they feel accepted and responded to (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005). In this way, listening is not about what the employee says as much as it is about perceiving supportive signals sent by the organization. Because perceived listening is intertwined with feeling understood (Dolev & Kluger, 2011), employees who do not feel listened to will see it as unlikely that the organization understands them as individuals. Without this understanding, employees will not feel that the organization recognizes and supports their individual needs. On the other hand, perceived listening meets the socioemotional needs of employees and enhances the perceived likelihood that future needs will be understood and attended to. Having these needs met reinforces the notion of social exchange with the organization and reinforces the notion that the employees' discretionary contributions will be positively received. As such, employees may be more likely to fully engage their capabilities at work by contributing through discretionary behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCBs "support the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place" (Organ, 1997, p.

95). These behaviors tend to be more similar across jobs and include things like protecting the organization, helping colleagues, keeping up with issues relevant to work, and making recommendations (Lee & Allen, 2002; Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998).

H2: Perceived listening will be positively related to employee organizational citizenship behavior.

Research shows that POS is positively related to citizenship behavior (see meta-analyses by Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). There is longitudinal evidence of this relationship (e.g., Choi, 2006) as well as positive relationships to subjective assessments of OCB and objective measures of OCB (i.e., number of employee suggestions) (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998). I expect the relationship between perceived listening and OCB to be mediated by POS. Based on social exchange theory, the assumption is that increased perceptions of support will result in greater social exchanges in the form of more willingness to put forth increased work effort (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

H3: Perceived organizational support will mediate the relationship between perceived listening and organizational citizenship behavior.

Impact of listening on well-being. Organizational scholars have long argued for the treatment of employees as humans rather than as simply workers filling a role. One way to honor the humanity of employees is to attend to factors that influence employee well-being. While there has been much debate over the measurement and conceptualization of well-being, the basic impetus for its study can be summarized in the desire for more "knowledge of what makes life worth living" (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000, p.5). The experience of positive connections within and outside

the workplace are shown to be a fundamental contributors to well-being (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). While attending to employee well-being is ideally valued as an end in itself, there is also evidence to suggest it is linked back to organizational outcomes such as higher job performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000), lower turnover (Wright & Bonett, 2007), and other objective outcomes (see review by Warr, 1999).

Organizational support theory asserts that employees actively attend to signals that the organization cares about their well-being, and I have argued that listening is one of these signals. Thus it makes sense to test whether or not listening and perceptions of support actually translate into enhanced well-being for the employees. Relational interactions characterized by listening may be important to individual well-being in that they have the potential to contribute to the fulfillment of needs to connect with others, which might encompass needs for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988), and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Reis and colleagues (2000) examined the impact of daily social activities on relatedness and well-being. Their results showed that engaging in meaningful talk, as well as feeling understood and appreciated, were linked to well-being indirectly through satisfaction of relatedness needs. Further, feeling understood and appreciated had a direct impact on well-being even beyond the satisfaction of relatedness needs (Reis et al., 2000). To the extent that listening is involved in these processes, we might expect to see a link between perceived listening and well-being.

Further, to the extent that perceived listening contributes to perceptions of support we might expect POS to mediate the relationship between perceived listening and

employee well-being. POS scholars have proposed four main mechanisms through which POS should have an impact on well-being: through increased competence or self-efficacy, through the fulfillment of socioemotional needs, through increased reward expectancies, and through the anticipation of help when needed (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Indeed, research has established a strong link between POS and various forms of well-being both in the workplace and at home in the form of positive mood, job satisfaction, organization-based self-esteem, reduced stress, and work-family balance (see overviews by Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; and Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012). On a physiological level, positive, supportive social interactions in the workplace have also been linked to physiological well-being in the form of decreased cardiovascular reactivity, strengthened immune systems, and healthier hormone patterns (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). For all of these reasons, it is expected that perceived listening will have an impact on well-being.

H4: Perceived listening will be positively related to well-being.

H5: Perceived organizational support will mediate the relationship between perceived listening and employee well-being.

Figure 1 shows the proposed relationship between variables.

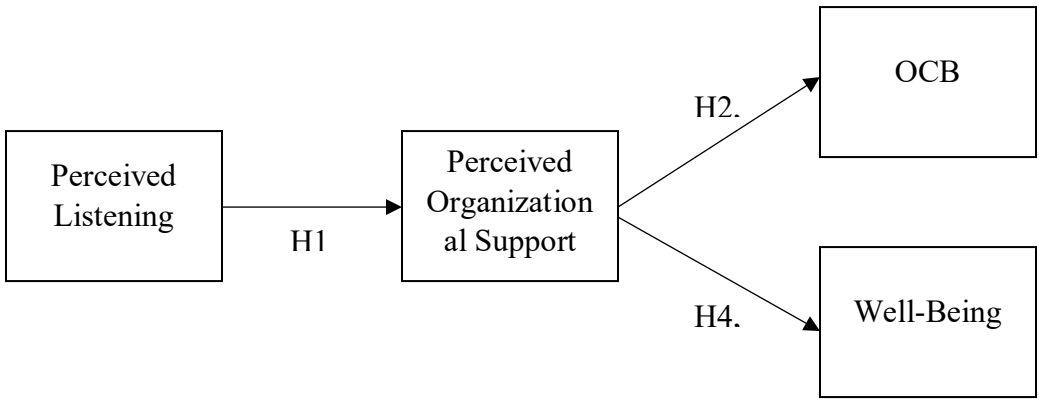

Figure 1. Preliminary Study Model: Perceived Listening is Hypothesized to Impact OCB and Well-Being through Perceived Organizational Support

Method

Sample and Procedure

Five hundred sixty seven working individuals from various industries were recruited to take our survey using Amazon Mechanical Turk. The survey was available only to those who were employed, working 20 or more hours per week, working primarily under one supervisor, had spent six months or more in their current position, were 18 years of age or older, and spoke English as their primary language. During the first data collection period we gathered 600 responses for a total of 567 usable data points, with respondents reporting on their demographics, their supervisor's listening behavior (scale adapted from Kluger & Bouskila-Yam, in press, see Appendix) and their perceptions of organizational support (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Of the 567 respondents, 316 individuals completed the follow-up survey six weeks later, providing self-ratings of their citizenship behavior (helping and voice, Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; OCBO, Lee & Allen, 2002) and well-being (subjective vitality, adapted from Ryan & Frederick, 1997; meaning in life, adapted from presence subscale in Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006).

Perceived listening scale measure development. In order to measure perceived listening we used a combination of items from a scale currently in development: the Facilitative Listening Scale (Kluger & Bouskila-Yam, in press), and newly created items. The subscale accounting for the most variance in Kluger & Bouskila-Yam's analysis is the subscale 'Constructive Listening Skills'. A reduced set of ten items from this subset served as a starting point for the current listening scale. These items nicely overlapped

with the components of the listening definition offered here. While this set of items covered a mixture of both appropriate contextual conditions for listening and actual behaviors within a conversation that might indicate listening, it was developed with a more specific type of listening in mind. It was therefore uncertain whether these items would cover the breadth of listening as it is defined here. In order to ensure content validity we combed the rest of the constructive listening skills subscale for items relevant to the current listening definition, which resulted in two additional items. Further, we sought to develop additional items. We sent the newly developed listening definition out to a number of subject matter experts and asked them to respond with suggestions for items that might tap into perceived listening as I had defined it. This generated a total of 32 items from four subject matter experts. We combined these 32 items with the 12 from the previously existing scale, and eliminated redundant items, resulting in 18 items. An exploratory factor analysis using principle axis factoring and varimax rotation indicated that these 18 items loaded cleanly onto a single factor (see Appendix A for items and factor loadings).

Measures

Perceived listening. Respondents were asked to rate each of the 18 listening items on a scale from "never" [1] to "very frequently" [7] with the common stem "When I communicate with my current supervisor, most of the time s/he." The scale alpha was .97, and scale score was calculated by averaging the 18 items.

Perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support was measured using a subset of six items from the original 36-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). The use of

item subsets for this scale are thought to be acceptable as long as they capture both the valuation and concern for well-being components of the POS definition (see review by Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). I chose this subset of items due to its mid-range length and the fact that it has been demonstrated to have good reliability and discriminant validity (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). The six items were rated on a scale using anchors ranging from "strongly disagree" [1] to "strongly agree" [7] and were as follows: "The organization values my contribution to its well-being," "The Organization strongly considers my goals and values," "The organization really cares about my well-being," "The organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor," "The organization shows very little concern for me" (reverse-coded), and "The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work." An individual's score on the scale was computed by taking the average of these six items. Scale alpha was .94.

Organizational citizenship behavior. Citizenship behavior was measured based on three common OCB dimensions: helping, voice, and organizational citizenship behavior to the organization (OCBO). Many different dimensions of OCB have been put forth by researchers. Helping and OCBO were chosen here because there were well-validated measures available, and because these captured both behaviors targeted toward other individuals and the organization (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), both of which should be impacted by listening. Voice is considered a form of OCB in that it is a discretionary behavior intended to prompt positive change (Morrison, 2011), but of relevance here it is related specifically to contributions in the form of ideas, suggestions, and concerns. Given the aforementioned linkages between voice and

listening it seemed important to capture this dimension specifically. Helping. Helping is a form of interpersonal citizenship behavior, meaning that it is action directed toward other individuals within the organization, rather than toward the organization as a whole. Helping was measured using the average of seven items adapted from Van Dyne and LePine (1998). Sample items include "At work I volunteer to do things for others," "At work I get involved to benefit coworkers," and "At work I help others with their work responsibilities." Scale alpha was .90. Voice. Whereas helping behavior is affiliative and promotive, voice behavior is challenging and promotive (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). Voice was measured using the average of six items adapted from Van Dyne & LePine (1998). Example items include "At work I speak up and encourage others to get involved in issues that affect the organization," "At work I get involved in issues that affect the quality of work life." Both helping and voice were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" [1] to "strongly agree" [7]. Scale alpha for voice was .92. OCBO. OCB directed toward the organization was measured using Lee and Allen's (2002) eight-item scale. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they personally engaged in behaviors toward the organization on a 1 ("never") to 7 ("always") Likert scale; item responses were averaged. Example items include "Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image," and "Take action to protect the organization from potential problems." Scale alpha was .93.

Well-being. Well-being was measured in the eudaimonic sense, meaning the type of well-being that is linked to full functioning and actualization of one's true potential, rather than a fleeting sense of happiness (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989;

Waterman, 1993). One way to measure eudaimonic wellbeing is through subjective vitality, or the "conscious experience of possessing energy and aliveness" (Ryan & Frederick, 1997, p. 530). Vitality. The subjective vitality scale is aimed at uncovering the feeling of being intensely alive and engaged that comes with full functioning in accordance with one's deeply held values (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Subjective vitality was measured as the average of seven items adapted from Ryan and Frederick (1997). The item stem was "When I'm at work I usually…" and example items are "feel alive and vital," "have energy and spirit," and "feel energized." Scale alpha was .94. Meaning. Meaning has been discussed as a component of well-being by many theorists (e.g., Frankl, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989) and is more stable than momentary affect. Meaning was measured using the Presence subscale of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, et al., 2006) by asking respondents to indicate the extent to which each item was true for them. Example items are "I understand my life's meaning," "My life has a clear sense of purpose," and "I have discovered a satisfying life purpose." The scale score was computed by taking the average of the five items. Internal reliability (alpha) for the scale was .93. Both subjective vitality and meaning were rated using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all true," 7 = "very true").

Control variables. Control variables included age (in years), sex (dummy coded as 0=male, 1=female), education (higher is more formal education), organizational size (higher is more employees), tenure (measured in years and months and coded in terms of total months), supervisor experience (higher is more experience, relative to own experience), and dyad tenure (measured in years and months and coded in terms of total months). With the exception of sex, control variables were used as continuous variables.

Analyses

A CFA was performed on the 7 study variables using AMOS version 20. The seven-factor model showed good fit. Table 1 shows comparisons to other possible models. Results indicated that the seven-factor model fit the data significantly better than any of the alternative models. To analyze the hypotheses, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted using SPSS version 20. To test the mediation hypotheses, analyses were conducted using a macro described in Preacher and Hayes (2008) that corrects for bias in the product of bootstrapped coefficients.

Table 1
Model Fit Results for Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Model	χ^2	*df*	RMSEA	90% CI	CFI
1. Hypothesized seven-factor model	3333.29	1518	.05	.05-.05	.93
2. Six-factor model (Listening and POS combined)	5043.27	1519	.07	.07-.07	.87
3. Six-factor model (Vitality and Meaning combined)	5065.26	1519	.07	.07-.07	.87
4. Six-factor model (OCBO and Voice combined)	3948.78	1519	.06	.05-.06	.91
5. Five-factor model (Helping, Voice, and OCBO combined)	4897.78	1521	.07	.06-.07	.87
6. Single-factor model	13936.24	1539	.13	.12-.13	.54

Note. $N = 511$. POS = perceptions of organizational support; OCBO = organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization.

Results

Table 2 provides summary statistics and correlations for all variables. Supervisor experience was positively related to perceived listening ($r = .25$), such that those supervisors with greater experience relative to the employee's own were rated as better listeners. Employees also rated their supervisors significantly higher on listening the longer they had worked together ($r = .16$). Organization size was negatively related to

perceptions of organizational support ($p < .01$). Finally, dyad tenure was positively related to all of the outcomes, such that the longer employees and supervisors had worked together, the more supported employees felt ($r = .19$), the greater their citizenship behavior (r's = .17 - .23), and the higher their well-being (r's = .12 - .17).

The first hypothesis predicted that perceived listening would be positively related to perceptions of organizational support (POS). Table 3 shows the results of the hierarchical regression with controls entered in the first model, and perceived listening added in the second model. As shown, perceived listening significantly predicted POS beyond the set of control variables ($F\Delta$ (1, 315) = 140.78, $p < .01$), accounting for an additional 38% of the variance. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

Employee perceptions of listening were also hypothesized to be positively related to both employee citizenship behavior (Hypothesis 2), and well-being (Hypothesis 4). Recall that three measures of OCB (helping, voice, OCBO) and two measures of well-being (vitality, meaning) were used. In order to test these hypotheses each outcome was regressed on the set of control variables in the first step and on listening in the second step. Table 4 shows that perceived listening significantly predicted each outcome beyond the set of control variables, accounting for additional variance ranging from 14-16% for OCB (helping, voice, OCBO) and from 9%-15% for well-being (meaning and vitality, respectively). Perceived listening was predictive of all three OCB outcomes, in the form of helping ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$; $F\Delta$ (1, 315) = 58. 02, $p < .01$), voice ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$; $F\Delta$ (1, 315) = 51. 73, $p < .01$), and OCBO ($\beta = .42$, $p < .01$; $F\Delta$ (1, 315) = 61. 71, $p < .01$). For well-being, listening was predictive of greater well-being in the form of

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	35.19	10.56	-													
2. Sex	0.43	.50	.08	-												
3. Educ	4.29	1.33	.01	.05	-											
4. Org Size	2.24	1.04	.01	.05	.08	-										
5. Tenure	73.07	50.36	.45	.02	.01	.01	-									
6. Sup Exp	4.11	1.01	-.27	.08	-.02	.01	-.17	-								
7. Dyad Tenure	51.33	34.27	.31	.10	.00	-.17	.64	-.14	-							
8. Listening	5.30	1.17	.03	.01	.00	-.02	.11	.25	.16	-						
9. POS	4.68	1.44	.03	.04	-.03	-.16	.12	.18	.19	.59	-					
10. Helping	5.36	1.04	-.03	.12	-.04	-.05	.07	.02	.17	.40	.47	-				
11. Voice	5.03	1.20	.06	.05	.05	-.09	.17	-.01	.23	.39	.55	.68	-			
12. OCBO	4.84	1.30	.08	.08	.00	-.10	.14	.05	.22	.43	.65	.66	.76	-		
13. Vitality	4.46	1.37	.08	.08	-.01	-.05	.09	.05	.12	.41	.60	.52	.60	.70	-	
14. Meaning	5.03	1.44	.08	.05	-.04	-.06	.13	-.02	.17	.35	.46	.39	.42	.42	.54	-

N=316. Org Size = size of the organization; Sup Experience = supervisor experience, relative to one's own experience; POS = perceptions of organizational support; OCBO = organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization.
r's ≥ .11 are significant at $p \leq .05$ level.
r's ≥ .14 are significant at $p \leq .01$ level.

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression of Perceived Organizational Support on Listening

	Model 1			Model 2		
Predictor	*b*	*SE*	β	*b*	*SE*	β
Control Variables						
Age	.00	.01	.01	.00	.01	.01
Sex	.04	.17	.02	.09	.13	.03
Education	-.02	.06	-.02	-.02	.05	-.02
Org Size	-.18	.08	-.13*	-.19	.06	-.14*
Tenure	.00	.00	.06	.00	.00	.04
Sup Exp	.29	.08	.21**	.06	.07	.05
Dyad Tenure	.01	.00	.15*	.00	.00	.06
Listening				.72	.06	.56**
Total R^2		.10**			.38**	
ΔR^2		.10**			.29**	

Note. $N = 316$. Org Size = size of the organization; Sup Experience=supervisor experience, relative to one's own experience.
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 4
Hierarchical Regressions of Dependent Variables on Perceived Listening

Dependent Variable	*R*	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF
Citizenship Behavior					
Helping	.45	.20**	.18	.15**	58.02**
Voice	.44	.20**	.18	.14*	51.73**
OCBO	.47	.22**	.20	.16**	61.71**
Well-Being					
Vitality	.43	.18**	.16	.15**	57.99**
Meaning	.39	.15**	.22	.09**	36.93**

Note. $N = 316$. OCBO = organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization. Control variables accounted for the following amount of variance for each dependent variable: 5% for Helping, 6% for Voice, 6% for OCBO; 3% for Vitality, 3% for Meaning. $R^2\Delta$ reflects variance in each dependent variable accounted for beyond the control variables.
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

vitality ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$; $F\Delta$ (1, 315) = 57.99, $p < .01$) and meaning ($\beta = .36$, $p < .01$; $F\Delta$ (1, 315) = 36.93, $p < .01$). Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 4 were fully supported.

Finally, I predicted that the relationships between perceived listening and the outcome variables of OCB and well-being would be mediated by perceptions of organizational support. Per the recommendations of Preacher and Hayes (2008) and others (e.g., MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Shrout & Bolger, 2002), bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from 5,000 bootstrapped samples were used to test the indirect effects of listening on each outcome through perceived organizational support (see Table 5). Indirect effects are significant when confidence intervals do not include zero. Results showed that perceptions of organizational support mediate the relationship between both perceived listening and OCB, and perceived listening and well-being for each of the three OCB measures and the two well-being measures.

Table 5
Results of Bootstrap Analyses on the Role of POS as a Mediator between Perceived Listening and Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Effect of Listening on Outcome[a]		Indirect Effect		
	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Bootstrap Estimate	95% CI[b]	Total R^2
Citizenship Behavior					
Helping	.39**	.20**	.19	(.13, .27)	.28**
Voice	.45**	.14*	.31	(.22, .31)	.34**
OCBO	.51**	.10	.41	(.32, .53)	.44**
Well-Being					
Vitality	.53**	.13	.33	(.25, .41)	.38**
Meaning	.56**	.21*	.32	(.20, .46)	.24**

Note. $N = 316$. OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CI = confidence interval.
[a]Total effects are unstandardized coefficients for listening to outcome when control variables are included in the model, but when perceived support is *not* included in the

model. Direct effects are unstandardized coefficients for listening to outcome when both perceived support and control variables are included in the model.
[b]Indirect effects are significant at $p \leq .05$ level when the confidence intervals do not encompass zero.
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature in three main ways. First, the strength of the relationships between perceived listening and the outcome variables highlight the importance of studying this variable within the organizational sciences. Listening seems to be implied within a number of organizational constructs including leadership (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Levine, Muenchen, & Brooks, 2010) and high-quality connections (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2012). Based on the present results, I suggest that perceived listening is an important variable worthy of study in its own right. Second, I have suggested and found support here for the notion that perceived listening is a unidimensional rather than a multidimensional construct. Listening encompasses different types of behaviors and processes and thus many previous researchers have struggled with expecting multiple dimensions but finding that those dimensions were empirically indistinguishable. The factor analytic results and high alpha support my argument that, from the perspective of the speakers, the more specific aspects of listening are overshadowed by a more general perception. In this way reported the findings contribute to the theoretical discussion around the nature of listening perceptions. A third main contribution of this study is to the literature on employment relationships. Recently, a growing subset of scholars have called for greater attention to positive work relationships, or those relationships characterized by "a reoccurring connection between two people that takes place within the context of work and careers and is experienced as mutually beneficial, where beneficial is defined broadly to include

any kind of positive state, process, or outcome in the relationship" (Ragins & Dutton, 2006, p.9). This study helps illuminate a part of the process through which employees and organizations build strong connections that ultimately benefit both parties, and thus contributes to answering the call for research on positive work relationships. A final contribution of this study is to offer perceived listening as a missing piece of the puzzle in terms of the process through which employees form perceptions of organizational support. As such, perceived listening could be studied in relation to other relevant outcomes, including task behavior.

Limitations

There are several limitations in the current study. First, the design does not completely rule out all common causes. It could be that the listening and perceptions of support both stem from the quality of the employee's contributions. That is, it is possible that employees who perform more citizenship behavior are more valued and cared for by the organization, and that *because* they are seen as valuable contributors they are also more likely to be listened to by the organization. This could then result in both higher perceptions of support and higher perceptions of listening. With regards to well-being, it could be that those with higher well-being are actually more likely to be listened, and in turn perceive greater listening in dyadic exchanges with supervisors, because they display more positive emotions and are more approachable (Miles, 2009). An experimental design with random assignment would be optimal in order to rule out this and other possibilities. The possibility for common method bias is another limitation of the study. This study relied on all self-report measures and while perceived listening and perceived organizational support are most appropriately measured as self-report, well-being and

OCB could have been measured through other means (Conway & Lance, 2010). Other limitations include the possibility of sample selection bias (individuals chose to take this survey from a number of available alternatives), and limited generalizability (limited to US workers). The next two studies will address the most major of these limitations.

CHAPTER III. STUDY I

Overview

The preliminary study described in the last chapter provides high-level support of the proposed model (Figure 1) through which listening impacts OCB and well-being through increased POS. When it comes to predicting perceived support and the aforementioned outcomes, it appears that listening plays an important part. But hundreds of research studies conducted over a period of more than two decades point toward other well-known and robust predictors of support. This begs the question, how much weight does perceived listening carry in impacting POS in comparison to other predictors? Without comparing listening against other well-known antecedents of we have an incomplete understanding of the relative contributions of each in predicting perceived support. Thus, this study is aimed at understanding the relative importance of perceived listening in predicting perceived support.

Rhodes and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis identified three main categories of antecedents to POS: fairness, job rewards and conditions, and supervisor support. In the time following the 2002 meta-analysis other antecedents have been identified as well, such as leader's political skill (Treadway et al., 2004), social context (Hayton, Carnabuci, & Eisenberger, 2012; Zagenczyk, Scott, Gibney, Murrell, & Thatcher, 2010), and the level of support felt by those doing the supporting (Hu, Wang, Yang, & Wu, 2014; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006; Tangirala, Green, & Ramanujam, 2007). In this study I am most concerned with contrasting listening not with any one antecedent of POS, but rather with the most well-known and robust predictors. For this reason I focus only on the main predictors that have been widely replicated and accepted as substantial

contributors to POS, which can be bucketed into three broad categories: fairness, supervisor support, HR practices and job conditions, and treatment by supervisors.

Fairness

Fairness, or justice, has typically been considered two come in three basic forms. Distributive justice represents fairness around how outcomes are distributed, whereas procedural justice represents fairness in procedure used to distribute those outcomes (see Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter & Ng, 2001, for a more thorough review of this distinction), and interpersonal or interactional justice (Bies, 2001), representing respect and downward informational flow in interactions between employees and organizational representatives. In terms of the link to POS, procedural justice (fairness of processes relating to outcome distribution) has been the primary focus. Often lumped together with this are perceptions of respect in interpersonal interactions and the communication of information, which have also shown strong relationships with POS (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). Politics is also thought to relate to notions of fairness because it tends to blur the relationship between performance and reward (Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewé, & Johnson, 2003), and has been a consistently strong negative predictor of perceived support (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002).

Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, and Rupp (2001) perhaps provide the most comprehensive discussion as to why justice matters, outlining three key perspectives: instrumental, relational/group value, and moral virtues. Justice is thought to be important for the development of POS (Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998), and to the larger social exchange relationship (Baran, et al., 2012) for both instrumental and group value reasons. According to Cropanzano and colleagues (2001), the instrumental approach is

based on the idea that people have a need for control, and fair situations offer greater control over the long-term. This may be particularly important around the formation of fairness judgments relating to procedural justice and politics. The relational approach (Lind & Tyler, 1988) is based on the idea that people need to feel a part of the group, and so employees may judge fairness according to the extent to which they are allowed to fulfill this social need. Thus, employees perceive greater fairness for both instrumental and group value reasons when they are treated with respect, kept informed, are allowed to do things like express voice (Moorman et al., 1998).

HR Practices and Job Conditions

HR practices and job conditions encompass a variety of human resource practices employed by the organization known to relate to overall employee job satisfaction (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2001; Shore & Shore, 1995). To the extent that organizations have control over rewards and conditions, they are important to building perceptions of support, because of their role in creating satisfying and inviting working environments, and because employees may view them as representing the overall benevolent or malevolent intent of the organization toward its people (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Levinson, 1965).

Eisenberger and colleagues (1997) investigated a set of 18 job rewards and conditions in terms of their impact on POS by surveying employees from a variety of industries on the favorableness of each job condition as well as the extent to which they perceived their organization to have control over each of those job conditions. They asked each employee to sort those 18 job conditions into one of three buckets: those that were most highly controlled by the organization (i.e., those over which the organization

had the most discretion), those that were least under the control of the organization, and those that were somewhere in the middle. They then averaged the favorability of job conditions in each of those buckets for each employee. Their results indicated that the job conditions ranked as most discretionary had a considerable impact on perceptions of organizational support. While the perceived discretion over those 18 conditions varied by industry, there were some that were more consistently ranked as being highly discretionary. The highest of these were training opportunities, physical working conditions, fringe benefits, and recognition for good work.

In their (2002) review and meta-analysis of the perceived organizational support literature, Rhodes and Eisenberger subdivided job rewards and conditions into organizational rewards (further subdivided into pay and promotions), job security, autonomy, role stressors (further subdivided into role ambiguity and role conflict), training, and size of organization. They found each of these to be significant predictors of perceived organizational support. Role stressors and size of organization had negative impacts on POS, whereas the other rewards and conditions had positive impacts on POS. Of these, organizational rewards (both pay and promotions) and job security were found to be the strongest predictors.

Treatment by Supervisors

Treatment by supervisors encompasses supervisor support and leader-member exchange, among other leadership variables. Supervisor support is conceptualized as the perception that the supervisor values the individual's contributions and is concerned about the individual's well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Typically this has been operationalized by adopting a version of Eisenberger and

colleagues' (1986) POS measure and simply changing the word *organization* to say *supervisor* (Eisenberger et al., 2002). This source of support is thought to be important to POS in that the supervisor is thought represent the organization (Levinson, 1965; Eisenberger et al., 1986), particularly when the supervisor is perceived to hold sufficient status within the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

Similarly, the supervisor's listening should therefore be representative of the organization. One might question whether or not listening and support at the supervisory level are actually distinct. While supplementary analysis conducted on my prior data indicated that there is a high degree of overlap statistically (r = .84) appearing to blend the two together, I propose that there is an important conceptual distinction. Supervisory support has been defined and measured as a global assessment the employee makes regarding how much the employee feels his or her contributions are valued and the level of care and concern he or she is shown by the supervisor (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Perceived listening, on the other hand, has been defined as the subjective, global evaluation *by the speaker* of the extent to which another takes in, understands, and appropriately responds to a speaker's needs following speaker's acts of sharing. Whereas supervisor support is a global evaluation of one's treatment by a supervisor, perceived listening involves a specific aspect of interaction between the two. Thus, perceived listening and perceived supervisor support can be conceptually distinguished.

Leader-member exchange, or LMX, is the belief by subordinates that their voluntary actions will be in some way reciprocated by their supervisor or manager (Bernerth, Armenakis, Field, Giles, & Walker, 2007). The leader-member exchange

construct is rooted in the leader-member exchange theory of leadership (Graen, 1976; Graen & Scandura, 1987), which suggests that leaders develop different types of relationships with different followers. LMX is typically used as a way of measuring the overall relationship between leader and subordinate by way of the resources (including socioemotional) that they exchange. LMX is thought to be important to the overall perception of organizational support because relationship high LMX relationships are marked by the exchange of resources, which is a form of support. Leaders are often responsible for acting on behalf of the organization (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997) and therefore high LMX has been positively associated with high POS. In a recent meta-analysis LMX and perceived supervisor support were found to contribute in roughly the same proportions to POS (their confidence intervals were overlapping: Kurtessis et al., in press).

Comparing Listening to Other Predictors of POS

I have argued that listening can be conceptually distinguished from other aspects of treatment by organization members (e.g., perceived supervisor support and LMX), yet this does not mean that these varying relational aspects should carry the same importance in influencing perceptions of organizational support. Understanding the relative importance of predictors is important for achieving model parsimony and targeting interventions where they will be most beneficial. In this section I offer two different lenses on the relative importance of listening versus perceived supervisor support and LMX in predicting POS. These perspectives reveal competing predictions, which I subsequently test. I prioritize focusing on the comparison between perceived listening and the other dyadic-level relational perceptions (LMX and POS) over the comparisons

to other predictors of POS. I do so because these are conceptually the most similar. LMX and PSS have been grouped together under the label of 'treatment by organization members' in a recent meta-analysis by Kurtessis and colleagues (in press), and had perceived listening been included in the meta-analysis it would have fit naturally into this category as well.

When taking a social exchange view, perceived listening should carry less importance than other predictors, most notably perceived supervisor support and leader-member exchange. Perceived organizational support research has traditionally been framed within social exchange theory and as such it tends to evoke notions of reciprocity and perceived obligations toward a relational partner (Ferris et al., 2009). In this view, individuals enter into exchanges with organization, its representatives, or other individuals that can be characterized by a long-term outlook and trust for the relational partner. Once the relationship partners have developed a certain level of trust generalized exchanges can take place without need for immediate reciprocation, or reciprocation in kind (e.g., respect can be exchanged for loyalty). Owing to this heritage, the organizational support theory literature is laden with references to favors, rewards, inducements, and resources. These terms (treated as largely interchangeable) are used to refer to the resources that employees receive from the organization or its representatives. These resources are involved in an employees' perception of the organization's orientation toward them and simultaneously their perception of the overall quality of relationship between themselves and the organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). According to this view, these resources are differentiated from one another on the basis of how discretionary they're thought to be and on the extent to which the

employee values the resource. From this perspective, general evaluations of one's exchange relationship with a supervisor should count for more when assessing POS than should perceived listening, a more specific form of resource being exchanged. Both LMX and perceived supervisor support fall under this more general evaluation of relational quality, and therefore it might be expected that both would outperform perceived listening as predictors of POS.

H1a: Perceived listening is a weaker predictor of POS than is LMX.

H1b: Perceived listening is a weaker predictor of POS than is perceived supervisor support.

Alternately, taking a positive relationships lens could lead to the expectation that listening is just as powerful a predictor of POS as these other variables. Recently, Carmeli and Russo (2016) proposed an alternative view on organizational relationships focused on the power of conveyed positive regard for enabling employee thriving. Positive regard is a concept popularized by several decades ago by psychologist Carl Rogers, and it refers to feelings of being accepted unconditionally by another individual. As Carmeli and Russo explain, positive regard suggests a growth-fostering relationship, and in this way small interpersonal gestures can have a big impact in nurturing the development of both individuals and relationships. One of these gestures is listening. As noted by Rogers and others, good listening can convey positive regard by stepping into the other's world and showing a genuine appreciation and understanding for the other's perspective (Rogers, 1989/1959). It involves setting aside one's own preconceptions and priorities and giving one's thought, time, and attention to the other individual. Thus, from this perspective the good listening can be a particularly powerful way to express

value and care for another individual. To the extent that the listener is thought to represent the organization, this should then hold true for influencing perceptions of value and care by the organization as well. Given that perceived listening should shape dyadic perceptions as well, this perspective suggests that there should be no difference between perceived listening and dyadic relationship evaluations when it comes to influencing perceived organizational support.

H2a: Perceived listening and LMX will be equally predictive of POS.

H2b: Perceived listening and perceived supervisor support will be equally predictive of POS.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling from current and former part-time MBA and executive MBA, and executive-education classes at a large Midwestern university, and through the author's professional network. Snowball sampling was used for both convenience and because it offered ecological and external validity when compared to using a single-organization sample. Further, this technique enabled me to find participants in a number of fields and organizational settings without having to use a ready pool of experienced survey-takers (i.e., Amazon Mechanical Turk).

This study was part of a larger data collection effort in which both managers and direct reports were recruited to provide assessments. For this reason individuals were recruited only if they could identify and provide contact information for three or more direct reports who might also participate in the study. In order to participate managers and their direct reports had to be 18 or older, and had to be working in the United States.

Direct reports were contacted by email about the study by both the manager and the study author, and given a link to the survey website. All participants were entered into a drawing for an iPad. Managers who were able to successfully recruit three or more direct reports were also provided with an anonymous feedback report based on the perceptions of their subordinates.

Twenty-six managers and 139 direct reports responded to a survey. Out of these, 25 managers and 120 direct reports provided usable data. The average age for the final sample of participants was 44 years old. Thirty percent of the sample worked in the healthcare industry, 16% in manufacturing, and the rest came from a variety of other industries. Twenty-nine percent of the participants self-categorized as being in a managerial position, 24% in a professional position, 13% an administrative position, 11% clerical positions, and 21% technical or engineering professions. Sixty-nine percent of the sample had either completed college or a more advanced degree.

Measures

Control variables included participant age, sex, education level (ranging from 1 = "Less than high school" to 7 = "Professional Degree"), organization size (ranging from 1= "Less than high school" to 7 = "Professional Degree"), and tenure and dyad tenure (both reported here in months). Unless otherwise stated all other items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree"). With the exception of sex (coded as Male=0, Female=1), control variables were used as continuous variables.

Leader-member exchange. Leader-member exchange was measured using the leader-member social exchange scale developed by Bernerth and colleagues (2007). This scale was developed to explicitly incorporate the social exchange aspect of leader-member

exchange theory and was chosen therefore chosen for its theoretical alignment. Example items are "My efforts are reciprocated by my manager" and "voluntary actions on my part will be returned in some way by my manager." Alpha for the 10-item scale was .92.

Supervisor support. Following Eisenberger and colleagues (2002), supervisor support was measured using three items originally derived from the perceived organizational support scale. Sample items are "my manager is willing to extend him/herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability" and "my manager takes pride in my accomplishments at work." Alpha for the three-item scale was .91.

Procedural justice. Procedural justice was measured using Colquitt's (2001) seven-item scale. Participants were informed that the scale items referred to "procedures used to arrive at outcomes from your job (pay, promotions, etc.). They rated the extent of each using the following anchors: 1="to a small extent" to 7= "To a large extent." Sample items are "Have those procedures been free of bias?" and "Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?" Scale alpha was .92.

Informational justice. Informational justice was also measured using a scale developed and reported by Colquitt (2001) using the same anchors reported above for the procedural justice scale, and the stem "The following items refer to your primary manager with regard to enactment of the above mentioned procedures. To what extent…" Sample items for this measure include "Has (he/she) explained the procedures thoroughly?" and "Has (he/she) communicated details in a timely manner?" Alpha for the scale was .95.

Politics. Politics was measured using Hochwarter and colleagues' (2003) scale, rated on a scale from 1=Never true to 7=Always true. Example items are "People spend

too much time sucking up to those who can help them" and "People are working behind the scenes to ensure that they get their piece of the pie. Scale alpha was .94.

Extrinsic rewards. Extrinsic Rewards were measured on a 1=Very unfavorable to 7=Very favorable scale using Stinglhamber and Vandenbergh's (2006) three-item measure. Items include "Opportunity for pay raises," "Opportunity for career advancement" and "Fringe benefits." Scale alpha was .85.

Intrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards were measured using the same anchors as extrinsic rewards, using Stinglhamber and Vandenbergh's (2006) six-item measure. Sample items are "Opportunity for personal accomplishment" and "opportunity to use my competencies." Scale alpha was .94.

Perceived listening and perceived organizational support were measured in the same way here as in the previous study. Scale alphas were .98 and .92, respectively.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using dominance analysis, which enables the identification of variables that outperform others across various regression model subsets (LeBreton, Hargis, Greipentrog, Oswold, & Ployhart, 2007). This is particularly useful in understanding the importance of new predictors relative to others, and in cases where predictors are correlated (as most are). Researchers tend to examine the incremental variance of new predictors by entering the focal predictor into the equation in the last block, and examining the change in R^2. However, this method may render important predictors unimportant because shared variance has already been accounted for by the other variables. Often researchers use regression standardized coefficients to infer the relative importance of predictors, however this technique is flawed when predictors are

correlated because they hold constant the other variables and therefore lose information where there is overlap (Johnson & LeBreton, 2004). Dominance analysis overcomes these limitations by performing all possible subset regressions (2^p) and comparing each pair of predictors across all models that contain some subset of those predictors (2^{p-2}). In this way the individual contributions of highly correlated predictors can be reliably parsed apart by running all of the possible subsets of regressions and comparing the relative strength of a predictor across all of these possibilities.

Azen and Budescu (2003) introduce three different levels of dominance. The strongest form of dominance is termed complete dominance, and this occurs when a predictor's importance is greater than another's across all subset models (regardless of how many of the other k predictors are included). Conditional dominance is the next strongest, and this occurs when a predictor is not dominant in every subset model, but it's average contribution for each given model size is higher than the other predictor's average contribution for each model size (e. g., in a model with k=3 variables, X1's contribution is stronger than X2 when averaged across null models, when averaged across models of k=1 variables, and when averaged across models of k=2 variables). Finally, general dominance is the weakest form of dominance. If a variable comparison does not meet the criteria for either complete or conditional dominance, general dominance can be demonstrated by averaging the average of each model size.

Because data individual data was clustered under manager, hierarchical linear modeling was used in conjunction with dominance analysis (Luo & Azen, 2013). This controlled for clustering, which was necessary because failure to account for clustering can lead to underestimation of standard errors for parameter estimates (Moulton, 1986,

1990). When conducting hierarchical linear modeling it is important to take into consideration sample size, particularly at the group level. In a simulation study Mass and Hox (2005) found that using HLM with fewer than 50 groups can lead to biases in standard errors at the second level (grouping level). Even when the grouping level is not of primary interest (as in this study), the grouping level biases can still impact overall results. In the current study the sample size at the grouping level was less than 50 therefore there was potential for bias. In order to minimize this bias, the analysis was conducted using restricted maximum likelihood rather than full information maximum likelihood (Albright & Marinova, 2010), and Raudenbush & Byrk's (2002) R^2_1 was used rather than Snijders and Bosker's (1994) R^2_1 (Luo & Azen, 2013; W. Luo, personal communication, November 30, 2015). The difference between the two is that whereas Snijders and Bosker's (1994) R^2_1 is a measure of total explainable variance across individuals, Raudenbush & Byrk's (2002) R^2_1 is a measure of total explainable variance within cluster. I conducted the analysis in SAS version 9.4 using a macro developed by Wen Luo and colleagues.

Following the lead of Kurtessis and colleagues (in press), I present the comparisons in three separate groups – listening versus other variables representing treatment by organization members (LMX and POS), listening versus variables representing employee-organization relationship quality (procedural justice and informational justice, politics), and listening versus variables representing HR practices and job conditions (intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards).

Results

Table 6 provides summary statistics and correlations for all variables. All of the main study variables were significantly and positively correlated with perceived organizational support, with the exception of politics, which was negatively correlated with perceived organizational support (r = -.45, p <.01). Perceived listening was significantly correlated with most of the study variables as well, and exhibited the highest correlations with perceived supervisor support (r = .88, p <.01) and informational justice (r = .76, p <.01).

Of greatest interest for the present study was the comparison of perceived listening against other variables representing treatment by supervisors (i.e., perceived supervisor support and LMX). Competing hypotheses were offered to suggest that perceived listening would be less predictive of POS than LMX (Hypothesis 1a) or that perceived listening and LMX would be equally predictive of POS (Hypothesis 2a). Contrary to both hypotheses, results indicated that perceived listening made a larger additional contribution than LMX when explaining within-cluster variation in POS for models of each size (Table 7), thus establishing complete dominance[2]. According to the criteria by Azen and Budescu (2003) perceived listening met the criteria for complete dominance—the strongest form of dominance—over LMX. Perceived listening explained 59% of the predictable variance whereas LMX explained only 11%.

[2] All findings reflect results using the measure of perceived listening reported in the methods section, but analyses were also conducted using a second measure of perceived listening, a measure developed by Lloyd Boer, Keller, and Voelpel (2015). The basic pattern of results was consistent with those results reported here.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	44.2	11.5	-													
2. Sex	0.62	.49	-.03	-												
3. Educ	5.06	1.57	.02	-.19	-											
4. Org Size	2.85	.90	.07	.04	-.07	-										
5. Tenure	90.9	85.4	.36	.08	-.06	.17	-									
6. Dyad Tenure	33.6	23.2	.18	-.07	.13	-.04	.18	-								
7. Listening	6.02	.97	.16	-.13	.15	.07	.10	.14	-							
8. LMX	5.08	1.13	-.04	-.19	.24	.03	.04	.13	.59	-						
9. Supervisor Support	5.98	1.12	.06	-.08	.10	.06	.11	.16	.88	.60	-					
10. Procedural Justice	4.14	1.56	.08	-.18	.25	.06	.03	.16	.48	.30	.43	-				
11. Informational Justice	5.45	1.62	.13	-.16	.13	.06	.16	.17	.76	.48	.74	.61	-			
12. Politics	3.41	1.55	-.10	-.09	.14	.08	-.04	-.04	-.41	-.11	-.37	-.40	-.34	-		
13. Extrinsic Rewards	3.94	1.80	-.01	-.04	.19	.17	-.04	.06	.16	.21	.21	.49	.30	-.19	-	
14. Intrinsic Rewards	5.64	1.34	.21	.09	.18	.06	.14	.19	.42	.26	.35	.53	.38	-.50	.42	-
15. POS	4.85	1.34	.09	-.06	.17	.05	-.06	-.02	.50	.26	.44	.71	.52	-.45	.46	.45

Notes. N=120; r's ≥ |.18| are significant at $p \leq .05$ level; r's ≥ |.23| are significant at $p \leq .01$ level.

Hypotheses 1b and 2b perceived listening would be less powerful than supervisor support at predicting POS (1b) and equally powerful at predicting POS (2b). Again the results suggested that listening was more powerful than expected. Specifically, listening was found to completely dominate perceived supervisor support in predicting within-cluster variation in POS, as can be seen by examining the additional contribution in all relevant subset models (those rows where additional contributions are reported for both X_1 and X_3) in Table 7. In total, supervisor support was able to explain 30% of the predictable within cluster-variance whereas perceived listening explained 59%.

Table 7

Subset model (X)	R^2	Additional contribution of: X_1	X_2	X_3
Null and $k = 0$ average	0	0.2127	0.0795	0.1542
X_1 (Listening)	0.2127		-0.0084	-0.0075
X_2 (LMX)	0.0795	0.1248		0.0692
X_3 (Supervisor Support)	0.1542	0.0510	-0.0056	
$k = 1$ average		0.0879	-0.0070	0.0308
X_1 X_2	0.2043			-0.0080
X_1 X_3	0.2052		-0.0088	
X_2 X_3	0.1487	0.0477		
$k = 2$ average		0.0477	-0.0088	-0.0079
X_1 X_2 X_3	0.1964			
Overall average		0.1161	0.0212	0.0591
Average percent predictable variance explained:		59%	11%	30%

Dominance Analysis for Predicting Within-Cluster POS with Listening, LMX, and PSS Notes. Model size is denoted by k. The first row represents how much variance is explained when each variable X is added to the null model, the second row represents the total variance is explained by listening when it is the only predictor present, and then how much additional variance when each of the other variables are included simultaneously in the regression (for LMX, .2043 -.2127 = -0.0084). Per LeBreton and colleagues (2007), average percent predictable variance represent re-scaled weights which were calculated by dividing the three-variable model R^2 by the overall average contribution of each variable. The denominator R^2 thus represents the within-cluster variance explainable by

this set of variables over and above the variance explained by control variables (age, sex, education, organization size, tenure, and dyad tenure). Level 1 n = 120, level 2 n = 25.

Supplementary Analyses. Comparisons between listening and other well-known predictors of POS were also of interest, although not formally hypothesized. Table 8 shows results for comparisons between perceived listening and procedural justice, organizational politics, and informational justice—variables representing the employee-organization relationship quality (Kurtessis et al, in press). These results suggest that perceived listening was completely dominated by procedural justice. Procedural justice explains 61% of the predictable within-cluster variation after accounting for the control variables, whereas perceived listening explains only 17%. The comparison between perceived listening and informational justice was more complicated, in that neither predictor completely dominated the other. Conditional dominance could not be established either, given that informational justice dominates perceived listening in terms of additional contribution to the null and k=1 models, whereas perceived listening dominates interactional justice in the k=2 and k=3 models. However, based on the overall average general dominance could be established with informational justice generally dominating perceived listening. Both variables accounted for 17% of the predictable variance. When comparing perceived listening and organizational politics neither again neither variable completely dominated the other, however, conditional dominance could be established for perceived listening over politics based on the average contributions of each predictor to models of each size. In comparison to the 17% variance explained by perceived listening, politics explained 5% variance. It appears that perceived listening dominated politics in all models except for when both are included simultaneously with procedural justice.

Perceived listening was also compared against extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards, which can be grouped into the human resource practices and job conditions (Kurtessis et al., in press) category of POS predictors. Results indicated were consistent across all pairwise comparisons, indicating that listening completely dominated both of these variables. Perceived listening explained 53% of the predictable within-cluster variation in comparison to the 32% explained by extrinsic rewards and the 15% explained by intrinsic rewards (Table 9).

Table 8
Dominance Analysis for Predicting Within-Cluster POS with Listening, Procedural Justice, Politics, and Informational Justice

		Additional contribution of:			
Subset model (X)	R^2	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4
Null and $k = 0$ average	0	0.2127	0.4597	0.0734	0.2354
X_1 (Listening)	0.2127		0.2986	0.0333	0.0490
X_2 (Procedural Justice)	0.4597	0.0517		0.0047	0.0208
X_3 (Politics)	0.0734	0.1726	0.3910		0.1991
X_4 (Informational Justice)	0.2354	0.0263	0.2450	0.0371	
$k = 1$ average		0.0835	0.3115	0.0250	0.0896
$X_1 X_2$	0.5113			0.0008	-0.0050
$X_1 X_3$	0.2460		0.2661		0.0437
$X_1 X_4$	0.2617		0.2451	0.0280	
$X_2 X_3$	0.4644	0.0478			0.0204
$X_2 X_4$	0.4805	0.0264		0.0043	
$X_3 X_4$	0.2725	0.0172	0.2122		
$k = 2$ average		0.0305	0.2411	0.0110	0.0197
$X_1 X_2 X_3$	0.5121				-0.0040
$X_1 X_2 X_4$	0.5063			0.0009	
$X_1 X_3 X_4$	0.2897		0.2180		
$X_2 X_3 X_4$	0.4848	0.0229			
$k = 3$ average		0.0874	0.3076	0.0276	0.0852
$X_1 X_2 X_3 X_4$	0.5077				
Overall average		0.2127	0.4597	0.0734	0.2354
Average percent predictable variance explained:		17%	61%	5%	17%

Note. Level 1 $n = 120$, level 2 $n = 25$.

Table 9
Dominance Analysis within Cluster for Predicting POS with Listening, Extrinsic Rewards, and Intrinsic Rewards

		Additional contribution of:		
Subset model (X)	R^2	X_1	X_2	X_3
Null and $k = 0$ average	0	0.2127	0.1417	0.1244
X_1 (Listening)	0.2127		0.1413	0.0441
X_2 (Extrinsic Rewards)	0.1417	0.2124		0.0379
X_3 (Intrinsic Rewards)	0.1244	0.1325	0.0552	
$k = 1$ average		0.1725	0.0983	0.0410
$X_1 X_2$	0.3540			-0.0040
$X_1 X_3$	0.2568		0.0931	
$X_2 X_3$	0.1796	0.1704		
$k = 2$ average		0.1704	0.0931	-0.0040
$X_1 X_2 X_3$	0.3500			
Overall average		0.1852	0.1110	0.0538
Average percent predictable variance explained:		53%	32%	15%

Note. Level 1 $n = 120$, level 2 $n = 25$.

Finally, because perceived listening is highly correlated with procedural justice and other variables, it could be that perceived listening would no longer be dominant over LMX and perceived social support when included simultaneously with these other variables. In order to test this possibility I conducted a dominance analysis with all eight predictors included. Results from the 255 regressions run in the analysis indicated that perceived listening maintained complete dominance over both LMX and perceived social support. This means that regardless of how many of these other predictors were included at a time, perceived listening always came out a stronger predictor than these other two variables. As shown in Table 10, procedural justice remained the strongest predictor, explaining 45% of the predictable within-cluster variation. Extrinsic rewards was the second strongest predictor at 12%, and perceived listening was the third strongest predictor, explaining 10% of the within-cluster variation in POS.

Table 10
Dominance Analysis for Predicting Within-Cluster POS with All Predictors

Predictor Variable	Average Percent Predictable Variance	Overall Average	Average additional contribution to models of each size							
			Model size (number of variables):							
			0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Procedural Justice	45%	0.2641	0.4597	0.3483	0.2856	0.2465	0.2192	0.1991	0.1835	0.1707
Extrinsic Rewards	12%	0.0686	0.1417	0.0998	0.0789	0.0653	0.0543	0.0446	0.0361	0.0282
Listening	10%	0.0610	0.2127	0.1151	0.0662	0.0400	0.0247	0.0153	0.0091	0.0048
Informational Justice	7%	0.0397	0.1582	0.0793	0.0410	0.0215	0.0108	0.0050	0.0018	0.0001
LMX	6%	0.0339	0.1542	0.0727	0.0342	0.0150	0.0046	-0.0010	-0.0040	-0.0050
Intrinsic Rewards	4%	0.0255	0.1244	0.0529	0.0214	0.0070	0.0001	-0.0020	-0.0010	0.0017
Politics	4%	0.0253	0.0734	0.0455	0.0291	0.0191	0.0129	0.0091	0.0071	0.0058
Supervisor Support	2%	0.0116	0.0795	0.0259	0.0059	-0.0010	-0.0040	-0.0050	-0.0050	-0.0050

Notes. Predictor variables are listed in order of relative importance. Level 1 $n = 120$, level 2 $n = 25$.

Discussion

This study was aimed at understanding the relative contribution of perceived listening to perceived organizational support. Surprisingly, the results indicated that perceived listening was consistently a more powerful predictor than both LMX and supervisor support. Further, perceived listening was generally a stronger predictor than most of the other well-known predictors of POS that it was compared against. This pattern of results is surprising because it does not fit with theoretical predictions based on either social exchange theory or alternatively, based on a micro-moves perspective. As a result I tried to examine the data from different angles by using an alternative measure of perceived listening and by including all variables into one large analysis. Still, the basic pattern of results was consistent and the findings robust. These findings thus offer several contributions to existing theories and suggest multiple avenues for future research.

Contributions to Organizational Support Theory

This study contributes to organizational support theory in at least two ways. First, is the methodological contribution. Dominance analysis is part of a wider pool of relative importance analyses which are collectively powerful in identifying variables of practical importance by dealing with multicollinearity in a more grounded way. That is, rather than partialing out and controlling for overlapping variance on the basis of the researcher's judgments, relative importance analyses dig into that overlap and examine a larger pattern of results—producing a pattern of results that can more closely mimic the actual processes they're intended to shed light on. Johnson and LeBreton (2004) explain this with the use of a bank customer service survey example. In their example

researchers are trying to determine the relative importance that bank customers place on teller service, loan service, phone service, branch hours, and interest rates. As they explain,

"customers do not consider the incremental amount of satisfaction they derive from each bank aspect while holding the others constant…rather, they consider all the aspects that are important to them simultaneously and implicitly weight each aspect relative to the others in determining their overall satisfaction." (p. 239)

In this way relative importance analyses can offer powerful and pragmatic evidence around the relative strength of predictors. Still, to my knowledge, these analyses have not been used in comparing the relative strength of various POS antecedents outside of a recent meta-analysis published by Kurtessis and colleagues (in press). Still, due to the meta-analytic nature of that study (i.e., examining well-studied relationships) these authors were not able to take full advantage of the method. One of the main advantages of relative importance analyses is the ability to identify the value of *new* predictors (LeBreton et al., 2007). In this case the results indicated that listening was a powerful new predictor, and one that would not have been identified as such had all of the overlapping variance been controlled out through more standard regression procedures.

Second, these findings suggest that prior POS theorizing has been limited in its ability to identify new predictors. Most of the relational antecedents that have been previously identified are at the level of a general relational assessment (e.g., supervisor support is a general assessment of one's treatment by a supervisor), and those that are more specific tend to be rooted in a justice perspective where the focus is on fairness, inducements, and perceptions of reciprocity. The findings of this study suggest that

while these all matter to employees, that when it comes to their interactions with supervisors it may be the more specific actions that speak louder than general quality of treatment. Specifically, these findings suggest that perceived listening matters more than broader relationship assessments, and that it couples nicely with fairness and HR practices, and job conditions to predict one's overall level of perceived organizational support.

The high correlation between the variables representing treatment by organizational members suggests that listening, although more specific than the more general measures, seems to be getting at the heart of the matter when it comes to what people value in a working relationship. Perhaps this is because listening suggests positive regard, as Carmeli and Russo suggest, "originates from individuals' perceptions of being truly valued, accepted, and loved for who they are and what they contribute in a social context" (p.115) and represent something deeper and more fundamentally human that simple acts of support. As such, listening and other micro-moves cultivating positive regard are thought to be powerful in shaping workplace relationships and experiences, and ultimately, a sense of thriving. The findings also align with perspectives that place emphasis on moves signaling social worth and opportunities for mutual growth (e.g., Dutton, Debebe, & Wrzesniewski, 2012). These perspective suggest that employees should be concerned not just with how they are treated and the fairness of procedures enacted in the workplace, but also the potential for growth-in-connection, as "Increased sense of worth arises from another person's recognition and acknowledgment of one's own experience." (Creary, Caza, & Roberts, 2015, p. 542). While listening should be important from each of these perspectives, there are other variables that could become

apparent when taking these lenses as well. Some other potential avenues of exploration include responsiveness, compassion, and gratitude (Reis & Clark, 2013; Carmeli & Russo, 2016). Thus, this study provides insights into how organizational support theory might benefit from embracing recent relational perspectives.

Contributions to Relational Theories

While the recent shift toward studying relationships and micro-relational "moves" has been highly productive in advancing our understanding of workplace relationships, listening has not been explicitly incorporated into most of these theories. This study suggests that perceptions of listening play a substantial role in shaping one aspect of an employee's organizational experience. Given that listening is a key mechanism toward exhibiting current and future responsiveness (Reis & Clark, 2013), and is a pathway for building positive regard and shared understanding (Rogers, 1989/1959), it is likely to play a key role in many relational processes. Still, within the recent growth of theoretical attention to relationships, listening is largely absent. This study suggests that perceived listening plays a powerful role in shaping workplace relational perceptions, and thus it should also shape how employees engage in those workplace relationships (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

Contributions to Listening Research

Finally, this study contributes to a small but growing body of work focused on listening at work and establishes new linkages between perceived listening and several important management constructs. Perceptions of listening have been mentioned in areas such as voice, silence, issue-selling, leadership, compassion, workplace relationships literatures. An ongoing meta-analysis suggest that listening is indeed strongly correlated

with many positive work constructs such as trust, job satisfaction, and leadership (Kluger, 2015). The strength of relationships exhibited here between perceived listening and other predictors of POS were similarly strong and therefore align with the general findings to date linking perceived listening to other workplace constructs. This study also contributes to extant findings by establishing new empirical links between perceived listening procedural justice, informational justice, politics, intrinsic rewards, and extrinsic rewards. These relationships were not the focus of the current study, but it is interesting to see that perceived listening is strongly correlated with many extant and highly-studied management constructs. My hope is that these linkages will prompt further theorizing and research around the place of perceived listening within management and organizational studies.

Implications for Practice

This study has strong implications for practice. The importance of establishing within employees a sense of perceived organizational support is well documented within the POS literature, given its strong links to outcomes like reduced stress and burnout, and decreased turnover, and increased citizenship behavior (Kurtessis et al., in press). Mechanisms for increasing POS in employees are thus valuable for managers and organizations who wish to impact these outcomes and improve employees' subjective wellbeing. But most of the antecedents identified in the literature are at a fairly abstract level and thus do not point toward specific mechanisms for enhancing POS. It can be difficult, for example, to know how to best enhance an LMX relationship, given the wide variety of behaviors that could be targeted for improvement. In contrast, perceived listening provides a narrower target and a clear way to help employees feel supported. At

the same time it can facilitates interpersonal understanding, providing a pathway to identification of employee's specific needs and values and thus potentially enabling managers to identify other personalized ways of delivering support. Thus, managers and who wish to enhance their employees' perceived organizational support may do well to work on helping their employees feel listened to, while also attending to things like fairness and extrinsic rewards.

CHAPTER IV. STUDY II

Perceptions of listening are key to accomplishing organizational outcomes. The previous studies and others suggest that when employees perceive that higher-ups are listening they are more likely to speak up about work issues (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012), to display other discretionary performance (Lloyd, Boer, Keller, & Voelpel, 2015), show higher levels of commitment (Lobdell, Sonada, & Arnold, 1993), experience lower emotional exhaustion and have lower intentions to quit (Lloyd, et al., 2015). Listening has also been positively correlated with trust, job satisfaction, psychological safety, and leadership (Kluger, 2015).

Yet listening is rarely given center stage in organizational research, and to the extent that it's mentioned at all it tends to be couched in discussions around leadership (Ashford, et al., 2009; Grant, Gino & Hoffman, 2010; Owens et al., 2013; Schein, 2013), justice (Avery & Quinones, 2002; Lind & Tyler, 1988) or enabling employee voice (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007). These studies are important for establishing the outcomes of listening, however, these studies do little to tell us what makes a listening experience satisfying for employees, and importantly, how and when this *process* of listening takes on significance for employees.

And listening is indeed a process. The reality is that listening is not a singular activity but a complicated interplay between individuals that involves understanding, interpreting, and evaluating a message, later remembering and responding to that message (Brownell, 2010). This process of listening has received some empirical and theoretical attention, the process of listening perception is not as well understood. However, as noted in the first chapter it is often the *perception* of listening that often

determines speaker actions. This study aims to answer the research question 'How do employees perceive and engage in workplace listening experiences?'

The qualitative study discussed in this chapter helps us gain insight into the process through which people in organizations form perceptions of listening. By acknowledging this process and the various ways of listening we are able to see new ways of listening and more broadly, and better understand how to meet the needs of speakers. In this way the current study contributes to literatures around voice, justice, and beyond, illustrating a mechanism for enabling desired outcomes by better understanding a key but understudied component – the nature of listening perceptions and the process of their formation.

Perspectives on Perceived Listening

Listening as a Route to Voice

Within the organizational behavior literature there has been growing attention toward the perception of listening. Most notably, studies on voice, issue-selling, and silence have suggested that perceptions of listening are linked with employees' willingness to speak up around issues that they believe are important within the organization (Ashforth et al., 2009; Detert & Burris, 2007, Dutton et al., 2002). These studies tend to situate perceived listening as a precursor to employee voice. That is, they tend to argue that employees are more likely to speak up about important organizational issues when they perceive a willingness to listening. But these studies often fall short of describing what goes into that perception – whether it's based on past listening behavior, or on other cues around future listening behavior. Further, it's often unclear how to

distinguish between perceptions that voice behavior will be simply heard and understood, and perceptions that the voice behavior will be acted upon.

Listening as a Way of Leading

When listening is discussed in the popular and scholarly leadership literature, it tends to be contrasted with extraverted, top-down, and charismatic forms of leadership (Ashford, et al., 2009; Grant, et al., 2010; Owens, et al., 2013; Schein, 2013). On the other hand some scholars have asserted that listening is an important component to all forms of leadership. In fact, researchers Barbuto and Wheeler attempted to measure listening as a form of servant leadership but what they found was that the listening measure was linked to all forms of leadership that they measured (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). While all of these accounts acknowledge and in some cases even focus on the perceptions of listening in leading to outcomes, none of them clearly describe *how* perceptions of leader listening are formed. For example Barbuto and Wheeler operationalize listening as "an ability to hear and value the ideas of others" (p. 306), but it is not clear from descriptions like this how or when an employee might decide that his ideas have been heard and valued. Further, it is assumed here that the value of leader listening is constrained to the offering of ideas.

Listening as a Part of Justice

Listening is also present to some extent in discussions around organizational justice. Specifically, the opportunity to voice has been positively linked to perceptions of procedural fairness, and the relationship is particularly strong when their voice is thought to have some sort of impact on the decision-maker (Avery & Quinones, 2002). Thus, employees are thought to respond positively when they both have the opportunity to be

heard, and when their voice is thought to actually make a difference. On the other hand they may become frustrated when they have the opportunity to be heard but find that their voice makes no difference (Avery & Quinones, 2002; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Lind & Tyler, 1988).

While the justice literature seldom uses the term 'listening' certainly many of these insights relate to the process of listening perceptions. Specifically, what this literature tells us is that in the mind of the perceiver, listening and action may actually be intertwined.

Listening as a Relational Practice

When listening is studied from a relational perspective or from a counseling perspective there is typically little emphasis on the action component. Instead, here listening is thought to involve the display of empathy, and is thought to be speaker-centered. A focus is placed on the quality, positive regard, and openness of the listener-speaker relationship as portrayed by what happens in the interaction itself rather than on how this information is later acted upon. The outcomes of focus are typically on the individual or relational growth that occurs through listening. Rogers theorizes that this growth can be transformational in that it can completely alter the personality of the speaker (Rogers, 1989/1959). This is thought to happen through the person-centeredness and congruence displayed by an empathetic, caring, and nonjudgmental listener who simply tries to understand the world as the other views it and therefore remains open to the possibility of being changed by what the speaker has to say. Thus, the Rogerian counselor or other listener must listen carefully and actively engage both verbally and

nonverbally in a conversation in order to garner perceptions that they are listening, but there is no expectation that the listener takes action outside of the conversation.

The Fuzzy Boundaries of Perceived Responding

Listening has been given most attention within the communications literature, where the focus has typically on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral attributes of listening, rather than taking a perceptual view from the stance of the speaker. Within the communications literature there has been a general recognition that listening—and particularly interpersonal listening—involves the giving of verbal and nonverbal responses. These responses are thought to help speakers change their message in order to match the listener's intake of information, and to evaluate where to change course (Brownell, 2010; Pasupathi & Billitteri, in press). But here again the boundaries of listener responses are not clearly delineated. Often when listener 'responding' is discussed it refers to methods of responding and acknowledging a message in real-time. Rarely is later feedback and follow-up addressed. Still, some suggest that while memory is a separate mental process, it is called upon in the complex process of listening (Brownell, 2010). This begs the questions, where and when do the memory and the responses end? Where does a listening experience end?

Literature on listening is relatively mute when it comes to drawing clearly delineated boundaries around the process of listening, and particularly when it comes to the response component. But if perceptions of being listened to determine speaker action, it becomes important to understand the temporal boundaries and larger process of listening assessment from the perspective of the person doing the speaking. This is the purpose of the current study.

Initial Conceptual Framework

An initial conceptual framework was created based on extant listening theory and research which laid out 'bins' that seemed likely to emerge in listening stories. These bins included processes (listening), people (listener, speaker), events (triggering event, decision to share), and theoretical constructs (behavioral changes, relational impacts, attitude changes, perceptual changes), and contextual considerations (the relationship between listener and speaker, context around conversation). This served as a first analytic display which could loosely guide interview questions and serve as a comparison to later inductively-derived conclusions and insights (Miles et al., 2014). This framework therefore outlined areas of a triggering event, a decision to share, the listening process itself, the likely outcomes, and other factors that might become relevant in the telling of listening stories. The component parts within the listening process bin were receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to a message, per the definition of listening offered by the International Listening Association: "Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (ILA, 1996). Questions about a potential triggering event, the decision to share and the context leading up to the decision to share emerged out of practice interviews with my friends and colleagues, which indicated that the emotions and assessment of listening can be intimately linked with the context leading up to that event.

Data Collection and Analysis

Setting

This study was conducted on-site at a large Midwestern bank. Over the past decade the banking industry has encountered several changes in its environment which

have required adaptation, such as increased regulation and increased online banking. These changes have required the creation of new roles, a change in many established processes, and an alteration of many job responsibilities, which in turn, have caused an increased need to stay in touch with the needs of those on the front lines of these changes. The particular bank used in this study has been recognized for its developmental approach to employees, thus promising a fertile ground from which stories of good listening should easily emerge.

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth critical incident interviews with 42 individuals working in a large Midwestern bank. Approximately two-thirds of the interviews were conducted at the headquarters location, and a third from branch locations in a separate region. In-depth interviews were chosen because the perspective of the employee is of paramount importance to answering the research questions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) and a storytelling approach was used in order to capture detailed information about key events that occurred in the past (Boyatzis, 1998; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

In choosing the participants, I employed purposive sampling (Maxwell, 1995; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I chose to interview only mid- to high-performing individuals (selected by my contacts in human resources) because these individuals are likely to be viewed more positively than their lower-performing counterparts, and as such, they may have better relationships with management and therefore experience more opportunities to be listened to (Ashford et al., 2009). In this way I targeted my sampling efforts toward individuals who should be able to provide rich data around the main construct of interest. In order to capture some of the heterogeneity from within this

organization (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), I conducted these interviews with employees from a number of different positions and functions, and from headquarters as well as an affiliate location.

The main interview questions were "Tell me about a time when someone at work had an important opportunity to listen to you, and he/she took that opportunity" and "Tell me about a time when someone at work had an important opportunity to listen to you, but he/she failed to take advantage of that opportunity." Given the primary focus on understanding employee experiences of listening, the first question was the focal question. Following the critical incident interviewing technique described by Boyatzis (1998) I asked about both listening and nonlistening events such that these could together provide a broader understanding of the construct of interest by enabling comparisons between the two types of stories. But as described earlier the sampling strategies were therefore more targeted toward revealing the first type of story (a 'listening' story) than toward the second (a 'nonlistening' story).

I conducted interviews with employees in the spring of 2015 over the course of a month and a half. Individuals working in human resources in each participating region contacted a list of employees who were mid-to-high performers and who performed work that was relatively interdependent. In total, 30 employees from the headquarters location were given information about the study and invited to participate, as well as 20 employees from branches of a separate region. For employees working at headquarters, an assistant from human resources set up a meeting time for employees to talk with me in a designated room. For employees at branch locations I independently scheduled times to interview each employee at his or her branch in a private office. Before beginning each

interview I gave a broad overview of the purpose of the research, explained the expected response format (personal stories), explained that the interview would likely take between 30 and 60 minutes, and asked for permission to record the interview. In order to help ease potential worries about the handling of sensitive content I explained to participants that I did not work for the bank, that they could skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering, and that I would be sensitive to hide identifying information in any eventual reports or publications.

During the course of each interview I relied primarily on the audio recording to provide a record of what the participant said, but I also took some notes on points that might help in facilitating the conversation and following up on relevant items (Kvale, 1996). As soon as possible after each interview, I completed an interview summary form in which I recorded the main themes, information gathered, notable observations, and emerging questions from that interview. After signing the consent form and before beginning the interview, I asked each person to fill out a brief questionnaire (Appendix B) in which they were asked to report on key demographics including their age, primary language, current work status, organizational tenure, education level. They were also asked to respond to a six-item survey of perceived organizational support, which used the same measure as described in Study 1.

In total, 42 individuals consented to participate in the interviews out of the original 50. These individuals collectively provided 81 stories comprised of 47 listening stories and 34 nonlistening stories. This difference between number of listening stories and nonlistening stories can be attributed to the sampling strategy and the bias toward individuals who would be likely to have listening stories. Nearly half of the employees

interviewed represented retail-banking centers which served individuals and small businesses. Nine individuals worked in the investment-advisory arm, five individuals worked in wholesale banking (serving mostly larger businesses), and eight worked in other areas (e.g., marketing, HR). Out of the 42 individuals 24 were female and 18 were male (23).

Interviewing, coding, and analysis were conducted in iterations although coding and analysis continued well after the final interview was completed (Miles et al., 2014). Throughout the coding and analytic process I kept notes in the form of jottings and analytic memos, and returned to my interview observation notes for additional context where needed. My early analytic efforts consisted of noting patterns from interview summary forms and the first few transcripts, and then coding a set of four full interview transcripts chosen at random. Based on these I then appended the first order codes with secondary theme labels, which effectively grouped the emerging themes into categories of context, sharing topic, sharing strategy, triggering event, listener relationship type, listener response, listening strategy, sharing location, speaker personality, and listening outcome. These codes were further developed and refined as I continued reading and re-reading the stories.

Each story was also coded as either a listening story or a nonlistening story, based on which primary interview question prompted the story. Stories that came in response to the question about a time when someone *took* an important opportunity to listen were coded as listening stories, and those stories about a time when someone *did not take* an important opportunity to listen were coded as nonlistening stories.

In some cases, interviewees told stories of nonlistening, but added further detail about how, in the end, they tried again and experienced a better result. In these cases, I categorized the story as a nonlistening story and left out the final result. An example is the story of Tom (interviewee) and Carol (the listener)[3]. Tom told a story in which, based on his in-person assessment of a particular client, he suggested to Carol that although this client looked risky on paper, the client's circumstances suggested that the risk was much lower than it appeared using the usual metrics. Carol initially discounted his experience with the client and decided to reject the loan. Tom went on to tell me that he later decided to ask Carol to meet with the client herself and that she changed her mind and agreed with him after the client meeting. This is a story of nonlistening turned listening, but because it was told in response to the nonlistening question, I considered only the nonlistening portion of the story the main story and treated the ending as an anecdote. In other cases interviewees told stories involving multiple listeners – sometimes those listeners acted in similar ways (e.g., both providing coaching) and could be easily coded as a single listening story, and sometimes they acted in different ways (e.g., one person listened and another did not). In cases where the story took different directions depending on the listener, I coded the story based on the primary listener anchoring the story (asking myself which listener had the individual focused on, and which listener seemed more peripheral?).

A partially-ordered meta-matrix was then created for each of the categories that had a sufficient amount of data (e.g., speaker and listener personality were excluded at this point because only a few interviewees had mentioned them). The purpose of this

[3] In order to protect anonymity of participants all names are fictional and are not necessarily reflective of gender.

matrix was to assess similarities and differences between the stories and to begin looking for patterns and relationships in the data (Miles et al., 2014). In order to facilitate this process I once again read through each of the stories, and this time developed a one-paragraph summary of each story. These summaries were not intended to replace the full transcripts, but to more easily detect patterns by seeing the stories together in a reduced form. I also created columns describing the listener(s) and speaker(s) involved and their relationship (e. g, manager/subordinate), and the period of time over which the conversation took place. Some of these details are threaded throughout the results but were not central categories in the final analysis. In general, most stories involved one or more higher-ranking individuals as the reported listeners, and a majority took place over time as opposed to occurring in a single interaction.

During analysis it became clear that there were a few different types of listening being described and that these went beyond simply listening (stories that came in response to the question about a time when someone *took* an important opportunity to listen) versus nonlistening (stories about a time when someone *did not take* an important opportunity to listen). Within the nonlistening category there were three different types of behavioral patterns that could be distinguished: *superficial listening*, *distracted listening*, and s*hutting down* (see Figure 2). All three of these represent unfavorable judgments of listening but differ in terms of their dimensional properties (Table 11). Within the listening category two different behavioral patterns could be distinguished which I call *building* and *acting,* each representing favorable listening judgments but again differing in terms of their properties. Each of these five types of listening will be briefly explained in the findings section.

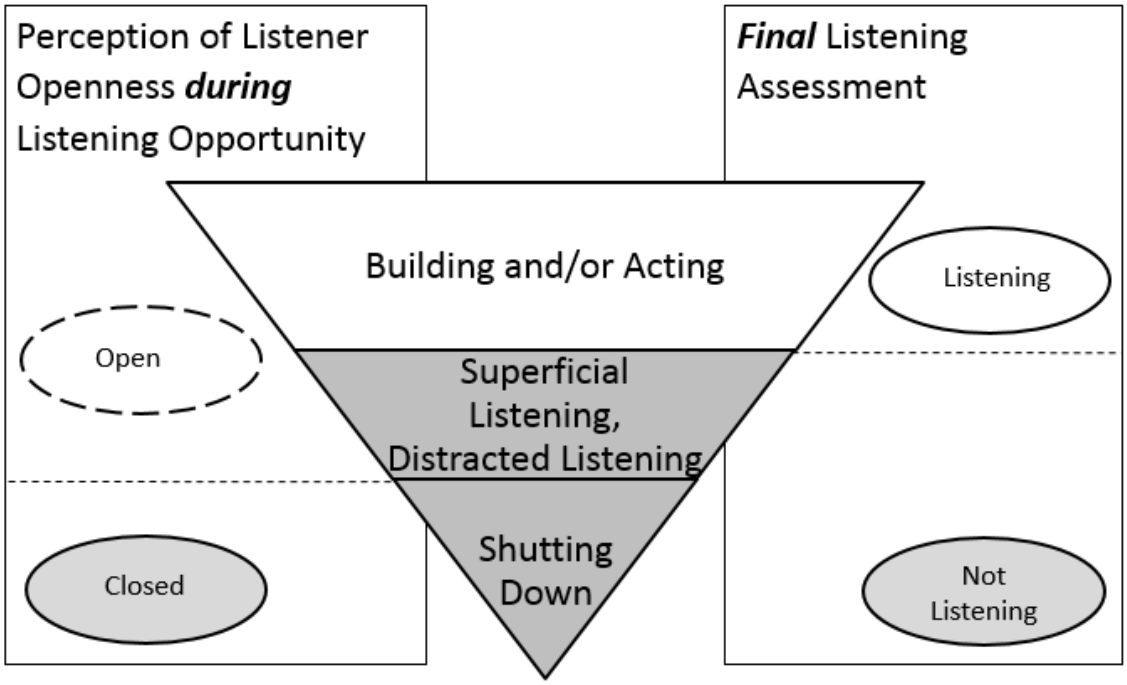

Figure 2: Types of Perceived Listening.

Table 11
Listening Assessment Classification Criteria

Listening Assessment	**Listening Classification**	**Classification Criteria (all must be present)**
Listening	Acting	• Open initial response • Some form of desired action (e.g., using input)
	Building	• Open Initial Response • Listener helps to expand speaker idea or thinking
Nonlistening	Shutting Down	• Closed initial response
	Superficial Listening	• Open initial response • Retrospectively viewed as nonlistening • Lack of desired action or follow-up
	Distracted Listening	• Open initial response • Noted distraction during exchange • Retrospectively viewed as nonlistening • Lack of desired action or follow-up

Table 12 displays the final list of codes used to create the final conceptual model and the larger themes I have categorized those codes as representing. The purpose of this display is to show how I organized and interpreted data. The codes represent interviewee perceptions around both the topic of sharing that opened up the listening opportunity, and their perceptions of listener behavioral responses.

Table 12
Data Structure including First-Order Concepts, Second-Order Themes, and Aggregate Dimensions

Aggregate Dimensions and Second-Order Themes	First-Order Concepts and Illustrative Data
Open Initial Listener Response	*Absence of shutting down behaviors (those listed below)*
Closed Initial Listener Response	
Shutting Down by Walling Off	*Making self unavailable for discussion*
	She always tries to avoid conflict [and] she sat in a different state -so she was able to not have to be involved. (Clarissa)
	He just wasn't really around (Danielle)
	Ignoring
	I feel like it's heard but not really, nothing's going to ever happen. But somebody else might present that information in a very similar fashion in a very similar way but it may be discussed more. (Dennis)
	I think in that situation, they just kind of wanted to brush it off because it would have involved an interaction with a high level person. (Melanie)
Shutting Down by Asserting Agenda	*Blaming speaker rather than trying to understand*
	I don't understand how I'm the one who is taking fault when I'm actually the one that's trying to resolve this issue, you know? She just - her reasoning was that she didn't feel like I did enough. (Felicia)
	Hearing but overruling speaker's perspective
	It was more that my pushback was overruled I guess is what I would say. (Jacob)
	I think that he felt like hey I've been in this business a lot longer than you have. I think know what's best here. I think this is the way we do it. You know? Kind of discounting my experience and my viewpoint. (Tom)
	Interrupting a speaker and preventing full message delivery
	And the entire time I would start out with maybe one or two sentences and then I would get cut off. (Greg)
Meeting Needs through Conversation	
Building	*Helping the speaker to build an idea*
	So then I contacted Yolanda and we brainstormed and figured out, alright what do we need to do from here? (Linda)

	They were very open in listening and working with me in pitching on it…[sharing] different options, different scenarios, different past experiences things like that. (Jody)
	Coaching
	The conversations are always very much centered around me and what I said...So the conversations over time went from learning the business and learning what it takes to be a private banker to okay now you're doing them, what else do we need to do to make sure whenever we do flip the switch when that times comes that you hit the ground running. (Jacob)
	They kind of asked me "Well how do you think that went? What do you think was the outcome? What was good? What was not good? I mean it's just – it's good for me [to discuss observations with seniors] because it's a good experience - because that's what I want to do. (Heidi)
Being With	*Willingness to engage with speaker around a difficult topic*
	So that was huge in terms of my self-confidence and knowing that I could talk to other people about it [a bullying situation]. (Melanie)
	He took a customer complaint and [instead of] saying, "Why is this happening? What did you do wrong?" he actually asked me to explain to him what was going on and listened to me and understood why the situation was the way it was. (Jason)
	Showing interest when it's not expected
	It stands out because she's very high level. I feel like when you are at the bottom of the totem pole, then you can get your ideas up to the top, it's really nice. And then maybe some change can happen from it. (John)
	And [local leader] came out and she assisted us with our team engagement and she actually listened to what the employees communicated to her. (Jennifer)
Meeting Needs through Action	*Providing a requested tool*
Facilitating Good Work	The minute he knew it [malfunctioning copier] was really, really making my job difficult we had [a new one] within a month. (Felicia)
	I first walked in and subsequently begin to ask questions, "When are we going to get remodeled, when are we going to get upgraded, when is…" and

	was relentless. I just got of a conference call yesterday that we'll be breaking ground in about sometime third quarter. (Lauren)
	Using Input to make a change that benefits the organization or other individuals
	[My boss] wanted to…lighten up the mood with everyone and I gave him suggestion… and he implemented it. (Felicia)
	Using Input to make a change that benefits the organization or other individuals
	So in this particular case, I kind of push it and I said, hey guys, why do we need to do this… We could potentially create a negative client impact or client experience… they finally, not necessarily said you're right but said, okay, because of this, we don't have to do that. (Sarah)
	Work-related solution creating
	[My boss] came up with an idea around how to try to keep [a star employee], which involved increasing salary and a chance to manage. It would mean creating a new position. I mean this is culturally and historically not easy to turn around when you're talking about a significant increase… I would say by two o'clock we had enough buy-in from key stakeholders [to make a counteroffer]. (Tom)
	I needed some support from [my manager] in regards to what can we do to help change the attitude of this employee. We didn't have anything internally to offer within the company, so we looked outside. We found something here locally, outside of the company. (Mark)
Using Feedback	*Using feedback to make a personal change*
	She listened to what we had to say and she made a lot of changes of her own which made a lot of changes just in general within our entire region which helps obviously with the entire bank. (Nancy)
	When this [direct report] first came to me, she was rough around the edges but was very smart and I told her - I said if you let me work with you, I said I'm going to get you to where you want to be. And she says okay. And she did everything I told her to do, every single thing I told her to do as far as her dress, her appearance, going to school…she did everything I told her to do. (Andy)
Supporting Personal Success	*Creating a personally-beneficial solution*

	In my position here it's [difficult to move up] in a short amount of time because there's not that many positions… So in order to offset that, other ideas were brought to the table and saying okay why don't we get you in touch with the appropriate person so you could learn more…increase your skillset. (Susan)
	She…placed me in a banking center and then gave me then the opportunity to become a manager. (Jessica)
	Providing tangible help
	He goes, "Why don't we do this? Since it involves one of my managers and one of my employees…I'll have the conversation." So he took that off of my plate. (Cindy)
	Providing tangible help, cont.
	Recently I was faced with a life-changing event…so I had to go to management and say hey my life is about to take a change…[everyone] collectively surrounded me with whatever I needed. From time away, to "don't worry about this, we got it covered" to "what do you need?" (Charles)
Listening, but Not Yet Delivering Final Action	
Trying	*Trying everything possible to connect to relevant authority*
	He said I'm working on it and I knew that he was working on it…he definitely knows exactly where I'm coming from (Frank)
Facilitating a Connection	*Connecting with next listener – awaiting results*
	So I just sent her an email and she went to HR with it and we will know next week hopefully. (Justin)
Failing to Take Desired Action	*Taking an action that's perceived as unhelpful*
Ineffective Action	It's like a Band-Aid as opposed to like an actual fix in the system. (Cameron)
	I told him I will always – I will take care of you. You know you don't have to worry about that. Well [one day he] started screaming at the top of his lungs when he's walking down the hall [over a small bug in the system that made something appear as an error]… I had actually already fixed it. (Ned)
No Action	*Doing nothing when action or follow-up is expected*
	So they provided the opportunity to hear what I had to say but I guess the outcome of that or the--what I hoped they had listened to didn't really take up. (James)

	They take it in, they understand it, the problem is that this is not implemented and we see that. You know, they don't, they take it in, they absorb it, they are very good at you know, this is great. I'm glad you changed your ideas blah, blah, blah. And we get that and unfortunately you still don't see a change (Andy)
Sharing topics	
Contributions	*Ideas* I kind of had some ideas for process improvement of them or ways to improve it kind of creating a template across the board for everyone to use in our group. (Cameron) *Suggestions* I said, "No. We need to wait until we get [product rollout] right because if you get it out there and the system doesn't work and people are struggling with it, they're going to write it off." (Cindy)
Sensitive communications	*Personal feedback and suggestions* We were able to sit with [our manager] and get her to see the fact that there were some things that she needed to change too (Nancy) *Concerns or desires* We would try to tell her [about an issue] and she refused. She just did not ever listen to us. (Clarissa) *Personal perspective on a sensitive situation* There were a lot of things that didn't go as planned with the transition…So he and I sat down and I was able to share with him some of the things about my transition that I hadn't had a chance to communicate. (Sam)
Information relevant to coordinated work	*General communications* My past boss was only my boss from January through March and there were a lot of issues during that time where I kept escalating them to him and wasn't really getting responses. (Danielle)
Work-related request	*Request relating to work needs* They made the request [on my behalf] and you know, I don't know how – where it goes from there I guess but it got turned down. (Jody)
Personal request	*Request relating to personal benefit* My mentality was that due to the short notice [of a change in vacation rules] and the preplanning that both [my direct report] and myself had made already that I seriously think it would be a reasonable request to keep everything as is. (Lauren)
Career consideration	*Career-related interests, desires, or concerns*

	Someone pursued me about another job outside of the bank. So I just kind of outlined [to a senior colleague] what it was and what I was thinking. (James)

Table 13 shows a conceptually-clustered matrix which helped me to see the relationships between topic of sharing, perceived listener behaviors, and ultimate assessments of listening. These are clustered on the basis of path ending, which correspond with the composite sequence display shown in Figure 3. In general, the listening stories could be grouped into different paths on the basis of two main factors: the perceived listener behavior (i.e., 'was the listener initially open or closed?' and 'was action expected or was conversation enough?'), and their personal classification of that behavior (judged on the basis of whether the story was told in response to the listening or nonlistening question). There were six main paths or trajectories listening stories could take, as indicated by the closed circles in Figure 3 (labeled with subscripts as ending with 1B, 2B, 4B, 5A, 5B, and 5C). An individual interviewees' path might also include subpaths, in which a speaker could become connected with an additional listener as a part of the listening process (T1-T3), or re-engage after an unsuccessful listening experience (T4-T5). These variations indicate the ongoing nature of listening as revealed through the stories. In the upcoming section primary attention will be given to describing each of the six main paths, which will be the basis for structuring the reported findings.

Table 13
Conceptually-Clustered Matrix with Path, Sharing Topic, Listener Behavior, and Listening Classification

Path Ending	**Interviewee (Subpath, if Applicable)**	**Sharing**	**Listener Behavior (Perceived)**	**Listening Classification**
1B	Dennis	Ideas	Ignoring	Shutting down
	Trevor, Susan (T4, T5)		Hearing but overruling	Shutting down
	Tom, George, Ted	Suggestions	Hearing but overruling	Shutting down
	Sarah, Melanie (T4, T5)		Ignoring	Shutting down
	Clarissa, Jennifer, Cindy (T4)	Concerns	Making self unavailable	Shutting down
	Felicia		Blaming	Shutting down
	Jacob, Sam, Nancy (T4)		Hearing but overruling	Shutting down
	Greg		Interrupting	Shutting down
	Danielle, Curt	General Communications	Making self unavailable	Shutting down
	Charles (T4)	Work-related request	Ignoring	Shutting down
	Jody (T1)		Hearing but overruling	Shutting down
	Danny	Personal request	Hearing but overruling	Shutting down
	Jessica	Career consideration	Making self unavailable	Shutting down
	Julian		Hearing but overruling	Shutting down
2B	Cameron, Linda (T3)	Ideas	Idea Building	Building
	Heidi	Personal perspective - sensitive situation	Coaching	Building
	Sam, Melanie, Jason, Greg	Personal perspective - sensitive situation	Just being there	Building
	John, Trevor, Jennifer, Curt	General communications	Showing interest	Building
	Jody	Work-related request	Idea Building	Building
	Jackie, Charles, James, Jacob, Heidi (T3)	Career consideration	Coaching	Building
4B	Frank	Personal request	Trying	Acting

5A	Justin (T1)	Work-related request	Facilitate Connection	Acting
5B	Felicia, Dennis, Roger (via T3)	Ideas	Using Input	Building
	Tom		WR Solution Creating	Building
	Brian (T1)	Suggestions	Using Input	Building
	Clarissa, Jacob, Ted, George, Steven (T2)			Acting
	Nancy, Andy, Ned	Personal feedback and suggestions	Using Feedback	Acting
	Mark	Concerns	WR Solution Creating	Building
	Cindy, Charles		Helping	Building
	Sarah, Joanna	General Communications	Using Input	Acting
	Danny, Felicia, Lauren (T3)	Work-related request	Providing Tool	Acting
	Sarah	Work-related request	Using Input	Acting
	Danielle	Work-related request	WR Solution Creating	Building
	Lauren	Personal request	Solution creating	Building
	Jessica, Susan (T3)	Career consideration	Solution Creating	Building
	Omar, Julian		Helping	Building
5C	Justin	Ideas	No action or follow-up	Superficial
	Joanna, Brian (4A)	Suggestions	No action or follow-up	Superficial
	Andy	Concerns	No action or follow-up	Superficial
	Ned	General Communications	Wrong action	Superficial
	Steven (T4), John (T4)	General Communications	Ineffective	Distracted
	Jason, Cameron (3B)	Work-related request	Ineffective	Superficial
	Linda		No action or follow-up	Superficial
	James	Career consideration	No action or follow-up	Superficial

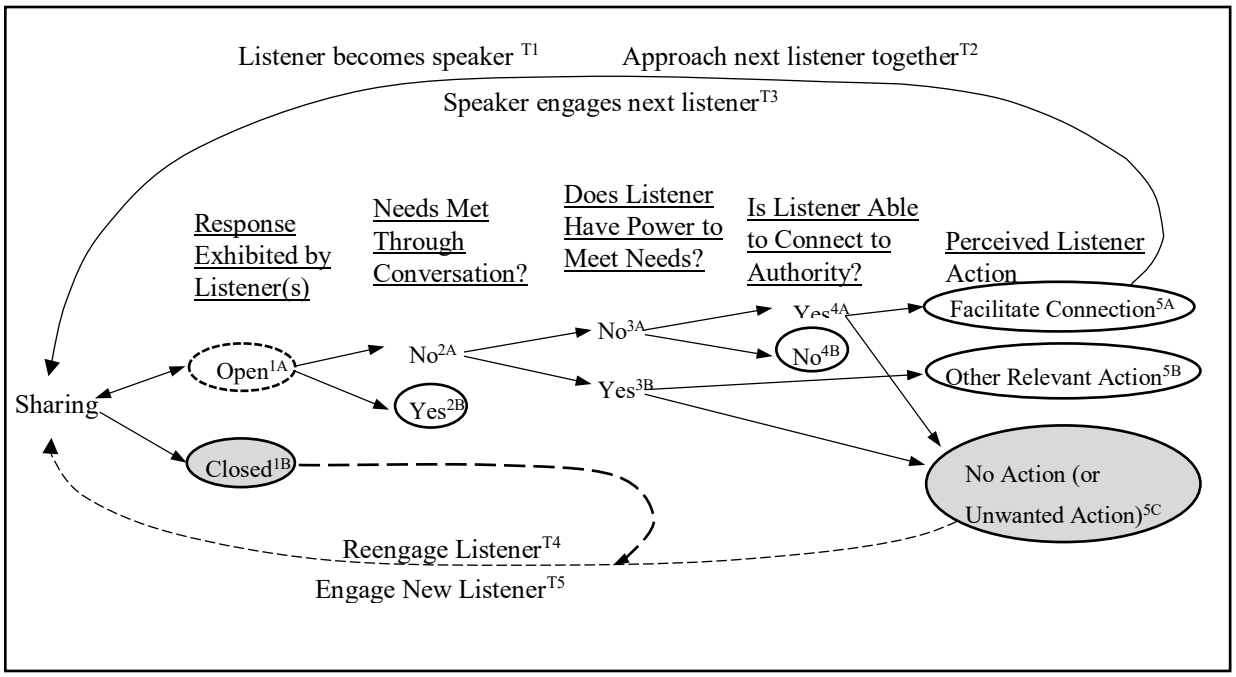

Figure 3: How employees see and judge listening as listening opportunities unfold. Path ending in 1B represents 'The Rejected'; path ending in 2B represents 'Conversational Growers'; paths ending in 4B and 5A represent 'Grateful Trustors'; path ending in 5B represents 'Satisfaction through Action' and path ending in 5C represents 'The disappointed.'

Listening Paths

In this section I report the insights documented about the experience and assessment of listening as told by the interviewees. The intricacies of the listening experience could not be summarized by a single path and instead represent differing experienced realities. I do not assert that the paths represent *individual differences*, but rather that they represent individual *situations.* This is supported by data showing that the same interviewee could have dramatically differing listening experiences based on what they were needing and wanting out of a given interaction, and on how the listener met or failed to meet those needs.

Path 1B – The Rejected.

Many of the nonlistening stories involved *shutting down* responses which effectively ended the listening process by force. For this reason paths ending here are nicknamed *the rejected*. These responses contained verbal and/or nonverbal signals indicating that the listener wished to end the conversation. This path ends in 1B, or the *closed* response in Fig. 2. This is contrasted with an *open* response, which, as I'll explain later, does not always result in a successful listening experience from the speaker's point of view.

Interviewee accounts suggested that there were two main ways listeners shut down the conversation. First, some listeners would *wall off* or create a barrier between speaker and listener by either making oneself unavailable for discussion, or by ignoring and blowing off a speaker's repeated attempts to engage. The latter can be seen in the story of Charles, whose work-related request was met with an ignoring response:

> I had a large commercial loan that I needed to get her to sign the blue on and discuss—and a blue was an approval memo, okay—I needed her signature because she had the lending authority. I had asked her five or six different times that I needed to get with her and I stopped in her office. I got on her calendar every time. There was something more pressing. So I felt like I was just kind of – I kept getting scooted aside and scooted aside.

Charles went on to describe the growing impatience that he had felt with his manager at the time, the frustration that was causing his client, and the angst he felt about not being able to better serve his client's needs. This came to a head, where he decided he couldn't wait any longer and approached her again, this time publicly (subpath T4 – re-engage the

listener). This time she again ignored the request, although this time with a more extreme reaction after being confronted:

> So finally after one manager's meeting, I walked up into her office and after a manager's meeting there were a pile of folks needing her attention for HR issues and other stuff…So I put the blue memo in front of her and I'm like I need you to sign this because I need to get this thing closed…. This was in the middle of the whole process in front of my peers and you know, because it was a pretty large request [but] I had everything in order and she just blew, blew her top… [she said] "What do you think you're doing putting this kind of a loan request in front of me without us having to sit down on it?" She went nuts and everybody kind of got away from her desk.

Charles walked away from her desk as well, taking the memo with him and still having no signature. Later, he was eventually able to get her signature but noted that the memory of the event is still present when he interacts with this individual: "Years down the [road] – that sharp edge that I had dulled so it's just I remember it. It's not that sharp edge where it's going to cut me but I remember it."

For Charles the memory is clearly still vivid, if not quite as emotional as it had been at the time. The sting is connected to a violated expectation: "Maybe I was not priority more so than lack of listening. You know what I mean? She should have said I need something, alright, here let's set up. I'm listening to you, I need you to sit down let's pick a day." It's not clear to Charles that this experience represents a pure lack of listening, and this uncertainty around categorization seemed to be a common theme among individuals who had experienced distancing from a potential listener. Still, the

fact that so many (*n*=10) told a similar story seems to suggest that emotionally, even if not cognitively, these stories do take on the profile of a nonlistening experience.

In contrast to those who reported being shut-down by a listener who had created a wall, other stories suggested that they were shut down by a would-be listener who *asserted their own agenda*. This took several different forms: blaming rather than trying to understand, hearing but overruling a speaker's perspective, and interrupting a speaker to prevent the full message delivery. Most common among these was hearing but overruling. Susan describes her experience with being overruled:

> When I was at the other institution prior to this, there was a great opportunity to do something in the community. My boss agreed with me because he was very, very into the community. And at the time I was very involved in the community also. So by us pledging $500, and this is what we're asking for would have given us significantly more presence in the city along with goodwill. It went leaps and bounds and we jumped through so many hoops to try to do this, you know, not only for ourselves but for the organization… But when I talked to her it was like yeah I don't think that's anything that we're going to do. That's nothing that I'm interested in. Like okay and like what can I say?

Susan described that she had been excited when she was approaching the manager with the idea —excited to do something for the community and for the organization. Having this idea thwarted for seemingly no reason caused her to feel progressively frustrated and disengaged:

> The more I thought about it after the fact just because I was so irritated, most of the stuff I was even – because even my manager at the time said like yeah, it's

> very common for her to do that. If it doesn't fit in her agenda [then it's] not going to work… it actually negatively impacted me in regards to the amount of effort that I would give to the organization. Because they didn't care enough about me to hear my opinion and give me a valid no. I get the fact that I'm going to ask you for some ridiculous stuff and you're going to say no. I get it. But tell me why. You know I'm not asking for a pair red air Jordan's that I could wear at work, I'm just not. It's something valid that's going to help out the business and it was just shot down. So I wouldn't – at that point I don't think I ever asked her for anything ever again. I didn't approach her for anything other than specific business relating to my office. Nothing to help further the business or increase the name reputation or yeah.

Susan describes feeling as though the response was invalid given that she received no rationale for the denial of something she saw as a compelling opportunity for the bank. Two themes can be seen here that thread throughout other interviews as well. First, often it's most important to employees to feel listened to when they are trying to do something that benefits the organization in some way. In fact 66 of the 81 stories told were related to an employee who was trying to do good work—ideas that would help individuals or the organizations, concerns about a work decision and the impacts it will have, suggestions for how to bring more business to the bank, etc. Yet these good intentions seem to come at a cost. That is, they seem to create heightened expectations around having valid rationale for denying those contributions, as was the case above with Susan. Second, for some individuals this type of "invalid" rejection leads to decreased

contributions. Greg describes having a similar reaction after he's unable to have a full, honest conversation with his manager about some of the struggles at his branch:

And it eventually got to the point where when he would ask a question I would just give him what he wanted to hear. So really it wasn't a true feedback from me. You know what I mean? I know you don't really want to listen to me so now my answer is just short and sweet, and whatever you want to hear or what I think you want to hear is what I'm going to tell you. Because at that moment in time I'm demotivated in having that conversation. If I can't get anywhere with you then why even bother. I mean I've got a lot to do.

Path 2B – Conversational Growers.

A stark contrast to this can be seen in the comparison between the above stories and the stories of those who ended with a listening assessment. For some who told listening stories they described specific actions that their listeners took that, as the speakers describe it, played a role in positively shaping their overall assessments. But for others, the conversation was enough to fulfill their needs and further action was unnecessary. These are the stories that end their path at 2B. In these stories the listeners take on an *expanding* role by helping the speaker to build an idea or by providing coaching to help them grow professionally, or by *being with* an individual through engaging with them around a difficult topic (one that might be more comfortably avoided), or by showing interest when it's not expected (which often took the form of a one-on-one meeting with a much higher-ranking individual). Collectively, I have termed these stories conversational growers given that the main function of the interaction served

was that it helped them grow in some way, either directly, or more psychologically through knowing that they had an ally.

Coaching was a big theme here, and this tended to come in response to discussing a career consideration of some sort. Often this was initiated by the listener, who proactively checked in with the individual to find out their career aspirations, but at other times it was initiated by an employee who asked a career-related question or brought up where she saw herself going in the future. Heidi shares a story in which she talked with her manager about career options. Between her manager and the next listener she connected with, she was able to find her path and recognize the skills she needed to move into that path:

> So I started narrowing down with conversations and my boss listening to me on different things I was doing to try to explore avenues of where I wanted to go next and giving recommendations based on those conversations…You know, by her giving that –listening to the different things that were going on and what I was trying to do—it kind of got me to the point of wanting to become a relationship manager and that led to her getting some time with the senior bank with [senior executive] to sit down and talk to me one on one about what exactly was trying to do and how he could me get there.

She further describes the significance these conversations had on her:

> I mean you know I don't think that that had ever happened to anybody in my role before so that meant a lot to me to be able to just have face time with him. And then he really did listen to everything that –you know, everything I had done, the

conversations I had. The additional things that I had to prepare myself and you know, it really because of him that it kick started me getting this particular role.

While there may have been some actions that came out of the conversation it seems that the conversation itself which was most important for Heidi, who clearly benefitted through the mutual exploration that led to the discovery of her desired role. She describes the impact this had on her attitude toward work:

> I mean that was definitely them listening to what I enjoy to do and what I –you know, it's something that would get me to come into work and be involved and enjoy what I'm doing which is always going to be better work then if I'm just punching like a time card just to get paid.

In other cases employees experienced growth from a listener who was simply willing to be there with them to have tough discussions. Greg, the individual who was earlier mentioned as shifting toward only saying what his manager wanted to hear, rather than discussing the real difficulties he was facing in meeting the goals that had been set for his branch, describes what happens when he gets a new manager who's more willing to have that conversation:

> And honestly, he was the first person to listen to the challenges that I was having in that branch. And although he really didn't say anything from a solution standpoint, when I got into my car and I drove to my branch I made a decision right away—whatever it is that I'm doing is not working. So scrap everything that I think I know and let's look at this for what it is—and it's non-performing. Who cares why I'm not, it's non-performing. So I made a decision there that I'm

> going to completely change what I'm doing—looking at what's going on—and from that moment on everything changed.

Greg knew all along that his performance wasn't what it could be and he had clearly wanted to talk about some of the struggles with his previous manager. But that manager's unwillingness to engage left him to be alone in the struggle. In contrast the simple fact that his new manager was willing to engage with him around the topic seemed to make all of the difference in finding a way to turn things around. In this way he was able to grow professionally due to his own effort, but that effort was backed by the knowledge of attention and support from his manager.

All of the stories within this path were able to be categorized as building, in that they involved an open initial response, and that they helped the speaker expand an idea or thinking. Even when these listeners were "just listening" without taking action, important listening experiences seemed to leave the speaker with the sense that they were walking away with something greater than they started with. As we'll see in the next sections there were other circumstances in which, in order for speakers to see a specific listening interaction as significant, they also expected some form of action.

Path 4B & 5A– Grateful Trustors

Those who were not able to fully have their needs met through conversation alone relied on their listeners to take some form of action or approval, or to connect them to someone else who had the authority to do so. Most of the important listening opportunities calling for action that the interviewees discussed were ultimately met with the action that they were desiring. However, there were two cases in which interviewees classified stories as listening stories even though the ultimate, desired, action had not yet

been achieved. These were recent situations which were still ongoing for the interviewees, and while they had not yet seen their end goal accomplished, they felt some satisfaction in knowing that their listeners had done or were doing everything they could to help them reach that desired end. In one case an interviewee (Frank) discussed a situation in which he felt he needed more information about a promotion that he was being offered, but neither he nor his manager were able to get the required information:

> I would say that my direct boss has definitely listened to all my concerns. I trust her a lot and everything that I told you plus more is what I told her and she's definitely listened to it and she gets it and I can see in her face that she wants to do more about it but I feel like she doesn't have the pen to make that decision. So getting back to your other question, I was like--is somebody holding up the process? I don't know the answer to that but I know if Janet had the authority to make the decision, she would've.

In this case Frank talks about feeling listened to and appreciating the fact that Janet has done all that she can do. Part of this perception, as Frank mentions, comes from not just the words she has said but what she has conveyed nonverbally. Still, he described perceiving that the problem was at a structural level, where there is some unknown corporate barrier that's preventing him from getting the information he needs in order to make the important career decision that the bank is asking him to make. Because of this his reaction to Janet's listening is much different from his larger reaction to the bank:

> I wouldn't say it's affected my work. [But] I would say it's affected my long-term view of the organization I mean just to put it bluntly because I wanted to make career out of this place… I mean I don't know how much do you want to know

> about me personally but you know I've been a top producing person for [the bank] my whole career and I feel taken advantage of, a little bit.

Frank feels listened to at the dyadic level because he trusts Janet and has a good relationship with her. But he perceives a divide between what he needs and what Janet is able to provide, therefore he's unable to carry over these positive, trusting feelings to the organizational level.

In another case an interviewee (Justin) discussed an ongoing situation in which he has been warned far in advance that an employee of his will be leaving. He doesn't have a lot of ability to cover her work so requests in advance to start looking to fill the position. He describes this situation as positive, but not unusual: "I think it's been a very positive experience for me as far as listening. I never really had someone say no, you can't do that." In fact this was the case for many of the interviewees I spoke with—while some described isolated incidents that stood out in their mind, many described that had a harder time thinking about times that they were *not* listened to, and gave me an example of something that stood out as an example of other, similar interactions.

One aspect that may have been at play in tipping the scales toward either a listening assessment or a nonlistening assessment is follow-up. Many of the positive listening stories involved accounts of listeners who followed up later. Jessica, for example, and similar to Justin, noted that everyone around her listened. When I asked her what stood out about the person in the story she told me, this was her response:

> I guess because she seemed – she would always keep coming back. Do you know what I mean or email me or call me and to see where I was and what I wanted to do, do you know what I mean. So she generally cared and it's not like

> she listened one day and then totally forgot about me and never made that contact back that she would reconnect with me on a weekly basis or a bi-weekly basis or different things like that. So she always reconnected with me and not just forgot about me.

Some noted that this follow-up was particularly important in the case of managers, because there was less comfort around continually approaching higher-status individuals with a given request or concern. In a similar fashion many of these speakers who were shut down suggested that they would not have been as negatively impacted by the experience if they had been given a meaningful rational for the rejection and an opportunity for follow-up discussions (e.g., Susan).

Path 5B – Satisfaction through Action.

The above two cases in which action was desired but not yet achieved, were rare in these stories of significant listening experiences. More common was that interviewees would describe the action, having already taken place, as a significant part of the listening experience itself. The experience was meaningful because the listener had helped them accomplish an end which they were intending to reach. This action came in several forms. Some listeners performed the function of *facilitating good work* by providing a requested tool, or by using the speaker's input to make a change benefitting either the organization or individuals. Danny describes a tool that he needed in order to reputably work with high net-worth clients:

> We have safety deposit boxes that are in the back behind us and we used the cart to transport them from the vault into a conference room so they can go through it privately. The cart was taken…. So I went, very stupid and basic I know, but I

> was having to wheel the clients safety deposit box out on a chair so very techy, not high net worth style.

He went on to tell me that he had been requesting a new cart form his manager and not getting it—for quite some time. The manager would tell Danny he was working on the issue but was not getting the issue resolved. Finally, a new manager took over and got him the cart he needed. He describes the significance that this has on him and his ability to professionally represent himself and the bank:

> Two managers before him, I could never get this stupid cart back and he somehow like within three days had me cart, a brand new one, a really fancy one. So I guess the point is that that maybe really dumb but it was a function of a representation of the bank that if you really something valuable in a box, you don't want to wheel it out plus if you have money.

Danny's experience echoes the experience that many employees had—they were trying to do a good job and to represent the bank well. Other interviewees similarly described the importance of having their input put to good use. One interviewee, Brian, had an idea for how to better serve his customer base. He built the idea with a colleague of his and they took it to progressively higher ranks until it was approved and implemented by the president of the company. Throughout his story he suggested several times that that having the idea implemented was important to him because he was passionate about serving his customer base, but in this excerpt he also suggests that he experienced a sense of meaning from serving the bank:

> I think it was important for my line of business exec and it was important for the corporate person…because now, we're solving not just for our group, but we're

> solving really for the whole bank. We're helping and not completely solving, but it certainly a good tool to put in the toolbox.

Another form of action was *using feedback*. I used this code for stories in which interviewees described offering personal feedback to a boss, colleague, or employee who was able to incorporate and use that feedback. Ned, an executive assistant, describes his changing impression of an executive he was serving who was new to the role. He describes finding space to give this a "numbers person" some feedback about the expectations for him in his new role:

> I remember talking to him and I said you know when I first found out that you were going to be my boss I was unhappy. I said you were a jackass…. I said you would literally walk by my desk when you would meet with Joan. You would never say hello to me. You wouldn't even look in my direction. It was like I didn't even exist. I said now I know because you're in your own little mind like you almost know like you're just in your zone. I said but let me tell you. [In this role] you [have to be] a prom king. You are Mr. Popular. Everybody wants a piece of you in this role. Everybody wants you to know who they are, everybody wants you to say hello to them. They want to feel special.

Ned describes getting to know the true nature of his new boss and seeing that he could use some help transitioning into his new role. Because he had served other inhabitants of the position before he knew what was expected and where his new boss Martin was lacking. This enabled him to coach his boss on how to use his strengths while also learning to be more approachable than he had been earlier on.

> But he got it and you know, we were at an event one time and he was over in the corner talking to me and another one of his direct reports. I'm like what are you doing? I'm like get out there. You need to be out there and about. You know, and he really - I feel like that was my purpose for him. It was to see what he was missing. He didn't see that and I don't even think he understood the importance of that. But when you're in that, this retail exec I mean I don't know why people think like you literally are a celebrity. It's the craziest thing and then they go oh, it's the retail exec. I'm like that's how they look at you. I said you need to get out there. You need to shake hands, kiss babies, do whatever it is that really and so it was really kind of cool that he took that advice and he listened to me. …He's like in my own personal growth.

Many of the stories I heard suggested the important listening moments were those in which they felt they made a contribution to helping the organization or the people in it. This was particularly true when individuals held unique expertise or insight into an issue due to either their position or unique combination of experiences. Ned felt this because he had grown to see an unknown side of his new executive, and was in a unique position to offer feedback that others might not be willing or able to give. He addresses this feeling specifically in using the word "purpose" and by referencing the mutual personal growth that came from having his insight listened to and acted upon.

Finally, some listener actions could be categorized as *supporting personal success.* This category was used for stories in which listeners were described as creating solutions that personally benefitted speakers by solving an issue or creating a path to their desired future. Jessica describes a situation in which she had regular contact with a high-

level manager from another department who initially opened up her career opportunities just by talking with her and asking about her career desires and preferences. Eventually, she put that knowledge to use in directly facilitating Jessica's desired career, which involved a big jump from what she had been doing previously:

> She put me – actually, I think she just gave me the job. She put me in touch with the manager who was an awesome manager and knew that Doug and I would click. So Doug did come down and I talked to him and more or less…I took the job.

Path 5C – The Disappointed

Finally, there were stories of *nonlistening* where action was expected but not taken. These, like the stories of rejection, involved disappointment with the nonlistening behavior of another. The difference is that these cases were not clear shut-downs from the start but rather revealed through a lack of inaction. *Superficial* and *distracted listening* are two types of these unfavorable judgments of nonlistening made in retrospect. In some cases the lack of follow-up can be likely blamed on distraction during the initial interaction (*distracted listening*). In other cases the lack of follow-through is not blamed on distraction but instead seems to represent to the speaker a lack of genuine commitment to following through with implied behaviors (*superficial listening*). As Brian describes:

> [So we] sat down with them and said, hey, we think we have found [an opportunity that the organization has been missing out on] and they just said 'oh it sounds great!' but they didn't do anything about it…they just didn't - their actions indicated they didn't think it was that important.

Brian's experience is similar to many others in that initially there is a seeming openness to what's being said, but this openness as taken as a sign of potential willingness to act. Brian, and others in his situation, were therefore disappointed in the end when they did not see the desired action. These nonlistening judgments can therefore be distinguished from the earlier 'rejected' nonlistening judgment by the dimension of time. That is, sometimes an employee had to wait and see how the situation would play out before being able to judge a listening opportunity as listening or not listening, thus making it a retrospective assessment.

Indeed, while there could have been cues that the individual might not follow up with a desired action (such as the case when listeners were clearly distracted during early interactions), there is still a sense of openness and a hope for what's to come. The listener may have even been actively involved in drawing out the full perspective of the speaker through asking questions or nonverbally displaying interest. But in the end these stories involved an implied action that wasn't ultimately taken.

Discussion

Long ago, Carl Rogers wrote about the transformative nature of listening, and in particular listening that was characterized by positive regard, empathy, and congruence (genuineness). For Rogers, listening was mostly linked to the intrapersonal growth experience with a therapist or other individual who empathetically listened and enabled an individual to become better acquainted with themselves and their experiences, yet he also acknowledged that this role could be served by non-counselors as well. This study suggests that within organizational environment employees can in fact experience a transformation from the act of listening. For some of the participants in this study this

was indeed the case that they were able to grow through the simple act of listening from another who exhibited the qualities discussed by Rogers. These individuals found that they grew through having someone who helped them determine their desired career, to find clarity around an issue or idea they had been working with, or to simply be there and allow them to navigate a difficult issue that had been escaping them. For others the desire for listening was linked to expected action. These individuals grew through having someone who helped them by more actively implement the idea, address a concern, shape a career, or approve a request. This study advances theory around the nature of listening and listening assessments within organizations. These contributions are discussed more thoroughly in the next section.

Contributions to Theory

The link to action is the most notable contribution of this study. The finding that actions are not separate from, but a part of listening, from the perspective of the speaker, stands in stark contrast to the boundaries that scholars have drawn in the past around the listening process (e.g., Bodie, St. Cyr, Pence, Rold, & Honeycutt, 2012) – boundaries which tend to draw a line between the process of listening within a conversation and behaviors that occur outside of that conversation. This finding also stands in contrast to conceptualizations of listening focused on personal growth, which tend emphasize the display of empathetic understanding as listener contributions rather than subsequent actions (Kluger, 2011). In contrast, these data suggest that action, at least in some cases, is considered to be a part of the listening process and, when it's expected, is integral to shaping listening perceptions.

One might ask why action was so important to these individuals. Is it that they live in a culture of pragmatism? Perhaps. This study was conducted in the United States, a country known for individualism and pragmatism (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; West, 1989). Further, it was conducted in the banking industry, which, by its nature, focuses on monetary ends over more humanistic ends. But, it should be noted that although these participants sometimes mentioned the enhanced recognition, opportunities, or exposure that came through their contributions and the associated listening, what they tended to emphasize more was the desire to do good work. Therefore, the pragmatism displayed by these participants cannot be attributed purely to careerist desires. Rather, the overriding prerogative suggested by these stories seemed to be the desire to do good work—to have a sense of pride, meaning, and full contribution at work.

The idea of a driving desire to find meaning and pride in one's work is by no means new. The basic idea has been theorized and discussed for more than a half a century (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Maslow, 1954), and has grown with recent attention to areas such as positive organizational scholarship, positive psychology, and job-crafting. What is new is that this study illustrates the role of listening, and the perception of listening, in delivering that sense of meaning. The job crafting literature, in particular, is relevant here. Job crafting theory states that employees actively alter their work in ways that enhance felt meaning (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Whereas most of the focus has been on the motivations for job crafting, the crafting techniques, and the outcomes of crafting, there has been less emphasis on the barriers and enablers of

crafting. This study contributes to the job crafting literature by offering listening as something that can either facilitate or thwart attempts at crafting.

This study also sheds light on the role of being in the minority when it comes to the ability to see a problem, solution, or in determining listening importance. The data indicate that for many individuals the desire for listening was linked to the sense that they held unique, relevant, knowledge. Here I chose to represent this feature through the story of Ned, who helped the new executive grow into his position. But in fact Ned's story was similar to that of many others I heard in these interviews, such as the story of Tom, who argued based on his in-person assessment of a client that they were a safe bet for the bank, or Clarissa, who argued for the recruitment of an individual that she had personally interacted with when the other recruiters had only been able the candidate based on what was on paper. The findings from this study, therefore, can be taken to suggest that individuals may feel a greater urgency around the need for listening when they think that they are the holders of unique knowledge. This is similar to Ashford and colleagues (1998) suggested link between functional fit and willingness to sell an issue. They hypothesized that functional fit was a part of an individuals' self-perceived credibility around issue-selling, and that it would link to willingness to sell because of this credibility rating. Instead, they found that there was a relationship, but that functional fit was not a part of the credibility rating as they had expected. The current results suggest that functional fit should indeed enhance willingness to sell, but not because of credibility, but rather because it heightens the sense of responsibility around sharing. When nobody else has the same type of knowledge or insight to share, there is no

possibility for diffusion of responsibility. Thus, the individual feels more responsible to act (or in this case, to speak up).

When an individual does speak up it's not guaranteed that someone will listen, as the literatures on voice and issue selling can readily tell us. This study helps us better understand those alternative situations by articulating the various ways that potential listeners can enhance or shut down conversations from the speaker's perspective. While there are many previous studies that have attempted to measure the perceived qualities and attributes associated with listening, there are far fewer that measure how these fit together into a process of listening perception formation. Better understanding the components associated with this perception process helps us understand the twists and turns that happen in a conversation, and illuminate the points at which assessments are actually made. Careful assessment of the differences between the up-front shutting down of listening opportunities versus the later nonlistening through nonaction, for example, could be combined with a study of poor listeners and the assertion of dominance power (Hurwitz, 2014) in order to better understand how and when dominance is used as a tactic for nonlistening.

This is one of the first studies to put forth a description for the opposite of perceived listening—the perception of nonlistening—and to show where this differs from listening assessments (but see also Kluger & Bouskila-Yam, in press). The lack of vocabulary around this concept can clearly be seen in the participant's collective difficulty in not knowing what exactly described a nonlistening experience. Still, their stories fell into patterns, suggesting that there are some similarities between their experiences. It was somewhat surprising to me to find that attention did not differentiate

between listening and nonlistening responses. Rather, people could be paying close attention but be judged as not listening if they did not take the expected action or if they paid attention but did not try to fully understand the speaker's perspective. And on the listening side, attention was brought up by some interviewees but certainly not all of them. Rather, it seemed to be other factors that distinguished listening from nonlistening.

Finally, the findings from this study suggest that experiences of perceived listening typically unfold over a period of time. That is, perceptions of listening often rely on follow-up to an initial conversation. The intervening time turns out to be critical for speakers in assessing whether the content of their conversation has been remembered and acted upon, where appropriate. Beyond spanning time, significant listening experiences often span a number of listeners as well. In support of Detert & Trevino's (2010) finding that employees paid attention to the atmosphere for voice not just from their managers but also from a "constellation" of leaders, the findings here suggest that indeed there were often multiple layers of managers who were significant to the listening process. In many cases, the additional listeners came into play because the relevant action required approval or implementation from levels higher than the first listener. But not all of the listeners mentioned were at higher levels - these findings also suggest that significant listening experiences can occur from non-managerial associates as well: colleagues, project teams, and even subordinates. Thus, these results suggest that meaning and relevance can come from multiple levels, and that the benefits of listening can be found not just in listening from above, but from a bottom-up direction as well. In this way, the findings highlight the need for listening at multiple levels, a sort of culture of listening, rather than relying on individuals solely to fulfill this need.

Practical Relevance

This study suggests several practical implications as well. First, these results suggest that it is of utmost importance to understand speaker needs. These data reveal that it is often not enough for managers to take in or acknowledge what an employee has to say—nor is it always enough to articulate respectful disagreement with an employee's position. For example an employee may judge and act on an assumption of 'not listening' if, from his/her perspective, the listener(s) have not provided a convincing and acceptable rationale for that disagreement. Understanding what an employee hopes to get out of a sharing interaction, and understanding how important it is for him or her to see that outcome come to fruition should therefore be a helpful starting place for listeners in ensuring that they are able to meet speakers needs' to the extent possible. In situations where employees have a specific outcome in mind that they have deemed important, additional efforts can be focused on helping the employee either reach that outcome or find acceptance for an alternative outcome. For example if an employee comes to a manager with a suggestion, the manager would do well to try to understand if the employee just wants to share information, or if they expect some action. Relatedly, these findings suggest that it may be prudent to help employees become clearer and more articulate about their needs such that they can be better heard by listeners.

This study also suggests the importance of following up. Several interviewees stressed the role that follow-up played in shaping their perceptions. On the positive end Jessica and others mentioned that follow-up made a listening interaction stand out as more meaningful than other similar interactions. On the negative end individuals like Susan indicated that a lack of follow-up exacerbated an issue. Therefore managers and

other listeners may both enhance the impact of their listening and signal continued openness and commitment by following up after a listening interaction. It should be noted, though, that the importance of following up may be greater in US context versus other contexts. Imhof (2003), for example, has found that research participants in the US expect more feedback and question-asking than German participants, so it may be that a similar difference exists around follow-up expectations.

A final practical implication is that these results suggest multiple *ways* of listening. Specifically, the model developed here provides empowerment to listeners by (a) pointing toward specific actions that can make the difference in terms of how their listening behavior is received and (b) pointing toward different ways of listening effectively. Specific actions that differentiate listening from nonlistening judgments often hinge on the expectations of the speaker, as well as the follow-through that occurs. Sometimes it is enough to simply be heard, whereas in other cases the speaker expects to see some sort of follow-up. Asking employees about their desired outcome and proactively following up around progress toward that outcome are examples of actions that can tip the scales toward a 'listening' judgment. Listeners can also be empowered through trainings that expose them to different ways of listening effectively. Individuals often hold misguided assumptions that effective listeners are simply those who take in information without offering their own perspectives. This data shows that good listening can also involve collaborative-insight building where the listener substantially contributes to the initial offering—building and shaping it into something greater than what the speaker started with, or using information to take relevant and desired actions.

CHAPTER V. AN INTERDEPENDENCE THEORY OF PERCEIVED LISTENING

A Definition of Perceived Listening

Several scholars have argued that the listening process contains elements of sensing, perceiving, and responding which involve capacities of cognition, affect, and behavior on the part of the listener (Bodie, 2011; Bodie, 2013; Drollinger, Comer, & Warrington, 2006). While each of these facets is a part of listening, they do not necessarily define how another's listening is perceived. Observations from Study II have helped me formulate my own definition which is rooted explicitly in the subjective perception of listening. From this perspective listening is assessed based on the alignment of listener response with the speaker's expectations and desires. Based on this study, and on the results of the factor analysis conducted in Study I which suggested that perceived listening tends to form a single factor rather than branching into multiple factors, I have defined perceived listening as the subjective, global evaluation *by the speaker* of the extent to which another takes in, understands, and appropriately responds to a speaker's needs following speaker's acts of sharing. In the next few paragraphs I will expand on each element of the definition offered here.

My hope is that readers will be able to appreciate the nuances of this definition now that they have journeyed through the findings of my research with me. Up until this point I have also not explicitly addressed the assumption that people should pay attention to listening in the first place. While this may seem self-evident in the findings discussed above, taking a closer look at this assumption and the theoretical basis for it should provide a more solid foundation for further exploring how, when people pay most

attention to listening. Later in this chapter, I'll lay the foundations for addressing these very issues.

When I define perceived listening as *global* I am suggesting that it refers to a feeling that is based on another person's general listening tendency within the relationship, rather than the person's listening in a specific instance. Listening tendencies can be shaped by opportunities and circumstances, and attributions matter. Connie might not be a great listener in one circumstance because she has just heard some distressing news and has a lot on her mind. If her colleague Doug perceives this then he may simply write off the lack of listening as due to external circumstances without holding it against Connie. (Heider, 1958). Thus Doug has a sense for how Connie normally performs as a listener within their relationship and is likely to forgive her behavior in this particular instance. In the longer term, it matters more to him that Connie is generally willing to hear his thoughts, ideas, and concerns. In this way the general listening behavior is more important than a single interaction. With that said, there is also opportunity for some listening opportunities to make more of an impact than others. Particularly powerful interactions can serve as "anchoring events" that shape the course of the relationship in powerful ways (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Thus, my assumption is that listening perceptions are relatively static within a relationship, yet they are also subject to periodic updating.

Perceived listening involves the perception that the other has *taken in* what has been shared. This implies that something has been shared and it therefore narrows the context to interactions that involve some sort of disclosure or sharing of ideas. It also means that the speaker perceives that the listener has heard both the words and the

meaning. It requires paying attention, but attention is not enough. In a series of laboratory studies Bavelas and colleagues found that individuals can closely attend to the words spoken, but if they are not also tuned into the *meaning* of those words at a more gestalt level then they exhibit fewer generic and specific responses, and storytelling is negatively impacted: "the stories faltered or fell flat when they were told to listeners who were attending closely to the individual words but not to the narrative itself." (Bavelas et al., 2000: 949). This suggests that individuals monitor in real-time, either consciously or unconsciously, the extent to which a listener seems to be taking in the both the content and the appropriate meaning from what is being shared.

But seeing that someone has taken in a message is not enough—there must be some sense that one has been understood by the other. This is where listening takes on the ability to truly connect two individuals by creating a bridge of understanding and for this reason it is the most important aspect shaping perceived listening. Thus I am suggesting that without a sense of *understanding* one cannot feel that they have been truly listened to.

Understanding by the other enables the speaker to take comfort in the fact that what they have said has been received and understood as intended. Understanding can be conveyed in a number of different forms based on a dyad's interpersonal history and mannerisms. One common way for listeners to convey understanding is by paraphrasing what has been said, but there are other ways as well. For example a listener might laugh at a subtle joke, or gasp when a speaker says something surprising. But in order for a speaker to feel understood, they must have the impression that the listener understands the issue as she sees it, rather than the listener understanding the issue through his own

lens (e.g., Connie gasps because she knows that *Doug himself* must have been surprised at that point in the story he's recalling, not because something he says is uniquely surprising to her). Facilitation of understanding therefore requires an ability to be open to understanding the worldview of another, which can be a difficult task. Accordingly this often implies having a nonjudgmental stance toward the speaker in order to encourage them to convey their full message and elaborate where needed (Rogers, 1989/1959).

Responding is another important aspect of listening. According to the collaborative model of communication (Bavelas et al., 2000), the responses given by listeners impact both parties in a reciprocal fashion thus shaping the conversation as it unfolds. These responses can vary in form. There are at least two different categories of responses that can be considered during the interaction itself—generic and specific. Generic responses are those that are more of the acknowledging sort. These responses encourage the listener to go on by providing some sort of reinforcement that they are hearing and understanding (Bavelas et al., 2000). Specific responses, on the other hand, are those that convey specific reactions based on the content of what is being said. Like the example of gasping above, these are expressions that mimic the emotion of the speaker to indicate that they are on the same page. Because these in-conversation responses often signal that the listener is taking in and understanding what the speaker is conveying, they are not completely separable from these other facets of listening but rather intimately connected in forming a more global assessment of the other's listening.

The appropriateness of the response is subjectively determined by the speaker. Taking a social constructionist view, I am suggesting that there are no objectively good or bad responses. Rather, an appropriate response is one that matches the needs of the

speaker. In this way appropriateness becomes more of a dance between the speaker and listener such that the listener picks up on the cues emitted by the speaker and responds in kind. Relationships have a history and the historical interactions influence the expected response. In this way the appropriateness of response will be judged against one's expectations that were constructed on the basis of prior interactions, knowledge of personal factors (e.g., motivations, desires, limitations), and knowledge of the situation (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Finally, it is important to note that the appropriate response, as determined by the speaker, may be an action rather than a simple acknowledgement of what was said.

Finally, perceived listening only applies in situations where there has been some sort of *act of sharing*. Perceived listening can come in response to sharing in the form of ideas, suggestions, concerns, desires, or emotions. These acts of sharing provide opportunities for listening, although not every opportunity for listening will be meaningful in shaping larger perceptions of listening. Sharing may be intentional and planned, but this is not always the case. For example it could be that a conversation morphs in such a direction that it leaves an individual sharing something that they hadn't planned to share. In these cases as well perceptions of listening can be shaped.

Now that I have offered a definition of perceived listening I will build the case that people do hold perceptions of others' listening behavior at work, and present propositions around how these perceptions influence cognition, affect, and behavior at work. I draw heavily on interdependence theory and thus I will start out by giving an overview of the original theory. Then I will explain how it applies to perceived listening, and advance arguments around how listening impacts individuals and relationships.

Interdependence Theory

The definition and research findings discussed so far give us a foundation for studying perceived listening by providing a sense for what it is and why it matters. Still, we don't yet have a complete sense for how and when people pay attention to listening. In order to provide additional clarity around when individuals are likely most attuned to the listening behaviors of others, I turn to interdependence theory, a theory that's popular in the psychology of close relationships literature. As will become clear, this theory is focused on more general interaction behaviors rather than focused specifically on listening. However, the data from the above studies seems to suggest that listening should follow these theoretical rules as well in that individuals do seem to pay attention to listening in interdependent situations, and that often the listener being described is less dependent on the speaker than the speaker is on the listener.

Interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) resides within a family of social exchange theories and provides a framework for understanding how individuals influence one another and the course of their relationship. The theory grew out of Kurt Lewin's observation that behavior is a function of person and environment, expressed in the equation B=*f* (P, E) (Kelley, 1991). But rather than focusing on the more general class of "behavior" this theory focuses in on the interpersonal interactions and explicitly incorporate the specific social situation into the equation. Thus, the equation becomes I=*f* (S, A, B) such that interaction (I) is a function of the specific social situation (S) and the thoughts, needs, and motives of the interacting individuals (A and B).

Through their equation Thibaut and Kelley suggested that individuals' behavior in an interaction situation is shaped by the immediate situation and individuals involved, but also by a consideration of the likely social and relational outcomes. Situation factors include things like level and type of dependence between interaction partners, covariation of interests (e.g., zero-sum situation vs. win-win situation), temporal structure (length of the interaction situation), and the availability of information (amount of information about the partner's goals and motives, as well as about the implications for future interactions). Person factors include relatively stable perceptual patterns and expectations that a person possesses (e.g., self-esteem, attachment orientation), but also factors relating to the specific partner, for example trust and commitment (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Social and relational considerations are things like long-term goals, relational desires, and implications for the partner's welfare. In this way the given situation is "transformed" into the effective situation that takes into account a range of interactional implications. All of these factors influence partner interaction behaviors. By understanding the power of the situation and the attributions that arise from the interaction between individuals interacting within a given situation structure, the theory has helped researchers explain forgiveness (e.g., Hoyt, Fincham, McCullough, Maio, & Davila, 2005), failure to leave abusive relationships (Bornstein, 2006), and the role of incentives in cooperative behavior (Balliet, Mulder, & Van Lange, 2011), among other interpersonal phenomena.

Similar to the way in which individuals make sense of the interaction situation based on broader knowledge and desires they can also engage in a sensemaking process around their partner's behaviors and responses during or following an interaction. This

process is motivated by an implicit understanding that an interaction partner's behavior often matters not just for the immediate desired outcome but also for what it's thought to symbolize in terms of the relationship—considerations that are ultimately driven by needs for attaining secure interpersonal relationships that are adaptive and personally beneficial (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). To the extent that individuals in an interaction desire to have a relationship, then, they have some basis for attending to the symbolic meaning of interactions. As an example of this relational symbolism imagine a boss, Sue, who goes out of the way to thank an employee, Mark, for his hard work on a recent project, and rewards him with a gift card to his favorite coffee shop. Mark experiences very concrete value from the gift card to the coffee shop he regularly visits, but the gift also carries symbolic value to Mark because it tells him that his boss (a) recognizes his hard work and is likely to do so in the future as well and (b) values his work, and (c) remembered his personal coffee shop preferences. In this way Mark sees the interaction as meaningful at a symbolic level.

When analyzing a partner's behavior individuals tend to consider either implicitly or explicitly expectations about that person's behavior based on previous interactions or on similar interaction partners (when the partner is relatively unfamiliar). They make inferences about the person's behavior and motives based on a consideration of these expectations, social norms, and attribution rules (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003), and these inferences can then lead to a revising one's assessment of the other's commitment to the relationship. For equity sensitive individuals (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987) this is likely to then shape their evaluation and behavior in the relationship. In this way the

results of meaning analysis can shape one's perception of and involvement in a relationship.

Not every interaction will be analyzed thoroughly for its meaning. Naturally, it would take up too much cognitive and emotional energy to constantly be giving close attention and analysis to a partner's behavior. Therefore healthy individuals only engage in this process at particular times, such as when a partner's behavior defies expectations, in "diagnostic situations" involving conflicting interests, when motives seem misaligned, or when situation's outcomes seem particularly consequential. To the extent that an interaction partner is dependent on another, and particularly when that dependence is nonmutual (A is dependent on B more than B is on A), the more dependent individual is more likely to attend to and analyze the other person's behavior. This process of analysis often takes place retrospectively in response to the experienced outcomes.

An Interdependence Theory of Listening

I propose that listening is a key interdependent behavior that people attend to because of its capability to provide a number of concrete and symbolic outcomes. In the paragraphs that follow I explain my rationale and build a theory of listening perceptions which paints listening as a gateway behavior. I then provide several implications of viewing this behavior as a key interdependent behavior, offering several formal propositions.

In interdependent situations there is a premium associated with working alongside individuals with higher social skills in that workers can better coordinate their work and even "trade tasks" in order to maximize their shared efficiency (Deming, 2015). In order for individuals to effectively specialize in the long term they must understand both the

abilities and preferences of one another. Some of this can be observed through enacted behavior, but oftentimes communication is required in order to get to know others on this personal level. This is particularly true for understanding the preferences, or the likes and dislikes of interdependent partner. Preferences and abilities can be discussed and communicated, but the outcome of this communication depends on the ability of the other person to absorb and consider the information. This can be signaled by the other's propensity to listen because listening displays both the taking in of information and a personal investment in the partner given the time and attention dedicated to the task. Listening, then, may signal that another individual is invested in knowing one's personal strengths, abilities, and most notably, preferences.

Listening should also be important in interdependent situations because communication typically plays a role in reaching shared outcomes. Listening should be particularly important within the arena of social skills because there are often consequences to both parties that accrue due to misunderstandings or miscommunications—errors that happen more frequently when individuals don't listen to or understand what is being communicated by the other (Sutcliffe, Lewton, & Rosenthal, 2004). In interdependent situations involving any sort of shared outcome, then, the individuals are at risk for experiencing a personal loss of resources when the partner is a poor listener. Thus in order to protect and maximize resources it behooves an individual to attend to the other's general listening quality. This could help the individual to develop relationship-specific expectancies around the other's behavior (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003) and safeguard against such miscommunications by

preparing to adjust communication tactics, reiterate points, and change courses where necessary.

Individuals may also attend to listening as they calculate the potential costs and benefits of speaking up. Attention to listening can help individuals "read the wind" when calculating the chances for successful issue-selling or voice behavior (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997). For all of these reasons individuals should assess the listening of interdependent others.

In this section I have proposed that individuals form perceptions of dependent others' listening for reasons relating to coordination, the achievement of shared outcomes, and for the self- and relationship-relevant information it reveals. In this way I am proposing that individuals attend to the listening behavior of interdependent others because listening behavior serves as a symbolic gateway to a host of outcomes.

Proposition 1: Individuals form a global assessment of perceived listening for those on whom they are dependent.

Factors that heighten attention to listening. A main assumption of interdependence theory is that individuals pay closer attention to both the person and the situation when they are dependent on the interaction partner, both in level (overall reliance on an interaction partner) and in relative distribution (when one party is more dependent than the other) (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). As the mutuality of dependence sways in one direction the more dependent individual may experience a deficit of power and greater vulnerability. The less dependent partner is only partially reliant on the interaction partners' behavior and therefore needn't exert too much cognitive energy trying to make sense of and predict the other partner's behaviors. On the other hand the

more dependent individual experiences greater vulnerability and therefore attends more to the partner's behavior and responsiveness in efforts to predict likely outcomes. Because they are dependent on the partner they are more attuned to that partner's behaviors and responsiveness than the less dependent partner need be. This greater attention helps dependent actors better anticipate their partner's future actions and to prepare accordingly, which can help in generating intended outcomes.

One of the areas that dependent partners are likely to attend to is the listening behavior of the other partner, particularly when they are relatively more dependent on the partner than the partner is on them. I have previously argued that listening involves both responsiveness in the moment and symbolizes the ability to be responsive in the future. One reason listening behavior may draw attention is that, as discussed previously, research suggests that individuals adjust their communication in accordance with the listening of others. Therefore to the extent that an individual is dependent on another to hear his or her perspectives, the listeners' style of listening may enable the speaker to adjust his own style around what he shares and how he shares it, in order to accomplish his desired outcome. Imagine Rachel and Nancy are departmental colleagues working on a coauthored paper together. The two communicate frequently with one another as they make progress in writing the paper and collecting the data and throughout the process Rachel realizes that Nancy is well-meaning but that sometimes her thoughts tend to become interrupted by distractions when they talk and as a result she tends to forget what they talked about. When it comes time for an important revision, Rachel has an ideas that she hopes to have integrated, but she anticipates that Nancy might not consider the idea if she doesn't fully hear it, and it is critical to her that Nancy understand the full message so

that they can consider the ideas together. In order to combat Nancy's tendency to become distracted she takes several steps—she asks Nancy to meet with her in her own quiet office where she can remove distractions, for example, by shutting the door. She also tells Nancy before the meeting what she wants to talk about and what she hopes to get out of the conversation. Finally, she sends Nancy an email following the conversation in which she reiterates her main idea and the main points of their discussion. In this way having a general sense for Nancy's listening helps her take specific actions that might improve their interdependent outcomes. Because the two were coauthors on a paper that was important for her tenure package, Rachel was highly attuned to Nancy's listening habits.

Now imagine that Rachel is thinking about an upcoming conversation with the dean about her tenure chances. She knows that she has a good case for tenure but she is not sure that the dean will see it. In the past the dean has allowed her to share her perspectives on key issues (such as when she argued for allocation of funds toward a new hire in her department), yet she has never had the impression that he truly considered what she had to say. Because of the power he holds and her unilateral dependency on the dean for continuing her career she is likely to pay even more attention to his listening behavior than she is toward the listening behavior of her colleague Nancy.

Consider as well Sutcliffe and colleagues' (2004) study of medical mishaps. These researchers found that resident physicians who were lower in status were often hesitant to reach out to the higher-status attending physicians because they were concerned about losing face or about offending the higher-status doctors. These fears were exacerbated by concerns that the doctors wouldn't listen even if they spoke up.

They didn't hold back in this way with the lower-status nurses, however the nurses did withhold information from the residents in the same way that the residents withheld information from the attending physicians. This suggests that power dynamics were indeed at play and limited the willingness to communicate even when important patient outcomes were on the line.

When individuals do communicate with those in authority they are likely to have spent more time deliberating about the likely reaction and tailoring their message accordingly (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987). In this way they may develop a richer perception of the higher-status individuals' listening cues than the lower-status individuals, because they have more riding on the outcome and therefore face more pressure to make a perfect pitch the first time around. Consider again those resident physicians from Sutcliff and colleagues' study. The residents were interdependent on both the community physicians and the nurses for delivering patient care—dependent on the nurses to administer the orders that they wrote, and dependent on the attending physicians for supervision and guidance—and because of this interdependence they were likely to attend to the listening behavior of both parties so that they could communicate most effectively and accomplish their interdependent outcomes. But the power dynamics exacerbate the dependency because the residents are more concerned about how they will be evaluated by the more powerful attending physicians than they are about how they will be perceived by the nurses. For this reason attention to listening should be heightened with both increasing dependence, and as the dependence becomes less mutual.

Proposition 2: Attention to a partner's listening will increase with increasing dependence on that partner

Proposition 3: The relationship between dependency and attention to a partner's listening will be stronger when the listener is perceived to be less dependent on the speaker than is the speaker on the listener (when dependency is more unilateral)

Even in dependent situations individuals are unlikely to analyze listening behavior during each and every interaction. In interdependent relationships individuals are communicating frequently and therefore there are many opportunities to attend to the listening behaviors of a partner. But in healthy relationships individuals forego constant monitoring in favor of more periodic assessments. Thus, change in relational perceptions tends to be more episodic than incremental. Interactions involving high-stakes situations may be particularly likely to evoke analysis of a partner's behavior, listening or otherwise.

Ballinger and Rockmann (2015) suggest that critical "anchoring events" serve as self-identifying memories that are recalled and that subsequent interactions are generally selectively perceived in order to reinforce the relational rule. They define an anchoring event in terms of three specific features:

(1) a social exchange that occurs when a focal individual is highly dependent on a target for exchange content necessary to meet a particularly central goal for the individual, (2) whose resolution differs, either positively or negatively, from his or her expectation given the decision rules he or she applied to the relationship prior to the event, (3) where the actions of the target in the exchange are judged to have an internal locus of causality and be controllable. (p. 376)

Anchoring events can also be thought of as high-stakes situations. High-stakes situations are those in which outcomes are perceived as critical. These are generally situations have

the potential to be more disruptive in nature than most and that are extreme in terms of their emotional and instrumental content (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). The outcomes that matter most will vary from person to person and will be influenced by their values and needs at that particular moment in time (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Liu, 2015).

Anchoring events theory, like interdependence theory, tends to cast a wide net when referring to relational perceptions in that it focuses on relational perceptions generally without focusing on specific types of relational perceptions. Still, the logic may apply to more specific relational judgments as well, and most notably, to listening. In many cases listening is associated with power and opportunity, particularly when the listener is a more powerful other (Hurwitz, 2015). For this reason it is not uncommon for individuals to see the listening of an interdependent other as necessary for meeting a central goal. Even when there is not a power discrepancy between the listener and speaker, listening can be a transformative personal experience because of both powerful inter- and intra-personal connections it is capable of fostering (Rogers, 1989/1959). For these reasons certain listening experiences can serve as impactful and emotional experiences that create self-defining memories and color general perceptions of the other's tendency toward listening.

In the case of Rachel and the dean imagine that Rachel had formed her impression of the dean's listening after he made the decision to shut down a key program that had been bringing revenue to her department. She knew that his logic was skewed, and she made a compelling argument as to how the program was serving the department, the school, and even the community who depended on having that type of program locally available. She felt strongly about the issue and had data to back her perspective. But in

her meeting with the dean he seemed to have already made up his mind and appeared relatively uninterested in considering the data that she had to share. This highly emotional episode stuck with her and shaped her perceptions around the dean's ability to hear and consider her perspective, such that now when she thinks about her upcoming meeting with him about her tenure package she is worried that he again will not fully "hear" the contributions that she has made.

In this way listening perceptions are likely to be shaped by certain key events and remain relatively steady otherwise. The key differentiating factor between exemplar interactions and everyday interactions lies in the perceived stakes. Further, Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) describe that in order for an interaction behavior to stand out as an exemplar there should also be some element of surprise (e.g., the dean's inability to hear the facts stands in contrast to his reliance on logic elsewhere), and controllability (e. g, the dean's behavior cannot be attributed to an environmental distraction) to the interaction situation.

Proposition 4: Situations involving higher stakes are more likely to lead to revisions of listening perceptions between interdependent partners than are situations involving lower stakes.

Proposition 5: High stakes situations are more likely to lead to revisions of listening assessments when the listening behavior is surprising

Proposition 6: High stakes situations are more likely to lead to revisions of listening assessments when the listening behavior is perceived as controllable

Outcomes of perceived listening. Listening is just one type of interpersonal perception but I argue that it is a fundamentally important one. Within any given

interaction, being listened to can yield concrete outcomes, such as enhancing self-clarity (Lloyd, Boer, Kluger, & Voelpel, 2015), relieving pain through compassion (Frost et al., 2006), enabling coping (Nils & Rime, 2012) or having a sense of influence over an immediate decision. But listening carries symbolic weight as well. In contrast to concrete outcomes, which are those that provide immediate pleasure or displeasure, symbolic outcomes are those that are meaningful only when taking into account broader relational implications (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). I suggest that listening has symbolic value because it is a voluntary behavior that requires an investment of time, energy, and attention.

While some individuals may describe listening as a part of their jobs (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), it is rarely specified as an explicit job duty outside of the therapeutic professions. In this sense it is a voluntary behavior. It can be easy to block listening opportunities by introducing physical barriers (e.g., closing one's office door), creating layers of distance through hierarchies, or otherwise restricting the frequency of contact opportunities. Individuals can also give nonverbal signals that they don't want to be bothered, for example by keeping earphones in while they work. I do not wish to suggest that these barriers are inherently negative, in fact I believe they can be quite helpful in the accomplishment of work. Rather the point is that even the creation of a listening opportunity can be a rare treasure and can symbolize an invitation to a relationship, or the desire to strengthen a relationship.

In other cases there may be less choice around the exposure to listening opportunities, such as when individuals share an elevator together or sit next to one another on a flight. Yet still there is a voluntary nature to listening in that individuals can

choose how to engage once a conversation has been initiated. For example an individual might choose to engage but to dominate that conversation by doing most of the speaking, or to more subtly turn the conversation in the direction of their interest, or to listen halfheartedly while mentally planning their evening grocery trip. At the other extreme they can choose to give the conversation their full attention, engage the other by asking clarifying and nonjudgmental questions, and provide thoughtful, other-centered responses. Thus listening demands the dedication of some amount of mental and temporal resources that could be used for other activities.

Because it is voluntary, and an investment of time and energy, the act of listening itself can be an important act of social valuing. Respected thought-leaders in the symbolic interactionism tradition have long asserted that one's social interactions impact one's sense of self and social worth through the signals that they send (Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934). Simply choosing to engage with a person can in some cases convey social value by recognizing the individual's presence as a human being, as evidenced by Dutton and colleagues' study of hospital janitors (Dutton et al., 2012). Engaging with the other person through listening in an other-centered fashion, then, should be a much more powerful signal of social value.

Listening may also signal social worth by suggesting an interest in relationship-building through the responsiveness exhibited both within the conversation and the building of a foundation for future responsiveness, particularly when there is an element of self-disclosure. Responsiveness is key to the development and continuing success of strong interpersonal relationships, and this relies on understanding and responding in a thoughtful and caring way to the needs, goals, and wishes of an interaction partner (Reis

& Clark, 2013). Good listening can demonstrate responsiveness within a conversation by providing understanding, empathetic, and validating responses. But it can also provide a foundation for future responsiveness by demonstrating an interest in getting to know the individual's values, their concerns, their needs, their hopes and desires for the future. By getting to know these aspects of an individual a listener may not be able to do anything in the short-term, but may be able to recognize opportunities to serve that individual in the future. Thus, listening can offer immediate responsiveness while also suggesting the potential to do so in the future.

Proposition 7: Perceived listening will be linked to a greater sense of social worth within the context of that relationship.

Perceived listening is likely also linked to one's investment in a relationship. As discussed above perceiving being listened to fulfills important social needs and signals a future ability to meet others. Social skills are thought to translate into a pay premium because they facilitate the efficient coordination of work (Deming, 2015). Listening, as a key social skill, may therefore signal that an individual will be more capable of future coordination behavior, thereby enhancing trust that one's efforts will not be wasted in the relationship. Further, listening is likely to serve as a signal of socioemotional investment in the speaker. The norm of reciprocity suggests that individuals are likely to reciprocate this type of behavior with other contributions, trusting that the cycle of reciprocation will continue into the future (Gouldner, 1960).

Proposition 8: Within an interdependent work relationship as the quality of perceived listening increases an individual will be more likely to invest resources in that relationship

Figure 4 displays the proposed relationships between dependency, situation, attention to listening, and outcomes of listening. The data from the presented studies aligns well with the perspective advanced here, in that they all point strongly toward the fact that individuals do indeed form perceptions of interdependent others' listening, that these assessments are unidimensional in nature, and that these assessments impact individuals and their relationships in some powerful ways.

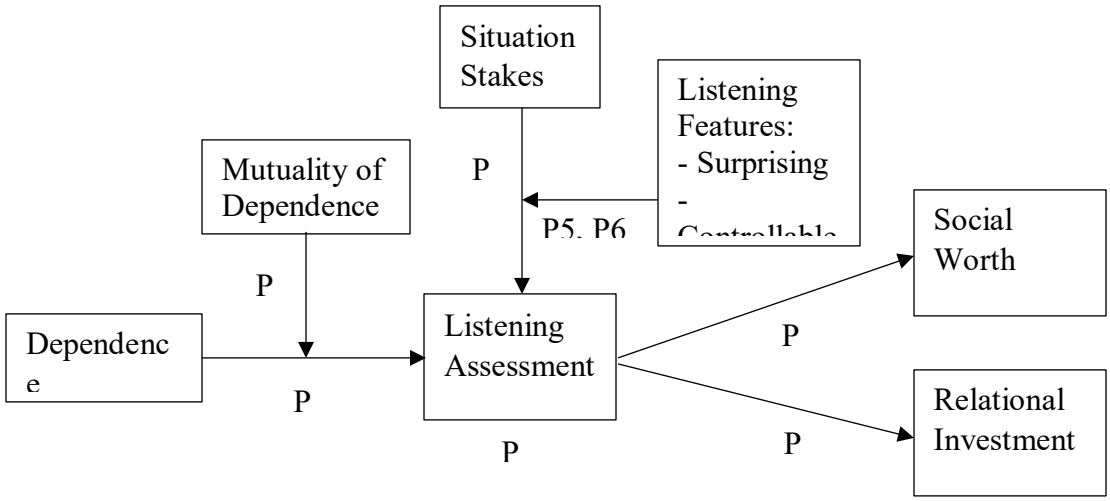

Figure 4: Formation and Outcomes of Listening Assessment in Interdependent Relationships.

Discussion

Interdependence theory focuses more on the process producing perception and behavior within interdependent relationships than it does on the specific forms of perceptions and behaviors. However I argue that listening is a key interpersonal behavior that individuals within interdependent relationships attend to because it provides a path toward meeting personal and interpersonal needs. As such, it suggests that listening is a behavior that should be given attention and subjected to meaning analysis.

This paper contributes to the relationships literature by shedding light on an important aspect of dyadic workplace relationships. Listening has long been touted as an important behavior for relationship-building and relationship maintenance in the workplace (Dutton, 2003; Schein, 2013), yet targeted research into this area is scarce. This neglect may be due in part to the difficulty in conceptualizing listening and the corresponding lack of theoretical frameworks surrounding the topic (Bodie, 2011). This paper lends clarity by narrowing the scope to the perception of listening, offering a formal definition for perceived listening, and drawing on interdependence theory in order to explain how and why perceptions of listening are formed as well as the nature of those perceptions. As a result it provides a route toward empirical examination of this key relationship-building mechanism.

This paper also contributes to the workplace relationships literature by describing the key tenets of interdependence theory. Workplace relationships are becoming a priority for organizational research, yet interdependence theory is rarely called upon as an explanatory framework. Harry Reis, a prominent relationships scholar, has suggested that interdependence theory could be a prime candidate for a grand theory of relationships (Reis, 2007). Given the prevalence of interdependence in workplaces this theory could provide further insight into key organizational topics. This framework could be especially useful when attempting to explain how situations and person factors shape interpersonal perceptions and subsequent behaviors. In this way further application of an interdependence framework could contribute to the important task of understanding the connections between dyadic workplace relationships and individual behavior (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

Finally, this paper contributes to voice, silence, and issue-selling literatures. Scholars and interview informants within each of these literatures have either explicitly or implicitly pointed toward the role of perceived listening in promoting an open exchange of employee voice. Yet up until this point scholars have had difficulty naming this type of perception or examining its role in any systematic format. By offering a formal definition for perceived listening and a description of its nature this paper sets the stage for empirical examination. In this way it sets the stage for understanding exactly how, when, and from whom, perceived listening or the lack thereof contributes to voice, issue-selling, and silence.

CHAPTER VI. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Throughout the course of this dissertation, I have attempted to clarify the nature of employee perceptions of listening. Each chapter offered here contributed to this general outcome through a different approach. In the first chapter, I set the stage by describing the simultaneous importance and neglect of listening within the organizational literature. Most notably, I point to the importance of perceived listening, and the lack of a definition or a theoretical foundation for its study within organization science.

In the second and third chapters, I linked perceived listening to perceived organizational support, a well-known and studied construct within the organizational behavior literature that has been linked to a plethora of valued organizational outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). I presented quantitative findings from two studies that supported the importance of listening as a predictor of perceived organizational support and other outcomes. Specifically, I found that perceived listening was positively linked to subsequent employee well-being and to organizational citizenship behavior, and that these relationships were mediated by enhanced levels of perceived organizational support. I proposed that perceived listening was an important missing predictor of perceived organizational support, and in the third chapter I presented findings that supported this notion, then found evidence that it was an even more important predictor than I had expected. Specifically, the dominance analysis results suggested that perceived listening was a stronger predictor of perceived organizational support than either leader-member exchange or perceived supervisor support.

In the fourth chapter I presented findings from a qualitative-interview study conducted with individuals in the banking industry, from which I developed a model of listening perception formation and *types* of listening that appeared in the stories of significant-listening experiences. Based on the findings of that study, I argued that resultant action is often a key component of perceived listening, and that listening assessments typically unfold over a period of time, and sometimes over a series of listeners as well. I was also able to offer a clearer distinction between perceived listening and nonlistening, which has generally been neglected in listening literature, and to expand on the role that listening can play in experiencing meaning at work.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, I drew on relevant literature, theory, and insights based on my own research in order to offer a definition for perceived listening. Along with this definition I was able to offer a model proposing the situations and events that shape perceptions of listening, and likely outcome of listening perceptions. In the process I drew on interdependence theory to build the case around why people pay attention to listening at all. The data from the previous chapters aligns well with the perspective advanced in this chapter, in that they all point strongly toward the fact that individuals do indeed form perceptions of interdependent others' listening, that these assessments are unidimensional in nature (despite the actual listening behaviors appearing to take different forms), and that these assessments impact individuals and their relationships in some powerful ways.

Within each of the chapters, discussed above, there are, of course, limitations. Listening is something discussed within a number of fields and that likely appears within the vocabulary of every language and culture. For this reason, it is impossible to give a

truly comprehensive and exhaustive account around the history and meaning of perceived listening. This limitation was most apparent in the first and last chapters, where I had to be selective in choosing which literatures to review and which perspectives to include in my own theory building. In the end, I chose to use interdependence theory to guide my own theory of listening, and in this choice, I limited my focus to a fairly cognitive and psychological account of listening. Similarly, in the second and third chapters, I had to narrow my focus to a specific organizational behavior construct in order to link listening to relevant outcomes. In reality, there are numerous others that can be linked to the perception of listening and its outcomes. To some extent the qualitative study was able to make up for the narrow focus by taking a broader, more atheoretical view of listening which was grounded in employees' own stories and experiences of listening.

There were also limitations relating to the methodological and sampling choices in each of the studies. As mentioned previously, the second chapter uses all self-report data, whereas it would have been optimal to get manager or peer ratings of OCB in order to avoid the possibility of common method bias and enhance the overall validity of the results. Although recent research reveals that common method bias may not be as prevalent as feared (Conway & Lance, 2010), in the case of OCB ratings it is preferable to seek other sources (Organ & Ryan, 1995). The third chapter, specifically, had a smaller number of participants than is recommended for the analytic techniques used, therefore the dominance analysis results should be viewed with some level of caution. Still, the strong relationships and the larger pattern of results is consistent with other studies showing strong impacts of perceived listening. But here again the collection of studies examining perceived listening from different angles may in some ways make up

for the lack of a sizeable sample in the quantitative findings in that there is a consistently strong evidence for the validity of perceived listening as a construct, and for its strong links to organizational behavior constructs. Finally, with regard to the qualitative study inductive account of listening that emerged is based in a particular organization, in a particular industry, in a particular culture and may or may not generalize to other contexts.

Taken together these studies provide insight into the nature, importance and process of listening assessments within organizational settings. With regard to the nature of listening these accounts have suggested that perceived listening is a unidimensional phenomenon rather than multidimensional. The dimensionality of listening is an issue that has plagued listening researchers for decades, as attempts to find multidimensional scales based on the hypothesized components of listening have repeatedly come up short (Kluger & Bouskila-Yam, in press). This set of studies reveals that, from the perspective of the speaker, listening appears to occur as a global assessment. Further, through the qualitative and the theoretical chapters I suggest that listening may be assessed episodically rather than on a continuing basis. I have laid out some of the situations in which listening perceptions are particularly likely to be developed and updated. These propositions provide a basis for future research and suggest the importance of taking context, relationship, and expectations into account when researching listening perceptions.

The description of perceived listening and the assessment formation process contributes theoretically to our collective understanding of listening within the organizational setting. Beyond this, the findings here contribute to organizational support

theory by offering listening as an important antecedent (Chapters II and III), to theories of workplace meaning by suggesting that listening is an important vehicle for feeling pride and accomplishment in one's work (Chapter IV), and to theories of voice, issue-selling, and silence by suggesting the importance of holding unique, relevant knowledge (Chapter IV).

These studies also lay the foundation for future research relating to listening in organizations. By clarifying the nature of perceived listening, and suggesting its relevance to other theoretical constructs this set of studies opens the door to a host of future investigations. In short there are many ways to build on these studies, but here I will discuss just four.

First, I would like to see these findings tested in other cultures and settings. One of the biggest findings that came out of this set of studies was the notion of perceived listening as often requiring listener action (Chapter IV). The US and the banking industry may be influential in the link to action, therefore it would be helpful to test these findings in contexts outside the US and in other settings (e.g., in settings where empathy is more core to the central mission, such as in the field of social work). Particularly, it will be important to understand whether action takes on the same significance in other cultures as it did within this specific professional and national culture.

Second, I would like to see future research more fully flesh out the relationship between listening and action. Specifically, within the qualitative study there was a lack of stories reporting both feelings of listening and a lack of desired action. It may be that individuals are able to feel listened to even if they do not see desired action, if they understand that the desired action is just not possible. A likely possibility is that I did not

hear those stories here because I was asking about exemplary listening opportunities, whereas those stories involving a lack of desired action could seem less impactful when looking back. Future research could alter the interview approach to target this relationship more specifically, looking for evidence of the possibility of listening assessments without the presence of desired action.

Third, future research can and should incorporate these insights into investigations in the area of employee voice and silence. These areas have often, directly or indirectly, invoked listening in their discussions around decisions that employees make to speak up or stay quiet. Now that we know we have a better sense for how these listening perceptions are formed and what they are comprised of, these insights can help to sharpen investigations into voice decisions. For example, researchers could investigate whether shutting down (immediate) or retroactive nonlistening assessments are more predictive of employee silence, or whether building or how building and acting compare when it comes to the decision to speak up and voice a concern.

Finally, researchers could expand on the insights here by observing listening in real-time. The studies discussed here collectively provide insight into perceptions of listening experiences that occurred in the past, but these memories cannot be counted on as accurate depictions of the original events, because human memory is notoriously unreliable (Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Roediger & McDermott, 1995). Armed with a better sense for how listening assessments function retrospectively, researchers can now investigate similarities and differences to the unfolding of listening events in real time, which could then potentially be compared to the retrospective accounts. In this way researchers can get a better sense for which listening experiences are remembered,

forgotten, and seen as significant, and which are not. Further, they can compare speaker accounts of listener behavior with 3rd party accounts of that same behavior in order to better understand the perceptual filters that go into these assessments. Another route could be the use of a diary methodology in order to collect the ongoing flow of listening experiences without the resource burden of in-person observation.

Concluding Thoughts

Beyond just preparing the stage for future research on perceived listening, this collection of work also compels it. Across the board, perceived listening in these studies and others was strongly and significantly related to variables and outcomes of interest to managers and management scholars. The strength of this construct likely lies in its symbolic nature for relationships and their future, for the potential it promises through interdependent action, and through the deeply human needs it satisfies. While listening may just represents a specific aspect of inter-relational behavior, it indeed appears to be a quite powerful one—a micro-move which can powerfully shape individuals and relationships (Carmeli & Russo, 2016). The link to action, discovered here, suggests that although listening is something we may think we're familiar with, there's still plenty to learn.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Items and Factor Loadings for Listening Scale

Item	
Pays close attention to what I have to say	**.90**
Creates a positive atmosphere for me to talk	**.88**
Demonstrates an understanding of my view	.88
Makes an attempt to understand my intention for talking	.88
Seems interested in what I'm saying	.87
Considers my opinion/preferences	.86
Actively responds to the content I share	.85
Offers relevant information in response to the questions I ask	**.84**
Tries hard to understand what I am saying	**.83**
Is able to pick out key points from what I have said	.83
Gives me his/her undivided attention	.80
Seems to understand my emotional state	.80
Allows me to relay my full message	.80
Senses how I feel	.77
Asks me to tell my account (give my perspective)	**.77**
Encourages me to clarify if I'm being unclear	**.72**
Asks me questions to further probe into what I'm saying	.69
Makes eye contact with me	.63

Note. $N = 567$. Items and factor loadings based on exploratory factor analysis. Items in bold were adapted from Kluger's (2011) constructive listening skills subscale.

Appendix B

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Demographics:

In what year were you born? _____

What is your primary language?
- ☐ English
- ☐ Other: _____

What is your current work status?
- ☐ Full time
- ☐ Part time working more than 20 hours per week
- ☐ Part-time working less than 20 hours per week

How long have you worked for [company]? ____ years _____months

How long have you worked in your current position at [company]? ____ years _____months

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school/GED
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ 2-year college degree
- ☐ 4-year college degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Professional degree (e.g., JD, MD)

Appendix B, continued

Listed below are a series of statements that represent possible feelings that individuals might have about the company or organization for which they work.

With respect to your own feelings about [company], please indicate the extent of your agreement/disagreement by circling the appropriate choice below each question.

The organization values my contribution to its well-being.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

The organization strongly considers my goals and values.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

The organization really cares about my well-being.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

The organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

The organization shows very little concern for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

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