

Kolb's Model Paper

I. Introduction

In successfully directing multiple contracts and self-managed teams over the past ten years, I have witnessed instances of effective and ineffective **communication**, **leadership** and organization **culture** and how behavioral aspects closely integrate with organizational structures and processes. This document highlights personal experiences encountered throughout my career as well as reflective comments and observations that allowed me to formulate abstract concepts and identify future topics that merit additional research and experimentation in the future.

II. Body of Summary Paper

A. Communication

An underlying and salient aspect of successful business is effective **communication**. Shannon, Weaver and Schramm's (1949, 1954) research was the incubus for efficient communication practices that included the standard elements of source (i.e. communicator), encoder, message, channel (i.e., medium), decoder (i.e., receiver), feedback, and noise (Wikipedia, 2012). The following paragraphs provide an overview of both effective and ineffective communication practices and identify additional factors that influence communications.

1. Concrete Experience (CE)

As a director for a pre-established, West Virginia-based small business I actively participate in monthly corporate management meetings. I often

communicated with the president/owner via mediums such as telephone, video conference, electronic mail, and face-to-face meetings. In attending the scheduled monthly planning meetings with the president, two vice presidents and seven directors, my approach was to communicate clearly and concisely, to remain flexible and acknowledge and adapt to the strengths and weaknesses among the management team and to offer recommended solutions.

Emanating from Shannon et al. (1949, 1954) research, I applied a **classic communication model** and focused particularly on effective listening and feedback techniques to ensure messages were encoded by the communicator and decoded properly by the receiver (Gibson, 2012, pp. 434-435). I discovered firsthand that obtaining feedback is an effective reinforcement technique when distractions are present and when topics are complex. My meeting objectives were to offer sound recommendations and to quickly alleviate service issues internal and external to the organization.

I noticed some managers refrained from communicating in meetings. Others failed to relay known issues while at the meetings and instead preferred to discuss concerns afterward. It was not uncommon for one of the managers to misconstrue topics and forget action items each month. In these instances, I encouraged meeting attendees to actively prepare and participate and to state action items prior to leaving the meeting. For managers who exhibited poor communication skills, I encouraged them to listen attentively, be well-prepared, enunciate clearly, record notes, and repeat messages as needed to clarify topics and action items.

2. Reflective Observation (RO)

My observations within the meeting were that some managers needed more formal training due to substandard communication skills and poor attitude. Others appeared to have hidden agendas when they arrived and some did not care to add value to the meetings.

In instances where managers failed to participate in monthly discussions, it appeared to annoy some meeting participants; they commented that the silent partners were adding no value to issue resolution or idea generation. In a sense, non-participating members were viewed as “**social loafers**” (Gibson et al., 2012, p. 242) and not contributing to their fullest potential.

Directors like I who had continual time constraints believed excessive hallway meetings infringed on time. Some directors commented that action items discussed in the impromptu hallway meetings were sometimes forgotten and not relayed to individuals. I suggested that they request individuals to speak up in meetings. I also suggested that managers be proactive in researching and preparing for meetings so that well-informed decisions could be made.

3. Abstract Concepts (AC)

The Shannon et al. (1949, 1954) classic model for effective corporate communication is still well-founded; however, additional factors appear to influence communication encoding and decoding techniques. There is also contention regarding the definition of “effective.” For instance, just because individuals successfully encode and decode messages does not mean that they

have completed the necessary research and fact finding that may weigh in on a particular message or topic being communicated; they may be communicating half truths or incorrect information through the horizontal and vertical organization structures. Also, communication could be based on instinct and biases. So, “What constitutes ‘effective’ communication from an organizational perspective?” It necessitates further investigation especially since knowledge transfer and global operation are at the forefront of business discussions.

In considering the classic communication model of Shannon et al., (1949, 1954), it appears that the **feedback method** was an excellent approach to safeguard from miscommunication. Action items were clearly understood after implementing the feedback method in the monthly corporate meetings. Training sessions on the classic model were reported to be successful and managers began communicating thoughts more clearly.

However, it merits noting that a new dimension was added to the communication model—**Barnlund’s (2008) transactional model**. Barnlund (2008) proposed that conversations occur simultaneously and that the manner in which the sender filters the message may vary from the manner in which the receiver decodes the message due to variations in the “regional traditions, cultures, or gender; which may alter the intended meaning of the message contents...reception and decoding of content may be faulty, and thus the speech may not achieve the desired effect” (Wikipedia, 2012). An in-class discussion supported this theory--a student had issues decoding messages

from the instructor. The majority of peers understood the instructor; however, one individual could not determine what the instructor was saying at certain intervals. For this reason, it appears Barnlund's research (2008) has merit.

With respect to pre-planning and having **resources** and justification available prior to the meetings, advanced preparation helped facilitate communication and decision making whereas lack of preparation resulted in trust issues, delays and ineffective translation. However, there was an instance of a hostile work environment and some managers were reluctant to actively engage in the meeting.

John C. Athanassiades' (pre-1986, 1973) peer review investigated "**The Distortion of Upward Communication in Hierarchical Organizations**" (Athanassiades, pre-1986, 1973, pp. 207, 222-223). Athanassiades (pre-1986, 1973) concluded that his findings were in agreement with earlier researchers' findings acknowledging "the tendency of subordinates to screen, withhold or modify upward communications." Athanassiades (pre-1986, 1973) also reported parallelism with **Maslow's theory of primacy of needs and Herzberg's two factor theory**—security affects distortion of upward communication. Athanassiades (pre-1986, 1973) findings also supported earlier researchers' findings--"linking member-behavior to organizational authority structure." These findings may explain the lack of engagement and potential hidden agendas in the corporate management meetings.

4. Active Experimentation (AE)

Although basic communication involves clearly channeling a message from an encoder to a decoder who interprets the message (Shannon et al., 1949, 1954), this document conveys a more intricate process. Multifaceted internal and external variables that influence communication in the workplace continue to be investigated. If presented with communication disconnects in the future, I would spend more time researching new methods that may be available to help optimize communication throughout the organization. It would be interesting to study the effects of poor leadership (e.g., ineffectiveness due to extreme authoritarian rule versus ineffectiveness of a somewhat dominant supervisor) to see the detrimental affects poor leadership has on organizational communication.

Kolb's Model Assignment



Situation Three

This final example is a page from recent experience. It involves an individual who I have come to deeply respect and whose opinions I greatly value. At the onset of our first meeting I would have guaranteed that I would never think that way, and I am fairly confident that his opinion of me was the same. I like to think that his opinion of me has changed as has mine of him. This final scenario is a study in prejudgment and stereotyping.

(CE) Concrete Experience

"Almost Four o'clock", I think as I pause to reflect on the fact that I am not as young as I once was, "My God it has been a long day and I still have three hours to go". "There it is – 307" I mutter to myself as I open the door and walk in the classroom. Finding it empty, I take a seat a few rows back that gives me a good vantage point, yet adequate separation from any potential unforeseen complications. Little do I know, there will not be enough room in the entire building to separate me from what is coming.

As four o'clock ticks closer, the other students begin to arrive and fill in seats in the classroom. "Four o'clock on the dot, now you're on my time" I think to myself. As the minutes tick away, I begin to fume as I contemplate how much I hate tardiness. "Come on, man", I think, "show a little professionalism for God's sake."

I pass the time and ease my temper by skimming over the textbook and making small talk with the other students, constantly reminding myself that this is not a business meeting nor are these people on my payroll. It helps a little, but not much.

I glance at my watch: 4:09. "You have to be kidding me", I think, "I'm out of here at ten after if he doesn't show. I don't have time for this and I'm not going to tolerate it"

Literally at the stroke of ten after, just as I am about to get up and leave, in walks the professor.

I feel myself sizing him up, as I do everyone with which I come in contact. I know I shouldn't but I continue to eye him up and down taking mental notes of my first impression of him.

"Sandals and gold chains, late to the first class, casual clothes. Is this what I'm paying for?" my mind races. I have to force myself to stay calm. "You're not in charge here fat boy. These people don't answer to you" I remind myself.

He makes his way to the podium carrying what can only be described as a wheelbarrow load of paperwork bound up with a manila folder with the random odd sheet poking out here and there.

"Oh great, were going to read the entire lecture, how wonderful" my sarcastic side interjects.

He plunks the whole mess down on the desk with a loud "thud"

He turns to the class and begins to speak.

"Good evening" he says as he introduces himself as the instructor. Additional words continue to emanate from his mouth because I can see his lips moving, but I tune him out. All I can focus on is the

thick “gooooodeeeevenning” hanging in the air. “Oh great a foreigner” races through my weary and already disgruntled mind. “That’s all we need”, I think, completely forgetting that two of my favorite professors at WVU were “foreigners” and were very capable.

Suddenly, my attention snaps back to the instructor. By this point he has moved on to conversing with the students, asking them to introduce themselves. I can see him sizing up each student as he or she speaks forming an opinion and mentally categorizing each one as to the quality of student he believes them to be.

The young lady beside me finishes her introduction with the fact that she is an accounting major. I see the instructor smile approvingly and nod. He then turns in my general direction. “And you? He demands. I see him sizing me up, forming an opinion of me. I can already guess what he is thinking: “What is this middle aged, fat, dumb, bearded redneck hillbilly doing in my class?” I oblige his stereotype: “I’m just a lowly airplane mechanic, Doc.”, I reply, playing to the bias. I see the wave of acknowledgement and disappointment wash over his face. I feel myself smirk inside. He then moves on to the last few students, who finish on a strong note indicating that they are nursing students.

The instructor pauses a moment then begins an introduction into the lecture. I think to myself “he’ll be pulling out the notes and powerpoint pretty soon”. He begins to ask a few course content related questions to the students, probing to see how much of the material they already know and if they realize that they know it. The answers are feeble, his frustration visibly mounts. He delves deeper into the material, turning his attention to me to prove to himself and the class how dumb this hillbilly really is. “Mr. Mason is it?” “Yes, Doc”, I reply. “How would you characterize and define the nature of management?” he prompts. My initial inclination is to sandbag and play to the stereotype. I open my mouth to say something clever, then my good sense kicks in, limited as it is. “Give him the benefit of the doubt”, I think. “Well”, I drawl as I lean my head back and close my eyes to visualize the answer. I slowly and deliberately answer the question, opening my eyes and refocusing my attention as I finish. My attention resettles on the instructor’s face and I detect a note of puzzlement in his expression. “Take that” I think, “that’ll teach you to underestimate someone”, the irony of my thought completely escaping me.

He continues speaking, offering examples and asking questions of students for the next several minutes. The discussion turns to cultural, racial, and gender issues, personal space and the like. I slowly tune my focus in and out of what is being said, struggling to remain awake. Suddenly a firm hand grabs my arm attempting to draw me from my seat. I jolt awake fuming, as I do not like to be touched by anyone and hate having my space invaded. The realization sets in that the instructor is using me as an example and I can’t help but wondering if he is also trying to push my buttons. I decide to go along as the situation becomes a discussion between the two of us of cultural and racial issues and how they might relate to the management of people.

The lecture continues as we skim over various management topics. “That looks like a good place to stop” the instructor says. “Stop?” I wonder to myself. “How can we be done already?” Looking down at my watch I realize that all three hours of the class have passed and we are in fact done, and that the instructor spent the entire time speaking without notes or aids of any kind. I also realize that the class was the most fun I have had in a long time and this professor is far better at his craft than I initially gave him credit for.

"Mr. Mason" he says as the other students file out of the room "I would like to have you in my advanced class". Astonished, I wonder how this man could have changed his opinion of me so quickly, then realize that in three hours I have done the same for him. Almost automatically I reply "I would love to Doc.", thoroughly looking forward to what the semester might bring. We exchange a few more pleasantries and I leave so that he can prepare for the next class. As I walk back down the hall toward my truck, beaming, I wonder what the hell the wheelbarrow load of paperwork was for.

(RO) Reflective Observation

In reflecting on this first meeting with this instructor I have come to recognize some shortcomings in my perceptions and mode of thinking. Additionally, I have identified some issues, that while not technically wrong on the instructor's part, might serve the professor better if they were modified until the students better knew him.

My demanding nature and impatience, combined with the fatigue of beginning a new semester at 40 plus years of age compounded a predisposition on my part to be overcritical of the people and circumstances in which I found myself. While proving an asset in the business environment, it has become somewhat of a hindrance in an academic setting. The direct result of this was demonstrated by an obsession with the instructor's tardiness, and a thoroughly and wholly uncharacteristic bias against a very good instructor simply because he spoke differently and was dressed somewhat more casually than what I had expected.

I, however, even in retrospect, continue to support my conclusion that the instructor was, ever so deftly, overstepping proper decorum and the bounds of the norms of interpersonal relations amongst what were at the time complete strangers. I feel that the immediacy and familiarity expressed by the instructor, while yielding a positive outcome in this specific situation, could just have easily led to a negative outcome and a sense of distrust and dislike on the part of the students. Similarly, the act of so intensely invading a completely unknown student's personal space with no warning, even in such a skilled manner, has the potential of causing the student to withdraw and refuse to participate further - even going so far as driving the student away from the class.

After contemplating the instructor's affinity for this student, I am unable to come to a definitive conclusion regarding his motivators. On the surface it would appear that the professor had seen a glimmer of enlightenment in this student, but one must also consider other alternatives. One possibility is that the instructor was trying to cultivate a superlative from the mediocre to prove to himself that he could accomplish the task. Another potential reason being an attempt to demonstrate to the student that he is not the superlative that his projected attitude exuded. A third possibility that comes to light is that the professor may have a *Trading Places* Randolph and Mortimer Duke-esque type bet with other instructors that he might form a silk purse from a sow's ear. Regardless of the factors motivating the instructor, this student hopes that he has, at least to some extent, lived up to the professor's expectations, however he fears that he has fallen far short.

(AC) Abstract Conceptualization

The National Institute of Health defines stress as: "...the brain's response to any demand. Many things can trigger this response, including change. Changes can be positive or negative, as well as real or perceived." (National Institute of Health) Certainly the changes being experienced by the student that day (ie: adapting to the academic atmosphere, changing roles from a position of command to that of subordination, and adapting to long hours and late nights to name a few), even though in the long term could be considered positive (ie: would ultimately lead to a broadening of the student's knowledge, skills, and abilities), were eliciting negative effects on the student's behavior in the immediate term. These negative effects manifested themselves in the form of impatience (fixation on the instructor's tardiness), judgmentalism (fixation on the instructors manner of dress/physical appearance), and xenophobia and stereotyping (fixation on the perception that the instructor was a "foreigner"). (Williams) (Gibson 96)

It, with certainty, can be said that this student's behavior as outlined in the previous passages clearly demonstrates behavior desperately in need of stress mitigation. Gibson, et al defines stress management as (paraphrasing) ...the amelioration of stress, especially chronic stress, for the purposes of everyday functioning. (Gibson 211) In *Problem Solving Techniques for Stress Management*, the Mayo Clinic defines a useful paradigm for relieving and coping with stress. It consists of five phases: "1) Identify the problem, What is happening? Where and when is it happening? Is it happening around certain people or in specific situations? How do you feel about it?, 2) Brainstorm ideas for mitigation: Recall past problems that you were able to solve. Could a similar solution work for this problem, too? Ask friends, family and people you trust for advice, 3) Select a solution that best alleviates the condition: Do you realistically think it will solve the problem? How will using this solution make you feel in the end? What are the possible positive and negative consequences?, 4) Put your plan into action: It may help to write down the details of your plan. Be sure to really commit to it before giving up or trying something else. Believe in yourself and go for it , and 5) Reflect on your experience: Did your solution solve the problem? If not, what issues remain unresolved? What would you do differently the next time?". (The Mayo Clinic). This mechanism, in this student's opinion is quite remarkable in its flexibility and universality of application. After examination of the mechanisms of coping that he experienced, it is quite apparent that this technique played a major role, albeit subconsciously, in the mitigation of the stressors experienced in this situation. Not lost on the student is the obvious fact that the actions of the instructor while on one hand were instigators of perceived stress in the student's mind, also ultimately contributed to, when deftly executed by the instructor, relieving those stressors by changing the student's perceptions of the situation to those of a more positive tone.

To thoroughly examine this scenario, one must also reflect upon the obverse of this coin: the instructor's behavior and perceptions. Behavior, clearly enough, can be directly observed and an hypothesis of the motivators thereof can be made fairly concretely. Observations pertaining to the professor's perceptions, however, are filtered through the prism of the observer's perceptions and are much more subjective in nature. Even given these shortcomings, the author feels that at least a superficial discussion is warranted.

Observation 1: Body language and other forms of nonverbal communication tend to be good predictors of one individual's perception of another (Peelen). The instructor's body language (facial expressions, gestures, etc.) directed toward the student led the student to believe that the professor possessed a negative bias against him. Again, this is the student's perception of the instructor's perception, so it tends to be reflective of the student's attitudes and beliefs.

Observation 2: The instructor's time management paradigm, again as perceived by the student, was incongruous with that of an efficient teaching schedule. Again, the student must realize that there are many factors affecting this parameter. First, Gibson explains that time perception across cultures is variable, implying that in some societies things such as a meeting time for a class would be more of a suggestion, than a concrete (Gibson 96). Secondly, the student should understand that there are far more demands on the instructors time than are apparent at the surface, requiring the application of time management strategies such as outlined in Pat Brans' article Forbes' Magazine: "Habit 1: Strive to be authentic. Habit 2: Favor trusting relationships. Habit 3: Maintain a lifestyle that will give you maximum energy. Habit 4: Listen to your biorhythms and organize your day accordingly Habit 5: Set very few priorities and stick to them. Habit 6: Turn down things that are inconsistent with your priorities Habit 7: Set aside time for focused effort. Habit 8: Always look for ways of doing things better and faster. Habit 9: Build solid processes. Habit 10: Spot trouble ahead and solve problems immediately. Habit 11: Break your goals into small units of work, and think only about one unit at a time. Habit 12: Finish what's important and stop doing what's no longer worthwhile". (Brans)

Observation 3: The instructor's motivation for so forcefully invading the student's personal space was perceived by the student to be imprudent at best to malicious at worst. Again, the student has come to realize that, according to Gibson, personal space and immediacy also vary across cultures (Gibson 438). Consequently, room should be made in the student's perception for the notion that this perceived offense could simply be a difference in cultural perspective. Additionally, Madlock identified 1969 and 1971 research by Mehrabian, and 2000 research by Richmond and McCroskey that suggested stressing immediacy in interpersonal relationships as a goodwill building technique. (Madlock)

Observation 4: The instructor's affinity for the student was perceived as disjointed from the student's perception of himself. The situation is derived, it is believed, from an attributional bias on the instructor's part arising from the Pollyanna effect (the tendency of one to think favorably about others) combining with the halo effect (identified by Thorndike in 1920) generated by a positive first impression arising from the first meeting of the instructor and student. The author sincerely hopes that the instructor continues to suffer from this bias at least until after final grades are submitted.

Regardless of perceptions, one must assume that the instructor's underlying goal was the effective and efficient imparting of knowledge of the principles of management to his students. Hitt, et al. defines effective leadership as influence that assists a group or organization in achieving its goals. (Hitt 208) Efficiency is defined as how well the individual/organization utilizes its resources while accomplishing those goals.

In examining the efficacy of the instructor's actions toward forwarding his goals, we must conclude that the evidence suggests, while perceived as unconventional, they allow him to make efficient and effective use of his limited time and other resources.

(AE) Active Experimentation

In reviewing the lessons learned from this scenario I have identified some new shortcomings in my personality and re-identified others.

First: I am demanding and impatient – OK, knew that- so what’s wrong with that. I would submit nothing, when applied selectively and in a controlled manner. If the situations and individuals that would benefit from this approach are identified and the pressure is utilized constructively and sparingly it can be an effective motivator. Used in the wrong places, as demonstrated previously, it can become a true hindrance to effective and efficient management.

Second: I am insecure – knew that too. My tendency to overanalyze and continually attempt to attribute motivators to people’s actions has been a bane of my existence since I can remember. This tendency to continually worry about the “why” of the actions of individuals is something I struggle with every moment. By recognizing that I have the problem, and evaluating the potential negative outcomes of such actions by utilizing tools such as this one I am able to marginally keep it in check.

Third: Stress tends to exaggerate the above conditions. Granted, I knew that stress could compound unwanted habits, but I was unaware that I could suffer so drastically from the application of such a mild stressor. I submit, however, that the severity of a stressor is in the eye of the beholder.

Fourth: When severely stressed I move into a dark place that I do not like and is uncharacteristic of my personality. The judgmentalism and xenophobia that I demonstrated at that first meeting disturbs me. I have never known myself to even remotely exhibit tendencies of that nature and I find it distasteful that something as minor as a little stress would send me there.

In conclusion:

This method of review and introspection was foreign to me. At first I, admittedly, had difficulty with conceptualizing the methodology therein. After applying this technique, however, I have come to recognize great value in its application. This process has helped to identify and reaffirm some shortcomings of my personality. Utilizing management techniques learned in this class and in others, I hope to be able to more effectively use the positives of my nature and curb the negatives to become a better leader. On a personal note, please let me say that I have thoroughly enjoyed this semester in both of your classes. It has been quite refreshing to find a professor that is so well versed in the subject matter and is able to provide comprehensive lecture solely from his own knowledge. Also, I have thoroughly enjoyed the nature and openness of debate and discussion that you have fostered in these classes. I, like you, feel that the only way that many of the issues before us as a society can be solved is by exposing them to the light of day. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of both of these courses; I can only hope that I have, at least in a small way, lived up to your expectations.

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Around My World in 3 Kolb's

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Introduction

Every day in the world of business, decisions are being made by people who utilize a myriad of criterion along with their own personal experiences to aid them in making their choices. It can also be said that outside the world of business, decisions are constantly being made in every aspect of life using expectation and desired outcome criteria coupled with personal experience. The point is that successful decision making is critical to every aspect of life whether it is in school, at the office, or in the home. One aspect of decision making that is often overlooked or dismissed is behavior. Every day all of us could choose to step back and analyze not only the behaviors of others around us, but also our behaviors; that is our own reactions to people and circumstances around us. In addition to individual behaviors there are organizational behaviors to consider in our workplaces. Organizational behavior is a broad topic and can include individual reactions to success or criticism, group behaviors within the organization, and even the behavioral perceptions of the organization as a whole. Many aspects play into the organizational behavior dynamic some of which are: culture, leadership, motivation, individual ability, stress, commitment, learning, and job satisfaction to name just a few. As I have studied organizational behavior under the guiding hand of Dr. Cassell, it has been impressed upon me that learning to take the time to honestly analyze the behavioral reactions of myself and others within my organization is an essential key to good decision making in all aspects of life, and as such is a critical ingredient to professional success. The following scenarios are an opportunity for me to critically analyze a few of my past experiences while learning to utilize Kolb's Model for experiential learning. Let's begin a behavioral analysis by examining the first of three scenario's.

Concrete Experience One: In January of 2007 I began a new job as a field operator for a security firm in Arlington Virginia that routinely handled government security contracts. I went into the job knowing full well that security was an essential key to everything that we did, from gaining access to facilities to the ways in which we communicated; security and the ability to trust one another was paramount. My recognition of the sensitive need for security was fortified when our operations chief immediately began training me on the specific security measures to which I must adhere. Unknown to myself and the existing personnel the vice president of the firm had recently ordered the installation of several new and discreet security camera's within our work space. Apparently shortly after I started the new job, funds started disappearing from the office space within which I worked. Within the first two months of my employment several thousand dollars had disappeared. One Monday morning the VP called all the available employees from throughout the building, about thirty total personnel, to a meeting in which he revealed that the funds had been stolen. The VP told the assembled employees that he knew who the thief was and that he had evidence to prove it. The VP announced that he would give the guilty party three hours within which they could admit culpability in exchange for some leniency. A few hours later a young lady was prompted by management to pack up her personal items and was escorted off of the premises. As the guilty party exited the building, the VP's voice boomed out of the loud speaker announcing throughout the building that the young lady would no longer be working with us. In that moment I can ashamedly say that I found peace in another person's misery.

Reflective Observation: The realization that there was a thief among us brought on a flood of emotions for me. At the time I did not realize the significant impact that the scenario had on me, but I can now almost relive the anxiety I experienced in those few hours. Since I was the only new employee I was mortified because even though I knew that I had not stolen the money, many of the employees may have come to the quick deduction that I was the thief simply because I was the “new guy”. The atmosphere in the office after the morning announcement was so thick it could have been cut with a knife. All of the employees were doing a good job of acting busy, but in my overactive imagination I could see them sending inner-office emails about the thief in the office named Casey! In an odd way I almost felt guilty, no trial just pronounced guilty with a sentence to hang! The tension I felt was intensified by the fact that this job was directly linked with homeland security issues and the scrutiny that a moral breakdown of this magnitude could bring would be career ending. I can honestly say that this was one of the longest few hours of my life.

Abstract Conceptualization: At this time I became acutely aware that the perceptions of my coworkers may become finely tuned against me. Could **perceptual selection**, which is basically how the perceiver filters external factors, cause many to deduce that there was a stark contrast between me and the more tenured employees that they have worked with (Colquitt, Lepine, & Wesson. 2011)? Not only was I a new employee, I also worked in the very same office from which the funds had been stolen. This combination of **contrast** and **proximity** certainly painted an inaccurate picture to those present, and in a strange way made me feel like an outcast (Renato & Petrullo, 1958). I found that I was very nervous and I did not want to look anyone in the eye.

As I sat at my desk and tried to resume my work, I found it impossible not to wonder who the thief was. I also could not stop worrying that other employees, through social **perception tendencies**, would attribute negative characteristics to me as they inaccurately assumed my guilt (Colquitt, et al. 2011).

I can look back and see that a **halo effect** could have caused others to judge everything about me based solely on the reasoning that may have caused them to assume my guilt (Collins, 2009). Once it became obvious to everyone who the guilty party truly was I enjoyed a huge sense of relief. Once again I attempted to resume my work, but I found myself now mired in wonder about the young female thief. I couldn't help but wonder what attributes she possessed that would have caused her to commit the crime. I found myself assuming that she must have some kind of personal or internal issue in order to break the law like that. I realize now that I committed the **fundamental attribution error** in under estimating external causes and overestimating internal causes for the behavior (Colquitt, et al. 2011). In hindsight the VP's actions, although at first causing me discomfort, ultimately led me to feel confident in my leadership and also secure in my work environment, both of which are key **job satisfaction values** for me.

There are many additional concepts that can be drawn from this experience. From a learning and decision making standpoint it is obvious that management had learned the thief's identity through **mechanical observation** via the use of hidden cameras and that the decision was made to use **punishment reinforcement** in order to correct the situation and set the proper example. The VP demonstrated that he had **legitimate and coercive organizational** power and made it clear through his actions that he had good **moral awareness** and could execute good **moral judgment** when necessary to maintain the high standards of the firm (Colquitt, et al. 2011).

The fact that the VP had reached out to the culprit with an offer of leniency in exchange for honesty shows that fairness was used in dealing with them, which in my estimation caused the VP to gain employee respect through good **interpersonal justice** skills (Gilliland, Skarlicki, & Steiner, 2008).

Active Experimentation: In general I think that it is clear that despite producing anxiety for me, the situation I have described was handled fairly well by management and can be taken as a learning experience. In the future if faced with similar situations I will be able to ignore the fear factors and chose to look at the situation as an opportunity to see if management handles morality issues in a fair way that aims to correct the situation. Anyone would probably have felt nervous in my shoes, but next time I will be able to more greatly appreciate the application of authority in correcting an unacceptable lack of ethics, while appreciating the fact that I don't need to feel awkward when I know that my behavior is in line with the firms standards and societal expectations for honesty in the workplace. In hindsight I appreciated working for a company with high moral standards and leadership not afraid to deal with faulty, even criminal behavior.