

# Discovering the Listener Within Us: The Impact of Trait-Like Personality Variables and Communicator Styles on Preferences for Listening Style

William A. Villaume  
*Auburn University*

Graham D. Bodie  
*Purdue University*

Extending past research, the present study provides an initial examination of the relationship between trait-like personality variables, communicator style, and individual listening preferences. A series of canonical correlations were run to ascertain to what degree certain communication preferences and trait-like personality variables are related to preferences for receiving information. Results indicated a similar pattern of listening styles is found regardless of the variables under question adding validity to the newly formed scoring method for the LSP. Specifically, people-orientation was advocated by a more competent, caring individual who enjoys conversation and is able to juggle affection with accomplishing conversational goals. The combination of high content- and action-orientations in listening is associated with a more masculine personality and greater tendency to engage in active, precise, and impression leaving arguments. High time and action (and to a lesser extent people) orientations correlates with high neuroticism and a high motive for control. Finally, individuals reporting time- and content-orientations also report high psychoticism and prefer a friendlier, more open communication style.

Individual differences in communication behavior have intrigued scholars for decades. This curiosity has initiated the search for personality traits that are antecedent to communication behavior (Heisel, La France, & Beatty, 2003; Leung

& Bond, 2001; Sargent, Fitch-Hauser, & Weaver, 1997; Weaver, 1998; Weaver, Watson, & Barker, 1996). These studies have supported the seemingly naturalistic connection between an individual's personality and his or her communication characteristics. However, given the assumption that there is likely a correlation between "the manner in which information is transmitted and received" (Weaver, 1998, p. 96), it is surprising that more attention has been given to how personality affects the role of the speaker than the role of the listener (c.f., Clark, 1989; Kiewitz & Weaver, 1997). Consequently, the present study attempts to discover how underlying trait-like personality variables relate to both listening and speaking styles.

## LISTENING STYLES

In an effort to test previous assumptions that people tend to listen in a habitual manner (see Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977), which may lead an individual to choose one specific listening style regardless of the situation (Langer, 1980), Watson, Barker, and Weaver (1992) conceptualized listening orientations across four underlying dimensions (people-, content-, action-, and time-orientations) that serve to define an individual's preferred style of listening. Listeners with high people-orientation usually try to find common ground with other communicators while remaining nonjudgmental. Listeners with high content-orientation listen for complex information and evaluate the content of a message before drawing conclusions. Action-oriented listeners prefer to focus on needed action in an organized fashion. Time-oriented listeners seek to minimize the amount of time spent interacting and may even state the amount of time they have available to spend in a listening situation (for a thorough analysis of listening styles see Barker & Watson, 2000).

### Measuring Listening Styles

The Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16; Watson et al., 1995) has served as the major research instrument for measuring a person's predominant listening style. Respondents self-report their preferences and concerns while listening to other people on four subscales that measure each of the four aforementioned listening orientations. These four interval level measures are then reduced to one predominant, nominal level listening style. Specifically, respondents who score in the upper tertile for one of these four orientations are identified as having the corresponding characteristic listening style: people-oriented, action-oriented, content-oriented, and time-oriented.

### Correlations between Listening Style and Personality Characteristics

Initial research has supported the assumption that there are certain personality characteristics exhibited by individuals with a pure people-oriented listening

style. For instance, person-centered listeners tend to be sympathetic with others (Weaver & Kirtley, 1995; Worthington, 2003), less apprehensive (Sargent, Weaver, & Kiewitz, 1997), and extraverted (Weaver et al., 1996; Worthington, 2003). These same studies have been less successful in identifying personality characteristics differentiating the three remaining pure listening styles, namely the content-, action-, and time-oriented styles. Instead, a combination of these pure styles is often categorized as a "socially callous listening style" (Weaver et al., 1996, p. 386). This type of individual is likely to be impatient and self-centered (Sargent et al., 1997; Weaver et al., 1996), which is likely reflected in his or her communication behaviors. Therefore, contrary to initial assumptions, the above studies indicate that many people may not be characterized by just one predominant listening style. Instead, people may exhibit high scores for two or more interval level listening orientations as measured by the LSP.

Recently, Bodie and Villaume (2003) identified three patterns of association between the set of four listening style orientations measured by the LSP and a set of communicator style and apprehension variables. Specifically,

1. People-centered listening is manifested in a relationally oriented speaking style characterized by a low level of dyadic communication apprehension.
2. The combination of high content- and action-orientations is associated with an attentive, precise style of arguing the issues that tends to leave an impression on people.
3. The combination of high action- and time-orientations (and to a lesser extent people-orientation) with low content-orientation is associated with higher apprehension toward receiving information, lower dyadic communication apprehension, and a dramatic, animated and forceful style that dominantly asserts one's goals/concerns.

The purpose of this study is to test whether these three underlying dimensions of speaking/listening styles are associated with a variety of trait-like personality variables often cited in the literature as affecting communication processes.

### PERSONALITY AND COMMUNICATION TRAITS: ANTECEDENTS TO LISTENING BEHAVIOR?

It is largely accepted that individual differences undergird and/or mediate communication preferences on different levels. At the deepest and most basic level lie personality traits and gender schemas (McCroskey & Daly, 1987). While many theories have been advanced, two of the most notable are Bem's Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1976, 1981) and Eysenk's (1990) BIG THREE. Both conceptualizations of personality point to deep-seated internal motivators that drive behavior.

## Gender Schema Theory

Gender Schema Theory (GST) was coined by Bem (1981) who claimed that "the phenomenon of sex typing derives, in part, from gender-based schematic processing" (p. 355). Humans manage messages and knowledge by categorizing information according to schemas of what is meant to be male or female. Specifically, this theory claims an individual's "self-concept itself gets assimilated into the gender schema" (p. 355). In other words, every individual processes information with some degree of gender schematization. More specifically, individuals generally display differing degrees of masculinity and femininity. A masculine, or agentic, orientation reflects an independent, assertive, and ambitious perspective while a feminine, or communal, orientation reflects a relational, sensitive, and affectionate perspective. In addition, Bem (1976) claims these "two domains of masculinity and femininity are both fundamental" (p. 50) and these characteristics are displayed through behaviors like dominance/submission, aggressiveness/affection, and dependence/independence.

These two dimensions of gender have been linked to listening preferences. Johnston, Weaver, Watson, and Barker (2000) report that individuals possessing a communal orientation prefer a person-centered listening style while individuals embracing an agentic orientation prefer a more task-oriented listening style. By using the four interval level measures of listening orientation measured by the LSP, we hope to further probe the relationship between gender-role and listening styles.

RQ1: How is gender-role related to listening style?

## Eysenck's BIG THREE

Eysenck (1990) conceptualizes personality types across three orthogonal dimensions, namely, extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Extraversion refers to the personality type characterized by sociability and an affirmative self-concept. In contrast, high neuroticism is characterized by anxiety and a negative self-concept. Finally, psychoticism is characterized by deviation from societal norms and a heightened sense of self and independence.

Weaver (1998) completed a battery of studies over a four-year period that "reveal a great deal about the mediating impact of personality on our perceptions of how we communicate with others" (p. 112). The pattern of results showed a unique "communication preference profile" for each of Eysenck's three personality types. The communication variables included communication apprehension, receiver apprehension, listening style, interaction involvement, and empathy. As predicted, Es endorsed a supportive, nonapprehensive style, Ps perceived themselves as moderately apprehensive and socially callous, while Ns endorsed "an apparent indifference toward and frustration during interaction with others" marked by apprehensiveness and "a lack

of finesse when communicating" (p. 112). In a previous study, Weaver et al. (1996) focused solely on listening style and personality. The authors found that Es preferred a people-centered style, Ns were more prone to be concerned with time constraints when listening, and Ps embraced a socially callous listening style. However, Weaver et al. (1996) relied upon the nominal level characterization of the listening style variables which led to the dual-loading along the psychoticism dimension. Moreover, a more recent study (McCroskey, Heisel, & Richmond, 2001) shows that the combination of personality dimensions (rather than nominalizing these variables) leads to a more realistic understanding of these dimensions and communication variables. Thus, we propose to explore the relationship between the set of three EPQ measures (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) and the set of four interval level listening preferences (people-, content-, action-, and time-orientations).

RQ2: How are extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism related to listening styles?

### Additional Trait-Like Personality and Communication Style Variables

While numerous studies have found personality to be tied to communication variables such as self-reported verbal aggressiveness (Valencic et al., 1998), affinity-seeking (Heisel et al., 2003), and communicative competence (McCroskey et al., 2001), to the knowledge of the authors there has been only one attempt to assess how personality affects both communication and listening styles. Weaver's (1998) study, however, focused on personality and not listening styles. Furthermore, the results from studies that focus on listening style have only been able to differentiate the personality characteristics associated with a pure people-orientation in listening, while the other styles have not been fully differentiated from each other (e.g., Sargent et al, 1997; Weaver et al., 1996). Thus instead of treating each listening style as a categorical level variable, and therefore forcing people into a single listening category, it may be more appropriate to treat the styles as interval-level listening orientations whereby each individual can score high on multiple orientations (Bodie & Villaume, 2003). This approach seems appropriate considering the high percentage of individuals that do not tend to listen with one distinct style (Weaver, Richendoller, & Kirtley, 1995). Furthermore, this scoring method allows for higher level connections between the styles.

In the Bodie and Villaume (2003) study, three patterns of association emerged between the set of listening style variables and the set of communication style and apprehension variables. The first canonical function established that the greater the people-orientation in listening, the lower the receiver apprehension, dyadic CA, and group CA were, and the higher the scores were for the friendly, attentive, animated and open styles. This function has identified a pattern of low apprehension manifested in a people-centered style of attentive listening and affirming responses. For the second canonical function, the higher the content and action orientations

the higher the scores for the precise, attentive, argumentative, and impression leaving styles. Thus individuals with both high content- and action-orientations are likely to attend to content with precision and subsequently are able to argue their case in a manner that leaves strong impressions on others. For the third canonical function, the higher the time-, action-, and (to a lesser extent) people-orientations, the lower the dyadic CA, the higher the receiver apprehension, and the higher the scores for the dramatic, open, animated, and dominant styles. Thus, this function seems to establish that listeners who have both high action and time orientations use dramatic, forceful, and dominating assertion as the means to quickly achieving one's goals. In an effort to determine whether the patterns reported above are stable with the addition of other trait-like personality and communicator style variables, we include several additional communication style and trait-like personality variables which are described in the next section.

RQ3: How are the personality and communicator style variables related to listening style?

## METHOD

To answer the three research questions, undergraduate students ( $N = 180$ ) enrolled in communication courses at a large southeastern university filled out a variety of self-report communication scales during the spring and summer of 2002. Students were allowed to participate only once in this study. All participants received extra credit for their participation in this study. All data collected were anonymous. These 180 students were a subset of the 301 students analyzed in Bodie and Villaume (2003). The loss of participants is attributable to a clerical error whereby some scales were omitted from questionnaires, and also to missing data for individual participants. The following sections describe the individual measures employed and report the reliability estimates for each.

### Listening Styles

Listening Styles (LS) was assessed using the Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16; Watson et al., 1995) which measures four orientations toward listening: people-, action-, content-, and time-orientation. On 16 items, participants indicate how often they engage in certain listening behavior on a 5-point scale from 4 (always) to 0 (never). Responses to the four items indicative of each of the LS were averaged to produce four listening orientations. Following findings from Bodie and Villaume, each individual was assigned a score on all four listening types, giving a set of four interval-level listening variables for each respondent, namely people ( $\alpha = .619$ ), action ( $\alpha = .612$ ), content ( $\alpha = .714$ ), and time ( $\alpha = .670$ ).

## Gender Role

Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) assesses an individual's level of sex-typing by asking how 60 adjectives describe his or her gender-role self perception. In the present study, only those adjectives ( $n = 40$ ) relevant to scoring were used. Thus, each participant was given both a masculinity score ( $\alpha = .874$ ) and a femininity score ( $\alpha = .818$ ) by averaging the respective items.

## Personality

Given the recent attention to Eysenck's BIG THREE within the field of communication and the scale's aptness "for examining potential interrelationships between personality characteristics and communication self-perceptions" (Weaver, 1998, p. 98), the researchers asked respondents to complete a short-form version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R; Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). Individuals were given a score on each of the three dimensions, all of which achieved adequate reliability: extraversion ( $\alpha = .913$ ), neuroticism ( $\alpha = .852$ ), and psychoticism ( $\alpha = .692$ ).

## Communicator Style

Communicator style refers to the manner in which an individual conducts him or herself while communicating with others (Norton, 1978, 1983). When someone perceives an individual as friendly, relaxed, or attentive, he or she is describing that individual's communicator style. A dominant communicator is someone who is likely to be in control of conversations or take control in social situations. The contentious communicator is closely related to the dominant style and is quick to oppose people who disagree. A dramatic communicator is more likely to exaggerate both the nonverbal features of his or her voice and the content of his or her message in order "to highlight or understate content" (Norton, 1978, p. 100). Linked with the dramatic style, the animated style is characterized by constant gesturing and the use of a multitude of facial expressions intended to fully communicate a desired message. The impression leaving individual is an individual who is remembered after an interaction. A relaxed communicator shows few signs of apprehensiveness and is, in general, poised and not anxious. The friendly communicator is acutely aware of other people in conversation including their feelings and tends to be encouraging, open, and attentive. The attentive communicator "makes sure that the other person knows that he is being listened to" (Norton, 1978, p. 100). This type of individual offers direct and precise verbal and nonverbal feedback to interacting partners. The open communicator is extremely conversational and personally revealing. The precise communicator is extremely meticulous in terms of speaking and listening. This exact nature can be

said to enable him or her to focus a message to an audience as well as recognize when that message has not been received as intended. Finally, an individual's communicator image is an evaluation of how well an individual rates his/her communication in comparison to the communication of others.

The Communicator Style Construct (CSC; Norton, 1983) measures each style dimension with several items: ten dimensions have four items each and one dimension has five items. Thus, each respondent was assigned an interval-level score across all 11 dimensions. Each dimension achieved adequate reliability: dominant ( $\alpha = .823$ ), contentious ( $\alpha = .745$ ), dramatic ( $\alpha = .682$ ), animated ( $\alpha = .611$ ), impression leaving ( $\alpha = .839$ ), relaxed ( $\alpha = .622$ ), attentive ( $\alpha = .728$ ), open ( $\alpha = .747$ ), friendly ( $\alpha = .724$ ), precise ( $\alpha = .633$ ), and communicator image ( $\alpha = .780$ ).

### Communicative Competence

Originally, the Communicative Competence Scale (CCS; Wiemann, 1977) was to be used as an observer rating of another's ability to communicate in a fashion that accomplished ones "interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of others in the conversation" (p. 198). The present study employed the self-report version of this measure to discern how an individual conceptualizes his or her ability to communicate in a competent fashion. Cupach and Spitzberg (1983) have reported the validity of this method. An overall communicative competence score was calculated across all items. Cronbach's alpha was .904 for this scale.

### Interaction Involvement

Originally defined as "one cognitive dimension of communicative competence," Interaction Involvement is a measure of the degree to which an individual is cognitively and behaviorally engaged in a conversation (Cegala, 1981, p. 109). The 18-item Interaction Involvement Scale (IIS; Cegala, 1981) measures respondents on three dimensions of involvement in interaction—attentiveness, perceptiveness, and responsiveness. Attentiveness can be described as an individual's tendency to attend to and focus upon an interaction with another person. Perceptiveness entails an awareness of the meanings and significance of the interaction for the other person. Responsiveness refers to the ability to respond appropriately to an utterance by the other person. Consequently participants were assigned three scores, one for each dimension: attentiveness ( $\alpha = .675$ ), perceptiveness ( $\alpha = .771$ ), and responsiveness ( $\alpha = .735$ ).

### Communication Apprehension

McCroskey (1970) originally defined communication apprehension (CA) as "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication" (p. 270). After years of

research, the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985) is the most widely used self-report scale of CA because of its consistent reliability and validity (McCroskey, 1997). It measures a person's self-reported anxiety in four types of communicative situations: interpersonal ( $\alpha = .892$ ), small group ( $\alpha = .909$ ), meeting ( $\alpha = .896$ ), and public speaking ( $\alpha = .916$ ).

### Receiver Apprehension

Wheeless (1975) claimed that receiver apprehension (RA), defined as "the fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others" (p. 263), is distinctly different from CA experienced when sending information. Wheeless' measure of receiver apprehension, the Receiver Apprehension Test (RAT), has been tested and validated (Beatty, Behnke, & Henderson, 1980). The total receiver apprehension score had an alpha reliability of .877.

### Verbal Aggressiveness

Conceptualized as a personality characteristic that is indicative of individuals prone to attack other people and their ideas, verbal aggressiveness (VA) is measured on the 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (VAS; Infante & Wigley, 1986). Individuals who score high on VA are likely to employ condemnatory speech, ridicule, and character assassinations. Cronbach's alpha was .855 for the verbal aggressiveness score.

### Argumentativeness

Trait argumentativeness is measured on a scale that assesses the tendency to approach as well as the tendency to avoid arguments (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Each participant consequently had a score for tendency to approach arguments ( $\alpha = .884$ ) and the tendency to avoid arguments ( $\alpha = .858$ ).

### Interpersonal Communication Motives

This measure is intended to discern why people generally engage in communication with others across six interpersonal motivators. Pleasure refers to an enjoyment and stimulating approach to interpersonal communication. The affection motive reflects an empathic compulsion and a desire for warm interaction. Inclusion indicates communicating to feel like one belongs. Escape is a drive motivated by wanting to flee a current situation. Relaxation refers to a calming motivation. Finally, control reflects a desire to "tell others what to do" (Rubin, Perse, &

Barbato, 1988). Alpha reliabilities for pleasure ( $\alpha = .899$ ), affection ( $\alpha = .825$ ), inclusion ( $\alpha = .792$ ), escape ( $\alpha = .807$ ), relaxation ( $\alpha = .806$ ), and control ( $\alpha = .746$ ) motives were deemed sufficient.

### Feeling of Understanding/Misunderstanding

Considered a valid and reliable measure of the level of understanding and misunderstanding a person feels after speaking and listening to others, the Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding Scale (FUMS; Cahn & Shulman, 1984) measures respondents using 24 adjectives that describe how one generally feels after an interaction. The present study used the two subscores of feeling understood ( $\alpha = .846$ ) and feeling misunderstood ( $\alpha = .810$ ) rather than an overall score whereby the second score is subtracted from the first score.

## RESULTS

Bodie and Villaume (2003) reported that using interval level LSP variables in a canonical correlation with a set of communication style and apprehension variables yielded the clearest associations between listening style, communication style, and apprehension. Insofar as this study extends this finding by adding more trait-like personality variables beyond communication apprehension and receiver apprehension, canonical correlation is used as the primary statistical analysis. However, the additional personality variables mean that there are three sets of variables (listening style, communication style, and personality variables) examined for their interrelationships. The general strategy will be to use the LSP variables as a common frame of reference. Three canonical correlations will be run, progressively adding more trait-like personality and communicator style variables to the analysis. The objective is to determine whether the pattern of canonical loadings for the LSP variables reported by Bodie and Villaume remains constant throughout these series of analyses. The first two canonical correlations will examine the relationship of the most fundamental personality variables from the BSRI and the EPQ with the LSP variables. The final canonical correlation will add the remaining personality and communication style variables into the analysis.

### Gender Role

The first analysis probed the relationship of the four LSP variables (people-, content-, action-, and time-orientations) with masculinity and femininity as measured by the BSRI. The canonical correlation was significant,  $\Lambda = .808$ ,  $F(8, 386) = 5.43$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ . Two canonical functions were found to be highly significant: Function 1,  $R^2 = .071$ ,  $F(8, 386) = 5.43$ ,  $p \leq .001$ , and Function

TABLE 1  
Canonical Correlation of Listening Orientations with  
Masculinity and Femininity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Function 1</i>	<i>Function 2</i>
People-oriented	<b>.958</b>	-.009
Content-oriented	.356	<b>.717</b>
Action-oriented	.167	<b>.865</b>
Time-oriented	.092	<b>.386</b>
Masculinity	<b>.503</b>	<b>.864</b>
Femininity	<b>.745</b>	-.668

2,  $R^2 = .065$ ,  $F(3, 194) = 4.47$ ,  $p \leq .005$ . Across both canonical functions 13.6% of the variance was shared between the two sets of canonical variates. As seen in Table 1, the first canonical function established that the greater the people-orientation in listening, the higher were the femininity and masculinity scores. While the listening canonical variate accounted for 18.3% of the variance of the LSP variables, the gender role canonical variate accounted for only 2.5% of the variance of the LSP variables. The second canonical function revealed that the greater the action-, content-, and time-orientations were, the higher the masculinity score was and the lower was the femininity score. Again, while the second listening canonical variate accounted for 38.9% of the variance in the four LSP variables, the second gender role canonical variate accounted for only 2.5% of the variance in the LSP variables. Thus, across both canonical functions, the gender role variates together accounted for only a total of 5.0% of the variance of the LSP variables.

### EPQ Variables

The second canonical correlation analysis focused on the relationship of the four LSP variables with extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism measured by the EPQ while controlling for masculinity and femininity. The canonical correlation was significant,  $\Lambda = .636$ ,  $F(12, 502.98) = 7.81$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ . Three canonical functions were found to be highly significant: Function 1,  $R^2 = .115$ ,  $F(12, 502.98) = 7.81$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ , Function 2,  $R^2 = .048$ ,  $F(6, 3828) = 6.38$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ , and Function 3,  $R^2 = .067$ ,  $F(2, 192) = 6.87$ ,  $p \leq .001$ . Across both canonical functions 23.0% of the variance was shared between the two sets of canonical variates. As seen in Table 2, the first canonical function is most easily interpreted by reversing the polarity of the loadings. The more extraverted, less psychotic and less neurotic a person is, the more people-oriented that person's listening style. While the first listening canonical variate accounted for 16.9% of the variance of the LSP variables, the EPQ canonical variate

TABLE 2  
Canonical Correlation of Listening Orientations with EPQ Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Function 1</i>	<i>Function 2</i>	<i>Function 3</i>
People-oriented	-.712	.525	-.034
Content-oriented	.390	.000	.242
Action-oriented	.412	.870	-.075
Time-oriented	.191	.550	.812
Extraversion	-.907	.082	.413
Neuroticism	.385	.919	-.089
Psychoticism	.581	-.119	.805

accounted for 3.9% of the variance of the LSP variables. According to the second canonical function, the more neurotic a person is, the greater his or her action-, time- and people-orientations in listening. Again, while the second listening canonical variate accounted for 32.0% of the variance in the four LSP variables, the second EPQ canonical variate accounted for only 3.7% of the variance in the LSP variables. The third canonical function established that high psychoticism is primarily associated with high time-orientation in listening. The third listening canonical variate accounted for 22.3% of the variance in the LSP variables whereas the third EPQ canonical variate accounted for 1.5% of the variance in the LSP variables. Across all three canonical functions, the EPQ variates together accounted for only a total of 9.0% of the variance of the LSP variables.

### All Personality and Communication Style Variables

The third canonical correlation analysis focused on the relationship of the four LSP variables with all the trait-like personality and communication style variables. This final canonical correlation was significant,  $\Lambda = .076$ ,  $F(144, 560.27) = 3.54$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ . All four canonical functions were significant: Function 1,  $R^2 = .130$ ,  $F(144, 560.27) = 3.54$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ , Function 2,  $R^2 = .096$ ,  $F(105, 423.14) = 2.76$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ , Function 3,  $R^2 = .136$ ,  $F(68, 284) = 2.23$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ , and Function 4,  $R^2 = .276$ ,  $F(33, 143) = 1.65$ ,  $p \leq .024$ . Across all four canonical functions 63.8% of the variance was shared between the two sets of canonical variates.

As seen in Table 3, the first canonical function links higher people-orientation in listening to the following characteristics:

- higher extraversion and lower psychoticism,
- higher communication competence,
- higher attentiveness, perceptiveness and responsiveness,

TABLE 3  
 Canonical Correlation of Listening Orientations with Personality and  
 Communication Style Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Function 1</i>	<i>Function 2</i>	<i>Function 3</i>	<i>Function 4</i>
People-oriented	<b>.912</b>	.245	<b>.330</b>	.009
Content-oriented	.020	<b>.841</b>	-.280	<b>.462</b>
Action-oriented	-.121	<b>.768</b>	<b>.590</b>	-.218
Time-oriented	-.214	.200	<b>.721</b>	<b>.628</b>
Gender Role				
Masculinity	.137	<b>.338</b>	.107	.055
Femininity	<b>.374</b>	-.063	.008	.161
EPQ				
Extraversion	<b>.507</b>	-.132	.172	.234
Neuroticism	-.072	.217	<b>.311</b>	-.180
Psychoticism	<b>-.437</b>	.189	.041	<b>.321</b>
Communication Competence	<b>.750</b>	-.075	.130	.079
Interaction Involvement				
Attentiveness	<b>.548</b>	.048	-.245	-.027
Perceptiveness	<b>.553</b>	-.044	.062	-.224
Responsiveness	<b>.529</b>	-.052	-.031	-.159
Communication Style				
Friendly	<b>.616</b>	.005	-.018	<b>.318</b>
Impression Leaving	<b>.316</b>	<b>.319</b>	.132	.026
Relaxed	.057	-.048	.125	.114
Argumentative	-.024	<b>.432</b>	.065	.291
Attentive	<b>.484</b>	<b>.383</b>	-.129	-.001
Precise	.183	<b>.792</b>	-.101	.160
Animated	<b>.479</b>	.245	.117	.266
Dramatic	.232	.289	.219	.142
Open	<b>.456</b>	.001	.235	<b>.310</b>
Dominant	.260	.263	.256	.143
Self Image	<b>.502</b>	.230	.196	.037
Communication Motives				
Pleasure	<b>.578</b>	-.091	.212	.138
Affection	<b>.662</b>	-.084	-.049	.074
Inclusion	.174	-.069	.097	.037
Escape	-.078	-.120	.169	.019
Relaxation	<b>.308</b>	-.212	.260	.242
Control	<b>-.352</b>	.089	<b>.363</b>	.202
Verbal Aggressiveness	<b>-.423</b>	.186	.151	.206
Argumentativeness				
Approach	-.060	<b>.472</b>	.244	.164
Avoid	.249	-.234	.024	-.070
Feeling Misunderstood	<b>-.334</b>	.208	.030	.105
Feeling Understood	<b>.428</b>	-.187	.246	.002

(Continued)

TABLE 3  
(Continued)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Function 1</i>	<i>Function 2</i>	<i>Function 3</i>	<i>Function 4</i>
PRCA				
Dyadic	-.456	.053	-.261	-.121
Group	-.222	.044	.116	.001
Meeting	-.253	-.003	-.068	-.240
Public	-.161	-.039	.031	.005
Receiver Apprehension	-.560	-.009	.218	.124

- lower receiver apprehension and lower interpersonal communication apprehension,
- a friendlier, more attentive, animated and open communication style,
- a better self image,
- more motivated by affection and pleasure, and less motivated by control,
- less verbally aggressive, and
- feeling more understood and less misunderstood.

While the first listening canonical variate accounted for 14.4% of the variance of the LSP variables, the trait and style canonical variate accounted for 9.2% of the variance of the LSP variables.

According to the second canonical function, higher content- and action-orientations in listening were associated with:

- a more precise, argumentative, attentive, and impression leaving communication style,
- greater masculinity, and
- greater tendency to engage actively in argument.

The second listening canonical variate accounted for 38.0% of the variance in the LSP variables whereas the second trait and style canonical variate accounted for 19.3% of the variance in the LSP variables.

The third canonical function reveals that higher time- and action-orientations (and to a lesser extent, higher people-orientation) are associated with higher neuroticism and control. Here the third listening canonical variate accounted for 28.2% of the variance in the LSP variables. The third trait and behavior canonical variate accounted for 11.6% of the variance in the LSP variables.

In the final canonical function, higher time- and content-orientations are associated with higher psychoticism, and a friendlier and more open communication style. The fourth listening canonical variate accounted for 19.4% of the variance

in the LSP variables and the fourth trait and behavior canonical variate accounted for 5.4% of the variance in the LSP variables.

Across all four canonical functions, the listening variates accounted for 100% of the variance in the LSP variables; the trait and style variates together accounted for a total of 45.5% of the variance of the LSP variables.

## DISCUSSION

The following sections will discuss the results presented in the previous section. Each canonical correlation will be discussed separately; a general discussion will proceed followed by limitations and suggestions for future research.

### Gender Role

This canonical correlation indicates that gender, as measured by the BSRI, has a systematic relationship with the LSP variables. The relationship as presented in the first canonical function is such that higher self-reported masculinity and femininity are both associated with higher people-orientation in listening. Following Bem's (1974) original conceptualization of gender, people-oriented listeners could be described as androgynous. However, the suggested scoring of androgyny as the difference between masculinity and femininity is incapable of revealing the association of gender role with listening styles because it conflates high scores on both masculinity and femininity with low scores on both masculinity and femininity. Both situations result in scores around zero. The distinctive association of people-orientation in listening only emerges when masculinity and femininity are allowed to vary independently.

The most important implication stemming from the association of both high femininity and high masculinity with a more people-oriented style of listening is that a people-oriented style of listening is not primarily a "touchy-feely" matter of attending just to how other people feel. People-orientation in listening also seems to focus on getting things done at the same time, hence the association with masculinity. This finding can be partially explained by reviewing the results of the Weaver et al. (1995) study. When looking at the empathic response style of different orientations in listening it appears that even while people-oriented listeners "are likely to express considerable concern for the welfare of others" they are not likely to "[experience] congruent emotions" (p. 138). Ultimately, the first canonical function points to a balancing act inherent in the people-oriented listening style whereby people-oriented listeners focus on both achieving conversational goals and maintaining relationships.

The second canonical function coincides with previous research where an agentic orientation (i.e., higher masculinity and lower femininity) is associated

with the other three listening orientations (Johnston et al., 2000). However, unlike prior studies which associated femininity with people-oriented listening and masculinity with content-, action-, and time-orientations in listening, this canonical analysis indicates that people-oriented listening is associated with both high femininity and high masculinity.

It should be noted, however, that the two canonical variates for masculinity and femininity accounted for only 5% of the variance in the four listening orientations. While gender role has a systematic relationship with listening style, it is a rather small relationship. Therefore, there was reason to control for gender in the subsequent canonical analysis of the EPQ variables.

### EPQ Variables

The canonical correlation between the set of four listening orientations and the three EPQ variables controlling for masculinity and femininity was significant. It also proved to be quite discerning insofar as there were three highly significant canonical functions. The first function revealed that people-oriented listeners tend to be more extraverted, less psychotic, and less neurotic. This pattern of personality traits would seem to facilitate the balancing act inherent in the people-oriented listening style. High extraversion orients and focuses listeners on their interaction with others. Low psychoticism avoids the social callousness and self-focus that would impede sensitivity to others. Similarly, low neuroticism avoids the crippling social anxiety of anticipating negative reactions to self that also would impede a realistic sensitivity to others.

The second significant canonical function reveals that high neuroticism is associated with high action-, time-, and people-orientations, a pattern that Bodie and Villaume (2003) report to be associated with a dramatic, animated and forceful communicator style. While Weaver (1998) argued that Ns are conceptually marked by communicative indifference and frustration, the association of high neuroticism with this pattern of listening and speaking styles points more in the direction of high defensive activation focusing on managing the threat of negative reactions from others. Such threat management inherently involves the action-, time-, and people-orientations. The key feature, however, is the lack of any content orientation required for such threat management.

The third canonical function identifies that high psychoticism is associated with high time-orientation. Ps may feel that listening is more of a chore and hence not stimulating enough for them. They may become frustrated with people that talk, in their perception, too much, which is indicative of egocentricity.

The overall implication of this canonical analysis is that each personality type seems to be associated with a unique profile of listening orientations. To further explore the relationship of personality with these patterns of listening and speaking styles, the final canonical correlation will add a wide range of more

communicatively oriented personality traits and communicator styles. The objective is to determine whether the patterns of association reported in Bodie and Villaume (2003) and in the previous two canonical correlations remain stable and consistent with the addition of other variables.

### All Personality and Communication Style Variables

The third and final canonical correlation produced four significant canonical functions linking the LSP variables with a host of trait-like personality and communication style variables. The first function showed that individuals reporting people-centered listening also report a socially adept personality that focuses on the other person in a communicatively competent fashion. In fact, the strongest association was with self-reported communicative competence, which essentially encompasses the ability to balance appropriateness and effectiveness. People-oriented listeners seem highly comfortable being attentive not only to the needs of the other person but also to the goals and flow of the interaction as manifested in high loadings for all three dimensions of interaction involvement, namely attentiveness, perceptiveness, and responsiveness. This appears to lead to a relaxed demeanor and willingness to engage in conversation for the purposes of establishing a pleasurable, warm, and relaxed connection with others. People-oriented listeners do not seek to control others and avoid verbal aggression. Rather, they tend to feel that they are understood by others and not misunderstood by others. It should be noted that this function exhibits the same pattern of loadings for the variables in the first function reported by Bodie and Villaume (2003). Consequently, the additional personality variables have fleshed out the description of people-oriented listeners.

The second canonical function indicates that the simultaneous preference for content- and action-orientations is associated with a masculine personality marked by a more precise, attentive, and active display of arguing the issues that leaves an impression on other people. This style is not only indicative of the masculine gender-role but is also consistent with a preference to receive information that is highly technical and organized. This function corresponds directly with the second canonical function reported by Bodie and Villaume (2003) with the addition of higher masculinity and the willingness to be argumentative (but not verbally aggressive).

The third canonical function showed that the combination of time-, action-, and to a lesser extent, people-orientations reported by Bodie and Villaume is associated with the neurotic personality and a motivation to control others. It seems that *Ns* are motivated primarily by a defensive reaction seeking to control the anticipated negative reactions of others as quickly as possible during interaction. Whatever it takes to accomplish this interpersonal defense is not related to the management of the content of communication. However, the pattern of communicator style loadings reported in Bodie and Villaume (2003) does not appear in this canonical function, probably because loadings tend to decrease in

size for the third, fourth, and subsequent significant canonical functions consisting of variances left unaccounted for by the prior canonical functions.

In the final canonical function, higher time- and content- orientations are associated with higher psychoticism and a friendlier and more open communication style. Therefore, individuals who prefer to restrict listening time and listen to highly technical information from highly credible sources seem to see themselves as friendly, argumentative, and open. In other words, they seem to say what they want to and do not necessarily worry about the effect on others that may run counter to their expectations. Again, because the overall loadings for other variables are relatively low, there may be other characteristics that may be associated with this style, for example, lower perceptiveness. The self-absorbed viewpoint of high psychotics would naturally lead to less inclination and ability to identify how the other person is making sense of the interaction. It should be noted that this canonical function is a new function that was not identified in Bodie and Villaume (2003). It probably surfaced in this analysis because of the addition of the EPQ variables to the analysis.

In sum, four patterns describe the association between listening styles and trait-like personality and communicator style variables:

1. High people-orientation in listening is associated with high communication competence and interaction involvement, low communication apprehension, a friendlier, more animated and more open communication style. In addition, people-orientation in listening is marked by the motivation to communicate in order to create pleasurable and warm ties to other people rather than trying to control them.
2. The combination of high content- and action-orientations in listening is associated with a more masculine personality and greater tendency toward an active, precise, and impression leaving argumentative style.
3. High time-, action-, and to a lesser extent people-orientations in listening are associated with higher neuroticism and greater motivation to use communication to control other people.
4. Higher time- and content-orientations are associated with higher psychoticism and a friendlier and a more open communicator style.

These four patterns constitute a relatively complete specification of the variance in the four LSP scores, because the four canonical variates formed from the LSP scores account for 100% of the variance in the LSP scores. In other words, there is no unexplained variance left in the LSP scores. In this dataset there are no other systematic patterns of listening styles. Furthermore, the canonical variates of the personality and communication style variables account for 45.5% of the variance in the LSP scores. While there is the possibility that other such variables could also be significantly associated with these four patterns of listening

orientations, the variables used in this analysis have provided a substantive description of how listening styles relate to personality and communication style.

The four canonical functions found significant in this study serve to establish that the people-oriented style is the only pure listening style supported by this interval level analysis. The other three patterns are characterized by combinations of the remaining listening orientations. It may be more heuristic in the long run to identify three other listening styles by characterizations based on the second, third, and fourth canonical functions reported here.

This stability of findings was also consistent with findings from Bodie and Villaume (2003). Three of the four functions discovered in this final correlation were also found in the Bodie and Villaume study. Additionally, each of these three functions was elucidated with the addition of relevant variables. Also found was a fourth function because of the introduction of the EPQ variables with specific emphasis on psychoticism, which appears to the personality of people heavily dependent on message content and time limitations.

### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The two most major limitations to this study derive from the number and nature of the participants. First, the number of participants is undesirably low for the number of variables involved in the third canonical correlation reported. Ideally, there should be 10 participants per variable in the analysis; otherwise there may be a loss of power and stability in the results. However, the loss of power is not germane given the significance of all four possible canonical functions. The possible loss of stability is somewhat muted by the fact that the same canonical functions appeared in the first and second canonical analyses where there were sufficient participants. However, the heuristic character of the results clearly calls for this analysis to be replicated with a larger base of participants.

More importantly, the fact that all participants in this study were university students may affect the nature and strength of the canonical functions derived. These students have not held professional-level jobs with real pressures to get work done efficiently and effectively. It is possible that the listening preferences of these students may change with the added pressures and complexity of professional life after university. This study should be replicated with a sample of adults holding jobs in the working world. It is possible that people-oriented listening may no longer be characterized with all the positive associations reported in this study. Content-, action-, and time-orientations in listening may become more positively evaluated. In this regard, sampling participants from geographical locales outside the southeastern United States may also affect the nature of people-oriented listening.

Some statistical control should be used when replicating this study to control for social desirability. It may be that high people-orientation, high masculinity and femininity, high communication competence, high interaction involvement,

low communication apprehension can derive from participants seeking to portray themselves in the best light possible rather than accurately reporting their personal characteristics.

Finally, the crucial test of these four patterns of listening orientations will come from the analysis of other-reported assessments of listening and communication behaviors. Self-reported listening and communication styles are subject to the bias inherent in self-perception.

In the meanwhile, this study has offered the most comprehensive and heuristic description of how listening styles, communicator style, and personality are related to each other. Further research along these lines is clearly warranted.

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