Individual Listening Styles: Short Form of Listening Styles Profile-Revised (LSP-R8)

Given how democracy is based inherently on difference, it is no surprise that much research on political talk, during election seasons and beyond, has focused on exposure to disagreement (i.e., "hearing the other side," Mutz, 2006). However, whether the individuals involved in the disagreement benefit from or are harmed by this exposure to disagreement may very well depend on *how* they approach such interactions. Scholarship in this area shows that exposure to disagreement, often facilitated by the heterogeneity of one's social and political networks, does not have consistent effects (see Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013 for a recent review). On the one hand, network heterogeneity is positively associated with political participation (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999) and expressing one's opinion in various arenas (Krassa, 1990; Nir, 2011). On the other hand, an increase in viewpoints also can increase the perceived complexity of discussed issues and thereby impede own action or at least not make it more likely to happen (see Rojas, 2008).

We posit that the effects of exposure to disagreement in political talk depend not merely on whether citizens hear the other side, but whether they *listen* to the other side. In other words, the theoretical argument underlying this question proposal is that scholars should examine the concept of an *individual's listening style* (Bodie & Worthington, 2010; Bodie, Worthington, & Gearhart, 2013; Watson, Barker, & Weaver, 1995). This concept, in its current form (Bodie et al., 2013), taps an individual's general disposition to: (a) listen to understand emotions and

connect with others (relational listening); (b) withhold judgment and consider all sides of an issue before responding (analytical listening); (c) focus on inconsistencies and errors during conversations (critical listening); and (d) see listening as a transaction aimed at solving concrete problems (task-oriented listening). These types of orientation (or "habitual ways of listening," in the parlance of Bodie et al., 2013, p. 73) have democratic implications. For example, the latter three clearly align with Schudson's (1997) prioritization of problem-solving conversation over sociable, lighter-fare-based conversation as the soul of democracy. All four listening style dimensions also reflect directly some central normative concerns of modern theories of democratic deliberation. Deliberative conversation and discussion comprise both analytical and social processes (Gastil, 2008, p. 20). Relational listening, expressive of respect, recognition, and a motivation to include others, is a crucial component of the social process. Analytical, critical, and task-oriented listening, expressive of a motivation to weigh a broad range of arguments regarding social problems and their resolution, and to "get it right," are crucial components of the analytical process. In other words, relational listening refers to the listening-*for* aspect of political deliberation while analytical, critical, and task-oriented listening refer to its listening-*to* aspect (Dobson, 2014, p. 110).

While the importance of good listening for democratic citizenship may seem obvious, especially in a deliberative model of democracy, it has been recognized as a major blind spot in political theory and research (Dobson, 2012, 2014). For empirical researchers, the study of individual listening styles has potential to provide solve the unexplained complexities regarding the antecedents and consequences of exposure to political disagreement mentioned above by enabling them to focus on how, not just if, people engage in such interactions. Such study would allow a focus from *hearing* the other side to *listening* to the other side.

Consequently, our proposal for the 2016 ANES Pilot Study is that items on listening style be included. Why? These items would allow scholars to identify among U.S. citizens the distribution, preconditions, and consequences of differing approaches to exposure to disagreement. Specifically, we aim to investigate for the first time:

(a) how different listening styles are associated with general interest in politics, broad political preferences, patterns of political media use, and political participation in organizations;

(b) whether and how citizens with differing listening styles vary in their willingness to engage in political conversations where exposure to disagreement is likely; and

(c) whether citizens' listening styles modulate how exposure to disagreement affects general political interest and satisfaction with democracy.

Reasons for Including a Measure of Individual Listening Styles

Theoretical motivations

To date no general survey in the social sciences has attempted implementing a psychometric measure of listening styles, in spite of their normative theoretical relevance and potential to empirically clarify many of the remaining complexities regarding the sources and consequences of disagreement in citizen talk.

The lack of high-quality data from representative population surveys has prevented for solid analyses of how listening styles intervene in public opinion formation and citizen communication processes. Some important research questions that can be answered using a proper listening styles measure have been given above. One major theoretical expectation is that citizens high on the more forthcoming relational and analytical listening dimensions will be more inviting and appreciative of exposure to disagreement than those high on the more problem-

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focused critical and goal-oriented listening style dimensions. Such differences in listening style should thus modulate the individual experiences of exposure to disagreement and moderate its effects on how often it is sought out as well as other indicators of civic engagement. Including an LSP measure in the ANES Pilot would therefore pave the way towards the study of how a culture of political listening interacts with a culture of political participation and civic engagement.

Analytical motivations

Listening styles were first conceptualized as a four-dimensional individual-difference construct reflecting differences in the degree to which individuals were habitually oriented towards people, action, content, and time when receiving information. These dimensions were subsequently operationalized using a 16-item scale, the original Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16, Watson et al., 1995). However, this self-report measure proved unreliable (Bodie & Worthington, 2010) and Bodie et al. (2013) recently presented a revised version, the LSP-R. The LSP-R, comprising the four listening dimensions named at the beginning, demonstrated higher construct validity, internal consistency, and greater stability across time than the LSP-16 (see also Gearhart, Denham, & Bodie, 2014; Keaton, Keteyian, & Bodie, 2014). However, as a 24-item self-report measure of orientations towards attending to and processing information in interpersonal communication the LSP-R is simply too lengthy for use in a general population survey, in which administration time is a scarce commodity.

Consequently, if we are to study the democratic functions of listening styles in the wider public of a democracy based on difference, we need to develop and implement a more economic instrument than the LSP-R. We therefore propose a short form of the LSP-R, the LSP-R8, which

balances proper construct validity and reliability with the economic efficiency of capturing individual listening styles with only eight items.

<div align="center">The Psychometric Quality of the LSP-R8</div>

The proposed short form of the LSP-R is based on an original pilot study undertaken at a German university in late 2014. We assessed the internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the proposed measure using a two-wave paper-and-pencil panel survey of undergraduate students ($N = 165$). Based on these data, we conclude this eight-item battery, the LSP-R8, is: (a) substantively sound as it covers all facets of the LSP; (b) statistically sound as it has been tested in prior research, including the pilot study; and (c) pragmatically sound. In sum, the proposed items are reliable and valid by psychometric standards, and more important, economic enough for use in a general population survey.

The proposed LSP-R8 scale is a short form of the LSP-R (Bodie et al., 2013). Item selection for the LSP-R8 was carried out to minimize losses in content coverage and reliability by selecting the two highest-loading items from each of the four LSP-R dimensions for inclusion into the short scale.

After initial item selection, the LSP-R8 was pre-validated in our late 2014 pilot study, which produced evidence of its internal consistency reliability, factorial structure, and test-retest reliability (four-week interval).

All four dimensions of the LSP-R8 proved to be internally consistent at t1 and t2 (relational listening: $\alpha_{t1} = .79$, $\alpha_{t2} = .78$; analytical listening: $\alpha_{t1} = .90$, $\alpha_{t2} = .88$; task-oriented listening: $\alpha_{t1} = .71$, $\alpha_{t2} = .75$; critical listening: $\alpha_{t1} = .84$, $\alpha_{t2} = .82$). Principal components analyses yielded the expected four-factor solutions according to the Kaiser criterion for both t1 and t2 data.

The pilot study consisted of a two-wave panel, in which participating students filled out the full questionnaire again four weeks after the initial administration. The test-retest reliabilities of the proposed two-item short-form measures of each listening style dimension in the LSP-R8 were very good to adequate, attesting to the stability of the short measure across time (relational listening: $r = .67$ analytical listening: $r = .59$; task-oriented listening: $r = .65$; critical listening: $r = .76$).

Most important beyond the validity estimation is that the LSP-R8 is much more economic in terms of completion time than the original LSP-R – and therefore much more practical for administration in a general population survey. By reducing the number of items needed to measure individual listening styles from 24 to eight, the LSP-R8 provides an improvement in completion time of about 60%. Together with its positive measurement characteristics it thus, for the first time, makes feasible the measurement of individual listening styles in general population surveys.

In sum, the LSP-R8 has the theoretically expected factorial structure and adequate internal consistency reliability while being economic enough to allow administration in large-scale surveys. Given the advances it promises for the empirical study of political talk, exposure to disagreement, and political participation, we propose it for inclusion in the 2016 ANES Pilot Study. Table 1 presents the exact wording and response format of the LSP-R8.

Table 1. The Short-Form Listening Styles Profile-Revised (LSP-R8)

Question Wording	LSP Facet
Below are several items that people use to describe themselves as a listener. We would like you to assess how each statement applies to you by marking your level of agreement/disagreement with each item. The stronger you disagree with a statement the lower the number you will circle. The stronger you agree with a statement, the higher the number you will circle. Please do not think of any specific listening situation but of your general ways of listening, how you typically listen in most situations.	
When listening to others, I am mainly concerned with how they are feeling.	Relational
I listen to understand the emotions and mood of the speaker.	Relational
I wait until all the facts are presented before forming judgments and opinions.	Analytical
I fully listen to what a person has to say before forming any opinions.	Analytical
I am impatient with people who ramble on during conversations.	Task-oriented
I find it difficult to listen to people who take too long to get their ideas across.	Task-oriented
I often catch errors in other speakers' logic.	Critical
I tend to naturally notice errors in what other speakers' say.	Critical

Note: Responses are recorded on a 1-5 scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree).

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