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**The Influence of Cultural Individualism and Collectivism on US  
and Post Soviet listening Styles**

Nadiya Dragan  
University of Maine

John C. Sherblom  
University of Maine

Nadiya Dragan is a graduate student in the Department of Communication and Journalism and coordinator of the Global Links outreach program at the University of Maine. John Sherblom (Ph.D., University of Maine) is a Professor of Communication and Journalism at the University of Maine. Please send all correspondence to John Sherblom, Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Maine, 5724 Dunn Hall room 420, Orono, ME 04469-5724. Email: [john@maine.edu](mailto:john@maine.edu), phone: 207 581-1940.

### **Abstract**

Listening is an important aspect of communication. Individuals differ in the ways in which they listen and in the listening styles that they adopt. These listening styles become more the function of habit than of conscious choice and people often come to rely on a predominant listening style (Aaronson & Scarborough, 1977, Shiffin & Schneider, 1977, Langer, 1980). These predominant listening styles have been shown to be influenced by aspects of culture (Orbe & Bruess, 2005; Kiewitz, Weaver, Brosius, & Wimann, 1997) . The present study investigates the individualist-collectivist dimension of culture on listening style by examining the listening style orientations of US and Post-Soviet groups of participants. The results show cultural influences on listening styles such that individualist cultures stimulate a greater degree of action oriented listening while collectivist cultures stimulate more people oriented listening styles. One caveat, however, is that even among the US group of participants, with its individualist cultural influences, people oriented listening styles predominate, just not to as great an extent as in the Post-Soviet group with its collectivist cultural influences. These findings offer insights into the influence of culture on listening styles and suggest implications for future research.

Communication requires the active participation of both speakers and listeners to create shared meaning. Each participant becomes involved and responds uniquely to the communication situation, yet people develop listening styles and these listening styles reflect the influence of that person's cultural background (Aaronson & Scarborough, 1977; Langer, 1980; Shiffin & Schneider 1977). Understanding the cultural influences is important to an increasingly intercultural world of communication. The present study examines one set of influences on listening styles by developing comparisons between people participating in the cultures of the former Soviet Union and of the US.

Nicotera, Clinkscales and Walker (2003) suggest that cultural research should be based on an analysis of a common set of symbolic systems in which the cultural members learn to understand the world while avoiding stereotypes and assumptions about the group of people in a certain geographic region. In accord with this precept we examine the cultural influences on these two groups by focusing not on the political boundaries of countries, but by examining differences in an underlying cultural dimension. This dimension of individualism-collectivism suggests research predictions about differences in the listening styles of people from the countries of the former Soviet Union and the US. By examining the individualist-collectivist influences of these cultures on the predominant listening styles adopted by their cultural participants, the present study makes a contribution to the broader ongoing study of cultural influences on communication.

### **Listening: An Important Aspect of Communication**

Communication is often equated with speaking: people delivering speeches, conversing, lecturing, or writing letters. Although listening is an equally important aspect of communication it is often ignored. Janusik (2004) argues that listening has not achieved the same degree of analysis as speaking within the communication literature and that the listener's role often remains overlooked as research focuses more on the speaker or the message itself (Rubin, 1990; Janusik, 2004). This relative paucity of research into listening occurs even though studies show that people spend more time listening than speaking and, in general, tend to have poor listening skills (Trenholm, 1999).

Janusik (2004) suggests that part of the challenge to research has been a lack of agreement as to what constitutes listening (Glenn, 1989; Witkin, 1990). This is demonstrated by the many definitions and models of listening used by communication scholars. However, there are several consistent elements found within most of these definitions. A content analysis of 50 definitions of listening found that the five most common elements are: perception, attention, interpretation, remembering, and response (Glenn, 1989).

Communication is a dynamic process (Schiffrin, 1999). Conversation requires at least two people (Nofsinger, 1991), who take turns as speaker and listener but it is more than a process of one person responding to the other. It is a complex process of meaning creation in which both parties, the speaker and the listener, are actively involved (Sacks, 1992; Janusik, 2004).

Hence, listening is more than the process of hearing. Hearing occurs when sound waves strike the eardrum and cause vibrations that are then transmitted to the brain. Listening is a complex process that occurs when the brain reconstructs the electrochemical impulses obtained from hearing into a representation of the original sound to give it meaning (Adler & Rodman, 1991). The listener does not simply respond to the message but is a co-creator of the meaning (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989). Active listening is a constitutive part in the production of that meaning with its attendant

perceptions, feelings, and goal of understanding. Listening, therefore, is not an automatic process but one that requires active participation in the communication process. Both the speaker and listener fully participate in this active process of meaning construction.

Given that meaning is constituted through an active listening process all listeners do not receive the same communicated meaning. Their meaning is shaped by their listening style and the cultural influences upon that style. As semiotics suggests: the decoding of any text involves not simply a basic recognition and comprehension of what that text says but an interpretation and evaluation of its meaning placed within the context of the relevant cultural system of codes (Chandler, 2002). Variations in these interpretations are inevitable due to differences in the communicators' underlying meaning codes. These codes vary by social context and are influenced by underlying cultural understandings. The process of text "decoding" and of meaning construction, therefore, is influenced by differences in cultural background.

### **The Influence of Culture on Listening Style**

Orbe and Bruess (2005) suggest that the effect of cultural influences on listening poses a challenge for listeners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bentley (2000) argues that the biggest part of this challenge will be to whom we listen. Often times we will be listening to a person from another culture who does not speak with the same semiotic code. Thus, the ability to understand differences in these semiotic codes and communicate with people from other cultures will become a highly valued asset in a global community. More specifically, understanding the cultural influences on listening styles is important to developing greater intercultural sensitivity and communication competence. To be successful in communicating across cultures a person must take into account the different cultural expectations of the participating individuals as listeners and be able to respond to their communication within the context of their listening habits and cultural norms (Imhof & Janusik, 2006).

Aaronson and Scarborough (1977), Langer (1980), and Shiffin and Schneider (1977) suggest that most people listen as a function of habit rather than conscious choice, relying primarily on a single, predominant listening style. The results of other research show that most listeners are hesitant to switch from their predominant listening style even when use of an alternative style could enhance their reception and recall of important information (Barker, 1971; Bostrom, 1990; Roach & Wyatt, 1988; Steil, Barker, & Watson, 1983; Wolvin & Coakley, 1992). Hence, an individual's predominant listening style generally reflects a structured habitual response (Watson, Barker, & Weaver, 1995). Several researchers have investigated the effects of cultural influence upon this habituated listening style.

Harris (2004) examined Mexican listening behavior and Veenstra (2004) investigated the historical background affecting the listening styles of modern Arab men. The results of both research studies demonstrated the importance of understanding the historical cultural values within the community and showed how these values affect the communicative listening behavior of people.

Imhof and Janusik (2006) conducted a study comparing US and German perceptions of what listening meant to them. The results of their study showed significant differences in the conceptualizing of listening by each cultural group and demonstrated culture influences on the way people conceptualize the process of listening itself and its importance in communication.

Kiewitz, Weaver, Brosius, and Wimann (1997) compared the listening styles of people from Israel, Germany and the US. The results of their study showed that listening is influenced by a participant's cultural background. The Germans endorsed action oriented listening. They approached listening with a active and direct style focusing on rhetorical considerations to arbitrate or negotiate interpersonal interactions. The Israelis preferred a more content oriented style of listening which involved a careful analysis of the information as a predominant aspect of the communication. The US participants emphasized the social aspects of the interaction and were concerned about the amount of time that the interactions required.

Lewis's (1999) research found that US and German respondents had different expectations of listening. The main interest of the US participant in their study was to listen in order to be entertained and persuaded, while the German communicator placed more value on receiving detailed information and learning more about the context. In addition, the US and German participants were willing to listen for a different amount of time. The US participants were willing to listen for up to 30 minutes. The Germans could listen for more than an hour. In addition, the US listeners expected comic relief somewhere in the presentation. The German listeners also thought humor was inappropriate.

Culture is clearly an influence on listening style. Identifying some of the many possible influences of culture on listening remains, however, something of an open question. Building on the work of Hall (1990), Hofstede (1980), and Rösch and Segler (1987) Harris (2003) investigates the influence of high and low cultural context on listening style. In high-context cultures, such as the French, Japanese, and Vietnamese cultures, personal relationships are highly valued. Harris reports research evidence that people in this type of high-context culture prefer a more people oriented listening style. In low-context cultures, such as the German, Swiss, Scandinavian, and US cultures, people focus on completing tasks and there is not as much emphasis placed on human relationship. Harris finds a greater preference in this type of low-context culture for an action oriented style.

Kiewitz et al. (1997) examine the cultural influences of the individualism-collectivism dimension on listening and show listeners from the US, among the most individualist of cultures, to be action oriented in their listening style when compared to the more collectivist orientation of Israeli culture. Their results suggest that a cultural focus on individual efforts and accomplishments promotes an action oriented listening style while a collectivist orientation de-emphasizes action and emphasizes a people oriented style.

This approach to studying the dimensions of cultural influence on listening style is fruitful. However, it is best undertaken from a perspective of looking at these influences as a set of learned rules and resources of a cultural group upon which an individual draws when acting in a social environment. This approach avoids essentializing cultural groups in terms of their geographic and political boundaries or nationalities and helps to avoid creating or reinforcing stereotypes about a certain ethnic group or nationality.

### **Cultural Identity**

“We are programmed by our culture to do what we do and be what we are. In other words, culture is the software of the human mind that provides an operating environment for human behaviors. Although individual behaviors may be varied, all

members within the same operating environment share important characteristics of the culture” (Chen and Starosta, 1998, p. 25).

Triandis (1995) suggests that culture is to society what memory is to individuals. Cultural expectations shape a person’s reaction to communication (Starosta and Chen, 2005). To understand a certain set of cultural communication patterns it is necessary to determine what core values underlie that culture (Veenstra, 2004).

Franklin and Widdis (2004) argue that a person’s identity, is not a ‘thing’ to be objectively described. It is a field of cultural discourse. “It is each person’s perception of themselves: as an individual, in relation to a group or groups, and by contrast with other individuals and groups” (Franklin & Widdis, 2004, p. xii). As Wess (1996) puts it, “the unique body, in its life and death, exists in all cultures, and one may expect it always to be signified somehow, but the signification’s rhetorical weighing can vary from culture to culture” (Wess, 1996, p. 148). The ratio in which people in different cultures hold perceptions of themselves as individuals and in relation to a group or groups defines some as more collectivist and others as more individualist.

### **Collectivism and Individualism**

“Unstated assumptions” are one of culture’s most important aspects (Triandis, 1995, p. 4). Thus, in more collectivist cultures, the assumption that we are bound together into tight groups is fundamental. The assumption that we are independent entities, different and distant from our groups, is fundamental in more individualist cultures.

The terms collectivism and individualism are given various meanings and there have been numerous attempts by social psychologists to measure tendencies toward them. Triandis (1995) defines collectivism as “a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives; are primarily motivated by the norms of and duties imposed by these collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives” (Triandis, 1995, p. 2). Individualism describes “a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analyses of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others” (Triandis, 1995, p. 2).

Veenstra (2004) identifies collectivism with loyalty to extended family and community. The collective family unit is larger than the traditional individualist nuclear family and extends to the entire society making the whole community a focus of the individual emotional experience. The communication style of people in an Arabic community, for example, can vary substantially from that used by people in the US. The more collectivist Arabic society shapes its communication behavior by putting the largest emphasis on the feelings of the people involved in the interaction during the process of listening. People from more individualist cultures such as the US can find such a listening style confusing because they generally have a preference for cause-effect arguments and a linear form of communication (Veenstra, 2004). A failure to understand this difference can mean a failure in the effectiveness of communication.

### **The Role of Cultural Myth**

Veenstra (2004) argues that the collectivist and individualist historical features of a society play a significant role in the development of cultural ideology and myth. Having a different cultural ideology is one thing that underlies these cultural differences, but

there is more to it than ideology: differences in values, stereotypes, a sense of community, expectations of the nation, and traditional ways of thinking are all part of the collectivist and individualist features of the society. Differing cultural myths surrounding aspects of collective power become a type of *topoi* or commonplace for people in these two cultural groups. The myths unite people providing a common understanding of the world. “Myths dissolve individuals and yet they empower individuals because individuals become part of large powerful entities” (Laskin, 2005, p. 5).

Osborn (1990) and Laskin (2005) conceptualize the cultural myth as a sociological phenomenon that unites people in communities providing an underlying meaning that illustrates the values, faith, and feelings that make up the social character of the people and community. Different myths come to dominance in different cultures at different times. Cultures “fish in the pool of collective unconscious for myths that help understand what is happening in the world and help distinguish a nation from the rest of the world” (Laskin, 2005, p. 6).

Hart (1997) calls these myths the master stories that describe exceptional people doing exceptional things and that serve as moral guides to proper action. Jewett and Lawrence (1977) identify myth as a tale of unknown origin that is tied to religious beliefs and that serves to explain the origin or purpose of some natural or social phenomenon. Cassier (1946) sees myth in close relationship to language and argues that myth as well as language provides a symbolic force that produces a world of influence. Laskin (2005) views myth as both a psychological phenomenon of the collective unconscious and a sociological phenomenon that unites people in community. Hence, cultural myths serve social and political functions; create, sustain, and strengthen values, beliefs and ideologies; and inevitably affect communication behavior (Lule, 2002; Strensky, 1987).

The following historical analysis of Soviet and US cultures develops the roots of collectivist and individualist cultural myths and influences on how people structure their communication behavior. The historic background of each reveals its cultural substance. In a Burkean sense “a person’s or a thing’s sub-stance would be something that stands beneath or supports the person or thing” (Burke, 1945, p. 22). History, with its events and changes in ideology, leaves an effect on a culture. ‘Substance’ designates the intrinsic essence of that culture itself. The history and ideology of the Soviet and US cultures become the scene for the establishment and development of cultural myths that form the substance beneath and that supports these two cultural groups. These cultural myths are larger and deeper than current ideology. As Laskin (2005, p. 7) states, the “phenomenon of myth refers to a large ocean of “eternal stories”, while ideologies are anglers at this ocean fishing out myths supporting their meaning-making activities”

### **Post Soviet Collectivist Cultural Influence**

Collectivism is proclaimed by many authors as the true nature of the Soviet people. The noun itself is believed by some to have originated from the description of the phenomenon brought about by the years of the First Russian Revolution (1905-1907) and the First World War (Kharkhordin, 1999). Although research shows that the words collective and collectivism were present in the Russian language before the establishment of the Soviet Union, the influence of the Soviet ideology reinforcing collectivism as the dominant value of the Russian morality is hard to deny (Hingley, 1977; Binyon, 1983; Mehnert, 1962; Kharkhordin, 1999). Before the 1917 Revolution the noun collectivism appeared in the translations of the French socialist writings and started circulating widely in the discourse of the workers’ movements. In the Soviet dictionaries collectivism was

similarly defined as the principle of comradely cooperation of laborers, “according to which the private interests of an individual were ‘consciously’ subordinated to social ones” (Kharkhordin, 1999, p. 76). Suppressing these private interests for the sake of social ones during the decades of Soviet Union government pushed the Soviet people toward a collectivist culture relying strongly on the myth of collective power.

The concept of the collective (or *Kollektiv*), as the group of people with whom the individual works, lives, and participates in sports and hobbies, has played an important role in Soviet ideology and politics as well as in the life of the Soviet people (Shlapentokh, 1989). Collectivism, as devotion to the collective, used to be one of the fundamentals of Soviet morality (Shlapentokh, 1989; Kharkhordin, 1999). This moral code presents the interests of society as superior to those of the individual. “Inside [the] Soviet Union the belief prevailed that the isolated individual was weak and vulnerable, and also prone to error and sin. For that reason emphasis was placed on conformity and collective discipline: individual enrichment was viewed with suspicion” (Hosking, 1991, p. 24). “Russians are sociable people. Their collective consciousness is strongly reinforced by the ideological approval of the *Kollektiv* and distrust of individualism in the Soviet Union” (Binyon, 1983, p. 69). The myth of collective power continues as a strong influence in Post-Soviet culture. The isolated individual is viewed as weak and prone to error and sin.

### **US Individualist Cultural Influence**

On the other hand, Bellah (1985) argues that individualism lies at the very core of US culture. Bellah cites Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a French settler who published his *Letters from an American Farmer* in 1782, as one of the first to speak specifically of the US character of individualism. In his work he sets the tone for future discussions by observing that people in the US tend to act with far greater personal initiative and self-reliance than Europeans and that they tend to be unimpressed by social rank or long usage. The historical background for the emergence of individualism in the US can be traced to “the struggle against monarchical and aristocratic authority that seemed arbitrary and oppressive to citizens prepared to assert the right to govern themselves” (Bellah, 1985, p. 142). Wess (1996) also identifies individualism as a characteristic of US culture by saying that “the rhetoric of individualism, having penetrated our culture so deeply, coaches us to look past the act to the agent for a privileged point of origination” (Wess, 1996, p. 147). Hart (1997) in his analysis of cultural identity in the US states that flattering self-perceptions and the desire for great individual accomplishments is very common among US people. Bellah (1985, p. 145) unites the notion of individualism with the admiration for heroism in US society: “A deep and continuing theme in American literature is the hero who must leave society, alone or with one or a few others, in order to realize the moral good in the wilderness, at sea, or on the margins of settled society . . . America is the inventor of that most mythic individual hero, the cowboy, who again and again saves a society he can never completely fit into.”

The differences in historical backgrounds between the Post Soviet countries and the US create a different set of assumptions within each that are based in part on collectivist and individualist cultural myths. The cultural assumptions based in these myths identify what is admirable or loathsome, useful or dangerous, good or evil, and create a role for the individual within the group that helps make sense of human life within community. These myths place the individual within a communication role and

influence the communication behavior and listening styles of the people within each of these cultural groups.

### **Measuring Differences in Listening Style**

Janusik (2004) argues that one of the reasons listening has not gained legitimacy in communication is that listening research is ambiguous and fragmented about how to measure listening. The Receiver Apprehension Test measures one's apprehension to listen to or receive information (Wheless, 1975; Beatty, 1994). The Willingness to Listen Scale measures one's perception of receiving information from intimates and non-intimates in professional, educational, and personal contexts (Roberts & Vinson, 1998). Other measures analyze one's managerial listening (Barker, Pearce, & Johnson, 1992) and one's perception of oneself as a listener querying what one does and should do (Glenn & Pood, 1989). Empirical evidence produced by these listening performance tests suggests individual differences in listening style relative to the contexts of content, relational, and emotional listening (Bostrom, 1990; Bostrom and Waldhart, 1980; Watson and Barker, 1984) and to differences in people's attitudes, beliefs and predispositions (Watson, 1993; Watson & Barker, 1990). However, "the lack of a modern theoretical framework that produces validated instrumentation has meant that many areas of listening research have gone untapped" (Janusik, 2004, p. 2).

### **The Listening Styles Profile Measurement Instrument**

Watson, Barker, and Weaver (1995) created the Listening Styles Profile (LSP) to analyze individual differences in listening style preferences. They developed a theoretical perspective on individual variability in listening styles and created the measurement instrument to examine the listening process within this theoretical perspective (Bostrom, 1990; Rhodes, 1989; Watson and Barker, 1984; Wolvin 1990; Wolvin & Coakley, 1992).

The Listening Styles Profile assesses one's perceived listening style by distinguishing among action, content, people, and time orientations. This has been shown to be a productive, reliable, and valid method of comparing large groups of people and identifying patterns of cultural influence on their predominant listening styles.

Watson et al. (1995) performed a factor analysis on data obtained from a large sample of participants (n = 1799) who completed the Listening Styles Profile. Their results produced an underlying factor structure having four dimensions. These dimensions identified the people, action, content, and time listening style subscales. Tests of these subscales demonstrated an internal test-retest reliability indicating a subscale consistency and stability in listening style over time. Consequently, the four descriptive scales of the Listening Style Profile characterize differences in people, action, content, and time oriented listening styles (Watson et al., 1995).

"People-oriented listening emerged as a style where concern for others' feelings and emotions were paramount. People-oriented listeners tried to find areas of common interest with others and respond emphatically to them. The action-oriented listening style reflected a preference for receiving concise, error-free presentations. Action-oriented listeners appeared to be particularly impatient and easily frustrated when listening to a disorganized presentation. Content-oriented listening reflected a preference for receiving complex and challenging information. Content-oriented listeners tended to evaluate facts and details carefully before forming judgments and opinions. The time-oriented listening style, on the other hand, involved a preference for brief or hurried interactions with others. Time oriented listeners

tended to let others know how much time they had to listen or tell others how much time they had to meet” (Watson et al., 1995, p. 3).

Janusik (2004) points out that analyzing action, content, people, and time orientations in listening style is consistent with the approach-avoidance literature (McCroskey, 1982) and the literature suggesting differences in listener goals and objectives (Wolvin & Coakley 1992).

Recent studies examining cultural influences on listening style have used Watson, Barker, and Weaver’s (1995) Listening Styles Profile (LSP) measurement tool. Kiewitz, Weaver, Brosius, and Wimann (1997) study used the LSP in their investigation of US and German listeners. Their analysis showed US participants to be more time and action oriented listeners while German participants preferred a more content oriented listening style. Imhof’s (2003) study which used the instrument to compare German and US participants suggests that the Germans place more emphasis on behavior orientation than Americans do. Imhof and Janusik (2006) used the scale to show that German and US participants view listening differently. Their US participants conceptualized listening as a sustaining activity which affects the listener’s knowledge structure and set of attitudes. Their German participants conceptualized listening as interactive and focused on the person and activities that support monitoring the conversation (Imhof & Janusik, 2006). These results show an action oriented US and people oriented German listening style.

### **The Present Study**

The purpose of the present study is to compare the listening styles of US and Post Soviet Union participants, anticipating that the collectivist influences of a Post Soviet culture and the individualist influences of the US culture will produce comparative differences in the predominant listening styles used by people in each of these cultural groups. We conceptualize specific predictions in the following three hypotheses:

*H1: Post Soviet and US participants will have different listening styles.*

*H2: Post Soviet participants, as representatives of a collectivist culture, will score higher on the people oriented listening style than the US participants.*

*H3: US participants, as representatives of an individualist culture, will score higher on the action oriented listening style than the Post Soviet participants.*

### **Methods**

#### **Participants and Procedure**

Participants were 58 full time students, 27 native-born US American students and 31 international students selected from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Participants were all currently enrolled in a northeastern US university. There were approximately equal numbers of female and male participants in each cultural group. The US students were approached individually by the principal investigator before and after classes and asked to participate in the study. The students from the former Soviet Union countries were approached and asked to participate during weekly coffee hour meetings for international students. These international students represented almost all 15 countries of the former Soviet Union. Participants were told only that the principal investigator was interested in listening styles and asked to respond honestly to the questionnaire. None were told the nature of the sample being selected or the comparisons to be made in the study.

The study received approval from the institutional use of human subjects committee and was conducted in accordance with those guidelines. Consent was obtained

orally from participants before they completed the questionnaire. Participant names were not connected to the completed questionnaires and no information on the questionnaire identified the participants except country of origin. The principal investigator kept a separate temporary list of participants who had completed questionnaires in order to send each respondent a copy of the summarized results at the completion of data collection. The principal investigator kept this list of participants confidential and stored the completed questionnaires in a locked box in the principal investigator’s office.

**Measures**

Each respondent completed a questionnaire and returned it to the principal investigator. The questionnaire contained 16 questions to which respondents indicated how well each applied to them on a five point Likert scale of: “Always” (4), “Frequently” (3), “Sometimes” (2), “Infrequently” (1), and “Never” (0). Participation in the study was voluntary. The assessment of listening style was calculated by comparing the two cultural groups (US and Post-Soviet) and using the action, content, people, and time listening style sub-scales as repeated measures. The results of the study are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1: ANOVA Comparisons of Listening Styles**

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Two-Way ANOVA with Repeated Measures of Listening Style Comparisons of Post Soviet and US Participant Groups

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Group	.15	1,56	.702
Listening Style	48.49	3, 54	<.001*
Group*Listening Style	7.54	3, 54	<.001*

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One-Way ANOVA Comparisons of People and Action Listening Styles Between Groups

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	US Mean	Post-Soviet Mean
People	15.97	1, 56	<.001*	3.85	4.37
Action	8.89	1, 56	.004*	3.32	2.81

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Follow-Up Duncan Comparisons of Listening Style Means within each Group

Listening Style	People	Content	Action	Time
Post Soviet Means	4.37 <sup>a</sup>	3.44 <sup>b</sup>	2.81 <sup>c</sup>	2.93 <sup>c</sup>
US Means	3.85 <sup>a</sup>	3.53 <sup>b</sup>	3.32 <sup>b</sup>	2.99 <sup>c</sup>

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\* indicates significant results.  
<sup>a, b, c</sup> listening style means having different superscripts are significantly different.

**Results**

Hypothesis 1 predicted that: *Post Soviet and US participants will have different listening styles*. A two-way analysis of variance for group (US compared to Post-Soviet country respondents) with repeated measures (the four listening styles: people, content, action, and time orientations) was performed to test this hypothesis. The results of the ANOVA suggest some support for hypothesis one, but in a complex way. The results show no significant main effect differences between the groups,  $F(1, 56) = .15, p = ns$ .

However, listening style shows a significant effect  $F(3, 54) = .48.49, p < .001$ , and a significant interaction occurs between cultural group and listening style  $F(3, 54) = 7.54, p < .001$ .

Hypothesis 2 predicted that *Post Soviet participants, as representatives of a collectivist culture, will score higher on the people oriented listening style than the US participants*. The results of a one-way ANOVA test of the people oriented listening style supports this hypothesis revealing significant differences between the two groups  $F(1, 56) = 15.97, p < .001$ , with the Post-Soviet mean (4.37) scoring significantly higher than the US mean (3.85).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the *US participants, as representatives of an individualist culture, will score higher on the action oriented listening style than the Post Soviet participants*. The results of a one-way ANOVA test of the action oriented listening style supports this prediction showing significant differences between the two groups  $F(1, 56) = 8.89, p = .004$ , with the US participant mean (3.32) scoring significantly higher than the Post-Soviet participant mean (2.81).

Follow-up Duncan multiple-range tests show that the Post-Soviet participants scored significantly higher on use of the people oriented listening style ( $M = 4.37$ ) than on any of the other styles, and significantly higher on the content oriented style ( $M = 3.44$ ), than on either action ( $M = 2.81$ ) or time ( $M = 2.93$ ) orientations. Interestingly the US participants also scored significantly higher on the people oriented listening style ( $M = 3.85$ ) than on any of the others, and significantly higher on content ( $M = 3.53$ ) and action ( $M = 3.32$ ) than on the time ( $M = 2.99$ ) orientation.

### Discussion

These results suggest the effects of cultural influence on the listening styles of the participants. Although there is no significant difference found in the main effect comparing the two cultural groups, the significant interaction between cultural group and listening style suggests a cultural influence on the pattern of listening styles. The follow-up Duncan comparisons of each group's listening style means show this pattern of differences.

The Post-Soviet group pattern of results is consistent with the predicted influence of a collectivist culture on listening style. They scored significantly higher on the people oriented style than on any of the other listening styles. Their second most reported listening style was the content orientation which occurred significantly more often than either the action or time orientations.

The one-way ANOVA results show that the US participants are significantly less people oriented than the Post Soviet participants. Behind this significant difference, however, is a more complex and surprising pattern of listening styles used by the US group of participants than was anticipated. Even though, as predicted, the US participants are significantly less people oriented than the Post Soviet participants, the US participants still choose the people oriented listening style significantly more frequently than they choose content, action or time orientated listening styles. So both the Post Soviet and the US participant groups indicate a choice for people oriented listening as their predominant style.

These results suggest that the individualism-collectivism dimension of culture has an effect on the listening styles of the respondents. The groups show the predicted differences in listening style patterns in ways that implicate the individualism-collectivism dimension of culture. That is, the US group is significantly more action

oriented and the Post-Soviet group is significantly more people oriented. These results concur with the findings of Kiewitz et al. (1997) that show US listeners to be more action oriented than listeners from a collectivist Israeli culture who are more people oriented in their listening style.

The present results go further, however, and extend earlier research by examining the pattern of listening styles within each cultural group. The present US participants are significantly more action oriented than the Post Soviet participants, but the US participants are themselves still more people oriented than action oriented in their listening style. So, even within an individualist influenced culture a people orientation to listening style is important. This result adds some complexity to the study of cultural influences on listening and suggests the usefulness of examining the pattern of multiple listening styles within a culture as well as developing comparisons between cultures.

The individualism-collectivism dimension of culture appears to influence the selection pattern and degree of use of all four identified listening styles in such a way that not only are the use of listening styles comparatively different between cultures but a different pattern of listening styles occurs within a culture as well. The collectivist influenced cultural group is both significantly more people oriented and less action oriented in listening style than the individualist influenced group. In addition, however, the relative use of these styles in relation to each of the alternative listening styles appears different for the two cultures suggesting a confluence of other dimensions of culture that may be interacting to influence listening.

The present results are limited to a specific set of participants in the US and Post Soviet cultural groups but these results suggest some broader implications about the influence of the individualist-collectivist dimension and other cultural effects on listening and communication styles. Future research might examine the multiple simultaneous underlying dimensions of cultural influence on a larger sample of cultures. The present study indicates the usefulness of this approach, shows some of the basic effects found through such a comparison of cultures, and suggests some larger cultural implications. In this way the present study supports the earlier findings of Kiewitz et al. (1997), Lewis (1999), Harris (2003), Imhof (2004), and Imhof and Janusik (2006), and it extends that work by examining the differences between a collectivist and an individualist culture and by analyzing the pattern of multiple listening styles within each.

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