

Hope for Sustainable Hospitality:
Learning to Listen Ethically through Discourses of Difference and Dialogic Philosophy

Elizabeth S. Parks

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Reading Committee:

Kirsten Foot, Chair

LeiLani Nishime

Melba Vélez Ortiz

Jessica Robles

Michael Blake

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Department of Communication

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Elizabeth S. Parks

University of Washington

Abstract

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Elizabeth S. Parks

Chair of the Supervisory Committee
Dr. Kirsten A. Foot
Department of Communication

There are ways of being in the world that create a good and flourishing life and other ways that restrict that life, both for ourselves and others. Listening, as an active communication process that shapes our individual and collective identities, is one of these ways of being. Listening gives shape to speaking, inviting other people into a dialogue that impacts the discursive environments that then impact us. Our acts of listening, like all communication, are shaped by our cultural and individual differences. Unfortunately, as people consider ways to ethically shape others and themselves through listening, they often abide by a set of rules developed through a particular standpoint that does not reflect or benefit their own or others' unique situations and communities. This unreflective listening can lead to deep misunderstanding and relational barriers that hinder good dialogue between individuals and communities. This is especially dangerous when people are marginalized because of their particular embodiments of listening that benefit their communities yet fall outside of broader prescribed listening norms.

In this dissertation, I respond to gaps in scholarship related to listening in communication research and difference in ethics scholarship to construct a dialogic listening ethic based on situated difference, embedded in historical narratives, and focused on emerging dialogue. Rather than imposing a rigid or prescriptive norm that is unresponsive to a community's particular cultural practices, a dialogic ethic is one that is highly contextualized and pluralistic and yet dares to make normative claims. I go beyond describing what listening *is* in a given context to what ethical listening *should be* by listening to and incorporating the insights of multiple communities of difference and dialogic philosophers.

I use research methods that are both quantitative (survey and corpus linguistics), qualitative (metaphoric criticism and value analysis) to empirically identify 12 values shared by several communities of difference that represent diverse ethnic, gender, and disability orientations (Asian, Caucasian, Deaf, First Nation, Latino/a, and LGBTQ) as they reflected on and discursively constructed good listening through online survey responses and English and American Sign Language focus group dialogues. These values are: authenticity, relationship building, time management, problem solving, cultivating understanding, care, retaining information, correct focus, intentional presence, openness to learning, response, and conversational engagement. My findings evidence both trans-community similarities and inter-community differences in these 12 listening values.

On one hand, the participants in this study expressed a foundational orientation to openness of learning in which good listeners actively try to understand another person's core identities and communicated meanings. Listening required a critical orientation for discerning truth and goodness in any situation so that dialogic partners could work together toward creating a more ideal world. It required people to embrace vulnerability and engage in reciprocal

relationships, intentionally choosing to be present and respond to the aspects of the dialogue that were of most importance to the relationship. Finally, participants needed the knowledge and skills to embody listening in ways through which speakers feel appropriately attended to, for example through effective eye contact, quietness, and use of conversational encouragers.

On the other hand, participants made some distinct, culturally-grounded choices as they enacted listening, including diverging enactments of authenticity and honesty, pursuit of criticism and relationship building through listening, acts of reciprocity in relational networks, adaptation of identity presentation in a given relationship, choices to express disagreement with a dialogic partner, differing physical engagement especially through eye contact and other sensory choices, and communicating silence through vocal absence and conversational encouragers as an invitation for another to continue speaking.

Ultimately, I argue that ethical listening is best conceptualized as the pursuit of sustainable hospitality in our dialogic interactions within and across difference. By understanding the ways that different people share values, we can affirm a shared humanity that promotes a normative listening ethic shared by all. By embracing a diversity of culturally-based performances of those values and how we hope others will listen to us, we can create a more nuanced ethic that is responsive to multiple narrative histories and futures and better understand how we ought to listen. By contextualizing both shared and distinct listening values and performances in a broader understanding of discourse that transcends any one particular moment in time, we can learn to trust each other in our dialogic relationships and attest to the hope that ethical dialogue is possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 ETHICAL LISTENING	1
Dialogic Ethics	5
Listening Ethics.....	14
Conceptualizing Listening	15
Listening and Difference	21
Review of Listening Ethics Literature.....	25
Dialogic Research Design	32
Dialogic Methodology.....	34
Summary of Research Process	37
Preview of Chapters	40
CHAPTER 2 NARRATING THE DIALOGIC MOMENT: SHARED LISTENING VALUES AS CONSTRUCTED THROUGH DIVERSE VOICES	42
Identity and Difference.....	44
Race and Ethnicity.....	46
Gender	48
Disability	50
Communities of Difference	53
Core Listening Values.....	60
Metaphors of Listening.....	61
Listening Values in the Corpus	66
CHAPTER 3 TAKE OFF YOUR ARMOR AND BRING DOWN THE WALLS: AUTHENTICITY AND CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT	73

Be Open to Learning	77
Try to Understand: Authenticity	87
Authentically Performed Selves	91
The Privilege of Being Honest	99
Criticism and Relational Engagement.....	106
Critical Listening and Ethnicity.....	109
Critical Listening and Gender.....	115
Critical Engagement for a Better World	128
CHAPTER 4 DOLLS AND CAGES: THE STRENGTH TO CARE THROUGH LISTENING AND CHOOSING NOT TO LISTEN	134
Strength to Listen	135
Relationship Building and Obligation	139
Reciprocity and Social Power.....	151
Risking Not Listening	158
CHAPTER 5 GROUNDED LISTENING: REMEMBERING AND RESPONDING WITH INTENTIONAL ATTENTION	173
Going Deep: Intentional Presence.....	176
A New Page of Learning: Remembering	188
Fish in an Aquarium: Responsiveness	194
Adapt to the Moment.....	197
Agreeing to Disagree	204
CHAPTER 6 HYENAS AND CHICKENS: EMBODYING LISTENING THROUGH SILENT INVITATION	211

Embodying Listening	214
Eye Contact.....	224
Hearing and Listening: Deafhood and Disability	232
Silence: Invitation and Rejection	248
Vocal Absence as Silence.....	253
Conversational Encouragers as Silence.....	262
CHAPTER 7 LISTENING SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY INTO BEING	274
Good Listening: Constructing Healthy Discourse	276
Listening as Hospitality: Negotiating Differing Expectations	283
Hope for Sustainable Hospitality	290
APPENDIX: RESEARCH DESIGN	297
Research Questions	297
Data Collection Methods.....	298
Survey	298
Focus Groups.....	303
Data Analysis Methods	310
Listening Concepts Inventory.....	310
Analysis of Discourse.....	317
REFERENCES	326

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Focus Group Video Recordings Demographics	39
Table 2: English Listening Metaphors	65
Table 3: Value Terminology Frequency	67
Table 4: Content Word Frequency in Corpus	70
Table 5: Emotive Terms in Corpus	135
Table 6: Communication Terms Frequency	212
Table 7: Embodiment Term Frequency	219
Table 8: Vocal Absence in Community Discourses	256
Table 9: Discursive Speech Times.....	261
Table 10: Online Survey Questions	299
Table 11: Stage 1 Focus Group Facilitation Guide.....	305
Table 12: Stage 2 Focus Group Facilitation Guide.....	307
Table 13: Focus Group Video Recordings Demographics	308
Table 14: LCI Scenario Construct Results.....	317

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Participants' Listening Constructs.....	84
Figure 2: Ethical Identity Performance.....	95
Figure 3: Learning as Listening Construct and Communities of Difference.....	110
Figure 4: Critical Listening Construct and Communities of Difference.....	110
Figure 5: Gendered Construction of Good Listening in Four Scenarios	120
Figure 6: Gendered Perception of an Ideal Listener	122
Figure 7: Relationship Building Construct and Difference	140
Figure 8: Relational Reciprocity: Dyadic vs. Triadic Responsibilities.....	154
Figure 9: ASL Sign for "Listen" (Ear).....	239
Figure 10: ASL Sign "Listen" (Eye).....	240
Figure 11: ASL Sign for "Listen" (Total Communication)	240
Figure 12: ASL Sign for "Listen" in Dialogue	245
Figure 13: Average Frequency of Minimal Encourager by Gendered Pronoun.....	264
Figure 14: Average Frequency of Minimal Encourager by Ethnicity	265

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CHAPTER 1 ETHICAL LISTENING

How you stand here is important.
How you listen for the next thing to happen.
How you breathe.
~ William Stafford, in *Being a Person*

There are ways of being in the world that create a good and flourishing life and other ways that restrict that life, both for ourselves and others. These ways of being often require conscious choices to communicate the best versions of ourselves through active engagement and disengagement. These choices impact not only our own lives but are connected to a larger discourse that began long before we were born and will continue long after we are gone. As we construct this discourse through our communication and relationships, we are ethically responsible for developing habits that create a flourishing world.

Philosophy of communication, as a field of study, explores the purpose and nature of human communication and how it creates our societies. Communication ethics is one kind of philosophy that considers how people “ought” to communicate in any situation and how they understand what “good” communication is in particular contexts. Indeed, although few people incorporate the term “ethical” in their everyday speech, using the term “good” to describe what is deemed ethical is common parlance. Communication ethics begin when one moves from individual experience to engagement with another person in society and involves the creation of each person at every moment of every day (Arneson, 2014). A commitment to understanding how best to live prompts ethicists to question what many people consider normal or natural, to examine implicit bias, challenge prejudice, and may be fundamentally subversive by acting as a value-laden approach to philosophies of communication (Arnett & Arneson, 2014). Chesebro

(1969) suggests that the study of ethics includes three components: social identity that requires people to appraise the world, cultural integrity that seeks a consistent integrated process between ideals and lived reality, and a temporal motivation that prompts people to consider collective humanity throughout time rather than individual choices at a single moment in time. Thus, a communication ethic is a philosophy that seeks to understand how best to communicate in diverse contexts for the good of society.

It is impossible to separate life from ethics. Just as we live in discursive environments, so our ethical frameworks are learned through communication within a broader socio-political structure (Arneson, 2014). Unfortunately, the field of communication ethics has often contributed to ongoing hegemony of particular dominant perspectives rather than acknowledging conflicting narratives and values in a given context (Arnett, Arneson, & Bell, 2007). Christians (1995) argues that “our only legitimate option is a comparative cross-cultural ethics that recognizes parity and is culturally inclusive rather than biased toward Western hegemony” (p. 60). Munshi et al. (2011) beautifully summarize this need like this:

The space for an ethical dialogue...is not an innocent space nor a politically disinterested space, but a space which enables, facilitates, references, activates, frames, and gives voice to the values and practices of all peoples so that they can engage in the world. Further, it is a space in which there is an active intent to disrupt the historic relations of power as they are embodied in particular forms of ethics, to change the rules of engagement and of communication so that new voices emerge (p. 128).

Ethicists have an obligation to expand the current conversation to include more diverse voices. Communication ethicists, in particular, are well positioned to critically challenge discursive processes and products that promote the good of a select few through unequal social structures (Mumby, 2011). As communication ethicists invite greater diversity into ethical thought, these

voices enrich the study of how communication shapes our worlds and the nature of communication values and degrees of rightness and wrongness.

Listening, as an active communication process that shapes our individual and collective identities, is one dialogic process that impacts ethical discourse. Listening gives shape to speaking, inviting other people into a dialogue that impacts the discursive environments that then impact us. Our acts of listening, like all communication, are shaped by our cultural and individual differences. This unreflective listening can lead to confusion and disrespect. This is especially dangerous when people are marginalized because of their particular embodiments of listening that do in fact benefit their respective communities yet fall outside of broader socially expected norms. Following prescriptive rules of ethical listening that are not responsive to cultural diversity may lead some people to form inaccurate perceptions of others who listen in unexpected ways. They may be labeled “bad listeners,” and this can lead to other judgments about their character. This in turn can result in deep misunderstanding and relational barriers that hinder good dialogue between individuals and communities. Exploring the ethics of listening is one way in which to engage communication ethics as a whole and work toward creation of a more flourishing world.

In this research, I employ a dialogic approach in the development of a dialogic listening ethic. Dialogic approaches are unique in their emphasis that communication is “something we create together, and the result is not something that is possessed by either party, but is a social construction shared by all” (Kimball & Garrison, 1996, pp. 56–57). Dialogic ethicists focus on how the lived experience of dialogue might both reflect and affect ethical value and interpersonal narratives. The ethical end that dialogic ethicists consider primary is responsibility to the

discourse and communication patterns themselves – to creating open space where human identities emerge and develop rather than to an individual person or specific community. As Arnett (1999) puts it, “the notion of ground or narrative differences moves communication ethics to a non-humanistic position. The issue is not that I am in dialogue with you; I am in dialogue with the ground upon which you stand – which is the issue of embedded agents in discourse” (p. 65). Although relocating the ethical interest may create a danger of losing focus on the real lived experiences of humans with whom we relate, contextualizing listeners in broader socio-historical narratives is crucial for understanding ethical rights and responsibilities to all acting agents in a discursive space. Attention to humanity is not lost when we recognize that both human and non-human agents shape our discursive environments. That attention simply becomes one focus in a set of broader concerns and decreases the likelihood of an overly anthropocentric ethic to the detriment of the ecological whole. For, as Hoffer (2014) so poignantly states, restricting ethical communication consideration to humans alone leads to “overlooking and (wrongly) de-centering the foundational, precarious, and vital interdependence of human beings and our natural environment” (pp. 228-229). In sum, what is good for humans is good for the broader biotic community and what is good for the biotic community will ultimately lead to sustainable and flourishing life for humans as we are all in symbiotic relationships with each other.

My goal in this work is to ground a dialogic listening ethic in the discursively constructed values of a particular narrative moment. Thus, the ultimate aim of this research is to combine the narratives of both dialogic ethics and situated cultural practices to construct an ethic that guides a better and more equitable way of listening that benefits discursive construction of social worlds and individual lives. This dialogic ethic hinges on understanding the grounded and emerging

values of diverse communities within a broader responsibility to dialogue itself. Rather than imposing a rigid or prescriptive norm that is unresponsive to a community's particular cultural practices, a dialogic ethic is one that is highly contextualized and pluralistic and yet dares to make normative claims. It goes beyond describing what *is* in a given context to what *should be*. I conceptualize a dialogic listening ethic as a standard based on situated difference, embedded in historical narratives, and focused on emerging dialogue.

In this chapter, I offer a brief overview of dialogic ethics and its grounding in phenomenology and pragmatism as well as its sensitivity to and inclusion of pluralistic value systems. I then discuss listening within its broader themes and outline several scholarly approaches to the study of listening ethics, paying close attention to dialogic listening ethics. I argue that it is critical to actively study the ways that diverse people and communities conceptualize listening ethics and discursively develop listening values in order to promote healthy dialogue. Finally, I discuss the dialogic research design adopted in this research and conclude with a brief preview of the chapters to follow.

Dialogic Ethics

All communication ethics consider what is good within our communicative behaviors and actions and the choice to apply and create those goods in different situations. They tend to fall into two ethical traditions: descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive ethics seek to describe how people communicate ethically rather than predetermining a right way of living. Ethical pluralists may adopt this perspective and describe the ways that people proceed through different ethical activities rather than determining a set of absolute rules to be followed in various contexts. In contrast, prescriptive ethics assumes that there is a right ethical way to live and develops ethical

imperatives to determine between right and wrong for a given situational context. Ethicists in this tradition tend to work toward identifying fundamental and universal human values that we can and should follow. Dialogic ethics, as is true with many philosophical traditions that ground prescriptive arguments in descriptive understandings of how humans interact, represents one way of conceptualizing philosophical ethics. It seeks to make normative claims that transcend individual cultural expression, yet it does so with an attempt to sensitize that normativity to radical alterity and difference.

Drawing heavily from descriptive narrative ethics, dialogic ethics prescriptively argue for an ethical commitment to creating hospitable spaces *between* people – promoting freedom of being together, co-constructing reality, co-constructing each “other” and even the “others” within the self and other (Cooper, 2003), even as they value and respect unknowable difference. As defined by Arnett et al. (2009), dialogic ethics addresses issues of belonging and the ways that we are shaped by the people with whom we associate and the narratives in which we communicate. Thus, dialogic ethics is concerned with the communicative relationship: “in short, interpersonal communication ethics is not about “me” or “you”; it is about a co-constituted communicative benchmark or standard that calls both parties to accountability for something that defines interpersonal communication – the relationship” (Arnett et al., 2009, p. 120). In sum, a dialogic ethic is based on the belief that dialogue itself is worth promoting and pursuing.

In 1999, Arnett and Arneson published *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*. In this text, they called for a theorization of dialogue and, building on the work of Johannesen (1971) and Stewart (1978), suggested that “philosophical hermeneutics, and the notion of historicity in particular, offers a communicative alternative to a psychological world view centered on

meaning within the metaphor of “self” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). Dialogic ethics draws from both phenomenology and pragmatism in formulating its primary ends, recognizing the “other” and “difference” as central theoretical concepts. I briefly describe both phenomenological and pragmatic approaches below in order to philosophically ground ways that a dialogic listening ethic will emphasize relationship and practical outcomes of applying particular individually and socially held listening values.

Phenomenology is a tradition that focuses on communication as dialogue and the experience of otherness. It embraces ethical commitments to authenticity, openness, supportiveness, and genuineness (Craig, 1999, 2007). The commitment to respect the other while interacting authentically and valuing the dialogue in the *between* is central to dialogic ethics. A, perhaps *the*, foundational philosopher for dialogic ethics is phenomenologist Martin Buber. Although other hermeneutical scholars such as Bakhtin, Gadamer, Levinas, and Ricoeur also impact the development of dialogic ethics, Buber’s philosophical work theorizing dialogue and the “*between*” in the mid-1900s remains the center of dialogic perspectives today, counteracting a psychological worldview that was popular at the time Buber wrote his seminal texts *I and Thou* and *Between Man and Man* (Cooper, 2003; Gordon, 2011). According to Buber (1996), dialogue constitutes the *between* and is engaged by relational partners. Without the intersubjectivity of this relationship, the world cannot fully flourish:

[W]hen a man withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity...and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a ‘part of myself.’...then dialogue becomes a fiction, the mysterious intercourse between two human worlds only a game, and in the rejection of the real life confronting him the essence of all reality begins to disintegrate (p. 27-28).

The intersubjective *between* is, according to Buber the starting point for all reality: “in the beginning is the relation” (p. 78). Arnett and Anderson (1999) argue that Buber considered dialogue as being grounded in people’s conversation and it is in the shared center of this dialogue and discourse that communication is enacted. It is relational being that is of utmost concern for the dialogic philosopher.

The phenomenological *between* is integral to being human and to human narratives. There is no self without the other. Life is a call to participation and community. The *between* cannot be demanded of others, but only invited in a spirit of hospitality. The other and the self are intersubjective. These foundational ideas were central to a Buberian philosophy that embraced existential phenomenology and called into being “dialogic voices willing to listen and to be heard...the phenomenological focus that guided Buber’s understanding of dialogue required taking seriously a given story and simultaneously offering a genuine response from the depth of our being to that story” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 136). The dialogic *between* is not about the amount of words shared during dialogue, but about the act of communicating presence through both verbal and nonverbal channels. Ethical communication and ethical listening is accomplished by dialogue which provides the realization of a flourishing life for participants in that dialogue (Buber, 1996). Dialogic participants involve people both in the immediate discursive environment and the broader socio-historical narrative in which they interact.

Appreciation of difference displayed in other people and compassion for diverse human experience lies at the heart of dialogic ethics and the work of dialogic philosophers, including Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur. Schur (2013) argues that the dialogic ethical tradition has drawn heavily from Levinas’ work, particularly in regard to “Levinas’s affirmation of the

Other's infinite alterity, his emphasis on the need to hear and to respond to the Other's call, his understanding of this response as directed toward concrete persons in concrete contexts, his insistence on the precedence of this response to any formal ethics, and his concern with one's unilateral responsibility for the Other" (p. 574). In addition, Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenological position that emphasizes description, narration, and prescription in the determination of the good also fits within the dialogic ethical framework. Although often overlooked in the dialogic and communication ethics tradition, I pay special attention to Ricoeur's work throughout this text.

Pragmatism is a second tradition that is central to dialogic ethics and focuses on the ways that knowledge is built and has concrete implications for the ways that we live. Dialogic ethical perspectives maintain that difference is good and that we learn from each other's differences, especially as postmodernism moved us beyond the idea of a Grand Narrative to a time that emphasizes the presence of conflicting narratives and values. Pragmatism embraces postmodern values of community, difference, pluralism, subjectivity of human experience, incommensurability, interplay between individual agency and structural constraints, collaboration, a constitutive perspective of communication, and the importance of discourse (Craig, 2007; Davis & Jasinski, 1993; Hannen, 2016). As we pursue ethical listening, pragmatic philosophy grounds the formation of a dialogic ethic as one that has practical and beneficial impact for our everyday lives.

Citing the work of pragmatist philosophers Mead, Dewey, and James, Arnett et al. (2009) position their argument for a dialogic ethic in a pragmatic perspective that people are continually caught in a web of human interaction (past, present, and future) that shapes who they are. In the

words of pragmatic philosopher William James (1954), “there is no such thing possible as an ethical philosophy dogmatically made up in advance. We all help to determine the content of ethical philosophy so far as we contribute to the race’s moral life. In other words, there can be no final truth in ethics any more than in physics, until the last man has had his experience and said his say” (p. 65). As a pragmatic philosophy committed to ideals of difference, a dialogic listening ethic purposefully listens to the voices of all humans throughout time in the construction of ethical listening, recognizing that each of our value frameworks and sense of good listening is influenced by our own standpoint and subjective experience. It remains committed to entertaining and even embracing pluralistic perspectives.

The many different values that people hold drive individual and collective behaviors and shape our everyday dialogues, choices, and activities. As Duncan (1973) argues,

Values organize the act since they determine selection of what we attend to in the act. Values then, are “futures” of real presents, not simply “subjective” images, or unreal fantasies. In the American pragmatic tradition values are *goals* which determine action in the present. Past images become future images in goals we struggle to achieve in the present. Social reality exists in the present, but this present is always problematic. An act is a problem which is solved, to the degree it is solved, in the name of values which are considered solutions to our problems. We worship our gods, march off to war, and educate our young in the names of social values (p. 75).

In other words, we prioritize particular values based on the cultural and personal ideals that we hold. As defined by Rokeach (1968), values are the few “abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific attitude or object or situation, representing a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct” that people hold and that guide the ways that they live (p. 124). Put another way, “a value is the importance we attribute to ourselves, another person, thing or idea” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013, p. 7). On a social level, cultural values may be defined as the ideas and principles that govern and guide thoughts, actions, and discourse and thus depend on

individual predispositions as well as cultural frameworks (Zhang, Song, & Carver, 2008). Values come in a variety of forms and can be drawn from any time in history (Duncan, 1973). In sum, we might say that listening values are abstract ideals that impact the ways we discursively engage and create past, present, and future worlds with our whole beings.

Our listening values impact our life choices and the ways that we pursue healthy communication. They motivate our priorities and choices and ultimately create the discourses in which we live, whether consciously or unconsciously. These discourses, in turn, then shape our listening values. As Gee (1990b) argues “any time we speak, read, write, or act, we are in a Discourse. Each and every Discourse makes of us, while we are in it, a certain sort of person; each and every Discourse ‘calls forth’ certain ways of viewing the world, ways of communicating to others, ways of valuing and thinking about the world and our fellow human beings” (p. 191). Our ways of thinking, of communicating, of listening, are central to the ways we live and we never escape their influence. The discursive construction of values shapes our attitudes, behaviors, and experiences.

As people navigate diverse cultural expectations and experience changing value systems, it is difficult to argue for any kind of shared value for all of society. As Frede (2013) so keenly puts it, those who promote specific values are challenged by the importance of diversity at this time in history:

... ‘pluralism’ is not only a characteristic of the present age, but also its pride and joy, at least in the Western world. It is therefore hard to envisage a unified conception of human nature, of the good life that suits it, and of the society that makes it possible. For, it is much easier to agree on what we do *not* want than on what we *do* want. Thus, while no one would deny that certain character traits should be regarded as desirable around the globe, when we come to draw up a list there are difficulties as soon as we go beyond a minimalist point of view. In a world that is full of cultural and religious clashes there is little chance of agreement (p. 144).

Yet pluralism and globalization are not societal traits that are on the verge of disappearing, and it is critical to learn how best to navigate these pluralistic spaces and the diverse ways that good listening may be conceptualized across difference. In a dialogic ethical framework based on phenomenological and pragmatic traditions, the exploration of diverse listening value systems is foundational to the development of any dialogic listening ethic grounded in pluralism.

While it is clear that diverse individuals and cultures may embrace different moral and ethical values, it would be a serious oversight to presume that this means that individuals and cultures do not also share values about communication and listening. Cultural relativism, while important for avoiding narcissistic and ethnocentric judgments, does not necessarily lead to an absolute conclusion that people's value systems cannot align. According to philosopher Ricoeur, describing shared and distinct values in a dialogic moment means engaging a broader narrative or narratives and recognizing that these narratives already contain "evaluations, estimations, and value judgments" and thus act "as a preparation for ethics proper" (Reagan, 1996, p. 83). In order to describe and narrate individual and collective values that would lead to a particular value system or ethical framework, it is useful to be able to identify value themes that emerge in the discourses of particular individuals and communities (Miles et al., 2013). As we identify these values, both differing and shared ethical systems will undoubtedly emerge.

As described above, dialogic ethics looks to phenomenological and pragmatic perspectives that embrace acceptance of difference and pursuit of diversity as the best framework to address real world issues at this time in our historicity. Instead of prescribing a "right" ethical path for all time in its initial formation, it grounds the creation of normative claims in the description of a particular social context through discursive and narrative analysis, identifying

public and private societal problems through description of ethical values being co-constructed in the between of interpersonal relationships, and intentional consideration of communicative processes that best promote dialogue. In a dialogic ethic, normative (but contingent) claims are grounded in the necessity of pursuing authentic dialogue in our interpersonal relationships and purposefully adopting a posture of learning in a time of conflicting narratives. This learning posture is created through intentionally listening to different experiences and perspectives than the ones that might be assumed or be held by a particular privileged individuals (Gurin, Nagda, & Zuñiga, 2013).

Dialogic ethicists argue that the ultimate ethical end is to maintain conditions in which dialogue can emerge in healthy relationships *between* (and around) people rather than the domain or psyche of an individual person. Dialogue is not something that is completely controlled by two speakers, but is mutually influencing and influenced by them and the broader context in which they live. Pursuit of ethical dialogue is based on an understanding that communication itself is constitutive of the world and that holding dialogue as the first ethical end ultimately yields the proactive ethical creation of our world. From a constitutive understanding of communication, dialogue constitutes us and we constitute that dialogue in symbiotic relationship. Put another way, listening constitutes us and we constitute listening. Understanding how our values promote particular approaches to this constitutive listening process becomes central to the ethical pursuit of listening that ultimately results in better dialogue and discourse for all of us. It is to this matter of listening ethically that I now turn.

Listening Ethics

Listening has consequences. It can promote individual and cultural well-being or empower voices that are best left unheeded. Unfortunately, listening is often overlooked in the communication process, with speaking taking center stage. Many people promote the right to speak, but fewer seriously consider people's ethical responsibilities to listen to those voices. Despite this focus on speech, the act of listening fills the majority of people's time in their daily interactions (Wolvin, 2010b), if not socially constructing all of it (Beard, 2009). Perhaps it is exactly because it is so commonplace in our lives and cultural norms privilege talking over listening (Carbaugh, 2005) that listening is often taken for granted and undertheorized.

People applaud good listening. Skilled listeners are often associated with caring, other-oriented ethical conduct. Research points to compassionate listening creating bridges that bring people, even those from very different backgrounds, together (Arbor, 2011), that empathetic listening is an integral part of creating safe spaces of social support and encouraging healthy ways of being (Gentry, Weber, & Sandri, 2007), or that listening is the most central competency for effective leadership (Brownell, 2008). Yet it is exactly this investigation of making "the familiar strange" that often yields the greatest insight into human communication and behavior (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2013, p. 188). By studying listening, I refuse to accept it as passive or familiar territory but rather claim it as a phenomenon deserving of deeper analysis (Bodie, Worthington, Imhof, & Cooper, 2008). I argue that even with our intuitive acceptance of the value of listening, we must look further into how communities enact that value in order to better understand what it is we are embracing. By exploring how a listening ethic might be developed and enacted to promote individual and social well-being, I hope to stimulate

intercultural awareness and social justice for communities of difference and to enrich scholarship on philosophies of communication, communication ethics, and listening. I also hope that this helps us create better dialogue and that the pervasive conviction that no one is listening carries less power in our world.

Conceptualizing Listening

It may seem obvious at first glance, but it is important to ask what exactly we mean by “listening.” Numerous academic disciplines have nominally engaged the study of listening, including communication, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and business. Listening has been conceptualized in a number of distinct ways in all of these disciplines. According to Lacey’s (2013) overview of the trends in listening research, listening scholarship has tended to focus on aesthetic listening in the context of music, as an interviewing skill employed by journalists, anthropologists, and others who research through conversation, and interpersonal and relational communication. This third vein of research is of most significance in the context of developing a dialogic listening ethic. There are three elements of interpersonal and relational listening that have traditionally captured the researcher’s gaze: listening as information processing, listening as a relational aspect of communication competency, and individual differences that impact listening behavior (Bodie et al., 2008; Bodie, 2012). Communication scholars have only recently recognized the need for more in-depth investigation of listening beyond these mechanical or skill-based approaches.

A brief summary of listening scholarship might be articulated as follows. Early academic listening research in the 1940s to 1960s focused on the ways that people receive, process, and retain information – listening as information processing and a cognitive task of comprehending

well (Bodie, 2012; Bostrom, 2011). Rather than conceptualizing it as a multi-dimensional task, listening comprehension tests attempted to measure a person's intelligence by their ability to process information. Yet, listening is so much more than information management. The 1970s and 1980s brought a new lens to listening research by expanding the conceptualization of listening into more nuanced and multidimensional aesthetic, affective, cognitive, and behavioral communication processes. In these decades, listening was conceptualized as a skill that could and should be adapted to the needs of diverse contexts (Bodie et al., 2008). For example, in the 1970s, linguist Dell Hymes promoted the idea that listening competence is demonstrated by a set of knowledge and skills that can uniquely engage a particular situation. In the 1980s, listening as communication competency took off with the work of Goss (1982) and Spitzberg & Cupach (1984) as they included listening effectiveness as a key component of their theoretical models of good communication.

From the 1990s to date, listening scholars have increasingly focused on relational listening as moving beyond the instrumental task of collection, retention, and interpretation of information. Good listening depends on understanding the goals of the interaction, and ideas such as discriminative, comprehensive, evaluative, appreciative, empathic, and interpersonal listening were engaged by listening researchers (Lipari, 2014; Thompson, Leintz, Nevers, & Witkowski, 2010). As this shift toward understanding the role of listening as meeting various relational goals occurred, research increasingly focused on individual differences that might impact listening behavior, including personality, listening style preferences, communication apprehension, conversational empathy and sensitivity, and culture (Bodie et al., 2008). Much of this research focused on active and empathic listening. In these listening approaches, the

communication goal is to accurately perspective take and listen in a way that maximizes genuine understanding of another person's experiences and effectively communicates that one is paying attention to their standpoint and accepts them as an individual (Borden, 1993; J. Brownell, 2012; Bruneau, 1989; Gearhart & Bodie, 2011; Myers, 2000). Another important approach to listening was explored by Stewart and Thomas (1995), Floyd (2010) and Stewart (2013): perception of listening from a dialogic perspective as moving beyond empathic and active listening.

Dialogic approaches to listening contextualize it within a broader philosophy of dialogue, particularly that of Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Mikhail Bakhtin, and argue for a relational approach to listening of all kinds. Gordon (2011) points out that Buber considered genuine listening "the sense of actively attending to and embracing the other... a necessary condition for the emergence of dialogue" (p. 216). Dialogic philosophers, theorists, and practitioners adopt a variety of definitions of dialogue, approaches to its study, and everyday implementation. An in-depth discussion of these approaches is not possible in this limited space, but it is useful to share a definition of dialogue as we move forward. Arnett et al. (2007) define dialogue like this: "Dialogue is understood as the communicative exchange of embedded agents standing their own ground while being open to the other's standpoint, conceptualizing meaning that emerges in discourse situated between persons while engaging a common text in their communicative event" (p. 164). Dialogue "is an event where meaning emerges through all the participants... meaning or understanding is collaboratively co-constructed" (Stewart & Thomas, 1995, p. 235). Thus, dialogue includes matters of individuality and community, of the particular moment and a broader narrative context, of independence and dependence of self and other, and the communication that binds all of this together.

According to Stewart and Thomas (1995) and Floyd (2010), dialogic listening promotes dialogue and mutual understanding between conversation partners while maximizing openness and minimizing selfishness. Dialogic listening encourages continued conversational expression to construct a positive communication experience. It focuses on meaning making as a joint-effort between conversational partners – as something that is emerging between people rather than in the mind of one person. It is open-ended shared interaction that requires humility and trust and focuses on the present moment rather than future or past events.

Effective dialogic listening requires a person to listen to self as well as the other. It requires critical thinking and protection of oneself while being radically inclusive of multiple perspectives that others embrace. Dialogic listening respects all conversation partners as making active choices that impact the discourse. It adopts a cosmopolitan attitude that embraces creativity and diversity across time and space (Stewart & Thomas, 1995). Floyd (2010) emphasizes dialogic listening as an attitude and conversational orientation that embraces characteristics of authenticity, acceptance of another's humanity, inclusion, attentive presence, and mutuality rather than a spirit of deception, manipulation, inauthenticity, dishonesty, control, and exploitation. This focus on listening as dialogic confirmation is central to constructing an open ethic of listening, but still tends to adopt an orientation toward listening as an act that shapes messages between conversational partners rather than emphasizing that those very communicators are part of the message being shaped.

Communication constitutes the world in which we live (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Listening, as not just half of a communication process but a unique communication process in and of itself, is also constitutive of our worlds. This conceptualization of listening as constitutive

intervenes in a theorization of dialogic listening that tends to focus on the co-construction of a message that can be formulated as separate from the conversational actors. As Lipari (2014) says "For it is in listening that we become, together. Not that we will come to agree, or to see things the same way, or even come to understand in the same way. But we share the experience of *being* listening – and up from the listening bubbles a speaking" (p. 102). Listening itself constitutes speaking and creates our ongoing discourses when we conceptualize listening not as simply responding to speech but rather as a phenomenological experience through which we create our sense of selves and the relationships that connect us. Instead of simply doing listening as an act of communication, the embodiment of listening as a way of being shapes the dialogues of which we are a part.

As such, listening is connected to the total discourse environment. The value of listening is not only foundational for the emergence of dialogue and discourse itself, but in the construction of the identities of those shaping and being shaped by that discourse. Purdue (1986) argues that "we inhabit language" (p. 7), that we are part of dialogue itself. In that same vein, listening philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2007) argues that listening includes multiple subjects and moves communication well beyond a transmission model of communication with separate senders and receivers of a message: it "is not transmission, but a sharing that becomes subject: sharing as subject of all 'subjects.' An unfolding, a dance, a resonance" (p. 41). In other words, listening constitutes communication actors' identities and these identities construct communication as they live a listening way of being. As the oft-quoted phrase states, "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1965, p. 8). The minds, bodies, and spirits of the people in

dialogue are not just mediums through which messages are conveyed but should be considered as much a part of the message as the words that these people speak and hear, sign and see or touch.

Stewart (2011) reminds that the message is not just about the content communicated in this current moment but involves a much larger narrative: “Neither speaker nor listener, in other words, is originating the interaction they experience together; both are responding to global and local elements that contextualize their communicating and affect what emerges between them” (p. 23). They, and the messages that they create and that create them, are all part of a broader discursive system and set of subjects that include diverse perspectives, values, beliefs, and identities (Hall, Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). As listening constitutes discourse, the listening that is embodied by the listeners constitutes them. As Beard (2009) states:

Our listening environments construct our subjectivity and sense of selves: To develop a sense of the listening subject as an ethical subject, we need to understand the role of listening, broadly conceived, in the constitution of the subject...Listening research should understand its object of study as a practice that constitutes the self, one of many such practices (p. 9).

Thus, when studying listening as part of a holistic communication process, it is beneficial to consider not only the words and nonverbal symbols that are being used to construct a message, but the ways that our very selves are constructing and being constructed as we evolve alongside and within a larger discourse.

Listening, as a performance of these complex identities and communication behaviors, is simply not easy to define. When people explain that someone is not listening or express the desire that others would “just listen,” it is far from a simple task to discern what exactly they mean or are hoping to happen. Listening transcends an expectation to simply hear words and

retain them, whether that be in information processing, cognitive comprehension, or relational interaction. As one friend of mine likes to say: “Listen to what I mean, not what I say!”

Listening scholar and ethicist Lipari (2014) defines listening as “the capacity to discern the underlying habitual character and attitudes of people with whom we communicate, including ourselves, in such a way that, at its best, brings about a sense of shared experience and mutual understanding” (p. 106). This shared listening experience and mutual understanding creates a connection between people that transforms the worlds integral to that message – not just the present world, but worlds remembered and hoped for as well. This transformative process is never ending. Lipari (2014) beautifully describes this type of relational interlistening, in which listening, speaking, and thinking are happening simultaneously, like this: “Every speaking is at the same time a listening, and every listening a speaking. In other words, when one talks and one listens, two talk and two listen. When one talks and thousands listen, thousands talk and thousands listen. When one talks and there is no one to listen, one still listen” (p. 159). That one person who is listening and talking is made up of a number of selves that are performing complex and hybrid identities. These hybrid selves within a person interact through intrapersonal communication and it is in this space that a person might negotiate multiple different identities that are speaking and listening with differing degrees of privilege. With so much listening occurring in and across individual and collective worlds, it is crucial to pay attention to the lavish diversity that creates these worlds.

Listening and Difference

Every person is unique, yet even in this uniqueness people from different walks of life share certain experiences and ways of being as they enact differences on group, individual, and

even intra-individual levels. These differences are not socially neutral characteristics, and can include a wide variety of social and cultural experiences, including physical abilities and qualities, gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, and other ways of being. At this time in history, divisions between people (between self and other) and within individuals (between inner and outer spaces) are captivating people's imaginations, concerns, and hopes (Peters, 1999).

Recently, listening research has increased study of the ways in which cultural constructs based on nationality might impact listening behavior (e.g., Imhof (2003) and Imhof and Janusik (2006)). Beall (2010) argues that culture guides listening orientations, just as it does all communication behaviors, and several studies have found differences between "Western" and "non-Western" cultures, genders, and continental spaces such as Africa, South America, and Europe (Beall, 2010; Glenn & Ratcliffe, 2011; Imhof, 2003; Imhof & Janusik, 2006; Ting-Toomey, 2011). Imhof and Janusik (2006) suggest that "it might be a mistake to talk inclusively about 'Western cultures' in spite of culture-specific values and conceptual representations within this conglomerate" (p. 83). Despite this initial work, little research has focused specifically on culturally different practices of listening as a communicative act in general, or on cultural values ascribed to listening in particular.

The societal categorizing of difference – such as race, disability, gender, and ethnicity – is socially constructed in a particular historical space and may point generally to shared characteristics but does not represent homogenous or clear-cut groups (Barrett, 1997). I accept as foundational both the inherent complexity of individual and group identities and a belief that particular identity performances can lead to a cohesiveness in community and socio-cultural belonging that enact shared values and ways of being and communicating (Lakoff & Johnson,

1980; Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005). Regardless of whether these groups are labeled cultures, communities, social networks, or something else, people who identify with each other often share a unique way of communicating and their values are manifested through their talk. Analyzing particular discursive listening performances can open new spaces for dialoguing about ways that identities are seen and hidden in the collective construction of normative values through the very acts of listening. Spaces in which people live are multiple and overlapping, as are the values embedded and promoted in the language discourses that they use. Incorporating these differences into listening research is crucial for understanding diverse discourses at work in today's pluralistic world.

Several listening scholars, including Wolvin and Coakley (1995), Brownell (2012), those involved in the edited volume of *Listening and Human Communication in the 21st Century* (Wolvin, 2010a), and others have worked toward developing models, instruments, and approaches to listening. The International Listening Association has compiled a list of over 30 listening instruments that offer a cursory look at ways that listening scholars have promoted particular listening values and behaviors. For example, Brownell's (2012) HURIER model offers one framework through which to understand the listening experience and supports the inclusion of several communicative orientations and behaviors essential to good listening. In a "Willingness to Listen" self-assessment drawn from Roberts and Hickson (2001), motivation to listen prioritizes aspects such as a speaker's organization and responsiveness in creating a positive climate that might motivate people to listen. In an active-empathic listening scale utilized by Bodie (2011), communication performances such as interpersonal sensitivity, understanding, ability to summarize, and particular types of body language such as head nods are

considered crucial aspects of good listening. Each of the many models, theories, constructs, and instruments used to evaluate good listening point to ways that listening scholars have lauded certain behavioral modes as being part of good listening, thus perpetuating particular cultural norms for ethical listening which may resonate with some cultures but contrast with appropriate communication in others (Beall, 2010; Hutton, 2003).

One obvious example of this is in the expectation to pursue particular types of eye contact. Consider, for example, a common piece of interpersonal communication advice represented in this statement in an introductory interpersonal communication text: “Good listeners let others know they are interested throughout interaction by adopting attentive postures, nodding their heads, making eye contact, and giving vocal responses such as ‘mm-hmm’ and ‘go on.’ These nonverbal behaviors demonstrate engagement” (Wood, 2016, p. 167). While one can surely imagine contexts where this is excellent guidance for good listening, it is not difficult to imagine scenarios where this would be harmful rather than beneficial to dialogue. For example, what would an up and down head nod mean in a culture that shows conversational tracking by moving their head in another direction? What would happen to a dialogue if one of two people who are sharing deeply while sitting shoulder to shoulder and gazing at stars or a horizon suddenly adopted these behavioral norms and started actively seeking direct eye contact? When does direct eye contact become interpreted as aggression or even domination rather than attention? How might offering particular vocal responses – even minimal encouragers such as “mmhmm” – be viewed as interruption rather than encouraging conversation?

I believe that these, and many other cross-cultural communication considerations, must be given a higher level of priority and consideration before communication scholars offer

detailed advice about how to act as a good listener, how to embody ethical listening. Indeed, listening advice is found not only in the interpersonal communication field but also as a chapter in most public speaking textbooks (e.g., Keith and Lundberg (2014) and Grice et al. (2016)) and other core courses that millions of college students are required to complete in order to earn their undergraduate degrees. In my work here, I hope to extend our basic understanding of good listening to be more inclusive of multiple and diverse standpoints that might emerge in the listening discourses of communities of difference. Moreover, I hope to prompt a greater focus on developing globally sensitive descriptions and prescriptions of ethical listening with the ultimate goal of more competent communication that expands our understanding of how good listening might be enacted, thereby decreasing cross-cultural tension, promoting ethical relationships, and becoming the best versions of ourselves.

Review of Listening Ethics Literature

Of the scholars that have engaged communication ethics, few have pursued an emphasis on listening ethics. Of those that have, a number of different approaches have been adopted including those that would fall broadly into descriptive, prescriptive, and dialogic perspectives. In this section, I briefly describe scholarship in descriptive and prescriptive approaches that provide context to the dialogic listening that I promote through this study.

Descriptive Listening Ethics

As stated previously, descriptive ethics does not attempt to predetermine a right way of living, but rather seeks to describe how people communicate ethically. Descriptive ethical approaches tend to emerge in scholarship that focuses on contextual communication ethics (exploration of different communication standards for different cultures) and narrative

communication ethics (standards embedded and in line with cultural narratives that dictate how “characters” behave in particular stories) – although both of these viewpoints can lead to prescriptive or dialogic ends as well. Ethical pluralists may adopt a perspective that ethical consideration depends on the activity at hand and will pursue describing the rules of how to proceed rather than attempting to infer a set of absolutes to be followed.

Descriptive ethics is less apparent than prescriptive ethics in the interpersonal communication ethics literature as a whole. Perhaps most interpersonal communication ethicists are more concerned with outlining particular practical applications and applied philosophical ends than being constrained to description alone. This might especially be the case because communication ethics as a field grew out of applied disciplines that tended toward addressing particular social problems (Cheney, Munshi, May, & Ortiz, 2011). Regardless of the motivating reason, Beard (2009) argues that socio-cognitive research has failed to account for different types of listening and appeals for research that considers how subjects are “constituted by the act of listening, not separate from it” (p. 8). Beard argues that we are far from being able to develop an ethic of listening because we do not yet understand how diverse selves are impacted by listening. Only after exploring and describing this can we “return to that dyadic relationship that is at the core of listening research. From this position, having already begun to construct myself as an ethical listening subject, I can return to the dyadic listening event...” (p. 19). In other words, Beard promotes descriptive ethical exploration before a predictive project begins.

Listening behavior is impacted by power structures at work in the world. According to Peake’s (2012) critical/cultural consideration of the way that language is listened to in one particular colonized space, listening behaviors are socially, politically, and culturally

influenced. Diverse cultural practices of listening reproduce power relationships. Rather than calling for a particular type of listening, Peake describes ways that listening impacts soundscapes and expectations by different people, in different cultures, and different places, for appropriate (or “good”) listening behaviors. While not claiming listening is a neutral activity, Peake makes no call for a particular activity to be adopted but rather describes a particular cultural context of ethical communication. Thus, Peake’s work reminds us that as we describe listening ethics, they are being shaped by particular cultural practices and relational structures.

Zuniga et al. (2012) indicate that “how we listen, to what and to whom we listen, and the assumptions we listen through all frame our perception of reality” before moving into a qualitative analysis of what people engaged in intergroup dialogue across difference perceive as good listening (p. 96). While arguing for the importance of understanding listening, this research found listening to be much more multi-layered and sensitive to context than previously assumed. Instead of prescribing particular types of listening, Zuniga et al. argue that deeper understanding of what it means to “listen closely” need to be explored. Driven by description, the only prescriptive statement in the research is a research prescription: research listening more. This study responds to that call for more research.

Prescriptive Listening Ethics

Prescriptive ethics tends to emerge in ethical development of universal-humanitarian communication ethics (emphasizing that select people can announce principles that should guide all communication behavior because of similarities that exist among people) and codes of ethics (select people can create a priori principles all people should follow within a given context). Ethicists in this tradition tend to look at individual choices of particular activities and their

consequences, considering how ethics determines the ways that we interact and indicating that there are fundamental and universal human values that we can and should follow: “For communication ethics to be meaningful over the long run,” Christians (2005) states, “we have to recover the idea of moral universals itself” (p. 4).

Prescriptive ethics are often based on particular values that are perceived as important for all people and was foundational for the communication ethics field, as represented by Chesebro (1969). Prescriptive ethicists might claim that beauty and love are universal goods and that all people’s actions should strive toward maintaining beauty and love in the world. Or, they might argue that oppression and perpetuation of unjust social orders are evil, and embrace critical and feminist traditions that challenge hegemonic orders. Although universal ethics do not at initial glance seem popular within postmodern mindsets that embrace individual difference and contextual distinctions, universal and prescriptive ethics often guide global and organizational codes of ethics (e.g., the United Nation’s human rights statements or university student behavior codes). Within interpersonal communication ethics, prescriptive ethical frameworks can be clearly seen in critical and feminist scholarship and post-positivist perspectives of listening.

Prescriptive ethical frameworks are found throughout introductory textbooks in interpersonal communication (Adler, et al., 2015; Solomon & Theiss, 2013), small group communication (Keyton, 2006; Rothwell, 2016), public speaking (Beebe & Beebe, 2006; Keith & Lundberg, 2014), and other courses frequently offered in colleges and universities. For example, consider this statement that begins a section on ethical listening in one public speaking textbook: “The choice to be a good listener has a necessary ethical component. As an audience member, you have an ethical and a civic obligation to listen carefully and critically” (Keith &

Lundberg, 2014, p. 72). The authors go on to prescribe ethical active listening with concrete behaviors: “Be ready to listen,” “Visibly pay attention,” “Eliminate potential distractions for yourself and others,” “Respect the forum,” and “Practice good turn-taking” that fit within their given value of careful and critical listening (pp. 73-74). Beebe and Beebe (2006) prescriptively state the ethical responsibility of listeners in public situations this way: “you have the right – even the responsibility – to enter a communication situation with expectations about both the message and how the speaker will deliver it. Know what information and ideas you want to get out of the communication transaction” (p. 51). This type of prescriptive ethical behavior indicates that listeners should have a plan in place and enact that plan in order to effectively fulfill their listening role.

Critical and feminist scholars tend to search for a prescriptive ethic with the main goal of righting perceived social wrongs. For example, Koskinen and Lindstrom (2013) argue that ethical approaches to listening are “a demand to find out and to listen with openness and sensitivity to what the other wants to convey in the conversation” (p. 146). In listening, a self must take on responsibility to respect another person’s uniqueness. Understanding the ideology that is oppressing particular people and working systematically to change that structure is an obvious end to critical and feminist initiatives (Craig, 1999). Thus, it is also not surprising to find them here in the prescriptive ethical framework and I bring a critical lens to this listening research as well.

Bodie (2010), in an overview of several ethics of listening essays, argues from a post-positivist and therapeutic interpersonal communication ethics position that listening scholars need to “take the study of listening seriously and provide some evidence that what we espouse

actually works” – arguing that prescriptive measures to put aside bias should be situationally contextualized, properly theorized and tested before applied (p. 187). Whereas the majority of interpersonal ethics work is based on philosophical reasoning, Bodie argues that empirical testing is needed to support ethical claims. This type of post-positivist epistemological perspective is unique among interpersonal communication ethics arguments, but this is not particularly surprising as post-positivist epistemological perspectives call for the use of the scientific method to not only understand but to predict, as well (Craig, 2009; Miller, 2002). Prediction of what *will* happen and prescription of what *should* happen reflect similar processes. In this study, I also adopt an empirical approach to understanding the ways that listening values and listening ethics might be working in and across particular communities of difference.

Two serious engagements with virtue ethics as prescriptive are exhibited in the Aristotelian virtue work of Rice (2011) and the sentiment-virtue and dialogic ethic work of Lipari (2014). Rice (2011) argues although Aristotle’s philosophy may not have directly engaged listening, it can offer a useful framework for exploring a virtue ethic of listening. Rice argues that listening occurs in many diverse situations and for unlimited reasons and motivations. Thus, to be an ethical listener, one must always behave with the perfect amount of all virtues in each situation. A primary difficulty lies, however, in the fact that situations in which we are expected to listen can be quite distinct from each other. Based on the Aristotelian idea of moderation (no excess or deficit), Rice argues that in an Aristotelian ethic, “a good listener will listen with varying degrees of attention and care depending on the situation in which listening occurs” (p. 150). The prescriptive nature of this ethic is not in prescribing the actual listening behavior, but rather in prescribing the virtues that must be performed. For Rice this list encompasses a variety

of virtues that a virtuous listener might be draw from in any given context, including an initial list of virtues such as being “attuned, attentive, engrossed, empathetic, understanding, patient, caring, discriminating, astute, open-minded, curious, persistent, and courageous” (p. 151). Rather than arguing that these should all be used at all times, however, Rice makes a crucial and often overlooked point when considering ethical choices: virtuous listening is situation-dependent. In sum, Rice argues that “listening is easy and anyone can do it; but listening to the right person, with the right amount of attention, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it” (p. 51). Rice’s work offers an important and rare consideration of listening as a virtue or as giving rise to virtue and fits into the Aristotelian tradition of rational choice governing right listening action. This approach to understanding the wide variety of listening virtues (or values) that might be expected is also reflected in this research as I explore shared and diverging listening values across difference.

In *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement*, Lipari (2014) argues for a type of listening that she terms *listening otherwise*:

In short, *listening otherwise* moves compassion from the realm of maxim, principle, utility into a world where understanding and the transcendence of egoic self-interest are possible. Listening otherwise is attuned to the suffering of others in a way that derives from regarding the other’s suffering as a concern of mine not because I make some kind of cognitive leap or because of some strategic need I have of you, but because I feel *with* you, ineffably and irrevocably connected but not subsumed (pp. 183–184).

In this brief statement of how to ethically listen, Lipari argues for a listening ethic that explores how “virtue may arise from *listening*” in a way driven by compassion rather than cognition and based on an emotional intent and connection with another human being (p. 176). I share some basic philosophical premises with Lipari’s dialogic ethical discussion and hers is one voice that has shaped my thoughts and will reappear throughout my discussion of dialogic listening. There

are differences, however, in our approaches and emphases and these will also become evident through my methodological approach and ensuing results. In the following section, I describe the dialogic research design I employed in this study.

Dialogic Research Design

The field of philosophy of communication is not based on a single methodological approach. Rather, it is focused on considering and testing appropriate communicative behaviors through whatever methods best fulfill that aim (Arnett & Holba, 2012a). Adopting multiple methods can strengthen a study by employing a diverse tool set with which to explore multiple standpoints on an issue (Pickering, 2008). Even so, studies of communication ethics within the broader philosophy of communication field have traditionally been led by rhetorical scholars (e.g., Arneson, Arnett, Hyde, and Rice, among others) and there has been little effort to incorporate narratives from social science research into narratives of philosophical ethics. Two exceptions to this are Peters' (1999) groundbreaking text *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* and Ayim's (1997) feminist philosophical exploration of "good talk." These scholars offer nuanced philosophical discussions of communication from a variety of perspectives, including spirituality, politics, hermeneutics, technology, and psychology, among others. Thus, although ethical frameworks have been suggested and applied to social science practices (e.g., how to ethically involve research participants in institutional review board procedures), little empirical research has been reflexively used to develop philosophical communication ethics itself. Peters (1999), Cheney, et al. (2011), Stewart (2011), and Hyde (2011a) all state that there has been an unfortunate oversight in the pragmatic application of

social science research to matters of communication ethics. Bodie (2010) narrows this critique to listening ethics in particular.

Some recent philosophers have adopted a “thick” interpretive approach as they work toward understanding conflicting value systems or comparing multiple types of knowledge or ethical standpoints (Christians, 2005; Chappel, 2013). By searching for the types of attributes that compel a moral subject toward ethical action, this knowledge helps us study the structure of value frameworks shaping and being shaped by particular contexts (Arneson, 2014). One way in which to pursue thick interpretation is to systematically gather empirical evidence about the ways in which diverse communities understand particular values. As communication ethicist Michael Hyde puts it:

Research in communication ethics is well advised to keep in touch with the findings of their scientific colleagues. That certainly is one way of building theory from the ground up. But another essential piece of ground is the temporal and spatial structure of human existence. Here is where language, communication, and rhetoric do their everyday social and political work. The data that can be found here and used in instructive ways to educate us about all that is “good” and “bad” in life are no less important for “postmodernity” than the data collected by cognitive scientists. The future of communication ethics lies in attending carefully to the world’s present-day scientific, social, political, and spiritual development and to the discourses that inform and are informed by such progress (Arneson, 2007, pp. 114–115).

Empirical research – especially that which is comparative – is particularly useful when exploring matters of diversity, culture, history, and theory (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011). Chappel (2013) agrees: “‘What is happiness for humans?’ is a question for empirically informed philosophical reflection, and good answers to it are answers which are well supported by human experience and humane wisdom” (p. 166). In other words, by empirically studying multiple cases and patterns of similarities and differences in those cases, it is possible for ethicists to compare and

contrast how people use concepts and how these differences may impact social life and the construction of our values.

In this study, I respond to this call for greater inclusion of empirical work in communication ethics research in general and listening ethics research in particular and recognize its capacity for exploring thick interpretive description of diverse ethical frameworks. Driven by both descriptive and prescriptive impulses, I ground a dialogic listening ethic in an effort to understand through empirical and philosophical reflection how diverse people conceptualize good listening and then move iteratively toward the articulation of a set of shared normative values. In the following sections, I briefly summarize the dialogic methodology and research procedure I employed in this study as I studied the discursively enacted listening values in diverse communities of difference.¹ Greater detail about my research design, methods, and procedure can be found in APPENDIX: RESEARCH DESIGN.

Dialogic Methodology

The dialogic methodology I developed included a variety of approaches in keeping with a multi-centered and multi-methodological orientation to philosophy of communication. As discussed previously, dialogic ethicists embrace phenomenological philosophical perspectives as the best way to pragmatically explore current ethical issues in society. These issues are based on difference as a primary value at this historical time. To explore value systems within this postmodern context as well as ones that emerge as societies evolve, dialogic ethicists often turn

¹ While recognizing that the term “communities of difference” typically refer to groups that are in some way marginalized in society, for this study I refer to all of the diverse communities included in this study (including Caucasian men and women) in this way.

to dialogic methods such as analysis of discourse and metaphors as the primary means of learning about the ethics of interpersonal relationships (Arnett et al., 2009).

Analysis of discourse is especially useful for investigating the ways that ideas and ideologies are organized through individual and collective sets of values (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010; Tardy, 2009). As Hyde (2011b) puts it: “discourse provides the most fluid image of communication ethics because it emphasizes process, envisions structures that continuously redesign themselves and imagines change on multiple levels through collaborative action within particular contexts” (p. 70). Thus, applying a dialogic methodology to the formation of a dialogic listening ethic involves descriptive analysis of the listening values that emerge in the discourses between people in a particular space and time, emphasizing ways that people conceptualize good and bad listening.

Working from a foundational premise that what we know as real is created through and reflected in our language, I used discourse methods in order to 1) provide better historical contextualization to the dialogue surrounding the ethics of listening; 2) understand how listening is made visible/audible as it constitutes discourse through different actors; and 3) increase cultural contextualization to listening ethics by analyzing discursive acts of listening and metaphorical constructs of good listening in a particular cultural context. Analysis of discourse can be both qualitative and quantitative; both kinds were used in this project through corpus linguistics and value analysis. Because of the importance of metaphors in creating cultural and experiential constructs on individual and collective levels (Gammelgaard, 1998; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), I paid close attention to ways that metaphors constructed and reflected cognitive

constructs and promoted particular listening values, especially as related to diverse embodiments of listening both in spoken English and signed American Sign Language (ASL) communities.

In this study, I triangulated ethical understandings of listening through comparing and contrasting the discourses of focus groups that share a common multicultural home and experience of societally defined difference. Focus groups are often used in qualitative research to pursue group interaction and dialogues about particular topics of interest (Freeman, 2006). They are particularly useful for considering how “knowledge is created through the diverse experiences and forms of knowledge of, and interaction between, participants” and can yield useful insights into a community’s cultural values (Grønkjær, Curtis, de Crespigny, & Delmar, 2011, p. 16). Triangulation of focus group cases helps to clarify a central idea by considering how multiple pieces of a theoretical puzzle fit together and offer unique perspectives of a common category. I investigated the ethical values constructed in these focus group discourses using a retroductive analytic approach that brings induction and deduction together in comparative analysis of discourse cases (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). This type of cyclical and iterative approach has also been utilized by philosophers, such as listening philosopher Fiumara (1990), and promotes inclusion of multiple standpoints in ongoing dialogue. By working through comparative case analysis, my research approach allowed me to generalize ethical similarities among discourses of communities of difference while at the same time noticing cultural distinctions that emerged in the discourse of each focus group.

In sum, I based this research in part on emerging ethical understanding of individual socio-cultural communities of difference and in part on philosophical perspectives that imagine a better path for listening ethically. I attempted to listen into dialogue (with listening itself being an

active form of communication) a social narrative that includes philosophies and discourses of ethical listening along with discursive construction of identity between and across difference. I brought a plurality of perspectives together to give shape to an emergent dialogic ethic of listening, remaining especially responsive to a focus on postmodern values founded on ideas of difference. Through analysis of the discourses of various communities of difference, I hoped to counteract myopic lenses of what “good listening” might be and move toward a more nuanced and multicultural listening ethic that promoted dialogue and listening across difference. I considered how listening values and ethics participate in the construction of several communities’ narrative ground in a town not historically known for its diversity. Through their standpoints, I reflected on how they might individually and collectively contribute to improving narratives already at work in broader historical, communicative, and philosophical discourses. Ultimately, I hope that this research will be useful to both communication ethicists in exploration of listening ethics and to relational scholars in discussing good listening with greater inclusion of diverse listening values and communication behaviors.

Summary of Research Process

This study was guided by a series of research questions (RQ) and methods meant to probe the listening values being constructed in a particular narrative moment. The overarching research question of this project was “How might a dialogic listening ethic construct individual and social well-being?” This question was guided by two more specific research questions:

RQ1: How might the work of dialogic ethicists inform a listening ethic?

RQ2: What diverse perceptions of ethical listening exist among and between people of different cultural communities?

On the basis of the findings from these two research questions, I discuss a community's negotiation of shared values with conflicting expressions of good listening and how that contributes to the conceptualization of a dialogic listening ethic that promotes healthy dialogue.

The first step of the research process included an online survey meant both to probe overarching conceptualizations of good listening and to act as a recruitment tool for focus group dialogues to follow. The online survey opened to the campus community during three months (January through March) in the winter of 2016. 179 students and staff between the ages of 17 and 75, including 119 women, 56 men, and 3 gender non-conforming (a-gender, gender queer, or gender non-conforming) participated in the online survey. The majority identified as being from the United States. 171 participants indicated fluency in English, 22 indicated also knowing Spanish, 6 ASL, and 1-2 participants indicated fluency in other languages. 143 participants primarily identified as White/Caucasian, 16 as Latino/a, 9 as First Nations, 7 as Asian, 3 as LGBTQ, 2 as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 1 Black or African American, and 5 indicated none of the listed groups. Participants could also volunteer to participate in a series of focus group discussions about good listening through this online survey and all who volunteered were emailed invitations to participate in a two-phase focus group dialogue process.

In the first phase of focus group dialogues in this study, participants were invited to talk within their self-identified demographic groups about ethical listening. These communities included seven groups: Asian, ASL, Caucasian Men, Caucasian Women, Latino, First Nations, and LGBTQ and Allies (who incidentally also identified as Caucasian). In the second phase of focus groups, all of the individuals from each of the first set of focus groups were invited to explore multi-difference and gendered understandings of good listening. Together, the first and

second stages of focus group dialogues yielded 11 different discourses about ethical listening.

The video recordings of the focus group discourses were between 43 and 112 minutes.² See

Table 1 below for a summary of the focus group discourse phases.

Table 1: Focus Group Video Recordings Demographics

Phase 1	Phase 2
Asian (60 min)	Asian/First Nations/Latino/LGBTQ (74 min)
First Nations (44 min)	Asian/First Nations/Latino (71 min)
Latino (50 min)	Asian/First Nations/Latino (65 min)
LGBTQ - Caucasian (57 min)	Caucasian Men/Women (72 min)
Men - Caucasian (49 min)	
Women - Caucasian (61 min)	
ASL (112 min)	

The discourses that were constructed and recorded in these focus groups were analyzed using a mixture of qualitative, quantitative, and rhetorical methods, including value analysis, corpus linguistics, and metaphoric criticism. In keeping with a dialogic approach which analyzes emerging values between individuals and communities with a consistent eye to alterity and a broader narrative context, I integrate the findings from these methods of analysis and a longer philosophical narrative of dialogue and difference throughout this text. The ultimate goal remains the pursuit of a dialogic listening ethic “owned by no one and meaningfully important to many” (Arnett et al., 2009). In the following section, I outline the chapters included in this dissertation and the ways that they work together to construct a dialogic listening ethic.

² The ASL group’s focus group covered questions that were asked during the first and second focus group dialogues. I did not include them in the second round of discourses because of the need to include an interpreter in those mixed cultural groups and the ways that the inclusion of an interpreter changes the interactional dynamics of a group.

Preview of Chapters

In the chapters that follow, I discuss a dialogic ethic of listening by analyzing the discursive construction of listening values in several communities of difference at one point and place in humanity's narrative history. I examine the shared and diverging cultural values of diverse communities who share the desire to enact ethical listening but do so through diverse communicative performances. In this research, I discuss 12 values expressed by several communities of difference that represent diverse ethnic, gender, and disability orientations as they reflected on and discursively constructed good listening through focus group dialogues and survey responses. These values are: authenticity, relationship building, time management, problem solving, cultivating understanding, care, retaining information, correct focus, intentional presence, openness to learning, response, and conversational engagement.

In Chapter Two, I briefly describe the particular context of the communities of difference with whom I interacted in this study and summarize the primary listening values being constructed in these particular communities as discovered through the multiple methods employed in this study. In chapters Three through Six, I discuss the primary listening values that emerged in the cross-cultural discourses about good listening and are crucial to consider when pursuing ethical listening. Chapter Three addresses an overarching conceptualization of listening as being first and foremost about learning, discusses openness and authenticity that are considered primary ends of dialogic ethics and were identified in the discourses as central concerns to good listening, and the ways that openness and problem solving intersect. Chapter Four turns to the relational responsibilities that these communities consider when pursuing ethical listening, with a particular eye to matters of reciprocity, gendered emotional labor, and

care-full listening. In Chapter Five, I discuss intentional presence and the ways that remembering the right aspects of a relational narrative and focusing on the right aspects of a conversational situation is key to ethically listening to a longer past and future discourse while remaining mindful of the present moment. This mindfulness requires the ethical listener to know when and how to adapt in a dialogic moment. Chapter Six explores the critical issue of how to show good listening through one's communication engagement, paying particular attention to the ways that listening is embodied in diverse physical experiences involving the eyes and the ears and offering a new interpretation of silence not as complete absence of sound but rather as the choice to create and open space in which others are invited to dialogue.

Chapter Seven concludes this work by bringing the aforementioned pieces together to suggest that when people envision ethical listening, they are hoping for listening to be enacted as a space of sustainable hospitality that might be metaphorically conceptualized as an ocean tide pool. Engaged, intentional presence becomes central to a dialogic meeting that is a communicative encounter based on trust. It is undergirded by attesting to potential change that creates a future in line with collectively shared sameness of values. We want to feel and be welcomed into dialogue with others and bravely expect that that dialogue is part of a larger narrative arc that began long before we speak and continues long after we are gone.

CHAPTER 2 NARRATING THE DIALOGIC MOMENT: SHARED LISTENING VALUES AS CONSTRUCTED THROUGH DIVERSE VOICES

Understanding people's expectations for ethical listening must be based on the performed values of particular communities. Thus, in the creation of a dialogic ethic, it is important to first describe the social situation at a particular time in history, including public and private societal concerns (Arnett & Arneson, 1999; Arnett et al., 2009). This description creates a narrative context in which to understand the construction of listening values that promote dialogue. As Ronald Arnett says about the importance of context, "dialogue begins before people in conversation meet; we carry a ground-laden, a story-laden, bias into the discourse...ground is the bias, or what Gadamer would call the fundamental prejudice, with which one enters the interpretive act of dialogue" (Arneson, 2007, p. 64). The ways that we narrate our worlds instantiates them. Taylor and Van Every (2000) explain that "when we have understood how people narrativize experience, we understand how they can enact it" (p. 35). Thus, every relational dialogue is done in the context of dynamic stories which impact the discursive construction of meaning and value.

In this chapter, I offer a brief description of the narrative environment in which this research occurred and to which this dialogic listening ethic would apply. In my description of this environment, I take special care to include diverse voices – both from multiple communities of difference and multiple methodological approaches – that together point to a shared set of listening values that we all might respond to in our creation of ethical listening in our own stories. The limits of this space clearly prevent a thick description of every nuance that might impact the construction of listening values across difference, but I hope to offer a few pieces that

help to contextualize the situational and societal concerns that might drive the creation and performance of particular values in this space, at this time in narrative history. These include individual and collective identities of difference and a discursively created listening value system that unites them all.

I collected data for this study in 2016 at a college campus in the United States. This college currently has four campuses located across three adjacent counties. Students and faculty are highly mobile in selecting and offering courses at any and all of these campuses in any given term. Data collection was performed during the winter 2016 term at the largest of the four campuses, at which 63% of the students primarily attend classes. Roughly 75% of this college's students have residency in the county in which this campus is located; the other students are from the two neighboring counties and outside of the region. Student ages span from under 19 to over 60, with estimates of the population at 18% for those 19 and under, 41% of the population aged 20-29, 15% of the population aged 30-39, 9% of the population aged 40-49, 7% of the population aged 50-59, and 10% of the population over aged 60.³

Three types of difference appeared to be particularly salient to the performance of individual identities of difference and to the social environment at this college: race and ethnicity, gender, and disability. Whereas detailed demographic information surrounding race and ethnicity were readily available through the college, numbers related to gender were more difficult to ascertain, and statistics related to disability inaccessible. The overarching social reasons for silencing information about some socially constructed categories as compared to others are many and myriad. They are also central to understanding the narrative context that

³ These statistics and others that follow are from institutional data.

energizes a discussion about good listening within and between distinct individual embodiments and communities of difference, whether that be difference based on ethnicity, race, gender, disability, or the hybrid intersections of these identities and others.

Identity and Difference

Identity is often theorized as a performance in which a self is presented to others and to itself in order to create an image of who that self *is* (Butz & Besio, 2009). Hybridity, when related to identity, points to a blending of difference in such a way that new performances of identity may appear in various social interactions. Exploring hybridity can bring about new perceptions of the world and the ways that people's identities are contextualized in particular relationships and particular stages of life. Throughout this study, I will be referring to various communities of difference as being united in their relationships and support of each other, but I also reject a homogenizing view of any individual or community. I label the communities through the names that they have adopted themselves to identify a particular practice of being together in community within the larger college collective. It is important to note that individuals within these communities each have their own hybrid identities that they are performing, some of which lead them to identify with multiple communities simultaneously.

As identities are assembled by ourselves and others, we position ourselves in relation to the people around us and within our own selves, communities, and broader social and political structures. This positioning is inherently an evolving and changing process, one that is a matter of both being and becoming, of past and future (Hall, 1993). Meanings of race, gender, and ability are historically and spatially situated. People are eager to label, categorize, and name aspects of other people that they do not understand, that does not fit the expected norm, that is

seemingly different (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2012). Certain privileges are both withheld and given based on the way these meanings, and the bodies that help create those meanings, are situated. As disability scholar Davis (2008) puts it, “what brings together all the social injustices of the past two hundred years is the idea that people with various bodily traits have been discriminated against because of those traits” (p. 322). This discrimination points to social structures that highlight certain physical characteristics as being essential for control and controlling, for talking about and talking for, for having the right to be listened to and to listen.

People reinforce and perpetuate socially constructed silos of purist categories by various micro and macro processes that impact the ways that diverse bodies are understood. Bodies, however, cannot be governed by a single system of values and norms as they are as diverse as the values that they embody and promote. Race, ethnicity, gender and disability are all multifaceted and nuanced creative performance that do not fall under the sole governance of a single medical establishment, culture, person, or epistemology (Butler, 1993). Bodies are read by others and selves through a variety of contexts and times. Constructions of identity are not merely the result of individualized reflected appraisal, social comparison, or the necessity of a right to define one’s body in a given moment – although these are important. They are also the product of social and historical forces. Bodies that have been socially categorized in one way can be categorized in another in a brief span of time. Every person has a mix of identities, and therefore hybrid identities, depending on the context and the requirements of the spaces in which they live.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity have been foundational to the construction of social groups in the United States and remain two of its central organizing concepts. This organizing may be based on changing racial and ethnic categorization and recognition of citizens through the national census (Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends, 2015), or through a wide array of other (often conflicting) definitional attempts to group people based on particular familial ties, nationalities, skin colors, socioeconomic status, and/or other biological and social features (Hall, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994; Rees, 2007). Racial and ethnic categorization is complicated.

Physical readings of race on and through bodies is a mark of everyday discourse in the United States, and most theorization of hybrid identities has continued to focus on interracial identities, or those who cross or overlap multiple racial categories (Young, 2009). According to Khanna (2004), a person's racial identity is more strongly impacted by their physical appearance than any other feature that may typically be used to ground race (e.g., language, geographical location, heredity, and/or cultural affiliation). For example, a person's identification with Asian identity "is shaped by how others racially identify the individual through visual cues of Asian-ness (e.g., our almond eyes, olive skin, dark hair, etc.)"; it is the reflected appraisal of how a person's self is interpreted and understood by others (Young, 2009, p. 143). Yet, physical appearance is not the only logic used to organize race and ethnicity.

Race and ethnicity may be best understood as a process through which human bodies are imagined to fill particular cultural and social roles. For example, one way of conceptualizing race would be to consider it "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). Similarly, a

definition of ethnicity might theorize it as “a product of dialectical tensions between internal self-identification and external ascriptions” (Eckert, 2010, p. 327). In both of these constructs, race and ethnicity go well beyond concrete and discrete scientific terms separating particular individuals into specific categories of existence. Instead, both concepts have produced and reproduced particular social sensibilities. These sensibilities often include nuanced mixing of physical and social traits of individuals and groups and are impacted by our own self-definition and the ways that that definition is constrained and determined by others.

Based on the overall student demographic information at the college at which this study was pursued, 74% of the campus population self-identified as White, 8% as Hispanic, 3% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.5% as Asian, just over 1% as Black or African American, and just over 1% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. According to registration trends over the last several years, students who identify with the communities of difference listed above have been growing steadily, while students who identify as White have seen a corresponding decrease. For example, compared with the same quarter four years previous to the one during which this study was conducted, the total student population identifying as White has dropped by over 25%. During this same time frame, the American Indian or Alaska Native population has grown by almost 10%, the Hispanic population by 12%, the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander population by 22%, the Black or African American population by 25%, and the Asian population by 40%. In sum, although the White/Caucasian student population is the majority in this college, communities of difference are growing, including most predominantly by overall population those that identify with the Hispanic, First Nations, and Asian groups.

The college's faculty diversity is not yet experiencing a corresponding diversification, however, leading to a gap between the diversity of the student body and that of the instructional and non-instructional staff at the college. Based on the college's information regarding staff published in fall of 2015, out of 422 total full and part-time staff members, 19 (4.5%) are categorized as an ethnic minority. This 20% ethnic diversity gap between students and staff leads to a variety of perceptions related to inclusivity and well-being of its members, as will become apparent during the discussion of listening values in the chapters that follow. Unfortunately, I do not believe much argument need be made that widespread and systemic racial and ethnic injustice has been and continues to be a major issue in United States. Just as identification of racial and ethnic categories is socially constructed and reflects social concerns, so is the creation of any other category that defines and constructs humanity – such as gender.

Gender

Gender is complex. It is a discursive performance rather than an inherent biological quality and cannot be accurately conceptualized as a binary spectrum of male or female, woman or man, as is often assumed in historical discourses of the United States and in the ways that people use these terms in their everyday lives (Butler, 1993; Cameron, 1999). As Fausto-Sterling (2000) puts it: “A body's sex is simply too complex. There is no either/or. Rather, there are shades of difference” (p. 3). Many studies still address issues of gender diversity as if they were binary and focus energy on understanding differences between two genders – men and women. There is much generative space to move beyond this categorical structure and this is no less true in the context of higher education.

Much of the literature surrounding the experience of gender in college and university life has traditionally looked at contrasting binaries of men and women and the inequities that occur there (Curtis, 2011). In the particular context in which this study and dialogic ethic is being formed, students who identify as women outnumber men (52 percent as compared to 45 percent), and three percent of the student population's gender was left unidentified. Among faculty and staff, the population of men and women in full-time instructional and non-instructional roles are almost equal (although men hold the majority of tenured faculty positions and women a majority of part-time roles). Although the institutional trends followed the overall national trends of male-dominance of tenured faculty and female-dominance of part-time staff employment, these gender gaps were not as extreme as is present at some other higher education institutions (Curtis, 2011). Based on observation of gender performance at this college, staff and students who performed cisgender identities did not voice major concerns about their inclusion and opportunities on campus. Perhaps this is in part correlated to the college president and many of the academic leaders identifying as women.

However, when it came to the performance of other types of gender fluidity and sexuality, reports of discrimination or fears of social retaliation were present. For those on this campus who embraced gender identities that did not conform to a cisgender binary, narratives of frustration and exclusion emerged. At the time of this study, gender was one of the defining issues of society. The rights of those who pursue same-sex marriage were being fought for at state and federal levels. People were voting on the issue of same-sex marriage on state ballots and the state legislature had just passed a bill that increased gender inclusive language in respect to marriage – defining marriage as a union between two individuals (rather than between a man

and woman). Safe Zone trainings on campus offered frequent small group discussions about gender inclusivity on campus grounds and the communities in which the campus was embedded. Gender was discursively constructed as a key diversity issue, and one that required greater knowledge-building on campus.

Like other differences, gender can be conceptualized as a range of lived experience that is dependent on nuanced social, political, and physiological features. It cannot be disentangled from the ways that ethnicity and race produce individual and collective identities in society today (Barrett, 1997; Ibrahim, 2012). To this complex of hybrid identities, I add one more that relates in important ways to race, ethnicity, and gender: disability.

Disability

Definitions of disability differ depending on the stance one adopts, as argued in the preceding sections on race, ethnicity, and gender. In the case of disability, people's health identities go far beyond the definitions of normalcy and related ideals that medical and mainstream discourses typically adopt (Davis, 1997). Events that traditional medical experts might find normal and routine may take on very different meanings for patients depending on their own personal histories, places of engagement, and interpersonal experiences (Tashiro, 2006). Traditional medical models may consider disability to be primarily about a particular person's physical ability to engage in normalized social roles. In contrast, social perspectives of disability may conceptualize the experience of disability as being created by barriers constructed by society that limit the access and acceptability of particular human physical differences or cultural approaches may conceptualize disability culture as a way of belonging to a broader

community of difference that shares and supports similar ways of being (Baynton, 2008; Murugami, 2009).

People with disabilities are often socially marginalized in a number of different ways related to hybrid identities. For example, higher percentages of racial and ethnic minorities report being disabled as compared to White people in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). More females report being disabled than males (Wendell, 1997). In addition, people with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty. Out of 10 people labeled as disabled, only four in the 15-64 age group are employed as compared to twice that many in the non-disabled category (Brault, 2012). In a recent study of scientists and engineers with disabilities, those with disabilities were significantly less likely to be employed even with the same academic qualifications (National Science Foundation, 2013). Thus, disability remains highly stigmatized in the current societal narrative, and this is no less true in higher education for both students and staff (American Association of University Professors, 2012; Grasgreen, 2014). Disability offices and higher education social structures discursively engage disability in both explicit legal access statements (in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which promotes participation of people with disabilities “in the mainstream of American life” (ADA.gov, n.d.)) and ways that people with disabilities are socially perceived.

Unfortunately, stigma surrounding a person who identifies as disabled still causes many in broader society to question a person’s competence. Those who have an “invisible disability” – such as deaf people when they are not engaging in a visual-gestural form of communication or a hearing aid or cochlear implant is not visible – may be extremely hesitant to present that aspect

of their identity to the broader community. Whether passing as able-bodied or being silenced by others, people with disabilities are often pushed or move themselves to the margins of public spaces. In the environment in which I researched, no statistics about disabled populations on campus were publically available. In the context of in-depth description of race and ethnicity and binary expectations of gender, this silence around disability (as was also the case for gender expressions that were not heteronormative and cis-gendered) is noteworthy and concerning. Those who are not named or spoken of are often not recognized to exist and their voices left unattended.

It is important to highlight alternative voices that account for evolving hybridity in the bodies of individuals through their life-span, societal shifts, and diverse cultural contexts. It is probable that all of us at one time or another will be in a social position in which the intersections of our unique bodies and societal expectations of those bodies will cause us to be disabled. In these changes, we may even embrace and celebrate a disabled identity. These abilities are tied in remarkable ways to categorical constructions of race, ethnicity, and gender (Wu, 2012). Thus, while I have divided these categories for the sake of discussing the importance of each type of difference in this chapter, I must reemphasize that they are one and all related and part of a holistic hybridity enacted among the participants in this study.

Maria Root remarks that “We are inkblots. People see us and they project what they need onto us to make themselves feel comfortable... We get a window into what their anxieties and fears are” (Gaskins, 1999, p. 20). Inkblots: an interesting metaphor for identity. People’s races have been categorized by heritage, by skin color, by blood quantum levels, and a host of other culturally influenced physical and social features. People’s genders have been categorized by

particular physical parts, DNA, romantic and sexual attraction, and verbal and nonverbal expression. People's abilities have been categorized by the instrumentality of their bodies, how they perform expected societal tasks, the barriers that prevent full inclusion in societal roles. Nishime (2014) reminds us: "There may be quantifiable physical differences between the people we place in separate racial groups, but the decision to *prioritize* the tiny physical differences that separate people along predetermined racial lines is culturally dictated" (p. xiii). I believe this can generatively expanded to include all types of difference.

All people who perform hybrid identities defy the cognitive and linguistic categories that people work to create, or have been given, to make sense of their world. In co-constructed communication acts today, I am more convinced than ever that the language we use shows our value systems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and that there will be inevitable difficulty building meaning between people that ask questions that negligibly reflect experiences of individual hybridity or communal narratives of difference, whether these differences be constructed on ethnicity, race, gender, disability, or some other social category.

Communities of Difference

Throughout this work, I refer to communities who relate around a particular way of being that is considered to be distinct from a monolithic majority as a "community of difference." This term, as adopted by scholars such as Tierney (1993), argues for the importance of studying difference in terms of culturally formed and socially practiced social alterity. These practices are not neutral, but have been stigmatized and oppressed by those in power who might view this alterity as weakness or shortcoming. Instead of capitulating to this perception, however, Tierney (1993) embraces the idea that "identity is difference, and in an organization based on agape, the

participants need to come to terms with how to recognize and to honor difference” (p. 63).

Communities of difference that organize around both differences and commonalities create new spaces to push back on systems of oppression and attempt to create new spaces of dialogic equity. At the institution in which I conducted this research, individual diversity and the communities of difference to which these individuals belong are supported and honored through the Office of Multicultural Activities and the Services for Students with Disabilities.

The Office of Multicultural Activities (OMA) is “committed to providing work and learning environments that respect and educate about cultural differences” and is centrally located on campus. It does this by recruiting and advocating for underrepresented populations among students and staff, planning and offering cultural events and educational opportunities, promoting personal connections, supporting student education, and working toward goals in keeping with their diversity plan that promotes intercultural communication and awareness. The OMA also supports and provides a safe meeting space for a number of multicultural programs and groups, including the Latino Club, the First Nations Student Union, the Asian Club, the LGBTQ and Allies Club, and hosts other cultural programs related to diversity and difference.

The Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at this college is housed in a different building than the OMA, near many of the campus administrative offices on the outskirts of campus. With three staff, one of whom is a sign language interpreter/coordinator, the SSD’s mission is to “create inclusive and sustainable learning environment and facilitate access, discourse, and involvement through innovative services and programs, leadership, and collaboration.” The SSD works toward making the campus more accessible in accordance with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, offers information about disability-related

scholarships, provides information and resources for both students and staff about how best to support students with disabilities on campus, and hosts the All Access Club and American Sign Language (ASL) Club.

Deaf students are one type of group that has a shared sense of community and culture united by their discourse through ASL. They have historically had a tenuous relationship with disability support services, which often functions from a medical and individualistic model of difference rather than a socio-cultural one. A deaf community offers a unique social group with which to consider similarities and differences with the other cultural communities, both by including an often overlooked type of difference – disability – and by their use of a visual-gestural language. The deaf student population at this college is slowly growing, with five students in 2016. These students, and other students and staff that have learned or are learning ASL and attend meetings (e.g., ASL interpreters and classmates), make up the ASL Club.

As the OMA pursues the support of communities of difference at this college, their own structure is impacted by the overall diversity population in the area. As stated earlier in this chapter, at the time of this research, the largest ethnic groups that do not identify as White on campus (and the three counties in which these campuses are based) include the Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Asian populations. These are also the three groups that have campus clubs that include both students and staff in their efforts to support one another. These clubs self-identify as the Latino Club, the First Nations Student Union (FNSU), and the Asian Student Club.⁴ In addition to these cultural groups, the narrative on campus clearly

⁴ Although these groups have the term “student” in them, they should not be conceptualized as serving students alone. With a lack of diversity among college faculty and staff and therefore a

indicates through campus-wide training (e.g. Safe Zone training) that gender is a salient category of difference being addressed by the OMA on campus. The LGBTQ and Allies Club promotes the inclusive performance of all genders on campus and a community space to discuss and support each other's lived experiences. Finally, as previously mentioned, disability populations are growing on college campuses throughout the United States (Clemson, 2015; Erevelles & Minear, 2011) and disability is increasingly becoming a matter of discussion for college campuses today. At this particular institution, one club focused on the deaf cultural experience is the ASL Club. Each of these clubs has worked to create a community of people that offer support and meet with some regularity over the academic year.

These groups, in contrast to the White, cis-gendered, and able-bodied experience present on this campus, offer a unique lens of constructed listening values within the shared humanity of the college campus. Together, these cases offer both overlapping and distinct socio-cultural experiences. Having both is critical for the comparative approach to yield integrated and theoretically rich information because comparison of multiple cases infers that the cases being studied can offer unique perspectives of a single research subject. These communities share an important similarity for the context of this study. Taken together, these groups offer a look at various facets of diversity and difference and thus offer varied types of the single categorical trait of difference. Taken apart, these groups create individual dialogues with potentially unique listening ethics based on their unique socio-cultural backgrounds.

lack of services to support them, it is clear that faculty and staff are connected to these clubs and find a shared community in these spaces as well.

Members of the Latino, First Nations, Asian, LGBTQ, and ASL communities share a commonality of being categorized as different from the White, gender normative, able-bodied majority population but they are also different from each other. They not only have unique community histories based on different founding moments and evolving social narratives, they also have distinct experiences of vulnerability in mainstream society as a whole. They use multiple mixed linguistic codes through English and additional languages prominent in their communities (e.g., American Sign Language, Mandarin, Spanish, multiple Native languages), along with embracing different values and practices to promote their unique community's norms and long-term viability. Divergent histories and experience may lead to different ways of understanding good listening within their community boundaries and the expectations they have when engaging people outside their socio-cultural group.

The experience of mixed race, mixed ability, and mixed gender bodies in the educational system is complex. Educational discourses can, at times, silence people's lived experiences when searching for solutions to issues that professionals in higher education identify as most concerning (Freire, 1968). As is true in other social contexts, the ways people engage diverse bodies in colleges and universities in the United States is largely based on personal experiences with discrimination, exposure to various perspectives, and socioeconomic and family backgrounds. It is important to recognize that the perception of students, faculty, and staff in this study generally point to both subtle and explicit discrimination based on ethnic and linguistic background that functions under a benevolent veneer of niceness and ignorance. This expectation of social nicety may lead to the silencing of voices that speak out for social change by people

who are enjoying a privileged social position and suddenly feel uncomfortable by an apparent lack of “niceness” by voices that demand systemic change that promotes equity for all.

One example of this can be seen in the results of a biannual campus-wide climate survey distributed by the college’s organizational development committee. In 2013, 220 full-time and part-time staff ranging from less than a year’s time employment to over 20 years responded to this climate survey (a response rate of 35%). Several of these questions related to ways that faculty and staff perceive diversity on campus. Based on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, 89% in some way agreed that diverse backgrounds and perspectives are valued on campus and 86% in some way agreed that direct supervisors value diversity present in the area of the college for which they are responsible. This said, 22% of staff indicated that they would not feel comfortable voicing a complaint about negative things that might be occurring to them personally or on campus generally. It might be argued that staff hold more power at this institution than students, so imagine the risk that students might take should they outspokenly voice a complaint that relates to their identities of difference.

In this narrative moment, Latino, First Nations, LGBTQ and Allies, and ASL communities discursively create values that both overlap and diverge from the majority who self-identify as White, cis-gendered, and able-bodied, and these values create their cultural communities and individual identities. This confluence of values creates the context for learning to better listen within and across difference. On campus, people are calling for a better engagement of diversity and difference and looking to be more inclusive and understanding of each other’s ways of life. They communicate desire to ethically listen while enacting both shared and diverging listening values in the constitution of their cultures.

A meaningful representation of ethical listening is my ultimate aim in this research. It is not my goal to argue that particular communities of difference included in this project listen in some homogenous way. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) argue that adopting a retroductive analysis of comparative approach of cases like these can be a beneficial strategy for developing theoretical frameworks by promoting a systematic analysis of the ways that diversity manifests and functions within and across different contexts: “There is a dialogue between ideas and evidence that culminates in a meaningful representation of the research subject” (p. 145). It is my hope that by listening well to communities of difference in a current dialogic moment, we may move forward with a dialogic ethic that is responsive to performances of difference in this time and space – including performances of hybridity which are inherent to the social construction of identity – rather than reenacting an ethic that relies on cultural exclusivity or is unresponsive to the challenges that shape cultural goals and values.

Inclusion of multiple voices in the understanding of ethical listening is at the heart of this project. From the active inclusion of multiple communities of differences to that of multiple quantitative and qualitative methods, I work to create a more nuanced conceptualization of good listening as gained through all of these voices and channels of understanding. In the following section, I transition from exploring the role of identity and difference in narrating the dialogic moment to that of shared listening values found through the methods I employed in my research: value analysis, corpus linguistics, and metaphoric criticism. Through these diverse standpoints, twelve shared listening values emerged and act as the guiding framework for the discussion of ethical listening in the chapters that follow.

Core Listening Values

Values, as central constructs to cultural expression, are both conscious and unconscious behaviors. My findings evidence both trans-community similarities and inter-community differences in listening values. On one hand, the participants in this study expressed a foundational orientation to openness of learning in which most argued that good listeners actively try to understand another person's core identities and communicated meanings despite, or perhaps because, of their differences. This process of really listening to another person required an ability to critically discern truth and goodness in any situation so that dialogic partners could work together toward creating a more ideal world. It also required people to choose vulnerability in relationships and to recognize who they are responsible to and respond appropriately in reciprocal relationships. They needed to intentionally choose to be present and respond appropriately to the aspects of the dialogue that were of most importance to the relationship and discourse both in the particular moment and the longer trajectory of the relationship. Finally, participants across communities articulated the need for knowledge and skills to embody listening in ways that enable speakers to feel appropriately attended to, whether that be through particular uses of eye contact, quietness, conversational encouragers, or some other act.

On the other hand, in the discursive construction of their values regarding listening, participants made some distinct, culturally-grounded choices as they enacted listening. Different performances included diverging enactments of authenticity and honesty, pursuit of criticism and relationship through listening, acts of reciprocity in relational networks, adaptation of identity presentation in different relationships, choices to express disagreement with a dialogic partner,

different physical engagement through eye contact and other sensory choices, and communicating silence through vocal absence and conversational encouragers as an invitation for another to continue speaking. My findings include indications of intracommunity differences related to the performances of listening that are possibly related to status and power. Although beyond the scope of this study and therefore not central to my primary argument, they are worth exploring in the future.

In order to probe the presence of values and a value framework in the discursive construction of the dialogic moment being considered in this study, I examined the corpus of texts from the complete transcribed focus group discourses to identify value-laden terms used throughout the discourses on ethical listening as a whole through metaphoric criticism, corpus linguistics, and value analysis of the language used by participants in the listening dialogues. Additional information about these methods is offered in the APPENDIX: RESEARCH DESIGN.

Metaphors of Listening

Language is foundational to both expression and construction of our cultural construction of values. Within the study of language, metaphors in particular create new ways to understand and generate our worlds. *Metaphor*, like most terms that have undergone millennia of scholarly discussion, has many different definitions. From the time of Aristotle to current scholarship, one might argue that metaphors have typically been understood as conceptual mappings that allow us to understand one concept in the framework of another, impacting our cognitive categories and thought processes in ways that can generate new meanings (Wilcox, 2000). They do this by mapping meanings from a source to a target concept, with both concepts being different enough

from each other that they would be considered quite distinct yet would share enough similarities within their particular domains that they could reasonably be compared to each other (Burgers, Konijn, & Steen, 2016). The power of metaphors to impact our discourses should not be underestimated and often occur at unconscious levels (Ayim, 1997; Gammelgaard, 1998). Yet, even though they may be unconscious, they are not random. They typically cluster around particular topics of societal import and offer concrete ways of understanding abstract concepts (Burgers, 2016). As our experiences are named and framed in new ways, our perceptions and responses to them often shift.

Arnett (2011) asserts that communication ethics can usefully engage the analysis of metaphors for exploring diverse perspectives of what is good as produced and reflected in language use and discourse. In this study, I embrace this perspective that people's use of metaphors influence the social construction of listening values and listening ethics. When listening is metaphorically constructed as getting *hooked* into a story, for example, we may not even recognize that a metaphor is being used related to a piece of curved metal used to catch or hold something because it has been conventionalized into everyday speech as a metaphoric way of referring to a speaker catching a listener's attention. People no longer recognize that there is a connection between the original source meaning and the target domain. Rather than succumbing to the danger of particular listening metaphors being mistaken for facts about the essence of listening because they have been normalized in everyday discourse and assumed to be concrete and absolute representations of abstract ideas (Geary, 2011), I work to make conventional hidden understandings visible by attracting attention to them (Burgers, 2016). I attempt to better understand the essence of listening values by studying the metaphors present in the discourse.

In this study, metaphors related to listening were found throughout the discourses in both English and ASL. Each of these metaphors offers a unique lens for the ways that listening is impacted by physical embodiment and the intersection of those physical experiences with culture and space. It is often difficult to identify metaphors in language because they have become so embedded in our everyday language use and help to hold culture together in often unconscious ways (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It is exactly because they are often normalized that analyzing metaphors at work can help bring new understanding to the ways that our cultures work as well. Ricoeur promotes the idea that "metaphors give us a new way to describe, a redescription, of the world, just as the interpretation of texts presents to us a world which could be our world, and, to use Gadamer's phrase, creates a 'fusion of horizons' of the world in which I live and the world in which I *could live*" (Reagan, 1996, p. 43). Metaphors help bring past, present, and future worlds together, and they are often (if not always) derived from our physical and social experiences.

This is particularly true in relation to the values that drive individuals and societies to act in certain ways. Literary scholar C.S. Lewis (2013) goes so far as to say that metaphors themselves, as produced by human imagination, can be good or bad because they ultimately lead to similar ways of thinking:

Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition. It is, I confess, undeniable that such a view indirectly implies a kind of truth or rightness in the imagination itself. I said at the outset that the truth we won by metaphor could not be greater than the truth of the metaphor itself; and we have seen since that all our truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor. And thence, I confess, it does follow that if our thinking is ever true, then the metaphors by which we think must have been good metaphors (p. 265).

As argued by Lewis, metaphors, as central constructs in our cognitive and linguistic realities, help to shape our ethical understandings of truth itself. Cognitive scientist George Lakoff and

philosopher Mark Johnson (1980), two highly influential figures in current metaphoric scholarship, would agree: "the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture" (p. 22). The very process of emphasizing certain concepts through metaphoric processes while diminishing or hiding others can represent the value systems of a community.

In this analysis, I generally adopted Foss's (2004) metaphoric criticism approach and the theoretical framework of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Lakoff and Johnson advance a perspective that the metaphors we use are grounded in our experience. Metaphors organize our cognitive structures and encourage certain modes of thought. Physical and cultural experiences lead communities to develop linguistic and nonverbal systems of metaphors made up of three overlapping types of metaphors: "orientational metaphors," "structural metaphors," and "ontological metaphors." In this study, I consider listening metaphors that relate to two types of metaphoric constructions, as identified in relationship to ethical listening as discussed in the focus group discourses: orientational and structural.

Orientational metaphors typically yield spatial metaphors that are derived from our physical experiences. For example, discussion of music may suggest that we are listening to *rising* or *falling* tones, to *low* or *high* notes, pointing to the conflation of our auditory and spatial experiences (Geary, 2011). Or, emotions may be referred to as *up* or *down*, following perceptions that up-emotions are happy and good, and so things that are good are *up*. In contrast, down-emotions are sad and bad, and so things that are bad may be referenced as being *down*. Orientational references to *up* and *down* may also infer meanings of quantity or intensity (e.g., unemployment is down) or other types of experiences and so metaphors of this type may

function in a type of hierarchy in which some meanings hold more weight for a cultural community and language than others. Structural metaphors occur when speakers frame differing concepts as being similarly structured. This typically occurs when a more concrete conceptual framing is used with a more abstract concept. Examples of these might include arguments being framed or structured as war or time being treated as a resource, such as money (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). All types of metaphors are deeply tied to cultural formation and expression and, as present in all cultural communities, yield unique lenses into the ways that communities function.

I integrate discussion of listening metaphors into the rest of this text. At times, they are used to help frame the content of each chapter and can be found referenced in the title. At other times, they help to elucidate values that can frame a dialogic listening ethic. See Table 2 below for a list of listening metaphors identified in this study, separated into one set of structural and one set of orientation metaphors.

Table 2: English Listening Metaphors

Structural Metaphor	Orientation Metaphors
Armor	Open up / Get shut down
Wall	Draw out / Drew in
Blanket	Heard me out / Listen in
Hammer	Take it in / Get it out
Doll	Space out
Cage	Tune out / Tune in
Ground	Cut off / Turn off
Deep	Absorb
New page	Pull my listening ears out
Fish in an aquarium	Pick up
Hyenas and Chickens	Hooked in
Hospitality and Dwelling	LISTEN/HEAR (ASL)

At each instance that I discuss these listening metaphors, greater context will be given to help frame its efficacy in promoting particular value systems among the various communities of difference. For all of these metaphors, and for metaphors in general, I adopt Ricoeur's perspective that "metaphor is not a purely linguistic phenomenon, and...is not a purely ornamental replacement of a literary by a figurative meaning. On the contrary, we must attribute to the metaphor a creative and informative function, indicating that it does not depend on a lexical translation but on an interpretation" and interpret the listening metaphors in context of these communities (Gammelgaard, 1998, p. 162).

Listening Values in the Corpus

Other ways to understand language and discourse as reflective of the cultural values of a community is to analyze the frequency with which members reference particular ideas and normative values. At times, people are explicit in their choices of vocabulary and terms to ensure that their communicated meaning is as close to their intention as possible. At most times, however, people communicate without much reflexivity about their particular word choices and the ways that these choices reflect their own cultural values. Thus, it can be useful to analyze how people use particular language constructions when investigating underlying values and motivations that drive their language performance.

Analyzing the complete discourse in the corpus of 100,958 words,⁵ it became clear that terms of *morality* and *ethics* were not popular in the discursive construction of good listening

⁵ This corpus excluded the focus group facilitator's discursive text and only included lexical items that were present in the discourses of three or more focus groups. This filtering was done to avoid the use of a single person's word or phrase appearing multiple times but not representing the perspectives of multiple members of discourse.

among participants in this study. At only one mention each, these terms do not seem to be central to the ways that they understand their own way of being. However, this does not mean that they were not making value statements or value judgments. Indeed, value-laden terms were quantitatively present in the discourse, including an explicit mention of *value* (and its derivative forms), as well as terms such as *want*, *good*, *have to*, *need*, *should*, *important*, *willing*, *obligated*, *obvious*, *wrong*, *expect*, *worth*, *must*, *rule*, *appropriate*, *validate*, *rude*, *priority*, *responsibility*, and *burden*. See Table 3 below for a summary of the frequency of common value-laden terms found in the corpus.⁶

Table 3: Value Terminology Frequency

Value Word	Frequency
Want*	360
Good*	327
Have to	227
Need*	194
Should	75
Import*	61
Valu*	28
Willing*	27
Obligat*	26
Obvious	25
Wrong	24
Judg*	21
Expect*	21
Worth*	12
Must	8
Rule	8
Appropriat*	7
Validat*	6

⁶ Throughout this text, asterisks surrounding lexical forms indicate the terms that were searched and the number of times that derivatives of this term were found in the corpus. For example “want*” could be “want,” “wants,” “wanted,” “wanting,” etc.

Rude	6
Priorit*	4
Responsibil*	4
Burden	2
Moral*	1
Ethic*	1

Throughout the corpus, participants were very clear that there were right and wrong ways to listen. They consistently talked about what they *wanted* to happen, what would *have to* happen, what they *need* to happen, what *should* happen. These and the other value-laden words point to the importance of values in the construction of cultural norms and behaviors, including that of good and bad listening.

I identified the listening values central to the participants in this study through empirical analysis of the discourses of 11 focus groups about good listening using value analysis, as described by Sillars and Gronbeck (2001). By probing explicit and implicit mentions of values of positive and negative values, ideals and flaws, I identified 12 core values that promote ethical listening: conversational engagement, response, openness, intentional presence, correct focus, care, cultivating understanding, time management, problem solving, relational connection, and authenticity. While I attempted to keep each value theme internally consistent and distinct from other values in this list so that no discursive marker would fit into multiple values, it would be imprudent to assume that there are not intersections and overlaps to these values. Value systems are often cohesive and one attitude impacts another. Like cultural hybridity, the identification of values should also accept some blurring of categorical boundaries as inherent to their identities.

Sillars and Gronbeck (2001) argue that identifying the frequency of values in a discourse is one way of understanding their importance to a cultural framework. Based on the frequency of

value mentions in the listening discourses,⁷ one could argue that conversational engagement was considered the most important at over 200 mentions. However, with response, openness, intentional presence, and correct focus garnering over 100 mentions, and care, cultivating understanding, time management, and problem solving, relationship connection and authenticity over 45 mentions, all 12 values appear to be important to a listening ethical framework. Every value was expressed in each of the 11 focus group discourses, indicating that they were shared among communities. Each of these values will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

The frequency with which conversational engagement concerns were mentioned during the dialogues about good listening were also exhibited in a written focus group activity used to elicit ideas about good listening. Prior to any discussion about good listening, phase one focus group participants were asked to brainstorm words that came to mind when they thought of good listening and to write them down on large sheets of paper. Analyzing these seven written records, words associated with conversational engagement were again seen to be the terms to which the participants most frequently referred, including *eye contact*, *body language*, *communication*, *active listening*, at the top of chart (seven, five, four, and four times, respectively). Other phrases that were included by three or more focus groups included *open* and *attention* (seven and five times, respectively), four instances each of *empathy*, *hearing*, *information*, *interest*, *not distracted*, and *responding*, and three instances each of *asking*, *connection*, *engaged*, *genuine*, *learning*, *person*, *quiet*, *self*, *understanding* and *value*. By comparing these terms with the values

⁷ Based on calculating frequency in distinct utterances by participants with less than a three second pause in their discursive act. If multiple mentions of a value were made by the participant during an utterance with less than two seconds pause, the value was only counted once.

that emerged throughout the focus group dialogues, one can observe that shared listening values continue to resonate throughout the discourses.

As people talked about listening and their values around its performance in their lives, several themes emerged. Based on a total frequency of lexical items, I examined the presence of the words given by participants in the brainstorming session and analyzed the total frequency of those lexical items and their derivatives (e.g., listen* could be listen, listens, listened, listening, listener, or listeners) that were present in at least three of the discursive texts in the corpus. The terms that were found through this analysis included *listen, other, person, hear, understand, learn, being, communicate, ask, information, interest, language, attentive, open-minded, eye-contact, response, connect, value, body, quiet, self, distract, engage, active, genuine, and empathy*. See Table 4 for content words and frequency of mention, from most frequent to least.

Table 4: Content Word Frequency in Corpus

Content Word	Frequency
Listen*	810
Other*	314
Person*	305
Hear*	264
Understand*	162
Learn*	160
Being	138
Communicat*	128
Ask*	96
Informati*	78
Interest*	77
Language*	73
Attent*	49
Open-Minded	45
Eye-Contact	45
Respons*	41
Connect*	29

Valu*	28
Bod*	27
Quiet*	25
Self	22
Distract*	18
Engag*	16
Active*	10
Genuine*	10
Empath*	8

The fact that participants from several different communities of difference used these terms points to their not being just one person's conceptualization of good listening but rather that they occupy discursive importance in the overarching listening values shared by the communities.

In sum, linguistic analysis of the discursively constructed values emphasizes the role that communication competence has for ethical listening. This includes references to both language use and the embodiment of listening through frequently referenced behaviors such as hearing, eye contact, and body language. This analysis also increases the discursive weight that should be placed on processes of relational connection and orientations toward learning and understanding as these lexical items received more frequent mention than particular communicative tasks when considering ethical listening. In addition, values such as openness to learning and intentional presence that were previously identified as values being performed in the discourse are reinforced through this analysis of this terminology correspondence with good listening.

By understanding the ways that diverse listening values are being discursively performed at this point in narrative history among Asian, ASL, First Nations, Latino, LGBTQ and Allies, and Caucasian Men and Women groups, I sensitize a dialogic listening ethic to the distinct listening values that arise among communities of difference. Through the recognition of structural and orientation metaphors that metaphorically shape community listening values and

the identification of 12 values expressed by these communities, we better understand what it means to be good listeners and pursue ethical listening across difference. In the following chapters, I turn to a detailed discussion of the ways that these cultural systems of shared and divergent values are constructed and ways that they point us to better enact good listening. Through this discussion I begin to answer the overarching research question driving this study by using investigation of diverse perceptions of ethical listening among people of different cultural communities to construct ethical listening and dialogic well-being founded on difference.

CHAPTER 3 TAKE OFF YOUR ARMOR AND BRING DOWN THE WALLS: AUTHENTICITY AND CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

In this postmodern age in which we are more aware than ever that narratives are multiple and often conflicting, individuals may find themselves torn between contrasting individual and collective discourses. Learning through these contrasts is central to the ethical process, as negotiating dialectic tensions create opportunities for producing new understanding and meanings (Kimball & Garrison, 1996). Indeed, Christians (2005) argues for the formation of prescriptive ethics based on grounded theories that create narrative portraits full of contingent and sometimes oppositional claims. Arnett and Holba (2012a) promote the idea that dialectics are crucial to understanding meanings:

Dialectic seeks to learn from contradictions in the discernment of truth. The philosophical use of dialectic acknowledges difference in a constructive manner, cultivating a habit of inquiry for learning that extends and sophisticates knowledge beyond what we currently know. Meaning emerges out of dialectical tension (p. 157).

Thus, I embrace dialectics in this research, recognizing that even as shared listening values are acknowledged, there may be oppositional enactments of these values that can nuance our understanding of what it means to develop ethical listening habits.

In this chapter, I begin to unpack the findings related to my second research question regarding how shared and diverging cultural values of different cultural communities are enacted in diverse communication performances and how that might promote good listening. I argue that values are both shared and diverging, both overlapping and oppositional. Rather than assuming that listening values are shared across cultures, I work to identify a value system for the dialogic moment at hand that is based on the knowledge of community members and ways that their ethical constructs of listening overlap and diverge. Terms like “dialogue” and “listening” do not

hold inherent meaning but are socially constructed both in presumed correct action (prescription) and in meaning (description). Ethical judgment depends on people's framing and defining of issues (Gilligan, 1982), including the way that listening is understood and the meanings that people hold when considering ethical listening. Meaning and action are both part of discursive interaction and are learned through active and passive processes.

Learning about diverse performances of listening values allows us to better negotiate ethical listening practices in the many different situations in which we find ourselves, yet learning is never complete. The more one explores, the more seeming contradictions in what people mean by good listening might appear. Simultaneously, the more contradictions that appear, the clearer meanings may become through new truths created and revealed by comparing diverse human perspectives and practices. This education, this learning, is a central construct in listening ethics. It requires an openness that can feel risky, both on individual and societal levels. It also entails having learned mutually shared meanings in order to be able to effectively listen and understand another living being's intent.

Among participants in this study, not listening was metaphorically constructed as both *armor* and *wall*. As one participant said, in order to listen well: "take off your armor...and then be there with them...just allow yourself to open – to like open up and like learn new knowledge? Just kind of like take it in" (LGBTQ and Allies member). Armor covers people to protect them in battle. It acts as a defense that is worn close to one's body. Metaphorically constructing not listening as wearing armor constructs conceptual meaning in which the communication process is a battle – a place where people are fighting, struggling, and can be hurt or even killed. This participant says that in order to listen well, one must remove the armor that closes one off from

the potential hurt of another. Listeners must make an active choice to open up and to learn, to “take it in” even when the conversation might feel dangerous. Listening requires trust.

Another structural metaphor used to describe a closing off of communication access by the listener is a *wall* or *barrier*. As said multiple times in the listening discourses, not listening is like a wall that can either be actively created or is simply present in the given context:

“I don’t want it and I create like a – a wall. I listen to only half of the message.” (Latino member)

“When I stop listening to somebody is when I didn’t feel that we are in equal conversation? It’s more in positive conversation? Mmm...most of the time, I am like a – I’m not talking. You are still repeating your words. But if we are no equal in a message that like going back? For me is no. You know I create like a wall. I’m ‘Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah’ but I am no interested in the – in the participating.” (Latino member)

In these discursive acts, the wall is something that is actively constructed by the listener to limit engagement. However, walls and barriers may also be present, not by the active choice of those communicating, but by a combination of features from their identities and cultural environment:

“I think it’s like a...wall. I think the culture and the language is a wall. You try to do friends? But it’s different when you speaking the same – the native language. It’s more easy to – to – to make relationships.” (Latino member)

“In my life it can be very frustrating to communicate with all of the barriers. Um. Some hearing people, they think that I can’t, can’t, can’t, can’t. And it’s like, I can try. I’ll communicate with you until you understand. I keep trying, trying, trying.” (ASL member)

Metaphorically comparing not listening to creating a wall or barrier leads us to picturing the impossibility of physically connecting with another. Walls, as vertical structures that divide spaces, lead to some measure of privacy, protection, and disconnection. A wall or barrier is constructed when people do not wish to listen any more, for whatever reason, or may be present when they do want to but lack the cultural and linguistic resources to fully relationally connect.

Listening, in this conceptual mapping, requires seeing another. Thus, conceptual metaphors of *armors*, *walls*, and *barriers* for not listening point to positive listening as involving active choices to be open, connect, and to acquire the cultural tools for new relationships.

In contrast to these metaphors of not listening, corpus linguistic analysis of the vocabulary associated with listening among the communities of difference included in this study point to two actions as more important to listening than any others: *try/trying* and *make/making*. At over 200 mentions each, these two action concepts were used two or three times as frequently as any other action word in the discourse (other words including terms such as *work*, *take*, and *change*). When interpreting this data, it is important to keep in mind that the context in which these discussions occurred explicitly prioritized listening as important and a matter worthy of better understanding. The discursive acts of the participants reinforced this prioritization of listening within their dialogues.

When analyzing lexical items that cluster with the term *try*, the most frequent and widely used phrases indicated active goals of trying to *understand*, trying to *get*, and trying to *say* (each of these phrases found across five or more texts of the 11 focus groups). For example, participants said things like “Just try to understand the other people instead of, just, if I don’t understand it’s your fault” (LGBTQ and Allies Member) or “They’re not listening to exactly what I’m trying to say or what the message that I’m trying to get across (is) so we can be more efficient” (First Nations Member). The concept of *make/making* was most commonly used to indicate that a person was *making sure* of something (forms of this phrase were found across all 11 focus group texts). For example, participants might have said “I just wanted to make sure I was clear” (ASL member) or “just making sure I’m having good listening skills” (First Nations

Member). In making sure, people are attempting to confirm that they are establishing something more concretely than might otherwise be the case if they did not check or reinforce an act.

Efforts to *try* to understand, to get something out, to say something, and *making sure* that what is being said is clearly seen by others point to community members valuing intentional emphasis and recreation of particular individual and cultural communicative values in the given moment. This work involves the agency of individuals who are socially engaged in a dynamic communication process and understand it to require active choices by themselves and others to perform well. *Trying* does not, after all, guarantee success. *Making sure*, means that one is not sure. Both ideas hold with its aspects of doubt and of being uncertain of success. Both require an active willingness to accept that one's best efforts may not be enough, but that the choice to be seen as reflexively engaging another is imperative to ethical listening.

Be Open to Learning

Listening is difficult as it mandates that we embrace the role of learner and stop pretending that we are experts who know everything (Moschella, 2008; Stein, 1994). Learning might be defined as “the appropriation of culturally valued mediational means of members’ resources as part of participation in active, distributed meaning making” (Rowe, 2011, p. 237). As an interactive process with both culture and the members of that culture, learning requires constant openness to evolving situations as the world changes through time and is reproduced through interpersonal interactions.

Learning is not only about facts but also about people and the dialogue that constitutes them. Efforts to learn can be framed as foundational to communication and understanding truth (Deetz, 1990). Based on the philosophy of Gadamer, Arnett and Holba (2012a) conceptualize

understanding as “a dialogue between the universal and the particular, which invites the discernment of truth” (p. 89). A dialogic ethic of listening embraces an open posture of learning and tries to understand the participants engaged in dialogue, the particular focus of their dialogue, and the holistic narrative (universal) of which it is all a part.

The participants in this study valued openness as a key part of listening well. They indicated that stubbornness, being judgmental, closed-mindedness, stereotyping, criticism, and being closed to change were all negative values while not being judgmental, change, discernment, a general posture of openness, and learning were positive values. This is reflected in the following participant’s statement:

“I’m listening to you. I can apply this in my life and so I’m going to – so you don’t always have to agree, you don’t always have to change. But acknowledging what the other person said and making sure that you understand it correctly? Is awesome. And when people do that to me, or they’re like I still don’t understand but thank you for explaining. It makes ALL the difference.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Like Lacey (2013), participants point to the “radical openness of listening” being “precisely what is needed in contemporary antagonistic societies” (p. 190). They emphasize and reemphasize throughout their discourses that the process of trying to and then making sure that mutual understanding is reached is central to good listening.

Openness can benefit everyone in a dialogue. It creates space for new ways of being together and for personal efficacy. Openness, learning, and the dawning of understanding can be a joyful process:

Receptive joy occurs when we are engaged as though possessed — when we are caught up in a relation. We may have ceased manipulative activity and fallen quiet; we are listening. We are not trying so much to produce a particular product or answer as we are trying to understand, to see. Whereas explanation is controlled, contrived, and constructed, understanding — like joy — comes unpredictably. At one moment we are bagged, stymied. Then, suddenly, the light dawns (Noddings, 1984, p. 145).

In this vein, understanding may come unexpectedly and be a part of a process where one feels lack of control rather than high degrees of comfort. For example, one participant indicated that openness by a listener was key to him feeling heard and understood during a difficult stage of life. The choice of others to openly listen made space for him to move forward through challenging circumstances:

“But it was really my friends that were more helpful because the nurses were always making judgments...But my friends were listening because I could express to them what I was going through. Like, why were they not getting it? So that really helped me a lot during that situation – during that time frame. So it’s hard to know when to say something. And you also know if you don’t say something, it will get harder. And you might quit. So I think I’m more open with people about what I go through. I’m more honest. I’m not afraid of being judged. I’ve been at the low. I’ve been at the lowest of the low.” (ASL Member)

Open listening thus led to a more flourishing self for this participant and for a more flourishing relationship with his friends, while lack of openness led to frustration with another person who was in a position to care for him but he did not perceive as being understanding or helpful. The listeners who were considered to be the most helpful and with whom he was most intimate were those that created space where he felt like he could be completely open and honest.

Community members consistently indicated that the people they most choose to listen to – to go to for advice even – are those that openly engage them and the multiple perspectives that might be present in their situations. For example:

“She’ll tell me what I want – NOT what I want to hear but what I need to hear? But in a way that will make me actually listen to her and not fight back. And she’s good at seeing both sides of a situation, or more if there are? So we have really good conversations that go full circle about how I need to handle things in a productive way. Whereas a lot of my other friends are like – go for the throat.” (LGBTQ and Allies Member)

This avoidance of friends that might “go for the throat” rather than seeing multiple perspectives indicates a need to trust the person to be open to whatever comes, as is commented on by another participant:

“I knew I could trust her to keep any kind of secrets or not to judge me, not to persuade me one way or the other. Just always giving me advice on both. On whatever question I came to she’d be like, this is what you can do or this is what you could do. She’s always asking me questions? And she’s like, well you know, if I was you? This is what I would do. But I’m not you. So you’re the only one who can make this choice? So she’s the only one that I go to for – for advice.” (First Nations Member)

As seen in these remarks, openness might be directed toward a thought process or toward a person. In both cases, trust is required for opening oneself to listen to their advice.

Openness may also be directed to communities or groups with which people identify. For example, when asked to offer 60 seconds of advice to anyone who might listen in their community of difference for the first time, several people mentioned openness (e.g., to new ways of being, to other people’s cultural identities, etc.) as a key positive quality. For example, here are two separate pieces of advice when engaging First Nations and Asian communities:

“Get out of your ways, you know. Just look at the community as just a group of people. Not color or race or gender, you know. Just have an open mind. Don’t – don’t be set in your ways. Like if it’s something that you don’t like to hear, don’t – don’t shut me out.” (First Nations Member)

“I think my – my advice would be, um. Not to judge that person? By the appearance, or maybe by their accent. Because I do feel like I get judged a lot? Because I’m obviously an Asian look and have accent. People start speaking slowly: ‘Do you understand English?’ And sometimes not the kind of support that those people need. Like, ‘What’s your name? So your name doesn’t sound like English names? So where are you from?’ And then, um, I think it – just a quick get to know will go a long way?” (Asian Member)

Openness to communities includes a willingness to change, to adopt a nonjudgmental stance and to actively learn about someone else’s identity – whether that be based on a strong association with a cultural community or a desire to be seen as separate. Either way, openness requires a

brave choice to open oneself to new information, to not assume disagreement, and yet when disagreement is present to be willing to be changed. For example, consider this dialogic exchange:

Person 1: ...when someone's disagreeing with you? If they stop to clarify it and hear it – it from you before they argue against it? Then at least they – they listened to what you had to say. Cause most disagreements – people don't listen to each other. They're talking but they don't know what they're talking about.

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 3: I think it's really true. I think a lot of – just disagreement in general is not active or you know or really the issue is um both sides happen to you know just lack information rather than disagreeing.

Person 1: The guy I said that I liked before has his own podcast. And he frequently invites people who are really, really critical about him to come on his show to talk with him. And he does a really good job that he's going to hear them out. And so, I'm going to hear you out? And then I'm going to tell you why I disagree with you. And he is very good about making sure that we're talking about exactly the right thing.

Person 2: That's an incredible skill 'cause I mean. Most people's conversations, even if it's important, you are usually talking about two different things.

Person 3: I'm not gonna try to lie to you. If it's something that I have an interest in, know something about, and am passionate about – so usually there's a disagreement you know, because I feel these things about it. I feel like it's mine (laughs). You know I'm not gonna change what I feel so you know it is harder to listen to someone. When you think you're right and, you know, maybe you feel like they – they're not as well prepared as –

Person 1: That's something I try to work on is, being genuinely open to change.

Person 3: Which is tough. Which is really tough.

Person 1: Which is really hard to do with ().

Person 2: It is. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You have to go into it with that mindset like, or you –

Person 1: Or you can try to identify what do I need to hear that would make me change my mind? Before you ever enter the conversation. Is there something that could possibly happen that would allow you to change your mind? (Caucasian Men members)

As seen in this discursive exchange, opening oneself to criticism and making sure people are sharing a discourse is “an incredible skill.” When people are passionate about something, it becomes infinitely more difficult to remain open to another point of view. Part of this process

may require the pre-engagement work of critically understanding what one must do to be open to embrace another person's perspective and way of seeing the world. In other words, "is there something that could possibly happen that would allow you to change your mind?" during the listening process.

Openness to learn and trying to understand may even go beyond individual choices and practices and become foundational to a culture's way of being. Consider, for example, this piece of advice offered to those who want to ethically engage the LGBTQ and Allies community:

"First off, listen. Like, when I say listen? I mean like, just hear what I'm having to say and try to understand it. For this conversation, I need you to throw out like what you assume gender is. What you assume all this stuff is. Throw out assumptions. Start blank. And now let's just talk about gender binary? And all, a ton of other, um – without noise coming in. TRY to just understand what you and I are talking about right now. And, it's like, I don't know. And just be open. That's a big thing. Like, even that I'm still trying to learn with this community? It's like – it's like, be open to everything because you don't know everything yet. You need – there's just still SO much to learn. Like, like if I said demi-gender, or a-romantic, or demi-girl. Then it's like, I didn't know what any of those things mean and I'm still trying to like teach other people? So this community is all about learning, I feel like." (LGBTQ and Allies member)

In this advice, the value of listening as openness and learning is constructed as going beyond an individual commitment to conversational engagement alone. It reaches to the very core of a community of difference's way of being, of their cultural expression because "this community is all about learning." Choices to listen and learn can be access points to cultures and failure to listen and learn might prevent one from embodying the core values of a culture.

Openness thus applies across listening settings and is paired with many different types of learning. However, it is crucial to note here that participants also emphasized that unreflective and undiscerning openness is not an absolute good. Closing off is at times the best choice when performing ethical listening, as openness requires a degree of reciprocity that is marked by

shared learning rather than pointed lecturing. This decision to not listen will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and it is closely associated with a broader position of trust. For now, with this caution in mind, participants in this study clearly constructed openness and learning as both posture and activity and the most prominent and valued characteristic of good listening.

One way that this emerged in this study was through an online survey that probed meanings of listening that the community held. To do this, 179 survey participants identified what listening meant to them based on a Listening Concepts Inventory developed by Imhof and Janusik (2006) and revised by Bodie (2010). The Listening Concepts Inventory is founded on the idea that “what people do as they are listening is formatted by their prevailing and situationally activated concept of listening. The pertaining cognitions and perceptions serve as the interface for the selection of both overt behaviors and mental activities” (Imhof & Janusik, 2006, p. 81). Thus, listening behaviors in a given dialogic moment are shaped by the meanings of listening individuals adopt. Choices about how to best listen is enacted based on those perceptions.

The Listening Concepts Inventory measures people’s cognitive engagement with four potential listening constructs: listening as organizing information as a kind of activity that processes information in one’s memory (information organization), listening as caring and mutuality in interpersonal relationships (relationship building), listening as analyzing, integrating, and applying information into a holistic knowledge system (learning and integrating), and listening as engagement and persuasion through both confrontation and collaboration (critical listening). Additional detailed information about the development of the Listening Concepts Inventory and the methodological process I adopted for its use in this study is provided in APPENDIX: RESEARCH DESIGN.

As a whole, research participants indicated that listening was most similar to learning, then relationship building, followed by information organization, and least similar to critical listening. This pattern differed slightly from the results of the US-American population studied by Imhof and Janusik (2006) in their original study which resulted in a top ranking of listening as learning and integration, followed by information organization, relationship building, and critical listening. In both US-American populations, however, learning and critical listening constructs shared first and final positions, respectively. In addition, results in this current study from the relationship building and information organization constructs were very close. As one can see in Figure 1 below, participants indicated that all four of the constructs were somewhere between “somewhat related” (2) and “almost identical” (4) to listening (based on a Likert scale of 1-5, with 1 being least similar and 5 being most similar to listening).

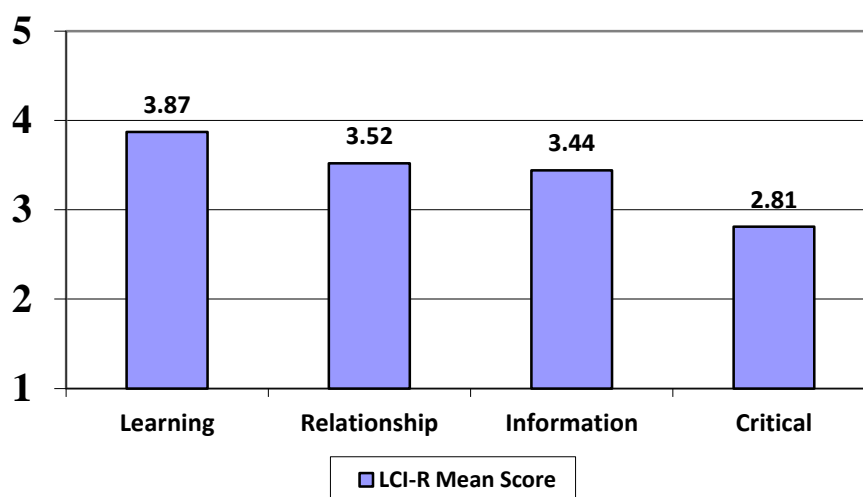


Figure 1: Participants' Listening Constructs

In sum, based on the survey results, participants primarily conceptualized the essence of listening – and therefore listening at its best – as being most about learning and least about criticism.

Similarly, of the 15 listening items in the Listening Concepts Inventory, the highest and lowest scoring items were *learning* (part of the learning construct) as the most similar to listening (4.09) and *arguing* (part of the critical construct) as the least similar to listening (2.59). This pattern of privileging learning and downplaying critical listening was repeated when focus group participants were asked to consider four different types of listening scenarios (e.g., a friend calling for help or a debate in a classroom) and respond with the same set of 15 listening items and 5-point scale about the ways they conceptualize effective listening in those scenarios. Based on the responses of 16 focus group participants who completed the activity, listening is overwhelmingly conceptualized as learning, emerging as the top ranked construct for every one of the 16 participants when combining individual's scoring across the four scenarios.

Although some constructs may be privileged in the listening process, all four are present in the participants' toolbox of listening approaches and many of the terms associated with these constructs were present in the focus group dialogues about good listening. An analysis of the focus group discourses indicated that of the 15 linguistic items used by the Listening Concepts Inventory to measure the four listening constructs, participants used six of the items at a much higher frequency than the other terms in their dialogic interactions. Throughout the corpus, forms of the terms *understanding*, *learning*, and *helping* were used in over 100 instances each, while *interpreting*, *bonding*, and *arguing* were used between 50 and 100 times each. All other Listening Concepts Inventory items were used less than 50 times. Other than *arguing* (which was typically discussed as a negative value of listening and an action to be avoided), all six of these most commonly used terms relate to learning and relationship building constructs in the Listening Concepts Inventory.

Bodie (2010) argues that multiple listening constructs are cognitively available to people at any given time and people make choices of how to think based on the particular context they are engaging. Communicators who embrace the value of multiple meanings of listening may promote positive attitudes toward listening as genuine engagement and acceptance of others and be more competent listeners. Thus, even if one must ultimately make a choice about when and how to engage each listening construct in a given situation, learning multiple meanings of listening is a strength that enables people to effectively and ethically engage others through listening in any context.

The results of this study point to learning being the chief construct and to critical listening being least important in the participants' conceptualization of good listening. The distinctions between these two are not, however, as simple as it might seem at first glance. Learning (as fashioned by the Listening Concepts Inventory) is constructed through interpreting, analyzing, and understanding. The differences between the learning process defined this way and the critical construct's key items of arguing, conceding, and answering are not obvious. Just how different, for example, are the communicative processes of analyzing and arguing, or of understanding and answering? Openness to learning about people and relationships may require a particular type of ethical approach, while learning about ideas engages another. With this in mind, the discourse of participants can help to identify how cultivating understanding through openness to authentic identity performances and critical problem solving both function as values associated with good listening.

Try to Understand: Authenticity

Differences of identity are performed in the context of narrative and constantly recreated narrative worlds. One well-known saying argues that we cannot hate someone once we know their story. As we listen to the stories of others, we inevitably become more in tune to our own experiences and the ways that diverse standpoints are impacting our lives. As Lipari (2014) says "So how does one listen beyond the schemas, categories, and dualistic thinking of the conceptual mind? One suggestion is to listen from a space of emptiness and unknowing, to be strong enough to relinquish our perceived mastery, control, and foreknowledge while remaining attentive and aware" (p. 99). This relinquishment of control requires constant practices of bravery and investments of energy. Difference in all its many forms is central to learning. If something or someone is already deemed fully familiar, there is little need to learn.

Feeling out of control may be fun for adrenaline junkies about to ski down a mountain slope but feels very different in high-risk scenarios that impact more bodies than one's own. In communication, there is always more at stake than one's own well-being. There is always an element of unknown. Consider, for example, this dialogue:

Person 2: I find meeting new people and talking to them is exhausting.

Person 1: (Laughs).

Person 3: I just – yeah.

Person 2: There's too much going on with trying to feel each other out and – and learn whether people actually care about what the person is saying or not. It's stressful.

Person 1: If I can't read a person, I agree. And I'm like, I don't know who you are and I don't like it. But if I can kinda like, get a quick – a quick read and go, 'okay I can see how this might go' –

Person 2: Mmhmm.

Person 1: then it usually ends up being a lot easier. (Caucasian Men Members)

These community members point to the stress and exhaustion that can come with efforts to understand other people and figure out who they are and what may happen in a dialogic event based on newly met identities. As Intrator (2005) suggests occurs in deep and fulfilling cross-cultural listening engagement:

We may be putting a lot of energy into focusing on the person in front of us, but this is hardly the same thing as true listening. Participants find it delightful, and surprisingly hard, to *really* listen to someone, without distraction, without thinking about the next question or what they will say when it is their turn. They notice how much of the time, while listening, they are evaluating or judging what the other person is saying. In deep listening, they are asked to simply receive what the other is saying - fully attentive, accepting and open, hearing it not just with the ears or the mind but with the whole of one's being (pp. 36–37).

Investing energy to learn about other people with “the whole of one’s being” can be draining and, depending on the energy resources available at the time, may feel like too great of a responsibility and cost. At the same time, however, learning who people *are* is vital to being a good listener.

Research participants emphasized that good listeners try to understand the person they are listening to, both the content that they share and the motivations and identities producing that content. In fact, in the corpus as a whole, the mental process of understanding is invoked three times more often (at 162 times) than any other thought process (i.e., the next most commonly referenced mental processes are to remember at 53 mentions, and focus at 37 mentions). The value of understanding in the listening process included positive values of correct interpretation, self-awareness, shared standpoint, and simply trying to understand, and negative values of simply not understanding or making any effort to do so.

For example, consider this narrative of a family listening event that happened during a conversation about a new friend. In this story, lack of trying to understand meant the end of that particular listening event and its potential future episodes:

“So, like after that she kinda – SHE stopped listening to me and stopped listening when I would use correct pronouns or trying to explain like trans-ness to um her, or like – more like – gender binary to her. And stuff like that. And she wasn’t willing to like, she wasn’t willing to TRY to understand. Like, I can under – I can understand her if she was like listening, and she was just like, ‘I just, I don’t – I don’t understand’? But she just, she wasn’t willing to even try to understand at all. And that’s why I just like, she stopped listening to me there. And I like, after that, I just stopped listening to her when she would try to say awkward things about trans stuff.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Listening and trying to understand are connected, and lack of trying to understand identities that lie at the core of someone’s narrative can be interpreted as ceasing to listen, as shutting down the listening process. In dialogic engagement, shutting down listening means shutting down the dialogue. This failure to try to understand, in contrast to a pursuit of genuine dialogue, shows a lack of ethical listening behavior.

In contrast, attempts to increase understanding of other people’s standpoints opens the listening process. This increase may be driven by questions, as Fiumara (1990) argues: “If the salient aspect of the art of questioning can be seen in knowing how “to preserve an orientation toward openness one might argue that the willingness to keep alive this orientation towards openness is the genuine basis for every question. The very notion of question is sustained by an openness – presumably an openness towards listening to the answer” (p. 36). As people listen to answers, as they listen to motivations, they exhibit the value of openness that leads to learning:

“I found a really helpful question is ‘help me understand?’ Like, especially when it’s in conflict? Like, ‘can you help me.’ Like, they’re saying something that they think you’ve done, or can whatever – ‘can you help me understand why you feel that way.’ Or, ‘can you help me understand what you’re trying to say.’ You know like if – sometimes if you just ask a few clarifying questions or incorporate a few questions into your vocabulary

then um, then it immediately helps people feel like you're listening." (Caucasian Women member)

"And one more thing I would say is uh if someone is listening to me? They're not judging my decision – like if I make a bad choice and they see that they're gonna try to understand my emotions. My thoughts...Just listen and try to understand. You understand, okay. I'll listen to you and try to understand your perspective and back and forth. That's an important part of listening." (ASL member)

In these scenarios, asking questions about and developing understanding about people emotions, about their thought processes, about their motivations, leads to being perceived as good listening. Paying attention to another person in the dialogic relationship is key, but the expectation for good listeners is that they would go beyond simply paying attention in general to pointedly paying attention and even asking questions to help them understand what the person is saying and the motivations and emotions influencing their perspectives.

Ethical listening also moves beyond listening to a dialogic partner alone to include effective attention to one's own self and a willingness to teach others from what is learned, especially when that new knowledge falls outside the socially expected:

"And learning within ourselves? And our own identities? And then like teaching others? And then those other people learning?...I think the overarching thing that I can already like see in – from what most of us has said is just like, be, I – I hate using the term open-minded? But, just try to understand...It's just a completely new thing that's outside of societal norms. So. Try to listen and try to understand." (LGBTQ and Allies member)

As seen here, intrapersonal listening – the act of listening to oneself – is foundational to choices of how and when to listen to others. As this participant argues, it is important to listen to what you are learning and how that knowledge is shaping your identity and to use that change to help others learn as well. As one mother reported telling her daughter when her daughter was criticized by another family member about her identity: "I say, you don't need to listen to her. You're not obligated to listen to her. I'm like, 'listen to yourself'" (First Nations Member).

Listening to the construction of one's own identity or identities, which may lay outside of the expected norms, points to a transparency of being true to one's own personality and character – an expression of authenticity. Performing authenticity while listening was one of the shared values constructed in the discourse.

Authentically Performed Selves

Authenticity is a central concept in phenomenological philosophy and cultural studies and is generally used to discuss how a person's enactment of identity fits into individual and social expectations of selfhood. In the shared expression of listening values, well-enacted authenticity included such positive values as honesty and being true to oneself and negative values of quiet pretending to be something one is not and being socially inappropriate or relationally hurtful.

The positive valued authentic performance of self and its connection to ethical dialogue founded on relational connection is constructed through comments like:

“I think, try – try to be yourself? You know and, I think it's the best. You know, if you – if you are...like a true? Maybe we can be friends?” (Latino Member)

“I have this – I have this – this view of the world that seeking out what's right is more important than having a relationship that's based on something that's not real? And so, for me, like if you don't critically think. If you give in your values of trying to seek out the truth? Whatever that might be? In order to maintain a relationship. You have a fake relationship. Because you're not being honest with those people.” (Caucasian Men member)

As seen in these participant's values, authentic (true) expression can act as a foundation for the development of positive relationships. However, authenticity as a central value in good dialogue is also created through the discourse with negative remarks such as:

“A lot of people, they like text me stuff that they would never say to my face. Like especially with being part of this community. A lot of people would be like, 'oh that's

really cool.’ And then text me, like, ‘ooo, you’re going to hell.’ That kind of stuff. And I’m like, wow. It’s really – it’s kind of like a mask that they can put on to like, be like, ‘Oh, I’m not really saying that. But this is what I’d really say to you.’” (LGBTQ and Allies Member)

In this case, being honest in one communicative channel while behaving dishonestly through another is seen as masking one’s identity in at least one, if not both channels. It acts as an impetus for lost relationship rather than fodder for a better one. In both cases, authentic communication is seen as central to the formation and continuation of dialogic relationship, as the LGBTQ and Allies member goes on to say that she avoids future interaction with these people who put on masks that promote duplicit communication.

Authenticity is often thought of as a practice and production of a singular self, a “conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features” (“Definition of Authentic,” 2016). It might be claimed that something is categorically authentic when it “is genuine, natural, true and pure” (Barker, 2008, p. 474). Some might even argue that authenticity requires a unique expression of identity that does not change across situations. In other words, a person’s identity is offered a binary definition of authenticity: either one is authentic or one is not, and this is an unchanging performance of self (Vannini & Williams, 2009). The literature dealing with the concept of authenticity is both broad and deep. Authenticity like other values, is socially constructed by the communities that use that term. Without attempting to give a survey of the narrative history surrounding this term here, I do think it generative to include a brief discussion of the ways that the articulated value of authenticity and conceptualization of authentic identity expression may effectively be included in an ethic of listening.

Consider this dialogue in which participants discuss the negotiation of their multiple images (identities) in different contexts:

Person 1: It's like the first you see me and the first I've seen you and we're kinda putting on a face, then I like to like come out of my shell and shine a little bit. But when it's like, me and my friends, and it's like we're doing nothing, and I feel like I'm an illiterate crazy person. But, like if I'm like at work, I'm – I'm having to talk to people or I'm at school or a situation like this, I tend to feel like I'm way more articulate and way better as a listener and as a speaker.

Person 2: I agree, actually. Yeah. I – I feel like a – a – it almost forces you to –

Person 1: Right?

Person 2: have – like use those characteristics that we have to force – I guess to put out a better –

Person 1: Appearance of yourself. Yeah, right?

Person 2: You know, yeah, image of yourself.

Person 1: Yeah. Definitely. (Caucasian Men Members)

In this discussion, the members discuss the roles that different personal characteristics have in their performance of listening and speaking in different contexts. These characteristics lead to different images (discursive performances of identity) dependent on what is needed in particular contexts, whether that be casual interactions with friends or professional engagements at work or school. These selves act in relation to each other, each being an authentic part of the person's whole although their expression – their faces – may look very different.

As people work toward appropriate communication of authenticity, they also navigate the multiple selves they see at work within their identity or, put a different way, multiple identities at work within their selves. Thus, multiple identities are present in the dialogue both among multiple persons and within one's own self. A polyphonic model of self offers a perspective that each person has multiple "I" positions, multiple performances of self that can be in dialogue with each other. These "I"s can also be in dialogue with others multiple "I"s. These "I"s listen to each other:

To be listening is thus to enter into tension and to be on the lookout for a relation to self...to *the relationship in self*, so to speak, as it forms a "self" or a "to itself" in general,

as if something like that ever does reach the end of its formation. Consequently, listening is passing over to the register of presence to self, it being understood that the “self” is precisely nothing available (substantial or subsistent) to which one can be “present” but precisely the resonance of a return [renvoi] (Nancy, 2007, p. 12).

As the self listens to self in this dynamic process of constant return, identities are intertwined with others in interconnected networks of identities that are created through situated subjectivity and particular relationships (Gergen, 1997). As people function in this network of relationships, their well-being is based on the kinds of relationships that exist between their multiple “I” positions and those “I”s with the multiple “I”s of others. Cooper (2003) argues that “psychological well-being has been associated with clear, open, and fluid communication between the different I-positions and with intrapersonal relationships that are harmonious, respectful, compassionate, accepting, empathic, cooperative, democratic and symmetrical” (p. 132). Trying to listen to and understand these shifting selves are central to philosophies and values of authenticity.

Just as identities are made up of multiple performances, authentic identities are not singular in the sense of some preordained Platonic pure entity that a person is attempting to realize. Identities are actively imagined and performed in particular narrative histories and contexts. As Stuart Hall (1996) puts it, “it is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are” (p. 476). Both the cultural studies tradition, of which Stuart Hall is a part, and the dialogic philosophy tradition in which Paul Ricoeur writes, have wrestled with the concept of authenticity.

The focus on the pragmatic performance of identity in different contexts aligns with Ricoeur’s perspective that authentic actions, including communicative ones, depend on commitments to particular ways of being that “orients itself to the future and to becoming

something which it still is not” (Ferrara, 2009, p. 28). For Ricoeur, identity lies between dialectics of sameness (within a person’s character and dispositions) and change (where selfhood is constructed through a set of responsibilities and commitments), As expressed by Reagan, (1996), Ricoeur believes that:

In the narrative dialectic of the character, one pole is the character, a constant set of dispositions which remains the same across time. The other pole is the self-constancy represented by commitment made and kept. In the ethical version of the dialectic of identity, character is in the role of sameness: this is what the identifiable and reidentifiable in me, through time and across all of my experiences and actions. The pole of selfhood, or identity in spite of diversity, is responsibility, or acting in such a manner that others can *count* on me and thus make me accountable for my actions (pp. 85–86).

Authenticity, in this vein, rather than being the same as one was, or being true to what one is, involves being true to the production of one’s future self in keeping with the values one holds and the behaviors deemed morally acceptable by the community. “Paul Ricoeur’s vision of authentic personhood...is not a fixed or static given that awaits one to passively receive it but a task that is to be performed” (Keuss & Koenig, 2012, p. 54). Identities, similar to dialogic ethical claims on those identities, thus include both description of what was and is, prescription of what ought to be, and then active performances of these selves. Expression of one’s authentic identity requires a competent negotiation and competent privileging of performance of these two dialectic poles. Ethical identity performance might be visualized as a weighing of two aspects of one’s identity – character and selfhood -- in any dialogic moment, as visualized in Figure 2 below.

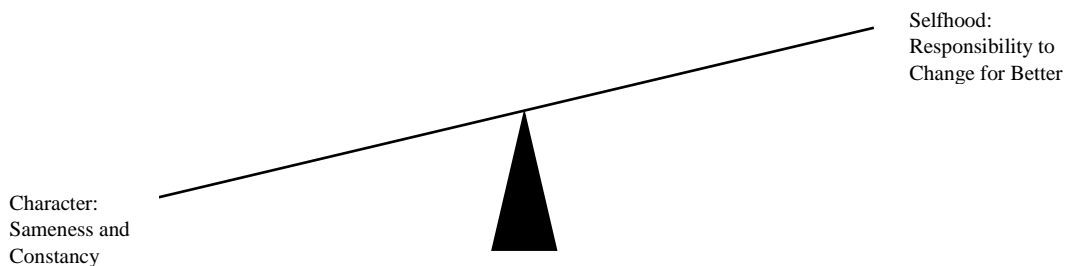


Figure 2: Ethical Identity Performance

The communities here work toward promoting each person's choice to be true to themselves, to be honest about who they are, while simultaneously limiting that performance by calling on social conventions where honesty is not always good if that performance hurts the community or conversation. Authenticity, in this context, fits best with a combination of definitions promoted by more recent philosophical theories and traditional moral theories: "an identity attains authenticity when it realizes to an outstanding extent the normative core that it sets as its own guiding ideal" and authenticity is "associated with attitude of openness and receptiveness toward inner motives in the assessment of the moral worth of action" (Ferrara, 2009, pp. 21, 23). A performance of authenticity in these communicative spaces requires both an eye toward honest self-expression based on a personal ideal of sameness and change, and assessment of whether or not particular performances are morally acceptable and worthy of reception in a broader society of sameness and change. As Wood poignantly states: "It is no small challenge to learn how to live and act in a world and with selves that are more shifting than those we previously believed in" (Arneson, 2007, p. 128).

This version of authenticity and ethical behavior is in keeping with Ricoeur and Gadamer's understanding of authenticity and dialogic ideals. Authentic identity integrates

...who we are over time and who we are in the moment – not merely as physical beings but, more importantly, as responsible, ethical beings in and for the world...one element to being an authentic person: to remain consistent. Ricoeur refers to this as one's character, 'the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of the personas being the same' or the 'set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized.' But another way to be an authentic self is to keep promises or, as Ricoeur puts it, 'keeping one's word in faithfulness to the word that has been given.' Here is where 'self' and 'same' diverge, for to keep a promise is not to remain the same through time but to defy the changes wrought by time (Keuss & Koenig, 2012, p. 55).

As Ricoeur argues, people who authentically perform their sameness and responsibilities to the future will change. These changes are inherent to performing and communicating ethically. Gadamer points out that “the ideal is not ‘self expression and the successful assertion of one's point of view, but a transformation into communion, in which we do not remain what we were’” (Deetz, 1990, p. 231). This type of transformational communion relies on listening and openness: “...anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without this kind of openness to one another there is no genuine relationship. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another” (Gadamer, 1982, p. 324). Listening to one another means listening to the many faces of each self and, as argued throughout this chapter, choosing to adopt a posture of openness to learning about those many faces.

Thus, listening ethically requires us to be aware of the multiple “I”s of ourselves as well as learn the multiple “I”s of another. This relational connection will yield new meanings and new understandings of those meanings. This set of new understandings is what Gadamer refers to as “fusion of horizons.” As Kimball and Garrison (1996) explain, “Fusion of horizons is the building of a common ground from which to create and sustain the dialogue. Once again, it is a *mutual* process that does not require the erasure of differences, and does not require one person to submit to the interpretations of the other(s)” (p. 57). Differences help to construct the fusion of horizons, leading to inevitable change that will be present with any dialogue.

At times, horizons are not easily fused. It may never be possible to understand another’s horizon. In fact, constantly shifting identities embedded in dynamic and evolving individual cognitive structures and overlapping and diverging social narratives means fully knowing another person is impossible. I am not you, and we are not them. As Lipari says (2014):

Thus, while many of us think we must understand in order to feel compassion, the engagement with alterity instructs that I may not, in fact, be able to understand. Events and experience may be unimaginable to me, beyond my comprehension. They may destroy my categories of thought or violate my beliefs about the world. Alterity reminds us, again and again, that our idea of reality is not reality, and to never forget that... (p. 182).

Understanding may seem impossible and, perhaps, even be impossible. Yet, the ethical call by community members is not *to understand*, but to *try to understand*. It is not to *be sure* but to engage in the act of *making sure*. As one participant put it:

“I would say it’s okay if you don’t understand. You don’t have to understand. You have to be kind. You have to be willing to listen. You have to know that whatever somebody’s telling you is their truth and that they’re trusting you with that? And that you do not take that lightly. That is an important thing. Um, if you feel the urge to say something cruel. Don’t. And if there is an experience that can be shared from the person who belongs to the community that you would like to learn about then you need to seek those people out and not take the advice of people who don’t belong to that community...Just be nice (laughs). You don’t have to understand. It’s not about you. That’s another thing. It’s not about you. It’s about the person that is talking to you.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Trying to understand the horizons of others may help to define one’s own horizon; it may help us recognize places where bias and prejudice are enacted, and may contribute to more ethical communities even when full understanding of another’s horizon is never reached (Mackin, 1997). Dialogic engagement, in keeping with Buber’s notion of the I-Thou attitude, “involves a turning toward the other, an openness to being addressed by the other in his, her or its present and particular otherness, and a confirmation of the otherness of the other” (Cooper, 2003, p. 138). As our own biases and prejudices become clear, acts of authenticity may require us to lean more toward Ricoeur’s dialectic pole of future selfhood as change and to disassociate from an identity of sameness across time. Embracing change through learning is inherent to good listening.

Although some scholars like Peters (2000) might claim that “the authentic representation of self or world not only is impossible, it is also never enough” (p. 266), Ricoeur and participants in this study point to a conceptualization of authenticity where it is not only possible but foundational to ethical communication. As seen in the discussion above, there are diverging perspectives of how authenticity should be enacted. Rather than disregarding it as a hopeless and irreconcilable venture, however, I embrace the dialectical nature of authenticity as an imagined and performed identity (Hall, 1996) during which excellent character motivates a changing individual interior and relational exterior that ultimately reflects our deepest ethical commitments to self and others. Rather than unchanging essence, authenticity is a profound commitment to an essence that changes yet retains its virtuosity. One relational area in which this pursuit of authenticity appears to be integral to good listening is in attempts to enact honesty.

The Privilege of Being Honest

Honesty is significant in performing authenticity. As Nepo (2012) states "After all we go through, we are asked to lead a life of honest expression, which always starts with listening as a way to remember what matters, to name what matters, and to voice what matters. These are the practices that keep us authentic" (p. 247). According to participants, honesty is a shared value for authentic listening and dishonesty can halt the listening process. Honest expression of what matters most differs, however, among community members and their stances within their intersecting social systems. Among the participants, two types of honesty appear that correspond with Ricoeur’s two poles of identity construction – sameness and changing. Within the discourse, what emerged in the discussion of honesty’s intersection with authenticity was a distinction between the ways that people prioritized Ricoeur’s two poles of identity. When

decisions to listen are based on perceptions of honesty, understanding people's enactment of honestly authentic identities matter. In this section, I discuss how social privilege and cultural diversity related to honest communication in performances of ethical listening.

For some, interacting with people who are overly superficial, dishonest, or appear to be disingenuous may halt the desire to listen or engage in dialogue. As one participant said,

“I, as I get older? I get less and less hopeful. ‘Cause...you only have so much energy? And you’re gonna spend it on things that seem like they’re worth your while. And so much interaction with other people, I find it’s just superficial and I – I just avoid it...It’s the dishonest and disingenuous thing that I can’t stand. Like when someone is – is willfully being dishonest. I just can’t be a part of it.” (Caucasian Men member)

Other community members indicated that it is good – expected even – to be ferociously honest with family, friends, and even strangers:

“It’s part of the honesty thing too, is that you can be brutally honest with your family.” (Caucasian Men member)

Yet, even as honesty is perceived as a positive quality, other participants indicated that honest communication should be carefully considered when engaging in close relationships. In another perspective of family expectations, one participant claimed that absolute honesty was not a good choice if it would lead to conflict and argument:

“Well, I – in my opinion you – you uh, especially family situations? Uh, if you want a people to listen to you. Uh, you don’t want an argument (laughs). Because when you’re arguing, people are not listening.” (Asian member)

Ultimately, participants agreed that the choice of whether or not to be completely transparent with others has implications for that interaction and may lead to hurt. That hurt may not be worthwhile, as in the previous example, or it may lead to positive ends as in this next one:

“Some – Sometimes I think I’m too honest. Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes. A lot of people don’t like it, but they need to hear it (laughs). That’s how I see it. Honesty does hurt.” (First Nations member)

As demonstrated in discourse across communities of difference, honesty is a choice. That choice depends on decisions that impact relationships and relationships that impact decisions of whether or not to be honest and/or the level of transparency that is expected in a given context.

Honesty, as enacted by people occupying different social spaces in the civic environment, held two different meanings. On one side, certain participants held that honesty meant remaining honestly the same. On another side, others held that honesty meant remaining honestly changing, honestly differing, honestly different. These discursive constructions of honesty were resonated with Ricoeur's poles of authentic identity. The variable that appeared to make the most difference on which pole was most emphasized was racial and ethnic affiliation. Whereas Caucasian participants tended to embrace an authentic honesty as remaining the same between past and present, other ethnic communities tended to embrace an authentic honesty as remaining committed to a particular set of ideals that guided differing behaviors. These choices appeared to relate to their relative social positions of being members of the majority or minority, and the ways that they felt they were being listened to by others in their communities. Perceptions of how others listened to them shaped how they performed their identities.

Consider, first, a perspective of honest authenticity (or authentic honesty) as sameness. In the following brief dialogue, politeness – a social expectation of behaviors that will save face for conversation partners – is perceived as causing problems in communication, as acting as a barrier that prevents effective conversation rather than an aid in constructing genuine dialogue.

Person 1: I feel like I'm a far better conversationalist with people who specifically aren't even native uh English speakers who like, who don't know those social norms of me and visa versa. I feel like I – I don't even know why, but it always ends up better...I think I feel that way because there's so – there's no politeness? Kinda thing? Barrier?...

Person 2: Well one nice thing about other cultures is you don't know whether you did something wrong or not (laughs). So it's more natural to be yourself, you know. Because we judge each other a lot based on how we interact because we have that social expectation. (Caucasian Men members)

In this discursive exchange, participants perceive that “not knowing” creates a space in which to practice a more “natural” self. They believe that not knowing expected social norms leads to positive conversational ends because there is no judgment for ignorance. They assume that if people know that their conversational partners are not familiar with (and presumably cannot follow) standard social norms the outcome is more positive than if everyone knows and follows the cultural norms and may not be able to be as “natural” or themselves. Rather than seeing honest “natural” enactment of self being adaptation to cultural or social expectations, these (self-identifying white, heteronormative, men) see being naturally oneself as not needing to adjust to a different set of cultural norms, not needing to be polite or to change. It might be argued that they share a belief that when they are ignorant of how to change they can then behave as they otherwise would and can function free from the constraints of social judgment. In this construction of honesty, naturalness leads to sameness with one's own background rather than change to a different one. The repercussions for self and the discourse are constructed as only positive.

In contrast, consider a second perspective of honest authenticity (or authentic honesty). In this version, honesty is constructed as changing what might seem most natural or normal to what is constructed by society as most ideal. In this scenario, the speakers (First Nations, Latino, and Asian) indicate that one must absolutely know the cultural way to behave because not doing so would create a barrier that would keep both the individual and the community from being listened to well by the majority population.

Person 1: People need to see the good side of the bad side that they've already seen. And so I think that's – that's a big thing that I try to work on showing them. That not all Native Americans are drunks. Not all Native Americans have problems. And so I think that's what people need to see in this community...

Person 2: Huh. For me is, hmm. I don't know why I have this thought that eh, being Latino? Eh, I have to work twice? And I have to – to – prove – behave twice better than normal?

Person 3: Work twice as hard to get half as – um – far (laughs). That's called teaching.

Person 2: Yeah. Some of the time. Only when here. Yeah. But, because I know that we are the minority? And I think I embrace the only few – few opportunities to speak out? I embrace it, and I show the good things that we have? I don't know. I – I saw a video in Sociology class? And it – one of the – one Black executive mob eh tell about that her son cannot run by the eh streets because the police stop him always? But if he a different color, probably the boy is not going to be uh stopped by the police? And, I – this touched me a lot because I have a son and most of the time I say, "Behave. Behave." You know? It's like uh, and I saw the other kids – different color kids don't behaving very well? But I say, "You have to work hard and – and you know it's because the things are like this. We are the minority. And we are the different? I think in the – I live in a very, very small community. And they really know the spots. Yeah. Or, or where is the – the different people you know. Because I uh speak, or my color. Yeah. But. I think they behave very well. I'm very proud of them. Of my kids.

In this scenario, three participants of different ethnic communities point out that in broader society, one cannot simply "be yourself" during cross-cultural engagement. Instead, being honest about one's identity means choosing to consciously and purposefully live a different life than the negative stereotypes of your community of difference, with the ultimate goal of performing a good identity that will enhance perspectives of your cultural community. Person 1, for example, consciously performs an identity that counteracts stereotypical problems in society. Persons 2 and 3 reconstruct a narrative that those who are ethnic minorities must work twice as hard as "normal" to get half as far. Person 2 explains that in her town, she coaches her son to work harder, to behave better, than other kids who are the majority. She does this because they are the minority and the local police are listening to them in ways that might differ from other communication locations, speech patterns, or skin color (e.g., "they really know the spots"). In

this dialogue, authentic honesty means leaning into change – promoting transformation in societal perspectives on individual, social, and political levels by performing “beyond” the norm. In a definitional framework of honesty as sameness, this act of “beyond” would point to being dishonest about oneself, perhaps even inauthentic. However, for honesty as change, these acts are authentically honest because they point to acting out of commitments to the world as it should become.

These two constructions of honesty point to a prioritization of being true to oneself as not needing to change versus being true to oneself as requiring change. Patterns of difference appear between majority and minority ethnic members. Most participants indicated a desire to lean into changing society for better. Collectively, they discursively promoted through explicit statements the unacceptability of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination (although all of these were enacted implicitly throughout the discourse). For example, when it comes to interactions which might cause interpersonal or social damage, being honest about prejudice or listening and promoting unhealthy conversation is deemed wrong. Ethical listening would promote the choice not to listen or hating to listen rather than continuing to listen to explicit prejudice.

“I can’t stand listening to someone talk about, um, racism or, you know like being racist or uh hateful toward others with a basis.” (Caucasian Men member)

“It’s hard to have a conversation with people who are not in front of your face because they don’t feel like they have to be personable in any kind of way? And they say things that they wouldn’t say if they were in person? So it’s hard. I’m finding it hard to respect a lot of the people that I know after I see what they do to other people online. Because there’s no accountability. So I’m finding that my accountability is saying, I’m not going to be friends with you anymore? If I can see all of this like racism or phobia or transphobia that you are clearly perpetuating while at the same time telling me that what I’m doing with my kids is so cool...why would I sit here and listen to what you have to say about these people who you don’t understand and this thing that you didn’t look into just because you can say it faster than I can say it because we’re on a computer. It’s just frustrating.” (LGBTQ and Allies Member)

“Like when someone’s making you feel like you’re being held hostage, you know, in a conversation. And there’s no solution, or there’s no topic. It’s – or else like they’re gossiping? You know, I mean if, you can be assertive but if it’s not assertive and you’re talking about something that ain’t healthy – that’s going to be good for you inside? That’s when you – I have to excuse myself and say – and I – I’ll be kind about it. ‘You know I’m not listening to this conversation.’ And, you know, ‘But I hope you get whatever you’re looking for’ basically. In a nice way. But I’ve got to put that healthy boundary up and – but I’m not going to sit here and let you conversate about somebody or a situation and there’s no solution. You’re not trying to be productive about it.” (First Nations member)

As one can see throughout this section, not all perspectives are considered useful to building a positive listening environment. Transparency – even honest acts of sameness with a self that is communicating prejudice – is not deemed socially acceptable, and good listening would involve choices to stop this dialogue and discourse. A version of authenticity that includes a belief that one’s own lack of understanding promotes ideal dialogue does not cohesively sit with the rest of the value system and thus would be rejected by the community’s overall dialogic ethic.

This is one example of where a community “is” should not be translated into an “ought.” Where a value of individual sameness does not point to continuance of that practice and an identity of change is privileged. Through the framework of Ricoeur, acts of sameness in identity – enacting particular types of conversational engagement and listening – should be integrated (and tempered) by a commitment to responsibly engaging future best versions of selves and the multicultural communities with whom they listen. A value of authenticity for listening thus brings Ricoeur’s identity poles together, requiring active choices by conversational partners to engage in ways that brings about more flourishing worlds and more flourishing selves. These choices to enact what one may have never experienced before requires an active choice to learn new horizons and the cultural material necessary for constructive dialogue.

In sum, and in answer to the research questions that contribute to the creation of a dialogic listening ethic through dialogic philosophy and diverse enactments of listening values, openness to learning is foundational to a dialogic ethic founded on difference. In a phenomenological exploration of listening, Bodie and Crick (2014) argue that when humans listen, they affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally unite their relational expectations and that this mediation promotes learning: “Indeed, when engaged in ‘good’ (or ‘ethical’) listening, we see the possibilities that are inherent in things, going beyond limits of what is known in the here-and-now” (p. 120). Listeners who move beyond what they know to focus on the dialogic between of relational interaction and the new meanings that might emerge in this space also open themselves to learning about and with someone and something altogether new. They share a commitment to evolving within and alongside that space: “One way to think of openness in the context of multicultural conversations involves *openness to alternative interpretations*, including interpretations of self and culture” (Kimball & Garrison, 1996, p. 55). Being willing to change and learn, to admit that one does not already understand, entails admitting and accepting one’s own limitations, one’s own mortality. It means taking off one’s armor and opening oneself to critique. It means expecting changes both to one’s identity and to one’s ideas. This engagement with potential criticism is risky as it has the potential to promote positive relational engagement or to destroy dialogue altogether.

Criticism and Relational Engagement

The idea of criticism being a core value for good listening is complicated. In the Listening Concepts Inventory, the construct of critical listening emerged as participants’ least engaged listening construct, as compared to learning being the most engaged as discussed in the

previous section. Indeed, many of the discursive comments about critical listening clearly showed negative values around the items associated with this construct (e.g., arguing, being critical, conceding, answering).

“I mean conceding is – conceding is not really a good listening skill...arguing. That’s not good listening. You’re not listening if you’re arguing.” (Latino member)

“When I’m like talking – trying to talk with my mom, and like the conversation will start out good? And then we’ll get like three or four responses back to each other and just like, in person, not over text. And then like – she’ll just start going off on something completely different. Like, I’m trying to tell her about, like, my identity and she’ll just start going off on how I’m terrible at communication. And I just – I stop listening. And, I just tune out, because she’s literally just told me like, for my entire life, how terrible I am at communicating.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Yet, research participants clearly did engage critically, even when their initial reaction to terms like “arguing” and “critical” were generally negative. Even in contexts in which criticism appears warranted in the relational interaction, such as when an instructor does not teach well, criticism may be perceived as less than ideal:

“I mean like, part of me wants to be critical towards the instructor? But, it’s – as far as good listening – it’s not in my high priorities.” (First Nations member)

For this participant, there is “a part” of them that wants to include criticism as part of the listening response, yet when reframing the listening process as “good,” this part of them is relegated to a place of less privilege than other aspects of listening. Criticism is thus present, but this member chooses not to actively pursue or intentionally communicate it when pursuing good listening.

Part of the complication surrounding whether or not criticism is considered a positive or negative value for listeners might be due to differing definitions of the terms associated with this listening construct. For example, “critical” might mean an act of criticism toward someone or

something, or it might mean engaging in a thoughtful way with a set of ideas or problem solving.

“Arguing,” as this member states, can also have differing definitions and application of those definitions can lead to different ends:

“I’ve learned arguing with teachers never works. Like (laughs) it does – it does – like – not really if you’re actually like really arguing, it just makes things worse. But if you’re asking questions – like maybe just look at this or maybe – I don’t know. I have different definitions of arguing.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Differing definitions of the terms within the critical construct thus leads to different perceptions of its value. Through one perspective, arguing as a listener makes things worse. But, if a listener were to ask questions in a response back to a person after they have shared, this might be defined as arguing but critical engagement might be viewed entirely differently.

“Um, having conversations with my mom is like me talking to myself. I feel like, cause just you know? She’s stuck in her beliefs. Like if it was something she doesn’t like to hear? She just blocks me out. And I know because she’s either on her phone, or she’s trying to um talk about something in HER situation or HER life that’s going on and she doesn’t want to address what we’re – what I’m talking about. And, um, at that point, I’m just, as far as you know what do you wish they would have done? Is just like ask me. Like, questions. Like, um respond back. With some of what I’ve talked about. So that way I know she wants to bond with me rather than just being stubborn.” (LGBTQ and Allies Member)

As seen in these two remarks, question-asking of both ideas and of people can be viewed positively as it can help a person better understand and shows that a person is not being stubborn but rather cares enough to try to understand the topic or issue of the dialogue. This critical listening, when framed as problem solving, is one of the 12 most important values that participants in this study share for enactments of good listening. It includes such positive values as working through a problem or challenging views that were not factual or incorrect, as well as negative values of fixing or solving a problem before fully understanding the content or intent of the issue being discussed. Yet, although this value for critical listening was a shared value of

ethical listening among participants, the privileging and practices of its enactment differed among participants from various communities of difference.

Critical Listening and Ethnicity

Participants from diverse communities in this study did show some differences in how they conceptualize listening as both learning and critical. It is not, however, safe to assume that all communities of ethnic difference have divergent concepts of listening as compared to Caucasians, nor that these diverse ethnic communities conceptualize listening in the same ways as each other. Being a minority does not make one a member of a homogenous group with one set of shared understandings. There may be as many differing concepts of good listening between communities of difference as between minority and majority groups.

Survey results showed that both critical and learning constructs of listening differed between the Latino community and several other communities. When comparing the learning construct, the Latino community emerged as different (with a much higher construct mean of 4.28) as compared to Asian (3.60, $p=.008$), Caucasian (3.81, $p=.008$), and First Nations (3.88, $p=.039$) communities. See Figure 3 for a comparison of these groups below. No other groups emerged as significantly different from each other on the learning construct.

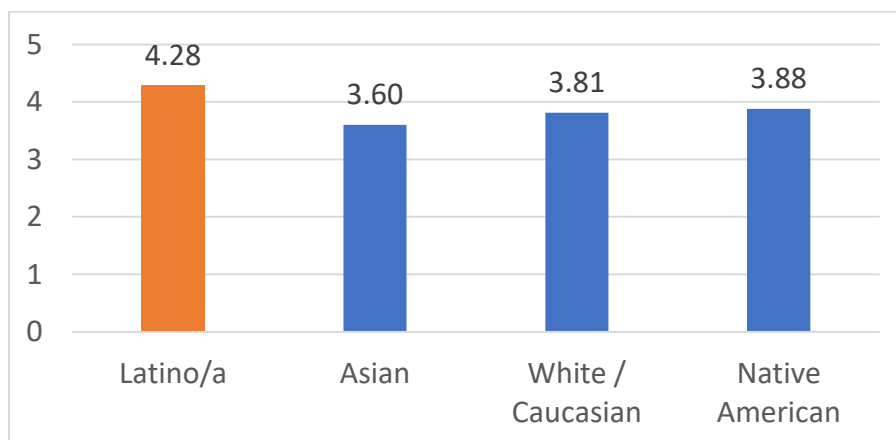


Figure 3: Learning as Listening Construct and Communities of Difference

Compare this to the critical construct. With critical listening, the Latino population again emerged as the sole group that was found to be significantly different than the others. Latino participants demonstrated an engagement with critical listening at a much higher level (construct mean 3.36) than both First Nations (2.61, $p=.006$) and Caucasian (2.75, $p=.002$) participants. See Figure 4 for a representation of these comparison groups below. No other groups were statistically different from the Latino group or with each other on the critical construct.

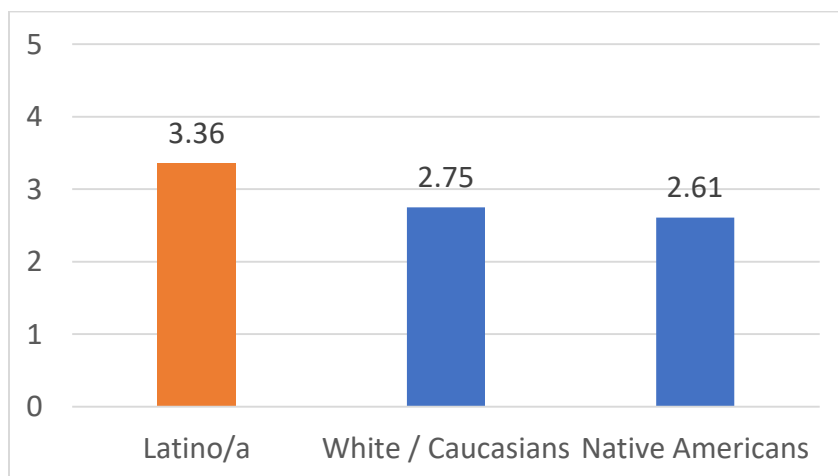


Figure 4: Critical Listening Construct and Communities of Difference

In reflecting on these higher numbers for the Latino population as compared to the others (namely, between Latino and Caucasian or First Nations groups), I suggest that the combination of both of these constructs may indicate more overlap between these two conceptualizations of listening in some cultural communities than others. This may be impacted by both language and culture.

As argued previously, language use impacts the discursive construction of values and listening. English and Spanish speakers represent the two largest language groups in this study and have distinct linguistic resources that would impact their construction of cognitive categories. In the case of the Latino community, their use of Spanish was clearly present both as native-Spanish speakers and in multilingual access to Spanish, English, and (in rare cases) other languages as well. There is not enough data to distinguish Spanish speakers from the Latino community, as only three of the participants who indicated knowing Spanish did not also identify with the Latino community.⁸ However, what is important to note here is that statistically significant differences did appear for learning (Spanish 4.19, English-Only 3.83, $p=.026$) and critical (Spanish 3.35, English-Only 2.72, $p=.001$) listening constructs when comparing Spanish speakers with English-only speakers.⁹

⁸ In future research, it would be useful to further explore how listening constructs might differ between those who identify culturally with the Latino community yet may not speak Spanish.

⁹When considering people's responses to language fluency, English-only participants and those grouped as using multiple languages showed significant differences for the critical listening construct alone. The differences are, however, opposite to the results that compared English-only and Spanish-using speakers. When comparing English-only and multiple language users as a whole, the mean scores for the critical construct were 3.14 for English-only and 2.72 for multiple languages, with a p value of .01 on a two-tail test. In other words, English-only speakers are more likely to conceptualize listening as critical as compared to multiple-language speakers. One possible interpretation of this data is that the linguistic terms used to define critical listening were generally seen as more positive by English-only speakers than by multilingual speakers.

Cultural expectations around the items associated with learning and critical constructs may also impact these results. For example, some Latinos may conceptualize critical listening as an internal process rather than one that must necessarily be voiced. Consider, for example, this comment that describes critically listening in a classroom setting by one Latino member:

“I think it is like a recording machine? That’s all. Probably you be aware that you are only recording? But you have to, how do you say? Only in the test – only say what you hear. And you be aware that is probably – you have – when you have a critical about those topics, it’s better to (zips lips) be quiet and only say what they want you to (laughs). (Latino member)

In this context, being critical about the topics does not entail sharing them. Critical listening thus can be a process that is actively engaging ideas within oneself rather than an overt engagement of critique with another person. At other times, positive relationships may be built on a foundation of remaining open to criticism and critical listening:

“When I need advice, eh, I go to my best friend? By telephone? Yeah, and she’s younger than me but she’s a good listener. And, she’s always without agreeing with me, she has, uh, critical thinking? And I like this point of view....sometimes I’m very passionate when I talk? And she – she listens to me? My points of view? She listens to me and she says ‘Yes. I’m agreeing with you. But. These things – these ones are my points of view, and I think your points of view have that that that that this kind of things that I don’t like.’...I prefer this kind of relation? That if you are critical to my – I think if you are critical to my thinking but you listen to me and ‘I agree with this’ – It’s a very good conversation. Productive.” (Latino member)

As seen here, critical listening is part of what makes someone a good listener because it leads to productive dialogue. Listening critically may also be viewed positively as “actual debate” as “opposed to just yelling at someone.” In these situations, a critical orientation would be seen as positive because it is an engagement of ideas (e.g., political) that are deemed very important. It is far better to respond with counterpoints in a critical way than to yell in a critical way.

“I think for someone to listen well and not agree with you, or what you would want – um, I feel like the political debates going on that’s a very important thing. And, uh (laughs),

um, to respond to someone like if you're having an actual debate as opposed to just yelling at someone. Um, to respond with either counterpoints to what they're saying? Like, okay you said this, but this is why, or um, to kind of repeat back to you?" (Latino member)

Thus, differences in critical listening may emerge when viewing arguing, being critical, conceding, and answering as positive behaviors – or at least more positive than the alternatives.

Throughout these remarks from Latino community members, one can see an overlap in learning and critical listening. A person critically engages ideas and then carefully decides when and when not to share those ideas based on their goals. A good friend critiques and engages in critical thinking in order to pursue a more productive conversation that would help to advise a person and produce some type of change. Critical listening during debates allows people to learn and to better understand different perspectives. In all of these scenarios, these members discursively construct positive values around listening as critical. As evidenced in the opening quote and in the results that the critical listening construct is not at a 5.0 (exactly the same as listening), the Latino community does not always construct listening as critical. It is possible, however, that through their linguistic perceptions of the terms associated with critical and learning constructs, and with their particular cultural intrapersonal and interpersonal relational values, that higher associations between good listening and being critical would emerge.

Cultural differences in the ways that people engage critically appeared in other communities as well. In the ASL community, for example, bluntness and sharing diverse perspectives is often considered a positive Deaf cultural trait central to community life. Consider two participants' perspectives of sharing in their community. In the first instance, the act of arguing opinions is viewed positively, associated with other constructive terms such as "feedback," "perspectives," and "advice."

“I am really – deaf people are really connected to each other. We enjoy their different perspectives. Their feedback. Perspectives that are different than my perspective – different opinions? Fine. We argue them. I really enjoy when they give me advice and I give them advice so that it makes their lives better. It makes me happy.” (ASL member)

Critical listening, here, is associated with a more flourishing life, and listening to arguments is framed as one part of learning different perspectives which ultimately leads to happiness and is part of ethical listening. This active effort to understand the perspectives of others is especially important when the norm in one context is very different than another and transitions and translations are required in order to effectively dialogue in both. Consider, for example, the following participant’s experience of communicating about gender diversity from a conservative viewpoint as compared to a more progressive one focused on advocacy:

“The LGBTQ is big in the deaf community. When I went to school in New York, at RIT – NTID – National Technical Institute for the Deaf? I’d never really been exposed to that kind of environment? More open? More, ally kind of, because the deaf tend to support, support, support, you know? You know? And so I wasn’t used to it, because I grew up conservative republican – conservative. I mean I’m just saying I grew up that way, so I – so I’m used to normal. I mean, I’m not stupid. I know what’s out there. I’ve seen it. But when I went to New York, it was a new process and I was like, ‘Oh. That’s normal here?’ And, even though I grew up in a metropolitan area it wasn’t like when I went to New York. Being around like a deaf university, a deaf college – they are all about advocacy. Versus like, a community college where it’s like smaller. And there, I would just like ‘Ohhhh.’ And it was good for me. I mean, I was exposed to more than I ever expected. But it was good for me. Because I was exposed to like more than I – but it’s overwhelming. But it was good for me. It helped me see what was out there, you know, from a different perspective because when you’re raised one way, it’s hard to see a different way, unless you’ve been there yourself. Or you know people. Or you’re willing to – willing to, you know – you’re willing to step – to step into their world.” (ASL member)

Understanding different perspectives is framed as the willingness “to step into their world” – a world that is different than what is expected or has been previously experienced and requires one to be willing to rethink previous stances and embrace change. Even though, in the words of this participant, this perspective taking can be “overwhelming,” it can also be “good for me” because

it encourages understanding of a bigger world and the ways to actively step into that world and offer support. This critical listening that engages new experiences thus benefits everyone.

Critical Listening and Gender

A significant difference may also be present between culturally constructed genders, as evidenced by the performance of gender identities within the broader Caucasian cultural construction. The discourses of Caucasian men and women groups indicated that they perceived differences between the ways that their particular groups enacted good listening, although they also hedged those perceptions with ideas of equality. Based on statements earlier in their focus group discussions, I prompted both groups to expand on ideas about good listening and gender by offering advice about how their counterparts could better listen to them. This is a part of those responses from the Caucasian Men's group:

Person 3: I hate to say it, but most women I know uh, I have – have a much harder time. And maybe it's just in my age demographic, but I have a much harder time putting up with them. I feel – I feel like the women that I do have good conversations with are engaged in the same manner like we are right now.

Person 1: mmhmm?

Person 2: mmhmm?

Person 3: You know. And I think a lot of that goes with just that, mutual respect of who that person is? Not really based on sex. Um, I don't think men and women listen differently. I can't really say that everything we've just said right now wouldn't be how that – how that still works.

Person 2: That, and staying in the central idea. It probably goes for both. But obviously, we're referring to women. But like, staying with a thesis is – like staying with your central idea. Like we mentioned, is crucial to a argument and I feel like that it's overlooked so, so often in just day to day things. And would like – we wouldn't even notice that all we're talking about is just fallacy and fallacy and fallacy and fallacy and it's not even a real argument.

Person 1: I think that there's a very big difference between how men and women communicate? But the default in our society right now is that women are the good communicators and so that that's the people who communicate. And that women try to understand men communicate differently? And, whereas I see that as it's a difference and

not a bad thing necessarily? It would be like, useful. And I certainly think men can do the same thing in the other direction. But I think that the tendency is that the women are the good communicators and they're talking the way everyone should communicate and I don't think that's true.

Person 2: Yeah, I can see that.

Person 3: Absolutely. You know, something else I was just thinking about. Women. And when I have conversations with them that don't go as well or I don't feel that they're listening, there's a lot of emotion involved? And, I'm a very emotional person so I'm not saying that's only true of women. But I do feel like taking the emotion out of it. Both men and women, um, uh, and, then being very emotional creatures. Um, dialing that back a little bit before you get into a good conversation? Or before you address something?

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 3: Um, makes you a more effective communicator and a more effective listener.

Person 2: Definitely. A hundred percent. Yeah.

Person 1: Alright. Hopefully they'll send –

Person 2: We solved it (laughs).

Person 1: Hopefully they'll send the memo out (laughs).

Person 2: (Laughs).

Person 3: (Laughs). (Caucasian Men members)

As seen here, Caucasian Men discussed feminine and masculine forms of listening as being both the same and different, and that when women communicate more like men would with each other, they perceive good conversations as possible between genders. One member indicated that women are socially constructed as being better communicators – that their ways of communicating are privileged as compared to masculine approaches. The role of emotion – and being overly emotional and not logical enough – was discussed as creating barriers to the conversation process, as was a lack of focus in the conversation, and the entire sequence was framed as a solution to a problem by a closing phrase of “We solved it.” Throughout this, the perception of some of these traits being present for both men and women, but perhaps more of an issue for women than men, was constructed in their discourse.

Compare this to a response from the Caucasian Women group, which constructs men as needing to solve perceived problems, being overly emotional, and not being able to effectively listen to find the main point of the conversation. Some of these traits should sound very familiar as they overlap with the men's complaints about women listeners. As in the men's discourse, the participants attempted to construct equality between men and women, remarking that differences in listening behavior may not be based on gender. Yet, the challenges and advice that are given in this excerpt is being specifically constructed with gender distinctions in mind:

Person 1: I'd like to be able to um talk about um a hurdle or a challenge that I'm going through without um him trying to fix it for me (laughs).

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 3: Oooo.

Person 4: Yeah.

Person 5: Yeah, that's classic. Yeah.

Person 6: Yeah.

Person 1: You know. Um, it – just – um. Knowing – just having him know that he doesn't have to come up with the answer.

Person 2: Mmhmm.

Person 1: I'm not asking for that, you know. Because it – it seems like a burden? You know? For those people who are fixers. And I'm guilty of the same with my kids but we're talking about men right now I guess.

Person 6: (Laughs).

Person 1: But if they, just um had a conversation without trying to fix – fix –

Person 2: That goes along with what mine is – is not cutting me off with the solution.

Person 5: Hhh. Oh no.

Person 1: Yeah.

Person 2: Before I've even finished what I'm saying. You know, I'm just like cut off. This is the solution. This is how it should be fixed. You know, and I'm like – I'm not even done and it's like, I'm – I've already gone through that solution and it didn't work.

Person 1: Right.

Person 3: (Laughs).

Person 5: (Laughs).

Person 6: (Laughs).

Person 2: And so to not be cut off in the middle with a solution and him assuming, 'Oh, I can fix this and I will.

Person 1: Mmhmm.

Person 2: And this is the only way.' That's my big thing. Yeah. (Laughs)

Person 5: Ohhhh yeah.

Person 7: Mmhmm. Yeah.

As these participants dialogue, one can see that they collectively agree that men have a need to fix a problem or find a solution during a dialogue. Together, they laugh, encourage, and respond with affirmation that this is true in their lives and is "classic" listening behavior of men, traits that are present across multiple times and contexts. In addition to listening with the desire to fix, men are cast as being emotionally defensive and that leads to men missing the point of a conversation as they focus on what they need to defend. Rather than men being constructed as unemotional, women construct masculine listening as overly emotional as communicated through defensiveness:

Person 4: You know, and – but we'll get into – into these things – into these discussions via text messaging? And, I realize he's not really hearing what I'm saying. He's not – or he's misinterpreting. He's looking at – reading the text and reading something else into it and not reading you know what I'm saying.

Person 2: Mmhmm.

Person 4: And – and – we'll have to stop and back – and – and there's been times I've put down the phone – I've put it down. And I put it down and I've called him. And sometimes I get through and sometimes I don't. Which is why we text so much.

Person 5: Mmhmm.

Person 4: But, then when I can, I'm like, 'You need to listen' (laughs).

Person 2: Mmhmm.

Person 4: To what I'm saying (laughs). You're – you're only hearing part of – of what I'm trying to say. And I can tell by your responses that you're not hearing the whole story. You're not hearing what I'm –

Person 2: Mmm.

Person 6: Mmm.

Person 4: What the frustration is, or whatever it is.

Person 1: The inflections are gone.

Person 4: Yeah.

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 4: They are totally gone. And then, well, so we'll get on, we'll get on the phone and completely solve whatever the issue was much more quickly.

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 4: So I realize that a lot of times – and this isn't necessarily women – men. In ours it is. And – and I don't see it coming the other way. I don't see that I do the same thing you know in quite the same way.

Person 1: Mmhmm.

Person 7: Mmhmm.

Person 4: But, yeah. I think not being defensive.

Person 2: Mmhmm.

Person 4: And really listening to the whole like – just like you said.

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 4: The whole thing. What are you – what's the bigger picture?

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 4: What are you saying in general and not just picking out a piece of it. Or taking it like it's against me.

Defensiveness as being overly emotional, inability to stay on topic with a broader discourse, desires to solve (while perceiving men as overly problem-solving), and privileging tasks over relationships are all part of the discursive construction of negative traits of masculine listening in this discursive construction.

These differences between the ways that men and women perceive each other's listening offer a brief glimpse into the ways that gendered listening is constructed by Caucasian participants. For both, members of one gender community perceives the other as potentially

deficient in listening based on a given set of values: being overly-emotional, not staying focused to the content of the conversation, and problem-solving. Together, they share these concerns and indicate that navigating them is crucial for ethical listening. Women are framed as illogical (not critical) and emotional and men as problem-solvers (not relational) and emotional. These values reappear in the gendered perception of idealized listening as explored through the Listening Concepts Inventory among Caucasian men and women.

Based on the responses of focus group participants about how good listening would best be enacted in four distinct scenarios using the 15 items of the Listening Concepts Inventory, listening was conceptualized similarly between genders, with calculation of these 15 items resulting in learning, information organization, relationship building, and critical listening being ranked in the same order between men and women participants (with small differences between relationship and critical constructs – women scoring relationship building higher and men scoring critical listening higher). See Figure 5 for a comparison of these results.

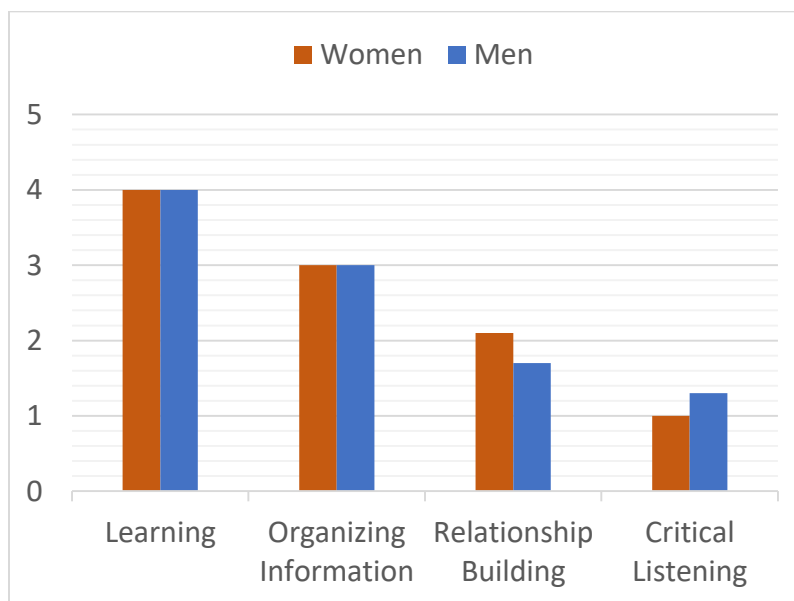


Figure 5: Gendered Construction of Good Listening in Four Scenarios

Thus, although there are slight differences in the values that participants discursively constructed as being frustrating about a gender different than their own, when actually responding to how they would envision good listening in four distinct scenarios through the Listening Concepts Inventory, the general approaches were similar between men and women. This mirrors previous research that found that men and women similarly understood good listening as including an overall willingness to engage, showing interest in what another person has to say, asking questions, and giving feedback and advice to others in appropriate ways (Beall, 2010). Among these same focus group participants, however, their responses indicated that more abstract perceptions of ideal listening as a general practice differed greatly by gender.

After the four scenarios were responded to with the 15 listening item Likert scale ranking, I explained that each of the 15 items was associated with one of four listening constructs. Participants were given four index cards, one for each construct of “learning,” “organizing information,” “relationship building,” and “critical listening,” and asked to rank these four cards (first, second, third, and fourth) based on what traits they considered most important for an ideal listener. They were encouraged to think about the listening activities they most needed to do or most wanted done for them to be a good listener in their life as a whole. The results of the ranking of these cards showed gendering of ideal listeners in interesting ways, with women idealizing learning and relationship building and men idealizing critical listening and organizing information. See Figure 6 below for a comparison of these ideals.

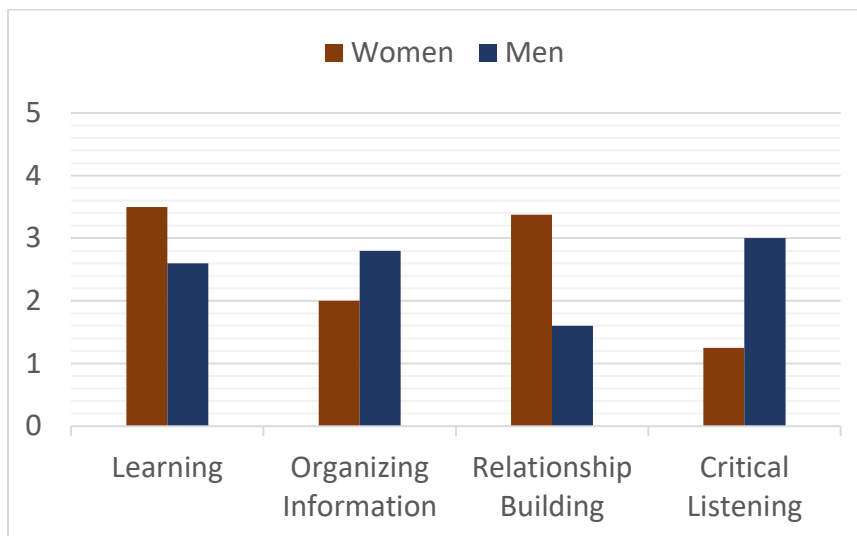


Figure 6: Gendered Perception of an Ideal Listener

These results suggest that the perception of listening ideals differs along the same gendered complaints as was discussed in the focus groups. Whereas women prioritize learning and relationship building in listening, men prioritize critical listening and information organization. Regardless of these general ideals, however, men and women responded about how to enact good listening through the 15 items of the Listening Concepts Inventory very similarly – prioritizing learning first, organizing information second, relationship building third, and critical listening fourth. Both genders exhibited a gap between their perceived general ideals and the perceptions of more concrete ideals – men idealize critical listening as highest, yet in concrete scenarios indicate that it is the least like ethical listening. Women idealized relationship building, yet indicated that it is less ideal than organizing information across the same four scenarios. For both genders, general ideals and more concrete applied ideals did not match. For both genders, there appears to be a distinction between learning and critical listening, yet the conceptualization of these constructs relate to how a person understands ethical listening of both the relationship and the dialogic content as was seen in the previous discussion of ethnicity and critical listening.

Relational turmoil can result from refusing to critically engage ideas or arguing in ways that a conversation partner views as illogical or driven by emotions that are deemed invalid because they are not based on facts. For example, the following narrative describes a situation in which an online friend argues against transgender access to the restroom of their choice and the mother of two transgender kids feels “unlistened to” in the process. In this scenario, it is exactly the decision to not critically engage that is constructed as poor listening:

“Recently um, there’s been a lot of talk about the bathroom bills with transgender people and not being able to go in there. And predators are going to dress up like trans people and attack people. Um, and I have two kids who are transgender. And so I, am, **VEHEMENTLY** against that because it puts MY daughters in danger from an actual threat versus an imagined threat that the **HYPE** is worse than the reality. But SHE was just arg – arguing with me over and over and over again. Making points that didn’t make any sense with each other and were like, well, ‘I don’t have any problem with transgender people and I just don’t want them in the bathroom.’ But equality isn’t this **AND** this. It’s one thing. Either you believe in equality or you don’t. There’s no middle ground when it comes to human rights. So I was trying to explain to her MY side and where I’m coming from and that all. ‘I mean it’s just – it’s the most basic of human necessities. Don’t flatter yourself. No one is going to peep on you. But my daughter needs to pee too. And do you think my seven year old daughter should be in a bathroom with grown men because she happened to be born with a penis? I don’t think so. That would put her in danger.’ So, it just where she wouldn’t listen to me. She was so upset about HER daughter being in danger? That she didn’t want to acknowledge the fact that my daughter would be in real actual danger if that law were to get passed here. So, we’ve had that conversation like six or seven times now (laughs). And every time, I feel unlistened to. I’m like, I’m validating what you’re feeling. I understand. But never has there ever been an instant where **THAT** happened. What you’re afraid of happening. What **HAS** happened is that countless trans people and women have been raped, assaulted, and battered in bathrooms. And that’s why I’m afraid. Because there **ARE** stats of what would happen to my kids. So, just that. Over and over and over again.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

As seen in this story, this participant considers critical thinking crucial for validating both an intellectual position and an emotional stance toward someone with whom a person disagrees. The participant discursively constructs the listening good of understanding an emotional position without criticism (e.g., “I’m validating what you’re feeling. I understand.”) while critically

engaging an idea (e.g., “But never has there been an instant where THAT happened. What you’re afraid of happening.”). In the process, when a dialogic partner does not respond in kind, the participant feels “unlistened to” when the argument repeats itself “over and over and over again” and she does not observe the critical thinking in her dialogic partner that she is hoping to see nor the emotional support that she needs.

In sum, differences regarding the ways that critical listening intersect with learning and listening ideals can be seen throughout the communities of difference. Distinctions were made between criticism of material (generally framed more positively as problem solving, but dependent on the situational needs) and criticism of a person (generally framed more negatively, but dependent on the relational dynamics), as demonstrated in the above discourse. This distinction is shown overtly in the following dialogic excerpt in which there are two responses to critical listening in a classroom setting:

Person 1: I mean like part of me wants to be critical towards the instructor? But, it’s – as far as good listening – it’s not in my high priorities. Yeah. (Caucasian Woman)

Person 2: Yeah. I thought of that as being critical of the material? And interpreting it. And like on the material more so than on like the person. (Caucasian Man)

In these two responses to the idea of critical listening, one can see a gendering that corresponds with the perceptions that have been discussed throughout this section – a woman orienting toward a person, whereas a man orients toward material content. This gendering is not absolute, however, and people of diverse genders and cultures embrace both approaches as having positive and negative qualities and ethical listening being dependent on the successful navigation of both.

Thus, the application of critical listening to ethical dialogic exchange is socially reinforced through particular expectations and socialization and this can be seen in gendered expressions of what is deemed appropriate and inappropriate. In the following discursive

exchange, for example, social stigma and social support is communicated to a focus group member (Person 4) who adopted a posture of critical listening toward another person. The stances seen in the following excerpt reinforce the gendered positions discussed to this point about how to ethically listen through criticism. Interestingly, a woman openly criticizes another person for employing critical listening of another person, performing the opposite of the ethical guideline she espouses. Then, a man supports the critical listening of another person, rather than being openly critical of the criticizing woman. These trends toward what is expected in word and what is done in practice point to the importance of future research exploring actual ethical listening performances rather than community perceptions alone.

Person 2: “Being critical...I wasn’t sure. You know, I – it’s the first thing I thought of was being, um – um, critical to you know, to the conversation. To the person. Rather than to critical thinking? Like you know – (Caucasian Women member)

Person 3: Right. Right. (Caucasian Women member)

Person 4: I – I kind of went okay. Is it – it’s one extreme or the other (laughs). (Caucasian Men member)

Person 3: Yeah.

Person 4: It’s becoming aware. I actually could have...hmm.

Person 3: Were you (Looks at Person 4) – were you thinking of critical as critical thinking? Or being critical of the person?

Person 4: Being critical of the person. I was like you definitely don’t need –

Person 1: Yeah. (Caucasian Men member)

Person 2: That’s what I finally thought.

Person 3: And – and you thought that was good listening? Being critical?

Person 4: Yeah.

Person 3: That’s good listening? To be critical? (Laughs).

Person 4: I would – yeah. I mean –

Person 1: And I think it is, but it’s –

Person 4: In order to – to draw a conclusion and to be like critical. You have to be like, ‘Okay. God. What did I do to get in – in this mess?’

Person 1: (Laughs).

Person 4: “Who is this person? And I’m like, okay. I don’t know – they’re kind of like a slacker.” And so you kind of like – I don’t know. That’s all in kind of like drawing conclusions.

Person 1: Nice. I like it (laughs). So I think a lot of this too is –

Person 4: Especially if they like cut off and stuff.

Person 1: How good a friend it is.

Person 2: Yeah. Yeah.

Person 4: You’ve got to know what you’re dealing with.

Person 1: Cause if you’re a really good friend you can – you can, ‘You moron. What were you doing?’

Person 4: Yeah. Exactly.

Person 2: (Laughs).

Person 1: But if it’s somebody you’re less close with, you’re probably going to be more comforting to them. Or if they’re nervous versus if they’re not.

In this exchange, critical listening is stigmatized by Person 3 (a woman) who repeatedly challenges Person 4 (a man) about their use of criticism with the comment “That’s good listening? To be critical?” and laughing. Person 4 immediately turns that critical eye toward himself to figure out how he landed in a particular listening situation, “In order to – to draw a conclusion and to be like critical. You have to be like, ‘Okay. God. What did I do to get in – in this mess?’” rather than emphasizing the criticism of another person who he then argues that he does not really know “Who is this person?” Person 1 (a man) then joins the conversation exchange and aids his male counterpart with “Nice. I like it.” He adds that good relationships create a foundation of being able to be critical – to the point of name calling: “Cause if you’re a really good friend you can – you can, ‘You moron. What were you doing?’” and yet does not engage in criticism during a moment of conflict in the dialogue. Good friends can criticize each

other when listening ethically because of the relational context, but they must be able to discern the quantity, quality, and timing of that criticism.

This leads to a final point. Listeners of all genders in this study perceived that an act of criticism might offer and co-construct a closure that is itself an ethical act of listening based on the needs of the particular relational context. Ethical listeners know how to engage critical listening so that it has long-term benefits by closing off the potential for repetitive harm. They do this by ethically engaging critical listening, as reflected by these two participants' statements:

“I would be like – that would be later when it’s not a – not a critical moment. I’d be like, so. How are we going to prevent that from happening again? Let’s think that through.”
(Caucasian Women member)

“Yeah. I put arguing and comforting at that same rather related to good listening? Because it’s kind of like a fine balance. Because if you argue with them too much – uh one wants to listen to you. But if you’re too comforting, then they’re like. You’re really not stimulating.” (Caucasian Men member)

Thus, the ability to discern the amount of critical engagement that is needed in any given situation and relationship is of paramount importance for all people. When the engagement levels are off, either in content or in presentation, critical listening may move from being perceived as positive to negative, from being constructive to being perceived as an attack.

“Don’t assume that something that I’m saying to you is a personal attack. What I – what I say is my opinion. And it doesn’t necessarily – it’s not a fact. It’s not necessarily directed at you as a person? This is my opinion? And if we can understand that you, you know, that what I’m thinking is not going to hurt you? Well, we can get through this smoother. Because then you don’t feel like you have to defend yourself. And that’s where a lot of conflict comes from, is people feel like they have to defend their person? And – and then it becomes attack after attack after attack. So, just don’t assume that what I’m saying is coming at you as an attack. It’s an opinion. And it’s not – I’m not trying to compete with you. I’m just stating my truth.” (Caucasian Women member)

“...you’re not there to attack each other? You’re there to help each other understand your point of view...and you do need to take into account the other side? And if you want people to listen to you it’s not what you say, it’s how you say it. So if you attack them,

and make no effort to bond with them at all, then how can you expect them to see your side?” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

These Caucasian participants promoted the idea that sharing perspectives with the goal of understanding should not be framed as battle – as attacks – but rather as multiple sides of a story, multiple perspectives of truth. They hope to share perspectives and to use that knowledge to build understanding between contrasting perspectives. Rather than competitive convincing, the participants valued shared understanding. These culturally-grounded perceptions echo Deetz’s (1990) philosophical argument that “From the ethical standpoint of mutual formation of understanding, the least effective thing a person might do in interaction is convince the others. To the extent that someone prevails, further understanding is always limited by someone’s prior understanding” (p. 230). Opening oneself to learning – whether that be of people’s identities or ideas – means listening critically to new ideas, to the people who share them, and to one’s own self. Learning and criticalness are not necessarily opposed; they overlap and enrich the other.

Critical Engagement for a Better World

When critical engagement, with both ideas and persons, are done appropriately, participants assert that it creates better relationships and a better world because it promotes positive change for all. They share this value and consider it central to ethical listening. These changes are essential to enacting identities that embrace authenticity both as maintaining an internal consistency to one’s own ideas and to pursuing change for the betterment of oneself, all the people in dialogue, and the world as a whole. Together, these findings answer my two-prong research questions related to the ways that diverse communities of difference and dialogic philosophers envision ethical listening as both point to the importance of critical engagement and its impact on evolving dialogue and identities for ethical listening. As one participant narrated:

“Recently I met a person who supports Trump? And who – I met him, and I was like ‘Wow. Like, I don’t agree with you.’ I’m like, ‘Bernie Sanders. Give me a tattoo. I want Bernie Sanders.’...I was discussing with him and it slowly – it slowly became an argument and escalated. And like, we cooled off. We got the ice – ice water and was, like, drenched ourselves in it. And was like, ‘Everything’s cool.’ But it was important for us to understand it. We just wanted to know why, ‘Why do you think Bernie Sanders is a good person?’ And, I wanted to know why he would support the opposite person. And, it was a good conversation. We – we – created good opinions. And I think we just uh concluded that we wanna – we have our perspectives? And you’re maybe right. I’m maybe right. We don’t know? But, the important thing is that we are both – both voting this year. And we agreed, we found ways to agree about something in that area? But maybe it’s not exactly the same.” (ASL member)

In this personal interaction, in an emotional election year, this participant described being enriched by a conversation about why opposing candidates could be promoted and seeking to understand both a position and critically engaging another person so that they could create “good opinions.” In the end, he embraced the perspective that open sharing of perspectives was more important than insisting on agreeing on the particulars in the community: “It was important for us to understand it.” Listening ethically requires one to try to understand and critically engage new and evolving ideas and people.

Throughout this chapter, values of openness, learning, authenticity, and critical listening interacted with cultural expressions of ethnicity and gender in unique ways. At each step along the way, ideals and practices at times overlapped and at other times did not. Expectations of others to be authentically honest along identities of sameness and change were performed by the participants throughout their discourse. Ultimately, both members of diverse communities of difference and dialogic philosophers argued for an ethic of listening that promoted openness to diverse ideas and people that would change the world for the better. This is not a one-time decision or act. As Kimball and Garrison (1996) say, it is a cycle of recognizing the other in

oneself and others, opening ourselves up to those differences being enacted with our identities, and choosing to pursue new alternatives to our ways of being:

By coming into contact with different beliefs, habits, and values, we become aware of our own prejudices. If we are willing to question those prejudices in light of the alternatives we now perceive, then new understandings of self *and* other are made possible. This, in turn, allows us to be more open to other aspects of difference, which leads to greater understanding, and so the cycle continues (p. 54).

These changes also reflect what Fiumara (1990) suggests:

It is almost as though in order to listen one had to “become” different, since it is not so much a question of grasping concepts or propositions as of attempting an experience. Unless we are ready, receptive – and also, possibly, vulnerable – the experience of listening appears to be impossible. Philosophy demands our entire mind: listening our totality (p. 191).

Put another way by a participant in this study:

“I’m looking for – what’s going to happen after that? If no change happens, so I cannot believe that people really listened. Or understand. Sometimes, sometimes it makes the situation even worse? Because you told me you were listening? But I don’t see any change. Any problem has been fixed. So that means that you disagree. So it causes more disagreements between two communities.” (Asian member)

Thus, as argued by both philosophers and participants in this study, listening ethically may actually require one to change rather than embrace sameness, and this may be particularly true when working in cross-cultural environments.

Vulnerability is loss of control. Loss of control, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, can be both thrilling and terrifying. Yet, it is exactly in this space of vulnerability that our listening ethic must take shape. As Lipari (2014) says, “When we bear witness and *listen otherwise*, we listen from a space of unknowing, loss of control, loss of ideas and concepts; an opening to what is, not shrinking away, *being* there. And it is from this place that the ethical response emerges” (p. 187). In the metaphoric construction of listening in the discourses of this

study, the act of listening can create *openness*. However, that opening is an act of risk that offers others the opportunity to *shut down* or *cut off*, and that closing off has dialogic and relational consequences, as is seen in these comments from three focus group dialogues:

“Or even if she had sat down with me and had an actually like adult conversation about it? That would have been cool? But shutting me down every time I open my mouth is not the way to get me to continue trying with you.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“...mine is – is not cutting me off with the solution before I’ve even finished what I’m saying. You know, I’m just like cut off. This is the solution. This is how it should be fixed. You know, and I’m like – I’m not even done and it’s like I’m – I’ve already gone through that solution and it didn’t work. And so to not be cut off in the middle with a solution and him assuming, ‘Oh, I can fix this. And I will. And this is the only way.’ That’s my big thing.” (Caucasian Women member)

“They want to shut me down before they really listen to me? And I don’t want to listen to anything they’re saying because they’re coming across as hostile.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Getting *shut down* in these ways is clearly a negative – even hostile – communicative act. In a listening space where trust needs to exist in order for ethical listening to occur, people do not always have the personal experience that teaches that it is worth that risk. Communities do not always act either in ways that others wish to be treated, or in ways that they wish to be treated. Instead, they may adopt the behaviors of their families and, as is expressed in these remarks, of their mothers, in particular:

“Because my mother was a notorious cutter-offer. And so like, you’d start and to this day does that. And um, and so you – so not feeling listened to. You could never get your whole sentence out. So you were always just in this state of talking fast. You know? Shutting down your feelings? Because you couldn’t get it – you couldn’t like – and I guess often times it happened more in conflict. So if you, you know. You, whatever, get caught as you know a high schooler you know doing something or whatever. And you’re trying to explain your thinking and you – you just get shut down. That’s where you – and I had a good mom. I don’t want to make it sound like I didn’t. But she – but that – that was my mom and my conflict. But I can trace it back to a lot of behaviors that I have now. Like, I’m a person now where I have to – I struggle because I will cut people off. I

will – I married into a family that everyone cuts each other off. You know? And so you have this state of frustration.” (Caucasian Women member)

“I’ve had to do this with my mom, where um. Where I – I started talking to my mom about some of the things you know, uh, I went through as a child that she didn’t know about. Or maybe she did, but you know, but we didn’t talk about it. And so, she would interrupt me, and say ‘Oh, oh hijo.’ You know. And I said, ‘Mom. You know what? I love you but you need to like listen to me right now. This is important stuff. And – and I – and I think that um we want to automatically step in and help somebody, you know, by shutting them out so they don’t have to feel the full impact of what – of what they’ve experienced. And so, when we don’t allow somebody to fully – someone when they’re confiding in you – something traumatic that’s gone through their life – and we cut them off and say, ‘Hey. I understand what you’re telling me.’ We don’t allow that person to – to fully appreciate their experience. And they don’t tell you what’s deep inside them that’s been hurting them all these years. We cut them off of that, and sometimes when we do it to some people, you know, that – that they want to share something? But they really don’t. You – you are essentially telling them, ‘You know what? It’s okay for you not to speak about your experiences.’ And you’re – you’re – you’re negating their experience, you know, as a person.” (Latino member)

Thus, listening environments should not be seen as blank slates on which people perform any identity that they wish. Instead, listening takes places in broader cultural and societal expectations of who should listen and when, and these cultures are often transmitted in families and the ways that those families performed listening identities.

Throughout this study, my overarching research question led to exploration of how to better understand the ways that ethical listening can lead to well-being in our individual lives and relationships. This chapter has helped shape a culturally nuanced yet shared dialogic ethic by cultivating understanding about how diverse perceptions of what it means to bring our whole authentic selves and engage in both learning and critical listening may be interpreted during the listening process by people of different ethnicities and genders. When we expect others to listen in particular ways and they do not fulfill those expectations, our emotional and rational response may be to disengage rather than pursue ongoing dialogue and relationships. Yet it is crucial in

the formation of ethical listening to understand how we may enact these values differently and still pursue the values of listening that we all share. Each time that we open ourselves to another person and learn with that person, we take steps that can lead to learning and more intimate relationships. Yet, in these interactions, we also know that we risk much on individual and relational levels and the outcome of this opening can yield positive or negative results.

In the next chapter, I extend this exploration of ethical listening further into the realm of relational reciprocity, social obligations, and care. I discuss ways that ethical listening is founded on values of care and expectations of relationship connection. I describe how listening has been gendered and ways that particular roles of listening are being constructed. I then contextualize this discussion in a broader ethical narrative of care and just social systems. Finally, I suggest that responding to a call for care-full listening is an ethical response that is the responsibility of every member of a community and that this risk requires an element of trust that is crucial for pursuing authentic and ethical listening.

CHAPTER 4 DOLLS AND CAGES: THE STRENGTH TO CARE THROUGH LISTENING AND CHOOSING NOT TO LISTEN

Listening includes both mental and emotional engagement. As discussed in the previous chapter, mental engagement may require one to learn about another person or idea, critically engaging the dialogue and evolving practices of identity and discourse. In this chapter, I explore the emotional aspects of listening and how we carefully create and claim connection and disconnection in pursuit of individual and social well-being. By being in tune to our whole selves, we can better construct a dialogic listening ethic that constructs wholehearted beings. Both participants from diverse communities and dialogic philosophers constructed caring as a shared value that is foundational to enacting ethical listening that supports the well-being of all.

Caring about a relationship reflects a broader relational stance to ethically understand others as well as oneself:

Understanding the needs, interests, and welfare of another person, and understanding the relationship between oneself and the other, requires a stance toward that person informed by care, love, empathy, compassion, and emotional sensitivity. It involves, for example, the ability to see the other as different in important ways from oneself, as a being existing in her own right, rather than viewing her through a simple projection of what one would feel if one were in her situation" (Blum, 1993, p. 51).

As argued by Blum, cultivating understanding involves cultivating care. That care does not have to stem from belief that someone else is just like oneself, but rather that they are different.

Pursuit of appropriate care in listening must often be influenced by a standpoint different than one's own. As argued throughout this work, an effective communication ethic goes well beyond feelings of compassion and empathy. Rather than arguing here that one has an ethical responsibility to empathically listen at all times, I suggest instead that wise listeners know how to

balance emotional engagements to others in a dialogue that impacts our own authentic selves.

Wise listening requires an extraordinary amount of emotional intelligence.

Strength to Listen

Listening, according to the discourse enacted in this study, involves a broad range of emotions, both positive and negative. The use of emotive words (terms used to elicit or represent some type of emotion) in the discourse shows that particular emotional concepts were inspired by talking about the ethics of listening. Emotive words used in three or more groups by participants included terms related to comfort, care, respect, love, emotion, healing, safety, trust, defensiveness, sensitivity, calm, aggressiveness, and empathy.¹⁰ These terms are listed by order of the frequency with which they were spoken in the corpus in Table 5 below. The range indicates the number of distinct focus group discourses in which these terms appeared.

Table 5: Emotive Terms in Corpus

Emotive Terms	Frequency	Group Range
Comfort	63	10
Care	52	9
Respect	43	10
Love	36	10
Emotion	26	8
Heal	16	4
Safe	13	5
Trust	13	6
Defensive	13	3
Aggressive	9	6
Calm	9	5
Sensitive	9	4
Empathy	8	4

¹⁰ Although the term “like” could be considered an emotive term, it is also frequently used as a filler term. This was also true of the term “feel” which was often used as an alternate term for “think” rather than referencing listening. These terms were excluded from this data set.

Emotive terms related with “comfort” (i.e., comfort, comforting, comfortable, discomfort, uncomfortable), “care” (i.e., care, caring, careful, carefully), “love” (i.e., love, loves, loved), and “respect” (i.e., respect, respected, respectful, respecting, disrespect, disrespectful) were used more than any other term. Each of these concepts was referenced in nine or more of the focus group dialogues, demonstrating that participants considered these important concepts when discussing listening. The most commonly used versions of these emotive terms (i.e., *love*, *care*, *respect*, and *comfortable*) were in the top 10 percent of all corpus word types used in the discourse.¹¹ Matters of comfort, care, respect, and love are thus central to understanding how listening and emotional well-being intersect and can strengthen the other in positive dialogic interaction. Bakhtin understands love as “the ongoing accomplishment of respectful attention that emerges as partners mature together” (Stewart, 2011, p. 21). In fact, the most frequently used term “comfort” suggests that strength is being created by the listening relationship. The Latin root for comfort can be translated as *together-strong* (com-fortis) or *strengthen* (confortare). Ethical practice of these emotive acts bring strength to the dialogue.

These concepts of comfort, care, respect, and love relate most closely to two of the 12 discursively identified values regarding ways that one intentionally and carefully engages listening: *care* and *relational connection*. Focus group members constructed the value of *care* as being related to positive values of empathy, compassion, helping someone feel better, comfort and being comfortable, showing value and validation, and caring for oneself and others. They

¹¹ Not including derivative forms of the terms, the lexical item “love” was the 324th most frequently used term among the 4,639 total word types in the corpus, “care” was the 329th most frequently used term, “respect” was the 404th most frequently used term, and “comfortable” was the 444th most frequently used term.

disparaged allowing oneself or those that you are responsible for (e.g., your child) to be hurt and not showing care or concern for others and oneself. As two participants indicated:

“To be a good listener is, um, simply to care about that person. It might be just one time meeting that person, but just to (show) genuine interest to that person.” (Asian member)

“I feel like being listened to makes you feel validated. Like, it makes you feel like that what – what you’re saying really matters.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Closely connected to this value of caring for others, participants indicated that listening was related to a value of relational connection. Relational connection had to do with fulfilling one’s responsibility to the relationship, relational bonding, increasing trust, and building or maintaining relational connections. When others make an active choice to “really listen,” those displays of care support relational connection – whether those connections be with strangers, friends, family, or people one simply respects.

“If someone really listened to me for just a little bit? That would make me feel like a lot closer to them? Like, okay, they’re here to like be here for me kind of? (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“I feel like if someone’s going to talk with me, I want to have a connection with them? I want them to know that it’s important that I am gonna listen and I do care?” (First Nations member)

“Who it is for sure. And I think that matters almost more than content for me cause I mean if I’ve already dismissed you as a person, right off the bat, I don’t care who you are. I’m not gonna listen to you. But if you’re family and I love you. If you’re my friend. If you’re someone who’s close to me, or someone like, I’ve read, and you have great credentials kinda thing. I’m gonna listen to you regardless almost – even if you’re kinda just a pain in the ass.” (Caucasian Men member)

Both values of *care* and *relational connection* point to a commitment to engaging dialogue in ways that support the specific needs of the people and broader narratives involved. Listening to someone communicates a desire to connect. Being listened to validates. Listening is like a warm covering. As one participant stated, “When I think of a good listener? I think of like getting

wrapped up in blankets.” Being wrapped up in listening can make one feel safe, cared for, and surrounded by meaningful dialogue. Positive emotions of love, care, respect and comfort are all elicited as one considers being listened to like a hug, like an embrace of a warm blanket.

Dialogue is created in the context of relationships and these relationships constantly require us to be full of care, to be care-full as we engage others in a dialogic moment. The desire for relationships is fundamental to humanity, as we seek out and receive each other. Yet, accompanying these relationships is an unending call to respond to other people, a call that impinges on our autonomy and self-determination. This call demands our attention:

...our apprehension of freedom springs from our awareness of obligation and the endless claims that can be, and will be, made upon us. We feel that we are, on the one hand, free to decide; we know, on the other hand, that we are irrevocably linked to intimate others. This linkage, this fundamental relatedness, is at the very heart of our being. Thus I am totally free to reject the impulse to care, but I enslave myself to a particularly unhappy task when I make this choice. As I chop away at the chains that bind me to loved others, asserting my freedom, I move into a wilderness of strangers and loneliness, leaving behind all who cared for me and even, perhaps, my own self (Noddings, 1984, p. 51).

We are defined by our relational obligations and these claims link us to others. We are responsible to identify in ways that strengthen both others and ourselves. There is no “I” without an “other.” Differentiation occurs in the context of relationships, but so does connection. These relationships are fundamental to our humanity and, as we live out our “selves,” we seek relationships that help us to become better versions of those selves. Indeed, as we act in relational connection, “The speaker ingests the listener; and the listener, the speaker” (Smith, 2003, p. 273). This taking in and giving out are both acts that we choose, but they are also acts that are demanded of us by our relationships and communities. They oblige us to connect and disconnect, and an ethical response obliges us to do this listening care-fully.

Relationship Building and Obligation

Communities are not all structured similarly and thus have differing expectations for the roles that their members will fulfill in broader society. This has implications for the ways that listening roles are constructed and conceptualized for community relationships and how those roles then create the community. As Beard (2009) says, “I do not, as an ethical being, listen only to you; I listen with you, as well. Some acts of listening create community” (p. 19). In the narrative context of this study, the intersection of relational connection and performances of cultural difference suggests an important nuance to the ways that an ethic of listening might be formed based on concepts of obligation and relational reciprocity. Although participants shared values of care and relationship building, the ways that they performed those values differed as will be shown in the evidence that follows.

The conceptualization of relational responsibilities appeared to differ in a significant way between Asians and other communities of difference in this study. The Asian community had significantly lower scores for the relationship building construct in the Listening Concepts Inventory (mean 2.83) as compared to Latino (3.82, $p=.002$), Caucasian (3.52, $p=.006$), and First Nations (3.61, $p=.018$) groups. None of the other groups significantly differed from each other. See Figure 7 below for a comparison of these community’s relationship building scores.

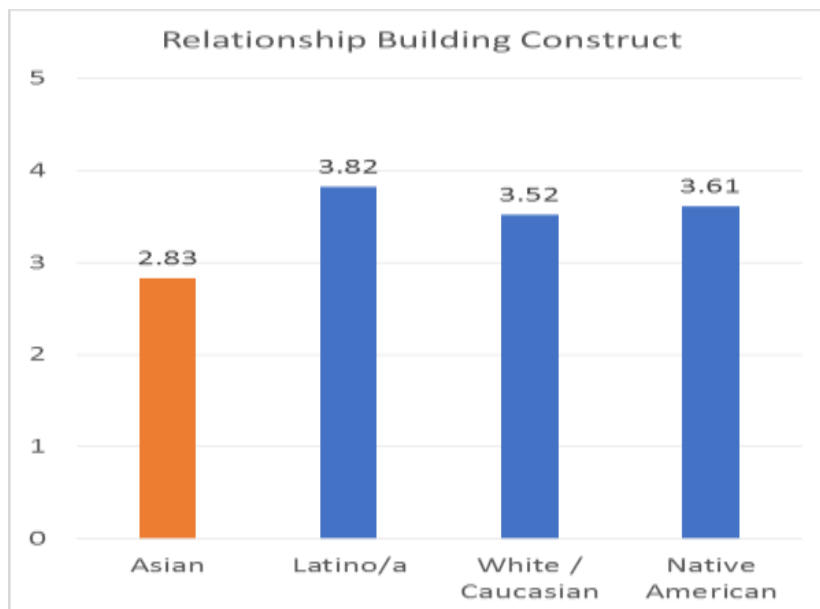


Figure 7: Relationship Building Construct and Difference

According to these results, the Asian community conceptualized listening less as a relationship building activity – as bonding, comforting, and helping – than Latino, First Nations, and Caucasian communities. However, the Asian members did construct listening as a key part of relational connection and maintenance, as demonstrated by a score of 2.83 on the scale of 1-5 and by their comments in the discourse. For example, one member of the Asian focus group clearly indicated that listening has a maintenance role in relationships:

“Good friends? It’s like, well you, it’s like because you’re good friends you’re kind of obligated to listen. If you don’t? You know, uh, pretty soon you’re not going to be good friends anymore.” (Asian member)

When exploring why this particular community of difference might conceptualize listening less as relationship building than the other communities, listening for maintaining relationships is still discursively constructed as important to their cultural discourse.

Examining the discourse of the Asian community clarifies the link between listening and relationship building that might be present as participants express differing cultural perspectives

about relational obligations to listen within eastern and western cultures. Consider, for example, the following two Asian participants' comments:

“When I should not listen to someone? In my culture, it doesn't exist. So I don't know. I don't know (laughs)...we may disagree but we still should listen. To some – to anyone else.” (Asian member)

“I don't think some – something has to be explained? And people have to understand each other – each other through language? But, I feel probably, that's the difference between the western culture and the eastern culture? Western people really rely on the communication – especially the language communication...you just need to sense that and feel that, besides the language.” (Asian member)

These two statements demonstrate an emphasis on listening as obligatory to all people, not just to maintain particularly meaningful relationships and not just when people are in agreement.

Differences in listening orientation is framed as uniquely cultural (western vs. eastern) by a second participant, with the implicit messages of a relational interaction being central to the cultural expression as a whole. In this way, Asian members construct listening to both what people say through language and what they express through other means as being of equal ethical import. Hall (1989) suggests that cultures might be considered low and high context.

Cultures that rely primarily on language and verbal expression to derive meaning are considered to be low context as compared to those that rely more on implicit messages and contextual cues which are high context. Asian members point to the potential construct of a high context culture, something that is noted by other studies of Asian cultures as well (e.g., Feng, 2015). They express that their own cultural backgrounds function as high context culture, where information and meaning is being drawn from the context in a way that is based on “sense” and “feel,” as much, if not more than, a person's words. This emphasis on a broader listening scope moves the

choice from one that chooses to focus on a particular other person to one that includes a broader narrative environment.

This narrative might mean that the focus is not so much on being with another person to understand who they are specifically, but rather that communication partners work in concert to reach a desired narrative end. The responsibility to listen to anyone and everyone else results in shared outcomes between the listening parties, and those outcomes might be positive or negative. In the following remark, for example, listening is required for both supervisor and employee in order to produce a good consequence, or at least to avoid a bad one in which “you would be blamed as well”:

“We are obligated to listen to someone face to face, but when we start to do work, we can still find a – some flexibility to do things a little bit different. And, uh, so, uh, I’m talking about my experience mainly in China. So, for example, I probably need to finish the work I was assigned by my boss? But, I can do a little bit different than what I was told. But later, mmm, my boss doesn’t – I don’t think my boss really expect I would do exactly as I was told. So when – when my boss saw the good consequence? My boss feels happy. So that’s how we Chinese people do things. We can – sometimes the – the boss doesn’t really know all the detailed information. But, if you just follow what you were told and uh got a bad consequence? You would (laughs) be blamed as well. So, it doesn’t mean, ‘That’s what I told you. But you – you did – but we got a bad product. It’s still your fault.’ So we still need to use our wisdom. Try to fix that and try to kind of work together toward what we are looking for. Yeah. So, basically um, the obligation is we should respect our boss – our boss. But at the same time we still keep the flexibility to do things a little different.” (Asian member)

Listening in this context shows a mutuality, a sharing of responsibilities with the end goal of a shared success based on the best of shared information between a boss and employee. Respect of a supervisor does not entail unreflective obedience to a word, but rather a shared commitment that they are trying to “work together toward what we are looking for.” The choice to look at a particular horizon, a particular goal, is one that is shared in the listening process in this work place. Although an explicit value of the boss is clear, listening to oneself in order to reach the

desired end is just as crucial. Ethical listening requires a thoughtful negotiation of the knowledge that multiple people can contribute to meet the current need.

Relationship building is clearly a part of listening as conceptualized by Asian participants, represented both by the Listening Concept Inventory results and by their own discursive construction in the focus group dialogues. However, it is clear from the Listening Concepts Inventory that as compared to the other communities of difference, the Asian community conceptualized listening more strongly as learning and information acquisition (with means of 3.6 and 3.5, respectively) than either relationship building or critical engagement (both with means of 2.8). This might show a stronger prioritization of listening as understanding information than as understanding particular people's identities. Indeed, this position is reflected in a general stance that personal concerns are matters that can be cared for independently rather than engaged with on a community level. In contrast, informational advice to succeed in one's career is an appropriate matter for interpersonal dialogue, as seen in the following comment:

“I think in, uh, Asian culture? We're old enough to handle all the personal issues by ourselves? We – we are not supposed to talk with our parents about it – what happened to us. So, uh, I think when I – when I talk about looking for advice, it's for working experience or studying suggestions. Not for personal.” (Asian member)

Being old and mature enough to handle personal issues alone while enacting a cultural norm of listening to every member of the community reminds us that listening is not something that is uniformly applied to all topics across all situations. Some topics may be taboo and undesirable in certain scenarios, and some information may be disregarded because it is not pertinent to the situation at hand. In some scenarios, listening may be understood to be primarily about the transmission of information rather than a mutual dialogue or relationship building moment. In these frameworks, and in contexts where information acquisition might be more valued than

relationship building (e.g., the workplace environment as compared to familial contexts), how a listener chooses to focus on particular messages will be influenced by their cultural standpoints.

Negotiation of a choice to listen to a person as compared to the information that they provide is repeated within the context of family, as this participant shows in her advice to her daughter about who she should and should not listen to:

“Probably, I will say, um, ‘I don’t think this is a good advice for you now.’ Instead of saying ‘This is not a person you should listen to.’ So probably I just do uh piece by piece, like this: ‘I think my idea is a little bit different. But I give you two options. You compare which one can fit your current situation better.’ Because sometimes I think people think things differently based on their different experience? So probably this person is very smart. It’s just, uh, doesn’t know my daughter’s situation well enough so gave an improper advice this time. But I don’t want my daughter to think this is a bad person. Because probably, because my daughter’s age? So, she’s just uh – one is just uh 10 years old. She just start to listen to others and how to trust other people. So, sometimes, I – I feel probably I won’t say, ‘Don’t listen to this person. Just in this time – this case – this advice.’” (Asian Member)

This cultural perspective focuses on the knowledge and awareness that a person brings to the situation, encouraging a young daughter to think critically about the particular piece of advice being given and its relative usefulness to her situation, rather than encouraging a decision to listen or not listen to a person based on maintaining or strengthening a relationship or the quality of the information they provide. This mother avoids advising her daughter not to listen to an individual person because she does not want her daughter “to think this is a bad person,” and assumes the best about the person. She indicates “probably this person is very smart” but they just do not know enough about the particular situation to give good advice. This openness to critical listening on a situation basis reinforces that, in this community’s discourse, listening to everyone is the norm and choosing not to listen would be implicating someone as having a moral failing, being “a bad person.” Thus, even in cultures that claim one must listen to everyone as a

de facto norm, some members of those cultures are still granted more privilege both to listen and be listened to than others. The obligation for an individual to listen to another person differs based on the roles of the people in the dialogue and the cultural and socio-historical space in which the communication occurs.

The perception of age groups and relational roles of different age categories was an important way that participants framed how and when they were obligated to listen to another person. Even as some participants indicated that one is obligated to listen to one's elders as a matter of respect for the experience they brought to a relationship and community, others indicated that younger people require the most attentiveness because of their vulnerability and ways that they will direct the future of society. Simultaneously, some participants indicated that older people do not need to be listened to because they do not understand the changing needs of a younger generation, while others indicated that they were not obligated to listen to their children at all as it was not their familial role to do so. Thus, the intersection of relational roles and the information that the people occupying those roles offer a community are tightly associated. Respect of the resources that people from different age groups offer undergirds the discussion of who should listen to whom and, in answer to my research questions, shows that ethical listening must consider cultural expectations about age roles.

In the Asian community, for example, decisions about who adopts the primary listening role is understood to intersect with positions of power, particularly as understood in the context of older people and younger people – seniors and juniors, older and younger, parents and children – occupying distinct dialogic roles.

“I mean people probably don't listen to you too well if you're less senior. You're junior.”
(Asian member)

“According to uh Chinese traditional culture, I mean the younger people are supposed to lis – to listen to the people who are older. People less powerful listen to people who have more power. Uh, you know, uh – uh – something like that. So, uh, but you know the Chinese culture is changing also, because of a lot of uh western influence. So, younger people, not necessarily uh, obligated to respect or listen to other people? If they don’t want to, they probably, uh, don’t.” (Asian member)

“The only person probably we don’t need to listen to is, my kids. Yeah. We don’t need, yeah (laughs). The – They should listen to us (laughs)...I mean, uh, typically Chinese culture I think the only person we don’t need to listen to is the people who are younger or just, uh, the – the younger generation.” (Asian member)

Power, and the association of power with age, is clearly an important aspect of social organization among these participants.

Listening to an older generation is seen as more important than other types of social listening in First Nations and Caucasian social systems, as well. In the following two excerpts, one finds the construction of this norm grounded on the value of communicating “respect” for those who are older and thus have more life experience to share with a younger generation.

“This kinda has a little bit to do with my heritage? Just. Someone that I feel obligated to listen to is older people? Just, because we were taught to respect them? And that you know, when they talk, you don’t talk. You listen. No matter what. Even if you don’t think they are right on wherever their beliefs go, or wherever the conversations go. You still have to listen. Because we were taught that, you know, they have experienced life? And, they have wisdom? And, they’re here to teach you. So that’s who I feel obligated to listen to...my little sister thinks she’s – I have to – I have to make her realize who’s – who’s older (laughs). Yeah. No. I’m like, ‘Who’s older? Who do you respect? Who do you listen to? Who makes sure you get here and there? Who does all this for you?’ And then I have to remind her who does stuff for her. And let her know that, yeah, the older person is the one who you have to listen to.” (First Nations member)

“I mean, at least for me? Being someone who’s younger. Well, say, uh – I don’t feel anyone should really, I mean, like listen to me. I mean, like – like – like – honestly. What do I know? Like, I like – I have no life experience. I like just started to college – school. I mean like, what do I really know? Like, not much that’s like relevant to like you guys. Truly. And so, I mean? I feel it’s nice when people listen to me (laughs)? I feel it’s nice when people listen to me. But I mean, like, and I would like to – you know if I get worked up? And, I’m like, well, you guys should listen to me. Like, I’m a person – you

guys are a person. I mean it's just, like you know, nice? I mean, I don't know. That's probably not good terminology. But um, it's like – it's just like, um, nice to do that. But then if I sit back and think about it, it's like, what do I have to offer? Not much. So, and then – same thing with older people. It's like, I feel obligated to listen to them? Because like, even if their information is outdated or irrelevant or nothing. It's just like, I don't know, respect? At that point. Because they have so much information. Regardless of its usefulness.” (Caucasian Men member)

As seen in both of these comments, respect for experience and respect for the great amount of information that an older generation has to share motivates this listening stance toward one's elders. Even if information is deemed not particularly useful, both members point to the necessity to listen to one's elders because of the information that they do have. Being older and more experienced, thus, socially demands a respect by a younger generation that is expressed through a listening stance. Ethical listening requires special mindfulness of age categories.

Age is not the only variable impacting the choice to listen, however. Participants also suggest that listening has much to do with the relational role one occupies:

“I was always taught if somebody's talking, you be quiet and listen. Period. You know, no matter the age. My elders of course you're going to be quiet and listen. People my age, yeah, I'm going to listen you know. And then even people younger like I have nieces and nephews, if they're going to talk to me, I want to be quiet and listen. Yes, it's – it's just how I was raised.” (First Nations member)

“Having something I'm interested (laughs) – that I'm interested in, you know. Um, yeah. Content I think is huge for sure. And just who the person is, um you know. If it's one of my good friends or family members – like my nephew or niece? They never really have good content. But I'll listen to them because they're important to me and I know they wouldn't talk to me unless it was important to them as well. It's that mutual respect of a friend or family.” (Caucasian Men member)

The value of respect in listening is invoked, yet again, but this time respect is not for the experience or information one brings, but for the relational role (friend or family) one fills. In these examples, elders and youth are both listened to in the context of family relationships. Each are listened to because they are important to the community.

Yet even these relational roles, regardless of age and position, can be upended in the listening position of some social structures. For example, Caucasian Men participants pointed out that they would not and should not listen to people who deliver incorrect or unethical content:

“I was thinking of less – something a lot more superficial? Like, people who just have a big mouth? And they just talk a lot? And, but you know, you’re like, oh you know, that’s just, that’s just them. But then just like sometimes people are like, ‘Oh I didn’t know this person? Wow they’re so knowledgeable.’ And you’re like, ‘No, no, no. Do not listen to them. You have to you know – take it with a grain of salt. And keep moving.’”
(Caucasian Men member)

“Yeah. It’s people who are dishonest? And people who are wrong. That’s who I would say that about (laughs). Who are like measurably just wrong. But continue to insist on saying something that’s not true. Whether they realize it or not.” (Caucasian Men member)

In these scenarios, content is a legitimate reason to stop listening to someone. This is repeated in even stronger terms by a member of the LGBTQ and Allies community who indicated that it has been a matter of personal growth to move from being a “people pleaser” and listening to everyone, to not feeling obligated to listen to everyone – particularly those who are older and do not understand changing gender norms and needs in the current historical moment:

“I don’t really have anybody in my life that I feel obligated to listen to? Not in, like, a disrespect kind of way. But, um, with the life that I live, with the people that I surround myself with, with the children that I have. If I were obligated to listen to people older than me, or people in my family, I would be miserable. My kids would be miserable. They wouldn’t allow – wouldn’t be allowed to be themselves. And it just – it wouldn’t work. So, I have tried really hard to overcome feeling like I have to listen to what other people are telling me, to be myself and not a people pleaser. Because, I used to just do what made everybody else happy, because it was easier and I like being liked, and I want people to like me and I want to be helpful. But after my kids came out, I realized that I can’t do that anymore. So the only people that I feel obligated to listen to? I guess would be my children. Because I have to raise them to be people that are confident and happy and know that their mother is there for them. And make sure that they have the best start that they can have. Myself? I feel obligated to listen to what I actually feel instead of what people are telling me.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

As one can see here, this member of the LGBTQ and Allies community discursively recognizes that obligation to listen is connected to issues of respect, but minimizes an apparent lack of respect in her decision not to listen to others based on their age or social position because of her perception of what the outcomes of that listening process will be. Basing her claim to not listen on evading a “miserable” existence for herself and her children (because listening to voices would not allow them “to be themselves”), she turns her ethical focus to listening to her children and to herself. In listening to her children, she positions herself as a mother and her goal of giving them a good start on life. In listening to herself, she listens to her feelings and to her primary relational commitments. Thus, it is not just age categories that matter, but rather the relational roles between the people occupying these age categories is also a cultural factor in determining how to listen ethically.

In some scenarios, we have an ethical responsibility to listen to our children because they will someday become adults and the ways that we listen to them as children will shape the ways that they communicate and ask for help later in life. An emphasis on listening to children is reiterated by one participant this way:

“Kids cry because they can’t fully express themselves to you, at the moment because they haven’t developed the – the language skills to communicate with you, or they haven’t figured out how to draw out what’s internal verbally to connect with you? So, we’ve just put them in a room to cry themselves to sleep. It creates that idea with them that every time I cry, and every time I need help? No one’s going to listen to me. And so they – so they get older and they become people who don’t ever ask for help. So we have to always listen to children. And so now, now when I hear children crying, I stop and say, ‘Hey. What’s going on?’ You know? Because we have to listen to children, you know?”
(Latino member)

Both of these assertions of the importance of listening to children contrast with the previously discussed perspectives of the Asian community that indicated that children may be the only group to which adults (those who are parents, at least) do not have a responsibility to listen.

Although the expectations to listen to particular age or relationship groups is not static between communities, age appears to be an important variable in learning to listen ethically. Expectations about how to listen to different age groups occupied important discursive space and was culturally influenced, according to research participants. Whether a dialogic listening ethic would promote listening to people who occupy older or younger relational positions, prioritize strangers or family, is impacted by cultural standpoints. Whereas some may claim one must listen to everyone but not about everything, others might claim that one should be open to everything from particular persons, and still others may claim that each person can or must make their own choice of who to listen to when and there are no obligations at all. These differences have real implications for the ways that people pursue and engage others in dialogue. Although incomplete listening does not inevitably prevent relationship building (e.g., Asian parents to Asian children), complete listening also does not necessarily build relationships (e.g., if one is obligated to listen to everyone, one can hardly expect to have a deepening relationship with every single person in the process). Perhaps the desire to be known for what one says is a myopic view of being known. Listening, thus, might be as much about what one does not say as what one does. After all, as one Asian community member mentioned – some cultures will draw more information from implicit actions and senses than explicit language use. Good listening requires more than just mindful attention to all other human beings, it requires mindful attention to the cultural practices of who and what and when one must pay attention.

In sum, the sense that some should listen while others speak is a commonly held belief among participants in this study. Through all of these interactions, rights and responsibilities to listen were directly tied to cultural expressions of relational reciprocity and perspectives of social power. As people interact cross-culturally, understanding differing perspectives of the ways that relational listening roles and reciprocal obligations are enacted can help increase individual and societal understanding and decrease the potential that one set of cultural expectations is inadvertently applied to another while missing the overarching value that all participants shared of care and respect.

Reciprocity and Social Power

An ethic of listening must consider social structuring of who has the right and responsibility to listen in a given context. The social construction of this practice has consequences for the identities of both individuals and communities and for the discourse that they are constituted by and are creating. Communication ethics, as I have discussed throughout this text, must be based on the study of difference, moving beyond simply considering individual diversity to an analysis of the ways that social structures reproduce particular power dynamics that privilege some and marginalize others. As Mumby (2011) states, communication ethics

...might focus on how the construction of particular institutionalized differences create privileged voiced identities on the one hand, and marginal, voiceless identities, on the other hand. A power-ethics perspective would thus be interested in examining the processes by which a hierarchy of values is strategically and discursively constructed, and in exploring the consequences of this hierarchy for various interest groups; whose interests are constructed as central and privileged, and whose are constructed as marginal and unworthy of consideration (p. 95).

These processes of power are evident throughout the discourses, both in the ways that people engaged each other culturally and in the content of that engagement. Voiced identities is

typically connected to the right to speak, whereas voiceless identities to the responsibility to listen. These identities are practiced in hierarchies of values and power.

Although listening is seen by many to be the passive process to an active speaking, this is not only an inaccurate representation of the deep and detailed cognitive processes that are happening when a person truly listens, but is also an inaccurate representation of the ethical process of the listener. Fiumara (1990) warns that an accurate understanding of listening requires a reconceptualization of its role in the ways that we do discourse and the expectations of the people who have the authority to demand others to listen to them:

And how could we begin to learn about genuine listening? First of all by eliminating all grossly misleading meanings of what listening is. Among the most deceiving of these is the idea that listening is something imposed by the holders of standard rationality upon those who can not or should not speak. A large part of linguistic interaction that underlies human coexistence is certainly not listening so much as endurance or forced feeding, hypnotic induction or epistemic violence; a linguistic game that one would prefer to stop playing as it is ultimately futile and fatuous (p. 94).

People in positions of power may demand others to listen to them. Children listen to their parents, or vice versa. Employees demand listening from their supervisors, or vice versa. Women by men, or vice versa. Ethnic majorities by ethnic minorities, disabled people by able-bodied, and the list can go on. Enduring hearing, or being forced to endure another's speech, is not listening. Such dialogic demands can be understood as violent acts.

However, it is not accurate to assume that listening rights and responsibilities must be performed in dyadic relationships, between two people or two groups alone. Relational networks are far more expansive than insular dyadic connections. For example, a daughter may directly benefit from her mother's friend driving to her mother's house to listen to her needs when she is not able to be present. In this scenario, there is a relational triad in which the daughter never

directly speaks or listens to her mother, and yet feels directly cared for by her mother's friend who promotes active dialogic space with her mother. That daughter may then choose to send this friend a fuel gift card as an act of reciprocity to her mother's friend for her drive, the time spent listening, and because the daughter understood herself to have benefited from her mother's friend. This cyclical reciprocity moves listening and speaking beyond a dyadic relationship, to one that recognizes a relational network being performed in a broader context. Thus, it is not accurate to assume that reciprocal listening-speaking relationships must happen between two people. Relational dialogue occurs in a broader narrative context – historically and relationally.

One could observe the above situation in many situations, but it may become a more formalized social construct in some societies as compared to others. For example, consider the following Asian member's comment about family listening roles in her culture:

“In my community, I think um the difference is that, um, the conversation is more one direction. At certain – certain times. The younger one listens to the older one? But, it doesn't mean that they – they have to agree. But, they have to listen to – but the older one also has someone above them. So, they have to do the one direction to listen to others as well. So basically, it's kind of like circles. So, my kids need to listen to me. I need to listen to my parents. And my parents are going to listen to the kids. So it's a kind of a weird balance.” (Asian member)

Reciprocal listening relationships, thus, do not have to be an exchange of resources between just two people. Instead a cultural performance of relational reciprocity – including that of the listening relationship – may occur with multiple people in relationship with each other. We could visualize a difference between cultural expectations of reciprocity as the difference between dyadic and triadic relationships, as represented in Figure 8 below.



Figure 8: Relational Reciprocity: Dyadic vs. Triadic Responsibilities

It is also not difficult to imagine that this relational reciprocity can include many more members of a social network, as long as they understand themselves to share a narrative context and share some type of relational dependency.

The rights of some to make dialogic demands on others – either to demand that they listen, or to demand that they speak – lies in the realm of power. As seen above, different social systems can understand the roles of the people and positions that have these rights and responsibilities differently. When the expected performance of roles does not match the expected norm, people may have strong emotional responses. Consider, for example, this dialogue about social power and listening as perceived in two different nation-states, the Caucasian Women members' home country of the United States and their perception of Russia, a foreign country:

Person 1: The word that comes to mind is responsibility. Is there a responsibility to listen? If you're in power.

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 1: The problem is that they don't realize that. A lot – a lot of people that get into power don't realize that it's their responsibility to listen to the people that are underneath them. You know, they are in power for a reason.

Person 3: That is an American point of view.

Person 1: Absolut – Yeah. Wait.

Person 3: It is.

Person 1: Oh wait. So we – ?

Person 3: And I think it's fabulous. I think it's fabulous.

Person 1: Because we're a democracy. We're supposed to be.

Person 4: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

Person 3: And I am SO grateful to be an American and to have that point of view. But, totally American. Because like, the Russian point of view? Is so reverse.

Person 1: Oh. (physically shudders and laughs).

Person 3: Whoever is the highest on the totem pole is the only one who gets to talk.

Person 5: Uhhuh.

Person 3: Everyone should not talk.

Person 1: Mmhmm.

Person 3: If you go see your doctor? You do not need to know what your doctor is doing to you.

Person 5: Exactly.

Person 3: You – you know.

Person 1: Yep.

Person 3: It's not your business. He does what he wants to you.

Person 5: They diagnose you.

Person 3: Oh my gosh. It's terrifying. Yeah.

Person 1: That's a terrifying society.

Person 3: Yeah.

Person 5: Everything I hear about Russia, just terrifies me.

Person 3: Whoever is the top dog in the room?

Person 5: I can't imagine that.

Person 3: Is the only one whose opinion is important. No one else should express their opinion.

Person 5: Yeah.

Person 3: No one else should express any differences with that person. It's like, oh my gosh (Hands drawn slowly across face). You are feeding idiocy.

Person 5: Uhhuh.

Person 3: Like, no one is going to get smarter in your culture (laughs), you know, if – if – that is the way it works. (Caucasian Women members)

In this dialogue, positions of power are clearly understood to intersect with particular listening expectations. As Person 1 submits that positions of power come with responsibilities to listen,

Person 3 counteracts this perspective and claims that Russian culture is exactly the opposite:

“Whoever is top dog in the room? Is the only one whose opinion is important. No one else should express their opinion.” In this statement, she aligns speaking with positions of power and listening with social positions that should never challenge that authority by using their voice. Both participants claim that the “American” way of people in power listening to those without is better (e.g., “fantastic” versus “terrifying”) than the alternative and none of the other participants negates this perception. This narrative line concludes with a claim that cultures that do not actively listen to the opinions of people who are not in power will not “get smarter,” and that unless differences are expressed “you are feeding idiocy.” For some, this type of society “is terrifying.”

Cross-cultural expectations of listening and power are not perceived differently just between national cultures, however. Within the communities of difference in this study, diverse perspectives were clearly communicated. For example, one Caucasian Men participant shared the above perspective that those in power should be listening:

“As a pessimist, I don’t expect people (laughs) at work to listen to me at all. Um, but then there’s the question of when you should expect which is important. People who are good in positions of power are good listeners and that’s how they stay in those positions. The fastest way to lose those positions is to have no one who will respect you.” (Caucasian Men member)

In this discursive construction, positions of power are retained in a given social structure by the act of good listening. Respect that would keep someone in a position of power is gained by the act of listening. In his own life, and particularly in his role as an authority figure (i.e., a professor) in the academy, this participant indicated that he should be listening to everybody, but is particularly obligated to listen to those that arguably have less social power than he does:

“There are a lot of people I feel obligated to listen to? I mean, everyday in your life. You – you go through people you work with? Um, I mean, my job as a professor? I’m obligated to listen to students? I mean, and part of – part of it you want to do. Sometimes you like it? But there are other times where you’re like, I don’t really want to be listening to this? But I know that I have to. Um, so there’s plenty of that. Yeah. Yeah I think it, uh – everybody (laughs).” (Caucasian Men member)

He constructs listening as an ethical responsibility for himself in the context of work and, particularly, in his own position of structural power over his students. In this culturally-influenced listening ethic, positions of power are accompanied by ethical responsibilities to listen to those with less power.

However, another participant in this same focus group offered a unique difference between definitions of power and authority and directly tied their differences to the very act of listening. In his semantic constructs of power and authority, people in power do not have to listen and, indeed, should not listen if they want to maintain that power. In contrast, people in authority exercise their authority (and respect) by giving away that power through listening.

“Power is like directly you know imposing my will over you. So I feel like people with power like the police? They don’t listen because they have that power and to like oppose whatever they want. For people with authority, like my teachers? Of course they’re more willing to listen because they’re communicating out of respect, and giving that power. So, I feel like people with authority are going to listen to me more like a peer would than someone with power who wants to keep that power over you. Because, as soon as they listen to you, they’re just an authority.” (Caucasian Men member)

In this construction of listening and power, power is equated with not listening. Listening itself is an act of disempowerment. And, indeed, those that truly listen are acting in a more egalitarian way: they will listen “more like a peer would.” In this moment, the participant equates listening with equality as a peer rather than differing positions in a social hierarchy. Even those in authority ultimately become more like peers, give up power, and show respect through the act of

listening: “of course they’re more willing to listen because they’re communicating out of respect, and giving that power.”

As seen in these examples, intersections between expectations to listen and social hierarchy can generally differ among people and communities. If one were to attempt to apply a universal standard of ethical listening based on the roles of people in particular social positions, there would be immediate conflict among how those relational positions and listening processes should work. If the ultimate goal of dialogue is to create better individuals and societies, those who expect people in power to listen or not, people without power to speak or not, may find themselves in direct conflict with others based on these perceptions. Ultimately all of the participants value caring for each other, and part of that care involves respect. This dialogic ethical principle, however, is enacted in diverse ways as seen throughout this discourse.

Risking Not Listening

There is a limit to which any individual can be expected to provide care-full listening to another being. How and when to say “no” to listening, to avoid listening in excess that decreases the well-being of the discursive whole, relates in part to people’s real needs for listening, to the relational dynamics of the context in which listening is performed, and to care of the relationship and the society in which that relationship is created. Research participants emphasized that the choice to not listen can itself be an act of good listening. For example, healthy boundaries are perceived as an act of kindness in this comment:

“Be approachable and know your healthy boundaries. Have some healthy boundaries and, uh, if somebody’s communicating with you? Make sure it’s out of kindness for yourself. You know, have respect for yourself in order to know what that kindness is, and what’s acceptable.” (First Nations member)

Having communication boundaries is considered healthy respect for oneself and part of determining what is “acceptable in a given moment. This choice to not listen as an act of self-protection is echoed through the statements of several other participants:

“It’s not all about listening to the other person. It’s also about protecting yourself.”
(Caucasian Men member)

“Sometimes I – I stop to – to listen to Fox News? When I saw that some candidate is going to talk? Because I – uh – it’s too much hate. And, I change it for whatever is on the other channel. And like for me, it’s like uh – I don’t want to listen to too much bad things to me? You know? And I cut.” (Latino member)

Thus, although listening is often celebrated as an ultimate good and something that we should all do to support other people’s freedom of speech and self-actualization, in understanding its ethical practice we must also understand its limits. Accepting listening as “caring, responsive, compassionate acceptance” of anyone or anything is ethically problematic. As Schur (2013) states, “...to the extent that listening entails a degree of validation, we need to know how to deal with stories that ought not to be validated” (p. 587). Some acts, some ideas, some narratives, should not be validated or promoted.

Listening might be practiced as an act of safe-guarding, as protection: "There are time when we truly listen – usually when we sense ourselves to be in danger. We stop in our tracks, our ears prick up, and we listen as if our lives depend on it...we need to listen as if someone's life depends on it, because it may" (Peavey, 2003, p. 187). That life might be someone speaking to us, it might be one or many of the multitude of selves that we are performing in our own lives, or it might be another person in our narrative. The fact that listening can act as a safe-guarding in a dialogic moment infers that there is a risk involved for the listener. Anyone who puts themselves on the line to protect another usually puts themselves in danger in some way.

Listening is hard work, and listening is dangerous even if it can come with the reward of saving a life. Listening can lead to hurt for any number of people and discourses, whether that be by the change that occurs in people through listening or in society listening hurtful voices into being. Listening is risky.

In contrast to an extremely positive conceptualization of listening as warm and caring that might be elicited through metaphors of listening as blankets or embraces, listening was also conceptualized as a *hammer* or *hammering*. This metaphor inspired both positive and negative constructs, particularly around the concept of respect within the context of particular relationships. Consider the following remarks, one conceptualizing a hammer as being a listening response that is disrespectful to the speaker by “slammin’ the hammer down,” and one envisioning a hammer as an act of repetition by the speaker and “hammering it into your head” as uncomfortably boring, yet keenly important for a listener to fully understand.

“Like, well, I understand that you, well, feel this way. Or, you know, but this is what we need for safety. Or this is the reason why this happens. So, really just kinda repeating back to them what they said? And then providing your counterpoint or desired outcome. Yeah, so? And it’s kinda a little more respectful in showing that, you know, you’re not just slammin’ the hammer down.” (Latino member)

“When we have Tribal Council meetings there...it’s like you have to – you’re obligated to listen. And they just go on and on and on. And it’s about the same thing every time. Somebody goes up and you’re just like, okay. Let’s move on to a different subject now (laughs). Yeah. That – that’s no fun...I think it’s good because it’s – they’re – you know, they talk about the same thing. And, so it’s kind of hammering it into your head so you get better understanding and so you know what they’re talking about.” (First Nations member)

In both cases, a *hammer* is used in a moment through which listener identity is being constructed. In one case, it is an inappropriate response. In the other, it is an appropriate one. For both, it speaks to a matter of respect and obligation to the participants in the dialogue. Hammers are

simply tools – they can deconstruct and destroy, but they can also construct and build. Tools in the hands of any person require a degree of trust in the relationship – trust that people will engage ethically with care and respect.

At times, listening does not go well. It does not yield the desired ends. We are forced to listen when we would rather not, or perhaps should not. One participant offered a useful pair of metaphors to explain this process of learning her position in care-full and care-empty dialogic relationships: porcelain *dolls* and *cages*. Both expose ways that listening may be constructed within broader narratives of power. In this situation, the person’s role as a young participant in family dialogue was constructed solely as a listener rather than speaker. Constrained in the conversation, she views herself as a *doll*, an object that is supposed to “just sit there, and look pretty.”

“With elders, you weren’t allowed to interrupt or anything? Um, like both – both of my parents came from military backgrounds? So, it was pretty strict. Like, if you – if you interrupt, you’re gonna be in some big trouble like, so just don’t do it. And then, more as I got older, I could share what I wanted to say like, I always like – I kind of explain to people like, I was that china doll? Like, just sit there and look pretty. Don’t, like don’t talk. Don’t cause us any problems. Like, just sit there, and look pretty. And, kinda, now that I’m older? I’m allowed to talk more? But I – now I overshare everything because I’m like, ‘Oh my gosh! I love this. Blah blah blah.’ Like, I can talk! But I’ve noticed now, um, with my siblings – with my siblings and my younger cousins. All I do is want to listen to them. I just want to hear them talk all the time because I never got to, kind of? But they’re —each one of my parents – each one of my families like around, like my cousins were raised a totally different way. And they don’t have any respect for their parents or elders. And so they – they’ll just interrupt and talk.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

This construction of the listener shows a family’s dialogic power structure being based on age and family roles, as discussed earlier. Elders punished children who were seen as interrupting. Children were to be seen and not heard. Children were supposed to act like a “china doll,” which is a doll that is at least partially made out of breakable material like glazed porcelain (i.e.,

“china”), and are often looked at rather than played with (“just sit there and look pretty”).

Porcelain dolls are collectable items, and the less use and interaction with people they have serves to increase their value to the collector. Porcelain dolls have eyes open and mouths closed. They do not speak, and they are best left untouched. Constructing one’s dialogic role in family discourse as a doll strips this listener of her agency to speak or to actively engage the dialogue through responsive listening.

Yet, this narrative also points to a change of that agency as she ages. In the process of evolving family roles, her own identity as a listener changes, as does her active presence in discursively creating other dialogic members of the community. She describes such a love of speaking that when given the freedom to do so, she herself talks more. She encourages her younger family members to do the same – breaking the *doll* role that she was assigned as a child. Even as she does this, though, she perceives that young people “don’t have any respect for their parents or elders” and that “they’ll just interrupt and talk.” She pushes back with her own identity yet she interprets other’s behaviors with the same expectation that she was given as a child. This difference in roles – even in the roles of encouraging others to talk and being able to offer an interpretation of that behavior – shows a power distinction between age groups and it also shows how family cultures perpetuate particular understandings of the intersections between listening, care, and respect.

Based on this participant’s ongoing narrative throughout the focus group interactions, she constructed another listening metaphor: refusal to listen as a *cage*. This cage, however, was not one that others imposed on her, but rather one that she constructed around herself as an act of protection against the ways that others would hurt her with their speech. In other times within the

emerging discourse, she referenced multiple episodes where others spoke unkindly to and about her because of her gender. As an act of protection, she describes having enclosed herself in a cage. She describes this cage as shaping her into a bad listener, one that does not listen at all, one that tunes out, one that is closed minded:

“When I was younger, I used to be able to listen really well and then, over the past couple years I learned, to not listen at all? Just because of like my experiences. So now, that I’m like in college, I’m like re-learning good listening? And it’s kinda like, it’s interesting coming to these groups and listening to you guys. And like, it’s helping me become a better listener? Cause I realize like, I have learned to tune everything out because I just became super closed minded because just of my experiences. And now, I’m like okay. Okay. I’ve gotta get out of that cage (laughs). Get out. And listen to what people have to say. Sometimes it’s not going to be – not going to be what you want to hear. But other times you really do need to hear it.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

The *cage*, in this context, is different than the act of being constructed as a *doll* previously discussed. As a *doll*, she was transformed into an object – something desirable and valued, but for appearance rather than dialogic presence. The *cage*, as a metaphor, breaks relational connection yet she retains her sense of self and agency. She entered the cage as a response to negative dialogic interaction which caused her “to not listen at all.” However, she is able to “get out of that cage” in order to listen to other people. The *cage* is thus conceptualized as a self-imposed barrier to understanding, one that offered both protection and perpetuated an identity of being shut-off from others. If she were to leave her *cage*, she would “listen to what people have to say” and that process could potentially be positive or negative. Yet, she describes this as a positive act. It is risky to step out of one’s protective shell to engage others, but empowerment and understanding can cause one to take that risk. In doing so, others are also empowered in their speech, they can be heard, and an active relational reciprocity can be created that would otherwise not be possible. This, she and other participants argue, is central to good listening.

Our choices to listen come with ethical considerations. Decisions of who to listen to and when can be forced, but they can also be chosen. Those choices can promote unethical acts by others and prolong unjust discourses or can lead to extending flourishing equitable spaces. When acting as free agents, we are responsible for those choices. As Gee (1990b) says, "when we unconsciously and uncritically act within our discourses, we are complicit with their values and thus can, unwittingly, become party to very real damage done to others" (p. 191). Becoming "party" entails that we are a part of the problem and, as part of it, are responsible for it. Fiumara (1990) goes so far as to say that "when we agree to go along with the discourse of an interlocutor who implicitly admits that he is obliged to say just about anything, we give up the right to consider the other responsible for what he is saying" (p. 105). In other words, our decisions to listen to another person or discourse, when that discourse is itself unethical, links us to that ethical culpability.

Study participants consistently indicated the benefit of learning how to say no to listening – to determine when the risk of listening is just too great. Much of this decision to disengage the immediate dialogue had to do with listening to the discourse that emerged between themselves, their conversation partners, and contextualizing that conversation in a longer historical narrative and broader social context. The following two comments by members of the LGBTQ and Allies community are part of a much longer dialogue about why they choose not to listen to people at any given time. Throughout their discussion, one can see the importance of self-care, care of others, and understanding how particular social environments should prompt a person to stop listening as an act of self-care:

"I have a – so like I said I'm – like I came from a pretty heavy like Christian background? When people want me to listen to like, their Bible talk to me. And really try

to tell me something that I don't believe? Or they try to like force opinions upon me? Of if someone tries to bully someone? Like, I just don't listen to them. Like, I don't want to intake or hear what you have to say if it's going to hurt me or be negative.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“Yeah I would agree. I – um – with the religious part. Because I, the groups that you talked about that you're doing this – this with. I – I think, that this group is probably going to be the one that religion has – has attacked – where most vocally, maybe not so much now. But, historically, it has attacked. Now, I know that there are other groups that – who might get attacked for different reasons. But, because religion has probably been a part of our lives growing up? There comes a point where we have to stop listening. And you know, it's – it's self-preservation. And, so um. You know with – with uh, some very religious members of my family? It's just come to the conclusion that, you know what? I understand you don't support me and the lifestyle I live. We at this point will agree to disagree on that. And, you know, um. Maybe I've been fortunate that I can have that conversation and say, you know what? I – I'm sorry but, you know if – if we're going to have this conversation and go down this road? We will not communicate. And that's – you know there's a whole other – you know – you're my mom's sister. You know, but if you want to continue to give me your religious perspective on my lifestyle? Then, I'm sorry. We – you – we you know we're just not going there. And that's where it has to end. You've got to – you've got to protect yourself. Especially you know when there's a time when you need to stop listening.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Here, and many times throughout the discourse creating reasons to not listen, research participants emphasized that it was important to incorporate knowledge of relationships and the ways that dialogue would impact future well-being into decisions of whether or not to listen. When others attempt to force you to listen or speech perpetuates a history of harmful attacks, participants constructed a listening ethic that allowed the purposeful end of dialogic engagement. Those who learned how to do this or had the freedom to do this were, as the second participant said above, “fortunate.”

At times, a dialogic listening ethic might require one to stop listening for one's own benefit. At other times, participants argued that ethical listening requires one to disengage from dialogue for the benefit of others. For example, in the following statement, a mother indicated

that not listening was the best communicative action because it was based on the need to protect one's child from joining a longer narrative of manipulation:

“It’s more on the lines of protecting my children? ‘Cause when this happens it’s usually, um, my mom discriminating against my daughter on certain things. Um, and I tell her, you know, cause of the history between my mom and I? I’ve already seen her actions. I can tell when she’s giving bad advice and stuff. Or, when she’s manipulating people and stuff. And I’m like, I’ve already experienced this? You know, don’t – don’t listen to her. Don’t take any of her advice. You know. It’s bad advice. Um, and that’s just me being a mom and just protecting her.” (First Nations member)

In “just being a mom,” this participant constructs her role of encouraging positive dialogue in preventing another person’s freedom to listen. In another scenario, one woman insists that a friend should stop listening to an abuser “even if that person is dead,” but constructs this advice in the context of abusive relationships where individuals may have trouble knowing when and how to do so as “they are still listening – they are still hearing that person”:

“People that are – that are beat up beat up and beat up and belittled their whole life? From you know an individual, say – you should probably stop listening to them. Even if that person is dead (laughs). They are still listening – they are still hearing that person. And so, so at some point – at some point you’ve got to learn to turn that off.” (Caucasian Women member)

As this person relates, at some point, listening has to stop – they have to “learn to turn that off,” referring to the person who is still speaking to them in their head and continuing to impact their life. Listening to relationships goes beyond immediate face-to-face interaction.

According to this participant and others, a dialogic ethic of listening must take into account the present moment, but it must also include voices that are still echoing through individual and social narratives. This is reinforced by philosophical ethicists, such as Held (1993), who argues that the voices with whom we interact may transcend the immediate moment as our realities are constructed by a multitude of voices that impact our existing relationships:

We are constituted in large part by our relations with other persons. Change for human beings is not a negation of existing reality so much as the strengthening of some relations and the weakening of others. ‘Clean’ breaks are rare; even if we decide to ‘end’ a relationship, historical and emotional aspects of it will linger. The tie will loosen rather than cease to exist. The language of ‘is’ and ‘is not’ seems clumsy rather than perceptive in describing the ever-changing relationships that connect us to others, not only in personal bonds but in the political and social ties that compose human reality as well (p. 94).

In partial answer to my overarching research question probing what a dialogic ethic of listening might look like as informed by both diverse cultural ethical frameworks and dialogic philosophy, the choice to ethically listen requires a recognition that existing reality is not necessarily as it should be and that there are means to move toward changing that reality by the ways that we engage our dialogic relationships through listening to the past, present, and future. Our interpretation of reality is impacted by the ways that respect, privilege, and respond to our narrative interactions. Although limited, these interpretations offer “a philosophical picture of knowledge advance through respect” of multiple and evolving identities, positions, and standpoints (Arnett & Holba, 2012b, p. 85). Listening well is foundational to caring well and care is foundational to listening well.

The ability to be attentive and to care for both the dialogic self and others in any dialogic moment is difficult work, yet crucial for avoiding listening burn-out. Dialogic listening requires resources. At the point that there are no resources to draw from, the ethical mandate to care for others and for ourselves cannot be met. Brady (2003) perfectly captures this challenge:

I've learned that listening skillfully, like most things achieved in life, has a cost. Sometimes the "still, small voice," which is infinitely worthwhile to cultivate a capacity to uncover, isn't so still and isn't so small. Sometimes it's loud and large and makes great demands of us. It's helpful to know ahead of time what such a price may be before we can legitimately be asked to pay for it. One price is this: the more skillful a listener you become, the higher the probability that you are transforming yourself into someone to whom painful, tender truths will be told, someone open to hearing things even a devout

personal practice or professional training and experience may not have adequately prepared you for, something that sooner or later is going to break your heart wide open...Integral to the skill of listening with our hearts open is the inevitable requirement to respond in some way that deeply honors those things with which you have been entrusted. And as we find ways to truly honor those truths in others, we are inevitably led to the other dangerous dimension of skillful listening: learning to listen deeply and authentically to our own tender heart (p. 298).

As we learn to listen ethically, we must also consider to the impact that listening has both for ourselves and our relational networks. We can learn to become better listeners and to navigate the costs that listening has, but ultimately we each much extend kindness and care to all humanity, including ourselves.

The chemistry between the rights of one to be able to act with agency and the responsibility of another to promote that agency is potentially volatile. If calls are endless and the resources to respond to them are not, there is incongruity between supply and demand. If one person subjectively perceives a need and another does not, subjective truths may conflict. Indeed, Kymlicka (2002) warns:

If subjective hurt always calls forth a caring response, there seems to be nothing which limits our obligation to attend to others. There is always something more that we can do for others, if we attend closely enough to their desires — there is always some frustrated desire we can help fulfill. And this becomes self-reinforcing, for once someone knows that we are attending to them, they will come to expect attention, and then be even more hurt if our attention is withdrawn. As a result, the agent always faces moral claims on her time and energy, claims which leave no room for the free pursuit of her own attachments (p. 413).

Can people demand our responsibilities to attend to them, even should their hurt be self-inflicted? What if their call is an inordinate desire for care, perhaps even to the point of excessive attention gaining? What are the limits of individual agency as related to collective action and discursive constraints? Humans, and the societies that they construct, are imperfect and our calls to each other to listen are not always marked by equitable sharing. As Friedman (1987) reminds,

The concept of justice, in general, arises out of relational conditions in which most human beings have the capacity, and many have the inclination, to treat each other badly. Thus, notions of distributive justice are impelled by the realization that people who together [constitute] a social system may not share fairly in the benefits and burdens of their social cooperation (pp. 69-70).

Although it is clear that some people truly are looking for an authentic way to perform their own characters and commitments, not everyone is doing so and this has consequences for us all.

There are many different types of relationships that are guiding both individual and societal communication. The importance of difference and diversity, or power and privilege, as it plays out in our interpersonal communication events impacts these relationships. All things being equal— we might easily be able to navigate our responsibilities and rights to listen to each other because we each would only call for what was needed. But all things are not equal. It would be foolish to move forward with any ethic of listening believing otherwise. As Noddings (1984) asserts: “We are both free — that which I do, *I* do — and bound — I might do far better if you reach out to help me and far, far worse if you abuse, taunt, or ignore me” (p. 49). This emphasis on shared obligations to listen while holding to a limit to answering any individual’s call for relationship is central to constructing a dialogic listening ethic.

Throughout this chapter, we have discussed the strength that is required to listen from a stance of care, love, respect, and comfort. Values of care and relational connection are central listening values but can be expressed in unique ways in different cultures. It is always possible, however, to construct both mutuality and dependency in ways that advance independence and guides ethical relationships (Kittay, 2011). Relational reciprocity itself might be conceptualized in ways that move beyond a set of exchanges between dyadic partners. Yet, even in understanding the ways that cultures perform listening in different relational structures, I have

also challenged the idea that simply because one is expected to listen, one must follow through with that expectation.

Listening is risky business and requires resources of the person doing it. Whether people's choices to act for the good of all are learned behaviors or individual choices, unjust social systems are perpetuated by relationships. As people live in social networks, we do not always accurately perceive when others or ourselves are oppressing or being oppressed. What is unjust might be normalized to such an extent that a person does not recognize their own lack of agency, voice, or listening. Our realities are subjective. We see through a glass dimly. Turning again to Kymlicka (2002), we must recognize that:

The view that subjective hurts always give rise to moral claims is not only unfair, it can hide oppression. Subjective hurts are tied to expectations, and unjust societies create unjust expectations...The oppressors will keenly feel any loss of privilege. Conversely, the oppressed are often socialized not to feel subjective hurt at their oppression: they adapt their preferences so as not to desire things they know they cannot get (pp. 412–413).

Some behaviors are treated like a natural order of things, when they are instead constructed by family structures and expectations. This may be true in the case of listening roles in the family. Friedman (1987) reminds us that justice requires that a balance of sharing be observed, both giving and taking:

The maintenance of a relationship requires effort by the participants. One intimate may bear a much greater burden for sustaining a relationship than the other participant(s) and may derive less support, concern, and so forth than she deserves for her efforts. Justice sets a constraint on such relationships by calling for an appropriate sharing, among the participants, of the benefits and burdens which constitute their relationship (p. 67).

Care without justice, may not be true care. Similarly, justice without care may not be true justice. These acts work together to create a more virtuous dialogue. Listening to both and engaging

listening through both can help us live more authentically so that our practices of listening follow our commitments rather than perpetuating unjust social systems and character.

Taking care of the well-being of ourselves and others ultimately means addressing social injustice because it is in the context of a just world that ethical listening can be enacted most liberally. A dialogic listening ethic must consider how people choose to enact vulnerability in relationships and to recognize who they are responsible to and respond appropriately in reciprocal relationships within a given culture or culture's understanding of reciprocity. Thus, as we intentionally pay greater attention to the narratives that bring people together and speak our relationships into being, we must bring the fullness of our mental and emotional capacities to our relationships. Through our whole selves, we can care-fully and critically learn to listen to the dialogues that emerge in those relationships and ensure that these dialogues are creating the habits and discourses that we desire and need.

In order to listen well in our relational interactions, it is important to be mindful of more than just the current dialogic moment. Much of our relational and intrapersonal processing is influenced by much larger stories that frame and construct their co-constituted telling. The personal and social stories that we bring to our relationships shape our approaches to listening, for good or ill, and our present choices are grounded in both our past experiences and future hopes. To better determine how to orient our listening to the relationship and broader dialogic between, we must learn how to focus our listening on the right aspects of the dialogue at the right times. When we become distracted by external and internal noise, we may find it difficult to intentionally engage with others in appropriate ways and make unethical choices of how to respond in the current moment. Thus, listening requires us to develop the habits that help us to

remember what is needed in our intentional responses, or to learn what is needed to ground our listening in the appropriate shared and diverging narratives. In the following chapter, I address this need for a positive listening journey by discussing shared values related to intentional presence, remembering, and responsiveness. By better understanding ways we can more ethically move through the listening process in our relationships, we can begin and end each dialogue in a way that promotes the well-being of the narratives and discourse to which we belong.

CHAPTER 5 GROUNDED LISTENING: REMEMBERING AND RESPONDING WITH INTENTIONAL ATTENTION

Caring for people requires caring for the dialogue and discourse in which we dwell. We must be able to select, from all of the potential things that we could listen to, that which is most important in each dynamic moment. We must exercise our agency to choose, whenever possible, what moves us forward into genuinely good discourse in complex situations and societies. Good listening, good attending, is partly dependent on our capacities to know what to pay attention to in a broader discursive environment, a nuanced and complex narrative landscape, and how to prioritize all of the information that is being created in the dialogue while being mindful of the resources of the persons involved in the communication and of the discourse itself. As one participant stated, “When you’re listening, you’re engaged.” Indeed. But, *what* and *who* is being engaged? Another participant warned, “In most people’s conversations, even if it’s important, you are usually talking about two different things.”

Brownell (2012; 2010) offers a useful model for understanding the role of listening in human communication and the ways that we choose to listen in dialogue. The HURIER model offers an acronym to help understand six skills that are needed to effectively engage the listening process, including Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, and Responding. Rather than considering this a strictly linear process, she describes the HURIER model as a group of interconnected and overlapping processes that, when done well, leads to effective communication.

In the HURIER model, the initial hearing is the “individual making decisions about what to focus attention on within the context of an environment filled with stimulus options”

(Brownell, 2010, p. 144). This stage of choosing what to pay attention to and selecting it to make meaning of is the first stage of any perception process (Wood, 2016) and is impacted by the individual and cultural filters that we use to identify what is important to pay attention to in the world around us. Since one is never outside of culture or one's own standpoint, aspects of our identity impact every aspect of our listening process, including what we choose to select when listening. It is crucial that we constantly remember the limitations of our particular perspective and the immediacy of our prejudice because they shape the ways that we listen. As Kimball and Garrison (1996) point out "To acknowledge oneself as 'conditioned by historical circumstances' is simply to recognize that one's values, beliefs, interests, perceptions, and so on are at least partially determined by the social context of a given historical moment...*These prejudices constitute our identities*" (p. 53). In other words, we are not only impacted by our prejudices, but we are shaped by them.

After selecting the pieces of information that we will listen to, we organize and interpret information through the cognitive constructs that we have developed through our individual, social, and cultural experiences. In order to formulate a response, the last stage of the HURIER model, the listener must remember all that is important to the communication at hand, understand what the various communication acts mean, and formulate an appropriate response that fulfills the dialogic need. Listeners must do all of this while mitigating many types of noise that challenge effective communication, including physical noise (e.g., many people talking in a restaurant), psychological noise (e.g., being preoccupied with a busy day), physiological noise (e.g., exhaustion), and semantic noise (e.g., messages or language that is disorganized or not understood) (Adler et al., 2015; Brownell, 2012; Solomon & Theiss, 2013; Wood, 2016).

The participants in this study clearly showed that they are aware that all of these stages were part of listening well and offered specific instances and suggestions of how to negotiate these listening components. Intentional presence, choosing to focus on the correct aspects of a conversation, effective management of time as a resource, retaining information, and choosing appropriate responses were important values when conceptualizing good listening. In this chapter, I discuss these five shared values in three parts as they relate to the research question of how a dialogic listening ethic constructs individual and social well-being as spoken through the values of the participants in this study both explicitly and implicitly in their discourse.

First, I discuss intentional presence and the significant role that being motivated to attend and then choosing to be mindfully present to the dialogue has in the minds of the participants. Intentional presence creates environments in which people feel cared for and conversations can go deeper than expected. This is especially true in the face of potential distraction, such as the increasing role that technology has in everyday life. I discuss the need to focus well, both to the evolving immediate dialogue and to the broader narrative in which it is embedded. Decisions to be intentionally present by investing time in the dialogue in ways that matter correspond to hearing (attending), understanding, and interpreting in the HURIER model. Second, I discuss the value of information recall and remembering. By remembering well, ethical listeners are able to communicate value to an ongoing narrative between dialogic partners and the narrative as a whole. Finally, I discuss the need for appropriate responses and responsiveness to demonstrate that one is listening and help sustain an ongoing dialogue. These second two parts of this chapter related to the values of information recall and response relate most closely to the remembering, evaluating, and responding stages in the HURIER model. All together, these shared values help

to create a dialogic context in which people enact ethical listening in particular relationships performed on a deep narrative ground.

Going Deep: Intentional Presence

There are times that we know that surface listening will simply not be enough to gain what we need from a relational dialogue. These times often occur when we are keenly aware that multiple contextual cues are present and must be attended to, when the discourse has the potential to have significant impact on our own lives, or when we recognize that the accuracy of our interpretation is critical for achieving our desired ends (Burlison, 2011). It is in times like these that participants' metaphors of listening *deeply* and moving into *deep conversation* emerge as highly salient.

“It’s amazing isn’t it?...Really deep listening?” (Caucasian Women member)

“Last Friday night I was just in the mood to be alone? And, um, this friend of my – my son’s came in and just insisted on talking to me. And, um, it took me awhile to warm up to it? But, once we engaged it – it was uh just a wonderful conversation. It went on for about three hours. He has – he’s a very deep thinker and he has a little different view of the world than mine but close enough that we just kind of compared notes and just got into a very deep conversation.” (First Nations member)

Deepness can be understood spatially as moving beyond the surface to something that is typically not seen or experienced. Deep seas are full of creatures that are typically not engaged. Deep trouble is understood to be extreme or intense. Deep colors are dark, and tend to obscure what may lie within or behind. In the context of dialogue, *deep* interactions are those that one does not typically expect to have in everyday life. They move us beyond outer, easily accessed layers of our identities and experiences to something that might become “amazing” and “wonderful.” In the context of dialogue, *deepness* is unexpectedly beautiful when shared with another person, but it takes an active choice to engage.

In his presentation of I-Thou and I-You relationships, Buber suggests that listening requires active attentiveness to the particular, as if the words that other people speak are directed at us as individuals rather than an unspecified general (Gordon, 2011). In order to be attentive to the particular, however, we must be able to discern what it is we must pay attention *to*. Lacey (2013) points out that listening can act as “both an intransitive and transitive verb. In other words, it is possible to listen without necessarily listening *to* anything. Listening can therefore be understood as being in a state of anticipation, of listening *out* for something” (p. 7). Yet, the majority of the participants’ discursive space constructed listening as the act of listening *to*. In a linguistic analysis of the use of the word “listen” and its derivative forms (i.e., listens, listening, listened), the word cluster “listen* *to*” (the transitive form of listening) had a 59 percent probability of appearance (found in the corpus 210 times) over the next common cluster of words combined with “listen, “listen* and” at three percent (found in the corpus just 11 times). Participants conceptualize listening as a transitive act – one that is done *to* an object – rather than an intransitive process that has no object.

The word *to* can be used to “indicate the place, person, or thing that someone or something moves toward, or the direction of something,” “a limit of ending point,” a relationship between parts, or a time or period (“Prepositions ‘Of,’ ‘To,’ and ‘For,’” 2015). Listening *to* indicates that there is a connection between listening and another entity of some kind. When conceptualizing listening as a transitive process being performed from a subject *to* an object, we might contemplate just who the object of that listening is. In other words, to whom or to what are people listening?

When conceptualizing who or what someone is listening *to*, research participants more frequently constructed listening as an act that was done *to* a single person (e.g., you, me, her) at 3.4-8.0 percent frequency in their discursive constructions rather than multiple people (e.g., them, us, each other) at 0.0-3.1 percent frequency. They typically did not construct listening as a sharing *with* but rather an act towards, and the people and things that people listen *to* have implications for the people who are listening as who we become is impacted by who we choose to listen to (McHugh, 2015). Our choices to listen, or to not listen, are not such that we can stop listening altogether. Rather, these choices are about how we orient our listening and that orientation of who or what we listen *to* is a part of making us who we are.

We cannot listen to everything or everyone all the time, even if that was our desire. There are so many choices to make, so many different stimuli that we must select from to make sense of and then respond to in the communication process. Thus, good listening requires discernment to know what to pay attention to at any given time and, as one participant said, intentional acts to do so: "I think you have to be intentional about listening." The value of intentional presence in the community included positive values of showing interest, acknowledging another person, being available and approachable, and actively engaging and negative values of communicating that one is unengaged by verbal and nonverbal communication. This value tied closely with the value of focusing on the right aspect of the dialogue. As Crick and Bodie (2016) put it, dialogue includes a process by which one identifies components of a discourse to be able to improve them. The value of correct focus included negative values toward being preoccupied or distracted, sensory noise that might make it difficult to focus on what is most important, being

focused on the wrong aspect of the situation, using technology and not being present, being self-centered, and positive value of choosing the right thing to focus on.

Intentionality might, as in the case of the following remark, be to something as minute as an individual's discomfort and brief (and perhaps unintelligible) statement of need:

“Um, my dad doesn't really talk? And he can't hear? He really can't hear. And, he um, says things just bare minimum. And uh, so I pay attention to um like he wanted something to drink because he was thirsty? But, he couldn't say it because his mouth was so dry. So he would say, uh, I – uh I need a charge, is what he would say. And no one could understand him, but I did. You could tell his discomfort and I could guess and – and being able to connect that with him.” (First Nations member)

Even though this person's dad could not express themselves with words, this participant

constructed intentional listening as being able to connect regardless of whether or not the words were clear or whether there were words at all. In contrast to paying attention to just a few words,

“really listening” might require one to look at a much larger piece of the discursive landscape,

well beyond a single statement:

“Really listening to the whole like, just like you said, the whole thing. What are you – what's the bigger picture? What are you saying in general and not just picking out a piece of it.” (Caucasian Women member)

Good listening might mean paying attention to a single individual, but to many parts of who that individual is rather than splitting attention between multiple people:

“I think two words kinda sum of – kind of sum up for me. Exclusive attention. Paying attention to me specifically? And if they're paying attention only to me that means they're paying attention to, um, more parts of me than they would if they were also trying to pay attention to something else at the same time?” (Asian member)

Or listening attentively may have to do with listening to oneself rather than other people in the discourse:

“It's kind of more like, you need to focus on yourself? And really listen to what you are understanding and aren't?” (First Nations member)

These are but a few of the many possibilities of how one should focus listening in order to do it well in any dialogic moment. The options of what to focus on are, although not limitless, expansive. It is not surprising, then, that focusing on the right aspect of the dialogue is one of the key values constructed through the discourse about good listening and a common complaint when performed poorly.

People want others to intentionally listen to them, and that intentionality will ideally lead to choosing the right pieces of the communication puzzle to turn one's focus *to*. When done effectively, listening suddenly becomes almost even more than listening – it becomes intentional presence. It can feel “like she’s actually with you,” like overwhelming kindness:

“I feel like she’s a person that when you have something really in your mind that you need to get out, she doesn’t, I don’t know. She has an innate ability just to listen. And to be with you for that time that you need her and um, it doesn’t feel like she’s just listening. It feels like she’s actually with you.” (Caucasian Women member)

“My grandfather was the kindest person to me? And, he was deaf. And the amazing thing was that I felt the most heard by him. In my whole life, I felt the most heard by him. And I think part of that is when you are hearing and you’re communicating with somebody who does not hear you have to be more intentional about how you communicate? And be looking at the person, and be slow and be trying to bridge that connection? Whereas, I think it’s hard sometimes being in an only hearing environment because everyone is less intentional with how they are communicating? They’re on their phone. They’re talking to you. I feel like we are communicating with like ten percent of ourselves with each other because it’s so easy to.” (ASL member)

As seen in this second comment, intentionality is constructed as being fully present, bringing one's whole self to the dialogue. It is about choosing connection with a particular person in the face of many choices and attentional demands. This intentionality is constructed not only as good listening, it is understood by this participant to be part of the effort to create and sustain relationship, to “build that connection.” Intentional presence can be stymied by our familiarity with the many different parts of life that vie for our attention, segmenting that attention into

smaller and less whole parts. In contrast, good listeners *try* to understand by intentionally listening through active communication choices.

Understanding the who(s) and/or what(s) one is supposed to pay attention to and having that align with other people's expectations is challenging. Not being able to discern how to ethically attend, or trying to attend to too much with finite capacity can lead to frustration and problems, as is seen in the following remarks:

“It's not a volume thing. It's – it's an interest thing. You don't want to miss anything. You want to – you want to hear both. And you end up hearing neither – neither one.”
(Caucasian Women member)

“If you're distracted, you're not gonna be a good listener. Whether that's distracted in your own personal things, or other, um – same with what you're describing here. If you're not focused? You can be focused on your own things or the whole world's problems, but if you're not focused right, there's going to be problems.” (Caucasian Men member)

As constructed by the participants, attending to the “wrong” aspects of a dialogic moment is interpreted by others as being distracted and that distraction as an aspect of bad listening.

Intentional presence and accurate choices of what to focus one's listening to in any given moment, is made more challenging by two distinct discursive components: technology and time.

Participants frequently mentioned technology as being distracting and impacting listening in negative ways. The degree to which cell phones are now present in conversations is no surprise, however there are clear ethical codes being created about their use. Breaking these codes leads to negative perceptions about how present someone is choosing to be in a dialogue. The role of technology is considered a mixed blessing and curse. While some participants claim that technology is “murdering” listening, others argue that it helps them be better listeners. For example, contrast the following two perspectives from the same demographic group. In the first, use of the telephone is seen to be harming listening, while in the second, it is aiding it.

“I think I’m definitely guilty of it some of the times, but when you need to pay attention? It’s super disingenuous if someone’s on their phone. Even at all. I mean, if – if they’re doing like work on your phone. It’s just the fact that they’re not giving you their full attention.” (Caucasian Men member)

“I feel like the best time I’m a good listener is when, I mean, I think like listening to my mom on the phone when she’s talking about her problems or something like that? Because it’s – it’s, I’m just like, I’m focused on what she’s saying. I’m not thinking about really how I’m gonna respond because in a phone conversation, you have to wait for them to finish what they’re saying, opposed to like, verbally, you know. When we’re face to face, it’s a lot easier to jump in and take over the talking. I feel like that is a point where I’m really listening to what she’s saying, thinking about it, and coming up with a good response based on what she is saying and not on what I’m feeling.” (Caucasian Men member)

As seen here, listening through a phone can be “disingenuous” if it is done with a person who is not physically present while in conversation with someone who is, but listening through a phone can cause someone to be more “focused” than when face to face as it requires a different set of pragmatic expectations. This same conflicting pattern can be seen with other technology, as well. Consider for example, these two perspectives of listening online in one community of difference:

“If I’m listening to someone online, um, on my computer with my headset, microphone and headphones. It can be really, really hard to listen to someone sometimes because it’s really, really easy to um, get bored of what they’re saying and just go on the internet and, um, just look for other information to pay attention to instead. And that’s not practicing good listening at all. I – I – I – When I do that, I basically tune out what the other person is saying and don’t remember anything of what they said after I start looking on the internet for information.” (Asian member)

“When I have to – to listen online? I pay more attention, because the quality, it’s not very good. And, uh, because sometimes I – I feel I don’t want the person to repeat. So I pay more attention. I try to figure out at the first time. Yeah, so basically, my experience – I listen more carefully.” (Asian member)

As seen in the discursive construction of good listening with both telephones and computers, the technology itself is not what necessarily causes the lack of listening, but rather the perception of

how one should use it or whether one is considered intentionally present that leads to its use being deemed right or wrong for listening. As another participant pointed out:

“I think just being attentive is key. I have a hard time with people looking at their cell phones when I’m trying to talk to them.” (First Nations member)

The use of technology is growing in society today and much study still needs to be done regarding its impact on face-to-face interpersonal communication as well as relationships that occur primarily through technological channels. Additional aspects of technology use will be discussed in the next chapter, but for now it is important to recognize that engaging technology while in conversation with another person may be interpreted as unethical listening.

Another key aspect of showing intentional presence is the way that people manage time. Time is referenced 383 times throughout the discourse, including references to derivatives of words to do with time, such as “sometimes,” and references to other concepts that relate to time such as “always,” “still,” “never,” “long,” “slow,” “short,” and “brief.” In fact, the word “time” itself is the 99th most frequently used word in the discourse, out of 4,639 different words spoken during focus group discussions about ethical listening. Clearly, time matters to these communities. Investing time in dialogue and exhibiting patience with another person is often interpreted as an act of care. As one participant stated, “When someone’s a really good listener? It just makes you feel like better. Like, ‘Wow. You really took the time to listen to me. Thank you.’” The value of time management included positive values such as investing time as a resource in relationships to show care through intentional presence, practicing patience, following up with another person if needed, and negative values of not waiting for another person to finish speaking and wasting someone’s time when they actively choose to be present.

Time is considered a resource to be managed in any dialogue. People do not want to feel like their time is “wasted” during a conversation, and actively communicating that a person and dialogue is worth the investment is considered good.

“That person doesn’t feel like they’re a burden on them? They don’t feel like they’re wasting their time. They feel like that – that – this person really wants to hear it and they want to experience what they’re experiencing with them.” (Caucasian Women member)

“I would say, guard a little time. Like, my one piece of advice would be to say, we’re going to take 10 minutes where I’m not looking at my computer, and I’m actually going to talk to you. You know, like I’d just like to see that be a priority to say, ‘Yes, I have amounts of work. Yes, I have – I’m super important and I have like a million people that want my attention. But I’m actually going to give you my attention. And you’ll be a priority...” (Caucasian Women member)

Intentional presence does not have to be investments of endless time, but it does necessitate the inclusion of at least some time. Offering time out of a busy schedule to another person is understood as prioritizing that conversation and that relationship amidst competing needs.

At times, this means choosing the way of patience, as other people’s timelines may not be the same as yours. This is especially true when people’s schedules are excessively full. Choosing to invest time in others, to “share” one’s time, especially with the goal of understanding, is considered by some to be crucial to hearing and understanding. As participants said:

“They’re not really listening. They’re thinking about what they want to say next and what’s in their brains and whatever’s on – on their agenda. And so, all it is hurry up and finish so I can say what I want to say, and no – no idea what was actually said. They weren’t actually listening at all.” (Caucasian Women member)

“Sometimes when you are looking at another person, you can tell that they are not willing share the time because they are doing all the talking. And you’re like (covers one ear with a hand), what? I’m finished. Finished talking (covers the other ear with a hand). Versus saying, ‘Oh cool.’ And sharing. And seeing from other people’s point of views.” (ASL member)

Creating relational understanding may take more time than expected or hoped for in cross-cultural engagements. The choice to be patient, to press through to understanding, is understood as a good among communities of difference

“Both sides should be aware that we’re going to be different. We’re going to talk differently. Think Differently. Just behave differently. Um, I don’t think people should just, uh, make – make the judgment? Based on the difference. So I – my point is, nothing, uh, nothing is better than the other one? We’re just different. That’s very important idea for – for people who don’t understand when they’re doing cross-cultural communication? And, uh, be more patient um to the people you’re talking to, and uh, just try to understand the other people instead of just, ‘If I don’t understand, it’s your fault.’”
(Asian member)

“In my life it can be very frustrating to communicate with all of the barriers. Um, some hearing people think that I can’t, can’t, can’t, can’t. And it’s like, I can try. I can communicate with you until you understand. And I keep trying, and trying, and trying.”
(ASL member)

Because communication challenges may become more obvious among dialogic partners who occupy different cultural and linguistic spaces, being patient while seeking to understand and be understood communicates that one is taking responsibility for the dialogic process and intentionally choosing others during that process.

At times, however, the act of patience goes well beyond being present in the moment and choosing to wait a few seconds, minutes, or hours for understanding to be reached. At times, it is crucial to be able to completely step away from the current conversation in order to reach the necessary perspective, potential of understanding, and be able to move forward with what is needed in the discourse. For example, conflict might mean that people need to wait, to walk away from a conversation, and then come back and reengage with a fresh perspective in order to be able to understand or to create the narrative most desired. The importance of waiting is present in the following statements from three communities of difference:

“I would say, close your mouth and take it all in. And then come back and talk – like a week later. After you’ve processed it. I mean, if it was someone that was kind of like (hands show resisting), you know. Close your mouth. Open your ears. Talk to me in a week.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“I feel I can do nothing. Some people are – sometimes some people, you – you feel – you feel some people are not listening to you. That means they have good reason to not want to listen to you. I don’t think, mmm, I can get the problem fixed at that time. Maybe try later? Or, um, just find some other ways to let – to let – let this person understand what I am trying to say. And uh, um, and I don’t think at that – at that moment? That person can really make any change – to change – to make the situation become better either...Just stop talking. No one can really understand better at that moment. So just wait.” (Asian member)

“So when we discuss, maybe, problems?...You’re frustrated and you want time to walk away and sometimes you need that. Sometimes you just walk away and you are frustrated and you don’t want to say something that will hurt the other person. So walking away like that helps and it’s important to come back (laughs) if you walk away. You know like, I think that that’s a good listener. They will come back.” (ASL member)

Walking away does not have to mean that one is disengaged from the dialogue. Instead, a significant gap in time, when pursued with the understanding that relational reengagement will occur at another time, can lead to positive ends. Some members even intentionally build this space of time into conversations in order to show care and validation through delayed listening:

“As a working parent? We – we – we’re busy. So we developed this system – the kids adopted, that um, when kids want to interrupt grown up conversation, you know we have a certain signal. And the kids will hold onto the arm. But, uh, that’s the sign for us to show, you know ‘Hey, I’m listening. I’m acknowledging your needs. But it’s not the right time for you to interrupt our conversation.’ So that – that has been helping for the kids to not feel rejected. And we also have a lot of writing going on? (laughs) When the kids are frustrated, they just write. And – and then they post that on our bedroom door? And then, uh, we read it. The next morning, we acknowledge them. ‘Okay, we read your letter and we understand how you’re feeling.’ And that’s another way for us to show them that we’re listening to your voice.” (Asian member)

Ultimately the goal is not to always be as efficient as possible, but rather to be coordinated in one’s communication time-line. Presence does not have to be perceived as being broken simply because face-to-face presence changes to presence at a distance. The important part of this is to

negotiate the expectations of the ways that time is used. This coordination is aptly described in this narrative between a music teacher and her student:

“I teach very little kids music, and this is one of the things that you have to – you have to start with? Is being a good listener. You can’t, like – one of the kids that I, um, I kind of butt heads with her because she’s a really strong personality. And she’s, I finished first!’ Well, like, you’re finishing before more and we’re playing together then you’re not listening. So (laughs). It’s not a race. And that’s probably my favorite thing that she’s said in a while. But, um, I’m like (laughs) when you’re part of an ensemble or you’re, I know. If you finish the song before me, you’re not listening. You know, you can be doing it right? Or you can be you know, technically correct. Um, if you’re not in sync with what is going on around you and not necessarily verbally listening, like listening to what I’m saying? But listening and kind of feeling. You know, it’s more – it’s more of a – an internal thing? Um. Then you’re not actually listening.” (Caucasian Women member)

Listening is “not a race.” One can be “correct” but not “in sync” and that leads to a lack of connection, of playing together, of loving connection that leads to sonorous discourse.

Time, like all other pieces of a dialogue, has differing interpretations based on one’s standpoint. Whereas some cultures might see time linearly and be considered monochronic in their orientation toward time because they prefer to engage one thing at a time, other cultures might be considered polychronic and maintain engagement in multiple things simultaneously (Hall, 1959). As with other cultural practices, no particular perspective of engagement and use of time is necessarily more ethical. Any orientation can be performed unethically, especially when engaging cross-culturally with people of differing value systems.

Analysis of the discourse indicated that time was an important nonverbal component of communicating good listening, especially in the context of showing others care and intentional presence. Both technology and time are specific communicative symbols through which to enact intentional presence, or lack thereof. With both, the choice to focus on a particular aspect of the dialogue accomplishes certain practices of good listening. Choosing to focus on time given, time

taken, and time managed as a valuable resource is one way to construct good listening. Engaging and disengaging from technology accomplishes a similar end. For either, and for innumerable other components of the listening process, ethical listening requires one to make choices of what to focus on when and how. Participants considered focusing correctly on the most important matters in the dialogic moment a key listening value and component of listening ethically.

A New Page of Learning: Remembering

In any dialogic encounter, we engage others in a narrative discourse that began long before we arrived. We need to be able to situate what we are listening to in the present with what it means in a broader context. We draw from past knowledge and then apply our interpretation of that knowledge to evaluate and respond ethically to the narrative call we help construct. If we respond poorly, or fail to appropriately contextualize our response, relational calamity may follow. As Arnett and Arneson (1999) say, “Any of us can be led to the brink of disaster if we do not listen to what is demanded in the situation and continue to offer a familiar response – rather than what is needed – in the given moment” (p. 37). Participants consistently indicated that ethical listening required an appropriate response but that shaping that response was dependent both on recalling the pertinent narrative features in which it was embedded and being able to look at the dialogue with a fresh mindset.

One of the emergent metaphors of listening in this research and one that represented the importance of remembering was the idea that we must listen as if we are adding a new book to our backpack of books or reconstructing our library of knowledge:

“Set aside all your past books, like your knowledge kind of? And bring out an empty one and be ready to like write. Just be ready to like, listen. Don’t bring out the book that says, ‘Oh don’t believe this.’ But turn to a new blank page. Be like, okay, there’s nothing that I need to bring along. Like, I’m open to starting over to listening to this. Like, I might have

those past experiences that tell me, ‘blah blah blah blah,’ but when you’re trying to listen to someone? Like you really kind of have to set those aside and bring out like an empty page of learning... Take off your backpack of like books, and then be there with them. Like, don’t bring all of your like past, like or what you’ve been taught. Just kind of, like, just allow yourself to open – to like open up and like learn new knowledge? Just kind of, like, take it in.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

In this visualization of listening, one comes to the narrative moment with a sense of openness rather than disbelief. Rather than adding to old pages, one starts anew. Rather than toting around a backpack full of old beliefs to share, one takes that off and is “there with them.” In this listening scenario, one just takes all of the new knowledge in, learning something new in the moment that it is needed, with the dialogic partners. One of the participants described this process of listening in a way very reminiscent of the ways that dialogic philosophers call us to understand the narrative ground and communicate with that ground on which people stand:

“I spaced out because I formulate pictures and images in my mind of what the person is telling me? And then I caught myself (hands show something escaping their head). Oh, you know (laughs)? And it – I’m grounding myself again.” (Latino member)

Whether we conceptualize the narrative that we are in as books that we are writing or ground that we are shaping, this narrative exists because we listen to it and consider it a critical part of our discourse (Fiumara, 1990).

The narrative ground on which we stand speaks to us, but what each of us hears will differ because of our unique relationship with that ground. As Carbaugh (2005) says,

Yet, how does one know what a place ‘says’? The knowledge does not necessarily come easily. And much hinges on the listener. In fact, particular revelations may, but need not necessarily take days or years. Whatever the time frame, the objective of meditating on who and where we are, what it all means, and the means for doing so – through an active silence in place – remains the same. One listens to that immediately real, historically transmitted, spiritually infused, deeply interconnected world, to that complex arrangement in order better to understand that of which one is inevitably a small part (p. 110).

As we listen to the ground on which we stand, we may recognize its vastness and the role that we play in the narrative might feel very small. Yet, those stories have value as we are a part of the “deeply interconnected world” and our mindless absence or intentional presence can change the ways that individuals and entities connect and relate.

The telling of our stories is unending. It is something that we listen to from our first breath. We grow alongside both the stories we listen to and the stories we tell. As Nepo (2012) puts it, "I've always been taught that first you listen, then you act. This of course gives time for compassion to rise in the heart. But I'm also discovering after all these years that listening deeply over time is one uninterrupted growing - *one continuous act*" (p. 152). We are caught in a continuous discourse, a story that we are shaping and that is shaping us. Ricoeur understood human behavior as beginning with discourse and our interpretation of that discourse being dependent on broader historical narratives (Purdue, 1986). Studying discourse helps us understand the fluidity of ethics as it is collaboratively constructed (Hyde, 2011b).

There is no separating the past, present, and future. As described in the listening process, the narrative ground on which we stand impacts our perspectives and potential standpoints. All that we have already listened to “will shape and determine the future far more powerfully than any action taken...What is critically important to realize is that what we "hear" or listen to determines what we say, which in turn determines our actions, which in turn determine the results or the future" (Fittipaldi, 1993, pp. 226–227). We are in time and that time shapes us. The ability to remember, to recall information and experiences that have already happened are essential to good listening. Remembering a broader narrative helps to bring context and

understanding, helps us to evaluate what our next communicative act should be. As this participant reminds, listening to the lessons of history is “super important”:

“I have a friend...born in Germany with Jewish family? So, she was in the war. Had family taken away? Had every cou – every experience you could possibly imagine in the world. She had during that – during that war. And when you listen to her, and listen to the experiences she’s had? It’s so, so important for today because. History does repeat itself. And you need to know, what was going on? And what were the values? And what led to that? Because you need to spot it today, cause it’s happening today, you know? And you need to be able to say, ‘These are the – the thing that looked good at first? But when they grew up? Were ugly monsters that ate people.’ You know? And you need to be able to recognize that, you know? Being with her, I feel like it’s super important to listen. Listen with – with a forward thinking mind. Listen to what happened. And what does that mean for our future?” (Caucasian Women member)

Good listening requires us to listen out into a life much larger than ours. It requires us to listen in to a life that another has led. It requires us to remember the worst of ourselves in hopes of creating change for a better future. Ultimately, the experiences that other people share with us and the experiences that we share with other people are impacted by our values and these values lead to particular ends. As this participant expresses, being able to “spot” what is happening because of these values will help us understand and predict will emerge as they mature, as they “grew up” and whether or not something beautiful or “ugly monsters that ate people” will be what we listen into being.

According to research participants, the value of information retention for good listening included positive values of remembering verbal and nonverbal messages, reflective listening, paraphrasing, getting the correct information, and negative values of forgetting, missing information, and needing a message to be repeated. Based on the Listening Concepts Inventory, the second highest ranked construct for the participants was information acquisition and organization – becoming aware, retaining information, storing information, and drawing

conclusions. Becoming aware of something requires intentional presence and focus as has been discussed as central to ethical listening.

Storing and retaining information that was previously learned or elicited during a conversation were considered key parts of good listening by participants. For example, consider this discursive exchange about how people felt when listeners did not retain information:

Person 1: So, it makes you think that whatever it was wasn't really important to them. Even though they asked the question, possibly. The answer wasn't important enough to hear it.

Person 2: Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. Well, it's like she was just saying that they – they want to know for that split second for another you know – for whatever reason. But they only want to know it for that one reason. You know. It's not 'cause they actually care.

Person 3: I think a lot of it is – is – there's value. You demonstrate value in what is being said, you know, like, by listening. You know like, often times people don't – they can't stay with you in a conversation because they don't – they can't stay with you in a conversation because they don't value the interest or the value isn't there for them.
(Caucasian Women members)

The fact that a listener does not remember the provided information is interpreted as that person not considering the “really important.” It is regarded as a sign that the listener does not care about the person sharing the information to pay attention over a longer period of time, and that that person is instead focused on how they are going to utilize that information to benefit themselves rather than the speaker. In the end, the people who “can't stay with you in a conversation” are also interpreted as being motivated by not valuing the information or person. In this, there's an assumption that listening for one's own benefit alone is not caring, nor is forgetting information really listening.

In order to feel heard, many participants indicated that paraphrasing, reflective listening, and other types of repeating back during a conversation were positive responses. For example, consider the following remarks from three different people:

“When someone’s really listening to me, I feel like they have, umm, they often paraphrase what I said? So that, they prove they understood what I said?” (Asian member)

“I feel reflective listening is the best. Um, for those of you that don’t know what reflective listening is? That’s repeating back to somebody what they’ve told you. As they say it to you, you repeat it back to them. So not only do you correlate it, but they understand that you are listening to what they are saying.” (First Nations member)

“If you’re my superior, like, I wanna know that you’re listening to me cause like you don’t have to. Like your time is probably more valuable than mine. Uh, and yeah, repeating helps a lot.” (Caucasian Men member)

Providing immediate feedback through these types of instant information recalls and reflections has been noted by many interpersonal communication scholars as useful to the listening process (Solomon & Theiss, 2013; Wood, 2016). However, participants’ hope that people will remember and be able to recall information goes well beyond the immediate dialogic moment.

As other participants indicated, the ability to recall information over time, to remember it well past short-term memory, signals that a person is “invested” in a conversation and that they are *really* listening:

Person 1: “I guess another thing with good listening is remembering? Like, if someone listens to me and then they bring it up the next day. Like, they’re like, ‘Oh when I listened to you, something was bothering you there. Like, how are you doing now? Or like, what is doing that? I really find that like a good quality? Or something like – I don’t know the exact word, but when someone remembers what you said, it’s just like, wow. You like took time to like remember that, and really like, listen. Like, even if they were listening like sometimes like I forget stuff, even if I’m really into listening? But, like, I find it really cool when people can remember that and kind of tie back to what you were saying.”

Person 2: “Because sometimes I forget. Oh, did I even tell you that? And that, the fact that they remember. The just – they’re invested in that conversation and that – that’s impressive.” (LGBTQ and Allies members)

“I always like it when people, after you have a conversation, come back and say, ‘Hey, I was thinking about what we were talking about.’ That, for me, is super powerful. And, that like, when you weren’t even there, they were mulling it over and they came up – and they were certainly invested in it.” (Caucasian Men member)

As seen in these comments, being able to remember is considered a “good quality,” and “really cool,” especially when that memory is part of a continuing dialogue that “ties back to what you were saying,” even after a long period of time. Time, as a resource, is considered an important part of the discourse. Having another person who remembers, even when “sometimes I forget,” signals investment in the shared discourse.

This ability to return, to continue a dialogue even after a long period of time because one is able to retain information and maintain a sense of intentional presence even in the absence of physical immediacy, demonstrates a continued investment in an ongoing narrative. This narrative connection between people takes place in the context of many other narratives being told in and by each person’s life. The ability to keep each of these narrative lines moving forward in the desired ways is no small feat, yet any ethical listening engagement demands presence and appropriate response to the particular even as one is focused out to multiple narrative horizons. In response to the overarching research question that explores the creation of a dialogic listening ethic, both dialogic philosophers and people from diverse communities of difference share the value of being able to recognize multiple narrative lines and use these ongoing narratives to construct better discourses through listening ethically.

Fish in an Aquarium: Responsiveness

Sometimes noise that prevents clear communication leads one to feel like a metaphoric *fish in an aquarium*. One can see everything, but not engage in such a way that a response is possible. As this participant reflects on her transition between countries, abilities that they had in one country are not immediately transferable to a different country and this limits dialogic

engagement as they negotiate the communication of the words that already in their head (e.g., “you have words here”) and the capacity to verbally express them (e.g., “you cannot speak”):

When we moved to the United States? I was, uh, studying English all my life, but when we moved and we were going to Burger King? It’s totally different (laughs). You know, you have words here (draws a finger across her forehead) but you cannot (hands moving in the space in front of her) speak. It’s – yes, it’s – I think, uh. I’m – I feel like, uh, I don’t know. I picture like a fish in a – in an aquarium? Because for the first days, er, I think months? We have to figure it out – all the things, you know. In, where I was, uh, living in Colombia? Eh, I drive. I know their – the buses. We have a lot of buses? Public trans – eh – transportation? And here? No. And this one was, and you have over there, the – the cities are in, uh, squares? Numbers? And letters? And here it is all words (laughs)? You know, the Patrick Street, the Ventura Street? The, uh – What? There’s no one, two, three. And A, B, C. Yeah. I think this one was like, ugh. I’m not from here. (Latino member)

As a *fish in an aquarium*, a person is able to see out but not freely interact. A person is observing, but through a glass and water that offers a distorted sense of what is happening. Knowledge that was so useful to a life in one context (e.g., understanding city layouts with letters and numbers) is useless in another (e.g., streets with names) and it all reminds a person that the context is new and that they may not know the right way to engage. Even if the words are in their heads, actually using that language to respond to basic needs (e.g., ordering food) becomes a challenge. Responsiveness requires facility with a shared set of symbols that promotes understanding between dialogic partners. If one does not have the correct words, the correct nonverbal knowledge, it is difficult and perhaps impossible to respond to another appropriately. One is stuck observing and excluded from the process.

Although one can observe the world as a *fish in an aquarium*, the dialogic resources and the situation at hand prevent a responsiveness that would deepen connection. Two members of the ASL community reiterated this shared experience of lack of linguistic and cultural access and the ways that this prevents dialogic engagement by both themselves and others.

“Every time I see hearing people laughing, I want to know and ask them why they are laughing and what it is about. What is the situation? But they don’t know how to explain it to me. ‘Try to explain it to me.’ ‘Never mind,’ they say. And I’m like, ‘Bummer.’ Because I want to know what they were talking about.” (ASL member)

“I didn’t learn signs until I was nine, so before that I was all oral. So, I hated going to family functions, because I always felt kind of left out. Because, I would just have to kind of play along. They would talk and I’d be like (nods head). No. Nothing. Everything was going by me. Or, it would be like three-way communication where they would ask my parents something and my parents would ask me, instead of going directly to me. And that always bothered me. I felt like I had to work harder to be part of the family. So that’s why I tend – I don’t know if that’s kind of what you were talk – so. And, I always struggled to try to communicate with my family because, you know? They’ve – you’re – you’re family, and you feel like you’re the only deaf in the family so you try to do your best to try to focus communicating with that person more than the deaf, because I understand the deaf. So, I can communicate easily – no problem...but at the same time with for me? Communicating with my hearing friends is important to me. Just because, you know, I was raised hearing and so I missed – kind of missed out a lot. And so I kind of wish that they would learn signs but sometimes they don’t want to and so I feel frustrated. And, and like for example, my dad never learned. My mom learned – my mom learned sign language. My sister picked it up because many of my friends were deaf. But my dad. So I always focused trying to work hard, and a good example would be if someone would try to talk to me and I’d be turned away and they’d be like, ‘You heard me.’ And I’d be like, ‘Yeah...I heard you, but I didn’t understand you.’” (ASL member)

Lack of dialogic access in these scenarios points to members of these communities having to work “harder to be part of” the relationships that surround them. It leads to disappointment and disengaged relationships. Just because someone hears, sees, or is otherwise present to a conversation, does not guarantee that they are listening. They may hear sounds but not be able to linguistically access the message. In still other cases, people pretend to listen all the time. Even when people are choosing to listen, it does automatically mean that people are listening in the ways that are appropriate to the situation. We are constantly being required to adapt in order to utter an appropriate response and those responses inevitably draw from the information that we can access.

Responding to another person's speaking in an appropriate and articulate way is one means through which the perception of good listening (or listening at all) is created. As one participant said: "If they have a good, well thought out response? Even, I mean, even if they are listening a lot and they're just very inarticulate? It almost seems like they're not listening. I mean, so it really is all about their response." Responses matter because whether or not one is actually listening, the motivation is not always easily interpreted by the person calling for the listening. As another participant said, "I can't tell when people aren't listening. I can't tell. I'm not inside their mind." Participants shared a value that listeners must communicate their desire to listen in the form of an appropriate and ethical response. It is simply not enough to want to listen ethically. This desire must be communicated. Yet, the relative appropriateness of responses is dependent on the particular social environment in which dialogue is performed. This requires the ethical listener to be able to adapt to evolving situations.

Adapt to the Moment

There are many purposes for which people listen. Five of these that are commonly discussed in listening literature include appreciative, comprehensive, critical or evaluative, discriminative, and therapeutic or empathic listening. The goal of appreciative listening is purely enjoyment to what one is listening to or the act of listening itself. Comprehensive listening focuses on particular messages in order to organize, remember, and be able to recall them. Critical or evaluative listening works toward being attuned in such a way that one can judge how complete, accurate, honest, or good a message is. Discriminatory listening relates to distinguishing between different words, sounds, and meanings. Finally, therapeutic or empathic listening is focused on listening in such a way where another person is comforted and their

feelings are engaged and understood. (Brownell, 2012; Solomon & Theiss, 2013; Wood, 2016)

Within the focus group discourses, each of these types of listening was mentioned by the participants as a type of listening that they engaged in their lives.

This framework of understanding various styles of relational listening helps us to envision how different strategies of communication and approaches to that communication would yield different types of behaviors and attitudes. Choosing how to respond requires one to be able to adapt to evolving cultural, environmental, and social variables. Responses that seem perfectly reasonable to one person may be deemed the opposite by another, a fact of life which participants were well aware:

“I think it – it depends on the people? When I’m in class, I can observe me – if my students are really listening carefully? So, normally if they do, they will give a very good feedback and uh, um, first they can answer the, uh – my question properly. And they, you can see they, from their face, if they are interested or not? And, uh, yeah – they also can give good feedback. Uh, but outside of the classroom? For example, in my family, and uh – I noticed, uh – if I – if I just stop my daughter from watching something, and no matter what I told them, they – they were sitting there quietly pretending they are listening, but actually they – they’re not.” (Asian member)

“I think it’s kind of the environment and the conditions that you’re in that kind of dictate what your feelings are and what your expectations are as far as what people’s responses will be when you, uh, give them your information that you are, uh, trying to relay.” (First Nations member)

Any response is judged by the context in which it is delivered, the relationship it creates, and the society in which it discursively functions. At times, words that are interpreted as aggressive or attacking in one scenario, might be understood as creating a bond in another. As some research participants mentioned, insults and slurs in one relationship shows care. In another? Antagonism. Thus, attempting to make an absolute ethical listening statement like “do not criticize” or “do not call other offensive names” is simply not useful. Every message includes both the content of the

symbolic messages and the relational messages that are unique to the particular people. Both must be attended to intentionally and carefully in order to offer an ethical response to a dialogic moment, and both must be responsive to the broader historical narrative in which the relationship is embedded. As one person described in a particular response that she gave while listening to a family member, “Be careful of what you say because it might come back.”

Adequately engaging a community entails understanding how a particular social structure currently enacts its way of being and offering appropriate responses, even if those very responses might seem from an outside perspective to be inappropriate. For example, consider the following remark about responses during a particular family’s interactions during a time of showing love to each other at a funeral:

“Over the years I’ve gone home, and – and there’s been members of our family that have passed away and a lot of family shows up that hasn’t seen each other in a long time. Um, but it’s the same thing. We, you know, we haven’t seen each other in years, or you know maybe decades. But, then once we’re around each other that – that – that dynamic of, you know, conversing with each other and, you know, it’s – it’s a – it’s a sad moment. But at the same time, you know we’re – we’re not there just to be sad and dwell on – on – on what has happened but also you know be happy that, there’s still that dynamic of people who are around us. We – we still enjoy each other’s company and will converse and, uh, I mean we – we give each other heck and you know – you know in some ways that’s the ways we kind of show and express our – our love for each other and appreciation for people being there. Um, you know, it’s kind of just a family dynamic that I’ve been a part of.” (First Nations member)

In a situation in which some might think that “giving each other heck” or even expressing happiness might be considered inappropriate, knowledge of this particular family’s culture requires an ethical response of both sadness and happiness because the situation takes place in a relational narrative of people who love and appreciate each other and who have not “seen each other in years...maybe decades.” A situation always takes place in a larger narrative line and ethical listening responses are sensitive to that narrative.

Responsiveness requires a person to understand what is expected and to be able to engage the dialogic moment in ways that interpretations and evaluations draw on memories that help construct meaning. At times the capacities to respond have much less to do with desire and more to do with having the knowledge and resources to do so. Thus, as important as remembering is – new pages of learning must also be opened. Together this commitment to the past and future merge into a responsiveness to the present and one that is able to contribute to a dialogic process by absorbing, recalling, and sharing the most important aspects of a dialogue.

One of the metaphoric constructions of listening in the discourse was listening as an act of *absorbing*. *Absorbing* refers to taking in or soaking something up, typically in a gradual way. The act of absorbing fundamentally changes the absorber – its shape, its chemical or physical constitution. Listening, or *absorbing*, during the dialogic process may lead to the attending of various components of that process. For example, participants indicated that they might *absorb* information or *absorb* a message:

“I, like, need to be alone? Like for a couple hours. And like really absorb the information.” (Caucasian Men member)

“I think the thing for me that makes a person easy to listen to is their, uh, their body language. If someone is really open and really just kind of passionate? About what they’re talking about? It doesn’t matter – it could be the weather!...it’s the body language. If someone is seemingly engaged? Then? It makes you want to – to listen to what they’re saying. It makes you more willing to absorb what they’re saying as opposed to just ‘Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Yeah. Okay. Yeah.’” (Caucasian Women member)

These participants consider the act of absorbing part of listening that is focused on outward processes, as compared to its negative connotation of one that is self-absorbed. One might picture a sponge that absorbs water from a river, that when squeezed is then released back into the river. Listeners who *absorb* show others that they are listening by somehow demonstrating that they are changing, grasping, and engaging another person or idea. Absorbent listeners ingest

dialogic components that they can then share back with their conversational partner and the broader discourse during a properly constructed ethical listening response.

There are a variety of listening responses that are of varying use and appropriateness, depending on the dialogic context at hand. Participants indicated that there are positive values associated with ethical listening, including respectfulness, politeness, thankfulness, affirmation, offering feedback, and generally responding in a way deemed socially appropriate. Negative values of attacking, aggressiveness, arguing, needing the final word, being overemotional or unemotive, being irrational, not offering what is needed in the moment, inequality, condescension, tuning out, and other responses that were deemed socially inappropriate were also to be avoided in the construction of an ethical response. Here, for example, are just a few of the participants' discursive construction of positive and negative response strategies:

“They respond – they often respond with something that’s relevant to what I was just talking about.” (Asian member)

“I think one time when, uh, I was a good listener was when my friend asked me for relationship advice (laughs). Not the best of ideas, but I listened to him, right? I paid attention, you know. I kept talking to him, but I actually had to think about what I was going to say. I didn’t just like, ‘Oh yeah great. Okay that’s cool.’ I actually had to think. And I gave him feedback about what he should do.” (First Nations member)

“He turned toward me and gave me his attention and listened to me expressing that interest and responded to me by saying he would invite me to things and work with me...It made me feel really – it made me feel really heard.” (ASL member)

“He would always say just simple phrases like, I like that idea. Not something fake but like, like, when a student would say something he would always just say, ‘I like that idea. Tell me more.’ You know? It was something that just immediately drew you in and gave you validation and made you feel good instead of just going like, ‘Okay. Good point.’ Or he would, he would say, I love the work you’re doing. He would say, like. Love. You know. I enjoy. Simple words that – that you know, just, yeah. It just made the whole time – I just felt like I – I just – I don’t know. He just tapped all the right things by his ability to listen.” (Caucasian Women member)

“Don’t obviously belittle what I’m saying. You can belittle it in your head but you – I want to make sure that you’re respecting what I’m saying and that you understand what I’m saying and that you’re hearing what I’m saying.” (Caucasian Women member)

A well-timed, well-crafted response requires both rationality and feeling, both listening to what someone says and what is left unsaid. It requires a critical engagement with all that one is and the intentional choice of attentiveness and presence with that whole being. It does not have to be a long response, although it might be. It also does not have to be a short response, although it might be that as well. For example,

“A lot of times when I’m sharing something and I’m feeling something inside about it? Um, you know, I’m not really looking for somebody to talk – to tell me something back. Uh, that’s when I know somebody’s really listening to me when they just listen? Instead of uh trying to give me feedback, unless you ask for feedback.” (First Nations member)

Again, more than concrete statements of *how to* appropriately respond, the trick is being able to listen to what is needed in the narrative moment at the time that it is being engaged and then construct a response based on that knowledge.

It is difficult, at times, to determine whether a response is appropriate as it requires a deep understanding of so many social, cultural, and situational factors as well as a commitment to a broader discourse that at times can lead one to feel uncomfortable in the moment. Comfort and emotional satisfaction do not always indicate what is best, nor what is real. As one participant saliently remarked, openly disagreeing can lead another person to feel not listened to:

“Sometimes I feel like instead of people not listening? It’s more that people just don’t agree with you. You know, whenever I get into an argument, I would yell out “You’re not listening to me!” But in fact, that’s not really what’s happening. It’s just that they’re not agreeing with you.” (First Nations member)

Just because someone feels like their dialogic partner is not listening does not mean that they are actually not listening. The creation of accurate perceptions is based in part on the effective communication of intent and also on dialogic partners interpreting accurately that intent.

Ignoring the emotional reactions of people in the dialogic moment is unwise, as these emotions speak to the interpretation of feelings and perceptions of whether or not a person is listening well. Having a high degree of emotional intelligence and being able to navigate both strong and weak emotions is part of learning to listen well and discerning what response is most needed in the given moment. These participants, for example, change their perspectives of what is a good and ethical response based on the emotional well-being of the person with whom they are communicating:

“I guess it depends on if he or she – like how they’re talking to you? If they’re just like freaking out? Then, I guess you’d want to be like assertive with them? And tell them what to do? And be like, look at this, this, this, and tell me? But if they’re being calm and collected and they’re telling you? Then you really want to listen?” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“And you don’t really want to argue with them, because they’re already emotional?” First Nations member)

“I’m a fixer. So, I’m like wanting to jump in and say ‘Stop it.’ But I let them, I let them do this thing. And my whole role was to – was to get them talking without being so angry. And watching these two people who felt like, they’re getting defensive and there are all those mechanisms that come up when we listen. And, and so often listening skills are shutting down because they’re being defensive.” (Caucasian Women member)

“I think there’s some room for telling them what they should do? If this is a good friend of yours? Yeah. Because they’re going to have – be in the mindset of this is devastating. There’s nothing good about this. And you can remind them that this is not the end of the world. Uh, and that there may be positive things about this. I mean, who’s to say that that long term partner was the one? Maybe you don’t agree. And maybe this is the opportunity to share that – kind of – I mean? Clearly most of it is going to be letting them vent? And say what they think. But, I mean part of comforting people sometimes is – especially if they’re a good friend is – sort of confronting them with the reality of what is

going on whether they like it or not. Because they're going to be hyperemotional, and you can try and feed a little bit of rationality into it." (Caucasian Men group)

At times, emotions should be encouraged. At others, a good response actively avoids overly engaging a person's emotional reactions and processes that might distract that person from ethical construction of their narrative future. Listening to another's emotion and properly responding to it may provide the needed space and time for that emotion to help construct well-being. At other times, however, it does just the opposite and can promote harm for any one or multiple dialogic partner. People's desire to listen to another person is impacted by their interpretation of a person's emotional well-being. It is also impacted by their own emotional place and ability to respond in a way that promotes healthy dialogue. Again, the need to be able to discern in the moment the purpose of the listening behavior, to enact critical listening skills, is crucial for creating an ethical response that leads to well-being for both the individual and discursive environment.

Agreeing to Disagree

Good listening may require a person to communicate a willingness to actively pursue change or actions that are noticeable by the dialogic partner as having been influenced by a shared conversation. As one Asian participant said, ethical listening sometimes requires responsive action: "To acknowledge like, hey I was listening? I'm gonna follow up on those things?" Consider, for example, the following scenario in which a participant felt "truly listened" to because they perceived their superior as having set aside time for a face to face dialogue with them that ultimately changed the way a company problem was handled:

"I used to work in a department store for like ten years. And nine of them were with – and uh – that was a really tough company to work for because the expectation is ridiculous and I was a service rep so I – there was direct responsibility all the time. And

one thing that I really liked about my management there is, if you had an issue, or problem, they would try – I feel they truly listened to me. They would set up a time, um, to address just my concern, and you would be face to face with a, uh, general manager who made all these decisions...I guess that he reiterating what we said? And used what you said to come up with a plan? Really made me feel listened to.” (Caucasian Men member)

In the above scenario, simply making time for and including a person’s opinions in a plan made him feel really listened to. The power dynamic between supervisor and employee was an especially salient variable when determining whether a person with less social capital felt heard in a particular dialogic interaction.

In a similar way, a power dynamic may be present between individuals and larger social structures. In the following example, a member of one particular community of difference explains that in order to feel really listened to when occupying a marginalized position in her community, she would need to see some kind of active response by the people that have the power to do something with and for her in order to feel acknowledged and not “shut out”:

“If it’s something that you don’t like to hear, don’t – don’t shut me out. Respond. Give me some kind of action. Or some kind of acknowledgment that you are listening to me. And, um, kind of like – if I were going for a scholarship – another scholarship. And with me not living on the reservation, I feel like they see me differently? ‘Cause they’re like, well, what are you going to give back to us? What are we going to get? Well, I’m like, if you fund my next couple terms? And I have said this to them. You know, I will come back to the Rez and give you two years of my life, out of whatever career I decide to go with? You know, it’s just like. If you give me some, I will give you some. So, just like, interacting. That’s what I would say would make a good listener for me and them.” (First Nations member)

In this scenario, the community member is clearly constructing a listening situation in which responsive action with a degree of reciprocity is needed in order for everyone to be good listeners. Reciprocity, as discussed previously, can go beyond a simple one to one exchange. In this situation, for an individual to feel truly listened to by a community and a community to feel

truly listened to by an individual, there needs to be an exchange of resources that will change the way that they function together. Relational connection is driven by reciprocal responses – not responses that are the same in form and function, but rather responses that work together to create a better future narrative for everyone.

A response that includes some demonstration of change appears to be especially important when there is a power differential between people or entities. When someone has power to create change, and another person relies on that power for a better future, the feeling of being listened to requires seeing some degree of transformation. For example, when one multicultural focus group discussed the role of noticing change in another person based on a given dialogue, one participant indicated that they would “brush off” a person or community’s lack of change but that she would still “probably feel like they weren’t listening to me” because of that lack of change.

Person 1: Just brush it off. Just walk away. Brush it off and don’t – don’t think about it afterward, I guess? Yeah, I don’t know. Yeah – yeah – I’m not going to hold you to it. (First Nations member)

Person 2: Would you still feel like they listened to you? (Asian member)

Person 1: Uh, um. No. I’d probably feel like they weren’t listening to me, but it’s like, you know. It’s (shrugs shoulders). It’s kind of how you – what you have to do nowadays. They either listen or they don’t.

Change, in this construction, is a part of a good listening response. Lack of change means someone is not listening. Change means someone is listening. And, in this construction, there are only two choices: “They either listen or they don’t.”

Not needing someone to change means that in some way one is not dependent on that change for a flourishing life. Some participants indicated that they did not think that change was required in order to feel listened to; however, these people often occupied more socially

privileged positions when they described the narrative space in which this was possible (e.g., Older Asian man in a patriarchal family structure, Caucasian man in a mainstream social setting, Caucasian woman who has the freedom to do what she wants regardless of what the other person says or does):

“I think that’s absolutely possible. You know, what that they –uh, uh, they listen to you but they don’t do whatever you want them to do. Um, you know they, or – or – they kinda – they coulda, I mean seem to agree with you but they don’t – they don’t do what – what you want. Or what your community wants. Or, sometimes they, um, don’t agree with you of course. Of course, they’re not going to do it. Um, my family? I mean they’re more direct. So if they don’t agree with you, of course they’ll say they don’t agree with you. They won’t just nod and say ‘uhhuh uhhuh’ and not do anything (laughs). (Asian member)

“Also, cause I think they’re quite closed minded and they don’t want to change? And I realize that? And so there’s no point in arguing? Cause, they’ll believe what they want to believe.” (Caucasian Men group)

“So I’m like, so your point doesn’t matter, so I’m not listening to you either. And I’m just going to go around you. And, I’m like a great like, get over that hurdle person? Yeah. If I don’t get what I want? Because you’re not listening to me? I’m going to do it anyway.” (Caucasian Women member)

Although some people would argue that listening does not require another person to explicitly change course, I have already argued that the very act of listening will in some way change both the identities of the conversation partners and the discourse in which they live. Change is happening, but whether it is explicit enough for a speaker to recognize and receive that change as a response and thereby to feel listened to by the listener is a different matter.

One participant expressed that the right to “agree to disagree” brings with it a degree of privilege, of being “fortunate” enough to have that kind of conversation with another person:

“It’s just come to the conclusion that, you know what? I understand you don’t support me and the lifestyle I live. We at this point will agree to disagree on that. And, you know, um. Maybe I’ve been fortunate that I can have that conversation...” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

One might reflect on what one must be fortunate enough to have, since fortune entails some degree of outside luck or chance that impacts human lives. I submit that the fortune has to do with the ability to consider oneself an equal with another and to be able to agree to disagree without it radically impacting one's own agency. Those who are not equals do not have the freedom to agree to disagree because they are dependent on another for maximizing their well-being. As another participant who mentioned loving the "agree to disagree" phrase indicated, the whole process of "agreeing to disagree" depends on a degree of mutuality:

"I love the saying 'agree to disagree'. We have to mutually agree to agree to disagree and get along with a lot of people that way." (Caucasian Women member)

Mutuality depends on the presence of something that is already shared. For those who feel at the mercy of another, there is probably a lack of equality of sharing already present in their relationship. For a person who is dependent on another person or community listening and enacting change, "agreeing to disagree" entails loss of the potential for a better end.

Some might argue that agreeing to disagree during conflict (if one actually does this and does not use this phrase as an excuse to leave and stop listening altogether) is the most ethical response given that it allows others to have the agency to make their own decisions and have their own beliefs. This, however, requires a fundamental belief that the world is mutual and that individual and autonomous agency for others is inherent to relationships. As discussed in the previous chapter, this world is not completely equal. It is not completely fair. It is not completely mutual. When those without as much social capital depend on those with more to listen, feeling listened to appears to require some kind of demonstrable change. Ethically listening to the narrative context in which a relationship occurs – listening both to the call of the people for

change and the discursive environment's call for a better world – may require one to enact more change than would be present if one considers an individual or relationship alone.

Intentional presence requires us to pay attention to the narrative ground on which a relationship evolves and to the ways that our relationships are changing that very ground. Remembering who we have been and actively orienting to who we want to become, we can learn what is necessary to listen in diverse communities. Listening ethically may require a number of different responses, but undergirding all of these is the knowledge that we may or may not have the resources needed to adequately and appropriately respond given in a particular need. Listening ethically, however, is something that *can* be learned. As discussed previously, it is this learning that grounds both dialogic ethics and ethical listening and leads to healthy dialogue.

In the following chapter, I turn to the most frequently mentioned value of the 12 for enacting ethical listening: conversational engagement. Conversational engagement relates closely to the ability to choose responses throughout a conversation that are appropriate to the moment. However, intercultural communication research has consistently shown that expression of competent interpersonal communication can differ greatly among different societies. Thus, I resist the urge to distill the many different aspect of competent conversation to a few “how to” pointers. Instead, I discuss the values about competent listening in conversations that were shared by the various communities. I also pay close attention to three of these that exhibited diverging enactments based on an individual's particular experience of difference. These included the embodiment of good listening and ways abilities intersect with that performance, the role of quietness and silence and ways that voiced conversational involvement may be

interpreted and promote dialogue, and the importance of equitable dialogic distribution as promoted through the strategic posing of questions and conversational turn-taking.

CHAPTER 6 HYENAS AND CHICKENS: EMBODYING LISTENING THROUGH SILENT INVITATION

Listening in relationships is communication performance. It is the conscious and unconscious choice of people to co-construct linguistic and paralinguistic symbols in their interpersonal relationships. The many different aspects of conversational engagement that must be effectively performed by ethical listeners are myriad. In order to listen ethically, communicators must attend to numerous aspects of both the ways they are listening and they are being listened to. The ability to do this complicated activity well requires both intent and skill. As one participant indicated, intent to truly “care about a person” through listening grounds the processes of good listening:

“You really need to care about the other person to really listen. It also made me think, you know, that as individuals you know you really need to be self-aware of ours – you know self-aware of how we approach different people. And when they – whether it’s cultural or just environmental that we – you know, everybody is so different. And, because I – I might have the tendency to process information really fast? Then, then it’s on me to slow myself down, you know? And to care enough about what that person is saying so I slow my – my mind down and sit there. And – and all the rest of it is the mechanics in my mind. It’s the mechanics of making sure you have eye contact. And you do the minimal encouragers. But I think the underlying root part of it is related to how much you actually care about that person? And your caring arises from your self-awareness.” (Caucasian Women member).

Being able to enact the “mechanics” of ethical listening requires one to be self-reflective as caring and care-full listening and “arises from your self-awareness.” Truly understanding who one is, how one is motivated, and the ways that one’s conversational choices may be interpreted by others, is all part of learning to listen well. As discussed previously, this type of self-awareness and sensitivity to different ways of communicating arises from care of self and others.

Throughout this study, participants indicated that listening ethically involved the ability to enact particular communication messages and that they valued communication competence. Based on corpus analysis, high frequency words related to listening performance included terms related to “say,” “talk,” “conversation,” “communication,” “asking,” “questions,” “language,” “words,” “response,” “stories,” “expression,” and “interruption,” as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Communication Terms Frequency

Terms	Frequency
Listen*	810
Say/Said	514
Talk*	380
Convers*	174
Communicat*	128
Ask*	96
Question*	83
Language*	73
Word*	61
Respon*	41
Stor*	40
Express*	32
Interrupt*	21

Listening is communication, and in all of these terms one can see that discussions of listening inherently involve matters of active rather than passive communication, actively saying, actively asking, actively responding, actively interrupting. It is not surprising then, that certain body movements, certain vocalizations, certain words, or absence and adaptations of these symbols were differentially understood by participants to be good or poor listening. As one person put it:

“So what it looks like when someone’s not listening to me is they’re usually turned away from me. Maybe doing something um on their phone or computer or reading something. And, they don’t give as much verbal or nonverbal feedback? So they don’t nod as much.

They don't talk to me as much. Um, when I finish, they usually just stay quiet. Um. How it feels like is not very good. Um, it feels like my self-worth goes down a little bit? And, it makes me – it doesn't feel like I really want to keep trying to talk to the person...When someone's really listening to me, I feel like they have, um, they paraphrase what I said? So that, they prove they understood what I said. Um, they also lean forward? Make eye contact? Smile a little bit and, like you said, um, do things like nodding? And, saying things like, 'Uhhuh? Yeah?' And then, when they respond, they often respond with something that's relevant to what I was just talking about." (Asian member)

Adding to the above construction of someone who is and is not listening, other participants indicated that negative listening behaviors included communicative acts such as dominating the conversation, faking listening by offering verbal and nonverbal feedback that makes it appear one is paying attention, lack of pausing from the demands of everyday life or during a conversational response, interrupting conversation partners, and aggressive eye contact. In contrast, positive listening behaviors included acts such as asking questions, choosing to interrupt in a timely way, quietness and silence, reciprocity of conversational distribution during conversation through turn-taking, effective use of words and phrases that encourage a person to continue talking, effective eye contact, and appropriate body language.

References to communication competence values fit roughly into five categories: kinesics (study of the way certain body movements and gestures communicate meaning), the role of silence and quietness in conversation, the use of minimal encouragers (subtle verbal and nonverbal cues used to encourage a speaker to continue speaking), turn-taking, and asking questions. Kinesics and silence were the most frequently referenced components to ethical listening engagement and, in the following sections, I discuss these two aspects of listening and the ways that we embody listening and utilize silence in ethical listening. For the first, I emphasize the ways that different bodies and abilities might engage listening and discuss how expanding our understanding of the sensory choices we might make during listening can help us

become better listeners. For the second, I challenge conceptualizations of silence as absence, arguing that constitutive silence might be performed both through vocal absence and vocal presence. Constitutive silence, as described by Ferguson (2002), is the type of silence that “can operate in multiplicitous, fragmentary, even paradoxical ways” and “can create identities and enable communities” (pp. 10–11). Constitutive silence is not necessarily defined by absence, but rather by its ability to constitute individuals and communities. In this chapter, I argue that silence is not vocal absence, but rather the active invitation of other people’s voices through creating space for them to speak. Choices about how to enact constitutive silence intersects in important ways with the use of minimal encouragers, turn-taking, and asking questions to perform effective listening and invite others to engage in mutual dialogue.

These are by no means all of the communicative acts a listener must attend to in a given relational context. Ostermeier (1995) indicates, for example, that international students in the United States consider the use of voice, space (proxemics), facial expressions, eye behavior, and hand gestures to all impact perceptions of good listening. As with all ethical dialogic engagement, participants must listen to the ground on which they stand and be responsive to the current historical and social needs. The discussion below does, however, highlight aspects of conversation that were consistently considered by participants as important, and the salience of these issues may well apply to other communities as well.

Embodying Listening

The effective and ineffective role of kinesics is of vital importance in listening well (Beall, 2010). Embodied and sensory experiences, as argued throughout the metaphoric analysis, affect our cognitive frameworks and the ways that we consider who listeners are and what

listening does. Several of the metaphoric constructions of listening in this study pointed toward a cognitive envisioning of listening as physical interaction with space. As Peake (2012) says, “First and foremost, listening is about environment, space, and spatial construction” (p. 177).

Consult most listening chapters in introductory interpersonal communication textbooks and they will all point to the importance of eye contact, of turning to face one’s partner in a conversation, of physical immediacy, and of other nonverbal and paralinguistic cues that construct competent relational listening (Adler et al., 2015; Solomon & Theiss, 2013; J. Wood, 2016). In this research, participants frequently referenced kinesics in describing positive and negative listening behaviors. Matters of whether one made direct eye contact or not, whether one turned to face a conversation partner or not, whether one remained present in the same room or not, were all frequently referenced as clearly communicating something specific about the desire to listen and the quality of listening that impacts relationships and dialogue. For example, one participant remarked that whether or not someone is listening is impacted by how they sit or number of drinks they get:

“I like to watch people. I may not understand them, but I like – I like body language. I’m just kind of curious what they’ve gone through with their life, you know. And so sometimes you can tell if someone is a good listener by how they sit. It’s like, you know, you can tell that they are engaged. They want more from you, like they’re like, and then you’re like, ‘That’s cool.’ They want to have a conversation versus stuff like (arms crossed). ‘Okay, I have to go (laughs).’ But I can tell – I mean like if you have coffee – sometimes somebody won’t get more coffee because you know, I’m not judging them I’m just saying – they are saying something. They want to stay. They want to have a conversation.” (ASL member)

Effective conversational engagement through listening is not just a matter of intent, but rather of being able to effectively communicate that one is listening within and across cultures and differences through one’s body movements. These communication behaviors are physical, they are multiple, and we learn how to appropriately embody listening in social contexts within our

cultures. Previous listening scholars have pointed out the need to understand the linguistic construction of listening in a culture (e.g., a Chinese character “ting” that involves the totality of eyes, ears, heart, and attention for listening well) and ways that physiological listening processes are tied to particular ideals of how people should enact listening based on their intersecting gender, racial, national, and other identities (Beall, 2010; Peake, 2012).

People who listen well are all-in and are able to coordinate the many nonverbal and verbal aspects of their communication. Communicating in a way in which there is little dissonance between messages helps people feel listened to and encourages desire to continue a relationship and dialogue. In contrast, conflicting messages can lead a listener to focus on the message that appears to be the least positive:

“Don’t just be like this the whole time (leaning back with arms crossed). And they could be smiling and ‘You’re awesome’ but you’re still like, why are you so closed-in and you’re awkward?” (Caucasian Men member)

Good listeners know how to negotiate and navigate the multiple cues that they are sending continuously and simultaneously. As Scaperlanda and Scaperlanda (2004) put it: "To live in the moment is to be aware, to wake up, to be mindful enough to see and to hear, and to face every moment with eyes, ears, and heart open" (p. 137). This openness to the other requires a person to make strategic choices about how to enact and communicate that listening posture to others.

When referring to listening, participants clearly conceptualized listening as involving multiple acts of embodiment. These cognitive constructs are referenced explicitly through discursive attention to different nonverbal modes of communicating listening and they are also seen through the use of listening metaphors. A number of orientation metaphors were constructed through the discourse that pointed to listening being conceptualized as a spatial process that can go *in* and *out*. They used concepts like stories that drew listeners *in*, taking a

message *in*, tuning *in*, listening *in*, and being heard *out*, tuning *out*, engaging a type of listening that draws people *out*, getting a thought *out*, spacing *out*, and even pulling one's listening ears *out*. In the context of dialogue, these metaphors point to a way that inward and outward orientations both point to ways that people engage in dialogue.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that orientational metaphors can convey particular value structures. For example, emotions might be conceptualized as *up* when they are happy and *down* when they are sad. In this research, neither *in* nor *out* appeared to be inherently positive or negative in the metaphoric construction of listening. Listening *in* could be considered eavesdropping, which has an inherently negative connotation that someone is accessing information that may not have been intended for them. Tuning *in*, however, has an entirely different connotation. There is a channel that is open for someone, and perhaps should be accessed. The act of moving *in* can thus be seen as both negative and positive. The same can be seen for differences in being drawn *out*, with spacing *out* being a negative movement and drawing *out* a positive one.

Listening itself is not inherently good or bad, but done in particular contexts, in particular ways, it becomes so. Within this spatial construct, what is noteworthy is that there is a sense in which people understand the dialogic process of listening partially in spatial terms. There is a way in which messages, thoughts, emotions, and identities are conceptualized in space. One metaphor in the discourse pointed to listening embodiment in this space as the discursive act of someone being able to *pick up* aspects of communication:

“Personally, I don’t *pick up* inflections that much?” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“I think the – you know a good listener – either really, really good in the face to face or one on one will *pick up* on your cues. So, if you’re having a conversation? And they can

pick up on that and say, you know, if you need to talk later we can do that. Or also *pick up* on your – you’re very nervous about what you’re telling me right now. And, you know I’m – I’m going to encourage you to go on because I’m here to listen to you.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

To *pick up* literally means to grasp an object by your body and to bring that object higher than it was before. Listening, when conceptualized in this way, is linked to an embodied experience of being able to use a body part – typically a hand – to grasp something and to move it upward, an act that is generally seen as positive as compared to moving downward. As participants used this phrase, they created a space in which listening was *picking up* an idea or part of a message (e.g., inflection or cues). Good listeners can *pick up*, and those who don’t *pick up* parts of the message need to find alternative ways to engage the dialogue. This type of embodied metaphor conceptualizes listening as requiring one type of physical ability. Namely, the motor skills and physical capacity that is necessary to *pick something up*.

Grounding listening in particular physical experiences impacts people’s ability to conceptualize listening in diverse physical ways that remain relevant to their life experience of listening. It shapes what they consider to be good and befitting their expected patterns. Good listening is constructed with explicit references to physical abilities and the ways that our senses can create meaning. It is thus crucial as we explore ethical listening that we also explore the ways that physical experiences of listening in diverse bodies and abilities intersect with our value systems.

Listening is a full-physical experience. Participants referenced many physical traits throughout the discourse, including nouns and verbs such as hear, see, nod, look, face, hand, eye (often in conjunction with the term contact, as in “eye-contact”), sound, voice, watch, quiet, body (often in conjunction with the term language, as in “body-language”), tone, laugh, smile, mouth,

physical, ear, observe, touch, and visual. The lexical items in this list refer to the embodiment of listening by their association with various sensory inputs and lack thereof. For example, “quiet” is not a body part, but it is a sensory experience described by many participants in their description of listening and their ears and eyes. See

Table 7 below for a list of these embodiment terms and the number of times they were referenced in the discourse.

Table 7: Embodiment Term Frequency

Terms	Frequency
Hear	264
See* (Saw or Sight)	220
Nod*	188
Look*	146
Face*	76
Hand	54
Eye	52
Sound	41
Bod*	27
Voice*	25
Watch*	25
Quiet*	25
Tone*	17
Laugh*	14
Smile*	13
Mouth*	11
Nois*	11
Physical*	9
Ear*	8
Observ*	7
Touch*	5
Silen*	5
Visual*	3

As seen through this corpus analysis, of the eight most frequently referenced physical parts when discussing good listening, nine referenced the head, with sight and hearing references taking the most prominent places, but touch also being referenced to throughout the discourse. Examples of the ways that participants constructed these physical enactments of listening through their ears and eyes included comments such as:

“If you’re talking to someone and listen quietly, and looking to your eyes and uh, ask questions once in a little while, and do not interrupt you? Um, so I feel that uh, they’re – they’re listening to you. Or nodding a little bit?” (Asian member)

“Okay when you listen somebody you, focus eye contact and be quiet and let the person finish.” (Latino member)

“Well, sight for sure because if you can see what they’re saying it helps me click it better if I can watch your lips moving while listening to you talk. Then it helps me understand what you’re saying.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

Yet, as seen in the corpus analysis and value analysis, there are other important physiological aspects to listening. For example, physical touch was constructed as an important aspect of listening, according to these participants:

“Physical touch? Where appropriate with consent? Like, with um, one of my best friends. Um, I like – sometimes I like – like, I just really want to lay my head on her lap. And have her listen to me. And understand that, um, because like I don’t want to make eye contact? So, I don’t want to sit right here and be like, ‘Let’s have a conversation right now.’ Like, I just want to be like laying my head down on her lap? Listen – like have her listen. Or I will listen to her.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“As a working parent? We – we – we’re busy. So we developed this system – the kids adopted, that um, when kids want to interrupt grown up conversation, you know we have a certain signal. And the kids will hold onto the arm. But, uh, that’s the sign for us to show, you know ‘Hey, I’m listening. I’m acknowledging your needs. But it’s not the right time for you to interrupt our conversation.’ So that – that has been helping for the kids to not feel rejected.” (Asian member)

In both of these scenarios, community members construct good listening through the conscious physical embodiment of listening by touch rather than by sight or hearing. They enact both

hearing and touch, aspects of embodiment that Levinas considers crucial to our recognition and responsibility for the Other (Schur, 2013). Touch, in particular, is an embodiment of listening that remains largely overlooked in the interpersonal listening literature. This enactment of listening through touch is obviously performed by deaf-blind individuals and communities that use tactile signed language to communicate, but it is also present in the everyday life experiences of others as people hold hands or hug. The power of touch and its role in listening should be explored in future research. For now, I simply note that touch, like other senses, is clearly a part of the construction of ethical listening.

All senses work together. "What meets our eyes winds up in our ears and what enters our ears can be seen through the eyes" (Gehrke, 2009, p. 5). Lipari (2014) aptly argues that listening is not a single sensory experience, but rather a relational, cross-temporal, and polymodal act:

"In this way we might say that interlistening is polymodal (occurring across multiple sensory modalities such as seeing, tasting, speaking, listening, and so forth), polyphonic (occurring through the voices of different characters such as self, other, real, imagined, inner, outer, our best friend parents, former teacher, and so forth), and polychronic (occurring in a confused multiplicity of temporal modalities such as past, present, future, duration, and so forth). Interlistening is thus a dense pattern of movements arising and passing away within a holistic gestalt, which atomist perspectives categorize as separate and bounded phenomena (p. 160).

Conceptualizing listening as "interlistening" creates a way for listeners to recognize that our bodies are part of a much larger narrative, one that we do not have complete control over as it is constructed by a number of overlapping discourses that can, at times, conflict. Our narrative presence in dialogue is part of a larger communicative experience, one that is impacted by our assumptions of how senses *should* work during listening. Listening, as with all communication forms, is a sensory space where power is performed and struggle can be assumed (Lacey, 2013). In the midst of this struggle, ethical *oughts* impact our beliefs.

Bodies are not separate from the intent of our listening, but rather our identities are expressed through and in our bodies. Ricoeur argues that consciousness and physical embodiment are not exclusive categories separate from each other, but rather that we *are* our bodies:

Ricoeur proposes an ontology of the *lived body* [*corps propre*], 'that is, of a body which is also *my* body and which, by its double allegiance to the order of physical bodies and to that of persons, therefore lies at the point of articulation of the power to act which is ours and of course of things which belongs to the world order" (111). So, the power of acting is rooted in a phenomenology of the 'I can' and the ontology of the 'lived body' (Reagan, 1996, p. 82).

Our bodies are not just physical. They are also constructed socially and culturally and act as a “point of articulation of the power to act” which then constitutes the world in which we live. As Butler (2009) puts it, “In its surface and depth, the body is a social phenomenon: it is exposed to others, vulnerable by definition” (p. 33). Our bodies, and the ways they enact communication and communication enacts them, opens us to others in dialogic construction. This can be both beautiful and devastating, separately and simultaneously. Buber (1996) argues that "The structures of communal human life derive their life from the fullness of the relational force that permeates their members, and they derive their embodied form from the saturation of this force by the spirit" (p. 98). In other words, the ways that we are allowed and choose to enact our physicality are part of constructing our social lives, our relational lives, and we are united through the forces that intersect all. As Intrator (2005) says:

Like most people, I learn in a variety of ways, but fundamental to all of them is the learning that comes from listening. When I can't - or don't - listen, I shut out external voices and shut down internally as well. If I listen deeply enough, however, I hear not only new ideas and valuable information but also hopes and dreams, joys and sorrows. I hear what is not said as well as what is spoken. I hear people the way they want to be heard, the way they hear themselves. I hear *them*. This kind of listening involves more

than my ears. It engages my eyes, my body language, and most of all my heart (pp. 82–83).

Deep listening is a fully-embodied experience.

Recently, listening through an auditory focus has included a rejection of Western philosophical perspectives that give primacy to vision as more important than other sensory experiences. Heidegger, for example, argues that there has been a bias toward privileging the visual in Western philosophy and critical theories have had an “anti-ocular” turn in which philosophy has moved toward a greater emphasis on sound and hearing. Levinas, and others who have adopted sound-based ethical orientations, have also often focused on difference as central to ethical consideration (Schur, 2013). For example, Lipari’s (2014) ethical attention to listening pays special attention to the overlooked nature of hearing in ethics. Although I am fully supportive of expanding space for diverse embodied philosophies, in the case of listening I would argue that there is a real danger in paying too much attention to the act of hearing through the ears alone in constructing a listening ethic. Even though all available senses might be engaged in the listening process, when it comes to the discursive construction of listening, the value of hearing is often the first one to be invoked.

When participants were asked whether they would rather never be able to *listen* again or never be able to speak again, many of them correlated not being able to listen with not being able to *hear* rather than not being able to *relate*, privileging physical ability over relational ability:

“I think that I would never want to speak to anyone again over not being able to hear them because then I couldn’t hear my children laugh or tell me who they are, or tell me that they love me? Or any of the other things that you can listen to. But mostly cause then I wouldn’t be able to hear my kids.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“I do like to talk but I love to listen to everyone’s story about what’s going on and if I can’t hear them, I don’t know...” (First Nations member)

When participants were prompted to discuss listening, many expressed fear of losing their hearing. So although participants clearly conceptualized listening as a whole body affair with auditory abilities just one part of that whole, their construction of good listening first drew attention to the ability to hear before other senses were discursively addressed. The overwhelming primacy of hearing in the listening process potentially creates a situation in which those who cannot hear well can also not listen well.

Davis (2008) reminds us that "When we talk about identity, we do speak of social identities, but the bedrock identities of this culture – racial, gendered, sexual, and so on – seem to have been, at least historically, defined by the fact that they, like disability, have been necessarily rooted in the body" (p. 317). As we consider the roots of listening in the body, this discursive attention to hearing as listening may hide other embodied experiences of listening such as what is enacted through the eyes and sight. In the following two sections, I draw attention to two enactments of listening through sight rather than sound. In the first, I consider diverse enactments of eye contact, especially as constructed by cultural and individual preferences for embodied ethical listening. In the second, I consider ASL members' conceptualizations of listening as grounded in the body and impacting their choices and expressions of cultural identity and relationships.

Eye Contact

According to listening research, the use of one's eyes has been considered a key characteristic of good listening (Beall, 2010). Words related to see, sight, seeing, vision, etc. are connected to listening in the discourse of the communities of difference in this study. Gehrke (2009) argues that "there is something to listening that is decidedly visual and not only aural" (p.

4). Lipari (2014) remarks that "beyond the sonic vibrations of speech, listening also requires an aural eye – an eye that listens" (p. 194). This focus on the eyes during listening comes with certain value sets and expectations – ethical rules, even. For example, consider this dialogue between several participants constructing lack of eye contact as a “weird” or even “dysfunctional” way of communicating, in part because it breaks social rules and is considered to be impolite:

Person 2: I feel like every family feels like they listen very dysfunctionally. And it’s probably true. But, uh, yeah. But I think we all have a weird way of listening.

Person 1: I mean, when you don’t understand what your family is saying, there’s a lower level of politeness than when you are with other people (laughs).

Person 2: Yeah. Exactly.

Person 3: So true.

Person 1: Cause, you know each other well enough.

Person 2: Yeah. Yeah. I guess – I mean, yeah. No. Rarely any eye contact? Yelling from across the house. No body language. I mean, like it breaks every rule. (Caucasian Men members)

“It breaks every rule,” one participant remarks when describing listening without eye contact.

These rules are commonly held beliefs about we should be doing with our eyes when we communicate. Ethical rules constructed by the participants regarding eye contact – looking a conversational partner in the eyes – included statements like the following:

“So, I feel like when someone is really listening to me? Is eye contact and also having a response from them. It’s showing interest.” (First Nations member)

“I’m big on eye – eye contact. Without that I’m just like, what you – now (leans over to try to make eye contact with another person) what are you doing? Are we, uh, talking (laughs)? (Caucasian Women member)

“I think she gives me eye contact and that’s important. And, she’ll face me, like you say – like, we face each other and discuss a problem.” (ASL member)

“Eye contact. That’s like my number one thing. Most of the time, yeah.” (Caucasian Men member)

“But as soon as we start talking the – his eyes are moving everywhere and looking at other people and even saying hi. Not really engaging? To? The conversation? With me? Or even when you’re hugging, like his eyes are on someone else (laughs). And, uh, it’s slightly different from listening... So the conversation doesn’t really go on. It’s like, oh, she’s not really listening, or she’s not really expecting to hear what my family’s doing? So that? Um, kind of made me, learn, again, this might be a cultural thing? Or this might be a personal thing (laughs). But definitely some cultural aspect to it. Because so many people are doing the same thing. And so I learned not to get disappointed. From my – it – I became tough (laughs).” (Asian member)

Throughout all of these comments, eye contact is considered a crucial part of dialogue, of conversational involvement, and of relational connection. Ask participants to describe what good listening is and eye contact is consistently referenced.

There is not, however, absolute consistency in how they construct ethical listening through eye contact. In fact, many of the people who initially gave a response that “good eye contact” was a prerequisite for “good listening,” later remarked that they actually do not like to make eye contact with other people or have other people make eye contact with them.

“I was going to write down eye contact, but I actually don’t like making eye contact with people. And I find that when I talk to people, I’m usually looking at their mouth and not their eyes.” (Caucasian Men member)

“Like, if there’s direct eye contact? I – I’m like – don’t look at me.” (First Nations member)

Not making eye contact might be because of a perceived threat, such as happens when a person is getting “stared down”:

“Oh that guy over there? He uses it as a weapon. And stares people down.” (Caucasian Women member)

Feeling someone using eye contact as a weapon may lead to a feeling of being unsafe and even threatened. Thus, even though eye contact is a shared value, the way that eye contact should be

enacted in ethical listening is distinctly dependent on the cultural community and individual embodiment of the listener.

The ethical stakes are high for discursively constructed identities when eye behaviors play such a crucial role in the perception of good listening and safety. These stakes are personal when people recognize that they cannot make eye contact because of their particular embodiment. They are also social, because the expectation to do so is so elevated that listeners who do not like to make eye contact feel that they must explain themselves in order to maintain positive relationships. This matter of individual and social navigation is clearly present in the participants following dialogue:

Person 3: “When talking with like my two best friends, um, and they know me well enough to know that like I can’t make eye contact. Like, that’s just a thing. And it’s like, I’m talking to all of you right now but I – I can’t do that? And when I’m listening to you, I can’t make that eye contact. So they know that like it’s easier for me to be like looking at something else and still listening to them? And when they are listening to me, I really like when maybe they are able to be doing something else? And, they’ll listen to like my whole thing before they respond? A big thing is that they aren’t a – a good listener isn’t listening to respond? They’re listening to understand. I – that’s what they do a lot. And I – I can and when I picture a good listener, I picture like the two of them. I really like that.

Person 1: That’s, I’m kind of the opposite a little bit. I make intense eye contact (laughs)? And a lot of my friends feel like intimidated or whatever? Cause like, I can talk to someone and keep eye contact but I will like look away sometimes but when I’m listening to someone I’m just like right (looking straight ahead at another participant). Like, I’m like (laughs) – and sometimes I don’t even realize how uncomfortable it makes them feel? So, I guess like a way for me to become a better listener is kinda like ask them if they’re okay with that, or see if they feel uncomfortable by my like deep eye contact. (laughs) that if it’s not then I should look away, or make sure they’re feeling okay to like share with me? So...

Person 3: And see, like with – what that. I know that like now we should be making eye contact but instead I’m staring at like a piece of your jeans? And that’s how, how personally, I convey to somebody else that like I’m like – I’m listening to them. And so, I’m looking at something around them, or on them? Or like, um, and that’s how they’ll – you’re trying to make eye contact with me (laughs). I can kinda see it but –

Person 1: I’m sorry. I just can’t (looks backward and then laughs).

Person 3: Um. And that's just like, that's how I tell somebody that like I'm listening to them nonverbally is just to like look in their direction? Or at something like on them? Instead of at their eyes because I just can't do that (laughs).

Person 4: Well, that's interesting because I think – I think socially there's such a value on that eye contact as – as part of the listening process that I – I can only imagine it would be difficult to convince someone that you're really listening and really talking to them. I mean (shrugs).

Person 3: Mhmm. (LGBTQ and Allies members)

The people in this discourse construct the importance of eye contact, yet recognize that how people enact it leads to particular relational implications. Following this exchange, these participants continue to brainstorm many scenarios when people should not make eye contact and the ways that avoiding eye contact can lead to dialogic well-being. They discuss the necessity of not making eye contact with another person when driving, for example. They highlight how sensitive topics are often best discussed without direct eye contact because it leads to the creation of a “less threatening” environment (e.g., between parents and children, between therapists and clients, and between members of a social support group). They discuss the value of doing activities side-by-side (e.g., cooking, coloring, and working) when dialoguing to keep a pleasant conversational flow. They indicated that diverse physical abilities (such as those with Attention Deficit Disorder or Autism) would lead people to listen much better when not making eye contact. They pointed out that some cultures could actually require a person not to make eye contact because of their social role and that to enforce a value that all people should make eye contact would be culturally insensitive. This dialogic moment about ethical listening yielded both a transparent individual expression of eye contact being personally undesirable and a social co-construction of ways in which not making eye contact promotes dialogue for many people in many different cases for many different reasons. Yet, throughout their discourse, it was emphasized and reemphasized that because eye contact is so thoroughly a part of the cultural

enactment of good listening, the practice of not making direct eye contact must be explained in order to save face as a listener.

Other participants also referenced that *not* making eye contact can benefit dialogue but that ethically pursuing lack of eye contact is influenced by a number of factors. For example, the following remarks point to differences in eye contact behavior enacted between generations, cultural groups, and natural environments:

I think, uh, the nor – northern Cheyenne tradition among especially the older folks. Uh, the tradition was not to meet eyes with those that you were talking to. You looked out into the distance, or something. So that took some getting used to... The one time that – that most sticks in my mind? I was camping out on the land, and I heard someone cough in the distance while I was taking down my tent. And I – I looked in that direction and a fellow walked up? And we sat down next to each other, and we just looked out at the mountains. At the scenery. And we spent the day just talking away. (laughs softly) It was beautiful.” (First Nations member)

“Sometimes like, I don’t know why to be honest, but like star gazing? Like, if you’re just like laying on your back and looking at the stars and someone’s next to you. It’s like – like I’ve had some good conversations like that. Like, even if I’m not looking at them. It’s just like, we might not exactly be talking about other things? But just talking about like stars and listening to what we observe? And then when you like look at something like if you saw that light and said, wow it’s bright’ and then I said “wow it has a great outlining.’ You kind of think of – you see both of those. So you can kind of see something better when you’re listening to someone else like, kind of like going into their perspective in that way?” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

As previously discussed, Gadamer argues offers the metaphor of a fusion of horizons where diverse forms of knowledge are articulated on a single horizon in dialogue. These two participants from very different cultural backgrounds and age groups may not be familiar with this philosophical argument yet give voice to that very idea. As people come together from different backgrounds, their perspectives can engage a single horizon and lead to fruitful unfolding dialogue. This shared horizon as two people occupy different spaces yet a shared focal

point leads to the embodiment of dialogue that changes their perspectives, that leads to beautiful discourse through difference.

Eye behaviors, like other parts of the communication process, are symbolic. They do not hold inherent meaning, but rather are inscribed with meaning by the communities that use them. Eye contact is clearly important – yet it is worth ethical dialogue about the many ways that this might be enacted with sensitivity to individual, social, environmental, and cultural differences. For example, some participants exhibited distinct attitudes about the link between eye contact, perception of healthiness, and disability:

“There’s a comfort level. I don’t like staring at people too much. I have a real hard time with it. And sometimes I wonder how much on the Asberger’s Syndrome I’m on? Because I think we’re all part of that syndrome. I mean that, uh, spectrum. I mean, I’m surprised that any of us are really sane? To tell you the truth? That we have the ability to even communicate with others (laughs)?” (Caucasian Women member)

“You know, you – because not only the language? Is sometimes you have some sickness – a disability problem or – or – wow. For me, but like a whoo. Sometimes you have a disability and no eye contact.” (Latino member)

Eye contact is thus constructed as an ethical *should* while participants simultaneously indicate that they do not like to do it. Beyond that (and more troubling), lack of comfort in making eye contact is linked by some as being related to both a “syndrome” and being “sane,” with the two linguistically and cognitively linked together. My point here is not to discuss negative perspectives of disability – although this is clearly present in the above remark. It is rather to highlight the fact that people have such high expectations around particular types of eye behavior during listening that to not want to follow these “rules” leads individuals to refer to themselves and the social groups that they are a part of in terms they perceive to be negative. People hold

values and beliefs about ideal listeners using eye contact during listening and this may negatively impact their perception of individuals that perform eye contact in unfamiliar ways.

Differing expectations of how one should embody listening may lead to more marked trouble for those who lie outside the societal norms or negotiate multiple identities that are socially marginalized. These individuals may work to control their environment at above average rates in order to enact particular types of listening that are expected, including full eye contact.

For example, one participant with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) said:

“For me, it was – it was um, it was a struggle. Um, to be able to focus on what someone who was talking to me because I have ADHD? And I am always going, I’m mentally, I’m always thinking about things. For me, to say, I’m going to engage in a conversation with you, or listen to you. I have to give you my absolute fullest attention. I put away my phone. So that way – because anything – blinking will just catch my – that’s why I don’t have a watch? Is that if I have a watch, I’m always like (looks at their wrist). I get – I get stuck in repetition with things. And, um, I – I make sure that there’s no, like, well we can’t always control our surroundings, but I – I make sure that we’re square, you know.”
(Latino member)

Throughout this member’s involvement in the focus group, he was fully verbally responsive to people’s comments and the conversational trajectory, yet he often was nonverbally moving items around on the table, fiddling with a pen in his hands, moving his bag next to him, was often seen not to make eye contact, to not be square, etc. If one were to look solely at his eye behavior, one may consider him a poor listener. Yet, he was a good listener as defined by many of the values discussed throughout this project, despite enacting a different physical performance of listening. In his remark, one can see that he has certain beliefs of what he should be doing (not getting visually distracted, not turning away from the conversation partner), yet his embodiment of listening did not always coincide with his statement.

Expectations of people embodying a single type of listening can lead to exclusion and negative perceptions of self when expected social norms are not fulfilled. If listening is first

conceptualized as “hearing,” then those who cannot hear are assumed to not listen, or not to listen well. If ethical listening is first conceptualized as “making eye contact,” then those who cannot make eye contact are assumed to not listen, or not to listen well. When certain members of a community are excluded from being able to ethically enact listening, it limits their capacity for involvement in society’s ethical framework. This is a problem, as people’s lack of expected or accepted presence in a society leads to lack of listening to or for their voices.

Hearing and Listening: Deafhood and Disability

Hearing and listening are not the same thing. Whereas hearing is typically associated with ears and audition, listening is a much fuller and more intentional experience. As McHugh (2015) puts it: “Hearing is an act of the senses, but listening is an act of the will. In listening you center not only your ears but also your mind, heart and posture on someone or something other than yourself” (p. 219). Lipari (2014) suggests that the terms “listening” and “hearing” have different etymological roots. Whereas the first refers to the practice of giving attention to others, the second deals with perception and a receptive stance to others. As stated in Chapter 5, listening requires one to focus on the correct aspects of discourse at the appropriate times. What one does not listen to often is understood to be noise – whether that be particular features of a communicative message, thoughts and feelings within the listener, lack of desire or effort, pretending to listen well when one is not, or another obstacle to listening (Solomon & Theiss, 2013). Noise gets in the way of what one wants to pay attention to and it also impacts perceptions of other people. Noise that reduces listeners’ ability to process language – whether that be the conditions of the conversation or an unfamiliar language accent – is correlated to a listener evaluating a speaker’s character more negatively, simply because they are difficult to

understand (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Noise is a nuisance, but it also prevents ethical listening and engagement with others.

Choosing what messages or features of messages to focus on and which should be considered noise is not an easy task. It is influenced by one's preferences, predispositions, physicality, socialization, and culture. Not all sounds, not all sights, not all sensory input is considered meaningful in a communication event. Languages that are tonal, like Chinese for example, may require one to pay attention to pitches of words in a much more focused way than English. Languages that are visual, like ASL, may require one to pay attention to changes in hand placement in mere millimeters as these locative distinctions impact meaning in one sign but not in another. Phonetic changes are captured into linguistic rules through a language's phonology, and that phonology must be learned by the conversational participants in order to share meaning. As Peake (2012) puts it:

Through socialization and cultural conditioning, people learn what sounds are important to their landscapes, and learn to locate these out of the many simultaneous sounds that may be heard because they reflect/echo something they believe about themselves as people. "Ways of listening" reflect the ways in which space is sounded and aurally interacted with, which further reflects how people learn to use audible systems to make sense of, and manipulate, the soundscapes around them. The study of different ways of listening is a study of the ways in which listening is always politically charged, and not a neutral biological function (p. 172).

Although one may hear a multitude of sounds, cultural socialization and individual perception lead one to decide which should be "interacted with," which should be engaged. Consider, for example, the distinction between hearing and listening constructed by one participant:

"When you listen and hear something? Even if it's a sound. How you trust that information? Or we doubt it? Like the other night...my son gets in late from work so I was making his dinner about nine o'clock. And I turned that – the broiler on? To make him something to eat? And I went out into the garage and then there was this woosh sound when I was out in the garage. And I went (looks to the side), and the heater had

just kind of come on and I was just like, that didn't sound right. But then I tried to convince myself that nothing was wrong? You know? And then, but it sounded kind of like, I don't know – like I just said, it was kind of a pop and a woosh. And like I turned around to the heater and I thought did we just – it sounded like gas – something like gas. And I kept doubting myself. Cause, you know, based on what I'd heard? So just what you said. We hear things and then – then I hear and then I was setting it aside. And later you find out.” (Caucasian Women member)

At times we do not hear and then cannot listen. However, as this person experienced, at times we hear something, and do not know whether to listen. We may hear a sound, but our experience does not include enough knowledge to determine if something is “wrong” or requiring our attention. We may, in those moments, consider it a nuisance and ignore it. We hear, but we choose not to listen. As we live, we choose whether to heed what we hear and live with the consequences of those choices. Hopefully, as we find out that we were wrong in paying attention or ignoring, we learn to listen better – to know what to listen to and how to listen. These choices impact our identities and our ethics, and our identities and ethics impact these choices.

Thus, although hearing and listening are not the same act, they are intimately tied to each other. Ethics of listening should not assume that hearing is a natural process while listening is a social one. Hearing itself – the ways that we listen and how we are conditioned to tune certain things out and hear others – is also a product of our socialization and enculturation. As Beard (2009) puts it, “Our soundscapes have a fundamental impact on the construction of our subjectivity. Before we can parse a theory of ethics in terms of listening, we need to account for the ways that our acoustic environments give contour to our sense of self” (p. 12). As argued throughout this chapter, the ways that we discuss and employ our senses in listening matter for the ways that we construct our listening values and ethical frameworks.

Communities clearly communicated ties between hearing and listening in their metaphoric constructions. One participant, for example, used the phrase *pull my listening ears out* when describing the need to adapt her listening after a long period of living in a cultural environment where speaking was considered more important than listening:

“I think that when I am surrounded by Asian people or back in Japan. Um, I think I have this social expectation that I have to demonstrate better listening skills than speaking skills. Because the talker is not as valued as a good listener? So, and especially elderly – like you have to show that you’re – you’re there to listen. Since I’ve move to the United States I feel like I talk even more (laughs). Right, like, um, I – I feel like, I don’t know. Just somehow I’ve developed that – I have to um show that I have to like share my opinion more? Um, whether people are listening or not. So that’s really interesting things that I’ve learned. Even now. I’m going back to Japan this summer. So that’s going to be an adjustment to me. To *pull my listening ears out*, uh, again (laughs).” (Asian member)

As with previous metaphors, listening is constructed as a spatial engagement where something is being *pulled* through space. Here, it is also constructed as a physiological one connected with hearing and the embodiment of listening through the *ears* rather than another part of the body. In order to culturally adjust to social primacy of listening over speaking, she constructs a metaphor in which she has put *listening ears* away because they are not valued in one context. She must then *pull them out* in order to use them in another context where they are valued. Listening well in a society that is perceived to value good listening is dependent on her *ears*.

Multiple participants from different communities of difference indicated that the ability to hear well was central to being able to listen well. Among many reasons given by participants for not being able to hear, an offensive tone of voice, perception of “mumbling” that prevents shared semantic meaning of language, ineffective volume that creates a soundscape in which messages are too quiet or too loud, certain pitches that are grating and avoided, were all fairly

common mentioned reasons for lack of hearing well that made listening difficult or prompted strategic efforts not to listen.

“Finding the right tone with the person where they can actually listen to you instead of block you out? With my mom, she’s like, you talk too low. I’m going to block you out if you keep mumbling. And I’m like, I’m trying not to. I feel like I’m yelling at you.” (First Nations member)

“I guess if, um, they’re talking clearly too, ‘cause sometimes I mumble and people will be like, I didn’t hear anything you just said. So, I didn’t listen to any of that.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

In addition to these issues, several participants discussed the role of hearing loss itself. For example, one participant described a narrative in which someone’s marriage almost ended because of unrecognized hearing loss of particular pitches:

“I was thinking of my friend, who um, he was in the Marines? And he, they had a big day where they had to do a lot of ammunitions practice? And he came back, like, with severe tinnitus and like ringing in his ear? And he actually had to go to a doctor. He almost went through a divorce because his wife was angry that he wasn’t listening to her? And he actually was deaf for this certain pitch that her voice was? So, like diagnosed by a doctor if she was more than five feet away from him, he completely lost that pitch in the tone of her voice. So, it wasn’t, yeah I’m not listening to you. It was, I can’t hear you. So I definitely think like lower tones a little for me. And you know higher tones are a little bit (harder) for me to listen to for longer periods? Especially if it’s someone talking like a professor or something? I notice like lower tones are easier for me to listen to and just hear overall.” (Latino member)

Changes to hearing ability is a part of human life. People can hear pitches in their youth that they cannot hear in their 20s, their 30s, and on and on as they age. Those whose audiological status changes enough so that they cannot hear a wide enough variety of pitches and sounds are classified as audiotically deaf. Yet, deafness is not just a physiological label. Some people who are deaf, as discussed earlier, have adopted a new visual way of being and created unique cultural expressions and linguistics forms. Deaf cultural communities thus offer a unique place in

which to explore the intersections of hearing and listening, where audiology becomes much less important to everyday life than other senses such as vision, sight, and touch.

Deaf communities often adopt the use of a visual language, such as ASL. Deaf people, according to ASL and Deaf Studies scholar Bahan (2002) "have found ways to communicate visually and developed visual languages. That is the essence of their being. All other things are constructed around this, channeled through and by vision" (p. 84). Deaf communities have been described as a number of different social groups, including as ethnic and racial groups, cultural and linguistic minorities, and disabled communities (Bahan, 2002; Baynton, 2008; Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011; Padden & Humphries, 2006). It is unnecessary to claim that one type of description is more correct than another or that deaf communities cannot occupy multiple spaces, as all of these identities are social constructions that depend on socio-historical contexts and individual perceptions. For all of these myriad and multiple identities, I will use the term coined by Ladd (2003) to refer to united yet diverse deaf identities and experiences: deafhood.

What I want to highlight here is the unique ways that the ASL community conceptualizes listening through their particular embodiment of listening. Several signs were used by the ASL community for "listening." The metaphoric construction of these terms point to particular cognitive constructions of the act of listening. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that all cultures incorporate their physical experiences, their unique embodiments in the world, into their metaphoric constructions of language:

Each culture must provide a more or less successful way of dealing with its environment, both adapting to it and changing it. Moreover, each culture must define a social reality within which people have roles that make sense to them and in terms of which they can function socially. Not surprisingly, the social reality defined by a culture affects its conception of physical reality (p. 146).

The physical and the social are interconnected. ASL, like other languages, incorporates metaphoric constructions that become a part of the cognitive processes of the individuals and communities that use them. As Burgers et al. (2016) point out, figurative frames such as metaphors often adopt personal characteristics that create differing positive and negative associations for a community. For example, people who are right handed or societies that are comprised of higher numbers of right-handed people are more likely to have more positive associations with their right as compared to their left (e.g. two “left” feet as compared to being “right”). In the context of the ASL community, the experience of listening and performing listener roles make sense through the physiological and social embodiment of visual listeners.

In her linguistic work with ASL metaphors, Wilcox (2000) discusses ways that some metaphorical concepts previously identified as present in spoken languages also exist in signed languages. For this study, of primary importance is the “thoughts are objects” conceptual metaphoric construct in which thoughts, ideas, and communication of those ideas are conceptualized as objects that can be manipulated (e.g., *picked up*, as previously discussed). In this study, native ASL speakers used several signs for “listening” that indicate ways in which the listening process can be conceptualized as both a receptive orientation and a process of mutual exchange, of giving and receiving. Similar to the ways that a receptive orientation is indicated through the etymology of “hearing,” one set of signs demonstrated a receiving-orientation and were used interchangeably by the community to refer to both hearing (reception of sounds and sights) and listening (of focused attention). The set of three signs were similar in several ways but distinct in one important one: location that indicated unique embodiments of hearing and listening. I briefly describe each of the three signs below and then follow these descriptions with

a more in depth analysis of their metaphoric meanings. In the figure of each sign, the left frame shows the initial/starting position of the sign and the right frame the final/ending position. Line drawings do not capture the dynamic visual-gestural nature of ASL, but one can gain a general idea of the form of the sign that will aid the discussion of its metaphoric significance.

In Figure 9, the sign for listening is performed as a reception of information from outside of one's body toward one's ear.

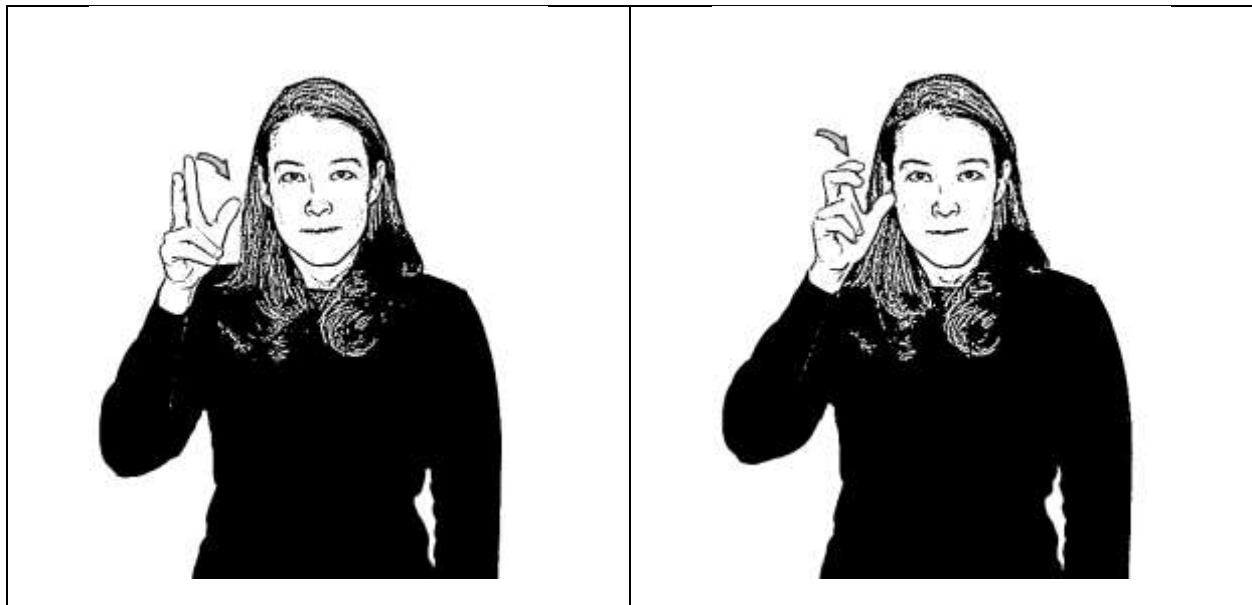


Figure 9: ASL Sign for “Listen” (Ear)

At times, this sign (and the other signs in this set) were done just once (fingers transitioned from extended straight positions to a bent positions once) and other times a sign involved multiple movements in succession (i.e., fingers were bent and extended multiple times). When done in repetition, the meaning shifts from a single listening act to one that is done over time and repetitively.

In contrast to the above sign which ends at the ear, another sign for listening began in a similar location but ended at the eye. See Figure 10 below for a representation of this sign.

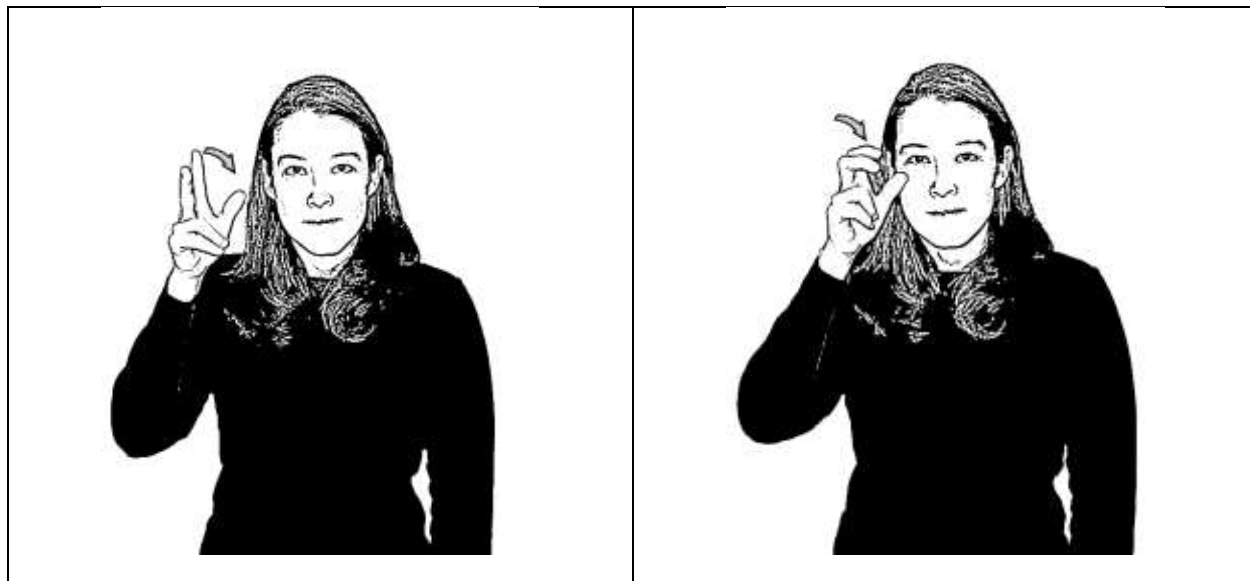


Figure 10: ASL Sign "Listen" (Eye)

As one ASL member explained when he discussed the differences between his use of the signs shown in Figures 9 and 10, “For the deaf, we listen with our eyes, versus with our ears.”

Finally, a third sign discussed included the use of two hands moving from the space in front of the face toward the eye and the ear simultaneously. This sign shows how listening can be embodied simultaneously through both the ears and the eyes, as shown in Figure 11.

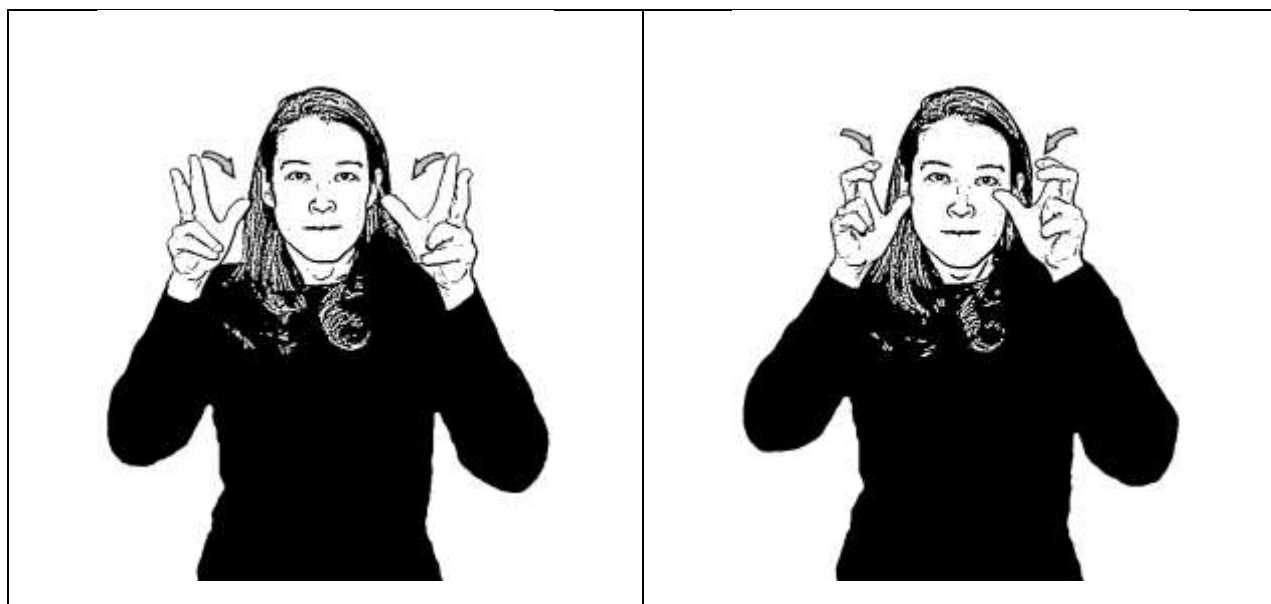


Figure 11: ASL Sign for "Listen" (Total Communication)

In this sign, right-handed signers ended the sign with the right hand near the eye and the left hand near the ear, perhaps showing a privileging of the eye over the ear by using their dominant hand to refer to it (or perhaps utilizing better muscle control in their dominant hand and avoiding gauging their eye out with a less controlled left thumb). The ASL community described this as an appropriate sign when referring to the integration of both auditory and visual listening experiences of deaf and hard of hearing people. It might be used during a “Total Communication” situation – when community members adopt both aural-oral and visual-gestural languages and use speech and hearing, sign and vision. Alternatively, it would be used to indicate the presence of hearing and deaf people in a single situation: “For deaf and hearing communities, um, people that are in both communities – they – they would use the eyes and the ears and they would then obviously be able to understand both.” Or it would be used when referring to listening within the context of communities: people experiencing “two communities, hearing and deaf that are integrated” and listening to both simultaneously. In sum, this two-handed sign of the set points to an embodiment of listening that utilizes multiple senses and connects with multiple individual and community identities – visual and auditory.

Although the difference in spacing between the eye and the ear is small, the difference in deaf identification between those spaces is large. The implementation of oralism and exertion of force on deaf communities to not sign, to focus energy on hearing and speaking, has created systems of oppression and marginalization in their life experiences. Consider, for example this participant who adopts a Total Communication mentality and the ways that he negotiates his various communities and identities:

“I didn’t learn signs until I was nine, so before that I was all oral. So, I hated going to family functions, because I always felt kind of left out. Because, I would just have to kind

of play along. They would talk and I'd be like (nods head). No. Nothing. Everything was going by me. Or, it would be like three-way communication where they would ask my parents something and my parents would ask me, instead of going directly to me. And that always bothered me. I felt like I had to work harder to be part of the family. So that's why I tend – I don't know if that's kind of what you were talk – so. And, I always struggled to try to communicate with my family because, you know? They've – you're – you're family, and you feel like you're the only deaf in the family so you try to do your best to try to focus communicating with that person more than the deaf, because I understand the deaf. So, I can communicate easily – no problem...but at the same time with for me? Communicating with my hearing friends is important to me. Just because, you know, I was raised hearing and so I missed – kind of missed out a lot. And so I kind of wish that they would learn signs but sometimes they don't want to and so I feel frustrated. And, and like for example, my dad never learned. My mom learned – my mom learned sign language. My sister picked it up because many of my friends were deaf. But my dad. So I always focused trying to work hard, and a good example would be if someone would try to talk to me and I'd be turned away and they'd be like, 'You heard me.' And I'd be like, 'Yeah...I heard you, but I didn't understand you.' (ASL member)

As with this case, many deaf people retain the right to use whatever physiological senses they wish to communicate. However, each choice of language and sensory access has relational implications. As this participant goes on to share, the choice to pursue a cochlear implant that enhances his ability to hear meant distancing between the deaf cultural community and his own identity, while aiding access to the hearing community that he works hard to be a part of – the hearing community that also includes his family. Depending on which community – deaf or hearing – that he is interacting with, he chooses between listening signs in Figure 9 and Figure 10. In comparison, the native Deaf ASL speaker indicated that she chose not to pursue a cochlear implant and does not pay much attention to auditory stimulus in listening. For her, listening is done through the ears and she solely uses the sign in Figure 10, a linguistic and metaphoric choice that serves to construct and reflect her visual cultural identity.

The process of receiving differs among the signs for “listening” offered by the community. Reflecting the argument that “the study of metaphors that refer to parts of the body

and their functioning contributes to a clearer understanding of how physical experience is projected onto linguistic action” (Wilcox, 2000, pp. 171–172), linguistic choice of which “listening” term is adopted depends on one’s physiological orientation and the aural/gestural means of communication being enacted by one’s deafhood. This choice reflects listening value systems and differing embodiment of listening in deaf and hearing communities. As they make their choice of which sense – hearing or seeing – to prioritize while listening and then display this through their language, they also construct their individual identities and promote particular social networks.

Although these three signs differ in physical placement and point to sensory preferencing, they also share a linguistic base. All three signs move from a 3-handshape (thumb and two fingers extended) to a bent-3-handshape (thumb extended and two fingers bent). In these listening constructions, listening grasps what is being listened to in the space in front of the listener and pulls it into the physical space in which it would be heard – the ear, the eye, or both. Wilcox (2000) argues that, in ASL, a grasping type of handshape like this one “deals with possession and retention of an object” (p. 118). In addition, whereas a straight index finger has a metaphorical representation in ASL that there is an idea in existence – “ideas in existence are straight” (p. 126) – the bending of the straight fingers of the 3-handshape to partially bent fingers shows some degree of possession by the listener and a lack of complete existence of the idea outside of the listener – “ideas not fully in existence are bent” (p. 131). As the listening process is performed, ideas change from full existence to partial existence, from being in the space between speakers, to being possessed by the listener within their head. Of note, however, is that the fingers are not entirely closed into a fist (representing complete possession) but rather remain slightly open as

the listener holds the communicated message or idea suspended partially in space and partially inside their head as accessed through their eyes, their ears, or both.¹² As mentioned previously, the bending of the fingers during these three signs are sometimes performed once and sometimes in rapid repetition. This might indicate a cognitive construction of the listening process as continuous, repetitious, partial, and open rather than instantaneous, complete, and closed. This stance of openness and contingency supports conceptualizations of listening discussed throughout this study – both in the ASL community’s hearing and listening processes.

A second conceptual sign for listening is also important to discuss here as it constructs a different type of listening marked by mutuality and sharing rather than receptive stance of partial grasping. This sign for listening, as shown in Figure 12 below, indicates a listening that happens in continuous interaction. Retaining the “ideas as objects” metaphoric construction, it shows that there is an exchange of ideas and communication between two entities – two speakers – two listeners. In visualizing this sign, consider the signer communicating with another person across from them. “Typically, in ASL, people who are conceived as being physically present are associated with loci corresponding to their spatial locations in front of the signer...Mental spaces are conceptual representations that are set up as people talk or listen to one another and are using to structure various roles, strategies, and relations” (Wilcox, 2000, p. 151). The repetitive back and forth movement in the space between the signer and the imagined physically-present interlocutor on the other side of the sign shows mutual exchange of ideas.

¹² This sign can also be moved to other parts of the body to indicate other embodiments of hearing and listening. It can, for example, be placed on the chest to indicate listening with the heart.

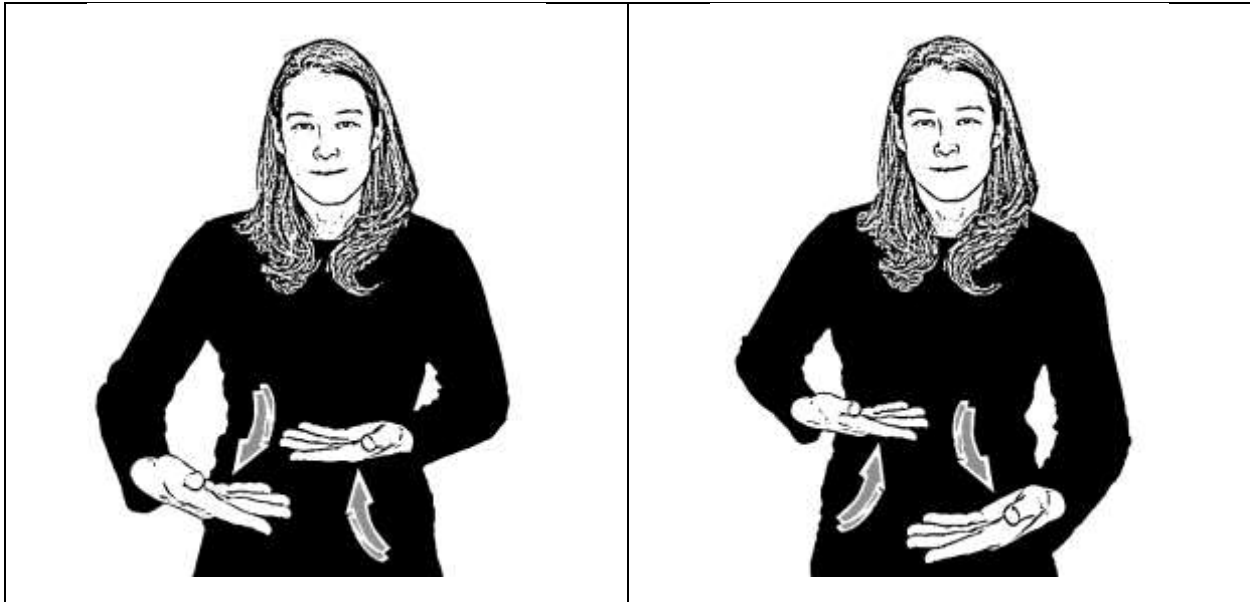


Figure 12: ASL Sign for "Listen" in Dialogue

In this conceptualization of listening, listening is metaphorically constructed as acts of repetitive giving. The sign constructs a concept of listening as sharing rather than keeping as the open palms show a complete lack of grasping, an openness and lack of possession by a single person. This sign is never used for “hearing” but was used by native ASL speakers for mutual dialogic listening, reflecting the etymology of “listening” as compared to “hearing” as an orientation toward giving rather than receiving.

As seen in the metaphoric constructions of “hearing and “listening” in the ASL community, multiple types of embodiment leads to multiple perceptions of the ways in which people hear to receive information and listen to engage others. The ASL community’s construction of hearing and listening can contribute to the listening ethical framework of the community by emphasizing the need to include multiple senses in hearing, prioritizing senses that are needed in the given situation and desired identity construction. Their metaphoric construction of dialogic listening through careful attention to mutuality and openness can benefit

more than just those people who primarily adopt a visual way of being but all people who wish to share in a dialogic listening process that promotes the well-being of broader discourse.

In addition, the deaf community can be conceptualized as one type of disability community (Baynton, 2008). They, like others with disabilities or who are members of a disability community, embody listening in a way that is disabled in a broader set of societal expectations. For example, consider this participant's story of his experience with listening:

“When I was younger, when I was in my thirties. Um, I thought that I had a hearing problem. And because I didn't hear half of what people would tell me, and so I got diagnosed with ADHD at 43. And, when, um I was given the ADHD medication? I suddenly could pay attention to people. I could hear what people were telling me? And, um, because I remember listen – trying to listen to – my mom, when we were younger my mom would take me to church? And the guy was like lalala. And it turned into like muffling noise, and I would pass out. I'd fall asleep. But I'd – I thought – I thought there was something wrong with me? You know? Well? And it – it turned out that – that – that because you're um, with ADHD. You, um, you're not fully engaged? And you're not really awake? Your brain is like half asleep. Half – most of the time? Unless it's exciting? And something that you can do a hyper focus with? But the rest of it? If it's not interesting enough? You – your brain falls asleep and I fall asleep with it. And so um, when I started doing, um, taking the ADHD medication? I – I could listen to people.”
(Latino member)

Physical differences are everywhere. ADHD is a common physical experience and increasing, with an estimated 11% of children aged 4-17 years (6.4 million) living with ADHD as of 2011 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.). Many people live with diverse ways of being in the world, including those with bodies that experience ADHD and being deaf. Statistically speaking, 100 percent of people have different bodies, different physical experiences, and different embodiments of listening. Listening to our individual experiences and standpoints can help us better listen to each other as well. Paying attention to the metaphors and the discourses that we use to construct ethical listening can help us understand socially constructed expectations

about the ways people should listen and the ways that those expectations create both positive and negative individual and social identities.

This is true in our sensory experiences and the ways that we engage these senses in creating spaces of silence, as well. As people engage each other in conversation, listeners encourage others to start or continue speaking through a number of nonverbal and verbal behaviors. In ASL discourse, for example, one might see a person lean backward from their conversational partner and gradually occupy less space between them in order to nonverbally signal to their conversation partner that they are finishing their thought and offering invitation for the other person to begin signing. That movement away increases the literal space between dialogic partners. That space, that absence of the person's physical and embodied presence, may be interpreted as silence – not as lack of engagement, but rather silence as an invitation to speak. In an English discourse, one might encounter the same type of engagement through the quieting of a voice or the stilling of one's physical movements as the listener invites a storyteller to continue through their quiet attention. However, these types of nonverbal communication signals are not the only way to listen well. Imagine, in contrast, a person excitedly leaning in as a person shares a new development in their life or shouting loudly about an unjust moment in a speaker's narrative. Far from quiet in the traditional sense of the word and with no intention to overtake the conversational floor as the speaker, these listeners invite the speaker through a different channel. I argue in the following section, that both of these approaches to good listening can be considered to be enacting silence and ethically used by engaged listeners to invite or reject dialogic interaction.

Silence: Invitation and Rejection

Silences are not all the same. This becomes quickly obvious when comparing “the silent treatment” where one person refuses to engage another and “sitting in awe and silence” where a positive emotion may be so overwhelming that one simply wants to sit and enjoy the moment. Silence can make people uncomfortable. For example, one Calvin and Hobbes cartoon represents the young boy Calvin with his stuffed animal Hobbes outside together. In this brief narrative, Hobbes says, “When you’re confronted with the stillness of nature, you can even hear yourself think,” to which Calvin responds, “This is making me nervous. Let’s go in.” In this moment of humor, we recognize a socio-cultural truth that many people wish to abandon silence in favor of a more familiar life filled with speech, technology, and even noise that could drown out silence. Although silence is sometimes colloquially conceptualized as a “nothing,” it still actively communicates (Beaulieu & Hoybye, 2011). When seen as absence, however, it speaks to a darkness, stillness, and an unknown that many people fear.

Silence does not always inspire discomfort, however. Silence can also make people deeply comfortable and can be good in itself. Indian spiritual leader Sai Baba recognized this when he sagely advised: "Before you speak, ask yourself: is it kind, is it necessary, is it true, does it improve on the silence?" (Chapman, 2012, p. 34). Staring at the ocean or walking through the woods on a beautiful day, many people lapse into a silence with each other as they listen outward to nature. Contemplative practices and mindfulness, often which are done in silence, prompt an introspection that can lead to heightened creativity, meaning creation, spiritual work, and listening (Kirsch, 2009; LeClaire, 2009). As Merton (2008) says, "contemplation is

essentially a listening in silence, an expectancy" (p. 79). Silence, for many people, is deeply positive.

Silences have been understood in a variety of ways and are very powerful communicative acts that can have differing meanings depending on the context (Jaworski, 1992; Tannen, Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). Although many studies of silence have ignored context, others have recognized that the performance and relative privileging of silence cross-culturally can lead to misinterpretation and miscommunication (Acheson, 2008; Molina-Markham, 2014). As Cheung (1993) states: "Silence, by contrast, has often been perceived negatively as absence, or as an out-of-awareness phenomenon – the ground against which the figure of talk is perceived. Such a logocentric tendency obscures the fact that silence, too, can speak many tongues, varying from culture to culture" (p. 1). Silence itself is a symbolic act that communicates. What and how it communicates can be positive and negative, and thus lies within the realm of ethics. Yet, according to communication ethicist Richard Johannesen, it has often been overlooked with other types of nonverbal communication in ethical consideration:

This presents the whole issue of where to go for advice about ethical nonverbal communication. You can't go to a nonverbal communication textbook. You won't find it there. For example, silence is a dimension of nonverbal communication. "What are the ethics of silence?" I don't know where I would go for ethical advice on that. "Can we assume that ethical norms for verbal communication apply equally well to nonverbal?" I don't think so in every case, but I don't think it's an issue we've looked at enough. There are elements of it that people are writing about, but we should have some more sustained analysis by people trained in communication ethics (Worthington, 2008, pp. 48–49).

Fiumara (1990) also points to this gap in philosophical literature: "Silence rarely becomes an object of philosophical attention. In my opinion the creation of an empty space, or distance, within a dialogic relation might be the only way of letting the deeper meanings and implications

of that relationship emerge” (p. 102). This section is a brief response to these calls to look at silence, as participants indicated that it was important in their consideration of good listening.

Participants’ calls for intentional presence and relational connection while listening ethically require us to be able to quiet the noise that preoccupies our brains in order to attend to others. This skill demands that we recognize when noise is even present as the drone might be so familiar that choosing another way never enters our minds. Yet, if we want to be deep listeners, we must learn to listen to the spaces of silence in our own selves, in others, and in the dialogue that is emerging among us (McHugh, 2015). Ricoeur argues that before the world is constituted through discourse, there is a silence and orientation toward hearing rather than speaking (Purdue, 1986). Silence, and listening in that silence, creates a space in which people coexist and what is unspoken can emerge in dialogue (Fiumara, 1990; Gammelgaard, 1998). Glenn and Ratcliffe (2011) argue that “silence is not bereft of meaning; rather, it is the beginning of meaning and a conduit for meaning” (p. 64). What emerges in a dialogic space that makes room for silence is the creation of new spaces in which new communication creates new identities and worlds. That communication does not fill the silence; it is constituted by the silence and constitutes the silence. Silence is a discursive act not the absence of discourse.

Glenn and Ratcliffe (2011), in their important work at the intersection of silence and rhetoric, argue that we must be listening for what the silence speaks. That silence might be purposeful and perceptive and used to show transformation and self-care, cultivate awareness of oppression and silencing, resist rigidity and unjust discourses. Foucault (1978) argues:

There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case...There is not one but

many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses (p.425).

Foucault's engagement with silence serves to emphasize that silences, as is true with all components of discourse, have important intersections with power. As LeClaire (2009) says, "...not all silence is benign" (p. 14).

Silence can mean that something or someone has been negated from discursive space, a matter which points to oppression, marginalization, and silencing so that the discursive texts of some people are erased and are not permitted to be produced (Wander, 1999). This type of silence points to ways that groups that are considered in some way taboo are silenced and through which silence results (Jaworski, 1992). For example, Glenn and Ratcliffe (2011) argue that whereas speaking has been gendered masculine and a sign of power, silence has been gendered feminine and a sign of weakness. In these constructions and in contexts where "voice is tantamount to power" (Cheung, 1993, p. 2), feminine speech and feminine embodiment might be considered taboo and silenced – both by others and themselves. Because of trends toward silence being equated with loss of agency, investigating silence can act as an intentional act of resistance against the silencers (Bell, 2014; Lotz, 2000). As Lipari (2014) puts it, a

...(a) listener will keep an ear out for places of silence, erasure, and misrecognition. Such a listener must notice the gaps and fissures that occur when one voice speaks in place of another, or when another is silenced. Who speaks? Who is heard? Whose voice is rendered unintelligible? These are the questions of discourse ethics, and they are poised on the fulcrum of the communicative dynamic between speaking and listening (p. 213).

Investigating silence can create new and evolving meanings of silence. It can also create space in which we can "keep an ear out" for the political nature of listening wherein people with the most power cease to listen or use silence to silence others.

However, silence need not always be interpreted as erasure. Carbaugh (2005) points to cross-cultural distinctions of meanings of silence between an interpretation of interconnectedness from a Blackfeet perspective as compared to failed relationship in a “White people’s” system:

Silence as communicative action came to mean 'White people,' a negation of one's personal being (as in 'the silent treatment'), a failure to connect with others in relationship, and a sign that social institutions have been ruptured or broken or corrupted (e.g., 'a conspiracy of silence'). Without speaking, in silence, one can hear (or feel) not an interconnectedness as among the Blackfeet, but an unhealthy separateness, and disconnectedness that is present between presumably different individuals or peoples (p. 90).

Depending on the context and the people who have the power to determine and interpret the symbolic meaning of silence, analysis of silence should be just as culturally responsive as other types of discourse analysis.

Power can be enacted through enforcing the silence of others, but it can also be enacted by retaining the right to remain silent. Power can be enacted through interrupting another speaker and forcing them to silence with one’s own speech, but it can also be enacted by refusing to cooperate in conversation topics that others propose. Silence can support dialogue, or it can prevent it (Ayim, 1997). Power can be enacted by a deaf person choosing not to speak and to sign instead, considered some to be silence because of lack of auditory speech and others to be full dialogue by presence of engaged communication. Again, silences, like other forms of discursive utterances, vary in meaning dependent on any number of socio-historical and individual factors. The difference between silence and noise is what we attend to: “All too easily, in fact, we tend to use or eliminate any ‘object’ – whether animate or inanimate – that does not tell us anything: and everything which is other than us can tell us nothing until we are prepared

and ready to listen” (Fiumara, 1990, p. 105). Silences can be considered positive or negative, depending on the expectations of the people in dialogue and their surrounding narratives.

Silence is typically defined as moving beyond quietness to a complete absence of sound. I suggest a different definition, however, in the context of dialogue as complete silence while alive in a rich historical narrative and in dialogic relationship with self and other is impossible. I propose that constitutive silence is the practice of selective invitation and the active opening to another and to co-created dialogue. Silencing is a rejection and closing of that same dialogue and to objectifying another as noise. In the next sections, I discuss the positive construction of constitutive silence through two types of enactments: silence as vocal absence and silence as encouraging response. Through this discussion, I hope to challenge the idea that silence is complete absence, instead arguing that effective use of constitutive silence in ethical listening entails that a listener is able to decide when and how to open space and invite dialogue whereas the negative version of silence closes and rejects that dialogue.

Vocal Absence as Silence

At times when one is listening, the involvement with the person or the message is being performed to such a high degree that one becomes completely still. The heart slows down. The little movements and vocal responses that signal involvement cease. Far from lack of response meaning that one is not paying complete attention, this type of embodiment signals complete and focused attention. Several research participants indicated that when they were entirely enthralled with another person’s message – whatever the emotive quality of that message – they became so

involved that they might be unlikely to respond with any words or gestures. One person described this type of listening as being completely *hooked in*:

“I so enjoy sometimes when someone is talking and I’m completely silent and engrossed in their story. It’s really cool...So if a person has like a really funny, or funny – fun story I enjoy listening. Like, I just – they have a story and I’m just like completely hooked in.”
(ASL member)

The metaphoric construction of listening as *hooked in* refers to a hook – a piece of curved metal used to catch or hold something. After one is hooked with this metal, one can be moved in various directions as guided by that hook. In the context of fishing, for example, being hooked in would mean that a fish has taken the bait, bit the hook, and can be brought into the fisher by the line. In listening, being hooked in means that one is so engaged in the speaker’s message that they have bit the message and the speaker can guide them where they will. One might think this is a negative metaphor – but this participant constructs it as something they “so enjoy.” The speaker, the speaker’s message, and the dialogue itself is so engaging that what is happening to the listener is beyond their immediate recognition. As another participant said:

“I guess what I – I like in conversations is – is the give and take? And then, that varies according to the depth of the conversation. As the conversation gets deeper it can go into you know, storytelling or explaining complex ideas without interrupting because by that time you are already en – engaged and the other person has your attention.” (First Nations member)

When a person is *hooked in* to a story, the person is not concerned about having a turn to talk in that moment, even though they do enjoy a give and take in dialogue. Instead, they are content to play the role of the listener in a silence that opens space and invites a storytelling other.

In the focus group discourses, silence was at times enacted through vocal absence (no words uttered, no laughter, no voiced feedback). Through quantitative analysis of the focus group interactions in which the same procedure was facilitated in each interaction (six focus

group events), patterns emerged around cultural enactment of this vocal absence. Based on the annotated video recordings of the focus groups, gaps between vocalizations were measured and counted when those pauses between vocalizations were greater than 3.0 seconds. This threshold was calculated based on two randomly selected focus group discourses (the Latino group and White Men group) and measurement of the longest pause during a speech act of a single member in these groups. The longest vocal pause a single person performed when completing an idea without interruption from another person was 2.7 seconds in the Latino group and 2.8 seconds in the White Men group. Based on these two results, as well as the practice of Molina-Markham (2014) in her study of silence as cultural performance which also used a threshold of three seconds, all pauses of 3.0 seconds or less were considered part of a single utterance and not included in the final calculation of vocal absence in the discourse.

The results of the calculations of vocal absence in the communities ranged from 0.9 to 7.6 percent of the complete focus group event. Caucasian Women, Caucasian LGBTQ and Allies mixed gender, and Latino mixed gender enacted the least vocal silence between 0.9 and 2.5 percent. The Asian mixed gender, Caucasian men, and First Nations mixed gender enacted the most vocal absence between 7.1 and 7.6 percent. The longest single instance of vocal absence was enacted by Caucasian men at 43 seconds (as in they sat together for 43 seconds without uttering a single word, laugh, or other vocalization), whereas the other groups longest instances of vocal absence ranged from 7.0 to 18.5 seconds, with the longest instances of vocal absence

roughly correlating to the overall percentage of vocal absence. See Table 8 below for the complete results.

Table 8: Vocal Absence in Community Discourses

Community	Total Absence	Range of Instance	Mean Instance
Caucasian Women	0.9%	.07 – 7.0 sec	1.0 sec
Caucasian LGBTQ and Allies Mixed	1.9%	.01 – 11.0 sec	1.1 sec
Latino Mixed	2.5%	.01 – 10.3 sec	2.0 sec
Asian Mixed	7.1%	.01 – 18.5 sec	1.8 sec
Caucasian Men	7.3%	.01 – 43.0 sec	1.9 sec
First Nations Mixed	7.6%	.01 – 17.9 sec	2.3 sec

This analysis quantitatively suggests what has been previously discussed in intercultural communication research: there are cultural differences in the ways that silence is enacted. In addition, the amount of vocal absence that might feel entirely comfortable to one group may feel very uncomfortable to another. People are watching for conversational engagement that they enjoy, and that enjoyment may come from the rate of exchange, the amount of vocalizations, or absence thereof. For example, two Caucasian Men members mentioned wanting to have a “natural” conversation feeling that was “very quick”:

“That natural feeling of conversation? Um, I think that’s what makes me – that’s what makes me feel listened to.” (Caucasian Men member)

“I kinda like that. I kinda – it’s a really easy back and forth and it’s very quick. To the point.” (Caucasian Men member)

Yet, what constitutes a “very quick” conversation might differ greatly depending on your community’s discursive practices. Imagine a Caucasian Women member, for example, transitioning to the Caucasian Men group in which the silence is over seven times the amount of vocal absence as she is used to. She may feel that no one is talking and that the conversational

flow is awkward. In comparison, a Caucasian Men member engaged with the Caucasian Women group may feel there is no space for his voice to speak and may feel that it is *too* quick. Clearly, understanding the amount of vocal absence that is culturally appropriate and socially accepted will impact the ways that one views a participant in that community, whether that be a community determined by gender, culture, ability, language, or some other feature of their identity. One's own comfortability may not be a good indicator of genuine dialogue.

Many of the participants indicated that vocal absence was a value, as seen by these three examples from Asian, Caucasian Women, and First Nations groups:

“My two daughters have different backgrounds? Because, cause the first one is just completely Chinese and the – the second one is a kind of a mix. So, I can compare them. So, the first one is really um, obedient. Kind of in – in some ways, compared to American kids. And at least one—sometimes I – I’m not – I would – I’m not serious at all. I’m just saying something and she will just stop doing anything and stand there and listen to me. I don’t know where she got this idea. I didn’t do – do the same thing when I was little. But the second one is way different.” (Asian member)

“My youngest son’s twenty now and moved out, but he – my daughter’s 28 and she’s a talk, talk, talk. You know, a lot of – a ball of fire. And um (name), my youngest son, and I uh we’re more similar like, we’re – we’re kind of overwhelmed by that much energy? And so every time when she would leave – he still lived at home – when she would leave we would both just sit there. (Deep exhale). And we would have a really good conversation with hardly any words, but we’d – we’d – a lot – a lot would come across between the two of us. It was really nice.” (Caucasian Women member)

“It’s actually a Native American tradition to not interrupt. It’s hard. Just that, I – I know from my spiritual advisor, um. When I interrupt him, he’ll say ‘(name omitted) that’s not traditional. Let me finish what I’m going to say? And then you interject.’” And in Native American – in basically western – westernized – uh, um, vernacular? Um, I tend to – I tend to interrupt people. I have – I have a bad habit of that. Unless I’m using gestures. But that’s still kind of interruption, you know?” (First Nations members)

These participants construct listening well as avoidance of interruption and potentially constructed by vocal absence and quietness. Participants also indicated that not creating space for

vocal absence was a negative value. When people did not silence their vocalizations, it might be read as an interruption or being cut off, poor listening, and damaging to relationships:

“Shutting me down every time I open my mouth is not the way to get me continue trying with you.” (LGBTQ and Allies member)

“I married into a family that everyone cuts each other off. You know? And so you have this state of frustration... That’s where I guess I am personally is that I want the conversations that I have to be meaningful? And I want them not to be spent on blaming or fighting or conflict. I want them to be meaningful. I want them to have like pauses for us to think about whatever that conversation is.” (Caucasian Women member)

“If somebody would just talk. No pauses, no just straight. I would be like, ‘I gotta go.’ And I would just walk away.” (Latino member)

As seen throughout this discursive, the ability to effectively use conversational strategies to communicate silence and attention are crucial to ethical listening. As mentioned in the discussion of the importance of kinesics and physical involvement in a conversation, so much can be communicated without words. In the context of silence as enacted through vocal absence, meaningful connection is communicated when one chooses not to interrupt a dialogic partner. Although diverse communities interpret the use of silence and its role in interrupting differently, there is a shared value among all of them that unwarranted interruption is not a part of ethical listening.

At times, however, people feel the need to interrupt, whatever the consequences might be for that interruption and regardless of whether they consider that a positive act or a “bad habit”:

“I think what I do, when I think about it is when I’m talking to someone or especially a group or especially if it’s in a situation when I don’t necessarily agree with them? Like in a class, and – and somebody like has really, an – an idea that I just really don’t agree with. Um, and it’s, uh, kind of a back and forth? I think. I don’t – I don’t even feel like I’m cutting them off as much as I’ve gotten everything I need out of what they’re saying. And I’m ready for my turn. You know, it’s like – it’s like – it’s like, the go around. It’s like, ‘Okay can you be done now? Because I get it? I have all the value I need from what you were saying. And now I want to go.’ And, I think I have to, you know – but the

problem I think is...you feel like if you don't jump in right before that last word or two? You won't have a turn. It's like – it's like – you know, I don't think any of us would talk if we waited for the very last thing to be said. It feels like it sometimes. But it's a bad habit I've got to get – get over.” (Caucasian Women member)

In the above scenario, one participant created an evaluative statement around her own choices to interrupt. On one side, she interrupts because she feels that she has gotten everything she wants to from the dialogue. On another, she is ready for her turn and she is afraid that if she does not start to talk before another person finishes, she will not get a turn. In the context of the 0.9 percent vocalized absence in the focus groups, one could perhaps argue that that is indeed possible in a Caucasian women speech community. However, participants indicated that effective turn-taking is a key element for conversational engagement and listening:

“Just listen and try to understand. You understand, okay. I'll listen to you and try to understand your perspective. And back and forth. That's an important part of listening.” (ASL member)

“A good – good listener seems to me like it all sounds good. The conversations are back and forth.” (Caucasian Men member)

“I have a friend uh, whenever he calls me? He, uh, he's like a keep talking – keep talking nonstop. And, uh (laughs) he, uh, he wants to – you know – he wants to have advice from me and uh, he doesn't give me a chance to respond so I have to, you know, ask him stop. Stop, hold on...Sometimes it doesn't feel that, uh, you know, very good. And uh, so uh, so uh, I uh, don't call him very often, uh, because of that. And uh sometimes once in a little while, I call him ask question, you know. I – I have to – to try to make sure uh my question go through, uh, before he keeps talking.” (Asian member)

“When somebody tries to take over a conversation. I'll ask a question. Then they'll start talking. And then I'll try to say something. And then they keep talking. I'll try to say another thing. And they keep talking. And then I'm like, yeah. I need to do my homework. You need to do yours. Go away.” (First Nations member)

This conversational turn-taking, the “back and forth,” the act of asking questions and responding, may be needed in a dialogue for someone to feel listened to. Or it might be extended across a

longer dialogic relationship, as might be the case if one person needs support at one point in the narrative of the relationship and the other person calls for reciprocal support later.

The distribution of talk across a discourse as exhibited through turn-taking can differ based on the needs of the community and has ties to the previous discussion of reciprocity in relationships mentioned at several points in this study. When people do not feel they have the means to enact multiple types of roles in a dialogue, they may feel like they are expected to talk too much (e.g., the Asian member who feels obliged to talk even if no one is listening) or listen too much (e.g., the LGBTQ and Allies member who is a porcelain doll sitting and looking pretty). Understanding how many turns one expects to have in a discourse, or how long those turns should be is a product of cultural and linguistic training. Someone may feel as if they are being asked to speak or listen more than is comfortable as they move between communities of difference. Thus, learning to listen ethically is not only about the shared value of reciprocity and silence but also about gaining the cultural tools to be able to engage in this turn-taking well. As discussed previously, silence is often associated with a feminine trait, as is listening, and this gendering also has important implications for the cultural and ethical construction of listening values.

In these focus groups, the total number of gendered turns could be calculated based on the participant's expressed preferred pronoun and the number of turns that they had in their respective conversations. Using a similar calculation strategy as was employed for vocal absences, I determined the total number of utterances by each participant within their focus group. The Asian group had a total of 256 utterances by two people who identified as "he" and two people who identified as "she," the First Nations group had a total of 200 utterances by four

people who identified as “he” and four people who identified as “she,” the Latino group had a total of 180 utterances by one person who identified as “he” and two people who identified as “she,” the LGBTQ and Allies group had a total of 228 utterances by one person who identified as “he” and four people as “she”.¹³ Collectively, eight participants self-identified with a “he” pronoun and twelve participants self-identified with a “she” pronoun. Table 9 below summarizes the gendered nature of utterances in each community’s focus group discourses. Columns two and three report the percentage of instances (speech acts) that “he” and “she” spoke as calculated from the total number of discursive utterances during the focus group dialogue. Columns four and five report the percentage of time occupied as calculated from the total amount of time of the discourse that these same “he” and “she” participants spoke in the total discursive time.

Table 9: Discursive Speech Times

Community	He%Utter	She%Utter	He – TotalTime%	She - TotalTime%
First Nations Mixed	5.0-19.5%	5.5-23.0%	4.3-22.2%	1.5-20.6%
Latino Mixed	17.2%	35.0-47.8%	33.7%	5.3-21.2%
LGBTQ and Allies Mixed	11.4%	18.0-27.6%	29.7%	6.5-22.9%
Asian Mixed	15.6-20.7%	31.6-32.0%	12.7-21.6%	23.4-27.2%

As seen in the above table, the general trend is that whereas people who identified with the “he” pronoun had fewer utterances than those that identified with the “she” pronoun (i.e., they took

¹³ In addition, the Caucasian Mixed group had 700 utterances by two people who identified as “he” and two that identified as “she.” This group performed a different set of tasks than the four groups discussed in this section, as this was a second phase focus group, and so were not included in the presentation of findings. However, as a point of comparison, 22.3-24.9% of the utterances and 23.7-25.5% of the total discursive time was occupied by individuals who preferred a “he” pronoun while 26.0-26.9% of the utterances and 30.8-35.6% of the total discursive time was occupied by individuals who preferred a “she” pronoun,

fewer turns) in every single group, the total length of time that “he” pronoun users occupied varied – sometimes occupying more time (in the case of First Nations, Latino, and LGBTQ and Allies communities) and sometimes less (in the case of Caucasian and Asian communities).

Although this analysis is meant to be merely suggestive and determinations of gendered turn-taking should not be definitively drawn from these numbers, it is useful to discuss these numbers in light of the perception of the participants and literature. In general, studies show that in mixed gender groups, men talk more than women (Thompson, 2007). Yet, these results point in the opposite direction – those who identify with a feminine gender pronoun had more vocal utterances and sometimes talked more. One interpretation might be that the personalities of the participants led to diverging results from the norm. Another might be that the topic of the conversation – listening – is typically considered a feminine domain and so those who identify with a feminine pronoun or more likely to talk about it. Still others might be that gender differences in the distribution of talk may be shifting societally, or that those studies are based on particular cultures and do not take into account the variety of cultural backgrounds in their analyses as was done in this study. While any or all of these may be true, I suggest that there is another piece of gendered conversational norms at work here and turn to the role of vocalized minimal encouragers in dialogue as another type of silence to potentially explain this phenomenon.

Conversational Encouragers as Silence

Women are often conceptualized as the communicators of a social environment, the ones responsible to keep the conversation going and good at doing it. As referenced in Chapter 4,

women are the listeners and the care-takers. They engage others. One of the ways that people keep dialogue flowing is through minimal encouragers. As one woman remarked:

“Nonverbals. I’m such a big nonverbal person. There’s – we all do it. And I’m noticing, everyone at the table does it. There’s that subtle nod. That subtle nod. Even – and when – when you’re not even thinking about it. Even you know, try – trying not to nod. Honestly? It is so hard...they’re, um, minimal encouragers. Is what they’re actually called. But they’re um, just the little things that people do to show that they’re listening. The nods. Or the – the shaking their head. Or the – the leaning forward. The eye contact. The things that – we all do them honestly. Unconsciously. It’s just kind of engrained in us. That when you’re actually actively listening to someone to make that – make that eye contact. But just enough eye contact. So you’re not weird.” (Caucasian Women group)

This participant was watching the Caucasian Women group interact and commenting on the ways that group members were enacting minimal encouragers to keep the conversation going. Some of these are nonverbal – the shaking of the head, the leaning forward, the eye contact. But others are vocalized and verbalized (e.g., “uhhuh,” “mmhmm,” “yeah,” “right,”) and are short sounds, gestures, words, and phrases that we use to show attention and we would like the speaker to continue.

As seen in the previous section, participants that identified as “she” had greater numbers of utterances than those participants that identified as “he” in every single community. They also had a distinct pattern of communication emerge: much higher number of vocalized minimal encouragers to other speakers in the group. To explore the differences that might emerge based on gender, I calculated the frequency of use of two common minimal encouragers “mmhmm” and “uhhuh” among participants who identified with a masculine pronoun as compared to a

feminine pronoun.¹⁴ The average use of “uhhuh” and “mmhmm” by participants that preferred the masculine pronoun “he” was much less than the use by participants that preferred the feminine pronoun “she,” as displayed in Figure 13 below.

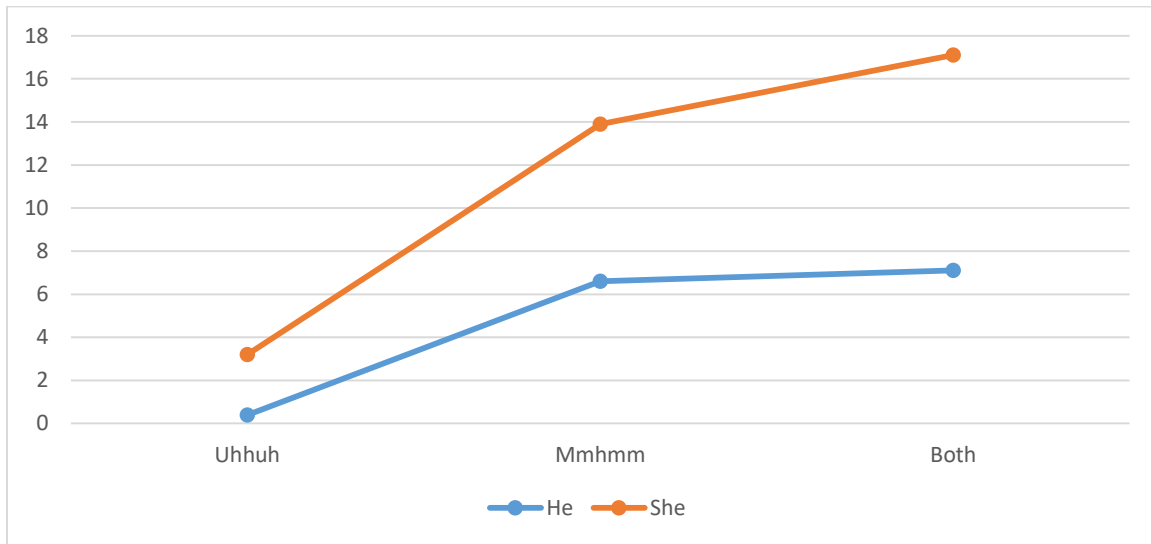


Figure 13: Average Frequency of Minimal Encourager by Gendered Pronoun

As one can see, the number of times that participants identifying with a feminine pronoun communicated vocalized minimal encouragers was over twice the number as those that identified with a masculine pronoun. There is a pattern in the discourse in which participants that identify with a feminine pronoun are speaking more frequently – they appear to be taking more turns. However, at least some of the content of that speaking is opening space for other participants to continue using their voice through their use of minimal encouragers. It is possible, then, that even as participants who identify as “she” understand those who identify as “he” as not listening

¹⁴ Collectively, there were 44 participant across their focus group appearances, with three “he” and four “she” Asian instances, six “he” and 13 “she” Caucasian instances, two “he” and three “she” Latino instances, and five “he” and six “she” First Nation instances.

because they do not offer enough vocalized minimal encouragers, those who identify as “he” may feel that those who identify as “she” use too many and are constantly interrupting.

Some discursive acts are more common in some ethnic groups than others. To explore the differences that might emerge based on cultural background and ethnicity, I calculated the use of these same two minimal encouragers “mmhmm” and “uhhuh” among Asian, Caucasian, First Nations, and Latino members across both phases of focus groups. As seen in Figure 14 below, clear differences emerged. Caucasians and Asians used more than three times as many of these vocal encouragers as Latino and First Nations members. In addition, among all ethnicities, participants that identified as “she” performed minimal encouragers much more frequently than those identifying as “he.”

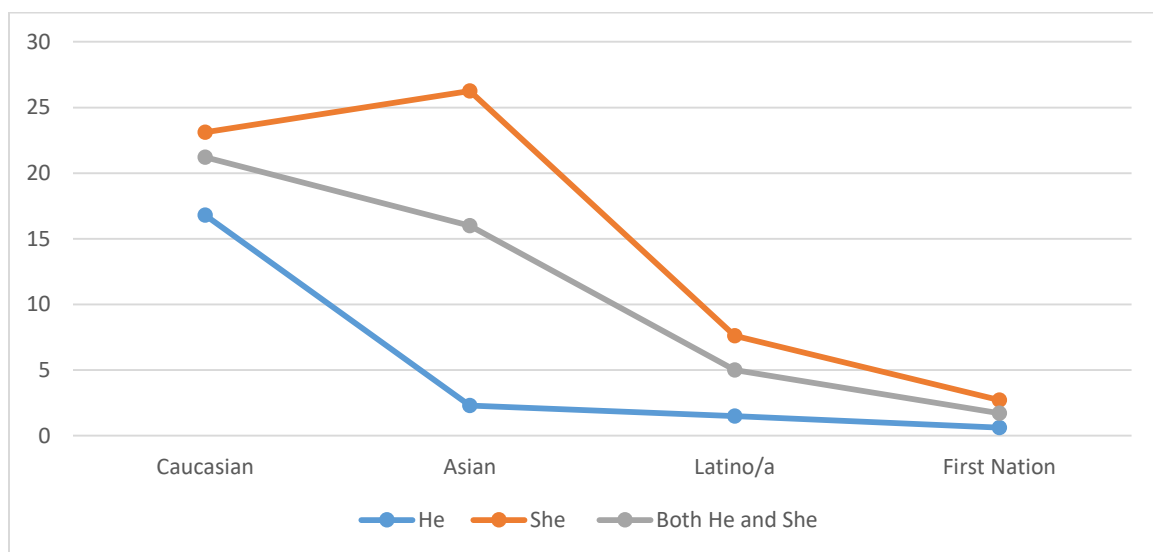


Figure 14: Average Frequency of Minimal Encourager by Ethnicity

The Caucasian sample had twice as many women as men in their group and because the results appear to show that those who identify by feminine pronouns use more minimal encouragers than those who use masculine pronouns, the total results in grey will be higher than if the sample size was equal. That said, the gendering of the participants in the other three ethnicities were

within one participant of each other and so relatively balanced. In addition, when looking solely at the masculine use of minimal encouragers, Caucasians still performed minimal encouragers over five times as often as the next highest group. In watching the discourses and reading the transcripts, there did not appear to be a significantly different type of vocalized minimal encourager among the Latino and First Nations groups. Future research, however, would benefit from examining whether nonverbal encouragers follow this same pattern as this was not considered or calculated here.

The use of vocalized minimal encourages is, I argue, another form of silence. Silence not as verbal absence, but rather as verbal encouraging, verbal opening. By speaking encouragement to another to continue using their voice in the dialogic space, those who have more vocal turns are not necessarily performing a dominant voice. Instead, the very act of speaking becomes an act of silence with that performance of silence creating dialogic opening for another. In every mixed gender group, with the exception of the mixed Caucasian Men and Women group, the person that had the longest vocalized utterance and the longest vocal absence was a person that identified with the masculine pronoun. If one accepts that masculine performance tends to occupy spaces of more power and privilege than feminine ones, the performance of vocal absence may not signify lack of power. Rather, the performance of minimal encouragers and the role of doing the relational work of keeping the conversation going might itself be a type of enacted silence (and perhaps, in its worst form, negative self-silencing) that creates space for the construction of communicative content by another. As Fiumara (1990) argues, “The verbal interventions of the person who “knows” how to listen as well as his silence impinge on the person who is speaking and thus ultimately reshape the physiognomy of the context underlying

the dialogue” (p. 174). The listener, through their enactment of both vocalization and vocal absence shape the dialogue and the others who might listen.

A metaphoric construction of vocalization and conversational encouragers as constitutive silence appears in the Latino discourse through referencing the interaction of *hyenas and chickens*. Far from being quiet, their dialogic engagement and encouragement is communicated through loud vocalization and verbal overlap:

“So, my – my family? We’re very communal people. We – we believe in, it’s not that we’re talking over each other. It’s because of, um, traditionally, when we meet?...We would designate a house. And you know, there’s like 30 people floating around. Las tias are together. They’re cooking and they’re – they’re passing generational information among each other and – and they’re you know, you hear them. They – they – they sound like – this is horrible, but this is true. They sound like hyenas? You know? And they’re like ‘yap yap yap yap yap.’ And they’re – and they’re you know, we listen like – when we look at community of chicken and they’re talking you know. They’re all, but they’re all different pitches and communication stuff? So, the tias were all hanging out and they’re all you know cooking and they’re – usually its tamales – and they’re talking and all the kids and everybody’s floating around and we’re all you know it’s like, you know twenty of us in one room back and forth. But it – it in that setting, um I think that we – we a lot of it is communicating with the language and the excitement with the body.”
(Latino member)

In this context, listening is not verbal absence at all but rather conceptualized as excitement that is communicated through embodied enthusiasm, with part of that being through the loud use of language where people are “talking over each other.” Yet, far from not listening, this member of the Latino community creates listening as a loud process in which important “generational information” is getting passed along to community members. The metaphor of sounding like *hyenas and chickens* when listening defies the idea that vocal absence is the best way to communicate. Yet it is not interpreted or enacted that way by every culture, as exhibited in this multicultural exchange about the use of the voice in their respective cultures:

Person 1: We talk very loud (laughs). You know, in my house. We talk very loud. I don't know. (First Nations member)

Person 2: I think when people go into my home, they think that we are arguing? But no. It's our way to always (high pitched screech with voice) – this tone (laughs). Yeah (laughs). (Latino member)

Person 3: “You want to listen? You've got to calm down. You've got to be serious. Something important you want people to listen to, you've got to, uh, you know, calm down and talk quietly. And not necessarily loudly (laughs). That's – that's my opinion.” (Asian member)

In sum, the negotiation and interpretation of vocal absence as silence and vocalization as silence requires cultural knowledge and cross-cultural communication competence

It is important to note, however, that minimal encouragers do not always mean that someone is listening or encouraging dialogue. In fact, many participants made it clear that verbalized minimal encouragers were often interpreted as fake listening, as pretending to listen, and as not being fully engaged in the conversation:

“Well, I can communicate fake listening. Oh, I'd be like, ‘Oh yeah. Right. Yeah.’ (ASL member)

“I'll probably just be polite. I'll probably just listen to you and be like ‘Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.’ But secretly be like, ‘How do I get out of this one?’” (Caucasian Men member)

“Like, kind of ‘Mmhmm. Okay.’ That's what I get a lot. And I'm like, ‘No. this is what you have to do.’ (laughs) Or this is what I suggest. Don't just – don't just ‘mmhmm’ you know. Actually think about it.” (First Nations member)

“My idea is if – if the only response you get, you – you get from the other person is ‘Yes. Yes. Yeah. What do you think? Yeah.’” So that probably means that person is not really listening carefully. They just, uh, give a very simple feedback. Nothing more than that. Just a – that means the person is not listening.” (Asian member)

Listeners who communicate minimal encouragers such as “yeah” in ways (e.g., tempo, frequency, volume, etc.) that are interpreted as inauthentic may be seen as trying to shut down

the conversation rather than open it up. They inspire people to want to leave, to feel like they are not being taken seriously, to not being cared for.

One way that participants encouraged others to move beyond this type of vocalization as fake listening was to ask carefully crafted questions that would make space for other to share.

When listeners ask questions that pertain to the matter at hand and wait for a response, people indicated that they felt drawn out into the dialogic space, as shown in these remarks:

“I mean there’s some people whenever they talk, they cannot stop. They just keep talking. They – they try to ask you a question. But they don’t wait for your answer (laughs). So they’re not listening.” (Asian member)

“They showed up. They showed up. I feel like – if they showed up and they did, uh, communicate – like ask some questions. And ask where our sources came from? And, um, maybe ask how we felt about it. Then I felt like, you know, well at least they listened to me. I felt like, well they gave me a chance to explain what’s going on.” (First Nations member)

“When someone’s disagreeing with you? If they stop to clarify it, and hear it – it from you before they argue against it? Then, at least they – they listened to what you had to say.” (Caucasian Men member)

“Well, one thing that you said, when listeners show that they are listening to you. That – I think a lot of it is too is, um, asking good questions? You know, like engaging questions. Like, often times you – I found that a really helpful question is ‘Help me understand?’ Like, especially when it’s in conflict? Like, ‘Can you help me’ – like, they’re saying something that they think you’ve done, or, can whatever. ‘Can you help me understand why you feel that way?’ Or, ‘Can you help me understand what you are trying to say.’ You know, like if sometimes if you just ask a few clarifying questions, or incorporate a few questions into your vocabulary then, um, then it immediately helps people feel like you’re listening.” (Caucasian Women member)

“Just like ask me. Like, questions. Like, um respond back. With some of what I’ve talked about. So that way I know she wants to bond with me rather than just being stubborn.” (LGBTQ and Allies Member)

Listeners who ask questions – whether that be for clarification, to find out more information, or just to “bond” relationally – help the speakers feel that they are being listened to because it shows engagement with them as a person and with the dialogue as a whole.

Yet, question asking itself is a cultural affair. What can be asked, how, and when, all depends on the cultural background one comes from. Ethical listeners understand the questioning strategies needed in any given culture and in cross-cultural interactions that will promote dialogue, as demonstrated by these three comments from Latino, Asian, and First Nations communities:

“Um, if you go to an English – or an English speaking residential treatment, you can’t bond. You can’t have relationships with people. And, and by relationships, I’m talking about – you can’t talk about the stuff where you came from. That kind of – they minimize how much interaction you have with people. You know. And even with the staff. Where – where in the Spanish side (sighs). We can – we can share information with them as long as it’s not, you know, very personal about yourself. You can’t disclose too much about yourself? You have to be careful about that. But everything else. You can ask your questions. You can be a little more – we go on walks. We play futbol. We play soccer. Where you don’t do that on the English side. The English side is very critical about how we share information with clients. And everything is very standoffish and it’s very, you know. And it’s just night and day. And it’s just based on culture.” (Latino member)

“I think it depends on culture. Yeah, I think in the US when they don’t understand, they just ask you questions. There’s no smiling. And uh, I – I – uh, I think my student told me. Teacher, you always have smile because you’re happy? I said, ‘This is just polite. In Asian country, we were supposed to keep smile and it just make other people feel comfortable. And uh, when we sometimes, when we – when we cannot understand everything. We still keep the smile because we don’t want to embarrass the other person.” (Asian member)

“Identify what kind of conversation we’re having. If it’s serious, then you might need to be serious. But also, to make sure that if you have a question that you can ask it. That you can interrupt me. But be sure that it pertains to the topic that we’re talking about.” (First Nations member)

Participants discursively construct the asking of questions as demonstrating interest. This interest can even be interpreted as “bonding” people together or helping people to feel “comfortable” or

less “standoffish” when the right types of questions are asked so that the right types of information are disclosed. This skill of asking questions during communication engagement is a shared value among participants to help construct ethical listening that promotes good dialogue.

In order to be able to effectively navigate situational contexts, one must have the cultural knowledge to understand what types of information and content “pertains to the topic,” as what is considered the message and what is considered noise can change with one’s point of view. Navigating whether a situation is serious when smiles can be interpreted as happiness rather than politeness requires a great deal of cultural and cross-cultural awareness. As Krueger (1994) states, “asking quality questions is not easy; it requires forethought, concentration, and some background knowledge” (p. 56). Every time a question is asked, something is assumed. “It is impossible to put everything in question at the same time. No discussion would be possible if we did not take for granted something else” (Reagan, 1996, pp. 105). What we take for granted, the very things that ground our discourses and appear natural and normal to us, is what makes us who we are and gives us particular standpoints from which we question.

As we apply a retroductive approach that brings inductive and deductive analysis into dialogue, it becomes clear that openness to learning and being willing to change in such a way that that awareness grows is a key part of a dialogic listening ethic that embraces difference at its core. The trans-community findings of this study support the importance of learning how to ask questions in order to communicate listening and increase understanding. Fiumara (1990) argues that skillful questioning requires one to retain an open orientation and that this choice is the basis of every good question and every good listening for the answer to that question. As we pose questions, we are able to open new spaces of understanding and exploration, always mindful of

the fact that "...the way in which a question is posed limits and condition the quality, and level, of any answer that can be possibly worked out – whether it be right or wrong" (Fiumara, 1990, p. 37). We can challenge dominant opinions and invite voices to speak through productive silence through our own vocal absence and thoughtful verbal presence.

Freire (2014) reminds us that learning requires peeling back the layers of discourse to understand the *whys* of the discursive process:

Never does an event, a fact, a deed, a gesture of rage or love, a poem, a painting, a song, a book, have only one reason behind it. In fact, a deed, a gesture, a poem, a painting, a song, a book are always wrapped in thick wrappers. They have been touched by manifold *whys*. Only some of these are close enough to the event or the creation to be visible as *whys*. And so I have always been more interested in understanding the process in and by which things come about than in the product in itself (p. 10).

As we learn to question the basic values and motivations that drive our dialogues, we also learn to better discern truth and goodness in any situation so that dialogic partners can work together toward creating a better world. We can follow the lead of Peavey (2003), who argues that "Questioning is a basic tool for rebellion. It breaks open the stagnant hardened shells of the present, revealing ambiguity and opening up fresh options to be explored" (p. 170). With this fresh space, we can listen in new ways, allowing the discourse to change our bodies, our identities, our relationships, and our discourse. We can listen more ethically and hope for change that is consistent with the ground we stand on and the narrative horizons we are shaping.

The participants in this study clearly demonstrated through their discourse that conversational engagement was of central importance for good listening. They discussed verbal and nonverbal components and connected particular communicative behaviors to feeling valued, listened to, and respected. They also discussed ways that any communicative symbol might have multiple meanings and that embodiment of listening can differ depending on the individual, the

social situation, and the cultural community. Embodying listening through the engagement of the senses was important, but which senses were given primacy depended on each person's standpoint.

Silence was constructed as constitutive both of the discourse and the identities of individuals and communities, and enactments of it through both vocal absence and presence showed ways that participants opened and closed dialogic space for each other. At times, listening is seen as a set of behaviors and skills for conversational engagement – yet this chapter's themes become much more meaningful in the larger narrative context of this research as they are specific values of good listening present in a particular dialogic moment. In the final chapter, I summarize how the findings to my research question investigating how diverse perceptions of ethical listening among communities of difference and the philosophical work of dialogic ethicists can work together to shape a dialogic listening ethic. I offer ten listening habits that lead to ethical dialogic interaction as shaped by a metaphorical construct of sustainable hospitality.

CHAPTER 7 LISTENING SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY INTO BEING

In this study, I have explored the research question “How might a dialogic listening ethic construct individual and social well-being?” through dialogic and retroductive analysis of the philosophical work of dialogic ethicists and diverse perceptions of ethical listening created among and between people of different cultural communities. My primary concern was to listen to people from a wide variety of backgrounds so as to better discern what is required to listen well across alterity and difference. Through trans-community and intra-community responses to survey questions and interactions in focus group dialogues, I employed a dialogic ethical approach that acknowledged “multiple goods that give rise to and emerge in ongoing conversations” in pursuit of better understanding of how a normative listening ethic can benefit all who live in this current discursive environment (Arnett et al., 2009, p. 55).

The call of a dialogic ethic is that we would practice responsibility to discourse and that the ways that we communicate would open space so that our evolving identities promote a positive discursive environment and shared narrative. Rather than stubbornly claiming an unchanging ethical ground on which to stand in judgment of others irrespective of the situation that presents itself, a dialogic listening ethic promotes a posture of perpetual learning and contingency that leads to the promotion of ethical listening and helps us create a more just and compassionate society. This posture was argued for by dialogic ethicists as well as by the communities of difference with which I dialogued. Bringing the dialogic philosophy and the values of different cultural communities together, I have employed a dialogic methodology through which a normative listening ethic could be shaped as contingent to the people and practices included in this project.

In order to identify an ethical *ought* concerning listening and every other mode of communication, it is useful to first understand what *is*. On one hand, a dialogic ethic encourages us to embrace a diversity of culturally-based listening value performances and appropriately respond to multiple narrative histories and futures. On the other hand, by understanding the ways that people share values, we can affirm a shared humanity that promotes a normative listening ethic shared by all. By contextualizing both divergent and shared listening performances in the ultimate goal of promoting healthy discourse, we can pursue more flourishing dialogic relationships. We can invite each other into more hospitable worlds in which we listen the best versions of individual and collective humanity into being, not just for today but for all time. We can practice ethical listening.

In this final chapter, I summarize the findings of this project by outlining the shared listening values and divergent expressions of those values that were present among the many cases and participants in this study. These listening values help shape a normative ethic for all communities while simultaneously recognizing that their performance may differ dependent on the narrative situation. I argue that by following a set of twelve listening values that emerged in this study, we can become better listeners that will result in more ethical dialogue and discourse. I assert that these values can be performed in a variety of culturally-dependent ways, and that learning how to skillfully negotiate listening in our relationships is crucial for communicators to be able to listen ethically across difference. Based on findings in this research, I also suggest two directions for future study to help guide continual learning about ethical listening through the particular standpoints of people in various disability communities and across age groups. Finally, I introduce a new metaphor of listening as sustainable hospitality similar to healthy ocean tide

pools. I argue that as we attest to the hope of sustainable hospitality, navigating impulses of trust and suspicion and holding on to the desire to be both trustworthy and believe in a better world, we can contribute to the creation of more ethical dialogue and healthier discourse.

Good Listening: Constructing Healthy Discourse

Throughout the narrative that emerged in this study, listening as learning acted as a, if not *the*, central listening orientation that people hoped for in their dialogic interactions. Learning about one's own identities, the identities of others, the relational between, ideas and hopes communicated through dialogic interaction, and engaging others through critical listening and openness were means through which authentic selves were constructed. According to philosopher Paul Ricoeur, these selves include commitments to values that often remain the same throughout an individual's life. Through these commitments, changes to one's identities were part of authentic and honest performances of self. The strength to change required courage – courage to risk listening when it would inherently create change, courage to engage and respond to social and relational obligations, and courage to engage communities in a network of reciprocal relationships in which people were responsible to care for each other.

As people relationally connect with others, these relationships make dialogic demands on their communication. At times these demands are equitable and life-giving. At other times, the expectation to listen points to spaces in our social structures where varying degrees of social capital and power have led to inequity and unjust relationships. Thus, ethical listeners must carefully navigate relational obligations and understand how reciprocity might play out in their daily relationships and ensure that they are involved in reciprocal social networks in which they both give and receive, listen and speak. Although listening tended to be expected most from

feminine partners in a dialogue, the broader narrative call that constructed good listening as part of healthy dialogue makes ethical listening the responsibility of every member of a community. At times, ethical listening requires a risk to not listen to another person when the emergent dialogue itself is damaging or will not contribute to healthy discourse.

Good listening is not just about intent, although this motivation is key to investing the energy needed to listen well. It is also practice and a skill that can be developed. As people choose to be intentionally present to both themselves and others, they make choices about what to attend to and what to ignore. This process of perception is shaped by each of our individual standpoints as influenced by our bodies, personalities, societies, and other features of the narratives to which we belong. As we negotiate the demands of so many sensory inputs, we learn what to attend to and what to remember as we care-fully engage the narratives of ourselves and others. These memories become a part of our ongoing stories and so must be chosen and communicated carefully. Good listeners need to be able to perceive what aspects of the dialogue should be recalled and remembered at any given point in a conversation so that responses can adapt to the necessary, appropriate, and ethical of the current moment and the larger narrative in which it is being lived. We can either embrace or reject a particular discursive construction. In that choice, we choose the stories that we all remember and live.

The choice to offer invitation to others through our listening is one of the key performances of ethical listening. This invitation occurs through verbal and nonverbal communication, through our choices of symbols to shape the ongoing dialogue and discourse. These symbols are shared between people and meanings are not absolutely owned by any one person. Thus, when we call to others to listen and they embody certain language choices and

nonverbal behaviors, we must open ourselves to the meanings that we can share together and not cling dogmatically to our own cognitive constructs or preferred methods of invitation. We learn how to give and interpret invitation in its many forms. Openness to learning across difference appeals to our ability to treat symbols as mutually constructed rather than representations of an individual's mental vision. We can encourage others to participate in this mutual construction of healthy dialogue by learning how to practice constitutive silence – a kind of silence that invites others to share space with us, embodying listening in such a way that whether through quietness or loudness the other knows that they are welcome.

As we listen to others, we make active choices of who will constitute us through our shared dialogue, and we constitute others through our listening. These choices impact each of our identities and the relationship we are living, and all of this is done in discourse and serves to create that discourse. At times, people may not be welcome. Choosing to remove ourselves from dialogue should not be assumed unethical. The choice to disengage can be a part of listening a better discourse into being by moving the relational responsibility away from the dialogic partner to the dialogue itself. If a person's speech clearly damages individuals and/or societies, the choice not to create space for that person to perpetuate hurt may be the way that we can best care for discursive wholeness. Because the choice to not listen to a person also stops an immediate dialogue, the pursuit of that end must be carefully considered. This is especially true when recognizing that it takes great strength to embrace criticism that would lead to needed change for ourselves and others. Subjective feelings of hurt do not mean that a person is necessarily causing hurt. Thus, each of us must develop the capacity to discern whether or not to engage another in

dialogue not just in its initial formation, but also in its ongoing construction. Each of us must ethically navigate how best to create space for ethical dialogue.

In conclusion, based on the retroductive empirical and philosophical results from this study as discussed throughout the previous chapters, I suggest that the following ten listening orientations can help us work toward developing the habits needed to be more ethical listeners and co-create a better discourse in which to live:

1. Actively open yourself to a continuous practice of learning.
2. Cultivate understanding about yourself, your dialogic partners, and the narratives you create.
3. Be authentic by performing sameness of character that leads to change for better.
4. Critically engage others to solve problems about what hinders the realization of more flourishing intra- and inter-personal worlds.
5. Build life-giving relationships by participating in dialogic reciprocity within your relational networks.
6. Be intentionally present to both the dialogic moment and eternal discourse, recognizing that both impact the other.
7. Remember and re-call into being the parts of shared and conflicting narratives that can co-create healthy discourse.
8. Practice competent communication engagement that reflects the needs of the individuals and their cultural narratives and physical environments.
9. Respond to dialogic interactions in timely and articulate ways that reflect the embodied needs of the individual, relationship, and community.

10. Care for the Discourse as it both constitutes who you are and you constitute what it becomes through your listening.

As a dialogic ethicist, I argue that ethical listeners should care about these ten listening orientations. The performance of these values requires a constant stance of learning about how to best perform listening in the unique contexts and situations in which we find ourselves. We help create dialogue and discourse by sharing the performance of these listening norms in our relationships, and as we learn how to do this better we also become more ethical listeners.

There are also a number of approaches to listening that one should avoid when pursuing ethical listening. These were reflected in the negative values of the participants in this study as they discussed ways that they disliked people listening to them or commented on “bad listeners.” Although some of these can be inferred by the negation above the above orientations, there are still others that would undoubtedly emerge with a re-evaluation of the empirical data focusing on the listening processes that people should avoid rather than pursue. In other words, in this research I paid greater attention to the positive listening values expressed by participants than to the negative ones. Future research grounded in the discursive creation of poor listening orientations is another piece of the ethical (and unethical) listening puzzle and should be a matter of future research.

There are two other areas in which future research could help us cultivate understanding about how to listen ethically across difference: disability perspectives and intergenerational relationships. Although differences in ability and age did not point to divergent listening values as discursively constructed in this project, they were variables that research findings point to as significantly impacting perceived enactments of ethical listening and warrant much deeper

consideration. By better understanding how diverse abilities and experiences of age impact our listening postures, we can further refine our conceptualization of listening values and the ways to perform these values in diverse contexts.

Throughout this study, it became apparent that perceptions of whether or not one listens well is grounded in particular understandings about the embodiment of listening. The challenges that participants with diverse physical orientations experienced when communicating that they were listening (e.g., people who cannot make eye contact or have facial paralysis but still want to communicate they are listening even though the kinesics of their face is not moving in expected ways), were able to listen (e.g., people with ADD or ADHD whose brains function in a way that make it more challenging to engage particular types of conversations), and the relative acceptance of diverse methods of listening (e.g., deaf people who embody listening more through their eyes than their ears, or deaf-blind people who embody listening more through their hands than their eyes or their ears) became increasingly obvious throughout this study.

Many people have diverse physical experiences that do not fit the expected norms of society. These disabilities offer particular embodiments of listening that could enrich our understanding of sensory listening postures as a whole. For example, in talking with colleagues that have facial paralysis and Tourette syndrome, performances of listening (especially as having to do with ethical focus and response) shift in diverse environments and relational contexts. Future research that explores the values and ethical performances of listening by and with people who identify as disabled can help us avoid developing listening ethics that are based on limited cultural or physiological ways of being.

In addition to disability, findings in this study showed that age was an important social variable impacting enactments of listening. A person's age was mentioned when discussions about reciprocity, respect, care, and other relational responsibilities were discussed by participants. In the Listening Concepts Inventory survey results, there appeared to be a clear differentiation between age groups. Participants were divided into five age groups based on their self-reported age, including ages 17-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-75. Statistically significant differences appeared between the youngest (17-24) age group and the other age groups except for the oldest age group (55+). No statistically significant differences appeared between any of the other age groups. Using two-tail ANOVA tests with two-tail p-values, both learning and critical constructs showed differences at a level of p of .01 for the learning construct and at p of .003 for the critical construct. Whereas the 17-24 age group collectively rated listening as learning between almost Likert scale levels worded as identical and almost identical to good listening (4.12), the 24-54 age groups rated listening as learning at a statistically lower level (3.58-3.73). Whereas the 17-24 age group collectively rated listening as critical as being rather related to good listening (3.09), the 24-54 age groups again rated listening as critical at a statistically lower level and closer to the somewhat related to good listening category (2.23-2.67).

Although the age gap between parents and their children is widening as couples pursue having children in their 30s rather than at younger ages, the average age of a person when they become a grandparent is currently in the 50s (American Grandparents Association Editors, 2016). Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) argues that "especially within communication, grandparents are often at least as important as parents in conveying elements of cultural identity to children" (p.

12). One participant in this study stated “There’s that, you know, generational difference too. That young people seem to be totally fine with everyone’s face down in their phone. And then talk for a little while, and then go back and forth. And older people are deeply offended.” This statement reflects many comments throughout this study from the 17-24 aged participants that differences are expected in the ways that people listen based on age and generation. Although age was briefly discussed in several sections of this manuscript, it became clear throughout the study that it warrants greater consideration in how we enact ethical listening in our relationships. In addition, intergenerational patterns impact a number of crucial cultural and family communication concerns, such as was exhibited in diverse cultural expectations of listening reciprocity and how a person listens to someone who occupies a different generational space. Future research that probes these differences in constructing how values of listening may shift depending on particular social and relational roles can help us better understand diverging expectations about how to enact our shared listening values and actively offer hospitable spaces in which we promote each other’s well being.

Listening as Hospitality: Negotiating Differing Expectations

Listening is a communicative process through which we can create relationships of mutual dwelling. One way ethical listening has been metaphorically constructed in philosophies of listening and dialogue is through the metaphor of *hospitality*. Listening might be conceptualized as a metaphoric opening of one’s door to another – a dialogic invitation into one’s space, to come in from the outside. Those who are considered most hospitable are often those who are able to adapt to the needs of guests, to intentionally create space for them to feel attended to, comfortable and comforted. When not driven by financial or business concerns (such

as might be the case in the hospitality industry), hospitality is a generous gift. For example, consider these conceptualizations of listening offered by several listening scholars:

The choice to open the door to one's home is an essential action, ethical act, effort and a generously given gift, to turn to, invite and meet the Other with openness, hospitality and generosity in order to get to know something other than one's own home. Listening is a choice to open the door to the outside, to invite and welcome the Other with hospitality and generosity to one's open home (Koskinen & Lindstrom, 2013, p. 151).

In this way, listening can be understood as a kind of dwelling place from where we offer our hospitality to others and the world. It is an invitation -- a hosting (Lipari, 2014, p. 102).

A recovery of our logos may be facilitated by a retrieval of a more 'circular' way of thinking, as it were, entailing repeated confrontations which may eventually result in the rule of dwelling and coexistence (Fiumara, 1990, p. 16).

We learn to listen because we want to learn how to love. We want to learn how to practice hospitality, how to truly welcome people into our lives. We want to be story-hearers and not just storytellers. We want to find the internal quiet and stillness that will open us to being changed. We want to learn how to listen because we want to become more human (McHugh, 2015, p. 12).

Freedom is in listening. I am never at home when I do not pay attention to the call. I am never at home when I do not hear the call. It is uncanny, unsettling, a kind of homelessness. I am never at home in my improper dwelling of selfhood. The primordial ethical obligation as attunement to the call is the Dwelling par excellence. I will be only at home answering to the call (Zeytinoglu, 2011, p. 282).

Listening is conceptualized spatially as an entering, as a reception of another. At times, this receiving might be of the speaker into the listener's space. At other times, this receiving might be of the listener into the speaker's space. *Hospitality* is an act of generosity by a person who welcomes and receives others into their spaces or creates a space of welcome in which they mutually dwell. It is kindness, goodwill, a generous gift of receiving for strangers, acquaintances, and friends. It is the creation of space in which another can dwell for a time, in which people are cared for and coexist in relative harmony.

Although I join with the other listening scholars in considering hospitality a beautiful metaphor for listening, I believe it is worth pushing that image just a bit further than may first come to mind for many of us. According to Lacey (2013), *hospitality* is conceptualized by Derrida's reading of Kant as the requirement "to welcome the other into one's space with or without any expectation of reciprocity" (p. 188). Yet, this conceptualization of listening as hospitality does not reflect all of the shared values of listening that emerged in this study, such as the very real expectation of reciprocal relating that occurs during dialogic interaction. Dialogue itself requires reciprocity, although that reciprocity may be culturally constructed in different ways and the exchange may be accomplished through different relational networks. At very least, those who would choose to be hospitable would expect the person that they are inviting into the shared space to respect and not hurt them or their space of welcome. They would expect them to be open and responsive to the expectations of the host. Consider, for example, how hospitality is assembled in this statement:

"I think some people come – come in with preconceived notions of what they imagine our – our community to be - or individual communities. 'Cause I – I'm from two different tribes and they're two different dynamics. You know, one's a very large populated area and ones very small and very quiet and somewhat stoic at times. And you can't approach those two different places with the same mentality in the same kind of level of communication. Those dynamics are completely different...And you have to be open and at least somewhat – like uh you know we wrote down - attentive and aware of where you are at and where things are going. Reading the room so to speak. You know it – it's when you come into a conversation or – or into someone's home that you've just met. Um, you don't make yourself at home completely you know as soon as you set foot through that door. You - you assess. Exactly you know how welcoming are they? What limits are they setting for you and are you aware of those limits? Because some - some people may take that as you know being a little too assertive or too aggressive. And that – that's not what they invited you into their home for. They want you to be somewhat respectful of – for the most part – of actually having the opportunity to be invited into their home." (First Nations member)

By this person's construction, the home is still owned by the family and a person who breaks the expected norms of behavior may be perceived as being too aggressive or assertive. The visitor, the speaker, the listeners, must understand the dynamics that are necessary for each home so that they can approach it with the right communication dynamics. They must "read the room" in order to understand the level of hospitality being offered to them. If they do not do this appropriately, they risk not "having the opportunity to be invited" back. *Hospitality*, like any communicative act, does not have to be a binary all-on or all-off. It can be offered and accepted in degrees.

Moving beyond myopic vision of our own cultural expectations about the social rules of hospitality requires a fusing of horizons that is only gained by being open to different perspectives and changes to our identities. This change can be frightening and should not be emotionally embraced without thinking or intellectually engaged without feeling. Baier (1994) argues that trust is the answer to this challenging negotiation of reason and feeling. As we determine whether or not to listen, whether or not to offer or accept hospitality, "our desire to listen is shaped by the trust we have for the voice we hear" (McHugh, 2015, p. 70). Our listening to a call should be at least partially determined by how much we trust the person we are working with to shape that call. We must know enough about the voice that calls and our own selves that hear that voice to construct an ethically hospitable response.

When we construct listening as hospitality, it is not about inviting anyone and everyone into our dialogic spaces. Rather, it is developing the capacity to be able to discern when to invite and when to reject, when to open and when to close, when listening builds capacity and when it destroys it. Choosing to listen with another requires a posture of trust. Trust requires belief based

on understanding how something works and an attitude of moving beyond what is known to embracing something new. Trust goes beyond certainty to contingent belief about what one hopes to be true. Trust requires one to be vulnerable, but not stupid. Trusting relationships are built on the willingness to take risks, not for the sake of an adrenaline rush but for the sake of building a better discourse. As Baier (1994) says:

To trust is to make oneself, to let oneself be more vulnerable than one might have been to harm from others — to give them an opportunity to harm one, in the confidence that they will not take it, because they have no good reason to. Why would one take such a risk? For risk it always is, given the partial opaqueness to us of the reasoning and motivation of those we trust and with whom we cooperate. Our confidence may be, and quite often is, misplaced. That is what we risk when we trust. If the best reason to take such a risk is the expected gain in security which comes from a climate of trust, then in trusting we are always giving up security to get greater security, exposing our throats so that others become accustomed to not biting (p. 180).

We should not trust another person, or expect others to trust us, without cause. Trust is built on conditions that have been underway for some time in a longer relational narrative. There are those who have clearly exhibited that they are not to be entrusted with important matters and there are dialogic *betweens* that have a history of harm. In this way, ethical listening would prompt us to trust based on memory and response to a broader narrative that promotes flourishing life both for the dialogic partners and the discourse in which they dwell. We must understand the narratives we tell so that we can effectively care for the discourses we create.

If hospitality is conceptualized as opening a door into one's personal space, those of us who live in unmoving structures might conceptualize hospitality solely as an act of welcome into a concrete space. Yet, as invitational welcome and opening, practicing hospitality can potentially happen in any space as long as we are present to the moment and relationship. People who choose to listen to difference must be willing to move, be willing to engage a number of different

unfamiliar spaces and places, to travel paths that are not their own (Coles, 2004). These might include different physical spaces, but they always involve different personal and social spaces and engage a variety of narrative times (Lacey, 2013). As we create these new spaces, we can practice hospitality in all of them and can bring with us new perspectives, new questions, new visions of what could be (Peavey, 2003). But "openness isn't a free-for-all, a license to dump all our emotional toxic waste onto someone else" (Chapman, 2012, pp. 114–115). Again, ethical hospitality requires trust but not blind trust.

As we consider the ethical creation of hospitable listening, I offer yet one more listening metaphor. I suggest that we consider ethical listening to be a tide pool on an ocean shore. In this tide pool, there are creatures that dwell for a time, and leave for a time. There is water that comes and that goes. There are rocks that create the bowl of space and gives shape to the speaking of the ocean, but are changed as they shape that speaking. Listening, like a tide pool, creates a hospitable space for people to come and find respite, to share a sense of belonging, to be authentic in their own bodies and yet trust that they are changing with the oceans of time. In this way, listening as a hospitable tide pool acts as Buber's concept of dialogic embrace. Although the members of the tide pool are in relationship with each other, and they do change each other, there is no purposeful effort to do so (Gordon, 2011). They are simply moving with the changing tides. They are energizing each other through their listening so that rather than seeing each other as obstacles, they are each "taking the energy from the other, then motion in a new direction emerges. Both parties end up in a different place than when they started, and the relationship between them is changed" (Peavey, 2003, p. 173-174).

In this tide pool, we are faced with much uncertainty of what will come, what will change, but there is a rhythm to the tides that also creates a sense of sameness and familiarity. In this space, “we are called to think, act, and construct dwelling places where moral consciousness can be cultivated. It is a heroic thing for us to do: create the habitats or openings where collaborative deliberation, moral consciousness, and civility become possible and where a life-giving gift can be shared with others” (Hyde, 2011a, p. 42). In this space, we practice openness and hospitality but there are limits to that hospitality.

Pollutants – garbage, oil, sewage, toxins – are not welcome. Plants and animals that do no harm in another environment can do much harm here. Some things are not welcome because they can damage both the tide pool and those being hosted in that pool. They are not welcome because they pollute the ocean of which the tide pool is a part. Perhaps any one thing might be tolerated, but in excess they are not. They are not welcome here, but they may be welcome elsewhere, may be useful elsewhere. But not here, and not now. And so the choice is made not to listen, not to extend invitation, and to close when necessary. This act of closing is ultimately ethical because it encourages sustainability of the overall ecosystem. Even as others call to us, we help shape that calling because in communication meaning is shared.

Much of the literature around listening discusses the ways that we respond to a call as if that call itself comes to us in an unmediated form. Yet, callings do not arrive to us unwrapped. They, as symbols, can change depending on any number of historical and contextual factors. The ways in which we sense the call impact the ways that we can or should respond to it. Some calls were never asking for all of us but rather inviting just part of us. Thus, perhaps instead of understanding a call as existing outside of ourselves and making demands on us, we can drop a

transactional model of communication and adopt a constitutive one where calling is something shaped *between* dialogic partners. If callings are developed, created, and constituted, they are also contingent on our shared and conflicting narratives, our community and personal perspectives. We must have the wisdom to ensure that the ways that we constitute those calls are sustainable and ethical. Reagan (1996) insists that "what is ultimately important in the text and in the work of art in general is not the object which it depicts but the world that it generates" (p. 107). In a similar way, when listening ethically we must recognize that what is important in the calling that we co-create is the world that it produces.

Conceptualizing ethical listening as *sustainable hospitality* encourages us to learn how to act on shared values that uphold healthy discourse. It requires us to learn how to choose, in the moment, what is best for the dialogic whole. At times, this means we listen when we could not. It never means that we listen when we should not. We can listen to the particular in our particularity, responding to the call that we helped to shape. We can choose to extend trust to the dialogue, and hope that we can create a more flourishing discourse through our commitment to ethical listening.

Hope for Sustainable Hospitality

A dialogic listening ethic is founded both on a pragmatic and phenomenological perspective of contingency, historicity, and experience that contributes to the ultimate goal of encouraging and constructing a more healthy discourse. Does this sound idealistic? It does to me. Many of our dialogues are fraught with pain and we have little reason to believe that they should go well or to trust another with our listening or our speaking. We try, and then the discourse falls apart. We reach out, only to have our relationships collapse around and in us. We want to be

ethical listeners – we want to listen well in whatever situation we find ourselves – yet there are so many matters to which we must attend. Listening itself may seem easy at the beginning of each day, but by the end of the day we remember just how hard it can be. Yet somewhere in the midst of this desire to pursue an ideal life, we must hope that change in keeping with our deepest shared values and commitments is possible. As Emily Dickinson reportedly said, “Hope inspires the good to reveal itself.”

It is not enough simply to hope that things will go well. Hope, rightly conceived, is based on both experience and rational thought of what has been and then attesting that a better future is possible through discursive action. Hope requires us to struggle between what has been difficult in our lives and work toward a vision of a better future. As Freire (2014) says:

To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle is one of its mainstays. The essential thing, as I maintain later on, is this: hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain. Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness (pp. 2–3).

As deduced from this argument, hope is essential to ethical listening yet it will always come with struggle. Effective collaboration to realize these visions requires a co-orientation toward a common objective through ongoing conversation (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). In a theoretical framework conceptualizing failed and successful collaboration in civil society, Koschmann (2016) points to the importance of dialogue, discourse, and co-orientation in any historical moment in creating effective collaboration. Collaborative dialogue requires us to work toward an end. As Crick and Bodie (2016) point out, “dialogue requires not only a shared commitment to inquiry and a respect for one’s interlocutor (even if it is oneself) but also a skill at reasoning and

a sensitivity to esthetic feelings, particular those that we perceived as predictive effects of certain experiences or courses of action” (p. 286). I argue that the end to which we are working is good discourse and that our dialogue that promotes that discourse is shaped by listening ethically.

Every now and again we are caught into dialogic moments that are full of beauty.

Although they might be difficult to remember, they might come to us in the whiff of a scent of sage, in the flash of an evening sunset, in the sound of a song. These sensory inputs lead us into a story that we can remember of beauty and goodness within our own self and in our relational selves. They help to put us in, as Carbaugh (2005) says, the “proper place to listen”:

There is the potential for mystery in this listening process that is important to emphasize. One does not make listening happen through an assertion of one's own will. In fact, efforts to listen this way will likely fail. In other words, one can put oneself in a proper place to listen, but the success and quality of the process is something that issues forth from the place, coming along of its own (p. 112).

As we position ourselves in ways that we can listen ethically, our memories of beautiful dialogue can remind us that there is hope, hope that retaining our commitment to core values that create identities in our own selves, others, and our communities can build rather than destroy. As Fiumara (1990) says,

It is almost as though in order to listen one had to “become” different, since it is not so much a question of grasping concepts or propositions as of attempting an experience. Unless we are ready, receptive – and also, possibly, vulnerable – the experience of listening appears to be impossible. Philosophy demands our entire mind: listening our totality. Experiential participation does not seem that necessary in seizing a theoretical construct...the more one listens the more one is absorbed by an awareness of the fragility of our doctrines and of the fertility of a Socratic “wonder” (p. 191).

As we live in this moment of wonder, we are aware of our vulnerability and choose to let go of our dogmatism. We become receptive. We hope to create ethical dialogue through the ways we give life to the listening values on which our communication is are grounded. We discern when

and whom to trust and, through that, hope for transformation through our dialogue. We navigate trust and suspicion toward learning how best to open sustainable hospitality to discourse, allowing ourselves to change and be changed by it. This, after all, is the nature of all relational listening. Its beauty lies in the fact that it is here, but not yet. Both present and future are part of a much longer narrative we are listening into existence and we are ethically responsible to give this narrative its shape by listening well.

Discourse is never completed and we have a role to play in shaping it. That shaping happens through our engagement and co-construction of it, by the ways that we respond and shape others through our listening. Why bother? We have to have the hope that something better is possible. Yet, through our experience and rationality, we know that something much worse is possible as well. Into this dialectic of the potential for better and worse in dialogue, we navigate a dialectic of trust and suspicion. As we acknowledge our vulnerability and lack of full knowledge, we may be tempted to be overwhelmingly suspicious of everyone and everything, including our own knowledge of ourselves which is always in itself partial. This path of total suspicion is not, however, the best path for creating sustainable hospitality as it keeps one from ever trusting and committing to another.

Van der Heiden (2014) argues that a useful concept to navigate this space in which we live with both trust and suspicion is Ricoeur's concept of attestation. "Attestation is a kind of belief, not in the doxic sense of 'I believe that...' but in the sense of 'I believe in...'" (Reagan, 1996, p. 77). This type of *believing in* supersedes the need to claim absolute truth or knowledge about processes or outcomes before moving forward to bring something new into being. Attestation is grounded in a larger narrative of belief and testimony that accepts contingent

truths, placing one's confidence in a narrative testimony rather than requiring verification of unmediated reality from the perspective of an individual.

Intention to do good, intention to listen well, matters. In a philosophy of attestation, "this sense of intention is very close to the act of promising" (Reagan, 1996, p. 81). Attestation allows us to engage in discourse and act responsibly and responsively in it because of the promise of a better future without knowing that it will absolutely come to pass. As we listen to the narratives in which we live, "one listens to the symbol in the *trust* that it tells us something profound about our existence" (van der Heiden, 2014, p. 133). Simultaneously, we "*distrust* the symbolic announcement. Rather than listening to what the symbol has to say, one withdraws from its voice and tries to interpret the hidden structure that lies behind the appearance of meaning" (p. 133). Both people and the messages they create are symbols. Our choice to attest-to is a belief in the discourse of a person offering a testimony – a narrative – of their experiences through symbols. Yet, we distrust because we recognize that there are hidden power structures behind the symbols that may harm the constitution of our discourses and ourselves. We distrust because we have personally experienced that sharing ourselves with the wrong person can put us in dangerous positions and threaten our well-being.

Rather than choosing blind trust or suspicion, Ricoeur's concept of attestation invites us into living a dialectic struggle of both trust and suspicion, knowing that relative weight on one or the other side of that spectrum will lead to different ends but that ignoring either can lead us to lose the capacity to act altogether. By attesting, we choose to act in ways that lean into the promises of symbols, of people and the messages that have proven themselves trustworthy in our narrative history and promise to remain so into our futures:

Despite the fact that we do not know whether we remain the same – or rather, we know that we change and do not remaining the same – we nevertheless promise. Consequently, since this promise is not founded in any certainty about whom we will be in the future, it is in and by promising itself that we attest to the fact that somebody else can rely upon us: by promising we attest to the other that we can be trustworthy. In turn, at one point in the future, the other may remind us of our promise and appeal to us to keep our promise. By making this appeal, the other also attests to our capacity to keep a promise. Regardless of the fact whether we do or do not promise, it would be meaningless for him or her to appeal to our promise; hence by appealing to us, the other attests to our capacity to be reliable and be accountable for the promises we make (van der Heiden, 2014, p. 136).

Joining others in attestation, to the pursuit of belief in a capacity for a better dialogue and discourse opens ourselves up for disappointment. We may not keep promises to others and to ourselves. We may find that deception weakens our capacities for wholeness. Yet, it is exactly this desire for capacity-building that is so central to caring for others and ourselves in the greater discourse and dialogue. It is because of this capacity-building and desire to be trustworthy in our promises to pursue opening of spaces that we make and appeal to promises. Suspicion and distrust helps us to determine untrustworthy people and relationships that would harm and decrease our capacity for ethical listening. Trust and trustworthiness creates the space in which we can risk employing our capacities for “acting, speaking and being responsible” (p. 139) and enact ethical listening. As Ohler (2008) says, “In reaching out the other is offering trust and demanding loyalty” (p. 124).

As we adopt a dialogic listening ethic that is responsive to the narrative history and cultural expressions in this study, we must be willing to embrace imperfection and recognize that beauty can be found in that imperfection. Learning happens through failure, not perfection. Like the philosophical perspective of Wabi Sabi in Zen Buddhism, dialogic interactions that do not develop exactly as we intended are inherently imperfect and impermanent and yet are beautiful because and not despite it. The incomplete nature of the narratives we live, the dialogues we

build, and the discourses we create is part of the beauty we embody. Instead of only being acted upon, we have the chance to be co-creators of our discourses. This responsibility calls us to carefully employ all of our mental and emotional capacities to listen well in constantly changing narratives to the needs of the discourse that unites us. As we embrace our limitations and open ourselves to others that are different than ourselves, we learn. And, in that learning, we listen. And, in that listening, we can practice our values through habits that shape the world as it ought to be.

APPENDIX: RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Questions

This study was guided by a series of research questions (RQ) and methodologies meant to probe the listening values being constructed in a particular narrative moment. The overarching research question was “How might a dialogic listening ethic construct individual and social well-being?” This overarching question was guided by two more specific research questions:

RQ1: How might the work of dialogic ethicists inform a listening ethic?

RQ2: What diverse perceptions of ethical listening exist among and between people of different cultural communities?

These research questions were explored in several communities of difference as introduced in Chapter 2, including self-identifying Asian, ASL, Caucasian, First Nations, Latino, and LGBTQ and Allies communities. These communities of difference represent ethnic, gender, and disability groups that are particularly salient in understanding diversity in the college campus with which this study engaged.

As explained in Chapter 2, I based this study on the self-organized communities that used a college multicultural center and disability support center, as well as the voluntary responses of Caucasian participants attending or working at the college. I employed several methods, including an online quantitative survey and analysis of the discourse of focus groups, both quantitative (corpus linguistics) and qualitative (value analysis and metaphoric criticism). I engaged a retroductive and dialogic approach that worked to integrate these many voices in dialogue with each other. Retroductive analysis brings inductive and deductive approaches together in comparative analysis of diverse cases (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011) while dialogic

analysis grounds research in intersubjectivity and difference as constructed through discourse and narrative (Sullivan, 2012).

On the basis of the findings from these two research questions through these research methods, I identify values that are shared among participants and crucial to consider in the development of a dialogic listening ethic. In this appendix, I outline the research process of the overall study and the methods I employed in greater detail than initially described in the sections on research design.

Data Collection Methods

The two data collection methods I used in this project included an online survey and focus group discussions that led to the creation of discourses about listening ethics. I first discuss the way that the online survey was used to gather a baseline understanding of diverse conceptualizations of listening on campus and how I used it to recruit participants for the focus groups. I then discuss the two phases of focus groups that I facilitated.

Survey

Surveys are useful for gathering information quickly and at low cost because they can reach large numbers of respondents while being relatively easy to use and offering some degree of anonymity when desired. In this study, I used an online survey to gain a baseline understanding of how participants in this study conceptualized listening and as a recruitment tool for the focus group phase of the study. The survey process that I adopted was guided by the practical guidelines offered by Van Selm and Jankowski (2006), Walejko (2009), and Yun and Trumbo (2000). Through the survey, I gathered basic demographic information about participants and implemented the Listening Concepts Inventory that explored the ways that

people construct meanings of listening. After introducing the research project, participants answered a series of demographic and questions related to conceptualization of listening. These questions are given in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Online Survey Questions

Question 1. This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to participate in this research. I know that I can contact Elizabeth Parks with any questions at lizparks@uw.edu. If I have questions later about the research, I can do so. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at the University of Washington at 206.543.0098. I have read the study information and ...

- agree to participate
- do not agree to participate

Please provide some general information about yourself:

Question 2. First and last name:

Question 3. Email:

Question 4. Age:

Question 5. Current Gender Identity: Mark the box that best fits how you describe yourself. (Choose one)

- Female or Woman
- Male or Man
- Trans Male or Trans Man
- Trans Female or Trans Woman
- Gender Queer or Gender Non-Conforming
- Prefer Not to Answer
- Different Identity (please specify):

Question 6. What is your home country or countries?

Question 7. I am a native speaker or fluent in the following language(s). (Mark all that apply.)

American Sign Language

English

Mandarin Chinese

Spanish

Other (please specify any other languages that you know):

Question 8. I am able to easily participate in a conversation in either English or American Sign Language (ASL) with other people.

Yes

No

Question 9. From the following groups, please select the one with which you most closely personally identify.

Asian

Black or African American

Deaf (ASL)

Latino/a

LGBTQ

Native American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White or Caucasian

None of the above

Question 10. Do you also identify with any of the other groups listed here (not including the group you most closely identify with)? (Check all that apply)

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Deaf (ASL)
- Latino/a
- LGBTQ
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- None of the above

Question 11. What does “Listening” Mean for You?

Listening has different meanings for different people. It is a rich and multifaceted concept and can be represented in various ways, depending on an individual’s experiences and cultures. Everybody has their own expertise in listening!

For each of the 16 activities, please select a response that indicates how similar you think each activity is to “listening” when communicating with another person.

	Not at all similar to good listening	Somewhat related to good listening	Rather related to good listening	Almost identical to good listening	Identical to good listening
Sharing Information					
Helping					
Learning					
Arguing					
Drawing conclusions					
Comforting					
Interpreting					
Being critical					

Becoming aware					
Bonding					
Analyzing					
Conceding					
Retaining information					
Understanding					
Thank you for your time!					

The online survey opened to the campus community during three months (January through March) in the winter of 2016. I marketed the study through posters that were hung on public boards around campus, through the online community listserv sent to all faculty and staff, and shared by word of mouth among staff and students. Posters invited participants to “take part in a study on listening and culture” and to “complete a 5 minute online survey about listening” at a given website. They were informed that if they chose to participate in the study, they could be one of eight randomly selected participants to win a \$10 gift card. Participants who indicated wanting to be in the drawing were randomized and gift cards were mailed, delivered, or picked up on campus following the close of the online survey.

179 students and staff between the ages of 17 and 75, including 119 women, 56 men, and 3 gender non-conforming (a-gender, gender queer, or gender non-conforming) participated in the online survey. Of the 186 total participants who started the online survey, five declined to finish or to participate, and two responses were removed because of repeat visits to the website under the same name. The majority identified as being from the United States in nationality, while 1-3 participants indicated national affiliations with Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece,

Japan, Mexico, and/or Russia. 171 participants indicated fluency in English, 22 indicated also knowing Spanish, 6 ASL, and 1-2 participants indicated fluency in French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and/or Swedish. Participants were asked to indicate a primary identity affiliation (a group with which they most closely personally identified) and 143 participants selected White/Caucasian, 16 Latino/a, 9 First Nations, 7 Asian, 3 LGBTQ, 2 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 1 Black or African American, and 5 indicated none of the listed groups. A follow-up question asked them to indicate all other identity affiliations not marked as the primary identification. For this second question, 131 indicated that they had no secondary identity group of the list provided, while 18 indicated White/Caucasian, 17 Latino/a, 12 Native American, 9 Asian, 7 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 5 LGBTQ, 4 Black or African American, 4 ASL (Deaf).

Participants could also volunteer to participate in a series of focus group discussions about good listening through this survey. I pursued trans-community and intra-community dialogues about good listening through focus groups formed from these volunteer participants as discussed in the following section.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews bring groups of people together to dialogue and discuss a particular issue. As Krueger (1994) puts it, “a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (p. 6). Krueger goes on to argue that it is appropriate to use focus groups as a methodology when one is trying to explain how people understand a particular idea. By working through comparative case analysis, I adopted a strategy which allowed me to generalize ethical

similarities among the discourses of communities of difference while at the same time noticing cultural distinctions that emerged in each focus group community. I followed the guidelines outlined by Fontes (2008), Krueger (1994), Morgan and Krueger (1993), Frey and Fontana (1993), and Knodel (1993) in their practical guides to facilitating focus groups in this project.

Focus groups are often used in qualitative research projects to pursue group interaction and dialogues about particular topics of interest (Freeman, 2006). They are particularly useful for considering how “knowledge is created through the diverse experiences and forms of knowledge of, and interaction between, participants” and can yield useful insights into a community’s cultural values (Grønkjær et al., 2011, p. 16). People who indicated they wanted to participate in focus group discussions about good listening were invited to be part of the two-phase focus group dialogue process and these dialogues were video-recorded.

The focus group interactions yielded 11 video recorded discourses that I used as the primary empirical data in this study. A foundational premise of my research was that discourse impacts and is impacted by an incredible variety of social, cultural, and linguistic elements and that its analysis can yield greater insight into the ways that humans have their being and help construct a more ethical and understanding world. Many philosophers (Heidegger, Gadamer, Foucault, and Ricoeur, to name just a few) argue that we all, as languaging beings, “make the world meaningful and ethical by way of our discursive practices” (Hyde & Sargent, 1993, p. 123). These discursive practices can include texts of all kinds in their creation of values, ideologies, and ethical frameworks. In the first phase of focus groups, all participants who indicated being interested in joining were invited to talk within their self-identified communities about ethical listening. These communities included seven groups: Asian, ASL, Caucasian Men,

Caucasian Women, Latino, First Nations, and LGBTQ and Allies (who incidentally also identified as Caucasian). An online poll of potential meeting times was emailed to all of the volunteers and the time that allowed the most participants to attend was selected from their choices which resulted in individual focus group sizes between three and ten participants. The focus group was facilitated loosely following the guide in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Stage 1 Focus Group Facilitation Guide

Time	Content
00-05	Consent Form
05-10	Opening Question: Can we go around the table, and you tell us what name you would like to be called and your favorite color?
10-15	Brainstorm: What are all the words that you can think of that are similar to listening? Write down all the words on the paper.
15-20	Introductory Questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does it feel like when you're really listened to? Or not listened to? 2. Describe a situation in which you felt you were a good listener. What did you do? 3. What makes a person easy to listen to? 4. Is this room set up for good listening? Why or why not? (<i>Change if needed</i>)
20-30	Transition Questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does a good listener show that they are listening to you? How do you know that you have been listened to and not ignored? 2. Is it possible for someone to listen well but not agree with you or do what you want? How would they show that? 3. How much do you expect people who have more authority or power than you – such as your supervisor, an elder, or a teacher – to listen to you? 4. How would people with more authority or power than you – such as your supervisor, an elder, or a teacher – communicate that they were listening to you?
30-35	Key Question: What do you think is the difference between good and bad listening?
35-40	Community Questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think you are a good listener most of the time? If yes, how did you become that way? 2. Do you and your friends or family have certain ways of listening to each other that are different than other people you know? If yes, what does that look like? 3. How do you feel about listening to people from different cultures than your own? How could you do it better?

40-50	Bodie Scenarios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain directions. Read each scenario and have them fill it out individually • Discuss after each scenario: “Which did you say was most similar to good listening in this scenario and why?”
50-55	Ending Question: If you had one minute to tell the world how to be a good listener to your community, what would you tell them?
55-60	Any questions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect scenario worksheet – make sure their name is on it. • Hand out business cards

I included the ASL community in this study, but due to time limitations and challenges in organizing the community, it was difficult to arrange a time and place where enough native ASL users were present to have a deep conversation about the role of listening in deaf cultural environments. The focus group included a wide variety of language preferences and skills. In one way, this was a strength to the research as the group showed fairly typical negotiation of signed and spoken languages in a mixed deaf and hearing environment. From another perspective, this was a weakness as there were communication gaps between the person who was just learning ASL and the fluent ASL speaker, as well as the need to interpret the discourse between ASL and English with the participants present (the ASL learner was a last-minute invitation by another participant who agreed to interpret for the meeting because of her presence). Interpretation added another discursive layer that was not expected – indeed, had been intentionally excluded in the project when I determined not to include ASL participants in the second phase of focus groups. Although this focus group’s discourse was not unusual for an interaction in the deaf community, it did add a challenge to including and analyzing the ASL focus group’s discourse in the corpus. Future research might examine discourses like these for listening in this mixed linguistic context, as it does represent one important communication context.

In the second phase of focus groups, all of the individuals from each of the first set of focus groups were invited to explore multi-difference and gendered understandings of good listening. Again, an online poll was distributed to coordinate availability, resulting in four focus group meetings with three to four participants each. The second stage of focus group dialogues included four groups where people were grouped across differences. One group included Caucasian men and women, and the other three groups included individuals from the various communities of difference included in this study (with the exclusion of the ASL group because of the ways that interpreters would impact the interpersonal discourses). The focus group was facilitated loosely following the guide as given in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Stage 2 Focus Group Facilitation Guide

Time	Content
00-05	Opening: Go around the table, and tell us: name you would like to be called, pronoun you prefer, and answer: Would you rather...never be able to listen to anyone ever again or never be able to speak to anyone ever again? Why?
05-20	Bodie Scenarios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass around the worksheet and ask them to rank: “I think listening is most like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Organizing information B) Relationship building C) Learning and integrating information D) Critical thinking and arguing • Read each scenario and have them fill it out individually • Discuss as a group after each scenario: “Which did you say was most similar to good listening in this scenario and why?” • Would they change anything on the back of their paper given these scenarios?
20-50	Individual Questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell a 60-second story about a time when you recognized that you were different in some way from the people around you? 2. When you need advice, who do you go to and why do you go to this person? 3. In the last week, is there anyone you felt obligated to listen to? What is their relationship to you? Why did you feel obligated to listen? 4. Have you ever given someone the advice: “Don’t listen to that person.”? If so, who or what message were you telling them not to listen to and why?

	<p>Individual Narrative</p> <p>5. Tell about a time when you felt you weren't listened to. Why do you think this person or these people found it hard or decided not to listen to you? What do you wish they had done instead?</p> <p>Community Questions</p> <p>6. Do you and your friends or family have certain ways of listening to each other that are different than other people? If yes, explain what that looks like.</p> <p>7. What is difficult about being a member of a majority or minority (or a privileged or underprivileged) community (here)?</p> <p>8. Is it possible for someone to listen well to your communities but not agree with you or do what your communities want? How would they show that?</p> <p>9. Give 60 seconds of advice to someone not familiar with your background and life experiences about how to be a good listener to people with your background and life experiences.</p>
50-60	Collect worksheets. Any questions? Return Consent Form and Gift Cards. Thank you.

Together, the first and second stages of focus group dialogues yielded 11 different discourses about ethical listening. The video recordings of the focus group discourses were between 43 and 74 minutes, and the ASL focus group had a much longer interaction at 112 minutes.¹⁵ See

Table 13 below for a summary of the focus group discourse phases.

Table 13: Focus Group Video Recordings Demographics

Phase 1	Phase 2
Asian (60 min)	Asian/First Nations/Latino/LGBTQ (74 min)
First Nations (44 min)	Asian/First Nations/Latino (71 min)
Latino (50 min)	Asian/First Nations/Latino (65 min)
LGBTQ - Caucasian (57 min)	Caucasian Men/Women (72 min)
Men - Caucasian (49 min)	
Women - Caucasian (61 min)	

¹⁵ The ASL group's focus group covered questions that were asked during the first and second focus group dialogues. A decision was made to not include them in the second round of mixed cultural discourses because of the need to include an ASL interpreter in those groups and the ways that changes the interactional dynamics of the group.

ASL (112 min)	
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All of these discourses were included in the analysis and the construction of this dialogic listening ethic using a mixture of qualitative, quantitative, and rhetorical methods, including value analysis, corpus linguistics, and metaphoric criticism. Findings were contextualized in over 20 hours of observation during four months (January-April 2016) of community meetings.

One aspect of focus groups to which researchers must pay attention is the likelihood that people will respond in ways that most fit expectations of the group. Social desirability and individual pursuit of approval in a social context is likely a universal concept, but there are important cross-cultural differences in social desirability. In early social desirability literature, performance of social desirability was primarily seen as a nuisance, but more recently it has been accepted as inherent to social relationships and as indicating something about the social reality of the respondents. For example, people who perform heightened social desirability behaviors during research processes may also be aware that they are doing it and performing it intentionally. Participant adaptation to perceived social desirability may be especially apparent when sensitive issues are being discussed or interactions are less anonymous and they have more issues of face to maintain. In addition, "cross-national differences in social desirability may, however, be related to cultural value systems such as individualism and collectivism dimensions" (Johnson & Van de Vijver, 2003, p. 203). Although these effects are likely present in the focus groups of this study, the fact that participants acted in a way that appeared to promote a particular conception of a culturally shaped "ideal" could be used to further identify "ideals" and "values" when enacting listening. Thus, whereas social desirability might be considered a limitation in another study, it would have been beneficial in this one.

Data Analysis Methods

Empirical data collected through surveys and focus group dialogues were analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative means, including Bodie's (2010) revised Listening Concepts Inventory and analysis of discourse through metaphoric criticism, value analysis, and corpus linguistic methods.

Listening Concepts Inventory

The Listening Concept Inventory was originally developed to probe the complexity of meanings of listening and how people perceive them, following the belief that thoughts impact actions (Bodie, 2010; Imhof & Janusik, 2006). In the initial formation of the inventory, academic listening scholarship and the input of students from the United States and Germany were inductively combined to yield 33 items that fit into four cognitive constructs. By using this Listening Concept Inventory, Imhof and Janusik (2006) found that there were significant differences in the ways that German and US-American student populations conceptualized listening. Whereas both populations were somewhat equal in the ways that they conceptualized listening as organization of information, German students were more likely to conceptualize listening as relationship building and less likely to view listening as "learning and integrating information and a critical reception of information" than US-Americans (p. 90). From this research, Imhof and Janusik argue that there are cultural variations to listening and that, even among so-called "Western" conglomerates, differences may exist.

Bodie (2010) furthered the development of the Imhof-Janusik Listening Concepts Inventory scale by testing its development and replication among college students in the United States, considering how diverse personalities and changes in time might impact test results and

how different listening contexts might impact the cognitive listening constructs. The Listening Concepts Inventory, as revised by Bodie (2010) and renamed the Revised Listening Concepts Inventory (hereafter, the LCI-R), includes 15 items found to be statistically significant when identifying the same four listening constructs developed by Imhof and Janusik. The 15 items that fall into these four constructs included storing information, drawing conclusions, becoming aware, retaining information (Information acquisition and organization), helping, comforting, bonding (Relationship building), learning, interpreting, analyzing, understanding (Learning and integrating information), and arguing, being critical, answering, conceding (Critical listening). Using Imhof and Janusik's same 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (=not at all similar to good listening) to a maximum of 5 (=identical to listening), participants were prompted to rank each of the 15 items based on how similar they believe they are to listening. As guided by the methodological procedures of the previous studies, I analyzed the results through Microsoft Excel's statistical package that included one-way analysis of variance using a two-tailed level of significance and t-Tests to identify individual differences.

In order to explore the ways that these constructs might be shared or differ based on different cultural identities, I calculated the responses of individuals associated with particular self-reported communities of difference. The differences that were included in this comparison include the largest ethnic groups on campus: Asian, Caucasian, First Nations, and Latino. Although the LGBTQ and Allies group was also a community of difference included in this study, all but one of the members of the LGBTQ group also affiliated as White/Caucasian. Because of the sample size, the intersecting identities, and the fact that no statistically significant differences were found between gender conforming and gender non-conforming groups on

campus, the LGBTQ group was not included in the statistical analysis of this comparison. Other participants that indicated other identities of difference – including the ASL group – were too small of a sample size to be included in this inventory’s statistical comparison but their voices are included later in the focus group discourse analysis portion of this study. I also explored the differences between the ways people from different populations conceptualized listening based on age, gender, national affiliation, English-only speakers as compared to those who spoke multiple languages, and identity group classifications based on the demographic information provided by the survey participants.

Results showed that this rank order did not significantly differ by comparing all of the participants with those that who identified as Caucasian/White and those who identified as identified with a non-White ethnic or racial community. It did not differ between those who primarily identified with the United States nationality as compared to Non-US-Only (affiliated with additional countries to the US, or with a different country than the US). There were no significant differences between gender conforming and gender non-conforming participants, nor were there significant differences between men and women (whether these were done all together or separated by differences or languages use). All four of the Asian, Latino, First Nations, and Caucasian groups ranked listening as Information Acquisition relatively high (between 3.41 and 3.62) and did not display significant differences. However, lest one assume that this data points to a completely shared perspective of what comprises listening, it is here that differences must be noted among communities of difference. ANOVA analysis of the inventory results showed significant differences were present in all three of the remaining listening constructs: Relationship Building (.007), Learning (.034), and Critical (.017). When employing t-

Tests to examine where these differences appeared, it became apparent that differences appeared throughout these communities of difference.

LCI: Online Survey and Focus Group Responses

In addition to the online survey of conceptualizations of listening using the LCI, a subset of participants completed an additional survey of listening conceptualizations based on four specific scenarios. These scenarios were developed by Bodie (2010) to explore situational impact on listening constructs based on the 15 items that categorized into the same four learning, relationship building, organizing information, and critical listening constructs. During the second phase of the focus group dialogues, participants were asked to follow the same LCI-R scale described above in order to assess how they conceptualized good listening in the four different scenarios developed by Bodie, including the following:

Scenario 1: You are sitting at home when your phone rings. It is a good friend of yours who tells you that s/he is having car trouble. While your friend is giving you directions to come pick him/her up, their cell phone indicates the battery will die soon. Your friend tells you they have limited time to talk.

Scenario 2: You are at home on a Tuesday evening when a long-time friend calls. This friend was just dumped by a long-time dating partner whom they thought was “the one.” Your friend begins to explain the situation and becomes quite nostalgic, telling several old stories.

Scenario 3: You are in a college class that is mainly taught through lectures by a professor. The class consists of 250 people, and the professor rarely encourages questions from students during class. Of course, since it is such a large class and attendance is not always 100%, the tests are heavily focused on lecture material. As you found out on the first exam, the test questions are more than simple “information regurgitation” and are, instead, aimed at testing whether you learned and can apply the material.

Scenario 4: In a small class, you have been assigned to a group for a short in-class activity. For the activity, each group is supposed to come up with a way to persuade classmates to accept a particular position on a controversial topic. At the end of class, the instructor has told the groups that they will debate each other. In the debate, you will be responsible not only for an opening argument but also for providing counter arguments to the main points brought up by your opponent.

For this segment of the second phase of focus group dialogues, I began by distributing handouts with all four scenarios, 15 listening items, and the 5-point Likert Scale accessible to each participant. I proceeded by asking the participants to “Imagine listening in each of these scenarios. If you want to be a ‘good listener’ how similar to each of these activities should your listening be?” I then read one of the scenarios above, and repeated the question: “If you want to be a ‘good listener’ in this scenario, how similar to each of these activities should your listening be?” Participants were encouraged to quietly fill out the Likert-scale for the particular scenario. When all participants were finished marking their perspectives on their own handout, the facilitator encouraged participants to compare their responses and discuss similarities and differences between how they marked each of the 15 items and what might be impacting their differing responses. At the end of the activity, I collected the hard copies of their responses and calculated their individual responses, as well as the mean results of the all 16 participants following the same analytic strategy as the online survey.

LCI: A Critique of the Nomenclature

In academic domains, the term critical is often viewed as a positive term. For example, critical thinking means intellectual engagement of an idea and critical studies examines the role of power in social interactions. In this study, the term “critical” was used frequently in the LCI, both as an item that was rated and one of the four listening conceptualizations. It quickly became apparent, however, that there were three major limitations related to this term and the conceptual construction of this listening orientation.

First, the term “critical” was considered overwhelmingly negatively by the majority of the participants. Several people from different communities of difference remarked that one

should never be critical and that it indicated a closing off of the listener from both ideas and people. The use of the term “critical” as one of the 15 items included in the LCI’s construction of “critical listening” was scored the lowest of any of the 15 items that were ranked for their similarity to good listening. When discussing the “critical” line item in the focus groups for the four different scenarios, people who scored it on the high side of the scale generally discussed how it would be used to manipulate a scenario to their benefit. Those who scored it low tended to discuss how there was no place for criticizing or criticism in good listening. On either side, even when participants indicated that they were critical when they listened, it was generally associated with negative engagement rather than positive characteristics. Just think: who would put “critical” on a resume as a positive professional or personal trait? I suggest that terms like “problem solving” or “engaged analysis” would alleviate that immediate negative reaction to the term and potentially change the overarching results.

In addition to the overriding negative connotation with being “critical,” several people from multiple focus groups indicated that they were not familiar with another one of the 15 items associated with the critical listening orientation: “conceding.” Eliciting participant suggestions of potential meaning ranged from definitions that included somewhat related ideas such as “competing” to very different concepts such as “conceited.” It is usually a limitation to a study when people are responding to things they do not understand! Participants tended to rank this item in the lower middle of the scale when they did not know what it meant, which as one of only four items on the scale, would lower the collective scoring of this listening conceptualization. Again, this term could be adjusted to a more generally well known English term such as “not resisting” or “yielding” to encourage more accurate responses.

Finally, of the four scenarios introduced by Bodie (2010), the scenario designed to test a critical orientation raised some concerns in its ability to elicit the critical construct as very different from the other three constructs. There were four scenarios included in this study – a lecture scenario designed to prompt the learning construct, the upset friend scenario designed to prompt the relationship building construct, the debate scenario designed to prompt the critical construct, and the cell phone scenario designed to prompt the information acquisition construct.

Similar to Bodie's original results, the upset friend scenario did yield the relationship building construct as primary. Also similar to Bodie's original results of the cell phone scenario's target elicitation of the information acquisition construct, my results "did not elicit the primary listening construct intended" (p. 329) and again prompted participants to respond with both information acquisition and learning constructs most highly. Bodie suggests that any scenario can "elicit secondary and tertiary conceptualizations" (p. 329), which is plausible as listening is a complex process and people's cognitive frameworks about listening can be nuanced. This was exhibited in the results of his original testing of these scenarios and again in the limited exploration of their use in this study. However, dissimilar to Bodie's results in which the large lecture did not yield the hoped for "learning" construct, this study's results did match this construct most highly with that scenario. Finally, Bodie's debate scenario results did prompt a "critical" construct in his testing but the results of my small sample yielded very high results on all but the relational construct, with "critical," "information acquisition," and "learning" all being rated on the scale between four and five (almost to identical to good listening). See mean results for each construct in Table 14 below.

Table 14: LCI Scenario Construct Results

Situation	Information Acquisition (Parks/Bodie Results)	Relationship Building (Parks/Bodie Results)	Learning (Parks/Bodie Results)	Critical (Parks/Bodie Results)
Upset Friend (RB)	2.93/2.09	3.91/3.29	3.55/2.73	1.77/0.79
Cell Phone (IA)	4.34/3.45	2.73/2.94	4.59/2.94	2.77/0.71
Lecture (L)	3.87/3.25	3.52/1.05	4.03/3.26	1.83/0.55
Debate (C)	4.19/2.79	1.77/1.31	4.69/2.06	4.04/4.09

As one can see above, the debate activity elicited the highest “critical” rating of any of the four scenarios in my sample, pointing to its ability to prompt that construct. However, as the critical scenario yields three of the four constructs at such a high level, its design needs further reflection to better prompt a critical orientation as the primary construct. This may be more easily accomplished if the critical construct as a whole undergoes more reflection, including exploration of how terminology used in the inventory reflects the aimed for construct and the target of participants’ attention – whether that focus be on the information or on the people in the scenario, and whether good listening is most constructed for the moment of the exchange or as part of a longer relational narrative.

Analysis of Discourse

The analysis of discourse is focused on the ways that language forms and functions relate and can include texts of all kinds (Silberstein, 2011). Discursive texts include many types of verbal and nonverbal communication and point to broader social systems that relate to people’s identities, institutional practices, and socio-cultural beliefs (Tracy & Robles, 2013). While some researchers may choose to focus on particular linguistic choices on micro-levels of language use (sometimes called little-d “discourse”), others focus on broader societal constructions of

language that impact and constrain people's lived experiences (sometimes called big-d "Discourse") and promote particular value systems (Gee, 1990b). All of these fall under the umbrella of discourse analysis, which is a highly interdisciplinary methodological tradition drawing from fields such as anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, sociology, critical/cultural studies and communication (Cameron, 2001; Mills, 2004).

Gee (1990a), for example, describes discourse systems as being created through nonverbal components such as linguistic prosody (e.g. pitch), cohesion of words on sentence levels, organization of sentences on multi-sentence levels (e.g., scenes), the values and beliefs of the speakers that create a context for the texts (e.g., culture), and particular themes throughout the texts that produce particular semantic, lexical, and syntactic meanings (e.g., repetition). Those who would choose to pursue analysis of discourse at the micro-levels of particular words in interaction may be very detailed in their analysis of particular textual qualities – for example, Conversational Analysis (Heritage, 2001; Sacks, 1992). Those who would choose to pursue analysis of discourse at macro-levels of broader social beliefs and ideologies impacting language use may look at whole social structures – for example, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Several scholars have worked toward combining quantitative corpus linguistics with qualitative discourse analysis methods to pursue a more comprehensive understanding of discursive phenomena (Baker et al., 2008; Subtirelu, 2013). In this study, I employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyzing discursive creation of ethics, including corpus linguistics, value analysis, and metaphoric criticism. Each of these methodological choices bring something distinct to the analysis of discourse and help to enrich the others.

Corpus linguistics, for example, typically calculates frequency of particular linguistic elements in a particular set of discursive texts that share some feature of interest, but it analyzes these elements without much consideration for the particular contexts of individuals and the identities that they are performing in the creation of those texts. As such, corpus linguistics is useful for exploring discursive patterns and trends but less effective in a deep analysis of a particular discursive moment. However, it can be usefully combined with other types of analysis of discourse to answer more qualitative research questions while offering its own quantitative strengths. As Baker (2006) points out: “A more qualitative, small-scale approach to analysis may mean that saliency is perceived as more important than frequency – whereby texts which present shocking or extreme positions are focused on more than those which are more frequent, yet neutral” (p. 88). Thus, corpus linguistics as a quantitative approach can be beneficially combined with qualitative approaches of value analysis and metaphoric criticism to understand discursive creation of ethics from a diversity of standpoints.

In the following sections, I briefly outline these three methodological approaches as they appear in the text, beginning with metaphoric criticism, followed by corpus linguistics and value analysis methods. In keeping with a dialogic approach that privileges multiple and diverse voices and retroductive approaches that values the comparison of multiple cases in inductive and deductive approaches, no one methodological approach was given preference over another, nor were they used independently. Indeed, as results emerged through one analytic tool, new or changed analyses were performed with another tool to further probe how the discourses were reflecting and constructing listening values and ethics.

Metaphoric Criticism

In this study, I identified metaphors in English and ASL discourses by watching the video recorded focus group discourses, reading the transcriptions of these discourses, and considering the words that corresponded to listening that were written during the brainstorm sessions during Focus Group Phase 1 dialogues. As metaphors emerged in this discourse, I marked them in QDA Miner for later critique. Arguably, all language is metaphoric. However, my goal in this particular process was to consider the conceptualization of listening through particular senses and ways of interacting.

In her description of metaphoric criticism, Foss (2004) indicates that there are four methodological steps to performing metaphoric criticism: “one, examining the artifact for a general sense of its dimensions and context; two, isolating the metaphors in the artifact; three sorting metaphors into groups according to the vehicle or tenor; and four, discovering an explanation for the artifact” (p. 303). I followed Foss’ approach in this study with one small change. I utilized the metaphorical structure advanced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that distinguished conceptual metaphors into three types: ontological, orientation, and structural. Based on the listening metaphors found through steps one and two of the above process, I narrowed my analysis in this research based on what was found in the discourse to orientation metaphors and structural metaphors, to the exclusion of ontological metaphors. Through this process, I identified 28 metaphors in the discursive texts, including those in English and ASL.

Corpus Linguistics

Corpus linguistics is one way to analyze language through a quantitative approach. As a methodology, it is used to explore the distribution of language data. Researchers who employ it

often examine naturally occurring language in systematically collected texts that create a corpus or corpora that are able to be read and processed by machine. A corpus is typically comprised of texts that relate to each other in some dimension or are representative of one genre or type of discourse. Corpus linguists usually analyze frequencies of particular linguistic parts to understand how often certain linguistic features appear in a given discourse, how this frequency may pattern across different parts of the corpus, or how often particular linguistic features (whether that be particular morphemes, lexical items, or phrases) co-occur with each other (Gries, 2010; Nesselhauf, 2005). These frequency results can then be used to uncover the ways that texts in a given corpus create and reflect a broader discourse.

Through corpus linguistics, researchers select particular linguistic features to study in the corpus and analyze these parts of language in context. They then formulate conclusions about the ways that linguistic patterns answer target research questions. In sum, corpus linguists are interested in linguistic frequencies and make discursive claims based on those statistics. Researchers base their conclusions on the idea that by using larger samples of text than could easily be processed manually and by identifying linguistic variation that occurs more frequently than would be expected by chance, one can infer particular language practices across groups and cultures (Yates, 2001). This is true both for larger corpora and for smaller interactional discursive texts (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010; McCarthy, 2003)

One of the chief benefits of corpus linguistics is that it allows researchers to quickly retrieve and analyze large amounts of text that would take days or weeks to accomplish if done manually. Corpus linguistics is usually done with the aid of specialized computer software (in this study, the open source software AntConc version 3.4.4.0 and QDA Miner 4 Lite). Although

different types of software have their own strengths and weaknesses, most corpus linguistic software is able to calculate the absolute frequency of occurrences of particular lexical items (words) or lexical clusters (groups of words or phrases). They can identify the collocation of particular linguistic features to understand the relative distance of certain words from each other, the ways that certain lexical items clump together, and how pervasive particular linguistic patterns are in the various texts that make up the corpus.

In this study of ethical listening, the corpus I analyzed was comprised of the 11 focus group dialogues about good listening that were video recorded, transcribed into English (using the open source software ELAN), and exported to text documents (using Microsoft Word). This corpus represented two types of dialogues: the first set of seven texts were dialogues about good listening within particular communities of difference (Asian, ASL, Latino, First Nations, Caucasian LGBTQ and Allies, Caucasian Men, and Caucasian Women) and the second set of four texts were three multi-difference dialogues and one multi-gender Caucasian dialogue. The second stage of focus groups and the texts that resulted from these dialogues were comprised of several participants in stage 1 focus groups, and the facilitator was the same in all 11 discourses.

Although the focus group facilitator clearly has an impact on the direction of the conversation and discourse within these discourses (Krueger, 1994), in the context of a corpus linguistic analysis and calculation of frequencies, the repeated verbal protocol that the facilitator followed would also impact the frequency of particular items purely by forced repetition of the same questions and prompts across focus groups. In order to minimize the impact of these repeated forms on lexical frequencies of repeated words, phrases, and questions that were used to help facilitate the discussion in all of the texts, the final corpus did not include the interviewer's

transcribed utterances from any of the dialogues. The final corpus included 100,958 lexical tokens representing 4,639 different word types as uttered by 40 distinct interlocutors.

My corpus linguistic analysis included a number of frequency and collocation calculations that focused on keywords used throughout the corpus. The software employed allowed me to search for multiple versions of particular words by using an asterisk (e.g. “underst*” would search the texts for instances of “understand,” “understanding,” “understood,” etc.). Based on these searches, I performed several analyses of keywords in the entire corpus, including frequency of the 15 Listening Concept Inventory Keywords, total frequency of all content words throughout the discourse related to listening ethics, clusters of lexical items and collocates with the “listen*”, and frequency of gendered lexical items (e.g., mother and father, woman and man). Results from these sources are incorporated throughout the text.

Value Analysis

Value Analysis is a cultural and rhetorical approach to understanding the ways that values interact with culture and culture with values. Every type of discursive analysis involves some investigation of values as values and ideology are wrapped up in the ways that we use language; thus, there are a variety of ways that one may probe values that are present in any discourse or set of discourses. For this study, I adopt a value analysis approach outlined by Sillars and Gronbeck (2001) as part of the cultural tradition of communication criticism. It is a process through which researchers can identify values, and the ways that values relate to each other in value systems, in a discursive text by examining positive and negative values presented by the linguistic patterns (and absence thereof).

Values may be communicated explicitly or implicitly and are deeply connected to broader socio-cultural frameworks and the ways that people communicate through language and nonverbal communication in these frameworks. Sillars and Gronbeck's approach to value analysis has been used by a number of communication scholars to better understand value systems constructed in a variety of discourses, including anti-drug public service announcements (Spitzer, 2010), presidential acceptance speeches (Ary, 2006), the rhetorical construction of beauty in the United States (Papajcik, 2006), and others. It can be generatively applied to these listening discourses as it inclusively takes into consideration both rhetorical and cultural perspectives of discourse.

Sillars and Gronbeck's (2001) approach to the study of value argues that it is important to analyze a significant group of texts for both explicit statement of values and speech acts where underlying values are supporting particular beliefs. To investigate both the explicit and the implicit, it is important to pay close attention both to presence and absence, to speech and silence, to the concrete and the abstract, in the texts and subtexts of discourse. Both the values that are spoken and those that one would expect to see but are absent are key to formulating an understanding of a cultural context – albeit one that is impacted by the cultural lenses of the researchers. People position themselves socially and relationally through their discursive choices, justifying their choices and value systems by their verbal and nonverbal communication about positive and negative values. These values are interrelated and impact each other in formation and expression. Researchers can look at the frequency of references to particular values and to the placement of these references during message creation to understand the relative importance of particular values in the discursive creation of values and ethics.

Particular questions help scholars identify values that are present in discourses, according to Sillars and Gronbeck, including questions such as “what words are used to articulate positive values?” (p. 191), “what words are used to articulate negative values?” (p. 192), “what values are implied in belief statements with specific value terms?” (p. 193), “what concrete values can be identified?” (p. 194), and “what values are implied by the formal elements used?” (p. 194). All of these questions guide my study of the listening values that appear among study participants.

The process of analyzing the focus group discourses for listening values included first watching all of the videos and transcribing them into written English transcripts. After they were transcribed, all of the transcripts were read through once. On a second pass, I generated 48 total categories of listening values that the participants explicitly and implicitly indicated as characteristics of “good” or “bad” listening (positive or negative values) in their dialogues. Upon further reflection, these 48 categories were grouped together into 12 roughly distinct categories, although as a listening value system they also shared some relational characteristics as some led to or prevented other values from being realized. The 12 values identified in the discourses included conversational engagement, response, openness, intentional presence, correct focus, retaining information, care, cultivating understanding, time management, problem solving, relationship building, and authenticity. These 12 values ground the creation of the dialogic listening ethic as informed by the ethical frameworks of communities of difference.

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