#### ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

## Organizational Listening II

"Something is seriously missing in democratic practice, and recently some scholars have realized that something is missing in research about society and politics too: an attention to the practices of listening. No scholar is bolder here than Jim Macnamara. In this ground-breaking new book, he relentlessly exposes the inattention to listening across several literatures, and presents rigorous comparative fieldwork to show that corporations, governments, and civil society organizations must invest and do much more if they are to listen effectively. His book is a wake-up call for anyone who seeks practical ways to address the growing democratic deficit."

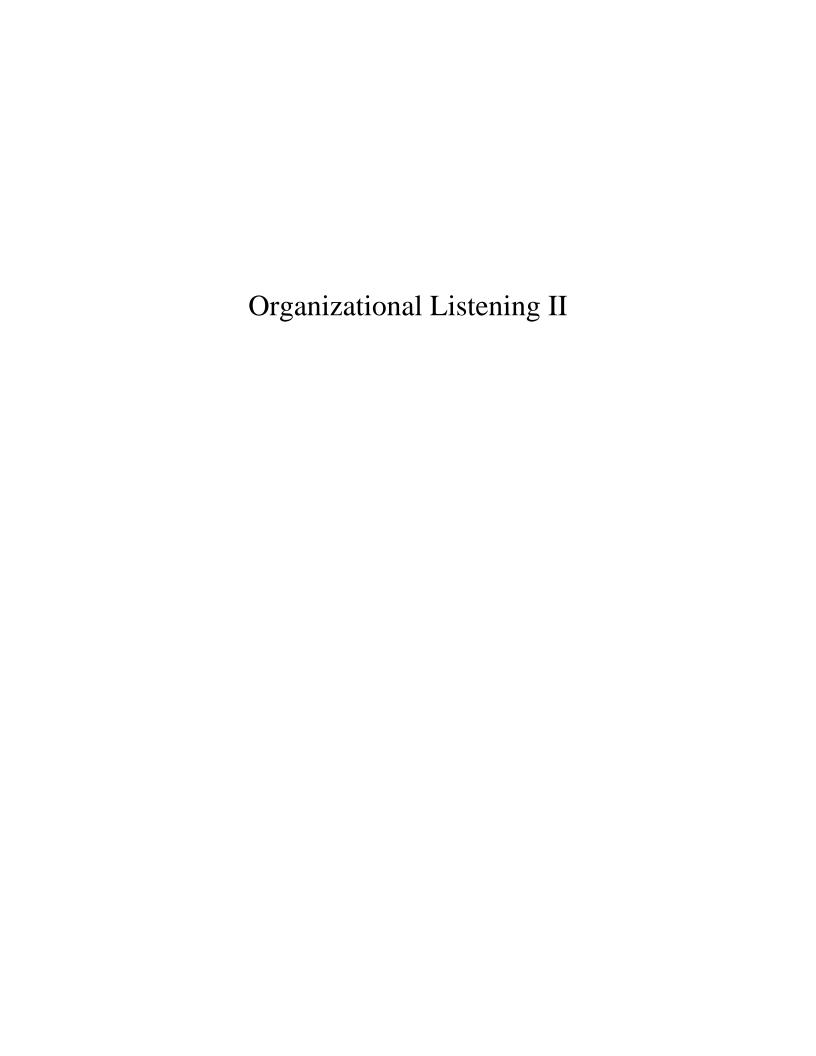
-Nick Couldry, London School of Economics and Political Science

"In this deeply original and empirically rich book, Jim Macnamara has expanded our understanding of what it means to communicate. He has reminded us of the vital difference between rhetorical claims to 'listen to the people' and the sensitive cultural prerequisites of meaningful listening."

—Stephen Coleman, University of Leeds

"This is a long overdue and important contribution to the communication and public relations literature. Like all brilliant ideas you wonder why you hadn't thought of it because it seems so obvious. Of course listening is vitally important and of course organizations should listen. So why has noone systematically researched how organizations listen and more importantly, if they do? Jim Macnamara has plugged this gap. The results of his extensive and meticulous research are stunning. Simply put, organizations don't really listen. So what's to be done? Helpfully Macnamara has also developed an architecture for listening which provides practical solutions to the problem. It's a must-read."

—Anne Gregory, University of Huddersfield



## Jim Macnamara

# **Organizational Listening II**

Expanding the Concept, Theory, and Practice



PETER LANG Lausanne • Berlin • Bruxelles • Chennai • New York • Oxford

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Control Number: 2023033532

Bibliographic information published by the **Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. The German National Library** lists this publication in the German National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

Cover design by Peter Lang Group AG

ISBN 9781636672175 (paperback) ISBN 9781636676326 (hardback) ISBN 9781636672151 (ebook) ISBN 9781636672168 (epub) DOI 10.3726/b21160

© 2024 Peter Lang Group AG, Lausanne Published by Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York, USA info@peterlang.com - www.peterlang.com

All rights reserved.

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright.

Any utilization outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution.

This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

This publication has been peer reviewed.

## **Contents**

List of Figures	X
List of Tables	xii
Acknowledgements	XV
The Author	XiX
Introduction – Why Organizational Listening II?	XX
Chapter 1 Communication and Voice	1
Interpersonal communication	1
Mass communication	2
Public communication in society	3
The public sphere	4
The market	9
Civil society	11
The valorization of voice and speaking	13
Understanding communication – Overlooked fundamentals	16
The missing half of communication – Listening	19
Audiences, publics, stakeholders – How we perceive others	24
Chapter 2 Listening	35
Beyond hearing	36

#### VI | CONTENTS

the pre-requisite of openness	38
Receptivity	38
Reciprocity	39
Hospitality	40
Engagement	40
Interactivity	42
Contingency	42
Listening vs. agreement	43
Listening and silence	43
Listen up, listen to, listen in, listen for, listen out for	46
Seven canons of listening	48
Identifying non-listening and fake listening	50
The ethics of listening – and ethics for listening	54
The effects and costs of not listening	60
Chapter 3 Organizations and Communication	77
The central role of organizations in contemporary societies	77
Organization communication	78
The unique characteristics and challenges of organizational listening	79
Scale	79
Delegation	80
Mediation	80
Asynchronous interaction	81
Potential sites of organizational listening	81
Research	81
Marketing communication	83
Customer relations	86
Political communication	88
Government communication	89
Corporate communication	92
Organizational / internal communication	93
Public relations	96
Strategic communication	102
Social media	108
Stakeholder and community engagement	109
Public consultation	110
Call centres, correspondence, complaints, 'contact us', and chat bots	123
Chapter 4 How, and How Well, Organizations Listen – Empirical Findings	135
The Organizational Listening Project	135

	CONTENTS   vii
Pilot study	136
Methodology	137
Stage 1: A study of 36 mixed type organizations	141
Stage 2: Listening by the UK Government pre- and post-Brexi	it 161
Stage 3: Corporate listening	176
Cognate studies of listening in organizations	188
The Pink Sari Project – Listening to ethnic minority group	s 188
Listening to a community	194
Listening to a city	196
Listening during the COVID-19 pandemic	203
Listening in public relations	207
Listening to employees	209
Listening to consumers / customers	212
Listening to young people	213
Listening to marginalized groups	213
Strategic listening	214
A new field of communication studies emerges	216
Chapter 5 Building Theory of Organizational Listening	227
Seven canons of organizational listening	230
Defining organizational listening	231
Creating an architecture of listening	234
A culture of listening	234
Policies for listening – Living up to organization values	238
The politics of listening	240
Systems for listening	244
Technologies for listening	247
Resources for listening	251
Skills for listening	252
Articulation of listening to decision making and policy m	
Listening competency	257
Knowledge, skills, and abilities	257
Competencies	258
Competency	259
Competence	259
Capabilities The control of list and a second of the control of th	260
The work of listening	261
Broadening understanding of two-way public communicatio	n 262

## VIII | CONTENTS

Chapter 6 Practical Methods and Tools for Organizational Listening	275
Inquiries	277
Complaints	278
General correspondence	279
Media monitoring	280
Social listening	281
Feedback mechanisms	284
Customer relations	285
Customer reviews	285
Relationship managers	286
Customer council	286
User groups	286
Customer relationship management (CRM)	287
Call centres	288
Advisory boards and groups	289
Stakeholder engagement	290
Community and citizen engagement	292
Citizen juries	293
Consensus conferences	293
Citizens' panels	294
Citizen assemblies	294
Citizen councils	294
Dialogues	295
Digital community engagement platforms	295
Mini-publics	296
Public consultation	296
Calls for comment	298
Public meetings and hearings	298
Website submissions	299
Consultation applications	300
Outreach	300
Research	302
Surveys	302
Deliberative polls	303
Interviews	304
Focus groups	305
Media content analysis	306
Behavioural insights	308

	CONTENTS	ix
Customer journey mapping		310
Participatory action research (PAR)		311
Ethnography and autoethnography		312
Delphi studies		313
Appreciative inquiry		314
Photovoice		314
Journals and diaries		315
Data analysis		315
Collaboration, co-design, and co-production		316
An organizational listening manifesto		318
Evaluation of organizational listening		319
Chapter 7 The Benefits of Organizational Listening		329
Listening is good for business		329
Increased employee engagement, productivity, loyalty,		
and retention		329
Reduced recruitment and training costs		331
Increased customer loyalty and retention		332
Reduced disputes and crises		333
Listening for successful strategy		334
Listening to navigate organizational change		335
Listening for better government		336
Increased legitimacy		337
Improved policy		338
Listening to rebuild trust		339
Listening to reinvigorate (save) democracy		342
Citizen participation and engagement		343
Listening to engage youth		344
Listening for social equity		346
Listening to marginalized voices		347
Listening to the silent majority		348
Listening across cultures		348
Listening across difference		349
Listening across borders		349
Chapter 8 Conclusions and Beginnings		357
Becoming a listening organization		359

## x | CONTENTS

Recommendations	363
A final word	365
Bibliography	367
Index	379

# **List of Figures**

Figure 1.1	The Mathematical Model of Communication developed by	
-	Shannon and Weaver 1948/49	15
Figure 3.1	How emergent strategy emerges through combining input	
	from stakeholders as well as the organization's strategic	
	objectives	105
Figure 3.2	A Gov.UK online public consultation site	113
Figure 3.3	Figure 3.2 continued	114
Figure 3.4	Sherry Arnstein's 'ladder of participation'	116
Figure 3.5	NSW Government 'Have your Say' public consultation site	121
Figure 3.6	Common terms used in organization-public communication	124
Figure 4.1	The communication-related terms discussed by interviewees	146
Figure 4.2	The contexts of communication most discussed by	
	interviewees	147
Figure 4.3	The main practices that organizations associate with listening	147
Figure 4.4	The main concepts discussed by interviewees in relation to	
	speaking	148
Figure 4.5	The theme of the 2017 Achmea International CEO Summit	176
Figure 4.6	Increase in Indian and Sri Lankan women aged 50-69 having	
-	a breast screen from 2012/13 to 2015/16	192

### XII | LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.7	Increase in Indian and Sri Lankan women aged 50–69 having	
	a breast screen from 2014/15 and 2015/16 compared to previous years	192
Figure 5.1	The elements and principles of an architecture of listening in an	
_	organization	256
Figure 5.2	Models of KSAs, competencies, competency, competence, and	
	capabilities	261
Figure 5.3	The basic structure of a program logic model	262
Figure 5.4	A sample program logic model of public communication	
	by an organization	264
Figure 5.5	A meta-model of two-way organization-public	
	communication	266
Figure 6.1	An example of a customer journey and potential organization	
-	touchpoints	310

## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1	Types of listening discussed in various literature	51
Table 3.1	Characteristics of strategic communication: Traditional and	
	emergent approaches	108
Table 4.1	Organizations studied in the three stages of The Organizational	
	Listening Project and cognate studies by the author	138
Table 4.2	Data sources accessed in The Organizational Listening Project	
	and cognate studies related to listening conducted by the	
	author 2013–2019	140
Table 4.3	Sample breakdown of Stage 1 of The Organizational Listening	
	Project	142
Table 4.4	The most frequently used terms related to listening	
	and speaking	148
Table 4.5	A comparison of listening orientated and speaking orientated	
	terms used by interviewees	149
Table 4.6	Sites of research in Stage 2 of The Organizational Listening	
	Project	163
Table 4.7	Summary of key listening activities in Achmea operating	
	companies in June 2019	185
Table 4.8	Summary of Greater Sydney Commission engagement stages	
	and activities	198

## XIV | LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.9	Examples of community engagement and consultation	
	activities conducted between February and April 2019 as part	
	of planning Sydney 2050	201
Table 5.1	Theories and concepts informing organizational listening	228
Table 6.1	Research methods and other methods for organizational	
	listening	316
Table 7.1	The percentage of young Americans (18–29) who say they	
	trust the above institutions to do the right thing all	
	or most of the time	345