



## Media, Multiculturalism & the Politics of Listening

Workshop presented as part of The Listening Project

Wednesday 16 April 2008, 1 - 5 pm

University of Technology, Sydney

Conveners: Tanja Dreher (UTS) & Gay Hawkins (UNSW)

Media, Multiculturalism & the Politics of Listening  
.....we listen

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## Workshop Program

- 12.30** Light lunch, meet and greet (foyer)
- 1pm** Workshop Begins, Introduction to Project and Workshop  
(Tanja Dreher)
- 1.15** Hearing Diversity (Gay Hawkins)
- 2.15** Listening to Media Interventions (Tanja Dreher)
- 3.00** Tea and Coffee
- 3.15** Ethics of Listening (Gay Hawkins and Tanja Dreher)
- 4.15** Where to? Possibilities for research, policy and practice  
(Gay Hawkins and Tanja Dreher)
- 5.00** Close

## The Listening Project

The Listening Project is a program of collaboration that will generate sustained discussion and publication around the politics, technologies and practices of the cultural literacy of 'listening'.

The project develops a new area of study through an innovative model of networking, bringing together researchers across a range of disciplines as well as media and cultural producers. The program will examine the neglected dynamics of 'listening', an emerging focus in Media Studies and citizens' media interventions. Habitual critiques of representation and the politics of 'speaking' (or giving voice to the voiceless) are giving way to investigation of more active possibilities for social inclusion and change based on recognition, dialogic engagement and acceptance.

Project Conveners Tanja Dreher, Justine Lloyd and Penny O'Donnell,

### Roundtable Workshops

Five afternoon tea workshops will be held in 2008, leading to a multi-authored publication around the theme of 'listening' in 2009. The discussion will be structured to lead to the identification of potential collaborative projects and papers for publication. Future workshops:

#### **Technologies of Listening**

31 July 2008, UTS

Justine Lloyd (Macq) and Kate Crawford (UNSW)

#### **Disability, Democracy, Media & Listening**

13 August 2008, UNSW

Gerard Goggin (UNSW) and Christopher Newell (UTas)

#### **Conflict, Democracy & Listening**

26 September 2008, Monash

Mark Gibson (Monash)

#### **Listening Practices**

17 October 2008, USyd

Penny O'Donnell (USyd) and Juan Salazar (UWS)

#### **Publications Workshop**

14 November 2008, UTS

## Workshop Rationale

This workshop will focus on the ethics and politics of listening in order to develop innovative approaches to thinking about media and multiculturalism. To date both research and policy on media and cultural diversity have emphasised questions of speaking, whether in mainstream, community or diaspora media. There is also a vast literature examining questions of representation including stereotyping, racialisation, hybridisation and self-representations. This workshop extends these discussions to focus on questions of listening. Sociologist Charles Husband has long argued that the 'right to be understood' and an ethics of listening are as important as the 'right to communicate' in developing a multi-ethnic public sphere. Susan Bickford suggests that 'just as speakers must reflect on how to speak (and what to say), listeners must be self-conscious about how they listen (and what they hear). Taking responsibility for listening, as an active and creative process, might serve to undermine certain hierarchies of language and voice'.

Attention to listening provokes important questions about media and multiculturalism: How do media enable or constrain listening across difference? What is the role of mediation in the politics of listening? How can a diversity of voices be heard in the media? How are new modes of listening developed or learned (by media producers and by media audiences)? How can media researchers, producers and policymakers best address these questions?

By bringing together researchers, media workers and policy makers we aim to start a conversation on new ways of understanding the dynamics and importance of listening in multicultural societies.

## Framing Questions

### Hearing Diversity

Linguistic diversity is a fundamental aspect of multicultural Australia. Language is one of the most intimate assets of cultural identity and social

communication, and not coming from an English speaking background can cause serious disadvantage. Hence the wide range of programs to enhance English language skills and allow people with diverse language backgrounds to overcome communication barriers. But effective communication in a multicultural society does not simply involve skills in speaking it also demands skills in listening and an openness to the embodied voices of diversity. Resentment about other languages being spoken in public, irritation with accents, demands that everyone 'speak English' are evidence of a hostility to diversity that can come from hearing linguistic differences in everyday life. These reactions are a powerful reminder of the normative power of 'proper English' and the ways in which difficulties in understanding can generate frustration with the speaker rather than and a willingness to change, or listen differently, in the listener.

In this session we want to explore these issues: in what ways do the media invite different listening practices? How do they apprehend accents? How do techniques like subtitling enable cross cultural communication? How can resistance to hearing difference be challenged? In what ways are barriers to communication a product of lack of English language skills or lack of skills in listening to diversity?

#### **Listening to Community Media Interventions**

Communities subjected to racism in the media often develop media interventions projects aimed at speaking up and talking back to the news media. In Australia in recent years there has been increasing support for Arab and Muslim communities in particular to develop media skills, to produce media education programs and to be involved in media production - all aimed at giving voice and being heard. In this session we will explore the complex dynamics of listening to such community media interventions: how are racialised communities heard when they talk back to the news media? How do media conventions shape the dynamics of listening and speaking? When and how is listening refused?

#### **Speaking & Listening Relations: Not Liking What You Hear**

Media are slowly beginning to include a diversity of perspectives on multiculturalism and other issues. This can reveal competing and conflicting ways of making sense of public issues. These discussions also generate a sense of democracy in action, the ways in which public debate is always dense and contested: a jostle of opinions that need to be listened to with respect. How does a commitment to inclusion and diversity of opinions demand a different ethics of listening? Rather than trading opinions and polemic how does the dissonance of democracy generate different ethical practices in listening and speaking? If diverse groups are given recognition and legitimacy in public culture how can we ensure that they are heard in ways that encourage intercultural dialogue?

### **Participants**

Tanja Dreher	Workshop Convenor, University of Technology, Sydney
Gay Hawkins	Workshop Convenor, University of New South Wales

Justine Lloyd	Project Convenor, Macquarie University
Penny O'Donnell	Project convenor, University of Sydney
Cate Thill	Project Officer, University of Technology, Sydney
Mark Gibson	Node convenor, Monash University
Vicki Bamford	University of Technology, Sydney
Barbie Bloch	University of Technology, Sydney
Amrita Cheema	SBS
Alissar Chidiac	University of Technology, Sydney
Jing Han	SBS & University of Western Sydney
Rick Iedema	University of Technology, Sydney
Olivia Khoo Winnie Lai	University of New South Wales SBS
Jake Lynch	University of Sydney
Fiona Martin	University of Sydney
Andrew McCormick	SBS
Lena Nahlous	Information & Cultural Exchange
Greg Noble	University of Western Sydney
Aneta Podkalicka	Queensland University of Technology
Julie Posseti	University of Canberra
Amanda Wise	Macquarie University
Christina Wulfhorst	University of Western Sydney