INTRODUCTION

Listening does not just function as a counterpart to speaking, but rather creates a unique communication process of its own. It can satisfy (or create) a multitude of communicative needs, depending on which orientations to listening we pursue and how we perform them to engage our individual, relational, and community goals. For example, Thompson et al., describes listening as potentially discriminative, comprehensive, evaluative, appreciative, empathic, therapeutic, or interpersonal. Cornwell and Orbe list additional forms of listening such as non-judgmental, critical, relational, responsive, and analytic. Beard and Lipari describe constitutive listening, Chapman elucidates a mindful listening approach, Arbor applies compassionate listening, and Kimball and Garrison characterize a hermeneutic listening engagement. This is but a small sampling of a variety of distinct listening orientations through which to attune to the multiple worlds around us.

This issue of *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* expands previous listening scholarship and engages a multiplicity of theoretical and pragmatic perspectives on listening as experienced in our day-to-day lives.

Throughout the essays in this special issue of *Listening*, authors review and articulate new listening theories, methodologies, and practices. In pursuit of more ethical and effective ways of listening, we address diverse topics such as relational connection and distance, culture and difference, equity and inclusion, dialogue and democracy, materiality and embodiment, moral emotions and ethical affect, health and well-being, and others. Collectively, these essays ask us to move beyond an individualistic approach to listening to consider how we can navigate the challenge of listening better together across diverse times, spaces, and places. Each essay in this special issue on spacious listening is briefly described below.

In the first essay, *Radical Listening: Cultivating a Feminist Ethics of Reception through Collective Listening*, Anjuli Joshi Brekke traces possibilities and barriers in cultivating “radical listening,”—a radical feminist ethics of reception that centers difference, equity, and embodiment. Based on an equity-focused digital storytelling project, Brekke recorded oral history podcasts and subsequently held “listening parties” grounded in these stories of racial trauma and resistance. Within the collective listening sessions, podcasts were doubly articulated as embodied sound and as symbolic messages located within wider discourses of racialized trauma and resistance. Brekke’s theorization of radical listening involves a praxis of tuning in to multiple voices in relation to each other and in relation to the self. Like performing one part of a polyphonic composition, it is challenging because it requires the listener to pay attention to the complexities of different voices and different musical parts, while also attending to the
self and to one’s own performance in relation to the other parts. This process is dependent on intersubjective listening that is both labor intensive and risky and requires vulnerability without offering guarantees of solidarity.

In the second essay, *Rhetorical Listening: Operationalizing a Rhetorical Field Method*, Kristen D. Herring explores how rhetorical listening can enrich rhetorical fieldwork and how rhetorical fieldwork can enable rhetorical listening. She uses fieldnotes from concert observations to illustrate how rhetorical listening enriches analysis of fieldwork and how fieldwork creates new possibilities for rhetorical listening. She posits that the four practices of rhetorical listening illustrated by Krista Ratcliffe can foster complex cross-cultural connections while also arguing that fieldwork can access cultural logics through embodied research, which enables the practice of rhetorical listening. In sum, Herring argues rhetorical field methodologists and rhetorical listening scholars should operationalize rhetorical listening as rhetorical field methods.

In the third essay, *Conflict on the Washington Mall: The Right of Free Speech and the Responsibility to Listen in the Age of Demagoguery*, David Beard uses two examples of political clashes (on the Washington Mall and online). He describes our contemporary political dialogue in terms of a climate of “demagoguery,” which has transformed our democracies from deliberative to adversarial spaces. Beard argues that this political climate encourages faulty dialogues that privileges the right to speak and diminishes our responsibility to listen.

In the fourth essay, *Dialogic Listening: Moving Beyond Idealism to Intercultural Ethical Praxis*, Elizabeth S. Parks advances theorization of dialogic listening beyond a perceived unreachable idealism to offer instances of ethical praxis through lived experience within and across diverse communities and individual stories. She describes diverse listening values and practices present in various communities of difference and works to expand dialogic listening theory through three ethical stances that appear both in dialogic listening scholarship and the ethical construction of listening among diverse communities with whom she has worked. Parks argues that dialogic listening can act as a generative stance through which we can pursue better intercultural dialogue that yields co-constructed meanings and practices of listening that ultimately contribute to a more ethical world.

In the fifth essay, *Existential Listening as Ethical Distancing: The Meaningfulness of Imposterism, Fear and Shame in Relation*, Janeta F. Tansey brings attention to moments of relation that apprehend alterity. This paper explores an ethical posture of listening across the event of alienation with an intention to preserve the distance rather than to close the gap. The common experience of imposter-feelings invites comparison to affective responses described by Nietzsche and Levinas, in which fear of my neighbor or shame in the gaze of the vulnerable other are considered ethical responses to the speaker’s existential priority. Connecting these painful effects of fear and shame with metaphors used in existential therapy and its listening practices, the author proposes that existential listening privileges intersubjective distance and its discomforts as an ethical disposition and practice. To experience imposterism, fear, and shame in the face of the other signposts an ethical call for courage to resist flight from the profound discomfort of alienation, as well as humility to resist totalizing drives for mutuality and understanding in the relation.
In the sixth essay, *Roots and Wings: Emergent Listening and Attentiveness to Narrative Ground as a Unity of Contraries*, Preston Carmack brings together emergent listening and attentiveness to narrative ground as a unity of contraries integral to a just communicative encounter. Emergent listening, coming primarily from the work of Bronwyn Davies, is an orientation of openness toward difference that does not presume to name the new as it emerges but instead does justice toward the other by approaching difference with eyes full of wonder. Attentiveness to the narrative ground underneath one’s feet provides coordinates of responsibility that anchor us in historicity and a contextualized understanding of the background script behind any encounter. By examining emergent listening and narrative ground, Carmack argues that we can be better equipped to forge creative, empathetic paths into an unfolding future.

In the seventh essay, *Cherished Comedy: Appreciative Listening & Positive Humor*, Michelle M. Matter argues that some scholars have studied appreciative listening while others have focused on interpersonal uses of humor, but that these spheres of research have yet to be brought together to generate new intersectional understandings of how we can improve our conversations and make speaking listener-centered by incorporating more humor. Matter expands the current contexts of appreciative listening to include humorous interpersonal interactions. She first offers an overview of appreciative listening scholarship and brief discussion of how humor impacts our interpersonal relationships. She then explains how incorporating more positive humor into our conversations and approaching listening through an appreciative lens is one way to put the listener first in our communication.

In the eighth essay, *Listening in Solution: Water Ethics, Holy Waters, and Wet Ontologies*, Emily K. Amedée considers what happens when water, rather than land, becomes the central animating feature of how we listen across difference. She argues that taking water seriously—in our bodies and in the arid West—partially unmakes the dichotomies between self and other(s), as well as between water and land, enabling us to rehydrate how we understand the ontology of listening as a fluid, co-constitutive making of each other, so that we might listen in solution. Focusing on water as a way of being, this essay reveals an account for the inherent waters that construct the physical human body. The essay ends by presenting how an approach of listening as a body of water offers an expansion of the ways we might be in solution across difference, within ourselves, and toward ways of being and listening that recognize critical mutual dependency and shared materiality between peoples, places, and animals.

In the final essay, *Eco-Listening: Listening To Place*, Jenne Schmidt challenges the anthropocentric framing of place and takes the multidimensional nature of place and the implications of this robust understanding of place within research more seriously, not as a backdrop and context for the research, but as central to the research itself. Schmidt considers how place is an entity or being in itself that one might directly listen to (not “with” or “in”). While there are many ways to listen to place, Schmidt presents eco-listening as a framework that attends to the ways that the ecosphere itself has intrinsic value. This enables an understanding of place as co-constituted with the social, more-than-human, ecosystems, materiality of land/water, and as connected to other places across space and time. Through a multispecies examination of the Hanford nuclear site and the migratory sandhill cranes that travel through this place, this project gestures...
toward the potential of an eco-listening approach to listening to place through its eco-centric challenge of anthropocentrism. In doing so, it reveals the ways that eco-listening may enable new knowledge, insights, and lessons to be learned from this listening to place, and ultimately aids in building new ways of being in the world that challenge the structures of violence that create such ecological destruction.

Together, these essays offer us the chance to become more spacious in our individual and collective listening, challenge us to think more critically about diverse ethical values in intercultural and intracultural communication, push the boundaries of how we have previously conceptualized listening in our research and relationships, and promote equity and inclusion across boundaries, whether these be interpersonal, intercultural, or in our engagement within the ecosystems within which we live.

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Guest Editor

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