



# The Journal of Family Communication

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## EDITORIAL

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## EDITORIAL

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# Family Communication: Navigating the Crossroads

Kory Floyd

Since taking the reigns of *Journal of Family Communication* last fall, I have heard several people opine that the family communication field is currently at a crossroads. This is a provocative metaphor. It suggests that our journey—begun when the systematic study of family communication was novel—has arrived at a type of critical juncture where our choices have real gravity for the future, in a two-roads-diverged-in-a-wood sort of way. Like many provocative metaphors, this one prompts a healthy self-reflection that is both retrospective and prospective. Where has the family communication field been? Where do we want to go, and via what paths? A cynic might call such a juncture a collective identity crisis, but a realist would counter that taking stock of our past, present, and desired future is a natural, even necessary, exercise for a field our age.

Retrospection invokes gratitude for those whose creativity and fortitude have guided us to our present position. Our gratitude for this journal, and the opportunities it has afforded our field, belongs unquestionably to Tom Socha. As the journal's founding editor, Tom took the concept for *JFC*, brought it to fruition, and oversaw its operations for 5 years. There is little question that the development of this journal ranks as a major milestone in our journey, and I encourage you to join me in thanking Tom for his many efforts on our behalf.

In addition to celebrating our milestones and appreciating our past, being at a crossroads also compels us to look optimistically at our future and to negotiate, as best we can, a cooperative vision for it. Our collective involvement with *JFC* affords us one such opportunity. In addition to continuing the journal's general mission to publish high-quality research on family communication, I have purposed to undertake two more specific goals during my tenure as editor. One is to publish more of the excellent work on family communication that is conducted outside of the communication discipline. Researchers in a wide range of fields—including sociology, speech and hearing sciences, human ecology, nursing, law and public

policy, psychophysiology, and certainly family studies—make detailed, compelling contributions to our knowledge about family interaction on an ongoing basis, and it can be only to our benefit to read and appreciate this work.

Understandably, some in our field bemoan the fact that these disciplines often fail to take notice of the excellent work we do. This cuts both ways, however, and our discipline has just as often been guilty of the same neglect. As one initiative to move family communication away from such myopia and toward greater transdisciplinary exchange, I will be making special efforts to seek out compelling work from scholars outside the communication field for publication in *JFC*. Toward this end, I am especially pleased to include two such articles (Niehuis, Huston, & Rosenband; and Weigel, Bennett, & Ballard-Reisch) in the current issue.

A second goal is to feature program reviews and commentaries by senior family scholars whose work is sophisticated, programmatic, and important, but often outside of the disciplinary mainstream. In service of this objective, the lead issue in each volume will commence with an invited article highlighting one such scholar's work. I am delighted to begin this inaugural issue with an invited article by Chris Segrin, whose research program on the associations between family communication and mental health is truly illustrative of the ways our field can benefit, and benefit from, the contributions of allied disciplines.

I am fortunate and grateful to have an able and diverse team to assist me in these efforts. The new editorial board of *JFC* is comprised of both junior and senior scholars from the disciplines of communication, public health, developmental psychology, family studies, biobehavioral health, and humanities. These scholars represent a broad range of theoretic and methodological orientations and are thus well positioned to evaluate the diversity of work that *JFC* receives. In addition, I am pleased to welcome Tamara Afifi as the new book review editor and Jeff Judd as the new editorial assistant, and to acknowledge the skilled editorial, marketing, business, and production professionals at Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Each of these individuals, as well as many ad hoc reviewers, will play a pivotal role in ensuring that *JFC* continues to thrive as an outlet for our best scholarship.

If we find ourselves at a disciplinary crossroads, it is not only a testament to our innovation and fortitude but also an opportunity for us to take our field in important and previously unseen new directions. I think this is an exciting time for family communication students and scholars, and I hope we can work together to navigate these crossroads with grace, optimism, and style.