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Reflections on **INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH**

Editors

Steven R. Wilson
Sandi W. Smith

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**INTERPERSONAL
COMMUNICATION
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Part I:

Overview

Foreword

Michael E. Roloff

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ANYONE WHO HAS EVER PUT TOGETHER an edited volume knows that it is a complicated and arduous task. One must identify topics that are “cutting edge” and of interest to the scholarly community. Often the candidates far outstrip the page limits and tough choices must be made about which ones make it onto the final list of chapters. Then editors must recruit authors with an eye toward achieving a mix of “old buffalos” whose research programs are well established and “up and coming” scholars whose chapters will be springboards for their research programs. Sometimes finding authors is difficult. Established scholars are often very busy and can only contribute a chapter if it is coauthored with one of their doctoral students. Younger scholars may wonder how much a book chapter will “count” toward promotion and tenure and whether their time might be better spent writing journal articles and/or securing external funding. During recruitment, editors communicate the general approach that should be taken when writing each chapter and then set forth a timeline for task completion. Although each author commits to the aforementioned, things often go awry. Some authors miss multiple delivery points. After being prompted, many apologize and offer excuses for the delay. Others are unresponsive and seem to be “missing in action.” Other authors are responsive but do not quite deliver the chapter they agreed to write or it seems too similar to earlier works they have published. At some point all chapters arrive and copyediting begins which can become time consuming. But at some point, the book finally is delivered to the publisher and appears in print. All is well.

When I wrote the preface for the earlier version by Sandi and Steve (Smith & Wilson, 2010), I noted it was excellent. Although I am sure there were stressful moments along the way, the final product included chapters written by the key players who wrote about a broad range of important topics.

When Sandi and Steve asked if I would once again write a preface for this new volume, I had a *déjà vu* moment. In 1985, I approached G.R. Miller about whether he considered updating his earlier SAGE volume focused on interpersonal communication (Miller, 1976). Before answering, he asked me a series of questions. Because I was a neophyte with respect to editing, I had not considered them.

First, GR asked, “Is there a need for an updated volume?” GR raised a good point. Although I am unaware of any research on the matter, I suspect that research areas do not grow at an even pace and hence, research progress does not justify a new volume. However, new editions and volumes seem to return at regular intervals regardless of whether the research literature has sufficiently grown to justify a new version. In such cases, authors struggle to find something new to say and the chapters make minimal contribution. Instead of highlighting substantial progress, the volume only shows “baby steps” or perhaps stagnation. Neither of those benefit the field.

Second, GR asked, “What chapters should be included?” Although he was happy with all of the chapters in the original volume, he noted that they varied in their impact. Some generated far more scholarship than did others. Consequently, he was unsure that each of the original chapters required updating. Moreover, he also noted that many research areas had emerged that were not anticipated in the first edition.

Third, GR asked “Who should write the chapters?” GR wondered if all of the authors in the original volume should be asked to contribute to the next one even if the new volume included chapters focused on the same topic. Some original contributors were no longer actively researching on the topic and might not be current on recent developments. Consequently, it might be necessary to recruit a different cast of authors without slighting those original contributors who were not invited.

I must have answered GR’s questions sufficiently well that he not only agreed to update the first volume but he invited me to coedit it (Rolloff &

Miller, 1987). The volume contained chapters that built upon those in the 1976 edition and also included new authors and some from allied fields and disciplines.

After reading the chapters in the current version, it was clear to me that Steve and Sandi also produced an excellent new edition. Some of the chapters update the perspectives described in their first edition (see, e.g., Solomon, Theiss, Knobloch, & McLaren update of their relational turbulence theory, or Erin Sahlstein Parcell's update of Baxter and Braithwaite's chapter on relational dialectics theory). In each case, the authors wrote a narrative that explained how their research program progressed. This information is especially informative for young scholars who are looking for models that inform how research programs develop. A large number of chapters highlight research areas not included in their last volume (e.g., chapters by Afifi and colleagues, Kam, & Buzzanell on resilience as well as by Bente and Grebelsky-Lichtman on nonverbal communication). Also, each of the chapters is focused on theory development and the authors note how current perspectives are linked to older ones. I especially was taken with Joe Walther's illustration of how G. R. Miller's distinctions about the nature of the interpersonal communication (see Miller & Steinberg, 1975) can be used to understand aspects of new technology. Perhaps what is old may become new again?

Because I am an "old buffalo," often I am often asked to comment on how the state of the field has changed. These requests are a bit disconcerting given they are focused on my knowledge of the past rather than on my current research, but such is the life of an "old buffalo." Age does afford a somewhat unique vantage point to identify trends.

As Steve and Sandi note in their introduction to this edition, the current volume builds on three earlier editions (Miller, 1976; Roloff & Miller, 1982; Smith & Wilson, 2010) and they make explicit links to chapters in earlier volumes. Because I was involved as author or editor in all three, I reread them and the current chapters with an eye toward how the area has developed over the last three and a half decades. Admittedly, the contents of each volume to some degree reflect how the editors viewed interpersonal communication research at that juncture and not everyone might agree with their view of the field. Moreover, unlike handbooks, none of the volumes were meant to be comprehensive views of the research.

However, they do provide insights into how these editors viewed critical areas of progress.

G. R. Miller's first volume (1976) reflected a newly forming field. When he approached me about contributing a chapter, he made it clear that he wanted chapters to build on the past but present an innovative approach that would guide the future. His forward noted that he constructed the volume to address three key issues. First, how was interpersonal communication to be conceptualized? Hence the first volume included chapters that more clearly identified the central features of interpersonal communication that differentiated it from other forms of communication. The second issue asked how interpersonal communication is to be researched. Chapters focused on approaches that focused on both the individual and relationship as the unit of analysis and discussed mathematical modeling and qualitative methods. Finally, the volume sought to identify the aspects of interpersonal communication worthy of study. These included verbal behaviors such as self-disclosure and influence as well nonverbal behavior such as facial expressions. Although not highlighted within GR's forward, the content of the chapters imply that he had two other implicit goals. First, he wanted to foreground critical theories guiding research and his volume included chapters on Uncertainty Reduction Theory, the Coordinated Management of Meaning, and Social Penetration Theory. Second, he recognized that interpersonal communication had implications for applied processes such as group decision making and therapy.

When GR and I coedited the second volume (Rolloff & Miller, 1982), the field had progressed and in our mind, the issues had changed. We no longer felt defining the parameters of the area was as important and we did not include a specific chapter related to that issue. Although we were strongly committed to showing links between the chapters in his original volume and the current one, we added new authors and subdivided some topics into separate chapters. To accomplish our goals, we invited authors to write chapters focused on the functions of interpersonal communication including uncertainty reduction, relational development, and interpersonal influence. Also, chapters were written that focused on a wide variety of interaction phenomena including self-disclosure, conflict management, and information exchange. The volume also had

a strong interdisciplinary flavor with contributing authors from social psychology and sociology.

Almost three decades passed before Sandi and Steve edited the next volume (Smith & Wilson, 2010) and not surprisingly, the field had changed and their volume reflected those developments. Their volume highlighted six key developments. First, there was a proliferation of identities among those contributing to knowledge about interpersonal interaction. Indeed, interpersonal communication scholars were often affiliated with groups of researchers studying other aspects of communication. Second, there was increasing globalization as interpersonal communication scholars increasingly conducted cross cultural research. Third, there was increasing recognition that interpersonal communication was not always functional and indeed, had a dark side. Fourth, a variety of metatheoretical perspectives had developed. Fifth, interpersonal communication research increasingly received external funding which signaled its links to socially important issues as well as directed the kinds of research questions that were being studied. Finally, researchers recognized that interpersonal communication often occurred via electronic media and both influence and is influenced by modality.

In their preface to the current volume, Steve and Sandi note that the chapters are divided into four main categories. The first set are focused on stress, stress coping and resilience. The second set of chapters look at communication adaptation. The third highlight recent approaches to social support, influence, identities, and health. The last focus on relational processes and transitions. Relative to previous volumes, these chapters reflect the wide range of topics being researched by interpersonal communication scholars.

I observed several trends across the four volumes. First, the community of interpersonal communication scholars includes researchers from various areas of Communication as well as from applied fields and disciplines and this pattern continues. Steve and Sandi highlight this trend by inviting boundary-spanning scholars who highlight connections between interpersonal communication and allied areas such as health (e.g., Donovan, Goldsmith), intergroup (Soliz), media (Rousseau & Eggermont), organizational (Buzzanell) and political communication (Hutchins). Second, from the beginning interpersonal communication scholars understood

the importance of theory and that pattern has grown stronger over time. Examples in this volume include chapters that trace recent developments with relational turbulence theory (Solomon, et al.), action assembly theory (Greene) or the theory of resilience and relational load (Afifi et al.). Third, interpersonal communication is often functional but may also prove to be ineffective or even harmful (see, e.g., Rosseau and Eggermont's analysis of interpersonal media effects and body image). Fourth, the contexts in which interpersonal communication is studied has grown to include a variety of relationships and different cultures, as is evident in the chapters by Dainton, Kam, and Soliz, among others. Fifth, interpersonal communication researchers have successfully adapted to societal changes in the modality with which people communicate (see, e.g., Rosseau & Eggermont, as well as Walther). Sixth, interpersonal communication researchers are increasingly exploring issues that are socially significant and that afford the possibility for funding (see, e.g., the chapters on applications of interpersonal communication theory and research to women on probation and parole by Smith and colleagues, or to military families by Wilson and Knobloch). Finally, there is evidence of vitality as newly established programs are introduced in each volume (see, e.g., Grebelsky-Lichtman's discrepant verbal/nonverbal profile framework).

All of this bodes well for the future of the area. However, I am a well-known curmudgeon and I cannot help but offer a few friendly warnings evident in the trends. Please note that I saw no direct evidence for my concerns in these chapters. These are simply words of warning.

As I noted, GR and I did not include a definitional chapter in our volume and few recent attempts have been made to explicate exactly what we study and none are strictly used to set boundaries for determining relevant literatures. Instead, we often treat interpersonal communication as a primitive term and infer its meaning based on what researchers claim to study rather than attempting to articulate its key features. Admittedly, historical attempts to explicate interpersonal communication have not proved satisfying. For example, restricting it to face to face interaction was arbitrary and technological developments demonstrated that it was outdated. Moreover, restricting it to close relationships ignored other relational types in which interaction plays a role. Joe Capella (1987) posited

that interaction was the organizing construct. Although often referenced, I wonder if his argument remains valid.

In some respects, the absence of such delimiters has served us well. Fortunately, our community has avoided a “litmus test” for membership and our permeable boundaries have allowed us to collaborate with and learn from researchers who have diverse viewpoints and methods. At the same time, the absence of a clearly defined construct begs the issue of what exactly we study that is unique and valuable. Perhaps it is time to revisit this issue. By doing so, we can help ourselves and others understand what we study and its value.

Also, across the four volumes, I noted increasing “contextualism.” By this I mean that research programs seem increasingly focused on specialized context. This not new. In GR’s first volume, much of the referenced research focused on relational development including the move from initial interactions to closer relationships. That focus on relational dynamics is evident in subsequent volumes (see, e.g., the chapters by Dainton, Sahlstein Parcell, and Solomon and colleagues). Researchers have also expanded the contexts in which they study interpersonal communication (e.g., health, families, and organizations). Contextual expansion can be valuable. It shows the relevance and utility of theory for understanding important problems. By grounding research in contexts, we may also gain new insights into general principles of interpersonal communication. However, I worry that our focus on specific contexts can also distract from developing and testing general theories of interpersonal communication. In other words, there are general theories of interpersonal communication that focus on communication functions (e.g., uncertainty reduction) or behaviors (e.g., self-disclosure) that can be tested within specific contexts. By testing them in a variety of contexts, we can gain valuable insights as to their generalizability. However, as a journal reviewer, I sometimes encounter theories that are tied to a specific context with only cursory links to much broader theories that provide insight into the context. While I understand the desire to conduct theory driven research, I am less convinced that we need perspectives that are limited to a specific context, at least until we have evidence that the broader theories are not applicable to the specific contexts. Contextualism can lead to a needlessly large number of micro-perspectives. Parsimony does have value.

But, subsequent volumes may prove me wrong. As an old buffalo, I look forward to seeing how younger members of the herd address these concerns. I hope that I am still around to find out.

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Preface

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REFLECTIONS ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IS the fourth in a series of edited volumes that feature scholars sharing the stories of their research programs. Nearly a decade ago, we published *New Directions in Interpersonal Communication* (Smith & Wilson, 2010a). Modeled on two earlier volumes edited by Gerald Miller and Michael Roloff (Miller, 1976; Roloff & Miller, 1987), *New Directions* was motivated by three goals. First, we wanted to highlight interpersonal communication as an area where exciting, vital work continued to be done. Like the earlier volumes edited by Miller and Roloff, *New Directions* showcased senior and up-and-coming scholars developing cutting-edge interpersonal communication theory and research; however, it did so in a world that had changed in important ways (e.g., globalization, new communication technologies) from when the earlier volumes were published. Hence, one goal was to highlight the contemporary relevance of interpersonal communication research.

Second, we strove to create a volume that was useful for a broad audience, in large part by asking authors to tell the “stories” of their research programs in a personal, engaging style. We wanted our volume to have scholarly depth but be more engaging than the typical review chapters found in handbooks. Third, we highlighted the permeability of boundaries between interpersonal communication and other areas of communication (e.g., health, intercultural, mass, and organizational communication) as many scholars who study interpersonal communication identify with multiple scholarly divisions or specialties. We did this by inviting authors

whose primary identification was within interpersonal communication, but also communication scholars who were “boundary spanners”—that is, whose primary identification might lie in another area but whose scholarship was relevant to interpersonal theory and research. In a review of *New Directions* published in *Journal of Communication*, Malcolm Parks (2010) praised the volume for being historically grounded while also offering a clear vision of the discipline’s cutting edge. *New Directions* also was honored with the G. R. Miller Outstanding Book award from the Interpersonal Communication Division of the National Communication Association.

Our goals for *Reflections* are similar to those that motivated *New Directions*. Specifically, we wanted to produce a new volume that

- Highlights the newest developments in interpersonal communication theory and research, while also being historically grounded (e.g., having clear ties to the earlier volumes);
- Emphasizes the relevance of interpersonal communication theory and research in a world where we interact with family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances online and/or face to face, and where people are more mobile than ever before;
- Highlights the ways in which interpersonal communication scholars are addressing real-world issues and challenges facing our families, institutions, and societies;
- Documents how the study of interpersonal communication has become deeply entrenched in the communication discipline broadly, such that our theories and research have impact in many different areas and divisions;
- Provides accessible overviews of cutting-edge research programs; and
- Contains greater international representation, both in contributors and topics addressed, than typically has been the case in the prior volumes.

To accomplish these goals, we were mindful about who we invited as contributors to *Reflections* as well as what we asked these authors to do. Several goals guided our selection of authors. First, we again wanted to showcase scholars whose primary affiliation is interpersonal communication, along with boundary spanners whose work draws from

and connects interpersonal communication theory and research to other areas of the discipline (e.g., health, intergroup, organizational, or political communication). Our goal was not simply to assemble a list of well-known interpersonal communication scholars, but also to spotlight scholars from other areas who could speak about fruitful intersections between interpersonal communication and their own area of study. These boundary spanners help show how the study of interpersonal communication has become entrenched across the communication discipline, as well as how interpersonal communication remains relevant in an ever-changing world.

Second, we wanted to showcase authors located outside of the United States, as well as authors whose work speaks centrally to issues of culture, race/ethnicity, and other forms of difference. As we noted in the introduction to *New Directions*, globalization had led to much greater diversity in the composition of our graduate programs as compared with the time when the first two volumes were published. Globalization also has spurred greater reflexivity about how cultural values or assumptions are embedded in our theories and even in our conceptions of what constitutes interpersonal communication (Smith & Wilson, 2010b, pp. 6–7). Despite this growing awareness of the potential U.S.-centrism of interpersonal communication research, we now recognize that every author in *New Directions* was located at a U.S. university! We are pleased that *Reflections* includes authors from Belgium, Germany, and Israel, though we recognize that a great deal remains to be done in terms of engaging non-Western perspectives. We also are struck by how many of our authors are studying and writing about diverse populations, such as immigrant Latina/o youth (Kam), interracial/interethnic couples and families (Dainton, Soliz), and LGBTQ members serving in the U.S. military (Sahlstein Parcell).

Finally, we wanted to showcase authors whose work simultaneously contributes to theory and addresses applied issues. Readers who are looking for the latest in theory development will not be disappointed by *Reflections*. Authors provide updates and insights about the theory of resilience and relational load (Afifi, Zamanzadeh, & Harrison), communication theory of resilience (Buzzanell), action assembly theory (Greene), the discrepant verbal/nonverbal profile model (Grebelsky-Lichtman), normative rhetorical theory (Goldsmith), relational turbulence theory (Solomon,

Knobloch, Theiss, & McLaren), and uncertainty theories (Walther). Yet authors also show the relevance of interpersonal communication for understanding issues such as how families talk about cancer (Donovan), job loss (Buzzanell), or military deployment and reunion (Sahlstein Parcell; Wilson & Knobloch), how Latina/o youth engage in language brokering (i.e., translating between their Spanish-speaking parent and English-speaking adults, Kam), how women on parole or probation communicate with correctional officers (Smith, Morash, Holmstrom, Walling, & Adams), how individuals communicate with (dis)similar others online during presidential elections (Hutchins), and how adolescents interact with peers about sexualized media content (Rousseau & Eggermont).

Aside from the goals that guided our selection of contributors, we were also mindful about what we asked authors to do. In our instructions, we stressed to authors the following:

[W]e are not looking for lengthy reviews of all research on a broad topic (e.g., emotion, influence). Rather, we want ... you tell the “story” of your research program. We want you to “reflect” on your research program, in the sense of telling a story about where you are now with your scholarly work, how you got there, and where you plan to go in the future. If appropriate, you might also reflect on how your work (or interpersonal communication theory and research more broadly) fits into the larger, evolving landscape of the communication discipline.

We chose not to impose a single, standardized organizational framework on all of the chapters in *Reflections*, because we wanted each author to determine the best way to tell his or her story. Having said this, we encouraged authors to write in a personal style—using first-person pronouns, adding personal background where relevant, and talking about how their research program and/or the larger discipline has changed/evolved over time (like a story plot). We also asked each author to include three areas of future inquiry that they and others can carry out to advance interpersonal communication research. We believe that this format strikes a useful balance between accessibility and depth. Chapters in *Reflections*

avoid the dense, encyclopedic style that sometimes is difficult for advanced undergraduate or new graduate students to comprehend, yet chapters also contain insights that will spur the thinking of even the most seasoned interpersonal communication scholar.

Reflections is organized into five sections, the first of which is composed of a Foreword by Michael Roloff and this Preface. The second section is entitled *Stress, Coping, and Resilience*. Scholarship on resilience has exploded over the past two decades (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018), and the three chapters in this section focus on connections between interpersonal communication and resilience. Tamara Afifi and colleagues (Afifi, Zamanzadeh, & Harrison) lay out their theory of resilience and relational load (TRRL). According to these authors, resilience is “a process of calibration in relationships where relational partners or family members must continually gather feedback from each other about how they are adapting to their stress and adjust their communication accordingly by investing in their relationships.” Afifi et al. describe several ambitious studies where they are gathering multiple types of data (biomarkers, surveys, videotaped conversations) over time to test predictions from TRRL in contexts such as families coping with chronic illness. Jennifer Kam tells the story of her research on stress, coping, and thriving among Latina/o youth. Her longitudinal survey research investigates conditions under which language brokering has positive and/or negative consequences for immigrant children, while her in-depth interviews explore how interpersonal communication with teachers and school counselors can function as a protective resource for youth who are undocumented themselves or have undocumented family members. Kam also discusses ethical issues involved in working with hard-to-reach, vulnerable populations. Patrice Buzzanell describes her communication theory of resilience (CTR), which conceptualizes resilience as a process “through which people reintegrate and actively construct their new normal through language, interaction, networks, and attention to their identities and identifications, within their material environments and societal discourses.” After laying out key CTR concepts (e.g., trigger events, five resilience processes), Buzzanell calls for both critical analyses of which groups benefit from particular ways of constructing resilience as well as scale development and construct validation to assess testable hypotheses derived from CTR.

The third section, *(Non)verbal Behavior, Adaption, and Interaction*, features five chapters that highlight interaction processes reminiscent of Cappella's (1987) conception of interpersonal communication as mutual influence. Jordan Soliz lays out an intergroup perspective on personal relationships, starting with early studies on grandparent-grandchild communication to newer research on inter-ethnic/racial families as well gay and lesbian family members. Soliz draws on communication accommodation theory as a frame for understanding types of verbal and nonverbal behavior that help create a sense of shared family identity as opposed to making differences in age, race/ethnicity, or sexual orientation salient. John Greene describes the development of his theory of transcendent interactions, which focuses on conversations that are absorbing, create a sense of shared understanding, mutuality, and connection, and are insightful and fun. Grounded in his program of research on action assembly theory (AAT), this new work shows how AAT has evolved from focusing primarily on the intra-individual to also explicating inter-individual processes. Tsfira Grebelsky-Lichtman introduces her discrepant verbal/nonverbal behavior profile (DVNP) model, which offers a framework for exploring not only whether verbal and nonverbal behaviors are congruent but also how some discrepant patterns can promote rather than inhibit cooperative communication. Originally developed in studies of parent-child playtime interactions, she shows how the DVNP offers a framework for analyzing a range of interactions including televised political debates. Continuing the focus on nonverbal communication, Gary Bente argues for the necessity of separating descriptions from social evaluations of nonverbal behaviors and patterns. He shows how developments in motion capture technology, avatar modeling, and immersive display technologies have opened up new avenues for describing and experimentally manipulating nonverbal behavior, using studies from his own lab to illustrate the challenges and possibilities. Finally, Myiah Hutchins tells the story of her research on political communication online, including work exploring motives and effects of online incivility as well as whether engagement with political social media leads to greater exposure with counterattitudinal (and not just attitude consistent) information. Hutchins argues that misinformation may be a bigger threat than audience fragmentation in terms of the quality of political discussion online.

The fourth section is composed of five chapters that explore the inter-related themes of *Social Support, Influence, Identities, and Health*. After laying out key concepts and assumptions of her normative rhetorical theory (NRT), Daena Goldsmith describes a current project in which she is using NRT to examine interactions that blur the boundaries between the personal and public: blogs by mothers of autistic children. Goldsmith argues for giving NRT a critical edge by exploring the power and politics of identities and meaning making in this context. Building on Corbin and Strauss's (1985) theory of illness trajectories, Erin Donovan describes her rationale for conceptualizing communication during cancer itself as a form of "work," in the sense that it is demanding (emotional labor), involves a series of tasks some of which may be delegated, and necessitates preparation as well as active message design. Donovan fleshes out the implications of this "communication work" lens for educating health care professionals as well as assessing what counts as competence during difficult conversations. Sandi Smith, Merry Morash, and their colleagues tell the story of how they integrated theory and research from interpersonal communication and criminal justice in an externally funded project that followed more than 400 women on parole and probation over time. Their research documents associations between patterns of communication between women and their correctional officers and women's drug and alcohol avoidance and rates of recidivism, as mediated by factors such as women's crime-avoidance self-efficacy and psychological reactance. Steven Wilson and Leanne Knobloch reflect on how interpersonal communication theories can offer insights about the experiences of military families, and in turn, how those experiences can inform theory. They discuss challenges and opportunities for conducting research with difficult-to-access populations, navigating ingroup/outgroup dynamics, and communicating research findings with multiple, diverse audiences. Finally, Ann Rousseau and Steven Eggermont describe their Media and Children's Sexual Socialization (MaCS) project, which involves a large-scale, longitudinal study tracking young adolescents' (9 to 14 years old) exposure to sexualized media content, conversations with peers and parents, and well-being. The authors conceptualize multiple forms of "interpersonal media effects," including when peers socially validate appearance-related information obtained from media sources, impact the salience of particular

motives for viewing such content, or expose adolescents to content they otherwise would not have seen.

The fifth and final section, *Relationship Processes and Transitions*, contains four chapters that continue the tradition of conceptualizing interpersonal communication as a developmental process (Miller, 1978). Denise Solomon and colleagues (Solomon, Theiss, Knobloch, & McLaren) describe how they moved from their earlier relational turbulence model to formally explicate a theory of relational turbulence. Among other things, this involved clarifying how both interference and facilitation from a romantic partner can increase people's emotional reactivity to specific events, how the global and persistent experience of a relationship feeling chaotic arises from specific events, and how relational turbulence in turn affects both the processing of specific events and also more global qualities of the relationship. They discuss implications of their theory for designing couple/family interventions, assessing dyadic convergence, and clarifying how relational turbulence evolves over time. Erin Sahlstein Parcell tells the story of her program of research on long-distance relationships (LDRs), including how she uses relational dialectics theory (RDT) as a framework for analyzing cultural ideologies that shape reactions to LDRs as well as how she began investigating the contradictions and praxis patterns Army wives' experience before, during, and after their spouse's deployment. She also describes a current project, grounded in RDT, where she is exploring "dominant discourses within and about the military that may marginalize certain forms of military families" (e.g., LBGTQ service members). Marianne Dainton presents her program of research on relational maintenance, which refers to "the actions and activities used by relational partners to keep the relationship in a preferred state." Building on groundbreaking work by Stafford and Canary (1991), Dainton describes her own contributions in terms of investigating routine forms of maintenance, demonstrating that maintenance behaviors are not necessarily prosocial in nature, and exploring maintenance behaviors in diverse samples (e.g., Black married couples). She also lays out challenges and suggestions for developing a full-blown theory of relational maintenance. Finally, Joseph Walther argues for the importance of distinguishing between interpersonal and personal forms of uncertainty. Walther begins with a paradox—why are we so drawn to noninteractive,

pictorial or video-based social networking sites (SNSs) when research shows that text-based interactions (e.g., online chat, email) often are superior at reducing our uncertainty about others? Walther argues that these latter channels are better at helping reduce our *interpersonal* uncertainty (i.e., how a target person respond to us, as a unique communicator, as distinct from how that person responds to others) whereas noninteractive, pictorial SNSs are more pertinent to *personal* uncertainty (the target person's idiosyncratic psychological makeup). Based on this distinction between interpersonal versus personal forms of uncertainty, Walther proposes new directions for exploring both face-to-face and mediated interactions.

As these summaries make clear, *Reflections* will be of interest to faculty and students who consider interpersonal communication to be one of their key areas of interest. Our aim is for *Reflections* to be a volume that anyone who teaches graduate and/or upper-level undergraduate courses in interpersonal communication will feel compelled to own (as was the case with the earlier volumes by Miller and Roloff). We envision the book being widely adopted as a primary and/or supplemental text in graduate-level courses on interpersonal communication, and also in senior-level undergraduate classes. Graduate students working on their theses or dissertations in interpersonal communication as well as undergraduate students working on an honors thesis should be drawn to this compilation of cutting-edge research.

Secondary markets for the book include scholars in related areas of study (e.g., family, health, intercultural, mass, organizational, and political communication) who find interest in the “boundary spanner” chapters that apply theory and research with roots in interpersonal communication in these related contexts. Scholars in related disciplines—such as those in clinical and social psychology, human development and family studies, and sociology who belong to the interdisciplinary “International Association of Relationship Researchers”—also will be interested in many of the chapters in *Reflections*.

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