

Dr. Kristina Scharp (Associate Professor, School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University, US): *Looking forward!: Interpersonal communication theorizing across metatheoretical perspectives and methodological approaches*

From global health crises to everyday conflict, interpersonal communication scholars play a vital role in predicting relational outcomes, understanding major difficulties, and critiquing systems of oppression that exacerbate an already complicated life. Despite this potential, relationship researchers have traditionally focused on identifying antecedents and predicting outcomes, favoring goals of generalizability, falsifiability, and parsimony in their theoretical work. Although this work is highly valuable, interpersonal scholars are growing increasingly interested in applying theory with the goals of understanding particular speech communities and engaging issues of power and inequity. Thus, in looking forward, this keynote begins with the introduction of the Theory of Communication (Dis)Enfranchisement (TCD; Hintz & Scharp, 2023), which is a postmodern critical theory that focuses on the ideologies that marginalize people, the consequences of those ideologies, and the (dis)enfranchising talk that has the power to both reify and resist them. This theory represents a path to asking different types of questions focused on populations often overlooked by both researchers in the past but also in public policy, the media, and hearts and minds.

In addition to increased attention to marginalized populations, researchers are making robust methodological advancements across the field of Communication generally but originating from interpersonal communication scholars specifically. For example, Floyd brought physiological methods to the study of bio-evolutionary theory; Baxter developed contrapuntal analysis as a corresponding method to her postmodern critical theory, and Solomon and her colleagues are revolutionizing how researchers analyze conversational data with their dynamic dyadic systems approach. Toward advancing and supporting interpretive theorizing, the second part of this keynote presents Thematic Co-Occurrence (TCA; Scharp, 2021) as a tool that helps researchers identify and interpret the relationships between their themes and across research questions. Generative for the development of grounded theory, TCA also allows researchers to illustrate the ambivalence that pervades participant accounts, yet is often difficult to articulate in research reports.

Taken together, the Theory of Communication (Dis)Enfranchisement and Thematic Co-Occurrence Analysis represent just two of the ways interpersonal communication scholars are increasing both meta-theoretical inclusivity and developing methodological innovations. Looking forward, advances in different types of theorizing and analysis foreshadow the promise of interpersonal communication scholars to be leaders in translating their research to address the timely and serious problems people must manage at multiple levels.



Kristina M. Scharp (Ph.D, University of Iowa) is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University and a Director of the Family Communication and Relationships Lab. Her work meets at the intersection of interpersonal, family, and health communication and focuses on the process of marginalization and the ways people cope with the major disruptions to their lives. Specifically, Scharp's research programmatically advances communication theory and method with the aim of (a) exposing institutionalized structures of oppression, (b)

understanding the populations those structures marginalize, and (c) illuminating communication processes marginalized populations enact to cope with the inequities they experience. To date, she has over 90 publications in outlets such as the *Journal of Communication*, *Human Communication Research*, *Communication Monographs*, and *Communication Research* as well as three co-authored textbooks. In the last few years, she was awarded the International Communication Association's Early Career Award, NCA Family Communication Division's Distinguished Article Award, and the Leslie A. Baxter Early Career Award in Family Communication. Her work on family estrangement, in particular, has garnered attention from numerous media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Conversation*, and *NPR*.