To my family: the Galvins, Wilkinsons, Nicholsens, and Sullivans, plus the special friends I consider as my family. KMG

To all my families—adoptive, stepfamily, voluntary, beagle—and especially my husband, Chuck. Thanks to all of you, it’s a wonderful life. DOB

To the many people I am privileged to call family, especially Greg, Thurman, Nicholas, and Madeline. CLB
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It is with amazement and a deep sense of gratitude that we introduce the ninth edition of *Family Communication: Cohesion and Change*. The first edition, published over 30 years ago, represented the first textbook to explore the family from a communication perspective. At that time few communication classes addressed the subject, and only a small number of communication scholars conducted research in the area. Currently, most communication departments in colleges and universities offer one or more courses on the subject at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The field has progressed from an early period when marital communication dominated the research agenda to the present when scholars address interaction within multiple family forms; there is a research journal devoted to family communication scholarship, and the number of family communication scholars and students is at an all-time high.

The authorship team has changed over these years. Kathleen M. Galvin initiated the book project in 1980 and the first copy was published in 1982. Bernard J. Brommel served as coauthor on the first five editions; Carma L. Bylund assumed that role for the next three editions. Dawn O. Braithwaite joined Galvin and Bylund as the second author for this ninth edition.

Historically, family interactions have received scholarly attention from family therapists, academic psychologists, and sociologists, who studied family issues at the macro level. Today, family scholars rely on a wide range of theories developed within the family communication field and in areas of social sciences. Contemporary scholars address questions related to family members’ interactions within a wide range of family forms and address interactions across the life span and within multiple cultures, relying on theories developed within the social sciences as well as those developed by family communication researchers. Today’s scholars undertake their studies using multiple quantitative and qualitative methodologies that have grown increasingly sophisticated with each passing decade. As an increasing number of communication scholars focus on family interaction, their findings contribute increased depth and insight to each edition of the book.

Our basic premise remains the same—communication processes create and reflect family systems and family identity. Relying on a range of theoretical perspectives, we examine the communication patterns enacted within families to demonstrate how these patterns affect, and are affected by, family life in the twenty-first century. Our objective focus remains to describe family interaction patterns rather than to prescribe specific interaction practices because we believe there are multiple ways to be a well-functioning family. We believe that readers will be in the best position to make their own choices about family communication when they have in-depth and up-to-date information on family interactions processes.

Throughout the book we present a range of family experiences, including introductory case examples that open each chapter, and de-identified real-life examples appear throughout the text. These are first-person examples provided by our students, friends, and family members. These personal examples ground the theory and research in real-life experiences.
New to This Edition

We made multiple changes in this edition based on feedback from instructors using this book as well as from thoughtful reviewers and comments from our students. Each chapter has been revised to keep pace with changes in the discipline and the state of everyday family life. More specifically we have developed sections that address the following topics: communication challenges in military families, the increasing impact of new technologies on family interaction, shifts in structured aging patterns to highly flexible ones. We have also paid increased attention to international and ethnic families as well as to national crisis situations.

In addition to updating the research base in every chapter, we now begin each chapter with learning objectives readers can expect to address. Other changes include the following:

Chapter 1: Expanded the “Families: current status” section and the discussion of emerging family forms
Chapter 2: Updated the primary and secondary functions framework
Chapter 3: Updated the description of theories with a special focus on advances in relational dialectics theory
Chapter 4: Added a new mediated section to networks and expanded the narrative section addressing varied family forms and storytelling practices
Chapter 5: Added a section on respect and expanded the rituals section
Chapter 6: Expanded the treatment of diversity and sexuality
Chapter 7: Explored the increasing complexity of family and gender roles
Chapter 8: Developed the focus on power as negotiated in interaction across different family forms
Chapter 9: Expanded the discussion of conflicts as managed rather than resolved and the characteristics of negotiating conflict as an interpersonal family process
Chapter 10: Enlarged the discussion of the role of communication in life stages and across the life course
Chapter 11: Added a section on communication challenges in military families
Chapter 12: Revised and updated the discussion of genetics and family communication

Features

As in earlier editions, the first three chapters establish the theoretical foundations of the text. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to communication, discourse-dependent families, and family concepts as well as an elaborate overview of the current state of the family. Chapter 2 depicts and discusses a framework for analyzing family communication that threads through the remaining chapters. It also includes a discussion of family-of-origin patterns because they link directly to the framework patterns. Chapter 3 examines key theories emphasizing systems theory, which undergirds the text, as well as social constructionism/symbolic interaction, relational dialectics theory, narrative theory, and communication privacy management theory. Chapter 4 explores the communicative construction of family identity through family patterns and meanings, including communication rules, family secrets, communication networks, and
narratives. Chapter 5 addresses partner and family relational maintenance strategies; these include confirmation, respect, rituals, and relational currencies. Chapter 6 focuses on developing intimacy; topics include commitment, self-disclosure, sexuality, other factors including forgiveness, and barriers to intimacy. Chapter 7 discusses the nature and enactment of family roles and of family typologies. Chapter 8 focuses on power and decision-making, while Chapter 9 discusses conflict, including conflict models and patterns, both destructive and constructive. Chapters 10 and 11 focus on both predictable and unpredictable family stresses. Predictable stress includes managing family developmental stages and the transitions between these stages; unpredictable stress refers to coping with the unforeseen, and usually negative, challenges including death, illness, divorce, and separation due to military deployment, as well as social support. Finally, Chapter 12 examines physical and psychological aspects of family well-being and discusses three emerging areas of future research. The first section examines communication about family health, followed by a discussion of the capacity to hold difficult dialogues, and, finally, psychological well-being and approaches to improving family communication.

Instructor and Student Resources

Haley Kranstuber Horstman at the University of Missouri has thoroughly updated the Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank (0205945333) to accompany this edition. The Instructor’s Manual portion of the IM/TB includes the following resources for each chapter: Brief Summary, Key Terms, Discussions and Exercises, and Media Illustrations. The Test Bank contains approximately 500 multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions, all of which are organized by chapter. A downloadable version of this supplement is available at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc (access code required). For a complete listing of the instructor and student resources available with this text, please visit the Family Communication e-catalog page at www.pearsonhighered.com.

This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about Pearson programs, pricing, and customization options, visit www.pearsonhighered.com.

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a Northwestern University student; Kathy Thorne, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for her substantial work on the bibliographic citations in the book; and Kaitlin Phillips, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for her highly detailed revision of the bibliography. Finally, we remain thankful to all our students, colleagues, and friends who continue to expand our horizons in discussions regarding the fascinating subject of family communication.

Our own family lives have changed significantly over the past decades, a reality that continually teaches us the importance of understanding family communication including basic interaction patterns in family systems, relationship maintenance and intimacy, conflict management, developmental and unpredictable changes, and adapting to societal changes. To our growing number of family members, related to us by biological, legal, and discursive ties, we express our continued gratitude for their patience, support, and unwitting contributions to some examples in the book! Through our ongoing interactions with our students and our own research projects, we continue to learn firsthand about family interaction patterns in multiple contexts. As each year passes we increasingly appreciate what it means to function as members of complex family systems.

We hope that you will be captured by the importance and complexity of family communication and that you will find the study of family interactions to be a thought-provoking and meaningful experience.

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