As with any discipline, current interpersonal communication scholarship relies heavily on its past in an effort to ensure an improved present and an even brighter future. Current research and teaching is informed by preceding theoretical and methodological trends and their associated strengths, as well as weaknesses. State-of-the-discipline publications focus on “where we have been, what we know, what we don’t know, what we need to know, and where we should be going” (Knapp & Daly, 2011, p. 3). The process of reflecting on the past as a way to inform the present is a hallmark of scholarship, yet how the present shapes the discipline’s future is less often considered.

The purpose of this special forum is to offer a platform for scholars to discuss the future of interpersonal communication by drawing on its past and present, as well as its challenges and affordances. The essays presented in this special forum for Communication Studies extend and formalize an intense and passionate conversation that began at a spotlight panel during the 2013 annual Central States Communication Association (CSCA) conference, “Interpersonal Communication’s Past, Present, and Bright Future.”

Seven high-profile and incredibly influential interpersonal communication scholars that represent a wide range of scholarly traditions, at different stages of their careers, were invited to participate in the panel (including Dr. Dawn O. Braithwaite, Dr. Steve Duck, Dr. Kory Floyd, Dr. Elissa Foster, Dr. Andrew Ledbetter, Dr. Jimmie Manning, and Dr. Sandra Metts). Panelists were asked to consider four specific questions in their brief, candid presentations at the panel: (a) How has the communication discipline changed since you began studying interpersonal communication? (b) What do you
enjoy most about being an interpersonal communication scholar? (c) What is the
greatest challenge of being an interpersonal communication scholar? and (d) Where
do you see interpersonal communication going in the future?

All of the seven participants’ responses to these questions were intriguing and
thought provoking! Thus, we thought it would be a shame that, after such an intense
and lively discussion at CSCA for the conversation to simply end there. So, shortly
after the panel, we asked and secured approval from Dr. Robert Littlefield to put
together a special forum dedicated to the bright future of interpersonal commu-
nication within Communication Studies. Indeed, we wanted the discussion that was
started at CSCA to continue but in a more accessible venue. Consequently, we asked
panelists to consider (and reconsider) their remarks at CSCA and to write up more
formal reports about their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences as related to
the future of interpersonal communication. As the coeditors for this project, we were
very excited about the potential contributions and how this forum would ultimately
take shape. As the essays began pouring in, we were thrilled at their depth,
complexity, and insight! The responses we received from peer reviewers who offered
their insights confirmed our appreciation.

To consider the future of interpersonal communication, we believe it is necessary
to evaluate critically the discipline’s past and present. Duck (this issue) carefully
revisits enduring critiques of interpersonal communication scholarship and argues
that scholars have failed to fully embrace these critiques in their research. Despite
long-standing criticisms, the discipline has developed to include a considerably
broader spectrum of contexts, theories, and methodologies, all of which are
accompanied by unique challenges as well as opportunities.

One challenge brought about by the discipline’s growth is to determine the bound-
aries and parameters of what comprises interpersonal communication. Thus, Floyd
(this issue) beautifully renders the adage that you cannot truly know what something
is unless you simultaneously know what something is not. Manning (this issue)
furthers Floyd’s essay by introducing a fully developed, carefully researched, and
thoughtful constitutive model of interpersonal communication.

Whereas the communication discipline’s breadth encourages a multitude of
approaches to coexist, some have received more attention than others, although they
all have much to offer to a more refined understanding of interpersonal communi-
cation. As such, Braithwaite (this issue) intelligently argues that a greater emphasis be
placed on interpretative studies. She draws on her extensive and intimate experience
with the discipline to make her arguments. In a similar vein, Foster (this issue) calls
for the acknowledgement and a special place for autoethnography within interperso-
 nal communication. Foster’s arguments are powerful and moving. As much as
challenges are a part of interpersonal communication scholarship, opportunities
are bound to surface as well. For instance, teaching interpersonal communication
provides opportunities to illuminate taken-for-granted dynamics in students’ lives
in creative and contemporary ways. Metts (this issue) offers compelling and nuanced
methods for interpersonal communication pedagogy and mentoring. Studying inter-
personal communication also enables researchers to embrace novel ways of relating
and communicating with each other by considering how technology can be studied from an interpersonal perspective. Ledbetter (this issue) thus provides a brief, yet amazingly comprehensive, review of technology research and theorizing within interpersonal communication.

Overall, we feel that the essays contained in this special forum for *Communication Studies* are groundbreaking and raise issues that will incite and inspire discussions about the depth, breadth, and richness of interpersonal communication. Indeed, interpersonal communication scholarship has evolved into the study of human interaction from a variety of vantage points, each of which offers distinct insights into its underlying roots and dynamics. We believe that the road ahead for interpersonal communication scholars is both challenging and exciting. And for every potential challenge, there is also an opportunity. Thus, we believe that the future of interpersonal communication scholarship is bright and promising!

**Reference**