

Special Issue: Hidden Gems in Communication Studies

What We Can Learn From Hidden Gems: Introduction to the Special Issue

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The world's first and longest running scientific journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, began publication in 1665. The goal of the journal was to distribute all of the important new scientific discoveries to the scientists of Europe (McDougall-Waters et al., 2015). Over time, the number of academic journals has grown substantially and as such, sometimes scholarship of high quality does not get same amount of attention that each research report received when there were only few journals reporting new scientific research (and indeed far fewer researchers).

In an ideal world, the most important and useful scholarly publications would be read and heavily cited. But all sorts of factors affect which articles are read and cited (e.g., cutesy article titles, see Keating et al., 2019). Sometimes important ideas are rediscovered later after being ignored when they were first presented (e.g., plate tectonics were first proposed in 1912 by Alfred Wegener and not widely accepted by geologists until the 1960s; Hallam, 1975). Science would work perfectly to advance knowledge if it were not for the troubling fact that scientists are humans (Bacon, 1620/2000).

Given the possibility that there are studies or ideas that might benefit Communication Science that have been neglected, our editor, Sungeun Chung approached me with his idea to put together a special issue devoted to uncovering and promoting “hidden gems,” i.e. publications by Communication researchers and those in allied fields that have been overlooked and that the community of Communication scientists might benefit from reading. We approached a group of Communication professors that we knew were both excellent scholars and knowledgeable about the history of the social sciences. We asked each to write a short essay on one or more “hidden gems” that they felt Communication scientists would benefit from reading and considering in-depth. We were pleased when they each not only agreed but

enthusiastically took up our request.

I will not review each of them here, they stand on their own and I invite you to read all of them. But I will briefly observe that if one theme stands out that connects them all, it is the importance of rigor in both methods and exploring topics of research. A lot can be learned from asking people to complete online surveys, but not everything. Field studies, network analysis, filmed interactions in labs, and more recently, brain imaging are all methods that take a great deal of time and effort. But there are many questions about human communication that are vital to testing our theories and solving problems that cannot be easily studied with an online survey. Additionally, merely approaching our subfields with only the tools and ideas commonly used in that subfield is a habit that will only produce stagnation rather than the flowering of unique hybrid ideas that should be the hallmark of a multi-disciplinary field like Communication. I hope that shining a light on these hidden gems will encourage researchers to sometimes do things the hard way in both our methods and our choices of what to read so that we might all benefit.

Thank-you to all of the authors of these articles who took time from their busy schedules to write these essays and to the editor of this journal, Sungeung Chung, for asking me to put this issue together.

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