

Forum

Co-Minding on Paradigmatic View of Community Problem-Solving Introduction of Special Forum

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The 1950s was a time when the study of communication and media sprouted and began to bloom. Carl I. Hovland, one of the founding fathers of the field and the director of the Yale Communication Research Program during the 1950s, observed “numerous *practical communication problems*” (Hovland et al., 1953, p. 1, emphasis added) and advocated scientific and systematic research concerned with understanding communication and media. With some successes in his research program, Hovland expressed a quite optimistic view about the future of communication studies. He hoped that “more intensive work over the next decades will help to reduce the gaps between the various formulations and to integrate the contributions of anthropology, sociology, political science, psychiatry, and psychology into a *general theory of communication*” (Hovland et al., p. 3, emphasis added).

Since then, the field of communication studies has grown and extended enormously. Ever larger numbers of researchers are dedicating to communication research these days. While many of them still rely on the research principles that Hovland and other founding fathers abided by, communication researchers test countless new hypotheses and publish thousands of articles every year (e.g., 4,300 articles in 2019, Clarivate Analytics, 2019). We, communication researchers, are making a significant achievement of quantitative growth. But at this point, it would be meaningful to ask whether Hovland’s visions are coming true. Are the numerous studies we have done contributing to solving *practical communication problems* in our societies? Are we providing knowledge that addresses intellectual questions of the public? Are we reaching a *general theory of communication*? Are the principles we rely on in our research still valid and effective? Are we doing right? These self-reflective questions should always be taken seriously, but they are getting more critical as our field of communication study grows bigger. We would better open to challenging answers to these questions and listen to new

ideas about studying communication and media.

Kim (2020), published in Volume 17(3) of *Asian Communication Research (ACR)*, is noteworthy for proposing a new paradigm on how scientists, humanists, and artists build research communities to solve situational problems facing humankind. With Richard F. Carter who influenced many communication scholars (Dervin & Chaffee, 2003), Kim (2003, 2007, 2012) has developed a communicative model for collective problem-solving based on Carter's paradigmatic view of behavioral architecture (1964, 2021). His model of a structure of behavior comprises co-minding (i.e., co-exposing, co-focusing attention, co-questioning) and co-moving. Kim (2020) applied this problem-solving model to interdisciplinary research efforts to solve significant social problems such as climate change and pandemics. His article is notable not only in that it deals with *practical communication problems* but also in that the concepts and ideas of the article are not from the mainstream of communication studies but are unique and original. For example, Kim views a community not as an entity with a body but as an actor that emerges along with co-minding processes.

Noting this theoretical and practical significance of the article, the *ACR* editorial team organized a special seminar titled *Challenging Ideas and Scholarly Responses* at the annual conference of Korean Society of Journalism & Communication Studies (<https://comm.or.kr>) on May 12, 2021. The seminar results eventually led to this special forum in *ACR*. This forum consists of two commentaries (Ahn, this issue; Y. Kim, this issue) on Kim (2020) and H.-S. Kim's responses to the commentaries (this issue).

Ahn (this issue) suggests that the proposed co-minding process of six collective acts for behavioral problem-solving might not be enough to solve dire problems such as climate change and epidemic diseases, because situational problems are two kinds (i.e., problems in social

and physical domains), and dire problems are fundamentally those of the social domain. Ahn points out that the more challenging part of the interdisciplinary research community is to deal with groups of individuals who are ignorant of their ignorance with overconfidence despite their limited knowledge and misleading intuitive epistemology, and to make them engage in the co-minding process.

The second commentary (Y. Kim, this issue) reflects on Kim's (2020) novel ideas by reviewing the (a) theoretical explication of the critical constructs, (b) behavioral processes that enable the community, and (c) values of community problem-solving. Drawn from the critical review, Y. Kim offers recommendations for future research directions. Specifically, Y. Kim highlights the importance of relating theoretical constructs with existing empirical concepts and approaches to study social phenomena. Given the communication field's focus and orientation, she also highlights the critical roles communication theories and research can play in interdisciplinary problem-solving.

Responding to the two commentaries, H.-S. Kim (this issue) further clarifies issues in Kim (2020). Specifically, the author explains differences between the actor's point of view and the observer's point of view, between puzzles and problems, between situational and behavioral problems, between individual actors vs. collective actors, between empirical concepts and theoretical concepts, and between discovery and development. H.-S. Kim suggests that researchers focus on behavioral process per se rather than empirical concepts such as decision making, attitude, and public.

The field of communication and media studies has grown big but we need to build strong scholarly communities so that we can contribute to solving dire problems in reality. It is hoped that this forum helps us reflect the principles and practices that we habitually rely on in our

research and helps individual researchers and scholarly communities together grow stronger.

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