AEJMC Senior Scholar Projects for 2023

Grants have been awarded to two Senior Scholar projects. Each Senior Scholar was awarded for a $5,000 grant.

Project #1

Rosie Jahng, Wayne State University

"Exploring Twitter Bots Message Strategies to Encourage Social Media Upstanders against Anti-Asian Disinformation"

Abstract: During the COVID-19 pandemic, hate crimes targeting Asian Americans increased both in online and offline context. Studies have noted the positive impact of social media in promoting anti-racist messages with hashtags, such as #stopAsianhate. To scale up the positive impact of social media designed to counteract racial discrimination, a non-profit organization, *Respond2Racism*, created Twitter bots that automatically and systematically respond to racist tweets at scale, by identifying and calling out certain expressions as hate messages (Respond2Racism, 2020). Building on this initiative, this project proposes studies to examine different types of factchecking messages that can be communicated with automated responses to anti-Asian disinformation using Twitter bots. The studies focus on identifying different messaging strategies that are more effective in correcting racist beliefs than fact-based didactic contents, increasing ethnocultural empathy, and can empower general Twitter users with upstander actions against racism on social media platforms.

To test the effectiveness of intervention message strategies, an online experiment with a 2 (Presence of exemplification) X 4 (race of speaker) will be conducted with U.S. adults. Participants' evaluation of Twitter bots' response will be assessed with their intention to engage with the messages and behavioral intentions for reactive and proactive anti-racist upstander actions when faced with similar situations. Building on the results from the experimental study, a nationally representative survey will also be implemented to test whether the presence of these automated intervention messages on Twitter can empower users for upstander actions. Results from this study will expand scholarship of online disinformation by examining how to use a large-scale automated system to correct racist disinformation targeting Asian Americans. Also, this study proposes a prosocial use of automated bots on Twitter that can be applied to many various forms of online trolling and racist dialogue.

Project #2

Jungmi Jun, University of South Carolina

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"Cancer Communication Ecologies of Asian Americans in the United States"

Abstract: Jun proposes to identify the cancer communication ecology network of Asians in the United States by conducting (1) systematic review of literature on Asians' communication resources and (2) surveys with Asians across the United States. The proposed research aims to (a) investigate Asians' cancer communication ecology distinguished from other racial/ethnic groups as well as variations within the group, (b) find ethnic/community resources of cancer information and extend the communication ecology network, and (c) identify communication resources that are associated with cancer screening knowledge and confidence.

Asians are the only racial group listing cancer as the leading cause of death in the United States, and cancer accounts for 25% of all deaths among Asians. Cancer deaths can be mitigated with early screening and treatment. Yet, Asians show the lowest cancer screening rates of all racial/ethnic groups. During the pandemic, many Asians avoided or delayed cancer/health screenings, and one reason was the fear of anti-Asian racism and social interactions. Findings from this project will support the effort to actively communicate and resume safe cancer screenings for Asians. This research will contribute to the field of mass communication by applying its theoretical framework – communication ecology network – into a current health inequality issue.