

Summer 2021 Newsletter

ComSHER - Communicating Science, Health, Environment & Risk Division

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

Elevating Voices

ComSHER Features Renewed Focus on Diversity and Inclusivity

By Kajsa E. Dalrymple, ComSHER Head & Sara K. Yeo, ComSHER Vice-Head

ComSHER members have done it again! In a year where we have faced unending uncertainty, our community responded with an outpouring of research (a record 215 submissions) dedicated to responding to crucial questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, social justice and disparities in SHER, and the ongoing climate crisis. Our dedicated ComSHER officers have also been developing programming and engagement opportunities that support the diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice values discussed in our 2020 business meeting. We hope to continue these discussions and get feedback on some of our new programming at our business meeting on Friday, August 6 from 8:45 p.m.-10:15 p.m. (CDT).

ComSHER is hosting our first “Diversity in SHER” research panel on Wednesday, August 4 (3 p.m.-4:30 p.m. CDT); thank you to all who submitted work to this special call. We hope to continue dedicating programming space to these topics at future conferences to center issues of inclusivity and representation in our division and field.

ComSHER is hosting a pre-conference titled “Inclusive ComSHER” Tuesday, August 3 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (CDT). The key objective of this pre-conference is for academics and practitioners to come together to explore how inclusive practices can be embedded in our research, classrooms, and workplaces. We will be sending out more information on how to register and participate via the ComSHER listserv and encourage you to spread the link widely (registration is free).

ComSHER has also partnered with [Inclusive SciComm](#) to develop the ISC+ComSHER Cohort initiative. The program brings together early-career practitioners and researchers to facilitate discussion and collaboration. Awardees are funded to attend the 2021 AEJMC conference and the 2021 ISC Symposium. Applications are due by July 1, 2021, and should be sent to Sara K. Yeo at sara.yeo@utah.edu.

Needless to say, the ComSHER officers have been busy at work, and Sara and I are so grateful and proud of the work that our team has done during this tumultuous year. Our new graduate committee has also been hard at work, creating opportunities for community and support throughout the year, such as the ComSHER writing accountability groups.

In short, we have a lot of wonderful events planned for the conference (and beyond), and look forward to engaging with all of you in August!

Rising Stars

For a Second Year in a Row, ComSHER Funds Top Graduate Students to attend AEJMC 2021

Meet this year's nine outstanding ComSHER graduate students! Please read their bios below, check out their work at the conference, and congratulate them at our business meeting.



Mikhaila Calice is a second-year science communication doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to starting doctoral work, Mikhaila completed an MPA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison La Follette School of Public Affairs. With a background in energy policy, Mikhaila's work explores how energy transition and climate change are communicated to the public and policymakers in order to better understand collaborative approaches to policy making.



Xinxia Dong is pursuing a Ph.D. degree in the Department of Communication at the University of Buffalo. Prior to her doctoral work, Xinxia earned a Bachelor of Arts in Advertising with a minor in Law from Nanjing Normal University, and Master of Arts in communication from

Renmin University of China. Xinxia's academic interests lie in health risk communication and narrative persuasion.



Ziyang (Mobius) Gong is currently a graduate student in the Master of Science in Advertising program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Ziyang is committed to applying quantitative approaches to study the roles digital media plays in shaping public communication and understanding of science and health issues. Ziyang's primary research interest is to understand the consumption and spread of misinformation on social media and to explore new debunking techniques to help fight against misinformation.



Sammi Munson is a doctoral student in Communications, a graduate teaching assistant, and a researcher at the Center for Climate Change Communication (4C) at George Mason University. Sammi earned a master of science degree from The Ohio State University in Environmental Science with an emphasis on Public Health. Sammi's research interests broadly include science communication and science education.



Muhammad Ittefaq is a doctoral student in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. Prior to starting doctoral work, Muhammad was a print media journalist and completed a master's degree in Media and Communication Science at the Technical University of Ilmenau, Germany. Muhammad's work focuses on the impact of new media technology on health behaviors, health literacy, and social disparities.



Youngji Seo is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at University of Georgia. Youngji's research interests lie at the unintended effects of persuasive messages in the domains of health and risk communication. In particular, Youngji's research focuses on cognitive responses to persuasive messages that are not expected or not predicted by message senders.



Aya Sami Shata is a doctoral candidate in School of Communication at University of Miami (UM) who is graduating this summer. Aya’s research interests focus on narrative persuasion and communication in the areas of health, social, and environment. She was awarded UM’s “most outstanding doctoral student of 2021.”



Jody CS Wong is a doctoral candidate in communication at the University of Buffalo. Jody completed a master’s degree and was a Wee Kim Wee Legacy Fund scholar at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Jody’s research focuses on media psychology in the areas of risk and health communication.



Ellie Fan Yang is a doctoral candidate in mass communication at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Ellie’s recent papers explored mobile support for vulnerable populations, the communication dynamics of computer-mediated interactions, and the effects of moral framing strategies for public support. Currently, Ellie is pursuing research in media technology and message effects for social support and social cohesion in health communication.

Top Paper Winners

Celebrating Another Record Year for ComSHER Submissions

By Matthew VanDyke and Jessica Willoughby

The ComSHER Division received another record high number of submissions this year! We received 215 full paper and extended abstract submissions—103 of which were accepted for presentation at AEJMC 2021. Three scholars reviewed each submission, and the submissions receiving the highest standardized scores will be presented at this year's conference.

We want to extend congratulations to our top paper winners! Below is the line-up for our top paper session:

Top Faculty Paper (Tied)

Integrating Psychometric Paradigm of Risk and Issue Attention Cycle: A Study of Risk Information in News Coverage of Avian and Swine Influenza

- Timothy Fung, Hong Kong Baptist University
- Kang Namkoong, University of Maryland
- Jiyoun Kim, University of Maryland
- Po Yan Lai, Hong Kong Baptist University

2nd Place Top Faculty Paper

Facing the Strain: The Persuasive Effects of Conversion Messages on COVID-19 Vaccination Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions

- Jeff Conlin, Michelle Baker, Bingbing Zhang, Heather Shoenberger, and Fuyuan Shen, Pennsylvania State

3rd Place Top Faculty Paper

The Growth and Disciplinary Convergence of Environmental Communication: A Bibliometric Analysis of the Field (1970-2019)

- Karen Akerlof, Katherine E. Rowan, and James L. Olds, George Mason University
- Julia Hathaway, Stony Brook University
- Kristin Timm, University of Alaska Fairbanks

4th Place Top Faculty Paper

How Lay Audiences Evaluate Scientific Uncertainty Disclosure: The Roles of Source and Preference for Communication of Uncertainty

- Chelsea Ratcliff and Rebekah Wicke, University of Georgia

Eason Prize Winner/Top Student Paper

Seeing from the Eyes of Suffered Peers: Using Distance-framed Narrative to Communicate Risks Related to E-cigarette Use

- Sixiao Liu, University at Buffalo

Please check out your colleagues’ great work featured in other sessions throughout the conference, too, including other award winners:

Top Faculty Paper (Tied), featured in the “Motivations Behind Health Behaviors” paper session

Examining Antecedents to Accuracy- and Defense-Motivated Information Insufficiency in the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Timothy Fung and Po Yan Lai, Hong Kong Baptist University
- Robert Griffin, Marquette University
- Sharon Dunwoody, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Second Place Top Student Paper, featured in the “Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Information in Digital Spaces” high density session

“BFF: Beer Friends Forever” Close Friends’ Role in Adolescents’ Sharing of Alcohol References on Social Media

- Robyn Vanherle, KU Leuven

Third Place Top Student Paper, featured in the “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice in Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Topics” paper session

Cultural Competence in Health Communication: A Concept Explication

- Evgeniia Belobrovkina, University of Missouri

We’re including all the programmed ComSHER research sessions below for your reference.

**All times are Central Daylight Time (CDT).*

Wednesday, August 4	
3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	“Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice in Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Topics” Paper Session
Thursday, August 5	
11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	“Motivations Behind Health Behaviors” Paper Session

3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	AEJMC Scholar-to-Scholar (Poster) Session
7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	ComSHER Scholar-to-Scholar (Poster) Session
Friday, August 6	
3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	“Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Information in Digital Spaces” High Density Session
7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Division Top Paper Session
Saturday, August 7	
10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.	“Addressing Wicked Problems: Communicating about Sustainability” Paper Session

Finally, we want to thank you for your participation in this year’s research competition. Whether you submitted work, reviewed submissions, will serve as a moderator or discussant during the conference, or all of the above, your participation and service to the division are greatly appreciated! We’re excited for the thoughtful presentations and discussions to come, and we look forward to seeing you at this year’s virtual conference!

Fighting Misinformation

ComSHER Features Two PF&R Panels Addressing Public Discourse in Racism, Health, and Social Justice

By Kang Namkoong, PF&R Chair

We are delighted to announce two interesting and insightful PF&R panels that cover timely topics for AEJMC 2021. ComSHER leads or co-sponsors the sessions with the Public Relations, Media Ethics, and Minorities and Communication Divisions. Below is the line-up for two excellent sessions on Thursday, August 5 and Friday, August 6. We look forward to seeing you online!

Panel #1: Misinformation, Racism, and the Magnification of Health Inequities: Research Informing Publics and the Practice (and Vice Versa)

Thursday, August 5 - 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (CDT)

Sponsors: Public Relations, ComSHER, & Minorities and Communication Divisions

Misinformation has long been a problem in our field; however, the COVID-19 pandemic, racist rhetoric tweeted from the White House, national protests inspired by Black Lives Matter, and other events in 2020-2021 brought issues related to truth, trust, and social justice to the forefront of public discourse. In this panel, scholars will 1) discuss how their work contributes to our

collective understanding of misunderstanding, and 2) set a research agenda for how future work can more closely examine the intersection of misinformation, racism, health disparities, and social justice.

Presiding/moderating: Brooke McKeever, University of South Carolina

Panelists:

- Maria E. Len-Rios, University of Georgia
- Lee Ann Kahlor, University of Texas at Austin
- Jungmi Jun, University of South Carolina
- Arunima Krishna, Boston University
- Ellie Yang, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Panel #2: New Normal for Journalism Ethics in 2020: Journalists' Responsibility in Addressing Misinformation in the Year of Coronavirus, Social Protests, and Natural Disasters

Friday, August 6, 2021 - 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (CDT)

Sponsors: ComSHER & Media Ethics Divisions

The year 2020 is challenging time for journalists who have to handle a considerable amount of new information from a variety of news sources, such as scientists, health providers, politicians, government officials, and celebrities, who have been often found as sources of misinformation. With limited time for fact-checking, journalists also became sources, as well as victims of misinformation from time to time. This panel will address journalists' responsibilities as they cover the broad range of topics, including social (e.g., Black Lives Matter), environmental (e.g., wildfires in the West Coast of the U.S.), and health issues (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic), and share their knowledge and experience of how journalists can protect the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, and public accountability in the midst of the substantial challenges in 2020.

Presiding/moderating: Kathryn Thier, University of Maryland

Panelists:

- Kathleen Bartzen Culver, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Nicole Kraft, Ohio State University
- Summer Harlow, University of Houston
- Danielle K. Kilgo, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
- Anita Varma, Santa Clara University

Joining the Movement

Inclusive SciComm and AEJMC ComSHER Welcomes New Cohort

ComSHER is proud to partner with Inclusive SciComm (ISC) this year and launch the inaugural cohort program focused on a growing movement in science communication focused on inclusion, equity, and intersectionality.

Six early-career researchers and practitioners representing diverse research perspectives in science, health, environmental, and risk communication were selected by a panel of ISC Symposium Planning Committee members and ComSHER officers.

Each individual is fully funded to attend the joint ISC/ComSHER pre-conference (August 3), AEJMC Annual Conference (August 4-7), and the ISC Symposium (October 14-16).

Congratulations to the 2021 ISC + ComSHER Cohort Awardees!

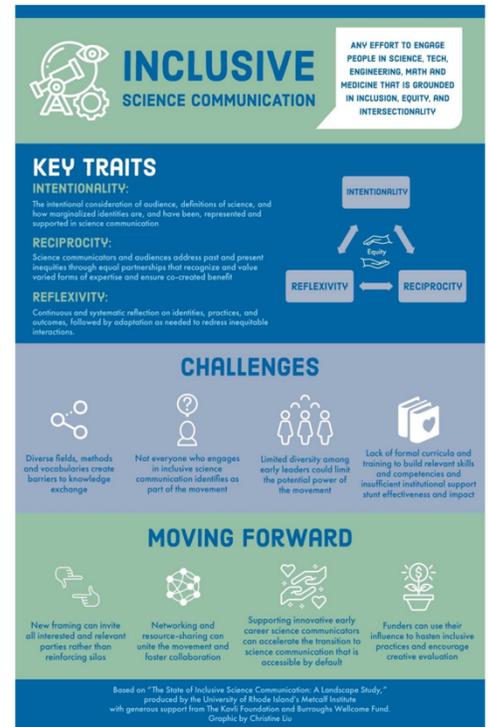


Kaytee Canfield

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Dr. Kaytee Canfield (she/her) is a queer, U.S.-based, interdisciplinary researcher-practitioner with training and expertise in environmental and coastal social science, environmental and social justice, and science communication. Her doctoral research used critical qualitative social science to investigate the justice of tourism development on Catalina Island, California. She is most excited about work that integrates social justice and equity with STEM and science communication, as exhibited in her past research with the Metcalf Institute on inclusive science communication. She currently works as a postdoctoral translational scientist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and teaches courses at the Rhode Island School of Design.



When not working, she enjoys spending as much time outside as possible, hiking with her dog and going on bike rides.



Kimberli Conro

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Kimi is an incoming doctoral student of Public Communication and Technology at Colorado State University's (CSU) School of Journalism and Media Communication. Her research centers on the influence of mis/disinformation on public opinion, meeting at the intersections of communication regarding science and emerging technologies, political communication, and the implications of their interplay for effective democratic policymaking. Kimi is excited to begin working with CSU's Center for Science Communication to pursue research that explores and prioritizes public perceptions of and engagement with science and technology.

While receiving her master's degree in Media and Communication from Middle Tennessee State University, Kimi served as president of the Graduate Student Association and as both editor-in-chief and creative director of *Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression*, where she dedicated her tenure to developing multiple initiatives to advance and celebrate diverse perspectives and inclusivity. Since graduating, she has spent the past five semesters working as an adjunct faculty member at MTSU's School of Journalism and Strategic Media, with a passion for guiding society's next generation into being mindful and literate media consumers.



Isabelle Freiling

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Isabelle Freiling is a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna. She completed her Ph.D. in communication science in a German Science Foundation-funded research training group at the University of Muenster, during which she was a Fulbright visiting researcher in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Her research focuses broadly on media use and effects, as well as on science and political communication. In particular, Isabelle’s research focuses on social media and misinformation, on public perceptions of issues at the intersection of science and politics, as well as on public engagement with science. Isabelle is currently working in an E.U.-funded citizen social science project on social inclusion of youths.



Sixiao Liu

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Sixiao Liu is an incoming postdoctoral researcher in the Health Communication and Equity Lab (HCEL) at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on the roles of message format, message frame, and individual characteristics in shaping people’s response to messages communicating issues such as e-cigarette use, vaccination, and ocean plastic pollution. As a researcher, Sixiao seeks to promote the well-being of underrepresented populations such as young people and people of color through the design and implementation of health and environmental communication campaigns. Her recent research on e-cigarette use prevention and ocean plastic pollution has been funded by the National Science Foundation.



Yasmine Bassil

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Yasmine Bassil (she/her) is a Lebanese Neuroscience doctoral student at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. She completed her bachelor's degree in Neuroscience at Georgia Tech, where she studied whole-brain dynamics and functional connectivity through fMRI with Dr. Shella Keilholz. Currently at Emory, she's conducting graduate research with Dr. Michael Borich in the Neural Plasticity Research Laboratory, focusing on age-related changes in neural plasticity in spatial navigation networks. She's interested in applying her neuroscience knowledge and scientific skills toward work in the fields of inclusive science communication, science outreach & advocacy, and the intersection of science & social equity. At Emory, she helps serve the program's inclusive SciComm efforts through the Graduates in Neuroscience student organization and the program's DEI committee.



Jessica Walsh

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Jessica Fargen Walsh is an assistant professor of journalism at the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research interests include environmental journalism and rural journalism. Dr. Walsh has researched and reported on the issue of nitrate contamination in the groundwater in Nebraska. She also interviews rural

journalists about decision-making and news judgment in weekly newsrooms. She is a faculty fellow at the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska. She was previously a reporter for news organizations including *The Associated Press* and *Boston Herald*.