

Yidi Zhang

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EDUCATION

University of California, Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara, CA
Doctor of Philosophy in Communication	2023 – 2027 (expected)

Advanced to candidacy: January 2026

Advisor: Prof. Joseph B. Walther

Dissertation: *Who Are You and Who Am I: How Responder Identity and Feedback Shape Subsequent Online Hate*

Committee members: Profs. Craig R. Scott (UT Austin) and Jiaying Liu

Michigan State University	East Lansing, MI
Master of Arts in Communication	2021 – 2023

Advisor: Prof. Brandon Van Der Heide

Thesis: *Testing attitude and behavioral intention toward online social support: A vicarious interactions perspective*

Committee members: Profs. Sandi Smith and David Ewoldsen

City University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong
Bachelor of Arts in Media and Communication (Honors)	2016 – 2020

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Research Areas

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC); Interpersonal Communication; Intergroup Communication; Communication Technology; Online Hate; Relationships

Teaching Areas

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC); Interpersonal Communication; Communication Technology; Communication Theories and Research Methods

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Top Student Paper Award from Communication and Social Cognition Division of the National Communication Association (NCA), 2026

Dissertation Fellowship, Department of Communication, UC Santa Barbara, 2026

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

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1. Holmstrom, A., Shebib, S., Hu, J., Lim, J., Zhang, Y., Bredland, A., Mazur, A., Mason, A., Allard, A., Boumis, J., Schulte, H., Ha, J., Wolfe, B., Szczypka, M., Wu, P., **Zhang, Y.**, Cui, X., & Zhang, L. (2026). Theoretical distinctions between emotional and esteem-support messages:

Examining effects and mediating mechanisms. *Communication Research*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502261426538>

2. Yik, B. J., **Zhang, Y.**, Nylund-Gibson, K., Ing, M., Krawiec, L., Houck, J. D., & Nacsa, E. D. (2026). Exploring heterogeneity in chemistry education research: Comparing cluster analysis and latent profile analysis. *Chemistry Education Research and Practice*. Advance article. <https://doi.org/10.1039/D5RP00432B>
3. **Zhang, Y.**, & Van Der Heide, B. (2026). How observing interactions online affects attitudes and behavioral intention toward online social support: A vicarious interactions perspective. *Communication Research Reports*. 43(1), 14–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2025.2589105>
4. Yang, Y., Lange, R., **Zhang, Y.**, & Walther, J. B. (2025). How social responses to online hate messages affect hatefulness. *New Media & Society*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448251396951>
5. Pham, D., Van Der Heide, B., **Zhang, Y.**, Earle, K., Rathjens, B., Ulusoy, E., Mason, A. J., & Bredland, A. (2025). Testing the effects of providing feedback on perceiving selective self-presentations in computer-mediated communication. *Media Psychology*. 28(5), 681–705. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2024.2418641>
6. Schmälzle, R., Liu, H., Delle, F., Lewin, K., Jahn, N., **Zhang, Y.**, Yoon, H., & Long, J. (2024). Moment-by-moment tracking of audience brain responses to an engaging public speech: Replicating the reverse-message engineering approach. *Communication Monographs*. 91(1), 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2023.2240398>
7. Rathjens, B., Van Der Heide, B., Earle, K., Ulusoy, E., Pham, D., Mason, A. J., **Zhang, Y.**, & Bredland, A. (2022). Negative online reviews and manager response: Applying expectancy disconfirmation theory in a CMC context. *Communication Reports*. 36(2), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2022.2154815>

PRE-PRINTS

1. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Strategy over source: How AI disclosure shapes perceptions of counterspeech*. PsyArXiv. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/rb8wn_v2/
2. Walther, J. B., Li, Z., & **Zhang, Y.** (2025). *Assessing the Hatefulness of Social Media Posts: A Continuous Measure of Hate Using Generative AI*. Available at SSRN. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=5215167>

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

1. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Mapping methods in online hate research: A review, comparison, and future directions*. Paper accepted to present at the National Communication Association's 112th Annual Conference (NCA 2026). New Orleans, LA, United States. [Top Student Paper]
2. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Mapping methods in online hate research: A review, comparison, and future directions*. Paper submitted to the Communication Science Futures for presentation. East Lansing, MI, United States.
3. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Everywhere and nowhere: A scoping review of anonymity in online hate research*. Paper submitted to the Communication Science Futures for presentation. East Lansing, MI, United States.
4. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Strategy over source: How AI disclosure shapes perceptions of counterspeech*. Paper presented at Comm Horizons @ UCD 2026: Communication in the Age of AI and Algorithms. Davis, CA, United States.
5. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Lost in identities: A computational approach to refine identities in online communities*. Paper accepted to present at the 76th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2026), Cape Town, South Africa.
6. **Zhang, Y.** (2026). *Can editable sources affect people's trust in online information? Exploring editability affordance on social media*. Paper accepted to present at the 76th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2026), Cape Town, South Africa.
7. Wang, M., **Zhang, Y.**, & Wang, L. H. (2026). *Advancing the use of latent transition analysis (LTA) in communication scholarship: An application to map shifts in privacy protection motivation*. Paper accepted to present at the 76th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2026), Cape Town, South Africa.
8. **Zhang, Y.** & Walther, J. B. (2025). *Strategies to deter online hate: Review, critique, and future research*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association's 111th Annual Conference (NCA 2025). Denver, CO, United States.
9. Walther, J. B., Li, Z., & **Zhang, Y.** (2025). *Assessing the hatefulness of social media posts: A continuous measure of hate using generative AI*. Paper presented at Comm Horizons @UCD 2025: Media, Health, and Society. Davis, CA, United States.
10. **Zhang, Y.**, & Wang, L. H. (2025). *Number of friends or mutual friends? Testing effects of different types of system generated cues on impression formation on SNS*. Paper presented at the 75th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2025). Denver, CO, United States.

11. **Zhang, Y.**, & Li, Z. (2025). *Can AI help counter hate online? Comparing AI- and human-generated counter-messages*. Paper presented at the 75th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2025). Denver, CO, United States.
12. Malik, M., **Zhang, Y.**, Wang, M., & Wheeler, B. (2025). *Exploring the ripple effects of online hate speech: A mixed-methods study*. Paper presented at the 75th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2025). Denver, CO, United States.
13. Hu, J. M., Holmstrom, J. A., Lim, J., Zhang, Y., Bredland, A., Schulte, H., Ha, J. H., Wu, P-H.; Szczypka, M., & **Zhang, Y.** (2024). *Supportive communication in response to low esteem-threatening situations: Comparing emotional and esteem support messages*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association's 110th Annual Conference (NCA 2024). New Orleans, LA, United States.
14. **Zhang, Y.**, & Van Der Heide, B. (2024). *Vicarious interactions in online support communities: Testing attitude and behavioral intention toward online support*. Paper presented at the 74th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2024), Gold Coast, Australia.
15. **Zhang, Y.** (2024). *Effects of anticipated future interaction on question asking in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal and language perspectives*. Paper presented at the 74th Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2024), Gold Coast, Australia.
16. **Zhang, Y.** (2023). *Joining a new organization remotely: Newcomers' information seeking behaviors in CMC context*. Paper presented at the 73rd Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2023), Toronto, Canada.
17. Schmälzle, R., Ye, Q., **Zhang, Y.**, Yoon, H., Liu, H., Delle, F., Lewin, K., Jahn, N., & Long, J. (2022). *Moment-by-moment tracking of brain responses to an engaging story: A replication study using forward and reverse correlation to study narrative reception*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association's 108th Annual Conference (NCA 2022). New Orleans, LA, United States.
18. Van Der Heide, B., Mason, A. J., Earle, K., Ulusoy, E., Pham, D., Rathjens, B., **Zhang, Y.**, & Bredland, A. (2022). *Does warranting theory function best outside of a truth-default state: Initial experimental evidence*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association's 108th Annual Conference (NCA 2022). New Orleans, LA, United States.
19. Pham, D., Van Der Heide, B., **Zhang, Y.**, Earle, K., Rathjens, B., Ulusoy, E., Mason, A. J., & Bredland, A. (2022). *Testing the effects of providing feedback on perceiving selective self-presentations in computer-mediated communication*. Paper presented at the National

Communication Association's 108th Annual Conference (NCA 2022). New Orleans, LA, United States.

20. Wang, S., Chu, T., Huang, G., & **Zhang, Y.** (2022). *A meta-analysis of credibility perceptions of bandwagon cues*. Paper presented at the 72nd Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2022), Paris, France.
21. Jin, X., Ye, Q., & **Zhang, Y.** (2021). *Trust and credibility: The differences between perceiving an AI anchor as AI and Human*. Paper presented at the 71st Annual International Communication Association Conference (ICA 2021), Virtual Conference.
22. **Zhang, Y.**, Jin, X., Ye, Q., & Zhao, X. (2021). *The cross-over effect of vividness and extroversion on the perceived trust in AI news anchor*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Mass Communication and Journalism (AEJMC) Midwinter Conference 2021. University of Oklahoma, Norman, United States, Virtual Conference.
23. **Zhang, Y.** (2020). *Imagined audience and news readers' choice of commenting crossing platforms: Under the Chinese news environment*. Paper presented at the 2020 International Communication Association affiliated New Media International Conference at SJTU (SJTU-ICA), Shanghai, China, Virtual Conference.

WORK UNDER REVIEW

1. **Zhang, Y.** (under review). Mapping methods in online hate research: A review, comparison, and future directions. Paper invited to resubmit at *Annals of the International Communication Association*.
2. Li, Z., Qin, J., Nan, Y., **Zhang, Y.**, Baum, M. A., Subramanian, S. V., & Viswanath, K. (under review). How does health misinformation shape vaccination outcomes? A meta-analysis. Paper submitted to *Health Communication*.
3. **Zhang, Y.** (under review). Strategy over source: How AI disclosure shapes perceptions of counterspeech. Paper submitted to *60th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-60)* for presentation. Waikoloa, HI, United States.
4. Walther, J. B., Li, Z., & **Zhang, Y.** (under review). Assessing the hatefulness of social media posts: A continuous measure of hate using generative AI. Paper submitted to *60th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-60)* for presentation. Waikoloa, HI, United States.

WORK IN PROGRESS

1. **Zhang, Y.**, Scott, C., & Walther, J. Anonymity in online hate: A scoping review (manuscript in preparation; data coding in progress)

2. Walther, J. B., **Zhang, Y.**, Garcia, E., Mayeda, C., & Rosen, Z. Counterspeech effectiveness: A field experiment (manuscript in preparation)
3. **Zhang, Y.**, & Wang, L. H. Number of friends or mutual friends? Testing effects of different types of system generated cues on impression formation on SNS (Manuscript in preparation, 2 rounds of pilot test done; accepted to conference, preparing journal manuscript)
4. Walther, J. B., **Zhang, Y.**, & Garcia, E. Literature review on counterspeech to deter online hate. (manuscript in final editing)
5. **Zhang, Y.** Attention or attraction? Exploring the effectiveness of humorous counterspeech to deter haters. (manuscript in preparation)

GRANT-FUNDED PROJECTS

Mixture Modeling For Discipline-Based Education Researchers

- PIs: Prof. Karen Nylund-Gibson (UC Santa Barbara) & Prof. Marsha Ing (UC Riverside)
- Funded by National Science Foundation (NSF #2216175)
- Role: Research Assistant, Apr 2025 – Jun 2025
 - Held office hours to support STEM education researchers applying mixture modeling in their work
 - Analyzed data and developed instructional materials for teaching mixture modeling
 - Co-authored a comparative analysis of K-means and mixture modeling, published in Chemistry Education Research and Practice

Counterspeech as Response to Online Hate

- PI: Prof. Joseph B. Walther (UC Santa Barbara)
- Funded by the California Civil Rights Department
- Role: Research Assistant, Aug 2024 – Mar 2025
 - Conducted literature review and authored a review paper on counterspeech as a deterrent to online hate
 - Designed and executed a field experiment testing counterspeech effectiveness
 - Contributed to a government report and subsequent academic manuscripts

TEACHING EXPERIENCES

Lead Instructor

University of California, Santa Barbara

COMM 89: Theories of Communication (Summer 2026)

- Enrolled students (N = 46)

COMM 191: Applying Communication to Internships in Organizations (Winter 2026)

- Enrolled students (N = 15)

COMM 185: Communication Technology and Relationships (Summer 2025)

- Enrolled students (N = 47)

COMM 1: Introduction to Communication (Summer 2024)

- Enrolled students (N = 40)

Teaching Assistant

University of California, Santa Barbara

COMM 89: Theories of Communication

- Instructors: Prof. Norah Dunbar (Spring 2026), Prof. Walid Afifi (Spring 2024)
- Enrolled students (N = 60, 50)

COMM 113: Media Effects on Individuals

- Instructor: Prof. Muniba Saleem (Fall 2025)
- Enrolled students (N = 175)

COMM 160OH: Perspectives on Online Hate Speech

- Instructor: Prof. Joe Walther (Winter 2024)
- Enrolled students (N = 59)

COMM 1: Introduction to Communication

- Instructor: Prof. Nikki Truscelli (Fall 2023)
- Enrolled students (N = 73)

Michigan State University

COM100: Human Communication (leading recitation sections on public speaking)

- Instructor: Prof. Allison Eden (Spring 2023)

MKT250: Business Communication: Oral and Written Skills

- Instructor: Prof. Amy Wisner (Fall 2022)

City University of Hong Kong

COM2105: Visual Communication

- Instructor: Prof. Sixian Lin (Fall 2019)

GUEST LECTURES

University of California, Santa Barbara

COMM160OH Perspectives on Online Hate Speech (Winter 2024)

Topic: Computational Approaches in Online Hate Research

Michigan State University

MI220 Methods for Understanding Users (Summer 2023/2024/2025)

Topic: Understanding Surveys in User Research

MENTORING

Research Assistants Advising

University of California, Santa Barbara

COMM 199RA: Independent Research Assistants in Communication

(Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2026)

- Mentored 30 undergraduate research assistants across multiple research projects
- Led weekly research meetings to coordinate tasks and ensure project progress
- Provided hands-on training in a range of research skills, including literature reviews, experimental design, and data analysis
- Offered individualized feedback and support on graduate school applications

Recommendation Letter Writer

University of California, Santa Barbara

Sasha von Ende (Undergraduate research assistant; law school application)

Thien Thanh Vo (Undergraduate student; job application)

Sophia Fei (Undergraduate student; graduate school application)

Emma Dela Cruz (Undergraduate research assistant; job application)

SERVICE

Ad hoc reviewing

Scientific Reports [1]

Communication Research [1]

Health Communication [1]

New Media & Society [1]

International Communication Association Annual Conference, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026

Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, 2026

Departmental Service

Teaching Assistant Liaison, Department of Communication, UC Santa Barbara, 2026-2027

WORKSHOP AND PANEL

Summer Institute in Computational Social Science (SICSS-Penn), University of Pennsylvania, 2024

Discussion Panel on Online hate and future communication research, Communication Science Futures Conference, Michigan State University, 2026

RESEARCH AND TRAVEL FUNDING

Doctoral Student Travel Grant, UC Santa Barbara (2026, ~\$900)

Second Year Research Grant, Department of Communication at UC Santa Barbara (2024, ~\$500)

Graduate School Travel Fund, Michigan State University (2023, ~\$600)

Graduate Office Fellowship, Michigan State University (2023, ~\$1500; 2022, ~\$4500)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

International Communication Association (2020 – Current)

National Communication Association (2022 – Current)

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (2026 – Current)

International Association of Language and Social Psychology (2026 – Current)

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Aranya Theater Festival

Board Committee Member (Advertising and PR team)

Hebei, China

May 2021 – Jun 2021

ByteDance

Product Manager Intern

Beijing, China

Nov 2020 – Mar 2021

36Kr.com

Intern Journalist

Beijing, China

Mar 2020 – Jun 2020

Caixin Global

Intern Journalist

Shanghai, China

Jun 2018 – Aug 2018

Beijing Jumeng Culture Development Co., Ltd.

Advertising and PR Coordinator Intern

Beijing, China

Apr 2017 – Aug 2017