

Pengfei Zhao

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ACADEMIC POSITION

Florida State University

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track), College of Communication and Information

Tallahassee, FL, USA

August 2025 -

EDUCATION

Cornell University

Ph.D., Communication

Ithaca, NY, USA

2025

Committee: Natalie Bazarova (Chair), Drew Margolin, Lee Humphreys, Qi Wang

Dissertation: *Addressing Online Problematic Speech through "More Speech." How Do Different Counterspeech Strategies and AI-Powered Interventions Shape Community Dynamics?*

University of Arizona

M.A., Communication

Tucson, AZ, USA

2020

Committee: Matthew Lapierre (Chair), Stephen Rains, Chris Segrin

Communication University of China

M.A., International Journalism

Beijing, China

2018

Communication University of China

B.A., Advertising Design

Beijing, China

2015

Honor: Outstanding Graduate of Beijing

SUMMARY

- ◆ **Research Areas:** Computer-mediated communication; human-AI interaction; AI-powered and community-driven interventions; emerging media and technology; privacy, relationships, and social support; technology and well-being
- ◆ **Research Methods:** Experiment (e.g., web-based experiments, social media simulation); Survey (e.g., longitudinal panel survey); Computational (e.g., supervised machine learning; web programming); Advanced statistical methods (e.g., mixed-effects modeling; structural equation modeling)
- ◆ **Software:** R (primary), *Python*, *SPSS*

GRANTS, AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

Fellowships & Awards:

2022-2024 **Meta Research Ph.D. Fellowship** (\$84,000, selection rate: 37/2300 = 1.6%), Meta. [[Media Coverage](#)]

2024 **Anson E. Rowe Top Advanced Graduate Student Award** (\$2,643.83), Department of Communication, Cornell University.

- 2022 **Anson E. Rowe Top Promising Graduate Student Award** (\$1788.25), Department of Communication, Cornell University.
- 2019 **Margaret Hickey Fellowship** (\$800), Department of Communication, University of Arizona.
- 2016-2017 **National Academic Fellowship** (~\$2,000), Communication University of China.
- 2015-2017 **Graduate Academic Fellowship** (~\$800), Communication University of China.
- 2011-2014 **National Academic Fellowship** (~\$3,500, selection rate: 1/45 = 2.2%), Communication University of China.

Grants Awarded

- 2024-2025 **PCCW Frank T. Rhodes Grant and Mission Grant** (\$5,000), Cornell University. *“Victim-centered, community-based interventions for online harassment: Empowering survivors in digital spaces.”* (role: PI)
- 2024 **Graduate Student Conference Travel Grant** (\$800), Department of Communication and Graduate School, Cornell University.
- 2019 **Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) Research and Project Grant** (\$1,500), University of Arizona. *“The effects of expectancy violations on relational outcomes during modality switching in online dating.”* (role: PI)

PUBLICATIONS

- [12] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., Bae, I., Hui, W., Kizilcec, R., & Margolin, D. (2025). Restorative justice appeals trump retributive vigilance on social media. *PNAS Nexus*, 4, pgaf255. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf255>
- [11] Valle, N., **Zhao, P.**, Freed, D., Gorton, K., Chapman, A. B., Shea, A. L., & Bazarova, N. N. (2024). Toward a critical framework of social media literacy: A systematic literature review. *Review of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543241247224>
- [10] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., DiFranzo, D., Hui, W., Kizilcec, R., & Margolin, D. (2024). Standing up to problematic content on social media: Which objection strategies draw the audience’s approval? *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmad046>
- [9] Lapierre, M. A. & **Zhao, P.** (2024). Problematic smartphone use vs “Technoference”: Examining their unique predictive power on relational and life satisfaction. *Psychology of Popular Media*, 13(1), 23-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000438>
- [8] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., & Valle, N. (2023). Digital parenting divides: The role of parental capital and digital parenting readiness in parental social media mediation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 28(5), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmad032>
- [7] Bazarova, N. N. & **Zhao, P.** (2023). Individualistic privacy theories. In S. Trepte & P. Masur (Eds), *The Routledge handbook of privacy and social media* (pp. 16-24). Routledge.
- [6] **Zhao, P.**, & Yan, K. (2022). “Not as attractive and communicatively competent as I expected”: The effects of expectancy violations on relational outcomes during modality switching in online dating. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107203>
- [5] Taylor, S., **Zhao, P.**, & Bazarova, N. N. (2022). Social media and close relationships: A puzzle of connection and disconnection. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.12.004>

- [4] **Zhao, P.**, Lapierre, M.A., Rains, S.A., & Segrin, C. (2021). When and why we disclose distress on SNSs: Perceived affordances, disclosure goals, and anticipated negative evaluations. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106964>
- [3] Lapierre, M. A. & **Zhao, P.** (2021). Smartphones and social support: Longitudinal associations between smartphone use and types of support. *Social Science Computer Review*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439320988762>
- [2] **Zhao, P.**, & Lapierre, M. A. (2020). Stress, dependency, and depression: An examination of the reinforcement effects of problematic smartphone use on perceived stress and later depression. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2020-4-3>
- [1] Lapierre, M. A., **Zhao, P.**, & Custer, B. E. (2019). Short-term longitudinal relationships between smartphone use/dependency and psychological well-being among late adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 65(5), 607-612. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.06.001>

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- [13] Bae, I., Bazarova, N. N., **Zhao, P.**, Hui, W., Kizilcec, R., & Margolin, D. (Accepted). *What do people think of competing behaviors: Harassment vs. objection to harassment*. Paper will be presented at the 111th Annual Convention of the National Communication Association (NCA), Denver, Colorado.
- [12] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., Bae, I., Kizilcec, R., Hui, W., & Margolin, D. (2024, October). *Transforming vigilante justice: Restorative appeals outperform retribution on a simulated social media platform*. Paper presented at the 2024 Conference on Digital Experimentation (CODE@MIT), Boston, MA.
- [11] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., Bae, I., Kizilcec, R., Hui, W., DiFranzo, D., & Margolin, D. (2024, June). *"Retributive" vs. "restorative:" The audience's reactions toward different objection strategies against offenses on social media*. Paper presented at the 74th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Gold Coast, Australia.
- [10] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., Bae, I., Kizilcec, R., Hui, W., DiFranzo, D., & Margolin, D. (2024, June). *Vigilante justice: How do different justice responses against online toxicity shape community dynamics?* Poster presented at Communication Science Future Conference, East Lansing, MI.
- [9] Valle, N., **Zhao, P.**, Freed, D., Gorton, K., Chapman, A. B., Shea, A. L., & Bazarova, N. N. (2023, October). *Toward a critical framework of social media literacy: A systematic literature review*. Paper presented at the 2023 AECT International Convention, Orlando, FL.
- [8] **Zhao, P.**, Bazarova, N. N., DiFranzo, D., Hui, W., Kizilcec, R., & Margolin, D. (2023, May). *"An eye for an eye" or "taking the high road": What are effective objections against problematic content on social media?* Paper presented at the 73rd Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Toronto, Canada.
- [7] Lapierre, M.A. & **Zhao, P.** (2022, May). *Problematic smartphone use vs "Technoference": Examining their unique predictive power on relational and life satisfaction*. Paper presented at the 72nd Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Paris, France.
- [6] **Zhao, P.**, Lapierre, M.A., Rains, S.A., & Segrin, C. (2021, May). *When and why we disclose distress on SNSs: Perceived affordances, disclosure goals, and anticipated negative evaluations*. Paper presented at the 71st Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA; converted to virtual due to COVID-19).
- [5] **Zhao, P.**, & Yan, K. (2020, May). *"Is your partner as physically attractive as you expected?": The effects of expectancy violations on relational outcomes during modality switching in online dating*. Paper presented

at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA; converted to virtual due to COVID-19).

- [4] **Zhao, P.**, & Lapierre, M.A. (2020, May). *Smartphones and social support: Longitudinal associations between smartphone use/dependency and types of support*. Paper presented at the 70th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA; converted to virtual due to COVID-19).
- [3] **Zhao, P.**, & Lapierre, M.A. (2019, November). *Stress, dependency, and depression: A longitudinal examination of the reciprocal effects of perceived stress and smartphone dependency on depression*. Paper presented at the 105th Annual Convention of the National Communication Association (NCA), Baltimore, MD.
- [2] **Zhao, P.** (2017, November). *The effects of interactive partners on social motives for emoticons use in instant messages*. Paper presented at the 103rd Annual Convention of the National Communication Association (NCA), Dallas, TX.
- [1] **Zhao, P.** (2016, April). *The effects of entertainment programs produced by internet video sites on the production of TV programs*. Paper presented at the 11th Annual Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Hong Kong, Kobe, Japan.

PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS

Invited Talks

- Nov 2024 Invited Research Talk, School of Communication, Florida State University.
- Nov 2024 Invited Research Talk, The Media School, University of Indiana-Bloomington.
- Oct 2024 Invited Research Talk, Department of Advertising and Public Relations, University of Alabama.
- May 2024 Colloquium Talk, Department of Communication, Cornell University.
- Mar 2024 Invited Lecture, COMM 3200: Technology, Behavior, and Society, Cornell University.

Workshop Participation

- June 20, 2024 Doctoral Consortium of Communication and Technology Division, International Communication Association (ICA), Gold Coast, Australia.
- June 13-17, 2022 Intensive Longitudinal Analysis: Experience Sampling and Ecological Momentary Assessment
- June 14-25, 2021 Summer Institute in Computational Social Science (SICSS), Rutgers University.

FUNDED PROJECT EXPERIENCE

- ◆ **National Science Foundation (NSF)**. “*Deterring objectionable behavior and fostering emergent norms in social media conversations.*” (role: Research Assistant; PI: Drew Margolin; co-PI: Natalie Bazarova, Rene Kizilcec, Dominic DiFranzo, Vanessa Bohns)
 - *Spring and Summer 2022, Summer 2023, Fall 2024*
- ◆ **Meta Digital Privacy Research** Award for Developing Novel Interventions for Digital Transparency and Control for Diverse Populations, Context, and Data Types. (role: Research Assistant; PI: Natalie Bazarova)
 - *Spring and Summer 2021*

TEACHING & MENTORING EXPERIENCE

Teaching

Florida State University, School of Communication

- ◆ RTV 5423: *New Communication Technology: Theory and Research*
Instructor of record (SP 2026)
- ◆ COM 3310: *Communication Research Methods*
Instructor of record (FA 2025)
- ◆ COM 4561: *Social Media Campaigns*
Instructor of record (FA 2025, SP 2026)

Cornell University, Department of Communication

- ◆ COMM 2820: *Research Methods in Communication Studies*
Section instructor (FA 2020, SP 2025)
- ◆ COMM 2010: *Oral Communication*
Section instructor (FA 2021)

University of Arizona, Department of Communication

- ◆ COMM 228: *Introduction to Communication Research Methods*
Section instructor (SP 2020)
- ◆ COMM 310: *Introduction to Organizational Communication*
Assistant to the instructor (FA 2019)
- ◆ COMM 410: *Struggle for the Presidency*
Assistant to the instructor (FA 2019)
- ◆ COMM 417A: *Relational Communication: In Close Relationships*
Assistant to the instructor (SU 2019)
- ◆ COMM 101: *Introduction to Communication*
Assistant to the instructor (FA 2018, SP 2019)

Mentoring

- ◆ Sasha Rabeno, master student in information science, Cornell University 2024
- ◆ Sherry Li, undergraduate student in information science, Cornell University 2022
- ◆ Zoe Danielle Gordon, undergraduate student in communication, Cornell University 2022

ACADEMIC SERVICES

Ad-hoc Journal and Conference Reviewer

- ◆ Human Communication Research
- ◆ New Media & Society
- ◆ Social Media + Society
- ◆ Journal of Social and Personal Relationships
- ◆ Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace
- ◆ BMC Psychology
- ◆ ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction (TOCHI)

- ◆ 2023, 2024 International Communication Association (ICA) Annual Conference
- ◆ CHI 2023 Late-Breaking Work

Department Service & Volunteer Work

- 2025- *Library Liaison*, School of Communication, Florida State University
- 2021-2022 *Treasurer*, Communication Graduate Student Association, Cornell University
- 2019-2020 *Graduate Historian Committee Member*, Association of Graduate Students in Communication, Department of Communication, University of Arizona
- 2018-2019 *Graduate Mentoring Committee Member*, Association of Graduate Students in Communication, Department of Communication, University of Arizona

MEDIA COVERAGE

Hendrix, J. (2023, September 6). Study investigates differences in parent approaches to children's online activities. *Tech Policy Press*.

<https://techpolicy.press/study-investigates-differences-in-parent-approaches-to-childrens-online-activities/>

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

National Communication Association (NCA)

International Communication Association (ICA)

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)

CERTIFICATES

Introduction to Teaching Online, Office of Instruction and Assessment, University of Arizona