

Qiankun Zhong, PhD

Postdoc Researcher,
Max Planck Institute for Human Development

Organizational Communication, Cultural Sociology, AI
Behaviors, Computational Social Science

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Education

Ph.D. in Communication
Oct 2023

University of California, Davis

Advisor: Martin Hilbert

Dissertation: *Institutions and Culture in the current Communication Landscape*

M.A. in Emerging Media Studies
Sep 2015 - June 2017

Boston University

Advisor: James Cummings

B.A in Journalism
Sep 2010 – Sept 2014

Shandong University

Additional training:
Graduate Workshop of Computational Social Science
June 2022

Santa Fe Institute

Computational Modeling

Additional training:
Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques
July 2019

University of Michigan

Multi-level Analysis of Survey Data

Employment

Post-doctoral Researcher, Nov 2023 –
Center for Humans and Machines, Max Planck Institute for Human Development
Supervisor: Iyad Rahwan

Publications and Preprints

Gupta, P*. , Zhong, Q.* , Yakura, H.* , Eisenmann, T., & Rahwan, I. (In Press). The Role of Social Learning and Collective Norm Formation in Fostering Cooperation in LLM Multi-Agent Systems. Proceedings in The 25th International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS 2026). *arXiv preprint arXiv:2510.14401*.

Zhong, Q., Eisenmann, T., & Rahwan, I. (Under Review for Philosophical Transaction of Royal Society Proceedings A). Cumulative Cultural Evolution and Multi-Level Selection of AI Behaviors.

Lorenz, J., Engljaehringer, H., Oswald, Y., **Zhong, Q.** (Accepted to Historical Social Research) Emergence, Dynamics, and Implications and Wealth Inequality Misperceptions, and Wealth Taxation in an Agent-based Model.

Zhong, Q., Jacoby, N., Tchernichovski, O., & Frey, S. (Preprint). Institutional Preferences in the Laboratory. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2502.06748*.

Chakraborti, M*. , **Zhong, Q.***, Bulat, B., Sen, A., & Frey, S. (Under Review). Deconstructing written rules and hierarchy in peer produced software communities. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2206.07992*.

Smaldino, P. E., Russell, A., Zefferman, M., Donath, J., Foster, J., Guilbeault, D., Hilbert, M., Hobson, E. A., Lerman, K., Miton, H., Moser, C., Lasser, J., Schmer-Galunder, S., Shapiro, J., **Zhong, Q.**, & Patt, D. (2025). Information Architectures: A Framework for Understanding Socio-Technical Systems. *NPJ Complexity*. doi: 10.31219/osf.io/c7vrw

Rao, A., Chang, R. C., **Zhong, Q.**, Wojcieszak, M., & Lerman, K. (2025) Tracking a Year of Polarized Twitter Discourse on Abortion. *International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v19i1.35893>

Chang, R. C., Rao, A., **Zhong, Q.**, Wojcieszak, M., & Lerman, K.(2023) # RoeOverturned: Twitter Dataset on the Abortion Rights Controversy. *International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v17i1.22207>

Zhong, Q., Hilbert, M., & Frey, S. (2023). Breaking the Structural Reinforcement: An Agent-based Model on Cultural Consumption and Social Relations. *Social Science Computer Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08944393211056501>

Cummings. J, Cahill, T. J., Wertz, B., **Zhong, Q.** (2022). Psychological Predictors of Virtual Reality Technology Adoption and Usage. *Virtual Reality*, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10055-022-00736-1>

Zhong, Q., Frey, S. (2022). Institutional similarity drives cultural similarity among online communities. *Scientific Reports* 12, 18982. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-23223-8>

Zhong, Q., Frey, S., & Hilbert, M. (2022). Quantifying the Selective, Stochastic, and Complementary Drivers of Institutional Evolution in Online Communities. *Entropy*, 24(9), 1185. <https://doi.org/10.3390/e24091185>

Frey, S., **Zhong, Q.**, Bulat, B., Weisman, W., Liu, C., Fujimoto, F., & Wang, H. (2022). Governing online goods: An Institutional Comparison of Minecraft, Reddit, and World of Warcraft. *In Proceedings of The 25th ACM Conference On Computer-Supported Cooperative Work And Social Computing*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3555191>

Cahill, T. J., Wertz, B., **Zhong, Q.**, Parlato, A., Donegan, J., Forman, R., ... & Cunningham, T. N. (2019). The Search for Consumers of Web-Based Raw DNA Interpretation Services: Using Social Media to Target Hard-to-Reach Populations. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 21(7), e12980. <https://doi.org/10.2196/12980>

Groshek, J., Katz, J. E., Andersen, B., Cutino, C., & **Zhong, Q.** (2018). Media use and antimicrobial resistance misinformation and misuse: Survey evidence of information channels and fatalism in augmenting a global health threat. *Cogent Medicine*, 5(1), 1460898. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331205X.2018.1460898>

Wang, C., Cahill, T. J., Parlato, A., Wertz, B., **Zhong, Q.**, Cunningham, T. N., &, Cummings, J. J. (2017). Consumer use and response to online third-party raw DNA interpretation services. *Molecular Genetics & Genomic Medicine*.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/mgg3.340>

*equal contribution

Research Appointment

Research Assistant

PI: Seth Frey

2020 – Present

University of California, Davis

Department of Communication

**Project: Designing Smart Environments to Augment Collective Learning & Creativity
(NSF Award 2421385)**

- Implement online large-scale asynchronous economic games
- Analyze experiment data using Bayesian Structural Models

Project: Jumpstarting Successful Open-Source Software Projects with Evidence-Based Rules and Structures (NSF Award 2020751)

- Conducted text analysis using multiple natural language processing models
- Conducted data analysis using multi-level regression
- Data visualization the results using R and Python
- Wrote multiple preprints and published papers on CSCW and Scientific Reports

Boston University

School of Communication, Emerging Media Studies

Project Perception of Presence in a Virtual Environment

- Conducted meta-analysis on objective measurement of presence
- Designed survey for VR usage and adoption
- Prepared clean dataset for statistical modeling

Skills

Programming

Python, R, Java, SQL, Stata, NetLogo, HTML, Javascript

Research

Agent-based modeling, Natural Language Processing, Econometrics, Experiment Design

Language

Chinese (First Language), English (Fluent)

Fellowships, Awards, and Honors

Dean's Graduate Summer Fellowship, 2023

School of Letters and Science, University of California, Davis

Dean's Graduate Summer Fellowship, 2022

School of Letters and Science, University of California, Davis

Graduate Student Travel Award, 2020

Graduate Student Association, University of California, Davis

Top paper award, 2020

Zhong, Q. & Frey, S. (May, 2020) "Institutional similarities drive cultural similarity among online communities", 70th

International Communication Association Annual Meeting (ICA), Online.

Computational Method, International Communication Association

Provost's Fellowship in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Science, 2018

School of letters and Science, University of California, Davis

Top poster award, 2018

Wertz, B. & Zhong, Q. (May, 2018) "Learning, Doing, Flow, and Fun: Understanding Relationships Between Difficulty, Enjoyment and Skill Development in Games" 68th International Communication Association Annual Meeting (ICA), Prague, Czech.

Game Studies, International Communication Association

Courses Taught

Introduction to Mass Communication

2021- 2022, Spring Semester

Teaching Assistant (lecture section) and Full Lecturer (lab section)

Responsibility: Lecture on basic empirical methods used in mass communication research; Grade quizzes, exams, and essays.

Data Visualization

2020- 2021, Fall Semester

Teaching Assistant (lecture section) and Full Lecturer (lab section)

Responsibility: Lecture on statistics and data visualization for social science students across communication, political science, psychology, and education; Grade exams and essays.

Introduction to Computational Social Science

2018-2021

Head Teaching Assistant and course design assistant

Responsibility: Lecture on computational social science theory and methods; Re-design course content to keep up-to-date with new changes in social science; Design comprehensive assessment to evaluate student performances.

Digital Technology and Social Change

2018-2021

Head Teaching Assistant

Responsibility: Coordinate with teaching assistants and professor to host office hours, grade homework and exams, support students with final paper writing.

Invited Talks and Guest Lectures

“Cultural Evolution of Online Communities” presented to USC-SJTU Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry. Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Dec, 2024. Shanghai, China.

“Comparing Python and Java in writing Agent-based Modeling” will be presented to Schank ABM Lab, UC Davis, Online.

“Group Selection of AI Behaviors” Computational Auditory Perception Group, Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics. June, 2024. Frankfurt, Germany.

“Agent-based Models in Communication Research”, Nov, 2023, Department of Communication, Clemson University

“Polarization of Beliefs and Identity Signals: comparing origins and maintenance” Information Architecture workshop, Santa Fe Institute. May, 2023. Santa Fe, USA.

“Comparing social learning strategies: Evidence in Patent Data” Knowledge Lab, University of Chicago. May, 2023.

Professional Affiliations

- International Communication Association (ICA)
- Cultural Evolution Society

Review

- Communication and Change
- Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences
- Digital Journalism
- ACM CSCW
- Cognitive Science
- Adaptive Behavior
- Computational Communication Research
- International Communication Association Annual Conference