

Yi Zhang

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I am a PhD candidate in Social Psychology with 7+ years of research experience in psychological assessment, experimental design, and quantitative data analysis. I am passionate about applying data analytic tools and behavioral science to improve interpersonal relationships and wellbeing in education settings.

— Education —

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

- Ph.D. in Social Psychology (expected in May 2026)
- M.A. in Psychology (received August 2022)

New York University, New York, NY

- B.A. in Psychology (with Honors) and Philosophy (received in May 2018)

—Skills —

Programming: R, Python, SPSS, SQL, Bash, Javascript/HTML/CSS

Statistical analysis: Regression, multilevel modeling, significance testing, natural language processing, social network analysis

Software and tools: Qualtrics, Pavlovia, Cloud Research, RMarkdown, ggplot, scikit-learn, matplotlib

Research methods: user interview, usability testing, A/B testing, survey & log studies, social network analysis

— Work Experience —

PhD Student at *University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA* | 2020 - Present

- Designed and led 10+ research studies on social connection and decision-making in real-world and virtual environments, collecting behavioral patterns and survey results from thousands of participants.
- Built data pipelines and applied various statistical models (e.g. multilevel mixed-effect model) using R to generate replicable and reproducible research insights.
- Authored 3 manuscripts and delivered 6 presentations at top-tier conferences, providing actionable strategies to enhance well-being among young adults in educational settings.
- Communicated research findings with field experts and the public audiences through visualizations and writings.

Research Intern at *Flourish Science, Remote* | July 2024 – January 2025

- Developed and tested the efficacy of a novel app-based intervention focusing on improving college students' wellbeing by reconnecting with old friends.
- Conducted user research and literature review to identify engagement barriers; designed and optimized LLM prompts to enhance activity completion rates.
- Designed and led workshops for 100+ college students, teaching science-based strategies for enhancing wellbeing through building emotional awareness and social connections.

Lead researcher at *Letters to Strangers, Los Angeles, CA* | October 2023 – Present

- Led a 12-week randomized control trial (RCT) to evaluate the effectiveness of a novel mental wellbeing intervention across university campuses.
- Conducted focus-group interviews and quantitative analyses of survey data to identify key predictors of mental wellbeing among college students, producing a research report with recommendations on youth's mental health programming.

Lab Manager/Research Coordinator at *Columbia University, New York, NY* | 2018 – 2020

- Collected and analyzed survey responses from 800+ college students in collaboration with the Army Research Office to understand drinking patterns in student groups; presented findings to stakeholders and provided recommendations for reducing alcohol consumption and improving group dynamics in the U.S. army.
- Helped secure over \$1,000,000 in research funding through research coordination and grant management.