

Stephanie Zhang

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Education

University of California: Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA (2023 – Present)

PhD, Sociology

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (2019 – 2023)

B.A, Mathematics (Probability/Statistics) & Sociology, Highest Distinction

- Thesis (Sociology): Twitter Dreams of AI: Understanding Futurity Through Sentence Embeddings

Research Interests

Computational Sociology, Science and Technology Studies

Papers

Technical Reports

Salvo J, Shipp S, **Zhang S**. Building a Case Study of Domestic Migration and the Curated Data TR# 2022-027 - Essential Elements, Technical Report BI 2022-027. [Print]. Proceedings of the Biocomplexity Institute, University of Virginia; 2022 April. <https://doi.org/10.18130/bcwa-gt69>

Salvo J, Shipp S, **Zhang S**. Defining the Role of Gig Employment in the Post-Pandemic World of Work, Technical Report BI 2022-026. Proceedings of the Biocomplexity Institute, University of Virginia; 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.18130/wkx0-4y46>

Shipp S, Salvo J, **Zhang S**. Understanding the State of Nursing Homes and Residential Care Facilities - A Use Case to Support the Development of the Curated Data Enterprise. Technical Report 2022-028. Proceedings of the Biocomplexity Institute, University of Virginia; 2022. <https://doi.org/10.18130/5d6x-f676>

In Preparation

Zhang, S. Twitter Dreams of AI: Understanding AI Futurity Through Sentence Embeddings. [*Revise and Resubmit at Information, Communication and Society*] WP: <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/n3g5m>

Pojman, E. M.*, Mwedzi, D.*, Olaya Bucaro, O.*, **Zhang, S.***, Chong, M., Alexander, M., Alburez-Gutierrez, D., Leaving for life: Using online crowd-sourced genealogies to estimate the migrant mortality advantage for the United Kingdom and Ireland. [*Under Review at Population Research and Policy Review*] WP: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4054/MPIDR-WP-2023-050>

* Denotes equal contribution

Honors/Awards

- University of Virginia Sociology, Best Distinguished Major Thesis Award, (2023)
- University of Virginia, Echols Scholar; Top 5% of incoming students in the College of Arts and Sciences (2019)

Grants

- University of California: Los Angeles, Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship, 2025 (\$6,000)
- University of California: Los Angeles, Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship, 2024-2025 (\$20,000)

- University of California: Los Angeles, Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship, 2024 (\$6,000)
- University of Virginia, Ingrassia Family Research Grant for Echols Scholars, 2023 (\$1,125)
- University of Virginia, College of Arts and Sciences Small Research and Travel Grants, 2023 (\$779)

Talks

- *The American Community Survey and Administrative Data*, MPIDR Incubator Tutorial Series (July, 2023)

Presentations

- Zhang, S. *Derailed: The Collapse of Pacific Electric (1911 – 1961)*. 2025 International Network for Social Network Analysis Sunbelt Conference, Paris, France (June, 2025)
- Zhang, S. *Twitter Dreams of AI: Understanding AI Futurity Through Sentence Embeddings*. 2024 Annual Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada [Oral Presentation] (August, 2024)
- Pojman, E. M., Mwedzi, D., Olaya Bucaro, O., **Zhang, S.**, Chong, M., Alexander, M., Alburez-Gutierrez, D., *Leaving for life: Using online crowd-sourced genealogies to estimate the migrant mortality advantage for the United Kingdom and Ireland*. European Population Council Meeting 2024, Edinburgh, UK [Presented by O.O.B]
- Pojman, E. M., Mwedzi, D., Olaya Bucaro, O., **Zhang, S.**, Chong, M., Alexander, M., Alburez-Gutierrez, D., *Leaving for life: Using online crowd-sourced genealogies to estimate the migrant mortality advantage for the United Kingdom and Ireland*. 2024 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Columbus, Ohio [Presented by D.M]
- Zhang, S. *Twitter Dreams of AI: Understanding Futurity Through Sentence Embeddings*, Echols Research Symposium, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia [Oral Presentation] (April, 2023)
- Zhang, S. *Classifying and Measuring Open Source Software Projects on GitHub*, Data Science for the Public Good Symposium, Biocomplexity Institute [Virtual Poster Presentation] (August, 2021)

Research Experience

Visiting Researcher, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (2023)

- Part of the [Population and Social Data Science Summer Incubator Program](#)
- Affiliated with the Kinship Inequalities Research Group and used FamiLinx data to examine migration and mortality (Supervisor: Dr. Diego Alburez-Gutierrez)

Research Fellow, UVA Biocomplexity Institute: Social and Decision Analytics Division (2021 - 2023)

- December 2021-May 2023: Worked on case studies regarding nursing homes, gig economy, migration and the undercount of young children as part of a project spearheading use of administrative data in the 2030 Census (Supervisors: Drs. Joseph Salvo and Stephanie Shipp)
- August 2021-December 2021: Worked on translating a term matching approach in the development of an R package ([tidyorgs](#)) designed to classify GitHub users into sectors based on location, email domain and institutional affiliations. (Supervisor: Dr. Brandon Kramer)

Intern, Data Science for Public Good Young Scholars, UVA Biocomplexity Institute (2021)

- Received training on data science in R and Python, research methods and ethics, data visualization and techniques such as topic modeling, and network analysis for the following projects:
 - [Classifying and Measuring Open Source Software Projects on GitHub](#)
 - [Manpower Planning using Skill Data](#)

Albemarle County Department of Social Services Child Welfare Report (2020-2021)

- Utilized administrative data from Albemarle County Department of Social Services and American Community Survey Data to study racial disparities at different stages of the child welfare referral process. (Supervisor: Dr. Michele Claibourn)

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant: Soc 180D: Mass Incarceration and Social Inequality (Spring 2025)

- Instructor: Dr. Naomi Sugie [Sociology, UCLA]

Grader: SocGen 180: Science and Technology Studies through Feminist Framework (Fall 2024)

- Instructor: Dr. Rachel Vaughn [Institute of Society and Genetics, UCLA]

Coach, Charlottesville Debate League (September 2019-May 2023)

- Taught middle and high school students public speaking skills, speech and debate basics and lead research and discussion of current events

High School Debate Chair, Charlottesville Debate League (January 2021-December 2022)

- Coordinated outreach, curriculum, teaching and tournament participation across multiple high school debate programs in the Charlottesville/Albemarle County area
- Managed a committee of 4-6 other students to organize outreach efforts, teacher feedback surveys, sponsor contact and curriculum development for individual school

Non-Academic Experience

Data Science Intern, MITRE (2022)

- Supported the Response Geospatial Office within Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the development of a new Disaster Analytical Platform based on historical storm data and damage assessments
- Utilized OpenFEMA datasets and CDC Social Vulnerability Index measures in a model based on Monte Carlo and Bootstrapping simulation in Python to predict county-level emergency, food and shelter needs

Professional Service

Internal

Social Chair, Sociology Graduate Student Association (2024-2025)

Student Organizer, Computational Sociology Working Group (2024-2025)

Technical Skills

Coding Languages: R, Python

Datasets: Familinx, American Community Survey

Other: LaTeX (Overleaf), Version Control (git)