

# ANEESH RAI

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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

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**University of Maryland, Robert H. Smith School of Business** 2023-  
Assistant Professor of Management & Organization  
**Behavior Change for Good Initiative, University of Pennsylvania** 2023-2025  
Visiting Scholar

## EDUCATION

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**The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania** 2023  
Ph.D. in Operations, Information, and Decisions  
Advisor: Katherine Milkman  
Dissertation Committee: Maurice Schweitzer (Chair), Rebecca Schaumberg, Sandra Matz  
**Princeton University** 2017  
B.A. in Psychology, *summa cum laude*  
Minors in Computer Science and Cognitive Science

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Diversity, Discrimination, Behavior Change

## PUBLICATIONS

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**Rai, A.**, Sharif, M.A., Chang, E.H., Milkman, K.L., & Duckworth, A.L. (2023). "A Field Experiment on Subgoal Framing to Boost Volunteering: The Tradeoff Between Goal Granularity and Flexibility." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 108(4), 621.  
Kirgios, E.L., **Rai, A.**, Chang, E.H., & Milkman, K.L. (2022). "When Seeking Help, Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Benefit from Explicitly Stating their Identity." *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6(3), 383-391  
Milkman, K.L., Gromet, D., Ho, H., Kay, J., Lee, T., Pandiloski, P., Park, Y., **Rai, A.**, Bazerman, M., Beshears, J., Bonacorsi, L., Camerer, C., Chang, E.H., Chapman, G., Cialdini, R., Dai, H., Eskreis-Winkler, L., Fishbach, A., Gross, J.J., Horn, S., Hubbard, A., Jones, S.J., Karlan, D., Kautz, T., Kirgios, E.L., Klusowski, J., Kristal, A., Ladhania, R., Loewenstein, G., Ludwig, J., Mellers, B., Mullainathan, S., Saccardo, S., Speiss, J., Suri, G., Talloen, J.H., Taxer, J., Trope, Y., Ungar, L., Volpp, K.G., Whillans, A., Zinman, J., & Duckworth, A.L. (2021). "Megastudies improve the impact of applied behavioural science." *Nature*, 600(7889), 478-483  
Chang, E.H., Kirgios, E.L., **Rai, A.**, & Milkman, K.L. (2020). "The Isolated Choice Effect and Its Implications for Gender Diversity in Organizations." *Management Science*, 66(6), 2752-2761.

## PAPERS INVITED FOR RESUBMISSION

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**Rai, A.**, Chang, E.H., Kirgios, E.L., & Milkman, K.L. "Group Size and Its Impact on Diversity-Related Perceptions and Hiring Decisions in Homogeneous Groups." (*Conditionally Accepted at Organization Science*)

## PAPERS UNDER REVIEW

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Blunden, H., Kirgios, E.L., **Rai, A.**, Chang, E.H., & Milkman, K.L. “When Does Flattery Fail? Flattery Backfires For Those Perceived As Inauthentic.” (*Under Review at Academy of Management Journal*)

Chang, L.W., Kirgios, E.L., **Rai, A.**, & Milkman, K.L. “Evaluating the efficacy of shortlist quotas to promote gender diversity.” (*Under Review at Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*)

## SELECTED RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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**Rai, A.**, Kirgios, E.L., Lucas, B.J., & Milkman, K.L. “The Impact of a Longer List Manipulation on Gender Diversity in Referrals.” (*Field experiments with 6,000 participants completed*)

**Rai, A.**, Kirgios, E.L., & Milkman, K.L. “Insider versus Outsider Perceptions of Group Diversity.” (*Data collection in progress*)

**Rai, A.**, Schaumberg, R.L., & Matz, S.C. “Promoting Re-engagement After Rejection in Job Applicants.” (*Data collection in progress*)

**Rai, A.** “The Consequences of Prosocial Signals That Leak Political Information for Job-Seekers.” (*Data collection in progress*)

## GENERAL AUDIENCE WRITING

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Kirgios, E.L., **Rai, A.**, Chang, E.H., & Milkman, K.L. (2022) “To Fight Bias, Consider Highlighting Your Race or Gender.” *Scientific American* (March 28, 2022)

## AWARDS AND GRANTS

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Cornell ILR Workplace Inclusion & Diversity Education Grant, 2023 (PI; Co-PIs: Brian Lucas, Erika Kirgios, Katherine Milkman; \$25,000)

Robert H. Smith School of Business Internal Grants Program, 2023 (PI; Co-PI: Jennifer Marr; \$38,315)

Wharton Leadership Center Grant, 2022 (\$5,000)

Mack Institute for Innovation Management Research Grant, 2022 (\$5,000)

Russell Ackoff Doctoral Student Fellowship, 2022 (\$2,500)

Paul R. Kleindorfer Scholar Award, 2022 (\$4,000)

Mack Institute for Innovation Management Research Grant, 2021 (\$7,000)

George James Term Fund Travel Award, 2019 (\$300)

Russell Ackoff Doctoral Student Fellowship, 2019 (\$2,000)

Princeton Psychology Senior Thesis Prize, 2017

Princeton Psychology Senior Award, 2017

Princeton Psychology Junior Award, 2016

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND CHAIRED CONFERENCE SYMPOSIA

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### Group Size and Its Impact on Diversity-Related Hiring Decisions in Homogeneous Groups

- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Montreal, Canada, 2019
- East Coast Doctoral Conference, New York, NY, 2020 (Conference canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic)
- International Association for Conflict Management, 2020, Virtual
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, 2020, Virtual
- Academy of Management, 2021, Virtual
  - Selected as part of a showcase symposium

## **A Field Experiment on Subgoal Framing to Boost Volunteering: The Tradeoff Between Goal Granularity and Flexibility**

- CHIBE-PAIR Roybal Mini-Symposium, 2020, Virtual
- Society for Personality and Social Psychology Judgment and Decision Making Pre-Conference, 2021, Virtual
- East Coast Doctoral Conference, 2021, Virtual
- Association for Consumer Research Conference, 2021, Virtual
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, 2021, Virtual (poster)
- MIT Conference on Digital Experimentation, 2021, Virtual
- Behavioral Science and Policy Association Annual Conference, 2022, Virtual

## **Insider versus Outsider Perceptions of Group Diversity.**

- Academy of Management, Seattle, WA, 2022
  - Selected as part of a showcase symposium
  - Part of chaired symposium “New Perspectives on Increasing Diversity and Reducing Inequality in Organizations” (Co-chaired with Linda W. Chang)
- International Association for Conflict Management, Ottawa, Canada, 2022
- Society for Judgment and Decision Making, San Diego, CA, 2022

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

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Ad hoc Reviewer for *Management Science*, 2019-Present

Ad hoc Reviewer for *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2021-Present

Co-Chair of DEI Initiatives (with Bella Ren) of Wharton Doctoral Council, 2021-2023

Ph.D. Social Chair of Operations, Information, Decisions Department, 2019-2020

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

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Teaching Assistant for ‘Managerial Decision Making’ (MBA, Spring 2020; Spring 2021; Spring 2022; Spring 2023)

Teaching Assistant for ‘Foundations of Teamwork and Leadership’ (MBA, Fall 2021)

Guest Lecturer for ‘Evaluating Evidence’ (Undergraduate, Fall 2021; Topic: Audit studies in behavioral science)

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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Academy of Management (AOM)

International Association for Conflict Management (IACM)

Society for Judgment and Decision Making (SJDM)

Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP)

## **OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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Research Coordinator, Behavior Change for Good (University of Pennsylvania), 2017-2018, Philadelphia, PA

Research Assistant, Elizabeth Levy Paluck Lab (Princeton University), 2014-2017, Princeton, NJ

## REFERENCES

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Wharton School of Business  
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## APPENDIX: SELECTED RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

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**A Field Experiment on Subgoal Framing to Boost Volunteering: The Tradeoff Between Goal Granularity and Flexibility.** With Marissa A. Sharif, Edward H. Chang, Katherine L. Milkman, and Angela L. Duckworth (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2023)

Research suggests that breaking overarching goals into more granular subgoals is beneficial for goal progress. However, making goals more granular often involves reducing the flexibility provided to complete them, and recent work shows that flexibility can also be beneficial for goal pursuit. We examine this tradeoff between granularity and flexibility in subgoals in a pre-registered, large-scale field experiment ( $N = 9,108$ ) conducted over several months with volunteers at a national crisis counseling organization. A pre-registered vignette pilot study ( $N = 900$ ) suggests that the subgoal framing tested in the field could benefit goal-seekers by bolstering their self-efficacy and goal commitment, and by discouraging procrastination. Our field experiment finds that reframing an overarching goal of 200 hours of volunteering into more granular subgoals (either 4 hours of volunteering every week or 8 hours every two weeks) increased hours volunteered by 8% over a 12-week period. Finally, we find that increasing subgoal flexibility led to more durable benefits from creating subgoals, but we find mixed evidence as to whether increasing subgoal flexibility directly boosted productivity.

**When Seeking Help, Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Benefit from Explicitly Stating their Identity.** With Erika L. Kirgios, Edward H. Chang, and Katherine L. Milkman (*Nature Human Behaviour*, 2022)

Receiving help can make or break a career, but women and racial/ethnic minorities do not always receive the support they seek. Across two audit experiments—one with politicians and another with students—as well as an online experiment (total  $N=5,145$ ), we test whether women and racial/ethnic minorities benefit from explicitly mentioning their demographic identity in requests for help, for example, by including statements like “As a Black woman...” in their communications. We propose that when a help seeker highlights their marginalized identity, it may activate prospective helpers’ motivations to avoid prejudiced reactions and increase their willingness to provide support. Here we show that when women and racial/ethnic minorities explicitly mentioned their demographic identity in help-seeking emails, politicians and students responded 24.4% (7.42 percentage-points) and 79.6% (2.73 percentage-points) more often, respectively. These findings suggest that deliberately mentioning identity in requests for help can improve outcomes for women and racial/ethnic minorities..

**Megastudies improve the impact of applied behavioural science.** With Katherine L. Milkman, Dena Gromet, ... and Angela L. Duckworth (*Nature*, 2021)

Policy-makers are increasingly turning to behavioural science for insights about how to improve citizens decisions and outcomes. Typically, different scientists test different intervention ideas in different samples using different outcomes over different time intervals. The lack of comparability of such individual investigations limits their potential to inform policy. Here, to address this limitation and accelerate the pace of discovery, we introduce the megastudy—a massive field experiment in which the effects of many different interventions are compared in the same population on the same objectively measured outcome for the same duration. In a megastudy targeting physical exercise among 61,293 members of an American fitness chain, 30 scientists from 15 different US universities worked in small independent teams to design a total of 54 different four-week digital programmes (or interventions) encouraging exercise. We show that 45% of these interventions significantly increased weekly gym visits by 9% to 27%; the top-performing intervention offered microrewards for returning to the gym after a missed workout. Only 8% of interventions induced behaviour change that was significant and measurable after the four-week intervention. Conditioning on the 45% of interventions that increased exercise during the intervention, we detected carry-over effects that were proportionally similar to those measured in previous research. Forecasts by impartial judges

failed to predict which interventions would be most effective, underscoring the value of testing many ideas at once and, therefore, the potential for megastudies to improve the evidentiary value of behavioural science.

**The Isolated Choice Effect and Its Implications for Gender Diversity in Organizations.** With Edward H. Chang, Erika L. Kirgios, and Katherine L. Milkman (*Management Science*, 2020)

We highlight a feature of personnel selection decisions that can influence the gender diversity of groups and teams. Specifically, we show that people are less likely to choose candidates whose gender would increase group diversity when making personnel selections in isolation (i.e., when they are responsible for selecting a single group member) than when making collections of choices (i.e., when they are responsible for selecting multiple group members). We call this the *isolated choice effect*. Across six preregistered experiments ( $N = 3,509$ ), we demonstrate that the isolated choice effect has important consequences for group diversity. When making sets of hiring and selection decisions (as opposed to making a single hire), people construct more gender-diverse groups. Mediation and moderation studies suggest that people do not attend as much to diversity when making isolated selection choices, which drives this effect.

**Group Size and Its Impact on Diversity-Related Perceptions and Hiring Decisions in Homogeneous Groups.** With Edward H. Chang, Erika L. Kirgios, and Katherine L. Milkman (*Conditionally Accepted at Organization Science*)

Why do some groups face backlash for lacking diversity, while others escape censure? We suggest that a group's size and Bayesian reasoning may help explain this puzzle. Because each member of a group represents the outcome of a selection decision, people have more information about larger homogeneous groups. Thus, we theorize that, consistent with Bayesian reasoning, people make different inferences about larger homogeneous groups than smaller ones, with downstream consequences for diversity management. Across a field study and three experiments, we examine how a homogeneous group's size influences diversity-related perceptions and hiring decisions. We first examine U.S. corporate boards in the S&P 1500, finding that among larger boards, all-male boards and all-White boards are significantly underrepresented relative to chance expectations. This underrepresentation increases as a function of board size, suggesting that larger groups work harder to avoid homogeneity. Moreover, larger homogeneous boards are more likely than smaller ones to add women or underrepresented racial minorities. We corroborate these field results with three experiments that generalize our findings to other settings. One experiment also examines the underlying mechanisms for the effect: Larger homogeneous groups are viewed as having (i) selection processes that are more likely to be unfair; (ii) less diversity; and (iii) greater impression management concerns than smaller homogeneous groups, all of which predict a greater likelihood of diversifying. Our findings highlight the role of group size in shaping diversity-related perceptions and decisions, and the benefits of incorporating Bayesian reasoning into theories about how groups are judged and selected.