# Jose Alfredo Cervantez

562-644-6851 | josecerv@wharton.upenn.edu | josecervantez.com

## Education

**The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania** Expected May 2027
Ph.D. in Operations, Information, and Decisions (OID), Decision Processes Track
*Dissertation title:* Essays on Selection Decisions in Organizational Gatekeeping
*Committee:* Katherine Milkman, Maurice Schweitzer, Rosalind Chow, Modupe Akinola, Nancy Rothbard

**University of California, Los Angeles** June 2020
B.A. in Psychology, Departmental Highest Honors

**Cerritos Community College** May 2018
Psychology Transfer

## Research Interests

Sponsorship, Diversity in Organizations, Judgment and Decision Making

## Published and Accepted Papers

1. **Cervantez, J.A.**, Pink, S. L., Chang, L., Rai, A., & Milkman, K. L. (in press). Does Feedback Enhance Diversity in Selection Decisions? *Management Science*.

2. Pink, S. L., **Cervantez, J.A.**, Kirgios, E. L., Chang, E. H., & Milkman, K. L. (2025). Can Stereotype Reactance Prompt Women to Compete? A Field Experiment. *Organization Science*, *36*(5), 2008–2027. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2024.19563

3. **Cervantez, J.A.**, & Milkman, K. L. (2024). Can Nudges be Leveraged to Enhance Diversity in Organizations? A Systematic Review. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 101874. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2024.101874

4. Wu, S. J., **Cervantez, J.A.**, & Mei, B. (2022). Preferences and Perceptions of Workplace Participation: A Cross Cultural Study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.806481

## Under Review and Working Papers

5. **Cervantez, J.A.**, Preston, M., Milkman, K. L., & Kessler, J. (2026). Does Supplying a Directory of Qualified Racial Minority Candidates Boost Organizational Diversity? A Field Experiment. *Working Paper*. [Job Market Paper]

6. Wang, B., **Cervantez, J.A.**, Xue, J., Milkman, K. L., & Wang, D. (2026). The Legibility Gap: How Gender Equity Interventions Redistribute Recognition Across Cultures. *Under Review*.

7. **Cervantez, J.A.**, Mosleh, M., & Milkman, K. L. (2026). Does Tracking Diversity Change Behavior? A Field Experiment with Podcasters. *Working Paper*.

8. Pink, S. L., **Cervantez, J.A.**, & Milkman, K. L. (2026). The Tradeoff between Initiating Goals All at Once versus One at a Time: A LinkedIn Field Experiment on the Moderating Role of Goal Difficulty. *Working Paper*.

## Selected Research in Progress

9. Chow, R. M., Chang, J. W., **Cervantez, J.A.**, & Chadha, A. (2026). Validating the Difference Between Mentorship and Sponsorship. *Data Collection*.

10. **Cervantez, J.A.**, Chow, R. M., & Kirgios, E. L. (2026). The Impact of Sponsorship on Sponsors. *Data Collection*.

## Handbook Chapter

11. Kiyawat, A., **Cervantez, J.A.**, & Kirgios, E. L. (2026). Behavioral Interventions for Reducing Inequality. *The Oxford Handbook of Inclusion Practice* (in press).

## Honors, Awards, and Grants

*Graduate School Awards*

Howard C. Kunreuther Research Award 2025

- Awarded to one Wharton doctoral student every two years who is creating knowledge that will impact public policy, business leaders and industries on a global scale.

University of Pennsylvania Presidential Fellowship 2022

- A University-wide fellowship for doctoral students of exceptional academic promise who increase the diversity of their fields.

*Undergraduate Awards*

UCLA Psychology Departmental Highest Honors 2020
Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program 2020
UCLA Alumni Scholarship 2018
UCLA Transfer Alliance Scholarship 2018
Cerritos College Academic Excellence Award 2018
Cerritos College Highest Honors, Scholars Honors Program 2018
Edison STEM Award 2018

*Grants*

British Academy/Leverhulme Research Grant 2024

## Conference Presentations

*Does Supplying a Directory of Qualified Racial Minority Candidates Boost Organizational Diversity? A Field Experiment.*

- Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, 2026
- Behavioral Decision Research in Management Conference, 2026
- Behavioral Science and Policy Association, 2026
- Diversity in Management and Organizations (DMO) Conference, 2026
- East Coast Doctoral Conference, 2026
- Interdisciplinary Network for Group Research (INGRoup) Conference, 2026
- International Association of Conflict Management Conference, 2025

*Does Feedback Enhance Diversity in Selection Decisions?*

- Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, 2023, 2024
- Behavioral Science and Policy Association, 2024
- Diversity in Management and Organizations (DMO) Conference, 2024
- East Coast Doctoral Conference, 2024
- International Association of Conflict Management Conference, 2023

*Does Tracking Diversity Change Behavior? A Field Experiment with Podcasters.*

- East Coast Doctoral Conference, 2025

## Teaching

**The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania**

*Teaching Assistant*

| | |
|---|---|
| OIDD 6900 Managerial Decision-Making | 2024 – Present |
| MGMT 6100 Foundations of Teamwork and Leadership | Fall 2025 |
| BEPP 7650 Economics of Diversity and Discrimination | Spring 2024 |

## Service and Affiliations

**The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania**

*Service*

| | |
|---|---|
| Co-Chair of DEI Initiatives, Wharton Doctoral Council | 2023 – 2025 |
| Research Associate, Coalition of Equity and Opportunity at Wharton | 2023 – 2025 |

*Ad Hoc Reviewer*

Nature; Nature Communications; Organization Science; Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes; Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

*Professional Affiliations*

Academy of Management (AOM); Society for Judgment and Decision Making (SJDM); Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP)

## Professional Work Experience

*Academic*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow*, UCLA Anderson | 2020 – 2022 |
| *Research Data Analyst*, Carnegie Mellon University | 2021 – 2022 |

*Industry*

| | |
|---|---|
| Kogi BBQ, *General Manager, Operations Manager, Line Cook* | 2009 – 2014 |
| Salt & Straw, *Store Manager* | 2014 – 2016 |

## Abstracts from Selected Published and Working Papers

**Cervantez, J.A., Preston, M., Milkman, K. L., & Kessler, J. (2026). Does Supplying a Directory of Qualified Racial Minority Candidates Boost Organizational Diversity? A Field Experiment. Working Paper. [Job Market Paper]**

When decision makers search for qualified candidates for open roles, candidates from underrepresented groups are at risk of being overlooked. Why? They are less likely than majority group members to be in decision makers' social networks, less likely to be prominent, and presumed to be scarce. Supplying a dedicated directory of underrepresented candidates to key decision makers may boost the selection of such candidates for opportunities via two channels: (1) by lowering the search costs associated with identifying these types of candidates (via the directory itself) and (2) by updating decision makers' beliefs about how many qualified candidates from underrepresented groups exist, leading them to search more broadly (beyond the directory). We test this theory in a pre-registered field experiment targeting the organizers of 1,881 STEM academic seminars at 146 research-intensive U.S. universities. Organizers were encouraged to diversify their seminars and randomized to receive either a directory of qualified underrepresented racial minority (URM) faculty (treatment) or links to department websites where qualified speakers could be found (control). The treatment produced a marginally significant 0.85 percentage point (12.4%) increase in URM speakers the following year, but it significantly increased the fraction of Black speakers (+0.73pp, a 41% increase; $p < 0.01$). Zooming in on Black speakers, we find that while the directory led to slightly more speaker selections from within its ranks, it primarily increased the number of Black candidates selected who were not listed within it. This suggests our directory meaningfully updated organizers' beliefs about how many qualified URM scholars exist; it did not merely operate by reducing search costs for the options it contained.

**Cervantez, J.A., Pink, S. L., Chang, L., Rai, A., & Milkman, K. L. (in press). Does Feedback Enhance Diversity in Selection Decisions? *Management Science*.**

Some organizations provide employees with feedback on the demographics of people they've chosen to spotlight, hire, and promote, hoping to spur more diverse future selections. However, it is an open question whether purely descriptive feedback accomplishes this. We theorize and show that descriptive feedback highlighting low past selection rates of women or racial minorities (e.g., "5% of previous experts interviewed were women") triggers a motivation to respond without prejudice, increasing the subsequent selection of members of underrepresented groups. Conversely, providing descriptive feedback about low selection rates of people with other attributes (e.g., areas of expertise, geographical location) that don't evoke image or reputational concerns has less influence on future decisions. We demonstrate these patterns across seven preregistered experiments (total N = 6,502), including one framed field experiment (Study 2). One study identifies motivation to respond without prejudice as a mediator of the effect of descriptive feedback about past choices on future selections of women and racial minorities. Another study shows that when women are overrepresented, the effect of descriptive feedback reverses in direction, increasing the subsequent selection of men (due to concerns about fairness), but this effect is significantly smaller in magnitude than the feedback effect produced when women are underrepresented. Practically, the effects of descriptive feedback were 45% to 80% as large as those of a simulated strict quota requiring that at least one woman or racial minority be selected for a given opportunity, highlighting that descriptive feedback is a light-touch but potentially powerful intervention for promoting diversity.

**Pink, S. L., Cervantez, J.A., Kirgios, E. L., Chang, E. H., & Milkman, K. L. (2025). Can Stereotype Reactance Prompt Women to Compete? A Field Experiment. *Organization Science*, 36(5), 2008–2027.**

Women are consistently underrepresented in leadership roles. One contributor may be that women are generally less willing than equally-qualified men to enter competitions (e.g., for jobs or promotions). We draw from research on "stereotype reactance"—the idea that telling people about stereotyped expectations can encourage defiance—to propose and test whether telling women about the gender gap in competition entry can increase their willingness to compete. Our prediction contrasts with prior work on stereotype threat and descriptive

norms suggesting that highlighting the gender competition gap might lead women to refrain from competing. In two incentive-compatible, preregistered online experiments, we find that informing women about the gender competition gap increases their likelihood of competing for higher pay, and this effect is mediated by stereotype reactance, consistent with our theorizing. Moreover, exposing both men and women to information about the gender competition gap closes the gap. We then test this informational intervention in a large-scale field experiment on an executive job search platform (n = 4,245), examining whether telling women about the gender competition gap increases their willingness to compete for leadership roles relative to a control message that tells them about an identity-irrelevant competition gap. We find that relative to our control message, informing women about the gender gap in willingness to compete increases submitted job applications by over 20% on the day of condition assignment. This suggests that women's willingness to compete is affected not just by confidence, but also by cultural expectations and motivation to defy stereotypical norms.

**Cervantez, J.A., Mosleh, M., & Milkman, K. L. (2026). Does Tracking Diversity Change Behavior? A Field Experiment with Podcasters. Working Paper.**

How does prompting gatekeepers to self-audit the diversity of those they've supported in the past affect the diversity of those they support in the future? We propose and show that the effects of asking gatekeepers to classify and count the demographic composition of the people they have previously platformed depends on the extent to which decision-makers feel scrutinized. When subsequent choices after a self-audit are perceived as being under scrutiny, prompted self-audit should create an external motivation to control prejudice, leading to an increase in support for diverse candidates. When people's subsequent choices after a self-audit are not perceived as under scrutiny, however, externally prompted self-audit should no longer generate an external motivation to control prejudice and may even elicit reactance, as gatekeepers seek to reassert their autonomy. We test these theories in a large-scale pre-registered field experiment with 6,050 active U.S.-based podcasters who regularly feature guests on their shows. Participants were all prompted to complete a self-audit exercise. For those randomly assigned to our treatment condition, the self-audit focused on tallying the race and gender diversity of their recent guests. For those randomly assigned to our control condition, the self-audit focused on tallying other characteristics of past guests (e.g., their professional backgrounds and their ages). The treatment increased the likelihood that—immediately after the audit—podcasters chose to click on a resource we provided to them offering a recommended list of underrepresented minority guests (where click throughs were plausibly scrutinized) by 1.7 percentage points. However, it reduced replies to a subsequent booking request from a Black female prospective guest by 4.2 percentage points and lowered the percentage of underrepresented minority guests featured on their shows over the following three months by 1.4 percentage points—both actions that gatekeepers presumably did not believe were under scrutiny by the organization that prompted their self-audit. Our findings suggest that prompted self-audit of the diversity of gatekeepers can increase support for diversity when gatekeepers are under scrutiny but can backfire and reduce support for diversity when gatekeepers do not feel scrutinized.

**Cervantez, J.A., & Milkman, K. L. (2024). Can Nudges be Leveraged to Enhance Diversity in Organizations? A Systematic Review. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 101874.**

In this article, we review and summarize key findings from a growing literature exploring how nudges can facilitate efforts to diversify organizations. Nudges are psychologically-informed interventions that change behavior without restricting choice or altering incentives. We focus on two types of nudges to enhance organizational diversity: (1) nudges that target organizational processes directly or the decision makers who oversee them to increase the diversity of those hired and promoted and (2) nudges that target the underrepresented candidates themselves to increase the diversity of those applying for organizational roles. We categorize nudges designed to enhance organizational diversity, both by their target and based on the psychology they leverage to improve outcomes for women and racial minorities.

**Wang, B., Cervantez, J.A., Xue, J., Milkman, K. L., & Wang, D. (2026). The Legibility Gap: How Gender Equity Interventions Redistribute Recognition Across Cultures. Under Review.**

Efforts to promote gender equity in science increasingly rely on name-based inference to quantify representation and guide policy and behavior. Yet linguistic cues that signal gender vary across cultures and are often obscured when names are transliterated into English. Here we identify a pattern we call the "legibility gap": when gender is inferred from names, equity interventions systematically benefit women whose names signal gender while bypassing those whose names lose such cues in translation. Using both observational and experimental evidence, we show how this gap reshapes recognition in science. Analyzing citation diversity statements—an emerging practice in which authors report the algorithmically estimated gender composition of their reference lists—we find that papers that include this practice cite women more frequently, but the gains accrue almost entirely to authors with gender-signaling Western names. By contrast, women whose names lose gender cues in English transliteration, predominantly those with East Asian names, receive fewer citations in these same papers. Two preregistered experiments (N = 2,250) corroborate this pattern and identify its mechanism: linguistic legibility, not cultural unfamiliarity, determines who is recognized as a woman and who benefits from policies designed to support women in science. Overall, these findings expose a previously unrecognized layer of inequity embedded in global equity infrastructures. As science becomes increasingly global and equity efforts increasingly algorithmic, the legibility gap reveals how uneven identity recognition reshapes fairness. In global systems of recognition, equity depends not only on whether policies are effective on average, but also on whether they are equitable across cultures.

**Pink, S. L., Cervantez, J.A., & Milkman, K. L. (2026). The Tradeoff between Initiating Goals All at Once versus One at a Time: A LinkedIn Field Experiment on the Moderating Role of Goal Difficulty. Working Paper.**

Organizations routinely ask employees to improve along multiple dimensions at once. Yet experimental research on goal pursuit has focused largely on single goals pursued in isolation, or on multiple one-off tasks, leaving open questions about how people should approach the ongoing, repeated goals organizations most often assign. Existing theory offers competing predictions about how best to initiate these ongoing goals to support long-term success. On one hand, beginning all goals at once maximizes early repetitions, and because early repetitions strengthen persistence, simultaneous initiation should be advantageous. On the other hand, research on goal conflict suggests that tackling several demanding goals at once can cause people to abandon some goals before they accumulate enough repetitions to build persistence, implying that staggering goal initiation over time may be preferable. We propose that goal difficulty determines which dominates: the repetition advantage of simultaneous initiation, or the overwhelm-avoidance advantage of staggered initiation. When goals are easier, initiating them simultaneously should be manageable, but when goals are more difficult, the overwhelm-avoidance advantage of staggering should dominate. We test this theory in a longitudinal field experiment for which we recruited 8,496 professionals on LinkedIn to join a program we built to help them achieve their routine goals on the platform (e.g. posting regularly). We randomly assigned participants to (a) select easier or harder goals and (b) initiate goals either simultaneously or in a staggered sequence, then we monitored objective weekly goal completion over a month. Consistent with our theory, goal difficulty moderated which initiation strategy worked best: simultaneous initiation produced greater persistence for easier goals, while this advantage disappeared (and directionally reversed) for harder goals. These effects appear driven by two distinct mechanisms: simultaneous initiation boosted early repetitions when goals were easy, while staggered initiation reduced early goal abandonment when goals were hard.

**Wu, S. J., Cervantez, J.A., & Mei, B. (2022). Preferences and Perceptions of Workplace Participation: A Cross-Cultural Study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 806481.**

Despite the amount of theorization on the forms and effects of participation, relatively little research directly examines what the concept of workplace participation entails in the minds of employees, and whether employees across cultures think positively when the concept of participation is activated in their mental representation. Three studies (n = 1,138 full-time employees) investigated the perceptions and preferences of full-time employees from the United States and China, cultures that might be expected to differ in their societal participation norm. Using a free association test and text analyses, Study 1 demonstrated that Chinese and American employees

differed in their construal of workplace participation, yet both culture groups associated positive valence to the concept of participation. Study 2 showed that employees' preference for workplace participation is positively related to their perceptions of its outcomes on productivity, job satisfaction, and workplace conflict. Study 3 had employees interact with either a prototypically high or low participation work environment and tested whether clear cultural contrasts might occur. American employees expressed unambiguous endorsement and predicted positive outcomes of a high participation workplace, whereas Chinese employees expressed slightly higher endorsement to a low participation work environment and associated it with higher productivity. This research provides insights on how workplace participation is construed by employees from different cultures, especially from cultures where democratic participation is not the normative default. Different perspectives on workplace participation across cultures may inform practitioners of the goals and approaches when shaping a more participatory workplace and a more democratic society.