

# RACHEL MENG

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## EDUCATION

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### Columbia University (Columbia Business School)

Ph.D., Marketing  
M.Phil., Marketing

New York, NY  
Expected 2019  
October 2016

### The University of Chicago

Bachelor of Arts, Economics  
Minor, Computer Science

Chicago, IL  
June 2012

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Judgment and decision making; incentives and motivation; social influence; financial decision making; preferences; policy and wellbeing; self-control

## DISSERTATION

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### “Cash (Dis)Incentives”

*Proposal title:* “The Compensation-Driven Nature of Monetary Incentives: Implications for Motivating Choices, Performance, and Behavior”  
*Proposal defended:* December 2016  
*Advisor:* Ran Kivetz  
*Committee:* Oded Netzer, Silvia Bellezza

## PUBLICATIONS

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Jun, Youjung, Rachel Meng, and Gita V. Johar (2017), “[Perceived Social Presence Reduces Fact-Checking](#),” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(23), 5976-5981. [Equal authorship]

Meng, Rachel, Youjung Jun, and Gita V. Johar (2017), “[Research: Being in a Group Makes Us Less Likely to Fact-Check](#),” *Harvard Business Review*.

Kivetz, Ran, Rachel Meng, and Daniel He (2017), “Hyperopia: A Theory of Reverse Self-Control,” in *Handbook of Self-Control in Health and Wellbeing*, ed. Marieke Adriaanse, Kentaro Fujita, and Denise de Ridder.

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

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Meng, Rachel, Stephanie Y. Chen, and Daniel M. Bartels (2015), “[Reasoning about diverse evidence in preference predictions](#),” in *Proceedings of the 37th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, ed. David C. Noelle, Rick Dale, Anne S. Warlaumont, Jeff Yoshimi, Teenie Matlock, Carolyn D. Jennings, and Paul P. Maglio, Austin, TX: Cognitive Science Society, 1577-82.

## MANUSCRIPTS & WORKING PAPERS

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Meng, Rachel and Ran Kivetz, “Cash (Dis)Incentives,” revising for second round at *Journal of Marketing Research*.

Kivetz, Ran and Rachel Meng, “Exercising Self-Control Through Self-Reward,” in preparation for submission to *Journal of Political Economy*. [Equal authorship]

Meng, Rachel, Stephanie Y. Chen, and Daniel M. Bartels, “Reasoning About Preference Diversity when Taking and Seeking Advice,” revising for second round at *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Johar, Gita V., Rachel Meng, and Keith Wilcox, “Rumination and Decision Making Among the Poor,” revising for resubmission at *Journal of Marketing Research*. [Equal authorship]

## SELECTED RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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“How Loneliness Affects Preferences for Social Information,” with Youjung Jun.

“Overpersistence,” with Ran Kivetz.

“Preference Diversity and Risk,” with Jacob Goldenberg.

“Penny Wise Pound Foolish,” with Daniel He.

“Incentive Distributions and Hedonics” with Evan Weingarten.

## PRESENTATIONS & TALKS

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N.B. ‡ denotes presentation by coauthor; § denotes poster or working paper

- Reasoning About Preference Diversity when Taking and Seeking Advice (with Stephanie Y. Chen and Daniel M. Bartels)
- *Association for Consumer Research* (New Orleans, LA) October 2015
  - *Academy of Management* (Vancouver, BC) August 2015
  - *Cognitive Science Society* (Pasadena, CA)<sup>§</sup> July 2015
  - *Society for Judgment and Decision Making* (Long Beach, CA)<sup>§</sup> November 2014  
[1<sup>st</sup> place student poster]
- Rumination and Decision Making Among the Poor (with Gita Johar and Keith Wilcox)
- *Consumer Financial Decision Making*<sup>‡</sup> (Boulder, CO) May 2016
  - *Society for Judgment and Decision Making* (Chicago, IL) November 2015
  - *Association for Consumer Research*<sup>‡</sup> (New Orleans, LA) October 2015
- The Compensation-Driven Nature of Monetary Incentives (with Ran Kivetz)
- *Columbia Behavioral Research Lab Symposium* (New York, NY) November 2017
  - *Society for Consumer Psychology* (San Francisco, CA)<sup>§</sup> February 2017
  - *Society for Judgment and Decision Making* (Boston, MA)<sup>§</sup> November 2016
  - *Association for Consumer Research* (Berlin, Germany)<sup>§</sup> October 2016
- Exercising Self-Control Through Self-Reward (with Ran Kivetz)
- *Columbia Behavioral Research Lab Symposium* (New York, NY) February 2017
- Perceived Presence of Others Reduces Fact-Checking (with Youjung Jun and Gita Johar)
- *Association for Consumer Research*<sup>‡</sup> (San Diego, CA) October 2017
  - *Whitebox Advisors Graduate Student Conference*<sup>‡</sup> (New Haven, CT) April 2017
- How Loneliness Affects Preferences for Social Information (with Youjung Jun)
- *Society for Judgment and Decision Making* (New Orleans, LA)<sup>§‡</sup> November 2018

## ORGANIZED SYMPOSIA

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- 360 Degrees of Social Influence: How Others' Presence, Attitudes, and Behaviors Change the Way We Think and Behave (with Youjung Jun)
- *Association for Consumer Research* (San Diego, CA) October 2017
- Reasoning About Advice: Inferring and Integrating the Preferences of Others
- *Association for Consumer Research* (New Orleans, LA) October 2015
- Understanding and Overcoming Financial Challenges: Process Insights, Pitfalls, and Recommendations (with Eesha Sharma)
- *Association for Consumer Research* (New Orleans, LA) October 2015

## HONORS & GRANTS

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Luxury Education Foundation Scholarship Award	2016
Media Program Research Grant	2016
Department representative, University of Houston Doctoral Symposium	2016
MSI Research Grant	2015
Qualtrics Behavioral Research Grant	2015
Columbia Business School 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Student Award	2015
Best Student Poster Award (1 <sup>st</sup> place), <i>Society for Judgment and Decision Making</i>	2014
Columbia Dean's Office Summer Internship (Mentorship)	2014, 2015, 2016
Columbia Behavioral Research Lab Fellowship Grant	2014, 2015, 2016
Columbia Business School Doctoral Fellowship	2012-present
Midwestern Psychological Association Travel Award	2011
Dean's List, University of Chicago	2008-2012
Valedictorian, Chattahoochee High School	2008
Telluride Association Summer Program, Cornell University	2007

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### Teaching Assistance

#### *Marketing*

Marketing: Innovation through Customer Centricity, Part I (MBA)	
• Fall 2013	Ran Kivetz
Marketing Management (Undergraduate)	
• Spring 2014, Spring 2017, Fall 2018	Ran Kivetz
Marketing Core (MBA)	
• Fall 2014, Fall 2015	Oded Netzer
Bridging Behavioral Economics and Marketing Science (MS/PhD)	
• Spring 2016, Spring 2018	Ran Kivetz
Marketing Strategy (EMBA)	
• Summer 2016	Ran Kivetz & Scott Shriver
• Fall 2018	Ran Kivetz & Andrey Simonov

#### *Consumer Behavior and Decision Making*

Experimental Design and Analysis (MS/PhD)	
• Fall 2015	Michel Pham
The Psychology and Economics of Consumer Finance (MBA/EMBA)	
• Spring 2015, Spring 2016	Eric Johnson & Stephen Zeldes
Behavioral Economics and Decision Making (MBA; EMBA)	
• Fall 2013, Fall 2014	Eric Johnson
• Spring 2015	Elizabeth Webb

#### *Innovation, Technology, and Media*

Systematic Creativity in Business (MBA; EMBA)
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2014, Summer 2015, Summer 2016</li> </ul> Innovation in a Connected World: Immersion Seminar (MBA)	Jacob Goldenberg
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer 2015, Summer 2016</li> </ul> Media Platforms and Content: A Foundations Course (EMBA)	Jacob Goldenberg
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer 2015</li> </ul> High-Tech Entrepreneurship (EMBA)	Miklos Sarvary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring 2018</li> </ul> Global Immersion Israel: Leadership and Innovation (MBA)	Ran Kivetz
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring 2018</li> </ul>	Ran Kivetz

## Mentorships & Tutoring

CBS Summer Research Interns: Ruouou Li, Jonathan Hurwitz	2015-2016
Research assistants: Julia Jeong, Jin Miao, Sheng Zhang	2015-2016
Private tutor: Experimental Design (PhD seminar)	Fall 2015
Private tutor: Undergraduate English literature, mathematics, physics, SAT	2008-2012

## OTHER EXPERIENCE

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Research intern, <i>Center for Decision Sciences</i> (Ye Li) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Columbia Business School, Columbia University</li> </ul>	Summer 2011
Research assistant, <i>Center for Decision Research</i> (Nicholas Epley) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booth School of Business, University of Chicago</li> </ul>	2010-2012

## SELECTED GRADUATE COURSEWORK

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### Consumer Behavior / Psychology

Consumer Behavior: Information Processing	Daniel Bartels
Consumer Behavior: Judgment and Decision Making	Eric Johnson
Self-Regulation ( <i>at New York University</i> )	Peter Gollwitzer & Gabriele Oettingen
Theories of Social and Personality Psychology	Tory Higgins
Bridging Behavioral Decision Research with Marketing Science	Ran Kivetz
Marketing Decisions and Methods	Don Lehmann

### Quantitative Methods

Experimental Design and Analysis	Michel Pham
Research Methods	Eric Abrahamson
Multivariate Statistics	Kamel Jedidi
Empirical Models	Oded Netzer
Economic Analysis I (Microeconomics)	Paolo Siconolfi
Economic Analysis II (Game Theory)	Paolo Siconolfi
Economic Analysis III (Contract Theory)	Paolo Siconolfi

Mathematical Methods  
Causal Inference  
Statistical Communication and Graphics

Assaf Zeevi  
José Zubizarreta  
Andrew Gelman

**Other Graduate-Level / Advanced Coursework** (*at University of Chicago*)

Behavioral Economics  
Experimental Economics  
Artificial Intelligence  
Networks and Distributed Systems

Richard Thaler, Devin Pope, & Emir Kamenica  
John List  
Yali Amit  
Borja Sotomayor Basilio

**AFFILIATIONS**

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Association for Consumer Research (ACR)  
Cognitive Science Society (CSS)  
Society for Consumer Psychology (SCP)  
Society for Judgment and Decision Making (SJDM)

**SERVICE**

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Ad hoc reviewer: *Association for Consumer Research, Society for Consumer Psychology*  
Trainee reviewer: *Journal of Consumer Research*

**PROGRAMMING & SKILLS**

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**Coding:** HTML/CSS, C/C++, Python, JavaScript (working knowledge), PHP (beginner)  
**Statistical:** R, Stata, SAS, MATLAB, SPSS  
**Typesetting:** LaTeX, ConTeXt  
**Linguistic:** English (native/fluent), Mandarin Chinese (fluent conversationally), French (on the edge of survivable), Bengali (beginner)

**PERSONAL INTERESTS**

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Science fiction (movies and literature); hiking; spicy food; board games; esports; astronomy; electronic mixes; spontaneous puns

**REFERENCES**

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**Ran Kivetz** (Advisor)

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New York, NY 10027  
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**Gita V. Johar**

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New York, NY 10027  
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**Jacob Goldenberg**

*Professor of Marketing*  
Arison School of Business, Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya  
Kanfei Nesharim St., P.O. Box 167  
Herzliya, 4610101, Israel  
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T: 972-9-9602461

**SELECTED ABSTRACTS (ARTICLES & WORKING PAPERS)**

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*Paper 1: “Cash (Dis)Incentives”* (with Ran Kivetz), revising for second round at *Journal of Marketing Research*

- Essay 1 of dissertation

Common wisdom and academic theories suggest that incentives can motivate behavior change. While considerable research has focused on financial incentives as a default tool to encourage desired behaviors, we know relatively little about the efficacy of monetary (*i.e.*, cash and cash equivalent) incentives compared to nonmonetary incentives in shaping human behavior. The present research investigates the psychology of cash incentives and its consequences for choices, motivation, and behavior. Results from eight series of studies (16 studies total) indicate that cash incentives evoke a “compensation mindset” that focuses consumers on the outcome of attaining the reward rather than the process of expending effort, leading them to prioritize maximizing the chances and immediacy of receiving a focal contingent reward. For example, compared with noncash hedonic rewards of equivalent retail value, when consumers face cash incentives for expending effort, they were more likely to: choose certain, smaller rewards over uncertain, larger rewards; set lower performance goals and opt for less challenging tasks; and select immediate, smaller rewards over delayed, larger rewards. These tendencies are diminished when (*i*) the incentives are no longer contingent on effort expenditure or (*ii*) both incentives feature uncertainty or delay (*i.e.*, where neither alternative can offer a guaranteed or immediate receipt of money). We also find that when people are asked to complete real,

performance-based tasks, those who face cash incentives (vs. hedonic rewards) cheated more to secure compensation for their efforts. Combined, these research findings suggest that managers and marketers seeking to motivate their employees, salespeople, and customers to engage in desired (healthy) behaviors would do well to reconsider the use of cash incentives.

*Paper 2: “Exercising Self-Control Through Self-Reward”* (with Ran Kivetz), in preparation for submission to *Journal of Political Economy*

- Essay 2 of dissertation

Incentives, whether externally imposed or internally generated, can be strong positive reinforcers of human behavior. Considerable research has used financial rewards as a default tool to encourage “good” decisions, but less is understood about the effectiveness of nonmonetary (compared to monetary) rewards in affecting self-control habits and promoting behavior change. The current research investigates the consequences of using contingent self-rewards, relative to externally prescribed cash incentives, in motivating performance over time. In three longitudinal field studies that examined walking activity (studies 1 and 2) and gym attendance (study 3), participants who defined and administered their own (indulgent, guilt-evoking) rewards in return for meeting a weekly target goal performed equally well as those who earned cash during the intervention period and, more notably, demonstrated greater sustained effort thereafter for a period of several weeks. Financially incentivized participants, by contrast, reverted to baseline (*i.e.*, control) activity levels upon the removal of rewards in the post-intervention period. Although people almost universally preferred cash-based (over nonmonetary) incentive programs under joint evaluation, as well as judged the former to possess a greater motivational advantage than the latter, their performance suggested otherwise. These findings offer some cautionary insight into the use of cash rewards in altering habits, with implications for the design of motivating, cost-effective incentive contracts that aim to better sustain positive, and persistent, behavior change.

*Paper 3: “Perceived Social Presence Reduces Fact-Checking”* (with Youjung Jun and Gita Johar), published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

Today’s media landscape affords people access to richer information than ever before, with many individuals opting to consume content through social channels rather than traditional news sources. Although people frequent social platforms for a variety of reasons, we understand little about the consequences of encountering new information in these contexts, particularly with respect to how content is scrutinized. This research tests how perceiving the presence of others (as on social media platforms) affects the way that individuals evaluate information—in particular, the extent to which they verify ambiguous claims. Eight experiments using incentivized real effort tasks found that people are less likely to fact-check statements when they feel that they are evaluating them in the presence of others compared with when they are evaluating them alone. Inducing vigilance immediately before evaluation increased fact-checking under social settings.

*Paper 4: “Reasoning About Preference Diversity when Taking and Seeking Advice”* (with Stephanie Chen and Daniel Bartels), revising for second round at *Journal of Consumer Research*



People often use the opinions of others to make predictions about their own preferences and to guide their consumption choices. Previous research suggests that consumers tend to rely on the opinions of those with similar preferences to their own when making such predictions and choices. We examine whether and how consumers use the opinion of reviewers with dissimilar preferences to their own when this opinion agrees with the opinions of similar reviewers. That is, do people prefer positive consensus among similar reviewers who share their tastes or among reviewers who have more diverse tastes—some similar and some dissimilar to their own preference? We find that although consumers believe that positive consensus among similar and dissimilar reviewers is evidence that they will also like a product, their actual predictions and choices revealed the opposite. People tended to contrast their predictions away from the opinion of a dissimilar other even when it agreed with the opinion of a similar other. Additionally, consensus among similar others led to greater preference predictions and choice of products than consensus among diverse others. However, this preference for similarity was attenuated when people made predictions about more objective features of a product.

*Paper 5: “Rumination and Decision Making Among the Poor”* (with Gita Johar and Keith Wilcox), revising for resubmission at *Journal of Marketing Research*

The poor often make “shortsighted” financial decisions, such as overborrowing or taking out high-interest loans that benefit them in the moment but ultimately impose costly long-term consequences. However, we understand little about why economically disadvantaged individuals behave this way (even when they do not face binding liquidity constraints) and how to reduce such tendencies. The current research establishes one source of this behavior—financial rumination—and tests the effectiveness of two strategies for reducing ruminative thinking to improve financial decision-making. Evidence from four studies suggests that the poor ruminate more on their financial concerns than the nonpoor, leading to increased preference for smaller, sooner (over larger, later) monetary gains and a greater willingness to incur unfavorable (high-interest) loans. Interventions that reduce momentary rumination, such as inducing distraction and increasing perceived social support, can help reduce the poor’s tendency to make shortsighted financial decisions.