

**From Whom Do People Diverge?
Out-Group Similarity, Identity-Signaling, and Divergence**

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Abstract

People often diverge from members of other social groups: they select cultural tastes (e.g., possessions, attitudes, or behaviors) that distinguish them from other groups and abandon tastes when other social groups adopt them. But while divergence is pervasive, most research on the propagation of culture is based on conformity. Consequently, it is less useful in explaining why people might abandon tastes. We propose an identity-signaling approach to divergence; people diverge to communicate identity and avoid others making undesired identity inferences. This perspective suggests that increased costs of misidentification should lead people to be more likely to diverge from others that are dissimilar. Six studies support this perspective. They find that people are more likely to diverge from dissimilar social groups and that divergence is greater in domains that people use to communicate identity (e.g., hairstyles and music as opposed to dish soap or bike lights). Results also cast doubt on alternative explanations based on liking, status, or desires for uniqueness. Taken together, these studies suggest that people diverge from members of other social groups to avoid misidentification.

Keywords: Culture, Diffusion, Identity, Social Influence, and Intergroup Processes

Kids abandon catchphrases that are adopted by their parents and the jocks dump clothing styles that are picked up by the geeks. Shanghai residents stopped purchasing Volkswagen Santanas because they were “a favorite first car among the nouveaux riches outside the big cities” (Wonacott, 2004, p. B1) and Manhattanites stopped wearing mesh trucker hats when the bridge-and-tunnel crowd adopted them (Barker, 2004). Original members of any cultural scene (i.e. music, style, philosophical schools, etc.) want to signal that they are different from the poseurs that come along later. The social process that underlies all these examples is one of *divergence*, by which we mean that people select cultural tastes (e.g., attitudes, possessions, and behaviors) that distinguish themselves from members of other groups, and they abandon cultural tastes when they are adopted by members of other social groups. Divergence is pervasive in social life.

Recent research has highlighted the value of studying psychological factors that influence the transmission and success of culture tastes (e.g., Kashima, 2000; Lyons & Kashima, 2003; McIntyre, Lyons, Clark, & Kashima, 2004; Schaller & Conway, 1999; Schaller & Crandall, 2004; Schaller, Conway, & Tanchuk, 2002), but less research has examined why culture might be abandoned. While divergence is quite pervasive, most research has focused on convergence. One of the most widely discussed principles in social psychology is conformity (Asch, 1951; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Sherif, 1936). Similar tendencies have been recognized under different names by researchers in sociology (e.g., mimetic isomorphism, DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and economics (e.g., herd behavior, Banerjee, 1992).

Because models of the diffusion of innovations and cultural tastes (e.g., Bass, 1969; Rogers, 1983) are implicitly based on conformity dynamics, they are less helpful in

understanding why people might abandon tastes. These models suggest people should be more likely to engage in a behavior the more others that are doing so. Dynamic Social Impact Theory (Latane, 1996), for instance, predicts that people will become more similar to those around them and that their attitudes will become increasingly correlated over time (e.g., Harton & Bourgeois, 2004; Harton & Latane, 1997). But while conformity processes are obviously important, they predict convergence, and thus cannot account for a world in which people select tastes that distinguish themselves from others and abandon tastes that are adopted by other social groups.

Further, although the divergence in cultural tastes we study can be considered a form of intergroup differentiation, it is a type of differentiation that has not been frequently considered in the rich intergroup tradition in social psychology. Previous work on intergroup differentiation has focused primarily on processes such as discrimination (e.g., Diehl, 1988), prejudice (e.g., White & Langer, 1999), and intergroup conflict (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The behaviors typically used to measure these processes include resource allocation (e.g., Moghaddam & Stringer, 1988), evaluations (e.g., Roccas & Schwartz, 1993), and trait ratings (e.g., Brown & Abrams, 1986), mostly in the context of trying to understand when and why people tend to favor their own group. For the most part, this research has not studied differences in cultural tastes, though such differences are pervasive in social life and are worth trying to explain psychologically. We know people diverge, but why?

What Drives Divergence and Why?

Though it has not focused on the abandonment of cultural tastes, existing research can be used to make predictions about why people diverge. Each research stream, however, has difficulty explaining certain classes of divergence.

Divergence Driven By Status

Sociologists agree that individuals want to set themselves apart from members of other social categories (e.g., Bryson, 1996; DiMaggio, 1982; Simmel, 1904 [1957]), but they have primarily focused on processes in which groups with traditionally high status (e.g., wealthy, educated groups) diverge from traditionally low status adopters. This literature is based on the trickle down theory of fashion (e.g., Robinson, 1961), which suggests that people adopt from those above them in the status food chain. Fashions are initiated by the higher class and imitated by the lower classes. But, once the lower classes have adopted, the signal value is lost and consequently high class people abandon the taste.

Many examples of taste abandonment, however, are not easy to classify in terms of a unidimensional status ordering. Teenagers reject catchphrases once they creep into the lexicon of their parents who probably occupy a higher social status. And rather than unidirectional imitation and abandonment, different racial groups work hard to diverge from each other: just as whites selected names to distance themselves from blacks in the early 1900s (London & Morgan, 1994), blacks often abandon clothing styles or slang that are adopted by whites. Fashion does not solely originate among the upper classes (Davis, 1992), and, in fact, often arises in low-status or somewhat marginalized groups (e.g.,

inner city teens or homosexual men). This suggests that divergence is driven by more than just unidimensional status.

Divergence Driven by Liking

Other work might predict that people diverge from others they dislike (e.g., Bryson, 1996; Cooper & Jones, 1966; Heider, 1946). People increase their association with groups they view positively (Cialdini, et. al. 1976) and thus it follows that they might be driven to decrease association with others they dislike. Indeed, people shift their attitudes away from obnoxious others (Cooper & Jones, 1966) and distance themselves from groups with negative traits (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996). Bryson (1996), for instance, found that social groups use music tastes to reinforce boundaries between them and groups of people they dislike. This prediction can also be derived from work on balance theory (e.g., Heider, 1946). If a disliked other (or group) likes a certain cultural taste, people should be more likely to dislike that taste themselves.

But while liking may play some role in why people abandon tastes, people often diverge from liked groups. Kids may like their parents a lot, but diverge when parents adopt their slang or way of dress. Newly minted professors probably like their friends who are still graduate students, but they no longer want to dress like one. Also inconsistent with an account based on liking is the fact that people sometimes adopt or accentuate seemingly negative traits as a way to achieve differentiation (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001). Polish students considered it important that others correctly identify their national identity and listed traits like quarrelsome, vulgar and disorderly as those most typical of Poles (Milicki & Ellmers, 1996). These factors suggests that divergence is driven by more than just liking.

Divergence Driven by Similar Others

A great deal of literature, including work on uniqueness (e.g., Snyder & Fromkin, 1980), optimal distinctiveness (e.g., Brewer, 1991), and intergroup differentiation (e.g., Spears, Jetten, & Scheepers, 2002; see Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004 for a meta-analytic review), would predict that people diverge from others that are similar.

Literature on individual drives for differentiation suggest that people would diverge as a result of too much similarity. The uniqueness literature (e.g., Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) argues that people have a drive to be unique, and that too much similarity leads to a negative emotional reaction. Consequently, this literature would predict that people might diverge from extremely similar others because their adoption of a taste could lead original taste-holders to feel overly similar. Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Pickett, 1999, 2002) suggests that people reconcile opposing needs for assimilation and differentiation through their group memberships. When people feel overly similar, they strive to differentiate themselves. Applied to divergence, it would predict that people should diverge due to feelings of too much similarity. Importantly, both the uniqueness literature and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory conceive the need for distinctiveness as a personal drive, operating at the individual level.

Research on intergroup differentiation focuses on more group-level process and perceptions of intergroup difference rather than individual drives, but it also argues that people will differentiate themselves from similar others (Brown, 1984; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Jetten & Spears, 2003; Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984; Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1978). Similar out-groups are relevant for social

comparisons, but they also threaten the distinctiveness of the in-group. Consequently, when group members are confronted by extremely similar groups they discriminate more against the out-group (e.g., Diehl, 1988, experiment 2), show more horizontal hostility (White & Langer, 1999), allocate more rewards to in-group members (e.g., Moghaddam & Stringer, 1988), and show in-group bias in evaluations (Roccas & Schwartz, 1993). This cluster of behaviors has been described as reactive distinctiveness (Spears, et al., 2002; Jetten, et al., 2004), and has been explained using social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as a product of too much intergroup similarity.

These diverse literatures would predict that similarity drives divergence, yet many times people seem to diverge from groups that are dissimilar. Los Angeles residents may keep wearing a clothing style that is adopted by people from San Francisco, but they may be more likely to abandon it if adopted by residents of Des Moines. In these situations, groups diverge more strongly when the adopting groups are dissimilar. Because uniqueness and optimal distinctiveness predict greater divergence from similar others and because work examining intergroup differentiation on behavioral measures finds greater differentiation from similar others (e.g., Jetten, et. al, 2004), these perspectives are less suited to explain why people might abandon tastes that are adopted by others that are dissimilar.

An Identity-Signaling Approach to Divergence

We propose an identity-signaling approach to divergence. Similar to some perspectives on intergroup differentiation (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Spears, et al., 2002, also see sociological work on distancing, e.g., Bourdieu, [1979] 1984) our perspective focuses on how distinguishing groups from one another can provide meaning.

However, instead of assuming people diverge to better understand their place in the social environment, we assume that people diverge to ensure that *others* understand who they are. In particular, people often diverge to avoid sending undesired identity signals to others.

We define a signal as a compact indicator of some set of information that is hard to observe or hard to summarize. When we first meet a group of people, for instance, we may want to know “who I would enjoy getting to know?”, and we may use signals in the form of their clothing, vocabulary, or cultural references to decide who to interact with further and how to treat them during that interaction (e.g., Wernerfelt, 1990). Signals can be extremely easy to detect, like whether someone has a pierced nose, or more difficult, like whether they correctly use phrases like *hegemonic discourse*, *economic value added*, or *self-regulatory process*.

Across the social sciences, researchers suggest that cultural tastes act as signals within the social communication system, communicating aspects of people (e.g., the social groups they belong to or other preferences they hold) to others (e.g., Davis, 1992; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; Solomon 1988). Attitudes and products can serve a symbolic function (e.g., Prentice, 1987; Shavitt, 1990; Shavitt & Nelson, 1999) and a great deal of research finds that people infer things about others based on their cultural tastes (see Belk, Bahn, & Mayer, 1982 for an overview). One might posit that a Volvo driver supports liberal politics or that a Harley Davidson rider probably prefers beer to wine.

Tastes communicate identity through their association with groups, or types of individuals, but if they are adopted by outsiders the taste may lose its ability to signal

desired characteristics effectively (e.g., Thornton, 1996). If lots of tough people ride Harley motorcycles, then Harleys may come to signal that rugged identity. But if suburban accountants start riding Harleys in an attempt to seem tough, the meaning of the taste may change, either becoming diluted and losing its meaning or signaling different characteristics altogether (wannabe tough guys). Original taste holders may then abandon the taste to avoid signaling an undesired, or unclear, identity (e.g., Hebdige, 1987; see Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999, for other types of identity threat).

In contrast with existing theories that have primarily focused on internal processes, we assume that people diverge, at least in part, to ensure their identity is correctly recognized by others. Uniqueness or optimal distinctiveness would suggest people diverge to satisfy internal drives for difference, and one motive for intergroup differentiation is self-esteem, or self-enhancement (for reviews, see Rubin & Hewstone, 1998; Vignoles, et al, 2000).¹ In the divergence examples mentioned previously, however, people seem to be abandoning tastes not for internal reasons, but for social concerns about how others might see them. It is unclear how abandoning something one previously liked could increase self-esteem, and it's plausible that people diverge not because they are in the process of defining themselves, but *because* they already have a clear self-definition and want to ensure it is correctly communicated to others. Shanghai residents don't abandon Volkswagen Santanas to make themselves feel better, or because they are grappling to understand their own self-definition, they do so to avoid others treating them liked they are a member of the nouveaux riche.

¹ It may also be motivated by the goal of definition or meaning, e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988

Importantly, people often diverge to ensure that they send appropriate signals about complex identities that involve subtle social characteristics, rather than group identities per se. Most people aren't going to confuse a CEO with a teenager, a woman with a man, or a balding accountant with a grizzled Harley rider. Yet if business executives start saying a teenage catchphrase or accountants start wearing biker jackets, others who see someone with those tastes may be more likely to infer that they share characteristics with those groups. Indeed, men were less likely to choose a 10 oz. steak when it was labeled as a "ladies cut," especially when they thought others would see their choice (White & Dahl, in press). It is unlikely that they thought that others would think they were female, but they may have avoided choosing that steak because doing so would make them seem less masculine. Thus people may abandon tastes adopted by other social groups to avoid signaling their characteristics.

Divergence Driven Identity-Signaling Concerns

Our identity-signaling approach suggests a different prediction about divergence from the other theories we have reviewed. We suggest the cost of misidentification will lead people to be more likely to diverge from others that are dissimilar. Presumably, the more dissimilar out-group adopters are to the current taste holders, the more costly it should be for people to be misidentified as members of the wrong social group. That is, the differences between correct and incorrect identification become larger when social groups are more dissimilar. Snowboarders might not want to be identified as skiers, but they probably prefer that mistake to being misidentified as a golfer.

If people do indeed diverge from social groups that are dissimilar, this suggests that something beyond current theories of differentiation may be driving the divergence

process. Some prior research has acknowledged that differentiation may occur when intergroup similarity is low, but researchers have focused on a form of differentiation that is much more passive and perceptual (reflective distinctiveness, Spears, et al. 2002; Jetten et al, 2004). Because the groups already differ, people can note the existing differences rather than actively creating them: “differentiation simply reflects the perception of real differences between and similarities within groups,” (Spears et al., 2002, p. 152).

Divergence behaviors suggest that people respond to dissimilar groups in a way that is not limited to passive perceptual acknowledgement of differences. If LA residents abandon tastes are adopted by people in Des Moines, they are not merely reflecting existing differences, they are diverging to maintain or *create* new ones. Why would people actively diverge and abandon tastes that are adopted by dissimilar others? People could achieve self-esteem and self-definition just by *noting* the existing differences with dissimilar groups. Why do they pay the personal costs of abandoning tastes that they once liked? While existing theories of differentiation go far in explaining some forms of differentiation, they are less suited to explain why people diverge in their cultural tastes.

Overview of the Present Research

We predict that people will abandon cultural tastes that are adopted by members of other social groups. Further, we expect that divergence will be driven by dissimilarity; our identity-signaling perspective predicts that people will be more likely to abandon a taste when it is adopted by dissimilar others.

In Study 1, we first investigate whether it is indeed more costly to be thought of as a member of a dissimilar group. The next five studies then examine divergence based

on the similarity of the adopting group to the current taste holders. Study 2 looks at whether people will abandon a wristband if it adopted by a dissimilar social group, the “geeks” next door. In Study 3, we use a broad range of social groups to examine the influence of out-group similarity on taste change. Study 4 investigates whether desire not to be thought of as a member of dissimilar social groups mediates the relationship between out-group similarity and divergence. The final two studies (Studies 5-6) look at signaling domains. If people diverge to ensure clear identity signals, they should be more likely to do so in taste domains where people send and receive identity signals (e.g., cars and clothes).

Study 1: With Which Types of Others Do People Prefer Not to Be Confused?

Before moving to examine actual divergence we first wanted to test an assumption underlying our model that people prefer not to be confused with dissimilar others. We gave people a list of social groups (e.g., 40 year old business executives, Princeton students, and suburban teenagers) and asked them to rate how much they would prefer or not prefer that others thought they were akin to the type of people in that group. Separate sets of raters also rated the groups on similarity and liking. We predict that the similarity of the out-group will influence how much people care about being thought of as a group member; even controlling for how much people like the group, people will prefer not to be thought of as members of dissimilar social groups.

Method

Participants

Fifty-six Stanford University students completed a survey as part of a larger packet of questionnaires. They were randomly assigned to condition.

Rating Social Groups

Participants were given a list of different social groups (e.g., 40 year old business executives, Princeton students, suburban teens, 15 in total) and asked to rate them on one of three dimensions. One set of raters ($N = 19$) rated the groups on how much they would like to be thought of as a member (“how would you feel if people thought you were a member of that group? For instance, if you were at a party or meeting new people how much would you like or dislike people thinking you were a member of that group?”, $-3 =$ Wouldn’t like it at all, $3 =$ Would like it a great deal, $\alpha = .63$). Separate sets of participants also rated the groups on our predictor variables, i.e., similarity ($N = 20$, “How similar do you think you and your Stanford friends are to the various types of people below?”, $1 =$ Not very similar, $7 =$ Very similar, $\alpha = .76$) or liking ($N = 17$, “How positive or negative do you feel about each of the types of people below?”, $-3 =$ Very negative, $3 =$ Very positive, $\alpha = .91$).

Results

Each set of ratings was averaged across the various raters to create a desire to be seen as, similarity, and liking score for each social group. An OLS regression analyzed the preference to be thought as a member of a certain social group as a function of their similarity to participants and how much they were liked. Figure 1 shows the influence of out-group similarity on desire to be thought of as akin to the people in each of the 15 social groups. Liking ratings have been regressed out and a median split on liking illustrates the effect of liked versus disliked groups.

Consistent with prior research, there was some effect of liking, though it did not reach significance ($\beta = .22, p = .17$); people preferred not to be thought of as part of

groups they disliked. Even when controlling for liking, however, analysis revealed the predicted significant effects of similarity ($\beta = .77, p < .001$); people preferred not to be thought of as members of dissimilar groups.

Discussion

The results of the first study support the notion that out-group similarity influences how much people care about being thought of as a member of an out-group. People prefer not to be thought of as members of dissimilar social groups. This effect occurs even when controlling for how much people like the group.

Study 1 provides evidence that out-group similarity can influence preferences to avoid confusion, but will people actually abandon tastes that are adopted by a dissimilar social group? Study 2 examines this possibility

Study 2: Taste Abandonment – Don't Think of Me As One of Them

Will people actually abandon a taste if it is adopted by an out-group with which they do not want to be confused? Study 2 examines actual abandonment of a real cultural taste, namely a yellow Livestrong wristband (Figure 2). In the summer of 2004, the Lance Armstrong Foundation started selling yellow Livestrong wristbands to support cancer awareness and research (www.laf.org). Originally, the wristbands were worn primarily by athletes, but they later caught on more broadly and spread contagiously in the general public (see Walker 2004). During the upswing of this trend, we distributed these wristbands to various university dorms to examine how adoption by dissimilar others might affect abandonment.

We sold wristbands to one dorm (Target dorm) and after a week delay, sold the same bands to an out-group that was dissimilar (i.e., an Academic Focus dorm next door).

Members of the Target dorm did not dislike Academic dorm members (as evidenced by liking ratings) but at the same time, they did not want to be thought of as a member of the “geeks.” A separate set of experimenters measured the number of Target dorm members who wore the wristband before and after it was adopted by the geeks. We predicted that when dissimilar others (i.e. Academic dorm members) adopted the wristband, members of the Target dorm would abandon it.

We also included a control condition to test boredom as a possible alternative explanation. Some disciplinary theories of fads and fashions suggest people may abandon tastes because they just “get tired of them” (e.g., Sproles, 1985). To test this alternative, we also sold wristbands to a control population on the other side of campus and measured their usage of the taste over time. While Target dorm members should have frequent opportunities to see that the wristbands have been adopted by the geeks (they live in the same larger building, eat in the same dining hall, etc.), this was not the case for control participants. Boredom, however, should be the same for both groups.

Method

Wristband Distribution

Research assistants went door to door in dorms at Stanford University, handing out yellow flyers with information about cancer, and selling yellow Livestrong wristbands to raise cancer awareness. Experimenters informed students that it was “Wear Yellow” month to raise cancer awareness at the school and asked students to wear yellow in the upcoming weeks to show their support. In addition, students were asked if they would like to donate a dollar to the Lance Armstrong Foundation in exchange for a yellow wristband. Almost everyone agreed to donate, and the donations ranged from

\$0.25 to \$5.00. Students were then given a wristband and asked to please wear it in the next month to show their support for cancer awareness. Wristbands were sold to the same number of people (38) in the Target and control dorms, and the bands were sold to these groups on the same evening.² All collected money was donated to the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

A week later, the same research assistants used the same procedure to sell a similar number of wristbands (36) to members of the Academic dorm. Members of this dorm are required to take part in a number of extra academic activities (e.g., group discussions, extra courses) and had a reputation for being somewhat “geeky.” The dorm was directly across a small courtyard from the Target dorm, and the two dorms were part of a larger residence unit which ate in the same dining hall.

Measurement of Wristband Wearing

As part of an ostensibly unrelated survey, different research assistants measured the number of people in both the Target and Control dorms that were wearing the wristband, both 6 days (Time 1, before the bands had been sold to the “geeks”) and 13 days (Time 2, after the bands had been sold to the “geeks”) after the wristbands had been originally sold. Prior to the wristbands being sold, staff in each dorm had agreed to have their residents complete a longitudinal “Attitude and Ownership” survey as part of an undergraduate’s honors thesis. Dorm residents completed the survey at their house meeting on two consecutive weeks and received pizza as compensation. Research assistants also followed up with any resident who did not attend the meeting and asked them to complete the survey.

² Members of the different dorms were similar: all were freshman only and none had any particular academic focus.

Questionnaire

Students were told the researchers were “interested in student attitudes, the things students own, and how attitudes change over time.” As filler, they were first asked to complete a number of items related to general student behaviors (e.g., how often do you eat in the dining hall). Participants then rated how much they liked, and were similar to, members of a number of other campus dorms, including the Academic dorm (using the scales from study 1).

Our key dependent variable (wristband wearing) was embedded in a number of “Cause Related Items and Behaviors” on the back side of the sheet. Participants were asked how frequently they engaged in certain cause related behaviors (e.g., attended a cause related rally) or wore certain cause related items (e.g., pink breast cancer ribbon) including a Livestrong wristband. For each item, students were asked whether they had worn it in the past two days.

*Results**Group Liking and Similarity*

As expected, members of the Target dorm did not dislike members of the Academic dorm ($M = 0.08$, not significantly different from the midpoint of the scale, $t(37) < 1$). Importantly, however, they did find members of the Academic dorm to be dissimilar. Similarity ratings for the Academic dorm were significantly below the midpoint of the 7-point scale ($M = 3.0$, $t(37) = 4.09$, $p < .001$), and significantly lower than ratings for other dorms ($M_{\text{other dorms}} = 4.31$, $t(37) = 6.01$, $p < .001$).

Taste Abandonment

Members of the Target dorm viewed the Academic dorm as dissimilar, but would they abandon their previously held tastes when those tastes were adopted by the geeks? Results suggest they did; in the week after the wristbands were adopted by the “geeks” there was a 32% drop in the number of Target dorm members who reported wearing the wristband. This drop is not accounted for by simple boredom. During the same period of time, there was only a 6% drop in wristband wearing in the control condition, $\chi^2(1, N = 36) = 3.78, p = .05$.

Discussion

The results of study 2 illustrate that people may abandon cultural tastes that are adopted by other social groups. Target dorm members stopped wearing Livestrong wristbands once they had been adopted by the “geeky” dorm next store.

These results allow us to test a couple of alternative explanations. It is difficult to suggest people abandoned the wristband just because they were bored. Compared to the control, more people in the Target dorm abandoned the wristband, even though both groups had an equal chance to become bored with it. These results also do not seem to be driven by liking. Target dorm members did not dislike the members of the Academic dorm, they just thought they were dissimilar.³

The observed pattern of taste abandonment is consistent with the notion that people may abandon tastes which are adopted by dissimilar others. It is worth noting though, that ratings of similarity can be context-dependent (e.g., Sjoberg, 1972; Tversky,

³ While one could argue that concerns of uniqueness may have contributed to the results, 30 extra people having a wristband is a much smaller manipulation than what has traditionally been used in uniqueness experiments (e.g., 80% similarity to 10,000 students on 30 attitude items, Ganster, McCuddy & Fromkin, 1977). In subsequent studies, we also more systematically rule out uniqueness as a driver of our results.

1977). Italy and Switzerland may seem quite dissimilar when they are compared in the context of other European countries, but may seem much more similar when considered in the same set as Brazil (Tversky, 1977). Similarly, the Academic and Target dorms may seem very similar in the context of U.S. citizens as a whole, but dissimilar in the context of groups of students on the same campus. For this study, the manipulation checks verify that in the context of campus groups Target dorm members did not dislike the geeks, but they did see them as dissimilar.

The results of Study 2 support our suggestion that dissimilarity drives divergence, but because it involved only one social group, it did not allow us to fully test the role of out-group similarity on abandonment. One could potentially ignore the results of the manipulation check, and argue that Target dorm members diverged from the dorm next door because they were so similar that their identity was threatened. The two groups share many characteristics (e.g., they are the same age, live in the same area, etc) and thus Target dorm members may have abandoned the Livestrong wristbands because they were already likely to be confused as a member of the Academic dorm. To truly examine the influence of similarity on divergence, one must examine a wider range of similarity; Study 3 does this.

Study 3: Abandonment Based on Out-Group Similarity, Status, and Liking

In Study 3, people were asked how they would change their use of a cultural taste if it was adopted by various different social groups. Participants were told to imagine their group of friends liked to say a particular catchphrase that no one else was saying. They then indicated how their use of the phrase would change if it were adopted by each of 15 social other groups (e.g., 40 year old white business executives, janitors, suburban

teenagers, etc.). Other groups of participants rated the social groups on similarity, liking, or demographic status. We predict that when their cultural taste is adopted by other social groups, people will diverge by decreasing their use of the catchphrase. Further, we predicted that divergence would be greater for groups that were rated as dissimilar.

Importantly our predictions differ from those made by prior literature. Conformity predicts convergence, thus adoption by others might even lead people to increase their use. The status-focused sociological literature would predict high status groups should abandon tastes adopted by lower status groups, so people should only decrease their use of the phrase when it is adopted by others who have lower status; indeed adoption by higher status groups might lead people to increase their use of the phrase. Uniqueness, optimal distinctiveness, and intergroup differentiation (at least on behavioral measures) predict people should diverge more from similar social groups. Finally, an explanation focused on liking would predict that people should imitate liked social groups (increasing their use of the phrase) and diverge from disliked social groups (decreasing their use of the phrase).

Method

Participants

Thirty-four Stanford University undergraduates completed a survey as part of a larger packet of unrelated questionnaires and were compensated for their time.

Taste Change Questionnaire

They were told to imagine they and their group of friends liked to say a particular catchphrase that no one else was saying it at the time. Respondents were then asked what they would do if each of a number of social groups started adopting the phrase. They

responded on an 11-point scale (-5 = decrease use of the phrase, 5 = increase use of the phrase) for 15 groups (e.g., 40 year old white business executives, janitors, suburban teenagers, etc.) that we expected to vary in similarity, status, and liking. Taste change ratings were averaged across respondents to create a taste change index for each social group ($\alpha = .73$)

Group Ratings

Three separate sets of raters from the same population (total N = 29) rated the same set of social groups on one of three experimental measures. Individuals rated each group on how similar the group was to them and their friends (1 = Not Very, 7=Very, $\alpha = .85$) and how positive their feeling were toward the group (-3 = Very Negative, 3 = Very Positive, $\alpha = .37$). Additionally, to compare these ratings with the existing literature in sociology which has focused on macrodemographic status, the third set rated the groups on how society viewed the status of that group relative to them and their friends (-3 = Much Lower, 3 = Much Higher, $\alpha = .97$).

Results

As predicted, for 14 of the 15 social groups, respondents said they would be likely to abandon the catchphrase if other social groups adopted it (see Figure 3). Respondents reported they would be most likely to decrease their use of the phrase if it was adopted by groups like 30 year old middle managers or janitors and least likely to abandon the phrase if it was adopted by Stanford athletes or typical Stanford students. An OLS regression then tested how responses to imitation by another group (i.e. average taste change) varied based on the similarity, liking, and status of that group.

While respondents were more likely to abandon a phrase the more they disliked the group that was adopting it ($\beta = .60, p = .03$), consistent with identity-signaling, similarity of the adopting group influenced taste change. Respondents were more likely to abandon the taste the more dissimilar the adopting group was to them and their friends ($\beta = 0.55, p = .05$). Out-group status did not influence abandonment ($\beta = -.37, p = ns$).

Discussion

Results of study 3 provide further evidence of divergence: people abandoned their use of a catchphrase when it was adopted by various out-groups. Further, consistent with identity signaling, abandonment was most pronounced for highly dissimilar groups. The effect of similarity held even when we controlled for liking and demographic status.

Prior theories cannot fully explain these effects. Conformity would predict adoption by others should increase use of the phrase, not decrease it. Status, at least for this set of groups, did not influence divergence. Though literature on uniqueness, optimal distinctiveness, and intergroup differentiation might predict divergence from extremely similar others, it would not predict the strong effects of dissimilarity on a behavioral measurement like abandonment. While how much people liked a social group did provide some predictive power, people did not increase their usage of the taste even for liked groups. People still diverged from groups they liked, just less so.

Study 4: Divergence to Avoid Confusion with Dissimilar Others

Study 4 again examines whether people are more likely to diverge from dissimilar social groups, but also whether this observed divergence is due in part to the cost of being misidentified. Each participant rated the same social groups used in the previous study on three measures: 1) how they would change their taste if it was adopted by each group

as well as 2) out-group similarity and 3) their desire to avoid being confused as a member. We predict that desire to avoid being seen as a member will mediate the relationship between out-group similarity and divergence.

Method

Participants

Seventy-five Stanford students and staff completed three questionnaires as part of a larger packet of surveys.

Procedure and Questionnaires

Participants first rated much they would change their use of a catchphrase if it was adopted by each of 15 social groups (questionnaire used in Study 3). After completing a few filler tasks, participants also rated the same groups on how similar they thought the group was to them and their friends and how much they would, or would not, want to be confused as a member of each group (questionnaire used in Study 1). The order of the other two surveys was counterbalanced across respondents and they were separated by filler tasks.

Results

Participants again reported they would decrease their use of the catchphrase if it was adopted by almost all of the social groups (14 of the 15). Because the data were nested, with each participant rating 15 social groups, we tested the predicted relationship between similarity, desire not to be confused as, and divergence using hierarchical linear modeling in HLM 6 (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004).

Consistent with identity signaling, the similarity of the out-group to the current taste holders predicted taste-change, $B = 0.25$, $SE B = 0.03$, $t(75) = 7.13$, $p < .0001$;

people were more likely to diverge from dissimilar out-groups. The similarity of the out-group also predicted people's desire to avoid being confused as a member, $B = -0.59$, $SE B = 0.04$, $t(75) = 14.88$, $p < .0001$; people preferred not to be thought of as akin to dissimilar out-groups. Finally, the data also confirmed the hypothesized mediational relationship (Figure 4). Supporting our prediction that desire not to be confused as a member of a social group may mediate the effects of similarity, inclusion of this variable significantly reduced the effect of similarity on divergence. A Sobel test confirmed that this pattern of mediation was statistically significant, $z = 6.24$, $p < .0001$. All results were identical when average ratings of out-group liking and status from Study 3 were included in the analyses.

Discussion

Results of Study 4 extend the findings of Studies 1 and 3 to a case where similarity, preference to avoid being thought of as a member, and divergence were measured within individual subjects. People reported that they would be more likely to diverge from groups they thought were dissimilar to themselves. They also reported preferring to avoid being confused with members of dissimilar social groups. Further, this preference mediated the relationship between similarity and divergence; people diverged more from dissimilar groups, in part, due to the desire to avoid being confused as a member.

The first four studies have provided evidence that people diverge from dissimilar out-groups, in part because of the cost of being thought of as a member of such groups. The next two studies provide further evidence of identity-signaling by examining

different taste domains. If identity signaling is driving divergence, out-group similarity should have a greater impact in taste domains that others use to infer identity.

Study 5: Groups, Domains, and Abandonment

We've suggested that people diverge to avoid signaling undesired identities to others, but so far we've primarily focused on out-group similarity. Yet identity signaling not only predicts that people will diverge from dissimilar groups, it predicts that people should be most likely to do so in domains of cultural tastes that others use to infer identity.

Taste domains (e.g., cars, toothpaste, and music tastes) differ in their signal value (e.g., Berger & Heath, 2006; Berger, Heath, & Ho, 2006). Across individuals, people are more likely to use some domains of cultural tastes to infer things about others (e.g., Shavitt, 1990); for example, people are more likely to infer something about the identity of others based on their selection of cars, clothes, and music as opposed to their toothpaste, pens, or notebooks.

If identity-signaling is driving divergence then people should care the most about *who* they share their tastes with in taste domains that communicate identity. We should care a lot about who adopts our music tastes or hairstyles and relatively less about who adopts our dish soap or notebook. Thus out-group similarity should have a greater influence on divergence in identity-related domains.

If we found such a pattern, it would be inconsistent with predictions based on liking, status, or uniqueness. We may avoid groups we dislike or see as lower status, and we may have a greater need to differentiate ourselves when we feel overly similar to others, but these theories provide no explicit reason why we should be more likely to do

so in certain domains as opposed to others. It is also not clear how such a pattern could be explained by work on intergroup differentiation. Prior literature (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that the relationship between distinctiveness and differentiation may be moderated by “the relevance of the dimension of comparison in a particular intergroup setting” (Jetten, et al., 2004, p.864), but a meta-analysis coding for general relevance found no evidence of this moderator (Jetten, et al., 2004).

Thus the present study examines whether the threshold for taste abandonment differs based on both the similarity of the adopters and whether or not the taste domain is related to identity. We also extend the findings of the previous study to a different measure of divergence and a case where the similarity of the adopting group was varied in a between subjects design.

Students were given 10 different taste domains which varied in identity-relatedness. Some domains had been established as domains that people use to signal and infer identity (e.g., hairstyles and music tastes) while other domains were not used in this way (e.g., pen color and DVD player). Participants were asked to imagine that members of another social group had started to copy their tastes in a particular domain (e.g., Princeton students had started adopting their favorite type of music). They then indicated what percentage of the other group would have to adopt the taste for them to abandon it (e.g., would they abandon if 10% of Princeton students had adopted? 50%? Never?).

Different participants were asked to focus on one of three different groups in a between subjects design--40 year old business executives, inner city teens, and Princeton students. All three groups had been previously rated (Study 3) as equivalent on a

measure of liking, but they varied in similarity—business executives (low similarity), inner city teens (moderate) and Princeton students (high).

We predict people should be more likely to diverge from others in identity-related domains because those are domains others use to make identity-inferences. Out-group similarity should also influence divergence; people should be more likely to diverge from out-groups that are dissimilar. Finally, if divergence is really driven by identity signaling we should find an interaction: the similarity of the adopting group should influence divergence, but only in domains that people use to communicate identity.

Method

Participants

One-hundred and thirty-two Stanford undergraduates completed a questionnaire as part of a larger packet of surveys. They were randomly assigned to condition and compensated for their time.

Procedure and Questionnaire

Participants were asked to imagine that they had a preference in each of 10 taste domains (e.g., hairstyle, brand of cell phone) and that members of a certain social group had started copying their preference (e.g., Princeton students had started adopting their favorite type of music). For each domain, they were asked how many people in the other group would have to copy their preference in order for them to consider abandoning their preference. Participants responded on a percentage scale from 10% to 100% (labeled “wouldn’t abandon at any level”).

Conditions differed in the identity of the people who were adopting the participants’ preferences (i.e. 40 year old white male business executives, Princeton

students, or inner city teens). These particular groups were chosen because participants in Study 1 suggested they differed in their similarity to Stanford undergraduates, but were equivalently liked. A separate set of raters from the same population ($N = 20$) rated each domain based in how much others would use the domain to form inferences about their identity ($\alpha = .91$).

Results

Hierarchical linear regression was used to test the hypothesized relationship between both similarity of the adopting group and identity-relatedness of the taste domain and the threshold required for taste abandonment. We first constructed a within subjects (level-1) linear equation that modeled how each participant responded to imitation by the other group depending on the identity-relevance of the taste domain in which the imitation occurred. We also created a between-subjects (level-2) equation modeling how respondents' thresholds for abandonment differed as a function of the adopting group's similarity to the subject population. The MIXED procedure in SAS Version 8 was used to solve the equations. People provided the percentage of members in the adopting group that would have to copy their taste for them to abandon it, and thus lower numbers mean a lower threshold required for abandonment.

Figure 5 shows the level at which people would abandon tastes. Note that for non-identity related items such as dish soap and DVD players, participants said that they would not abandon their preferred option even if 100% of the other group adopted it. The abandonment threshold decreased, however for tastes relevant to identity (e.g., music and jacket style). Our Stanford student participants said they would abandon a jacket worn by 48% of business execs, or 61% of Princeton students, or 70% of inner-city teens.

As predicted, divergence varied based on both whether the domain was related to identity ($\beta = -0.54$, S.E. = 0.05, $t(130) = -10.79$, $p < .0001$) and the similarity of the adopting group ($\beta = 0.30$, S.E. = .12, $t(130) = 2.34$, $p = .02$). When a cultural taste was more identity-related, participants required the presence of fewer others to abandon that taste. The threshold of abandonment was also lower the more dissimilar the out-group. Finally, there was a significant domain identity-relatedness x out-group similarity interaction ($\beta = 0.10$, S.E. = .05, $t(130) = 1.95$, $p = .05$). Out-group similarity only influenced divergence in identity-related domains (e.g., the right side of Figure 5).

Discussion

Findings from study 5 underscore the findings from the previous four studies. In domains that are unrelated to identity, little (if any) divergence was observed, and out-group similarity did not influence divergence. It was only in domains that others use to infer identity that out-group similarity influenced divergence. In those domains, identity-signaling predicts that people will be wary of what their cultural tastes communicate about their identity, and they may abandon tastes that are adopted by other social groups (especially dissimilar ones) to avoid undesired identity inferences.

The fact that divergence was primarily observed in identity-related domains helps separate our identity signaling account from simple liking, status, or uniqueness accounts. If people merely wanted to avoid disliked groups, or imitate high-status groups, they should do so for all products.⁴ If people merely wanted to be unique, they could do so by diverging in any area, but people seemed vary happy to share their bike light and DVD player preferences with 100% of people in a given out-group.

⁴ In this case, in fact, status ratings were inversely correlated with divergence; people were more likely to diverge from traditionally high-status out-groups than groups that are traditionally seen as having lower status, i.e. inner city teens.

To further examine whether these domain findings are due to the identity-relatedness of the domain, rather than some other factor, the next study takes a single taste domain but uses a prime to frame it either as more identity-related or more functional. We predict the social group associated with a taste will have greater influence when the taste is framed as identity-related.

Study 6: Priming Domain Types

If people diverge to avoid signaling undesired identities, then divergence should differ depending on whether people see a particular domain as a good avenue to signal identity. Study 6 tests this possibility. It provides a particularly pure test of identity signaling by using a single product, but using a prime to encourage participants to frame that product as more identity-related or more functional.

We chose a product (a digital music player) that has both identity-related and functional aspects. We then primed participants to think about the different aspects of this product by asking them to write about products they own that are identity-related or provide functional benefits. After they completed the writing task they saw, in an ostensibly unrelated task, a new digital music player that was evaluated positively by a certain social group that was either highly similar (Princeton students), moderately similar (inner city teens), or dissimilar (business executives).

We predicted that out-group similarity will only influence divergence when the product is framed as identity-related; in this condition, participants should evaluate the product less favorably if it is associated with a dissimilar out-group. The similarity of other potential users should have no influence on product evaluations when participants are primed to think of products as serving a functional purpose.

Method

Participants

Fifty-three Stanford undergraduates were randomly assigned to condition and completed two surveys as part of a larger group of studies for which they received \$20

Procedure and Questionnaire

First, participants completed a “Product Ownership” survey in which they wrote a few sentences about a product they owned. They were told the experimenters were “interested in the way people describe the products they own,” and in the identity-related condition, they read [alternate wording for functional condition is in brackets]:

Sometimes people choose things based on how well *that thing expresses their identity* [*they perform a specific function*]. In the space below, please write 5-7 sentences about something or things you own that you bought *that expresses who you are to the people around you* [*for the functional benefits it provides*]. Also write about why you decided to purchase that particular type/brand. For instance, some people may buy a *pair of sunglasses because they feel it expresses they type of person they are* [*specific toothpaste because it freshens breath and does a good job of fighting cavities*].

Participants then completed an ostensibly unrelated “New Product Testing” survey. They were told that the experimenter was interested “your attitudes towards a new digital music player that Real Music Inc. is considering putting on the market.” All participants were given the same general product information (e.g., memory size and product slogan), and the “results of some recent focus group testing.” Conditions differed

only in the identity of focus group participants; for example, participants in the similar condition read:

The device was recently tested among a group of *Princeton students* and 77% of *Princeton students* reported that they could see themselves using the eMuse device. In addition, 69% of *Princeton students* suggested the device fit what they were looking for. (italics not in original)

Participants in the other conditions read the same text but with the words in italics replaced by “inner-city teens” (moderately similar condition) or “business executives” (dissimilar condition).

Participants then provided their attitudes towards the device on three 10-point scales (1 = bad, negative, unfavorable; 10 = good, positive, favorable). They also rated how similar they thought they were to a number of social groups, including Princeton students, inner-city teens, and business executives (1 = Very dissimilar, 10 = Very similar). Finally, they provided some demographic information (e.g., age, gender).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

As expected, there were differences in how similar participants thought they were to the three social groups in question, $F(2, 76) = 57.62, p < .001$. Replicating the findings from Study 3, participants thought they were most similar to Princeton students ($M = 7.09$), followed by inner city teens ($M = 4.44$) and business executives ($M = 3.52$); each of the means was significantly different from the others (p 's $< .05$). The three device attitude items were highly correlated ($\alpha = .93$) and were averaged to form an Evaluation

Index. A 2 (Prime: Functional vs. Identity-Related) x 3 (Out-Group Similarity: Similar vs. Moderately Similar vs. Dissimilar) ANOVA examined product evaluations.

Product Evaluation

As predicted, there was a significant Prime x Out-Group Similarity interaction, $F(2, 76) = 3.21, p = .05$, see Figure 6. Out-group similarity affected product evaluations when participants were primed to think of products as identity-related ($F(2, 71) = 4.60, p = .01$), but not when they were primed to think of products as serving a functional purpose ($F < .5$). Further, contrasts indicated that when participants were primed to think of products as identity-related they evaluated it less favorably when it was associated with dissimilar others ($M = 4.40$) as compared with moderately similar others ($M = 6.49, t(71) = 14.71, p < .001$) or similar others ($M = 6.00, t(71) = 2.82, p = .01$).

Further, ancillary data supports the notion that the differences in evaluation were driven by difference in the similarity. For participants who were primed to think of products as related to identity, there was a significant correlation between product evaluations and similarity ratings for the out-group associated with the device (in their particular condition), $r = .35, p = .03$. People evaluated the device less favorably when they thought they were more dissimilar to the group associated with it. There was no corresponding correlation for participants who were primed to think of products as serving a more functional purpose, $r = .09, p = .59$.

Discussion

Results of Study 6 extend the findings from Study 5 to a case in which only one domain was used, but a prime focused participants either on the functional or identity-related aspects of products. The effects again illustrate that divergence varies with out-

group similarity, but more so in identity-related domains. Participants showed reduced product evaluations when a product was associated with a liked but dissimilar out-group, but only when they were primed to think of products as identity related. There was no influence of out-group identity on divergence when participants were primed to think of products as serving a more functional purpose.

The fact that out-group similarity only influenced divergence when the product was framed as relating to identity further separates our identity signaling account from other approaches. If liking, status, uniqueness, or intergroup differentiation was driving divergence then which particular group was associated with the product should have had the same effect on product evaluation regardless of how the product was framed.

General Discussion

People often diverge from members of other social groups. They select cultural tastes that distinguish them from out-group members and abandon tastes once they are adopted by other social groups. But while divergence is quite pervasive, little research has documented divergence or suggested a mechanism for this process.

Six studies supported our identity-signaling perspective; people diverge to avoid signaling undesired identities. As predicted, people tended to diverge more from dissimilar others. In an initial demonstration, dorm members stopped wearing a wristband that was adopted by the dissimilar geeky dorm next door (Study 2). Greater divergence from dissimilar others again emerged when a broader range of social groups were used (Studies 3 and 4), even controlling for how much people liked the groups. People were also more likely to diverge from dissimilar others across a variety of

domains (Study 5). The results are consistent across both questionnaire data (Studies 3, 4, 5 and 6) and real choices (Studies 2).

The observed pattern of results also supports the notion that identity-signaling concerns drive divergence. We suggested that people would be more likely to diverge from dissimilar others because the cost of such confusion is higher, and indeed, people suggested it would be worse to be thought of as a member of a dissimilar group (Study 1) and this desire not to be thought of as a member mediated the influence of out-group similarity on divergence (Study 4). Further support for our perspective comes from the fact that people diverged more in domains that people send and receive identity signals. Dissimilarity only influenced divergence in domains that people use to communicate identity (Study 5) or when a prime encouraged participants to frame a product as more identity-related (Study 6).

These findings are difficult to explain using existing perspectives. People did not dislike the groups they diverged from, and similarity influenced divergence even when liking was controlled. Literature on uniqueness and optimal distinctiveness focus on extreme similarity and cannot explain why people should diverge more from others that are dissimilar. Work on intergroup differentiation also suggests that on behavioral measures, similarity drives differentiation. Finally, these perspectives have little to say about why people would show greater divergence in identity-related domains. If people just diverged from disliked others, they should do so equally in all domains. If people just wanted to be unique or optimally distinct, they could do so anywhere. Instead, people seemed quite happy to share tastes with other social groups in certain domains

(e.g., DVD player), but not in others (e.g., hairstyle). Status also did not predict divergence (Studies 3, 4, 5 and 6).

Although our main finding was that people diverged more from dissimilar groups, it is worth noting that people also seemed to diverge slightly more when the adopting group was extremely, as compared with moderately, similar. This effect was less pronounced than the effect of dissimilarity, and though it was not significant across the set of studies, the pattern hints that the relationship between out-group similarity and divergence may not be solely linear. This is consistent with identity-signaling if we added a plausible assumption about the likelihood of misidentification. When types are more similar, they are more likely to overlap in their tastes and they may be more likely to be confused with each other (Cooper & Jones, 1966). Also, similar types should be more likely to encounter each other than to encounter more distant types. Further research is necessary to more deeply examine this pattern.

Our research adds to literature on intergroup differentiation by beginning to examine differentiation from out-groups that are already quite distinct. Because most studies focus on distinctiveness threat, existing intergroup differentiation work has tended to use cases where groups are already quite similar. Consequently, this literature has under-sampled high levels of distinctiveness between groups (see Jetten & Spears, 2003 for a discussion). This paper suggests studying high levels of existing distinctiveness is a fruitful area for future study.

The study of cultural tastes can also contribute to the literature on intergroup differentiation by helping us to understand how different groups to recognize one another. The intergroup differentiation literature has provided numerous insights into

the antecedents and consequences of intergroup conflict, but most experiments take the groups as given (e.g., using existing groups, or creating and labeling minimal groups in the lab). We know less, however, about how individuals recognize others as out-group members in the first place. Cultural tastes are one important way that such recognition occurs, and recognizing differences may form the basis for future discrimination.

These findings contribute to the burgeoning literature on the success of cultural tastes (e.g., Kashima, 2000; Lyons & Kashima, 2003; Schaller & Crandall, 2004; Schaller, Conway, & Tanchuk, 2002) by examining a process that may influence their spread. While models of diffusion of innovations and cultural tastes (e.g., Bass, 1969; Latane, 1996; Rogers, 1983) show that people often converge to the behavior of others, there are also many cases where people diverge from other social groups. In these cases, adoption by others may lead the original taste holders to abandon the taste. Thus processes of conformity and imitation may lead tastes to spread rapidly within social groups, but processes of divergence may prevent cultural tastes from being widely held among the population at any given time.

Our perspective highlights the importance of attending to the meaning associated with a cultural taste. For tastes that act as signal of identity, what engaging in a practice signals depends on who else is engaging in it, and consequently, meaning is dynamic. A rich white male may have originally worn Tommy Hilfiger to signal his upscale preppy identity, but the adoption of Hilfiger clothing by hip-hop artists in the early 1990's meant that those clothes came to signal a different identity. Consequently, rich white men may have needed to diverge just to maintain their desired signal. To understand the success of cultural tastes then, it is important to consider what they signal about the user.

This paper has focused on why people diverge when their tastes are poached by outsiders, but more research is necessary to examine why outsiders poach the tastes of others in the first place. In general, people may want others to identify and treat them like the type of person they actually are, but certain people may want to be treated as members of another group and therefore poach the cultural tastes of others (e.g., Berger, Heath, & Ho, 2006). Researchers know little about the poaching portion of the process. To truly understand both the spread and decline of cultural tastes, we need to understand both processes of imitation and divergence.

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Figure 1: Influence of Out-Group Similarity on Preferences to Avoid Being Thought of as a Group Member

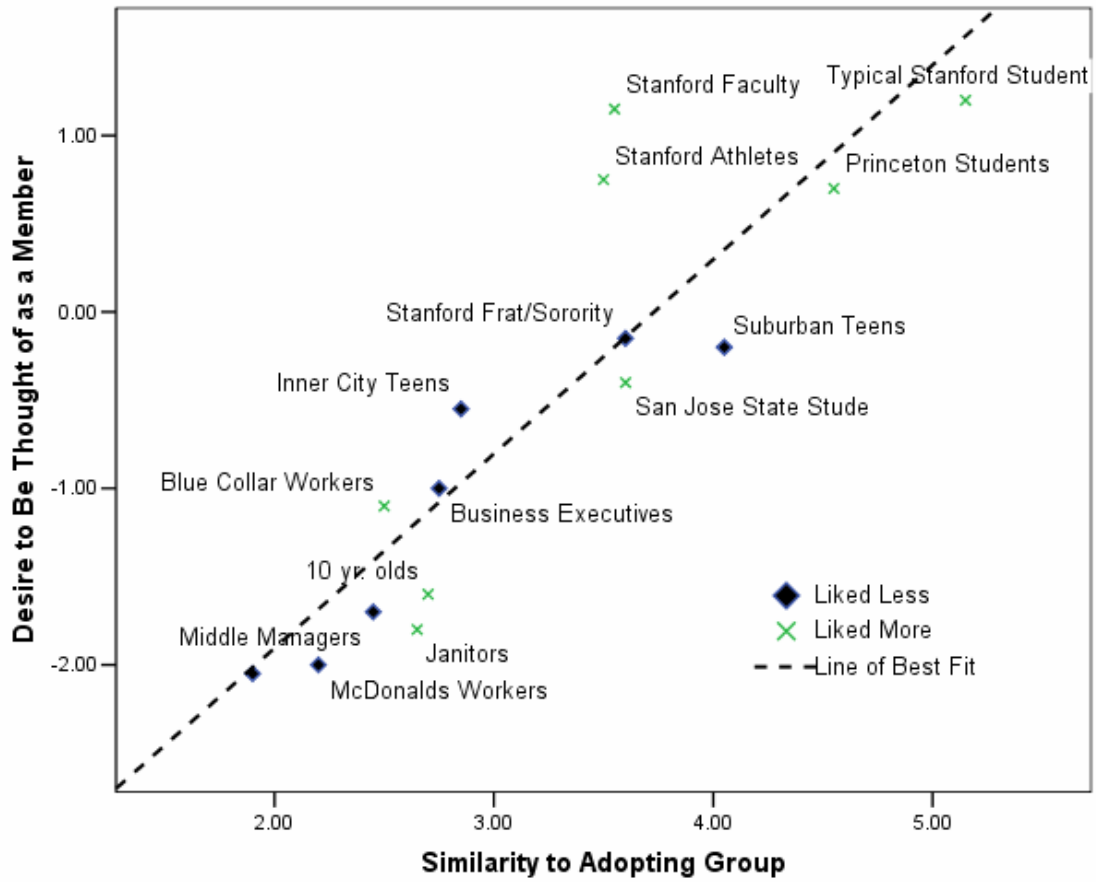


Figure 2: Livestrong band



Figure 3: Change in Taste Expression Based on Similarity of the Adopting Group

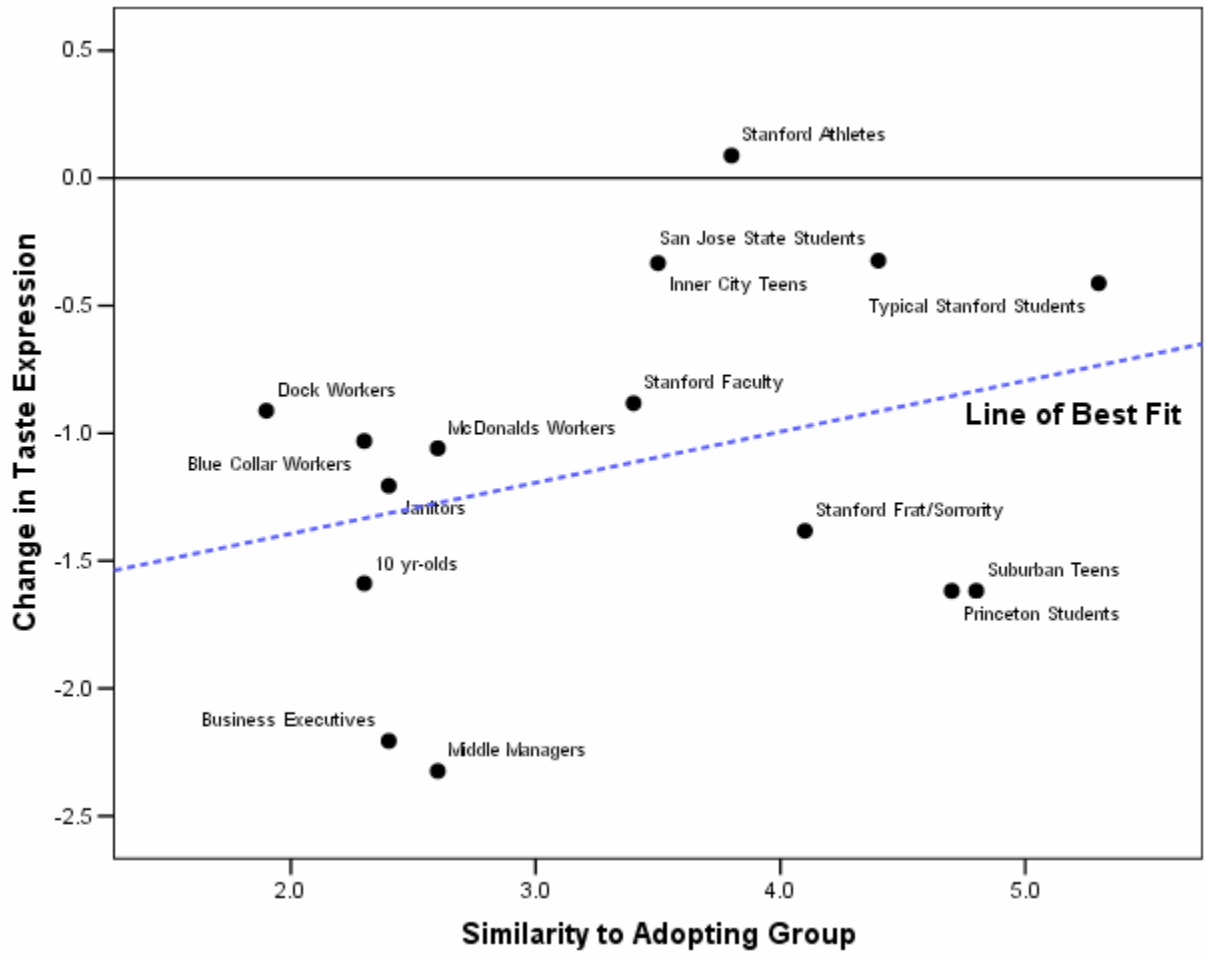


Figure 4: Desire to Avoid Being Thought of as a Member Mediating the Relationship between Out-group Similarity and Divergence.

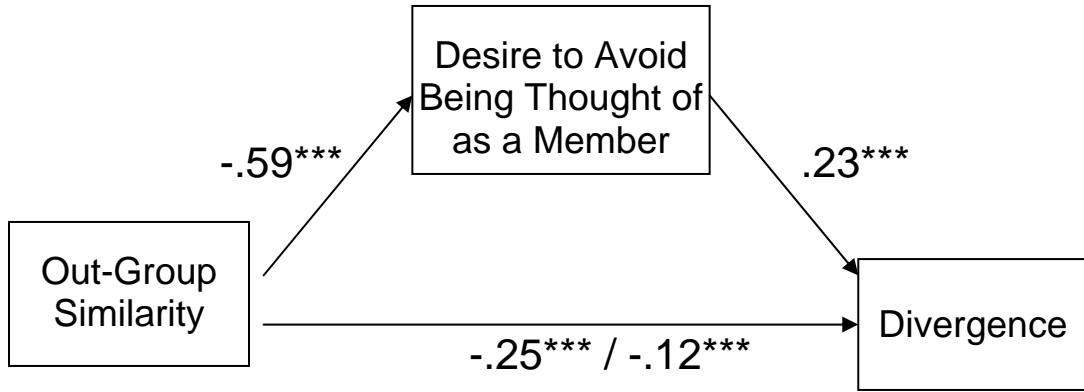


Figure 5: Divergence Threshold Based on Similarity of Adopters and How Related the Taste Domain is to Identity

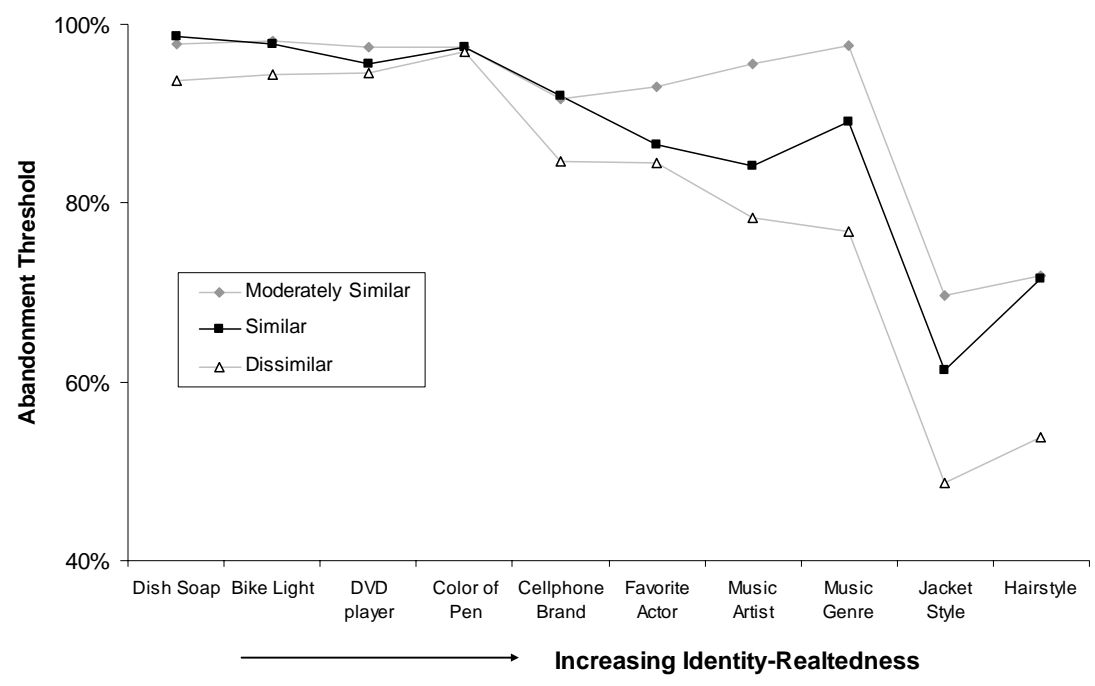


Figure 6: Effect of Out-Group Similarity and Prime on Product Evaluation

