[MSB637] Week6 Thought Paper **20223484 이연수**

1. Berger, Jonah and Chip Heath (2008) "Who Drives Divergence? Identity Signaling, Outgroup Dissimilarity, and the Abandonment of Cultural Tastes," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95(3), 593-607.

Main hypothesis: People diverge to avoid sending undesired identity signals to others, which leads to more divergence from dissimilar others. People diverge more in public, and the relationship between outgroup similarity and divergence is mediated by the cost of misidentification.

This article is critical in that it points out social influence can drive divergence in cultural tastes. It takes a unique viewpoint that people sometimes abandon their tastes to signal who they are to others. In particular, it successfully proves the existence of external motivation for divergence by comparing how people abandon a taste accepted by others in public (vs. private).

While I find the identity signaling approach novel and significant, I doubt the main finding of this article that people tend to abandon cultural tastes adopted by dissimilar others. Specifically, I agree that misclassification cost mediates the tastes abandonment but I'm skeptical about dissimilarity increasing misclassification cost. I believe that the studies in this article all miss an important confound: whom people want to be seen as. As stated in the discussion, identity signaling predicts that people may abandon tastes adopted by stigmatized groups and continue using tastes adopted by aspiration groups. That is, identity signaling might be used to signal wannabe traits rather than their identity traits. The authors introduce this possibility as another factor that may also influence divergence and do not delve deeper into it. However, I argue that this wannabe signaling may be the main contributor to cultural abandonment and that divergence from dissimilarity may be a partial consequence of it.

To validate my point, I would first like to justify how wannabe signaling can explain the results of the experiments in this article. People have their own idea of who they are (identity) and whom they want to be seen as (wannabe). I claim that the experiments in the article supported identity signaling (while wannabe signaling is in fact the underlying mechanism) since identity and wannabe have a high correlation. To illustrate, one's wannabe is likely to (at least partially) reflect the traits that are perceived as appropriate or desirable by society. Moreover, traits that are perceived as desirable by society are different for each group. For instance, the ideal traits of university students include being young, energetic, passionate, and fun. On the other hand, the ideal traits of business executives include being rational, serious, and professional. Additionally, I argue that desired traits and self-identity have a positive correlation. That is, some university students may not be fun but still, they are likely to be young and energetic. Some business executives may have serious personalities but they are still likely to be rational and professional. To sum up, a wannabe is influenced by desirable traits and desirable traits and self-identity have a lot in common. Thus, I argue that wannabe and self-identity are likely to be positively correlated. Thus, even if it is indeed the wannabe signaling that drives divergence, without controlling it, the result can be seen as identity signaling driving the divergence.

Next, I would like to discuss dubious points in this article that are inconsistent with identity signaling but can be explained with wannabe signaling. First, I wonder if the result of experiment 2 would have been replicated if the geek dorm was replaced by the jock dorm. I think if dissimilarity is the same, people would prefer wearing a wristband that jocks wear compared to geeks. I argue that this is because jocks are more consistent with desirable traits of university students (e.g. energetic, fun). As a matter of fact, according to figure 3, the participants abandoned cultural states the least when Standford athletes adopted it even though they find several others (e.g. Stanford Frat/Sorrority, Princeton Students) more similar. Second, I think figure 3 itself is equivocal. I think the groups can be divided into two groups depending on age - teens & university students (G1) vs. others (G2). As G1 show high similarity and (relatively) positive change in taste expression compared to G2, the regression line is positively significant. That is, between groups, similarity positively impacts change in taste expression. However, within each group, this pattern is no longer seen. It even looks like the relationship is reversed within the group. I suggest that wannabe signaling might explain this result better. Earlier I argued that wannabe should be consistent with self. Since the participants are

university students, their wannabe is likely to be young. Thus, the misclassification cost is lower for G1 compared to G2. So far, this is also consistent with identity signaling. However, they differ when we look closely into G1 (or G2). According to identity signaling, similarity should still have a positive effect in G1. It cannot explain why the participants will change their taste more when their culture is adopted by suburban teens rather than Standford Athletes. However, wannabe signaling can explain it as: Standford athletes are more consistent with wannabe than suburban teens. A similar interpretation is possible for G2. Although middle managers are perceived to be more similar compared to dock workers, the participants will change their tastes less when their culture is adopted by dockworkers since they are more associated with desirable traits like being powerful. Third, the result of study 3 which compares private and public behavior is also better explained by wannabe signaling. If signaling were intended to ensure that others understand who they are, they should signal who they are. In other words, they should choose what they want to choose, resulting in no differences between private and public conditions. However, if signaling were intended to ensure that others see them as whom they want to be seen, then it makes more sense that people behave differently in public. A jock who secretly likes geeky music would say that he has such a taste if he wants others to know who he is since it is part of his identity. Instead, he prefers to hide it since it is far from the wannabe traits that he wants to be seen as.

I believe the comparison between identity signaling and wannabe signaling would be an interesting future research. One can include the wannabe variable which measures how similar each group is to the wannabe image that one wishes to be seen as and replicate the experiments in this article. The problem with this design is that the result may be biased due to multicollinearity (although I heard that this is not a significant problem anymore). Then one might consider building two models with dissimilarity (from this article) and wannabe, respectively, and compare the fitted model.

2. Johnson, Eric J. and Daniel Goldstein (2003), "Do Defaults Save Lives?" Science, 302(5649), 1338-1339.

Main hypothesis: Setting default influences the respondents in a way to follow the default.

This article contributes significantly by demonstrating how people's answers can be influenced by the default option even when changing the answer requires little effort. It has a lot of implications since the default option is used on many occasions and the default option can influence people's responses a lot. It was shocking how the percent consenting to being donors doubled in the opt-out condition compared to the opt-in condition.

I wonder what factors can be the moderator for the default effect. As mentioned in the paper, how strong the preference is for each option can be relevant. If someone has a strong preference for the question in hand, he/she will choose according to the preference regardless of the default option. Another moderator can be the importance of the question addressed. If the option you choose is important for you, you would be more prudent and likely to choose what you really prefer. In a similar vein, how soon the option will affect you can also be a moderator. The sooner it takes effect, the clearer its potential effects are. The difficulty of evaluating the consequences of each option might moderate the default effect as well. The more difficult it is to compare possible gain and loss, the more you might rely on the default. The amount of uncertainty regarding the consequences of each option could also be a moderator. In fact, the timing of the effect and uncertainty could be related to the difficulty in that it requires a lot of cognitive resources to make the decision.

The reflection about the possible moderators reminded me of the system 1 and system 2 thinking processes from the last week. I hypothesize that more preference for the default option could be (at least partially) the result of system 1. When the question in hand is too difficult (requires too many cognitive resources), considered not important, or not interesting (no strong preference), then people may use heuristic in choosing the option, which leads them to follow the default option. One way to test this hypothesis would be to ask people to make choices with/without default with/without cognitive loads and compare the result.

Finally, I would like to suggest how we can prevent the misclassification of respondents and encourage them to choose the option that reflects their actual preference. Of course, not setting the default will have an effect as suggested in the article. However, even without the default option, people can still rely on other heuristics such as just choosing the first option. I believe stressing the importance of the choice could prevent such behaviors. By explicitly demonstrating how important their choices are, people may care more about the options they choose. Another way could be to provide adequate decision aids. If people rely on system 1 due to the difficulty of accessing each option, showing people what could be the critical consequences of each option will help them to choose what they really want.

3. Goldstein, Noah J., Robert B. Cialdini and Vladas Griskevicius (2008), "A Room with a Viewpoint: Using Social Norms to Motivate Environmental Conservation in Hotels," Journal of Consumer Research, 35(3), 472-482.

Main hypothesis: Using an appeal that conveys the descriptive norm is more effective in encouraging towel reuse than the current industry standard appeal that relies solely on the environmental aspect. Moreover, the provincial norm is more effective than the global norm in engaging guests to participate in towel reuse.

This article is meaningful in that it shows the substantial impact of social norms in the real world. It provides useful implications for practitioners by demonstrating how social norms can enhance consumer participation. It also makes a notable contribution theoretically by proving that not only personal importance but also contextual circumstances can affect norm adherence.

I wonder if there were any confounds in the two studies that are not properly addressed. For instance, the proportion of long-term guests might have differed in each condition. I acknowledge that hotel rooms were randomly assigned to each condition, which mitigates such concerns. However, there is still a chance since some hotels assign long-term guests to specific rooms or floors for managerial convenience. Moreover, long-term guests could prefer some rooms (e.g. high-rise room or a quiet room at the end of an aisle). If there were differences in the proportion of long-term guests, it could lead to bias since towel reuse was only examined once during a stay. Since long-term guests have more chances to participate, a higher proportion of long-term guests might lead to more participation. A descriptive statistic that compares the characteristics of guests (e.g. length of stay) in each condition would have helped eliminate such concerns.

I also wonder if small changes in the messages could alter how much it is conceived as a social norm or how much it influences people's behavior. For example, in the study, the message conveyed that about 75% of the guests (or other reference groups) participated in the towel recycling program. If it stated that about half of the reference group participated, would participation still be considered a social norm? Would a 50% message still be more effective than the message that focuses on the environment? How about the case where no quantitative information is provided? I wonder if the result will still be the same if the message used the term 'majority of' or 'many' instead of 75%.

Next, I would like to discuss the possible moderators of the proposed norm effect. I think the purpose of staying could be a moderator. Specifically, I think people will show stronger adherence to the province norm when they are on vacation (especially oversea) than when they are just staying a few days for other reasons. Anyone would have an experience of feeling like another person when on vacation. Normally I regard myself as a female or student but when I go on a vacation, I rather think of myself as a vacationer or foreign. The excitement of traveling could engender a feeling that the experience in the hotel is something special that only the hotel guests share, increasing norm adherence to the other guests, in particular those who used the same room. This is consistent with Heider's (1958) argument about rarity. Further, I propose that excitement can cause hotel guests to consider their hotel experience even rarer than it actually is.

In a similar vein, I propose that how many exclusive activities a hotel provides can also influence the result. If a hotel has many exclusive services such as a pool or free tea time that only hotel guests can enjoy, guests might identify with other guests since they exclusively share the same experience. The

number of social activities that a hotel provides could also be a moderator. Some hotels offer experiential programs in which guests can socialize (e.g. yacht party). These events are exclusive in nature and also allow the guests to get to know each other, enhancing their social identity of being hotel guests. Although mentioned earlier, a long-term stay may have a similar effect. The longer a person stays in the hotel, the more they get familiar with the hotel staff and possibly other long-term guests. I have an experience of staying in one hotel for more than a month and I think being a guest in that hotel actually contributed substantially to my self-identity back then. It may be partially due to the rarity of staying in one hotel for such a long time, but also because I get to remember the hotel staffs, interact with them, and feel closer to them. I think future research could investigate how these factors influence the proposed effect.

4. Cheng, Clara Michelle and Tanya L. Chartrand (2003), "Self-Monitoring Without Awareness: Using Mimicry as a Nonconscious Affiliation Strategy," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85(6), 1170-1179. 5

Main hypothesis: High self-monitors engage more in nonconscious mimicry in the presence of affiliation cues (study 1: peer group, study 2: higher status) while low self-monitors do not show the difference.

This article makes a counter-intuitive finding that people use mimicry as a nonconscious affiliation strategy. It is surprising that high-monitoring people engage in more mimicking when affiliation cues are present without noticing it. This article also shows how individual differences (high vs. low self-monitoring) can result in different behavior in social mimicry.

I find it really interesting that self-monitoring can be nonconscious. According to the definition of self-monitoring, it requires one to find relevant social cues in the context and control oneself to better suit the situation. It sounds stressful and burdensome in that it requires a lot of information processing and self-control. Especially, considering the brief discussion regarding self-control's reliance on a limited resource, self-monitoring sounds like an onerous task. I wonder how one's unconscious mimicry affects one's mood or energy level. People sometimes get stressed or tired without knowing the cause. Sometimes people do not even recognize that they are stressed or tired. I wonder if the unconscious affiliation strategy could have such an effect. Moreover, if self-control indeed relies on limited resources, then can it be the case that high-monitors fail on other self-controls more after using such a nonconscious affiliation strategy? Or, would it be the case that high monitors' affiliation strategy is so automated that they do not feel any burden about it? I think investigating the possible side effects of social mimicry on individuals could be interesting.

The definition of self-monitoring reminded me of another concept, reward dependence from the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI). As far as I understand, reward dependence refers to how much one relies on social rewards and needs social approval. I do not have a deep understanding of either construct, but it seems like they have some similarities and differences. To the best of my knowledge, high self-monitors and those with high reward dependence have some similar characteristics in that they are sensitive to social cues and look forward to affiliating with others. On the other hand, I do not know if those with high reward dependence are status-oriented as high self-monitors. Moreover, while reward dependence is known as a trait that does not change significantly throughout life, I do not know if the same applies to self-monitoring. I wonder if reward dependence will also moderate social mimicry behavior.

In study 1, the authors argue that high self-monitors show more social mimicry toward the peer group due to the possibility of future interaction. They eliminate several other explanations such as conscious motive to affiliate, attention, and liking. I would like to propose yet another alternative explanation - intimacy. Since the peer group was introduced as a fellow introductory psychology student, the participants may have felt some kind of kinship toward the confederate. I thought of this possibility because when I was a mathematics student as an undergraduate, the introductory courses were much more difficult than I imagined so I had to struggle to survive and so did other fellow students. I think those hard courses induced a sort of camaraderie and even now when I meet someone

who studied mathematics as an undergraduate, I feel intimacy for no other reason. I think it is different from liking or attention. It is more like I do not know anything about him/her but I can still see that they also liked mathematics a lot and suffered from it a lot and this feeling of knowing him/her creates intimacy. I heard that introductory psychology courses are very hard so I think the participants might have felt a similar way.

Lastly, I want to discuss some minor remaining thoughts. I want to point out that there is a mistake in either the main text or figure 1 in presenting the result of study 1. Specifically, the proportion of foot shaking of low self-monitors when the confederate was introduced as a graduate student is stated as 0.02 in the main text but plotted as 0.01 in figure 1. In addition, I find it interesting that the low self-monitor group showed the opposite pattern of high self-monitors in both studies although the difference was not significant in both studies. I think the number of participants is small per condition, so I wonder if this result could turn out significant if there were enough participants. If so, then why? I think the opposite behavior of low self-monitors needs more investigation.