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## Fashionably Late: Differentially Costly Signaling of Sociometric Status Through a Subtle Act of Being Late --Manuscript Draft--

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<b>Corresponding Author:</b>	Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir Sabanci University Faculty of Management: Sabanci Universitesi Yonetim Bilimleri Fakultesi Turkey, TURKEY
<b>First Author:</b>	Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir
<b>Order of Authors:</b>	Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir Andy H. Ng Cenk Koças
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Fashionably Late: Differentially Costly Signaling of Sociometric Status Through a Subtle Act of  
Being Late

**Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir<sup>1</sup>**  
**Andy H. Ng<sup>2</sup>**  
**Cenk Koçaş<sup>3</sup>**

**1Assistant Professor of Marketing, Sabanci University, Orhanli-Tuzla, Istanbul, Turkey**  
**Tel:+90-216-4839677**  
**e-mail:kivilcimdd@sabanciuniv.edu**

**2Lecturer in Marketing, Cardiff University, Aberconwy Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff,**  
**Wales, United Kingdom CF10 3EU**  
**Tel: +44 (0)29 2251 0204**  
**e-mail: NgA4@cardiff.ac.uk**

**3Professor of Marketing, Sabanci University, Orhanli-Tuzla, Istanbul, Turkey**  
**Tel:+90-216-4839674**  
**e-mail:kocas@sabanciuniv.edu**

## **Biography of authors**

**Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir** is an assistant professor of marketing at Sabanci University. She holds a PhD in marketing from Washington State University. Her research interests are consumer behavior, collaborative consumption and behavioral pricing. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research* and *Marketing Letters*.

**Andy H. Ng** is a Lecturer in Marketing at Cardiff University, UK. His research primarily focuses on how cultural factors affect consumer decision-making and consumption behaviors, informing the basics of successful cross-cultural marketing strategies.

**Cenk Koçaş** is a Professor of Marketing at the School of Management of Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey. His previous position was at the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management of Michigan State University. He holds a Ph.D. in Management from Purdue University. His research interests are psychological pricing, consumer behavior, game theoretical models of price promotions and application of theory from economics and marketing in online markets. His work has appeared in leading academic and practitioner journals such as *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *the International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *Decision Support Systems*, *Journal of Mathematical Psychology*, *European Journal of Operational Research*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing* and *Marketing Letters*. Cenk has also completed consulting projects and executive trainings with many national and multinational companies.

Dear Editor,

We are really glad that you conditionally accepted our paper titled “Fashionably Late: Differentially Costly Signaling of Sociometric Status Through a Subtle Act of Being Late”(JOBDR-D-21-02959).

Our paper is formatted as per the guidelines of JBR. It was also sent to a language editing service prior to the last revision. Thank you and the review team once again for a constructive review process.

Sincerely,

Kivilcim Dogerlioglu-Demir  
Assistant Professor of Marketing,  
Sabanci University, Orhanli-Tuzla, Istanbul, Turkey  
Tel:+90-216-4839677  
e-mail:kivilcimdd@sabanciuniv.edu

Andy Ng  
Lecturer in Marketing,  
Cardiff University, Aberconwy Building, Colum Drive,  
Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom CF10 3EU  
Tel: +44 (0)29 2251 0204 e-mail: NgA4@cardiff.ac.uk

Cenk Kocas  
Professor of Marketing,  
Sabanci University, Orhanli-Tuzla, Istanbul, Turkey  
Tel:+90-216-4839674 e-mail:kocas@sabanciuniv.edu

## Fashionably Late: Differentially Costly Signaling of Sociometric Status Through a Subtle Act of Being Late

### Abstract

This research examines how arriving late to social gatherings operates as a signal of social connectedness and desirability, leading to elevated sociometric status attributions. Drawing on costly signaling theory and the premises of sociometric status and consumption mimicry, we argue that tardiness to a gathering, as a costly and visible signal, can lead to positive inferences of sociometric status, thereby leading to mimicry. We define fashionably late as a separating equilibrium tardiness based on a signaling game and demonstrate through a series of experimental studies that people infer higher status to late- rather than on-time-arriving people. Consequently, they strive to be in the same social network with such individuals, favor their product choices, and imitate their consumption behaviors. This research contributes to the literature on the conspicuous consumption of time and to research on costly signaling by revealing the powerful influence of signaling (through late arrival to a social event) on perceptions of sociometric status.

*Keywords:* conspicuous consumption, costly signaling, sociometric status, tardiness, consumer mimicry

*Fashionably late, Karen Kahn and her husband Jeffrey, walked past the flash of photographers' lights and into the Waldorf Astoria Hotel on Park Avenue. Karen felt, for that moment, that she had it all. Tonight was the annual award party and benefit held by the Oakley Foundation, and Karen was about to be honored with their thirty-eighth Annual American Fashion Achievement Award. If she couldn't arrive fashionably late here, where could she? (Goldsmith, 1995)*

Almost everyone considers time a valued and limited resource that should not be wasted (Leclerc et al., 1995). In his well-known theory of time, Becker (1965) suggests that the value of time is equal to its opportunity cost, which is usually the wage rate. Therefore, idle time is viewed as a waste, a loss that could be used more efficiently (Larson, 1987). Relatedly, punctuality is considered a crucial element in social life (Zerubavel, 1982) and part of a professional code of conduct (Hall & Whyte, 1960). After all, organized social life and increased interdependence among communities, due to the establishment of national and international communication and transportation networks, call for activities coordinated in time (Durkheim, [1915] 1965; Zerubavel, 1982). Many scholars indicate that apprehension of "the appointed time" (Sorokin, 1943, p. 173) by members of a society is one of the most critical factors of social life at any time and any place. That is, all individuals should follow invariable and common time so that any economic and social activity is conceivable (Mukerjee, 1943). As individuals became

an interrelated part of a system, the self-governing individual view of time is replaced by social time (i.e., a time common to the group that everyone is expected to adhere to), thereby moving individuals closer to punctuality (Durkheim, [1915] 1965). Indeed, studies find a strong inverse relationship between a country's Human Development Index score and its average on-time window (White et al., 2011). Individuals with higher on-time window scores have more flexible windows for what is considered "on time," which suggests that these individuals are less punctual than others (White et al., 2011). Thus, as a society becomes more developed, the more punctual it becomes.

Amid all the discussions on punctuality, however, it seems acceptable or even desirable to be late on certain social occasions (Festervand, 2002). For example, a crowdsourced experiment that gathered data points from 803 people attending 26 social gatherings (from book clubs to dinner parties in Europe, the United States, and Canada) suggests that the majority of attendees arrive approximately one hour after the start of a party, and a quarter of the guests do not show up until an hour and a half after the party starts (Hickey, 2014). If punctuality is the normative behavior, as discussed in previous works (Durkheim, [1915] 1965; Mukerjee, 1943; Sorokin, 1943; Zerubavel, 1982), why do so many people engage in such nonconforming behavior when attending social events? Unlike what low punctuality suggests at the societal level (i.e., low educational attainment and economic output), low punctuality of people, as exhibited in their arrival time to social gatherings in particular, seems to suggest something positive. Why would tardiness, not punctuality, in social gatherings be associated with positive outcomes? Being late to a social gathering can be a costly act. In addition to the risk of being disapproved of by some people (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), opportunity costs are associated with being late to a social event. For example, people arriving late may miss out on the good food, perhaps miss the finest music, and miss opportunities to make new friends, socialize with the old ones, and even find a romantic partner. However, there must also be an upside to being late to a social event, considering the clear pattern of late arrivals. That is, some individuals are willing to bear the costs of tardiness in return of some benefits. As the opening vignettes suggest, tardiness may actually pay off. In some cases, lateness signals high status and leads to perceptions of being "fashionable" when the late-arriving person is popular and has a large social network. Entwistle & Rocamora (2006) indeed suggest that late arrival is used by popular players in the fashion industry to signify high status. Late arrival of VIP is often interpreted by the fashion press as power moves that others have to follow.

The perception of being popular may even attract more individuals who are willing to be part of the late-arriving person's social network, clearly benefiting the latecomer. By showing up late to social gatherings, people may be conveying, preserving, or enhancing their own sociometric status, defined as the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference individuals receive from others (Anderson et al., 2015). By arriving late to a party, a person through a subtle action, indicates that he or she has high sociometric status and thus can afford being late. We refer to these individuals as fashionably late arrivals. Fashionably late individuals arrive much later than the majority of the crowd, with the goal of being recognized as having high sociometric status at the least cost. As we present in detail subsequently, all that high sociometric status guests need to do is delay their arrival to a point that is suboptimal for low sociometric status guests to delay, referred to as the fashionably late level. That is, a fashionably late arrival is too costly for low sociometric status guests and therefore bestows high sociometric status to the late-arriving guests.

In this article, we examine how such leisure time allocation decisions are perceived by others. In particular, we explore how arriving late to a social gathering influences perception of sociometric status of the late-arriving person. Is a person who arrives late always perceived as “fashionably late,” receiving admiration and respect from others? Would such admiration magnetize even more people and enlarge the fashionably late guest’s social network? Do such perceptions carry over to downstream product preferences of the observers? Drawing on costly signaling theory (Grafen, 1990; Spence, 1974; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997), works on sociometric status (Anderson et al., 2015), and research on consumption mimicry (Ruvio et al., 2013; Tanner et al., 2007), we argue that such tardiness, as a costly and visible signal, can act as a particular form of conspicuous consumption and lead to positive inferences of social capital and sociometric status, which in turn may lead to mimicry. We define fashionably late as a separating equilibrium tardiness based on a signaling game and demonstrate through a series of controlled experiments and field studies that people infer that late-arriving people are of higher status than on-time-arriving people. More specifically, when social targets are perceived as late, they are perceived as having higher sociometric status and more friends, which in turn grants them more admiration from others. Consequently, observers desire to be in the same social network as late-arriving individuals, tend to favor their product choices, and imitate their consumption behaviors. Moreover, an investigation of moderating conditions shows that the tendency to imitate consumption behaviors of late-arriving people is exacerbated among observers whose chronic desire for status is relatively high. This research contributes to the literature on conspicuous consumption of time and to research on costly signaling by revealing the powerful influence of signaling (by arriving late to a social event) on perceptions of sociometric status.

## ***THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES***

### *Perceptions of Being Late*

People are not born with the aptitude to organize life with the sense of time but acquire this skill over time from experiences (Lewin, 1938). As such, most consumer behavior research on the consumption of time has explored the antecedents and consequences of time allocation decisions, examining culture and language effects on perceptions of time (Graham, 1981), the effect of individuals’ temporal orientation (Bergadaà, 1990), the relationship between time styles and patterns of consumption (Cotte et al., 2004), and context effects and valuation of time (Leclerc et al., 1995). For example, the concept of time in the United States is often characterized as objective, measurable, linear, and irreversible (Graham, 1981). Therefore, time is considered a scarce resource that is quantifiable in monetary terms and thus must be effectively managed (Becker, 1965; Leclerc et al., 1995). One way to manage time is to split it into segments assigned to separate activities and make time allocation decisions limited not only to work but also to leisure time. As individuals and societies become more interconnected, setting a common time to begin and end such activities has become even more important, and thus punctuality has become prominent (Durkheim, [1915] 1965; Mukerjee, 1943; Sorokin, 1943).

Many studies show, however, that there is no single definition of what counts as punctual and late. When people show up to an event largely depends on local norms (Levine et al., 1980) and situations (White et al., 2011). While Americans value punctuality, Brazilians have a more flexible definition of punctuality (Levine et al., 1980). In work-related events, punctuality is the norm, while being late to social gatherings is “less taboo” (White et al., 2011). Similarly, in their modeling article, Basu and Weibull (2002) stress that punctuality has less to do with innate

characteristics or even habit and more to do with equilibrium behavior. People prefer to be punctual or not depending on their expectations of how other attendees will behave (i.e., whether they are punctual or not). So, in a party setting, for example, if they expect the majority of other partygoers to show up late, they will adjust their arrival time accordingly. In a functional setting, however, people may try their best to be punctual because that is what others will likely do. These articles seem to suggest that there is actually a more malleable definition of punctuality, which changes depending on context. In this article, we explore the consequences of being late to a social gathering, particularly investigating others' perceptions of fashionably late arrivals. Although we accept that people adjust their arrival time according to other attendees, as Basu and Weibull (2002) suggest, we go beyond such an analysis and argue that lateness in itself might bring substantial benefits to the latecomer. Perhaps tardiness is a signal of sociometric status through which people further enlarge their social networks. While Basu and Weibull (2002) address how the social norm (the peak) of arrival time to social gatherings develops over time, we examine "extreme" lateness. People arriving very late probably know that most people would have arrived already and that this is a costly act but that this act carries with it substantial social benefits.

### *Sociometric Status*

While socioeconomic status refers to a person's income, education, and occupation (Adler et al., 1994), sociometric status entails the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference that people afford to others (Anderson et al., 2015). It is distinct from related constructs such as power, financial success, and social belongingness. A review of diverse literature streams lends support to the status hypothesis: People's subjective well-being, self-esteem, and mental and physical health often depend on the level of status they are accorded by others. People engage in a wide range of goal-directed activities to manage their status, aided by myriad cognitive, behavioral, and affective processes. For example, they vigilantly monitor the status dynamics in their social environment (Shariff & Tracy, 2009), prefer and select social environments that offer them higher status (Solnick & Hemenway, 1998), and react strongly when their status is threatened (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Griskevicius et al., 2009). Finally, the importance of status applies across individuals who differ in culture, gender, age, and personality, supporting the universality of the status motive (for a review, see Anderson et al., 2015). Therefore, as a whole, relevant evidence suggests that the desire for status is indeed fundamental. As people strive to appear socially valuable, they constantly engage in various signaling activities to show status. Even social groups in which people do not know one another play status-signaling games, with members arriving late to gatherings so that observers may confer them a higher sociometric status.

### *Costly Signaling*

The question of how signalers can inform receivers of their unobservable quality while credibly separating themselves from those who actively want to deceive receivers, also known as the classical signaling model, indicates how specific actions by signalers (e.g., overeducation, advertising, conspicuous consumption) can be valuable evidence of unobservable quality (e.g., employee quality, product quality, wealth, health) (Grafen, 1990; Spence, 1974; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). Thus, "costly" signaling theory maintains that individuals engage in behaviors that are costly (i.e., involve a significant amount of economic resources, energy, risk, or time) to signal to others valuable information about themselves (Bird & Smith, 2005; McAndrew, 2002). The established solution to this model involves high-quality types signaling with a differentially

costly signal that the low types cannot fake, resulting in a separating equilibrium.

“Differentially” in this setting refers to the asymmetric nature of costs that are incurred by the parties in a signaling game. Just like a peacock’s beautiful tail (which is differentially costly to grow and maintain; that is, only the healthy and disease-free peacock can allocate resources for such a flaunting display whereas the weak peacock cannot maintain such a costly display), we argue that arriving late to a party is a costly act that signals valuable information about one’s sociometric status (Anderson et al., 2015).

We briefly reiterate some details of the costly signaling game and define what fashionably late means from a separating equilibrium perspective. Suppose that a high sociometric status–type guest arrives at a party where she wants the existing crowd to bestow her the highest sociometric status possible. How can this guest inform receivers at the party of her unobservable quality (high sociometric status) while credibly separating herself from low sociometric status–type guests who would try to deceive the receivers? Is a delay in arrival a credible signal, as low sociometric status types would not be able to afford such a delay? Assume that any guest can strategically decide on the time (delay) to show up for the party. Also assume that the delay has no actual influence on the sociometric status; that is, the delay may have been caused by waiting idly alone at home or prolonging the preparation duration without actually having any impact on the actual sociometric status.

The cost of the delay to the arriving party guest, however, is the opportunity cost of socialization, which actually could increase the sociometric status level. However, this opportunity cost depends on the arriving guest’s type. A guest with a high sociometric status has a lower opportunity cost of socialization. In a given time period, the high sociometric status type can engage in more social interactions, and therefore her cost of a given delay is much less. That is, a delay is differentially costly to the two types, those with high and low sociometric status. This is referred to as the sorting or single-crossing condition in games of signaling (Tirole, 1988). The difference in this opportunity cost is the main reason why costly signaling works. The low sociometric status type can accept the cost of a delay up to the point at which she would be indifferent between arriving on time (and being perceived as a low sociometric status type) and arriving fashionably late and being recognized as (being taken for) a high sociometric status type. This level of tardiness is known as the low-type incentive compatibility indifference point. Elimination of weakly dominated strategies in a perfect Bayesian equilibria results in this fashionably late level of delay for the high sociometric status type and arriving on time for the low sociometric status type (Tirole, 1988). Any delay more than this fashionably late level is dominated by arriving on time by the low type. Thus, to be recognized as having high sociometric status at the least cost, all that the high type needs to do is delay her arrival at the party to the point at which it is suboptimal for the low type to delay (i.e., the fashionably late level). We can formally present this signaling game as an application of the costly signaling model (Grafen, 1990; Spence, 1974; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997) (see Web appendix A).

### *Being Late as a Costly Signal of Sociometric Status*

Studies in consumer research have examined the ways individuals signal their status (most of these studies combine economic and social status). Conspicuous displays of benevolence (e.g., announcing donation acts, philanthropy) may serve to increase the signaler's status, which may ultimately increase his or her ability to attract and retain a desirable mate (Griskevicius et al., 2007). Subtle consumption of brands can serve as a signal that the consumer is an expert or an insider, leading to higher status inferences (Berger & Ward, 2010). Selecting larger rather than smaller sizes of food products (e.g., pizza) from a set of options is also

associated with higher status (Dubois et al., 2012). In a similar vein, house size serves as a primary signal of social connections and status for men, and this signal predicts marriage success in areas where it is costly to own a large house (Fang & Tian, 2018). Furthermore, people spend money on products that signal status (Wang & Griskevicius, 2014) or wear, for example, red sneakers to a professional setting, leading to positive inferences about one's competence and status (Bellezza et al., 2014). In this article, we aim to demonstrate that tardiness signals sociometric status (i.e., a large network of friends, engagements in previous social gatherings, popularity and social desirability) and, as a result, benefits the latecomer (i.e., attracting even more friends, esteem, prestige, respect, and admiration).

Recently, Bellezza et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between busyness (lack of leisure time) and status attributions. They conclude that individuals interpret busyness as a signal of competence, hard work, and ambition. Moreover, others perceive busy individuals as scarce and in demand. Therefore, those who lack leisure time and always seem to be busy are granted higher status (social and economic status). In their paper, signals are personal communications such as tweets, chats, and letters that state the work-related busyness of the individual. Humblebragging and complaints about busyness and lack of leisure time is used as a mechanism to convey busyness. The signal in our work, however, is a real act that conveys social connectedness. We contend that late arrival of the individual to a social gathering is a credible and differentially costly signal about one's social status, much credible than humblebragging alone. Thus, we contend that actions speak louder than words.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, our work complements extant research on status signaling by exploring how a novel signal (i.e., arriving late to a social gathering) can predict a specific dimension of status (i.e., sociometric status). Furthermore, we examine how this sociometric status perception, as inferred by late arrival times, can have downstream social psychological (i.e., affiliative intention) and consumer behavioral (i.e., evaluation of possessions, imitation of consumption) consequences.

To sum-up, for a behavior to qualify as a costly signal, it must meet four criteria (Smith & Bird, 2000). First, it must be easily observable by others. Second, it must be differentially costly to the signaler in terms of economic resources, time, energy, risk, or some other significant factor. Third, the signal must be an indicator to others of some important trait or characteristic, such as access to resources, prosocial orientation, courage, health, or intelligence (Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997). Fourth, the behavior must ultimately increase the odds that the signaler will gain some advantage through the display, such as increased ability to attract a desirable mate. According to costly signaling theory, being late to a social gathering is a communicative signal, easily recognizable by others. This signal communicates a person's ability to incur costs (Bird & Smith, 2005). That is, tardiness signals that one has sufficient resources (e.g., popularity, prevailing social network) to be able to afford to lose current socializing opportunities without

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<sup>1</sup> To test this proposal that actions speak louder than words, that is, a credible differentially costly signal is perceived significantly different than a non-credible non differentially costly signal we ran two studies with students from a European university. In the first study, forty participants saw a scenario about two individuals, one bragging about his social connectedness while the other arrives late to a party. Participants were asked to evaluate the sociometric status of both individuals (adapted from Adler et al. 2000). As expected, the late arrival individual was rated as significantly higher on sociometric status ( $M = 6.70, SD = 1.56$ ) than the one that brags ( $M = 5.43, SD = 2.31; t(39) = -2.56, p = .01$ ). In the second study, forty-one participants saw a scenario about two individuals, one bragging about his work-related busyness while the other's appointments are all booked observed by the participant. Participants were asked to evaluate the busyness of both individuals. The fully booked person was rated as significantly higher on busyness ( $M = 5.32, SD = 1.59$ ) than the one that brags ( $M = 3.80, SD = 1.65; t(40) = 4.44, p < .01$ ).

suffering a negative impact on existing qualifications. Thus, we expect that such incidents of tardiness will be associated with sociometric status because such acts demonstrate both one's willingness and ability to incur the costs of arriving late. Although research has examined time perceptions at cultural and individual levels (Bergadaà, 1990; Cotte et al., 2004; Graham, 1981; Leclerc et al., 1995), the current research is the first to show that being late is a differentially costly signal that people use to convey, preserve, or enhance their own social status. People need such a signal because it might not be apparent to others that they have high sociometric status. Although arriving late is a risky and time-consuming act, it is also a differentially costly but visible sign of high sociometric status. In other words, being late is a depiction of status that otherwise cannot be easily observed. It is also credible because those who rank high can afford engaging in such a costly act with substantial opportunity costs while those who rank low cannot; revealing the differential between opportunity costs of the high vs. low rank individuals.

The foregoing analysis suggests the following hypotheses:

**H1:** (a) Arrival time positively predicts self-reported sociometric status, and (b) observers perceive a target who arrives very late as having higher sociometric status than a target who arrives on time.

**H2:** (a) Observers perceive a target who arrives very late (vs. on time) as having a prior social engagement, and (b) arrival time has an indirect effect on sociometric status perception, through the effect of perceived prior social engagement.

**H3:** (a) Sociometric status perception positively predicts affiliative behavioral intention, and (b) fashionably late perceptions have an indirect effect on affiliative behavioral intention through the effect of sociometric status perception.

#### *Downstream Consumption Effects of Being Fashionably Late*

One route to advance interpersonal interactions is through behavioral mimicry. Individuals tend to imitate behaviors (e.g., speech patterns, facial expressions, consumption behaviors) especially when they want to be associated with others (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). For example, individuals who have a strong need to affiliate (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003), those who have an interdependent self-construal (van Baaren et al., 2003), and those high in self-monitoring (Cheng & Chartrand, 2003) tend to mimic other individuals more than do those who are low on these aspects. For such people, mimicking is a way to create rapport and liking (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003).

Several researchers have tested the impact of behavioral mimicry on choice and consumption and found that mimicry extends to imitable consumption activities that happen even outside of direct contact (e.g., two independent consumers browsing in a store) (Tanner et al., 2007). The mimicker may have a favorable preference toward the item consumed and end up purchasing the same product as the other shopper in the same aisle. Other researches link consumption mimicry to status seeking. For instance, Clark et al. (2007) discovered that the more consumers seek status through consumption, the more likely they are to conform to group norms and to pay attention to the opinion of others, imitating high-status individuals' consumption patterns. This is similar to what Ruvio et al., (2013) refer to as the doppelganger effect, in which people strategically or intentionally mimic others when they perceive them as role models. In their study with teenage girls, they found that the girls were more likely to

imitate consumption behavior of celebrities because they considered them representations of who they wanted to be.

In a similar vein, we expect observers to mimic consumption behaviors of a latecomer. Because observers attribute a higher status to a latecomer, they should favor his or her product choice (e.g., outfit, drink, food, accessories) more than those of other attendees, all else being equal. In turn, this should lead to mimicry behavior on the part of the observer.

**H4:** (a) Participants are more likely to imitate the consumption choice of a target who arrives very late (vs. on time), and (b) there is an interaction effect of arrival time and chronic desire for status on consumption imitation, such that participants whose chronic desire for status is relatively high are more likely to imitate the consumption choice of a target who arrives late (vs. on time) than those whose chronic desire for status is relatively low.

### *PILOT STUDY*

We first conduct a pilot study to confirm that fashionably late perceptions are closely associated with actual arrival time. After confirming this link, we then conduct five studies to examine the aforementioned hypotheses.

We asked 190 (100 female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.3$  years) U.S. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers to imagine that they had just started their college education as a first-year student and, within the first few days upon arrival on campus, were invited to attend a welcome party organized by a student club. Participants saw a listing of the arrival times of 31 guests (see web appendix B) and then were asked the degree to which they perceived person 1 (on-time target), person 16 (late target – a target who arrived 45 min after the event start time), and person 31 (very late target – a target who arrived 90 min after the event start time) as fashionably late on a seven-point scale. Following this, participants were asked to describe what “fashionably late” meant to them. The results showed a significant effect of arrival time on perceptions of fashionably late ( $F(2, 378) = 131.95, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .41$ ), in the form of a linear trend ( $F(1, 189) = 282.91, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .60$ ). Post hoc comparisons using Šidák corrections (reported  $p$ -values are adjusted  $p$ -values) indicated that participants perceived the very late target as being more fashionably late ( $M = 4.79, SD = 1.86$ ) than the late target ( $M = 3.66, SD = 1.73, p < .001, d = .63$ ), who in turn they perceived as being more fashionably late than the on-time target ( $M = 1.84, SD = 1.20, p < .001, d = 1.22$ ).

### *STUDY 1A*

The purpose of Study 1a is to examine H1a. We expected that arrival time would positively predict self-reported sociometric status.

#### *Method*

We conducted this study at two social gatherings at a European university. Both events were mingling parties open to all undergraduate students. The events were organized for attendees to get to know friends and meet new people. As each student joined the event, the research assistant recorded the arrival time and gave him or her a short survey to complete. The survey asked students to indicate their own subjective sociometric status using a measure similar to that in Adler et al. (2000). Upon seeing a ladder with 10 steps, which depicted 10 levels of sociometric status (1 = lowest, 10 = highest; see web appendix C), participants answered the question,

“Where would you put yourself on this ladder?” Data collection took place until the end of the announced end time for both parties, resulting in an effective sample size of 61. Please note that this is a measure of how one person perceives how much respect and admiration they get from a given community in relation to others.

### *Results and Discussion*

We transformed participants’ arrival time to number of minutes late (lateness). As our research interest is in tardiness, we did not analyze data from those who arrived earlier than the official start time ( $n = 20$ ). We found that lateness positively predicted subjective sociometric status ( $b = .05$ ,  $\beta = .38$ ,  $t(36) = 2.47$ ,  $p = .02$ ), in support of H1a<sup>2</sup>. This study demonstrates that arrival time indeed is an indicator of an individual’s sociometric status, with people who arrive later reporting themselves as having higher sociometric status.

## **STUDY 1B**

The purpose of Study 1b is to test H1b. We expected that observers would perceive a target who arrives very late as having higher sociometric status than a target who arrives on time.

### *Method*

*Participants.* One hundred ninety-seven American participants (97 female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.07$  years) from MTurk completed study 1b for monetary compensation.

*Measures and Procedure.* The measures and procedure were similar to those of the pilot study with two exceptions. First, instead of focusing on three targets, we focused only on two targets: person 1 (on-time target) and person 31 (very late target) (see web appendix B). Second, before measuring fashionably late perceptions, we measured two dependent variables in the following order: (1) friends (“I think person X has the largest number of friends”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) and (2) sociometric status (adapted from Adler et al. 2000). After seeing a ladder with 10 steps depicting 10 levels of sociometric status (same as in study 1a, see web appendix C), participants answered the question, “Where would you put person X in this ladder?” (1 = lowest, 10 = highest). Please note that fashionably late perceptions were measured as the last item to overcome any potential effect of such perceptions on other outcome variables.

### *Results and Discussion*

We found that participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 5.87$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ) as having higher sociometric status than the on-time target ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 2.05$ ;  $t(196) = 2.47$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = .30$ ), in support of H1b. The participants were also more likely to perceived the very late target ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) as having the highest number of friends than the on-time target ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ;  $t(196) = 5.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .59$ ). As the number of friends can be considered an indicator of sociometric status, this finding is also consistent with H1b. We also confirmed that participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ) as being more fashionably late than the on-time target ( $M = 1.98$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ;  $t(196) = 21.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.27$ ), replicating the results of the pilot study. Please note once again that fashionably late perceptions are measured after the items on number of friends and sociometric status measures, which are in fact more central to our theorizing.

This study shows that from an observer’s perspective, people’s sociometric status can be inferred by their arrival time, with people arriving later being perceived as having higher

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<sup>2</sup> Three cases were identified as multivariate outliers with Cook’s  $D > 4/n$  (Bollen & Jackman, 1990) and thus were excluded.

sociometric status and more friends than those arriving on time. In conjunction with study 1a, the findings of study 1b indicate that a person's arrival time is a signal of sociometric status that others pick up accurately.

## **STUDY 2A**

The purpose of Study 2a is to examine prior social engagement as a mediating mechanism to explain why people perceive a target who arrives very late (vs. on time) as having higher sociometric status, testing H2a and H2b. We also intend to rule out perceived prior academic or work engagement as a mediator.

### *Method*

*Participants.* One hundred ninety-one American participants (110 female;  $M_{age} = 35.93$  years) from MTurk completed study 2a for monetary compensation.

*Measures and Procedure.* The measures and procedure were similar to those of study 1b with two exceptions. First, in this study, we used a between-subjects design, asking participants to judge either the on-time target (person 1) or the very late target (person 31) (see web appendix B); we randomly assigned participants instead of using a within-subjects design. Second, after measuring the variables friends and sociometric status (see study 1b), we measured two dependent variables in the following order: (1) prior social engagement ("I think that person 1 [31] engaged in other social activities before coming to this party"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) and (2) prior academic or work engagement ("I think that person 1 [31] engaged in other academic or work activities before coming to this party"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

### *Results and Discussion*

We found that participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ) as having higher sociometric status than the on-time target ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 2.11$ ;  $t(189) = 3.12$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .45$ ), consistent with H1b and replicating the results of study 1b. They were also more likely to perceive the very late target ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) as having the highest number of friends than the on-time target ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ;  $t(189) = 3.03$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .44$ ), again consistent with H1b and replicating the results of study 1b. We also confirmed that participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) as being more fashionably late than the on-time target ( $M = 1.79$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ;  $t(178.81) = 12.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.83$ ), replicating the results of the pilot study and study 1b.

We tested the indirect effect of arrival time on sociometric status perception through the effects of prior social engagement and prior academic or work engagement in parallel using a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples (Hayes, 2013). We also tested the two indicators of sociometric status perception separately.

When the number of friends was the dependent variable, the results showed that participants perceived the very late (vs. on-time) target as more likely to have a prior social engagement ( $b = 1.55$ ,  $\beta = .51$ ,  $t(189) = 8.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ), in support of H2a, but not as more likely to have prior academic or work engagement ( $b = .21$ ,  $\beta = .08$ ,  $t(189) = 1.15$ ,  $p = .25$ ). In addition, prior social engagement positively predicted the number of friends ( $b = .39$ ,  $\beta = .42$ ,  $t(187) = 5.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but prior academic or work engagement did not predict the number of friends ( $b = -.04$ ,  $\beta = -.04$ ,  $t(187) = -.53$ ,  $p = .59$ ). Importantly, the indirect effect of arrival time on the number of friends through the impact of prior social engagement was statistically significant ( $b = .61$ , 95% biased-corrected confidence interval [CI] = .3558, .9339;  $\beta = .21$ , 95% biased-corrected

CI = .1234, .3238), confirming H2b, whereas the indirect effect of arrival time on the number of friends through the impact of prior academic or work engagement was not statistically significant ( $b = -.01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI =  $-.0965, .0185$ ;  $\beta = .003$ , 95% biased-corrected CI =  $-.0335, .0064$ ; see web appendix D).

We obtained similar findings when sociometric status (i.e., the ladder measure) was the dependent variable. The results indicated that prior social engagement positively predicted perceived sociometric status ( $b = .46$ ,  $\beta = .34$ ,  $t(187) = 4.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but prior academic or work engagement did not predict sociometric status perception ( $b = .03$ ,  $\beta = .02$ ,  $t(187) = .32$ ,  $p = .75$ ). Importantly, the indirect effect of arrival time on sociometric status perception through the effect of prior social engagement was statistically significant ( $b = .71$ , 95% biased-corrected CI =  $.3058, 1.2074$ ;  $\beta = .17$ , 95% biased-corrected CI =  $.0749, .2959$ ), in support of H2b, whereas the indirect effect of arrival time on sociometric status perception through the effect of prior academic or work engagement was not statistically significant ( $b = .01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI =  $-.0449, .1200$ ;  $\beta = .002$ , 95% biased-corrected CI =  $-.0110, .0294$ ; see web appendix E).

Study 2a shows that people perceive latecomers as having relatively high sociometric status because they infer that the latecomers were engaged in other social activities before arriving at the party. We also ruled out the possibility that people infer that the latecomers were engaged in prior academic or work activities.

## **STUDY 2B**

The purpose of study 2b is to replicate the results of study 2a and extend them by including both small and large social gatherings. We expected that the results would not differ as a function of social gathering size. Moreover, we tested (with the intention to rule out) perceived independence and perceived uniqueness as mediators. Unique individuals are not concerned about others' criticism and generally make unconventional choices (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000). Similarly, independence refers to giving minimal weight to the norms of reference groups (Goldsmith & Clark, 2012). Thus, we treat both uniqueness and independence as potential mediators of the suggested link between arrival time and sociometric status perception. Although the choice to arrive late to a gathering may well be perceived as a sign of uniqueness or independence, we argue that these variables do not explain the process by which individuals make sociometric status attributions. In other words, neither independence nor uniqueness indicates anything about the size of one's social network. We argue that the perception that latecomers have some prior social commitment is a direct sign that they have a large social network.

### *Method*

*Participants.* Two hundred ninety-four American participants (172 female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 36.32$  years) from MTurk completed the study for monetary compensation.

*Measures and Procedure.* The study was a 2 (party size: small vs. large)  $\times$  2 (target arrival time: on-time vs. very late) between-subjects design. Participants were asked to imagine that they had just started their college education and joined a club by signing up online. They were invited to attend a welcome party, which started at 9 P.M. and ended at 12:30 A.M., with most guests staying until the end. We randomly assigned participants to either the small party size condition or the large party size condition. In the small party size condition, the party was described as a welcome party for 10 new members this year. In the large party size condition, the party was described as a welcome party for 60 new members this year. We also randomly

assigned participants to either the on-time condition or the very late condition. In the on-time condition, an attendee, named John, was described as showing up to the party at exactly 9 P.M. In the very late condition, John was described as showing up to the party at 10:30 P.M. We measured six dependent variables about John in the following order: (1) friends (“How many friends do you think John has?” 1 = no or very few, 7 = a lot), (2) sociometric status (adapted from Adler 1999; see pilot study), (3) prior social engagement (see study 2a), (4) prior academic or work engagement (see study 2a), (5) uniqueness (“I think that John is a unique person”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), and (6) independence (“I think that John is an independent person”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

### *Results and Discussion*

*Friends.* A  $2 \times 2$  between-subjects analysis of variance on friends revealed two findings. First, there was a main effect of party size; participants who imagined going to a large party ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) perceived the target as having more friends than did those who imagined going to a small party ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ;  $F(1, 290) = 6.01$ ,  $p = .02$ , partial- $\eta^2 = .02$ ). Although this main effect is not the focus of this research, we suspect that participants might have interpreted the size of the party as an indication of the typical size of the target’s existing social group and inferred the number of friends according to this typical size. Second, there was a main effect of target arrival time; participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) as having more friends than the on-time target ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ;  $F(1, 290) = 16.87$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial- $\eta^2 = .06$ ), consistent with H1b and replicating the results of studies 1b and 2a. Finally, party size did not moderate this main effect of target arrival time ( $F(1, 290) = .20$ ,  $p = .66$ , partial- $\eta^2 < .01$ ).

*Sociometric Status.* A  $2 \times 2$  between-subjects analysis of variance on sociometric status also revealed two findings. First, as before, there was a marginal main effect of party size; participants who imagined going to a large party ( $M = 5.61$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ) perceived the target as having more friends than did those who imagined going to a small party ( $M = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ;  $F(1, 290) = 3.04$ ,  $p = .08$ , partial- $\eta^2 = .01$ ). Second, there was a main effect of target arrival time; participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) as having higher sociometric status than the on-time target ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ;  $F(1, 290) = 9.96$ ,  $p < .01$ , partial- $\eta^2 = .03$ ), consistent with H1b and replicating the results of studies 1b and 2a. Finally, party size again did not moderate this main effect of target arrival time ( $F(1, 290) = .91$ ,  $p = .34$ , partial- $\eta^2 < .01$ ).

*Indirect Effect of Arrival Time on Sociometric Status Perception through the Effects of Prior Social Engagement, Prior Academic or Work Engagement, Perceived Uniqueness, and Perceived Independence.* As party size did not moderate either indicator of sociometric status perception, we collapsed them across the two party sizes to test the indirect effect of arrival time on sociometric status perception through the effects of prior social engagement, prior academic or work engagement, perceived uniqueness, and perceived independence in parallel using a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples (Hayes, 2013). In addition, we tested the two indicators of sociometric status perception separately.

*Friends.* When the number of friends was the dependent variable, the results showed that participants perceived the very late (vs. on-time) target as more likely to have a prior social engagement ( $b = .86$ ,  $\beta = .30$ ,  $t(292) = 5.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ), consistent with H2a and replicating the results of study 2a. In addition, neither perceived prior academic or work engagement ( $b = -.20$ ,  $\beta = -.08$ ,  $t(292) = -1.35$ ,  $p = .18$ ) or perceived uniqueness ( $b = .03$ ,  $\beta = .01$ ,  $t(292) = .22$ ,  $p = .83$ ) differed as a function of target arrival time. Finally, participants perceived the very late (vs. on-time) target as more independent ( $b = .30$ ,  $\beta = .14$ ,  $t(292) = 2.41$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Though not the focus

of our research, we suspect that people might perceive arriving very late to a social gathering as deviating from the social norm and thus reflecting the independent aspect of the latecomer.

The results also revealed that, first, prior social engagement positively predicted the number of friends ( $b = .35$ ,  $\beta = .34$ ,  $t(288) = 6.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), replicating the results of study 2a. Second, prior academic or work engagement negatively predicted the number of friends ( $b = -.13$ ,  $\beta = -.11$ ,  $t(288) = -2.16$ ,  $p = .03$ ). This may be because people perceive the time spent on academic or work activities as not compatible with establishing and maintaining friendships, a finding we did not obtain in the previous study. Third, perceived uniqueness positively predicted the number of friends ( $b = .24$ ,  $\beta = .19$ ,  $t(288) = 3.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As Americans highly value uniqueness (Kim & Markus, 1999), they may evaluate targets who appear unique (vs. not) more positively and infer that other people will be more likely to befriend such unique targets. Fourth, perceived independence did not predict the number of friends ( $b = .05$ ,  $\beta = .04$ ,  $t(288) = .59$ ,  $p = .56$ ).

Importantly, the indirect effect of arrival time on the number of friends through the effect of prior social engagement was statistically significant ( $b = .30$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = .1715, .4807;  $\beta = .10$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = .0573, .1605), in support of H2b and replicating the results of study 2a, whereas the indirect effect of arrival time on the number of friends through the effect of each of the other three potential mediators was not statistically significant (prior academic or work engagement:  $b = .03$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0065, .1162;  $\beta = .01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0022, .0388; uniqueness:  $b = .01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0563, .0839;  $\beta = .002$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0188, .0280; independence:  $b = .02$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0321, .0883;  $\beta = .01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0107, .0295; see figure 1).

----insert figure 1 about here-----

*Sociometric Status.* When sociometric status (i.e., the ladder measure) was the dependent variable, the results showed that, first, prior social engagement positively predicted the perceived sociometric status ( $b = .53$ ,  $\beta = .46$ ,  $t(288) = 8.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ), replicating the results of study 2a. Second, prior academic or work engagement did not predict perceived sociometric status ( $b = -.002$ ,  $\beta = -.001$ ,  $t(288) = -.02$ ,  $p = .98$ ). Third, perceived uniqueness positively predicted perceived sociometric status ( $b = .26$ ,  $\beta = .18$ ,  $t(288) = 3.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As Americans highly value uniqueness (Kim & Markus, 1999), they may evaluate targets who appear unique (vs. not) more positively and infer that other people will be more likely to respect and admire such unique targets. Fourth, perceived independence did not predict perceived sociometric status ( $b = -.03$ ,  $\beta = -.02$ ,  $t(288) = -.28$ ,  $p = .78$ ).

Importantly, the indirect effect of arrival time on sociometric status through the effect of prior social engagement was statistically significant ( $b = .45$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = .2709, .6789;  $\beta = .14$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = .0815, .2042), in support of H2b and replicating the results of study 2a, whereas the indirect effect of arrival time on sociometric status through the effect of each of the three other potential mediators was not statistically significant (prior academic or work engagement:  $b = .0003$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0331, .0474;  $\beta = .0001$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0099, .0143; uniqueness:  $b = .01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0669, .0836;  $\beta = .002$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0201, .0251; independence:  $b = -.01$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0783, .0477;  $\beta = -.002$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = -.0236, .0144; see figure 2).

----insert figure 2 about here-----

This study replicates and extends the previous studies by showing that, again, people perceive latecomers as having relatively high sociometric status and it is because they infer that they were engaged in other social activities before arriving at the party. We also showed that these effects generalize across party sizes. Finally, not only did we again rule out the possibility that perceived prior engagement in academic or work activities could explain the effects, but we also discounted the possibility that perceived uniqueness and perceived independence could explain the effects.

### STUDY 3

The purpose of Study 3 is to replicate and extend studies 1b, 2a, and 2b by examining one downstream consequence of sociometric status perception derived from fashionably late perception—that is, affiliative behavioral intention, testing H3a and H3b. We expected that high sociometric status perception, as derived from fashionably late perception, would positively predict affiliative behavioral intention.

#### *Method*

*Participants.* Eighty-one undergraduate students (49 female; age was not measured in this study) from a European university completed the study for course credit.

*Measures and Procedure.* The measures and procedure of this study were similar to those of study 1b with one exception. In addition to the dependent variables of friends, sociometric status, and fashionably late perceptions (see study 1b), we measured three dependent variables for each target in the following order: (1) invitation (“I would like to be invited to a party by person X”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), (2) perceived admiration from others (“I think person X would get the most admiration from others”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), and (3) social network (“I would like to be in the social network of person X”; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

#### *Results and Discussion*

We first transformed participants’ responses to the sociometric status question into the same seven-point scale as the other questions (1 = lowest, 7 = highest). Then, for each target, we combined the variables friends, sociometric status, and perceived admiration from others ( $\alpha$ s = .51 to .63) to form a composite variable of sociometric status perception using the mean. For each target, we also combined the variables invitation and social network ( $r$ s = .43 to .61) to form a composite variable of affiliative behavioral intention using the mean.

*Fashionably Late.* Participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) as more fashionably late than the on-time target ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ;  $t(80) = 6.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.19$ ), replicating the results of the pilot study and study 1b. This result confirms that arrival time and fashionably late perceptions are closely linked.

*Sociometric Status Perception.* Participants perceived the very late target ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ) as having higher sociometric status than the on-time target ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ;  $t(80) = 3.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .73$ ), in support of H1b and replicating the results of studies 1b, 2a, and 2b.

*Affiliative Behavioral Intention.* Participants were more likely to show affiliative behavioral intention toward the very late target ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) than the on-time target ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ;  $t(80) = 2.41$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = .29$ ).

*Indirect Effect of Fashionably Late Perceptions on Affiliative Behavioral Intention through the Effect of Sociometric Perception.* We first calculated the difference score (very late

vs. on-time target) for each of the three variables and then examined our proposition with the difference scores of these variables using a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples (Hayes, 2013). The results showed that (1) fashionably late perceptions positively predicted sociometric status perception ( $b = .39$ ,  $\beta = .36$ ,  $t(79) = 3.44$ ,  $p = .001$ ), replicating the results of study 1b, and (2) sociometric status perception positively predicted affiliative behavioral intention ( $b = .30$ ,  $\beta = .71$ ,  $t(78) = 7.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), in support of H3a. Importantly, the indirect effect of fashionably late perceptions on affiliative behavioral intention through the effect of sociometric status perception was statistically significant ( $b = .12$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = .0434, .2123;  $\beta = .25$ , 95% biased-corrected CI = .0923, .4510; see web appendix F), in support of H3b. This suggests that when people perceive social targets as being fashionably late, they view them as having more sociometric status, friends, and admiration from others, which in turn motivates them to affiliate with and join the social networks of these fashionably late people.

### STUDY 4

The purpose of Study 4 is to investigate how target arrival time might affect an observer's tendency to imitate the target's consumption preferences, testing H4. The previous studies have shown that, compared with arriving on time to a social gathering, being very late (i.e., fashionably late) to a social gathering serves as a signal that the person is higher in sociometric status (has a larger number of friends and is admired by more people). As we show in Study 3, after picking up this signal, observers want to approach and associate themselves with these latecomers. This outcome of high sociometric perception derived from late arrival time should have consequences for imitation behaviors. As mentioned previously, imitation behaviors are a tactic to affiliate with a target, reducing social distance (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). If people want to affiliate with late-arriving individuals, they might deliberately imitate the consumer behaviors of these people. Moreover, people who have a high chronic desire for status should be even more likely to do, as they should be even more motivated to associate themselves with late-arriving individuals, as they perceive these people as having high status. Accordingly, we predicted that (1) observers would be more likely to imitate the consumption preference of the target who arrived late (vs. on time) and (2) observers' chronic desire for status would moderate this effect, such that the effect would be stronger for those with higher (vs. lower) desire for status.

#### *Method*

*Participants.* One hundred thirty-six students (50 female; age was not measured in this study) from a European university completed the study for course credit.

*Measures and Procedure.* Participants were first asked to imagine that they had just started their college education as a first-year student and, within the first few days upon arrival on campus, were invited to attend a welcome party for 30 newcomers. This party started at 9 P.M. and ended at 12:30 A.M., with most guests staying until the end. Participants were then told that an attendee, named John, showed up to the party at 9 P.M. (on-time condition) or 10:30 P.M. (late condition), randomly assigned, and brought with him a six-pack of Hoegaarden beer (a Belgian brand). Participants were asked to continue imagining that they saw a few beers of different brands in the cooler and to indicate their intention to try the beer the target attendee brought ("I would definitely try Hoegaarden"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; imitation intention). Following this, participants completed a measure of chronic desire for status (adapted from the

Status Aspiration subscale of the Achievement Motivation Scale<sup>3</sup>; Cassidy & Lynn, 1989) with seven items (e.g., “I would like a high social standing where people looked up to me,” “I like to be admired for my social achievements”) on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree;  $\alpha = .79$ ). Please note that though Hoegaarden beer might be regarded as a high-status beer, since both conditions used the same brand, the difference we might observe across conditions can be attributed to the late arrival.

### *Results and Discussion*

Multiple linear regression with imitation intention as the criterion and arrival time (0 = on time, 1 = late) and chronic desire for status (continuous) as predictors revealed the expected interaction ( $b = .96$ ,  $\beta = .22$ ,  $t(132) = 2.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ; see figure 3). Participants whose chronic desire for status was at one standard deviation above the mean ( $b = 1.70$ ,  $\beta = .46$ ,  $t(132) = 4.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ) or at the mean ( $b = 0.88$ ,  $\beta = .24$ ,  $t(132) = 2.94$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were more likely to choose the beer brand the target brought to the party when he arrived late than when he arrived on time whereas those whose chronic desire for status was at one standard deviation below the mean ( $b = .06$ ,  $\beta = .02$ ,  $t(132) = .15$ ,  $p = .88$ ) were not. These results are consistent with H4a, suggesting that people are indeed inclined to imitate the consumption behavior of other people who arrive late to a social event. In support of H4b and consistent with the idea that the underlying motivation for this imitation behavior is to achieve higher status, people who have a high desire for status are especially likely to follow the consumption pattern of late-arriving individuals, probably because they view these latecomers as having high sociometric status.

---insert figure 3 about here---

## **STUDY 5**

With this follow-up study, we aim to increase the ecological validity of our findings by employing a real-world manipulation of arrival times, testing H4a again. More precisely, we examine the mimicry behaviors of professional MBA students of a European business school attending an informal party at a night club. Although other patrons were at the club, we collected data only from the students.

### *Method*

We collected data at a night club where a cohort of 35 professional MBA students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.0$ ) were getting together. Two confederates (two men aged 30 and similar in physical appearance: average height and weight and similar complexion) wearing different T-shirts (with the rest of the outfit the same) showed up at different times (see web appendix G). Preference for the T-shirts was not significantly different across designs, as tested with a different sample ( $N = 45$ ,  $z = .75$ ,  $p = .45$ ). The announced start time of the party was 7:30 P.M., and the end time was 12:00 A.M. One confederate arrived at 7:30 P.M., and the other arrived at 9:30 P.M. The confederates mingled with the rest of the patrons after they walked among the crowd for exactly two minutes to get enough exposure. At 10:00 P.M., another confederate approached the participants one by one and told them that there was going to be raffle and that the winner would get to pick a T-shirt (one of the two that our confederates wore). The participants were given a

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<sup>3</sup> We slightly modified two items to reflect more of a sociometric status than a social status. For example, we changed the original item “I would like *an important job* where people looked up to me” to “I would like *a high social standing* where people looked up to me.”

small form with the pictures of the T-shirts and asked to choose one. We randomized the order of presentation of the pictures of the T-shirts. Participants also wrote down their names and indicated their gender for the raffle. Of the 35 attendees, 23 ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.0$ ) returned a completed form.

### *Results and Discussion*

Of the 23 participants, 18 (78%) chose the T-shirt that the late-arriving person wore. A general z-test revealed that this proportion was statistically different from chance (50%;  $z = 2.71$ ,  $p < .01$ ), consistent with H4a. Neither the order of presentation of the T-shirt pictures nor the gender of the participant had a significant effect on choice ( $ps > .10$ ). Thus, we conclude that spectators observe not only the consumption choices of partygoers but also their arrival times and, more important, favor the later-arriving partygoer's consumption choice. This finding extends that of study 5 by showing that target arrival time has a causal effect on actual consumption choice.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Many essential traits or personal characteristics are hardly observable. As such, people find ways to convey those characteristics by performing certain acts. These signals are then picked up by others, who infer those characteristics. As mentioned previously, people engage in various consumption behaviors to convey positive information about themselves that otherwise might not be observable. While there is a wealth of research evidence documenting the use of consumer products (e.g., food, watch, car, house, clothes) to signal various traits (e.g., Dubois et al., 2012; Fang & Tian, 2018; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Otterbring et al., 2018; Puska et al., 2018), research on the use of time for signaling purposes is relatively rare (c.f. Bellezza et al., 2017).

Our work complements that of Bellezza et al. (2017) by showing that a relatively subtle behavior without the use of any consumer products (i.e., arriving late to a social event) can serve as a signal of sociometric status and social resources, similar to how a relatively blatant act (e.g., explicitly stating that one is very busy or has no leisure time) or the use of certain consumer products (e.g., Bluetooth headset) to imply that one has a busy lifestyle can serve as a signal of social status and financial resources, providing further evidence that the consumption of time can signal positive, socially valued characteristics of oneself. Moreover, our research extends this relationship showing that the inferences people draw from how other people use their time can have important downstream consequences. Specifically, we show that late arrival time is indeed a reliable indicator of sociometric status (study 1a) and is used to infer sociometric status of unknown targets (studies 1b, 2a, 2b and 3). The inferred high sociometric status of an unknown target, as derived from observed late arrival time, has social and consumption consequences; observers are more likely to affiliate with late- (vs. early-) arriving individuals (study 3), and to imitate (studies 4 and 5) their consumption choices (see table 1 for a summary of the procedure and results of the studies).

---insert table 1 about here---

### *Theoretical and Practical Implications*

This research contributes to the literature by showing that people may be able to enhance their sociometric status, develop interpersonal relationships with more people, and potentially gain admiration from more people by strategically presenting their allocation of leisure time.

Prior research tends to focus on how people strive to project an image that indicates instrumental social value, so as to earn sociometric status from others. For example, to earn sociometric status, Americans would likely try to portray themselves as competent and Latin Americans would likely try to portray themselves as generous (Torelli et al., 2014). Strategically projecting one's image in a positive light by performing some skillful acts to appear competent or by contributing a relatively large amount of money to a social group to appear generous can certainly increase one's sociometric status. Another possible way to earn sociometric status from others, acquire new friends, and gain respect and admiration from them is to capitalize on existing social connections. All else being equal, if a target individual has a large existing network of social connections, observers who do not know the target and thus do not have more tangible evidence that the target possesses instrumental social value would still infer that the target has instrumental social value because of his or her ability to establish a large social network. In other words, observers would trust the judgment of others—if a person has many friends, he or she must be socially valuable. Therefore, it may be possible to attract strangers to join one's social network and potentially gain respect and admiration from them by flaunting one's social network (e.g., bringing a large group of friends to a party). Our research suggests a novel way to potentially gain sociometric status. Instead of showing off one's social value directly or indirectly through some "social proof," individuals can achieve the same purpose by performing a very simple act alone—arriving late to a social gathering.

This research also carries some practical implications. First, the finding that people exhibit an increased tendency to adopt the consumption preferences of late-arriving people suggests a novel way to advertise products. That is, it may be beneficial to create a story that portrays a product being used by an antagonist who arrives late to a social event to increase the probability of adoption. Second, the finding that arrival time is a reliable indicator of sociometric status suggests a novel way of finding influencers to spread positive word of mouth. For example, companies can use arrival time as a cue of high sociometric status when giving out free samples during a social event or launching a new product. Third, as almost all club gatherings or group exercise events have some aspect of socialization, a yoga instructor, for example, could be a bit relaxed in terms of punctuality. In other words, he or she should not discourage people from arriving a bit late. As later arrival is a credible signal of one's sociometric status, by relaxing arrival times, the instructor may facilitate the natural status ranking of attendees. Fourth, brands that amplify status (e.g., cosmetics, luxury watches, automobiles) generally target fashionably late customers. Such brands could use slogans in their marketing communications such as "take your time" and "no need to rush" to trigger fashionably late individuals' mindsets. Finally, some clubs charge late-arriving individuals higher rates. Entry prices of such places tend to go up at around 11 P.M. (Butler, 2019), suggesting that it is somewhat cooler to arrive late. Some restaurants also offer different seatings (pricing the later seating higher). Such a price segmentation scheme can be applied to any event that has some socialization aspect (e.g., gyms).

#### *Limitations and Future Research Directions*

This research has limitations that offer opportunities for future research. First, the scenarios and events sampled in this research were those that target young people. Thus, whether the effects would generalize to older people is unknown. Future research could examine whether age differences exist in terms of the degree to which people infer higher sociometric status to late- (vs. early-) arriving individuals. Second, in this research we show the imitation effect in beer and clothing categories. It remains an empirical question whether this effect would generalize to

other product categories. Thus, we recommend that other researchers replicate our research in other product settings. Third, we believe that not only late arrivals but also other arrivals times (e.g., early) may signal a specific resource (e.g., that a person is generous, ready to help, etc.). In a similar vein, when a person leaves the party may also be a strong signal of his/her status. We suspect that if an individual leaves the social gathering earlier than the announced end time, it may indicate that she has some other commitments social in nature, thus she is a sought- after person. Overall, we believe that the use of time (by arranging when to arrive and leave) is a strong and credible signal of a person's sociometric status. Fourth, in our studies (except for study 5 in which we tried to keep the targets' age and appearance as similar as possible across conditions) there were no additional cues regarding the appearance or age of the target other than the time of the arrival. We did not supply any information about characteristics such as attractiveness, clothing and age that might potentially contribute to sociometric status as we were interested in whether being late contributed to the overall perception. This helped overcome any biases these additional factors may play. Future studies could look into how these aspects chip in the overall sociometric status perception. Finally, fashionably late perceptions could be investigated across cultures. Study 1 was conducted in Europe and the result indicated that late arrival time is a reliable indicator of sociometric status. Studies 3 to 5 were also conducted in Europe and the results showed that inferred high sociometric status of an unknown target, as derived from observed late arrival time, has various social and consumption consequences. Study 2 that examines the mediating mechanism of the effect of late arrival on high sociometric status perception (hence, the relationship between prior social engagement and sociometric status perception) was tested using North American participants. We believe that the demonstrated mechanism is universal. However, a broader cross-cultural investigation is required to establish that.

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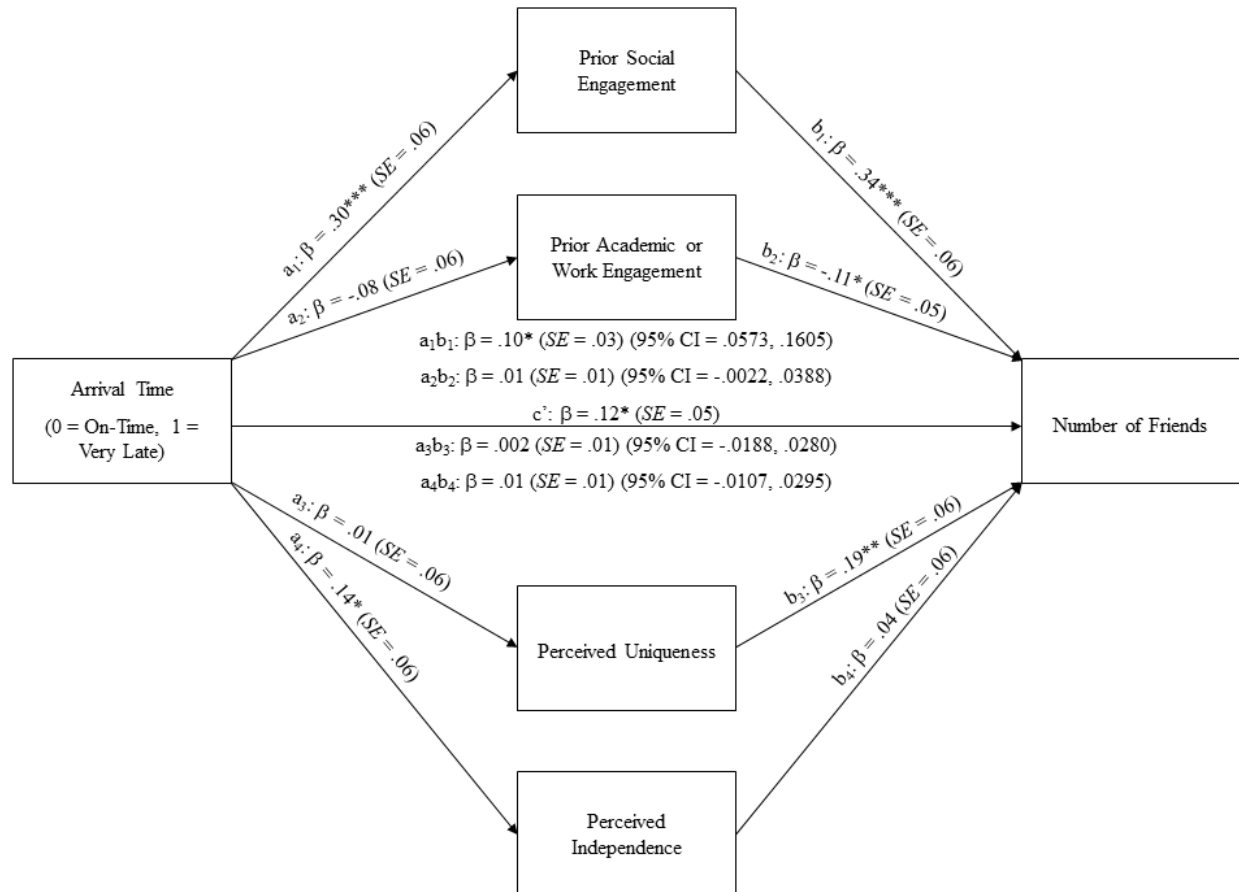
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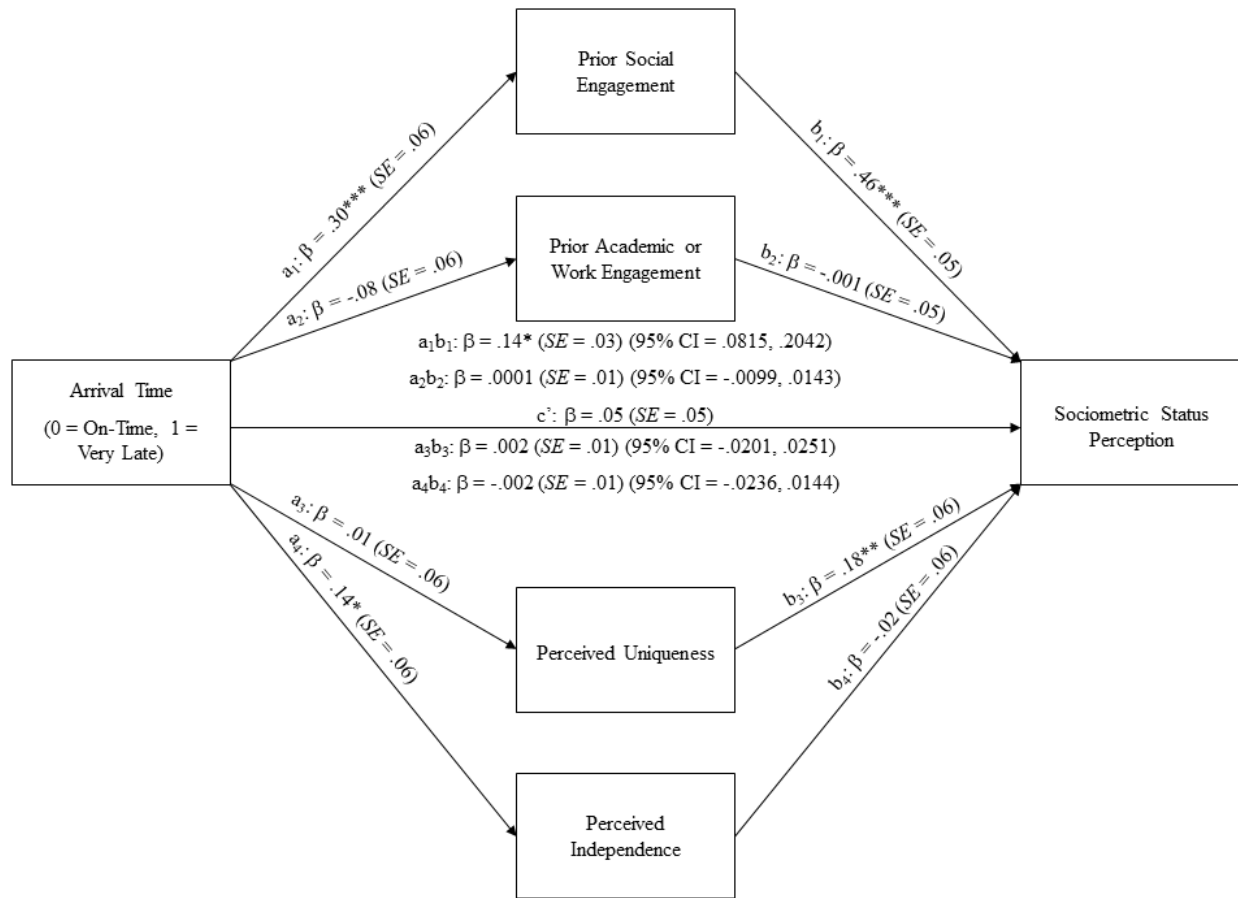
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## FIGURES



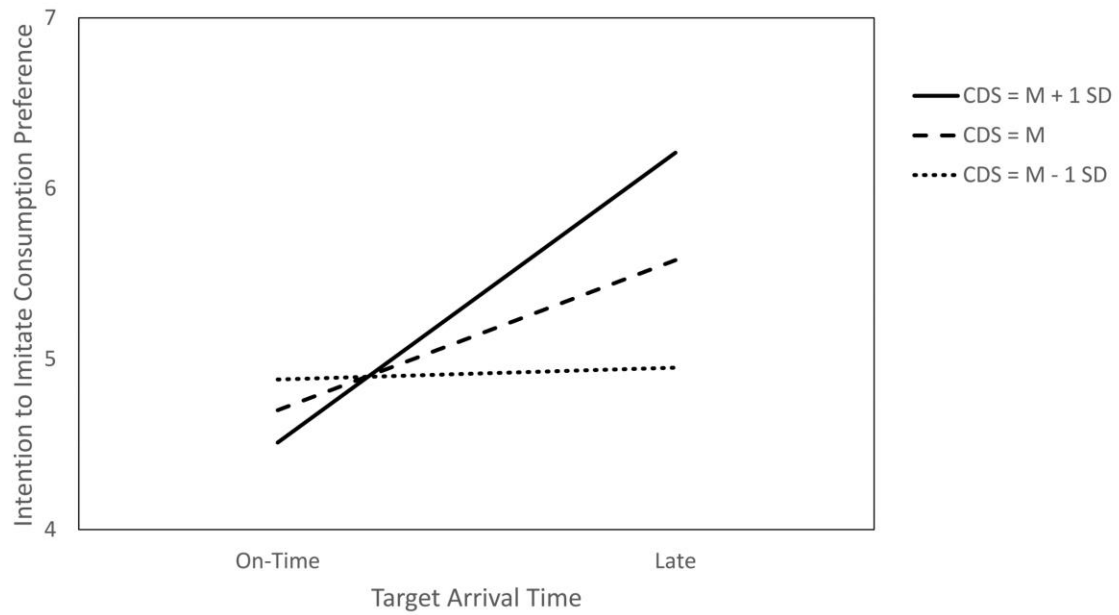
\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Fig.1. Study 2b: Indirect Effect of Arrival Time On Number Of Friends Through The Effects Of Prior Social Engagement, Prior Academic Or Work Engagement, Perceived Uniqueness, And Perceived Independence**



\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Fig. 2. Study 2b: Indirect Effect of Arrival Time On Sociometric Status Perception Through The Effects Of Prior Social Engagement, Prior Academic Or Work Engagement, Perceived Uniqueness, And Perceived Independence.**



NOTE. CDS = chronic desire for status.

**Fig. 3. Study 4: Interactive Effect of Chronic Desire For Status And Target Arrival Time On Intention To Imitate Consumption Preference.**

<i>Study</i>	<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Study 1A</i>	H1a: Arrival time positively predicts self-reported sociometric status.	Naturally occurring arrival time was tested as an indication of an individual's <i>self-reported</i> sociometric status.	<b>H1a supported.</b> People who arrived later reported themselves as having higher sociometric status.
<i>Study 1B</i>	H1b: Observers perceive a target who arrives very late as having higher sociometric status than a target who arrives on time.	Experimentally manipulated arrival time of a target was tested as an indication of <i>observers'</i> sociometric status judgments.	<b>H1b supported.</b> The target arriving later was perceived as having higher sociometric status and more friends than the target arriving on time.
<i>Study 2A</i>	H2: (a) Observers perceive a target who arrives very late (vs. on time) as having a prior social engagement, and (b) arrival time has an indirect effect on sociometric status perception, through the effect of perceived prior social engagement.	Experimentally manipulated arrival time of a target was tested as an indication of observers' sociometric status judgments and prior social engagement was tested as a mediating mechanism.	<b>H2a and b supported.</b> The target arriving later was perceived as having higher sociometric status. Prior social engagement (not prior academic or work engagement) mediated this effect.
<i>Study 2B</i>	H2a and b	Same as Study 2a with an additional manipulation of group size (small vs. large).	<b>H2a and b supported.</b> Results of Study 2a were replicated, and independence and uniqueness were ruled out as potential mediators. These effects generalize across party sizes.
<i>Study 3</i>	H3: (a) Sociometric status perception positively predicts affiliative behavioral intention, and (b) fashionably late perceptions have an indirect effect on affiliative behavioral intention through the effect of sociometric status perception.	Experimentally manipulated arrival time of a target was tested as an indication of <i>observers'</i> sociometric status judgments and affiliative behavioral intention.	<b>H3a and b supported.</b> Fashionably late individuals are viewed as having more sociometric status, friends, and admiration from others. Therefore, observers want to affiliate them.
<i>Study 4</i>	H4: (a) Participants are more likely to imitate the consumption choice of a target who arrives very late (vs. on time), and (b) there is an interaction effect of arrival time and chronic desire for status on consumption imitation.	Experimentally manipulated arrival time of a target was tested as a determinant of observers' imitation of consumption choice (choice of beer at a party). Participants' chronic desire for status was measured.	<b>H4a and b supported.</b> Consumption choice of the target arriving later was imitated more. Participants whose chronic desire for status was relatively high were more likely to exhibit this effect.
<i>Study 5</i>	H4a	Conceptually the same as Study 4 but conducted in the field. Experimentally manipulated arrival time of a target was tested as a determinant of imitation of consumption choice (choice of t-shirt).	<b>H4a supported.</b> Consumption choice of the target arriving later was imitated more.



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