Social Bonding without Liking or Desire for Affiliation: How Disgust Can Build Unique Social Connections

By

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Abstract

Although disgust is linked to a strong distancing and rejection reaction, we find that simultaneously experienced (“shared”) feelings of disgust can build unique social connections between consumers. In three studies, we show that when previously unacquainted individuals consume a disgusting product together and experience shared feelings of disgust, they subsequently feel more similar, close and therefore more bonded to one another. Importantly, however, we also find that disgust’s strong contaminating properties taint the social connections that it builds. Unlike other social connections where feelings of similarity and closeness run in parallel to liking and desire for affiliation, the current research shows that disgust leads to a unique type of social connection in which consumers report increased feelings of similarity and closeness to one another but decreased liking for and interest in affiliating with one another. Two other projects, which examine the impact of disgust and fear on social bonds, choice deferral, and virtual reality, will also be presented.

Prof. Andrea Morales is J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation Professor of Marketing at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on the role of emotions in a consumer context, social influence and consumption, and consumer responses to retail and service environments. Her work has been published in leading journals including Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes. She serves as an associate editor for Journal of Consumer Research and is on the editorial review board of Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing, and Journal of Consumer Psychology.

All interested are welcome.