



## A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions, and Culture Change

By Stanley Lieberman

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What accounts for our tastes? Why and how do they change over time? In this innovative book Stanley Lieberman analyzes children's first names to develop an original theory of fashion. Children's names provide an opportunity to view the pure mechanisms of fashion, unaffected by commercial interests that influence many fashions and tastes, says Lieberman. He disputes the commonly held notion that tastes in names (and other fashions) simply reflect societal shifts. There exist also internal taste mechanisms that drive changes in fashion even in the absence of social change, Lieberman contends. He explores the intricate and subtle ways in which internal mechanisms operate in concert with social forces to determine our choices of names. And he applies these conclusions to classical music, the decline of the fedora, women's garments, and other examples of change in fashion. Examining extensive data on names over long periods of time, Lieberman discovers an orderly regularity to the process of change. He considers an array of naming practices—how Rebecca became a popular name, why the names of certain important and attractive biblical characters are rarely chosen, and the influence of...



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