

Research Activity 1

Subtle mimicry

Explore what happens when you subtly mimic people's behavior. According to the text, individuals like those who subtly copy their nonverbals. Specifically, unobtrusively mimicking things like people's facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc. has been shown to increase liking among strangers. So, let's put it to the test!

There are a number of different ways that you can test this idea. First, you can subtly mimic the same person's behaviors over the course of a few days and see how your interactions go. Then, you can stop mimicking their behaviors during the next few days and see if the interactions are less smooth.

Second (for an even more controlled activity), introduce some of your friends who have never met. Beforehand, tell one of your friends (who is a stranger to the others) to subtly mimic the behaviors of some of your friends, but not others. Is there any difference in liking for your friend? Do the individuals who were mimicked like your friend more than the individuals who were not mimicked? (After the fact, it might be nice to let everyone in on your little experiment.)

Can you think of another related experiment? Go for it!

Research Activity 2

Systematic processing

Find six people who share the same opinion about a certain attitude object. Then ask three of these people to mention three good arguments to support their opinions. Ask the other three people to come up with 10 good arguments to support their opinions. After everyone has finished this task, ask how certain everyone is about their opinion.

This exercise demonstrates that when you can easily come up with (three) arguments, you are (or stay) sure about your opinion, but when you have struggled to come up with (10) arguments, you are not so sure about it any more.

Research Activity 3

Analysis of Public Health Posters

Use what you've been learning in class to analyze public health posters.

First, go to the following website and find a few posters to analyze:

www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visualculture/index.html

Second, answer the following questions about each poster:

- What is the topic of the poster?
- Are any heuristics being used?
- Who is the intended audience of this poster?
- What are the characteristics of the source?
- Are they an expert? Are they likeable? Are they attractive?
- What are the characteristics of the message?
- Is it long or short?
- Is the perceiver required to take the central route, or the peripheral route?
 - Is a fear appeal being used?
 - If yes, do you think the fear appeal will be successful?
- Other noteworthy aspects of the poster?
- Compare and contrast two posters. Are similar/different tactics being used? If yes, why might that be?

Don't stop now! Now that you've analyzed these posters, move on to other persuasive appeals such as magazine advertisements, television commercials, etc. Do you notice any difference in the tactics used?

Research Activity 4

Persuasive appeals

Organize a discussion with six people about a certain subject. Before the discussion, measure these people's attitudes toward the subject, and also ask how certain they are about their attitude. After the discussion, measure their attitudes again. Is there a difference in their attitude (certainty)?

This exercise demonstrates that people's attitudes can become stronger when they have to resist an attempt at persuasion.