

Capitolo 12

Case Study 1

Liking, similarity, interaction, and mimicry: Mutually reinforcing processes

As well as liking, similarity, and interaction, there is another important component involved in these factors that mutually reinforce one another, namely mimicry. Mimicry is related to liking for each other, perceived similarity, and the smoothness of interactions.

Mimicry and liking

Mimicry enhances liking. Chartrand and Bargh (1999) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.76.6.893] provided evidence that participants, when *being* mimicked, evaluated their interaction partner more positively. In addition, Stel and Vonk's studies (2004, 2005) showed that as well as mimickedees rating mimickers more positively, mimickers also rate the interaction partners more positively.

Liking influences mimicry. Liking or disliking a specific person also influences the amount of mimicking of this person; Stel, Van Baaren, Blascovich, McCall, Pollmann, Van Leeuwen and Vonk (2006) showed that disliked people were mimicked less than liked people. In addition, a target belonging to a negatively stereotyped group was also mimicked less than a target not belonging to that group.

This suggests that mimicry starts a positive circle in which liking and mimicry reinforce each other. But similarity and the interaction are also influenced by mimicry.

Mimicry and similarity

It is suggested that mimicry increases coherence between interaction partners by making them more similar to one another (Gump & Kulik, 1997 [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.72.2.305]). Bailenson and Yee (2005) [DOI:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01619.x] demonstrated that mimicry leads to more attitude similarity, but people also actually *feel* more similar to each other as a result of mimicry (Stel & Vonk, 2004).

Mimicry and interactions

The final factor, interaction, is also deeply connected with mimicry. When being mimicked, people rate interactions as smoother than when they are not being mimicked (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999 [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.76.6.893]; Stel & Vonk, 2005). Mimickers feel the same; they also rate the interaction as smoother (Stel & Vonk, 2005).

In sum, mimicry is strongly related to liking, similarity, and interaction. All these factors mutually reinforce one another.

References

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Case Study 2

Who says “I love you” first?

Think about your own romantic relationships. Who has said “I love you first”? How did that confession of love make you feel? Were your feelings at all influenced by the level of intimacy of your relationship?

Conventional wisdom would predict that women fall in love first and are more likely to confess their love to their partner first. But is this prediction supported by empirical research? Ackerman, Griskevicius, and Li (2011) [[DOI: 10.1037/a0022412](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022412)] set out to study gender differences in who confesses their love first, and how those confessions make their partners feel. The authors predicted that men and women would feel differently about love confessions that occurred before and after a couple’s first sexual encounter. Specifically, they hypothesized that men would feel happier if their partner said “I love you” before they had sex for the first time, whereas females would feel happier

with love confessions that occurred *after* a couple had sex for the first time. Can you think of why Ackerman, Griskevicius, and Li made these predictions? Read on to see if you are correct!

In a set of six studies, Ackerman et al. (2011) asked participants in romantic relationships about who confessed their love first, and how those confessions made them feel. In the first three studies, the authors found that people believed that women tended to feel love first in relationships and to confess this love earlier than men. When participants were later asked about their previous and current relationships, the results actually showed that men tended to be the first to confess their love. In studies 4 through 6, participants were asked to either imagine a hypothetical relationship or to think of a current relationship and rate how happy they felt after love confessions that occurred either before the couple's first sexual encounter or after their first sexual encounter. Gender differences were compared, as were differences between people who were seeking short-term vs. long-term relationships. The results showed that men tended to be happier with confessions of love that occurred before the first sexual encounter, especially men who were interested in short-term relationships. In contrast, women were happier when their partners said "I love you" after sex. If their partner said "I love you" before sex, women tended to perceive that declaration as less honest, and more of a ploy by their partner to have sex with them.

And that is the crux of the issue. As mentioned in the text, men may engage in greater self-disclosure earlier in a relationship in an effort to make the relationship more intimate. If women say "I love you" early in a relationship, this may be a signal to the man that she is ready to have sex with him. Results from the current study show that ratings of happiness are tied up with sexual excitement for men, especially those who are seeking a short-term relationship. In contrast, women experience greater happiness when a man confesses his love *after* a couple has sex. This happiness is related to feelings of romantic love, especially for women who are seeking a long-term relationship. In other words, if a man waits to say "I love you" after having sex, then he is not just using it as a way to have sex with a woman and, in fact, this declaration may be an indication that he is committed to the relationship.

This research shows that, unlike conventional wisdom, *men* are more likely to say "I love you" first and, in order for their partner to actually believe them, the timing of this confession must be just right.

Reference

- Ackerman, J., Griskevicius, V., & Li, N. (2011). [[DOI: 10.1037/a0022412](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022412)]. Let's get serious: Communicating commitment in romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *100*, 1079–1094.

Case Study 3

Reduced cognitive control in passionate lovers

The text describes passionate love as a “stormy, roller coaster, head-over-heels”, obsessive type of love. Have you ever felt this type of love? If so, when you were in the throes of this type of passion, were you able to think clearly and make rational decisions? Probably not.

Researchers from the Netherlands and the United States had Dutch individuals who had been in relationships for 6 months or less rate their level of passionate love for their partner. The participants then thought about a relevant romantic encounter before they performed two tasks designed to measure their level of cognitive control (Steenbergen, Langeslag, Band, & Hommel, 2014) [DOI: [10.1007/s11031-013-9380-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-013-9380-3)]. These two tasks have been designed to assess participants’ ability to focus on one aspect of the task while filtering out distracting stimuli. The results showed that, the more passionate love the participants felt for their partner, the greater interference (and the less cognitive control) they experienced on the two tasks.

This study provides some of the first empirical evidence that people who are in the throes of passionate love have less self-control. In the long run, is this lowered self-control and head-in-the-clouds feeling a good thing? Research cited in this article has found that self-control is actually an important ingredient in promoting a lasting relationship. Those high in cognitive self-control are more forgiving, and less interested in the flirtations of people who are not their partners. Perhaps it is a good thing that passionate love tends to decrease in relationships over time, as that decrease also signals the return of self-control.

Reference

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Case Study 4

The triangular theory of love

When Fehr and Russell (1991) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.60.3.425] asked students to list all kinds of love that came to mind, they arrived at 216 different answers. Different types of love can be classified in various ways.

Robert Sternberg (1986) [DOI:10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.119] proposed one of the most popular classifications: the triangular theory of love. According to Sternberg, there are eight different subtypes of love, which can be derived from three components. The first is *intimacy*; which involves liking, feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness. *Passion* is the second

component, which encompasses the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation. Finally *commitment* reflects the decision, in the short term, that one loves another, and, in the long term, the decision to maintain that love.

The amount of love that is experienced depends on the strength of the components that are involved, while the kind of love that is experienced depends on what components are involved. When none of these components is involved, there is no love. Kinds of love that are experienced when only one component is involved are liking, infatuation, and empty love. When intimacy is involved without feelings of passion and commitment, liking is experienced. Infatuation is the love that is experienced when only passion is felt. Empty love is felt when commitment is the only component that is present.

Interactions between components also produce different kinds of love. The love that one experiences when intimacy and passion are the components that are present in a relationship, is romantic love. Companionate love is felt when couples are intimate and have commitment to the relationship. When there is no intimacy, but passion and commitment are felt, the type of love that is experienced is called fatuous love. Finally when all components, intimacy, passion, and commitment, are present, the kind of love that is felt is consummate love.

Wojciszke (2002) proposed that these components are dynamic in the development of a relationship. He proposed that the cycle of love consists of six stages, which are based on the components of Sternberg's triangular model.

According to Wojciszke, we first *fall in love*. The only component involved here is passion. Then there is the *romantic beginning* of a relationship, in which passion and intimacy are felt. These romantic feelings turn into *complete love* when couples commit (so passion, intimacy, and commitment are involved). After being together for a while, the passion disappears and the love experienced then is *companionate love*. When a relationship goes wrong and levels of intimacy drop, *empty love* is felt (the only component left is commitment). The final stage is *dissolution*; the relationship ends; there is no commitment any more.

References

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Case Study 5

Ideal partner preferences predict divorce

According to the text, individuals who idealize their partners tend to have more positive relationships. But what about the ideals that people have about their partners at the *start* of a committed, marital relationship? If one's partner does not match up to one's ideals, is the relationship doomed?

Consider two women from two different relationships. Marta's ideal relationship partner is someone who is highly extroverted and sociable. Her husband is fairly extroverted but he can also be introverted in certain situations. Greta's ideal relationship partner is someone who is very kind, who is about average in terms of attractiveness, and who is low in disagreeableness. Greta's husband is very attractive, he is often unkind, and he tends to be disagreeable. Whose marriage is in the most jeopardy —Marta's whose husband's personality does not match her preferred *level* of extroversion, or Greta's, whose husband's personality does not match the *pattern* of attributes she desires in an ideal partner?

Eastwick and Neff (2012) [DOI: 10.1177/1948550611435941] recruited newlywed couples to take part in their study of ideal partner preferences and risk of divorce. These researchers had couples indicate the extent to which 21 different characteristics were important in a marriage partner, and then they rated their partners on the same characteristics. Next, the researchers kept in touch with these couples for the next 3.5 years to determine who remained married and who divorced. The researchers found that the factor that put the couples at the greatest risk of divorce was if the characteristics of one's partner did not match the pattern of characteristics desired in an ideal partner. It didn't matter as much if one's partner, like Marta's, fell short on a particular desired characteristic (i.e., did not demonstrate the desired level of extroversion). Instead, if the characteristics of one's partner did not fit the pattern one desired in an ideal partner, like Greta's, then that couple was 2.7 times more likely to divorce in the next 3.5 years. Intriguingly, this pattern mismatch was a stronger predictor of divorce than other well-established risk factors such as stress level, income, employment status, age at marriage, etc.

Exactly why a pattern mismatch between an ideal partner's characteristics and one's actual partner's characteristics is so detrimental to marital relationships is not yet clear, but these results do provide an important warning to couples considering marriage. If your partner seems to possess the pattern of characteristics you desire in an ideal mate, then the odds are good that your relationship will last. In contrast, if your partner does not seem to match up to this ideal pattern, it may be helpful to either reexamine your values, or reexamine your relationship.

Reference

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