

## Attraction and Rejection (Part 10)

Wan Noraini bt Wan Razab

### 3.4 Reciprocity and Liking

Reciprocity is important for culture and therefore for human beings. Culture depends on reciprocity: if I do something for you, you should do something for me in return. Reciprocity is also important in liking. Having someone like you is powerful at a deep, gut level: it is hard to resist liking that person in return.

The simple principle that liking begets (reciprocal) liking has been confirmed in multiple studies, and it is so obvious and intuitively correct that few studies now bother to focus on it. Still, whenever participants receive feedback that someone else likes them, they almost invariably feel a surge of affection for the person. The power of reciprocal liking seems to be universal. Thus, even research that finds differences between cultures in how people think about friendships and how they attract new friends still finds the common principle: if someone likes you, it is hard to resist liking that person in return (Fiske & Yamamoto, 2005).

Reciprocation can take other forms and in that respect can imply similarity. In nonverbal behavior, reciprocity can take the form of mimicking. In one well known study (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), participants interacted with a confederate who, they wanted to like them. Sometimes the confederate touched his or her face during conversation, and other times the confederate wiggled his or her foot. Without realizing what they were doing, participants mimicked these behaviors themselves. A follow-up study showed that mimicry is often successful as a means of increasing liking. Participants talked to a confederate who had been trained to mimic to participants' nonverbal behavior or not. When the confederate performed the same nonverbal behaviors as the participants, for example, wiggling her foot in response to seeing the participant wiggle her foot-the participant ended up liking the confederate more (Lakin & Chartrand, 2005).

Reciprocation of liking may have a hugely powerful effect in everyday friendships. Its impact is more of a problem in romance, however. The difference may lie in the simple truth that you can have many friends but usually only one love relationship in most culture. Actually, reciprocity brings us back to the broad theme of humans as cultural animals. If people liked those who liked them, this reciprocity would make people better suited to culture. Creatures who mainly liked those who disliked them would have a difficult time forming the network of relationships that makes culture possible. You are safer and better off among people who like you than among people who don't care about you one way or the other. It seems to work best when it involves people who like us and are similar to us.

### **3.5 Propinquity Effect**

According to Rowland Miller's *Intimate Relationships* text, the propinquity effect can be defined as: "the more we see and interact with a person, the more likely he or she is to become our friend or intimate partner." This effect is very similar to the mere exposure effect in that the more a person is exposed to a stimulus, the more we like it; however, there are a few exceptions to the mere exposure effect (Miller, R, Perlman, D, & Brehm, S, 2006).

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