

Mimicking other people is such a common and distinct phenomenon that it gets typically overlooked. We talk about „parroting”, „aping”, imitating behaviors, about a child being a copy or mirroring its parents. A person in a concert moves along with the whole audience, shouts or sings the song lyrics. When during a psychological session, a subject leans over, a sad expression appears on his face, and a therapist does likewise letting the patient know that he is “in it with him”. During an election campaign meeting, a politician takes off his tie and jacket upon noticing that the meeting participants are dressed slightly less formally. He shows them thus “I am just like you!” An ideal synchronization of movement is at the root of dancing. When we observe believers during the religious ceremonies, children on a playground, parading soldiers – we can notice this phenomenon everywhere. Woody Allen coined the term “chameleon effect” when portraying the hyper-ability of his main character: Leonard Zelig who could become a person he was with

Research on the mimicry phenomenon has been run in psychology for years now. The youngest and the most dynamically developing area is called the theory of mimicry and the chameleon effect (the term borrowed from the movie mentioned above).

On the one hand, when reading many papers presenting the study in this area, one may form an impression that new studies come quite often and are published in leading professional journals, which would indicate a dynamic growth of this area. On the other hand, one may think that everything has been already discovered that it will be hard to find new, undiscovered yet phenomena in this area. Nevertheless, the research project we submit identifies areas that – hopefully – will make it possible for the research team to join the world-class research community and to contribute substantially to the pool of knowledge.

Nearly accidentally and as a side note (because this was not the topic of research interest) some authors indicated mimicry results spread to other people. For instance, if I mimic you, you are going to be more likely to offer help not only to me but also to my colleague next room who doesn't come into the picture of mimicry that takes place between you and me. So mimicry is a process that modifies the mimicker to such a large extent that – as if under alcohol or some drugs influence – starts to like everybody around them. Quite often this brings social benefits but sometimes, when abused, it may lead to the loss. The problem is, though, that there are very few studies that would shed light on this phenomenon. Maybe it was just a coincidence? Furthermore, if not, we want to know how it works and what are the foundations of this fascinating process.

The tangible results of this project are going to be: two submitted articles for Western journals (JCR list), which will be used to promote knowledge accumulated during research and - above all - obtaining a doctoral degree in social sciences by a recruited PhD candidate.