

**The Role of Self-disclosure
in Developing Liking and Disliking**

Sociology 141S

May 28, 2005

Robert Alvarez

Marcus O. Hoey

Gabor Por

The three people we are focusing on are N., Me. and Ma.. We feel the three of them provide a wide enough range in terms of self-disclosure. For example N. was the most talkative out of these three and the whole group, Me. did not talk a whole lot but when she did there was a lot of quality information. Ma. talked the least of these three, but she had a lot of quality talk in the group. We will analyze the data gather on how they formed impressions of each other and how others--the group, the male and female observer groups—formed their opinions of them. We believe that the outcome, how much of a person is liked, can be measured and explained by the interplay four variables:

- 1, the amount and type of self-disclosure they produce,
- 2, their gender (and the related gender expectation),
- 3, whether the person judging is in the group or an observer, and
- 4, whether the person judging is male or female.

There are so many factors when people develop liking or disliking of a person that it is difficult to single out one. We observed however the following tendencies and correlated to verbal self-disclosure. If a male (e.g. N.) talks a lot about him it generates a positive image in others up to a certain point. However extended self-disclosure makes such a person less liked amongst males and more liked amongst females.

The opposite is true for females. We are socialized to expect more self-disclosure from them. If such a person doesn't live up to this expectation (e.g. Ma.) both males and females would like her less. On the other hand the more she self-discloses (e.g. Me.) the more she is liked amongst females.

We will show on the following page the specifics that support these theses above.

An important thing to remember is that self disclosure for its own sake is inevitable. It is going to happen whether a person talks a lot or does not disclose much about them at all. For

instance, self disclosure begins immediately when all the participants walked into the room on the first day of class. N., by his style of dress, can be assumed that his personality is outgoing and somewhat wild, not average. He stands out from other people. Me. shows some maturity through her dress. Ma., possibly through her dress and to further simplify it, by her being a Latina, shows her self disclosure. We must take these characteristics into consideration when we analyze how people responded to them, in the main group and in the observation groups. As you will see, the way people present themselves can have a significant impact on the way people interact with them, and observe them.

Our analysis follows the three selected people one after the other. Within each of these three sections we first present the data: the other two persons' opinion of them, the rest of the group's opinion, the male observers' and finally the female observers'. Once we have all this data collected and available we show how the overall picture in the class of the person was made up and how.

N.

Ma. on N.

She ranked him the highest (+4) male in the first session and still amongst one of the highest in the second session (+3). She picked Pat. as the best liked but assumed that N. would be the GB.

In the first session she labeled him as typical "skateboarder" who is a "skater, likes to swim and is a rocker". Not much changed for the second session when she thought of him as a typical "surfer", who "likes hangout and is talkative."

Me. on N.

Me. ranked N. with a +3 behind Pat. in the first session, and with a +4 as everybody else in the second one. Her first choice is consistent with ranking Pat. as her Best liked. But in both sessions she assumed that N. would be the GB.

After the first round she thought of him as a typical "Santa Cruzian" surfer with beads. The second session left her with more specific memories as the keywords were "Bible, grandpa and socks", while she rated her as 0% typical Fire Marshall Bill (which is a character on the show "Living Color", played by Jim Carrey).

Group on N.

N. was the best liked amongst the female group members in the first session with +3.8 mean. He still was the best liked male for females in the second session with +3.5, but behind Ma.'s +3.7. For male group members he was in the middle range with 2.3 in the first session and +3 in the second.

He gathered two Bs and seven GBs in the first session, but lowered it to one B and four GB after the second.

Male observers on N.

Liking based: In session one N. was less liked by the male observers than C. and R., who both averaged +3.1, while he did +2.9. But all the male group members scored higher by the male observers than all the females. Seven out of the eight female observers guessed that N. would be the best liked in the group, while only two of them marked him as best liked. The male observer group liked R. the best as he got four Bs.

After the second session he dropped significantly. Four male observers didn't change their rating, but the other four lowered it; including a 3 point drop by two observers (Adam and Devin). This was the largest drop by the male observers. Only R. had this big drop, but he got it in the eyes of only one person. N.'s average liking was down to 1.0, making him the least liked

male, but still higher than any of the females. By this time only three people marked him as GB and none as B. [In comparison, R. still got four Bs and two of N.'s GBs were now placed on R..]

Label based: N. dropped 3 points in Adam's opinion. On Adam's first label N. was a 70% typical surfer and after the second session a 50% Christian. Maybe Adam likes surfers more than Christians. The other person who liked N. much less after the second session was Devin. For him N. was typical musician both time, and the third label was trendy. But instead of being a punk interested in music N. became a talkative person who needs attention. Travis also changed N. from a typical homosexual to devious, while dropping him a point. Gabor lowered N.'s liking with one point while labeling him from surfer to storyteller.

Most the labels on N. by male observers focused on his image, music interest and talkative nature.

Female observers on N.

Liking based: Based on the first session, similarly to the male observers his liking was behind C.'s (+3.4) but on par with R.'s (+2.9). The female observers were more distributive amongst genders regarding their liking, e.g. N. was less liked than Ma.. Only two female observers marked him as GB, while none liked him the best. In comparison, R. got the most Bs (four) and GBs (five).

The second session improved his liking a great deal, with .6 point: five females increased their scores, one lowered, and two didn't change it. Also by this time he got four GBs and three of the GB givers also marked him as B.

Label based: The only female observer who lowered scores for N. was Karina. For her he remained a typical surfer. His "funniness" changed place with his "talkativeness", the latter taking the first position by the second session; and instead of being "interesting" he became "friendly."

The other labels were identifying him as surfer and musician.

Summary table on how the class liked N.:

	Ma.	Me.	Group	Male observer	Female observer
1 st session	+4 (Skateboarder)	+3 (Santa Cruzian)	+3.1	+2.9	+2.9
2 nd session	+3 (Surfer)	+4 (Firemarshall Bill)	+3.3	+1.9	+3.5
Difference	-1	+1	+1	-1	+1.6

Analysis of people's perception of N.

N. was probably the most talkative person in the first session. His self-disclosure was direct and open from the very beginning. This fits well with the traditional gender expectation that males should be assertive. However he talked more than any of the other male group members. In a culture where females are supposed to be the talkers this made his extrovert nature look a bit feminine. Furthermore the clothing he was wearing, with its colorfulness, printed texts, and in the general attention he paid to his outlook emanated somewhat effeminate aura.

He managed to charm the female members of the groups. His persuasive personality resulted him getting the highest score from them. On the other hand the male group members first didn't appreciate as much his antics, he ranked number three out four first. When during the second session he talked somewhat less, but still consistently presented himself he was rewarded with a .7 increase from them.

From the two observer groups he first got the same score +2.9, making him for both groups the second most liked male. It is clear that the impact of his communicative personality had less of a positive effect outside the group. After the second session his liking dropped a full point among the male observers, and became the least liked male group member. By this time his lack of machismo backfired in the males' eyes. At the same time he gained .6 points in the

female observers' mind, making him one of the two most popular males. This shows that they appreciated more his self-disclosure and humor.

Analysis Based on Readings:

One of the main factors with N. was the way that he self-disclosed himself to the rest of the group. The reason for this is because he had the most outgoing personality visually and communication-wise of the three people that we are observing. As stated previously, his clothing was more noticeable than anyone else in the group, as this was stated after sessions were over by a female observer that noticed his neon colored jacket that he wore and torn jeans. Obviously, his clothing made a lasting impression with people in the class. His self-disclosure about himself was also very outstanding compared to others in the group. He presented himself as a very social person with labels from the men's observation group being "socially active", "talkative", and "energy", and from the female observation group being "friendly", "caring", and "well spoken".

How did his self-disclosure affect the way people saw him? Within the group, people responded to him fairly well, and in connection to that he received many GBs in the group. In the group, his communication skills benefited him and people appreciated it. Outside of the group is a must different scenario. In "Social Psychology: Exploration in Understanding" by Kenneth Gergen, it explains on page 504 the process of groupthink called shared stereotypes. All the members of a group that lead the group to act unwisely with regard to the objects of its stereotypes hold this idea. Let us examine the male observation group. He did not rank as well in this observation group as he did with the female observation group. What stereotypes that a male group would usually hold were missing in this situation? N. came off as more of a feminine male with labels such as "sensitive", "talkative" and "trendy". The shared stereotype by the males that a man should be more masculine clearly affected the way group as a whole responded to him.

Now look at the female observation group. Their shared stereotypes also came into affect here. Labels by the women to N. were “unique”, “caring”, and “sensitive”. Notice how some of the labels are the same and some are quite different with the males having more of a negative cognition to them compared to the women’s. His ratings with the women were higher; because they felt they could be friends with him easier than a male could be friends with him. Clearly the way he presented himself and the way each gender received the oncoming information affected the way different groups and different people observed him.

We have also picked up on other things that affected the way N. saw other people. One of the main things that were discussed in class was the fact that he did not like R. very much, even though a majority of the class believed that they got along great and had many things in common. Why did this happen? One reason that we saw was the notion of competition. In chapter 2 of “Interpersonal Attraction” by Berscheid and Walster, it explains the action of reinforcement. Reinforcement is a simple principle that underlies all attraction: we like those who reward us and dislike those who punish us. In the form of competition, R. was competition to him because they were somewhat similar, which brought down his uniqueness that he seems very fond about. N. does show us one phenomenon in effect and that is the ecology of the group. In the first session, R. and N. sat next to each other, and this could be related to the low score that N. gave R.. In the second session, they did not sit next to each other, and in effect N.’s scores for R. increased and his labels to him were not so offensive. In “Small Group Communication” by R. Cathcart on page 292 it explains how gender ecology of sitting arrangements can affect the way we like or dislike someone. It says that males do not respond to crowding to other males very well, and this can be seen on the tapes by the lack of intimacy that N. and R. share in the first session. In the second session, when N. was farther away from R., in

changed his score in a positive manner. The change of location for N. shows how gender ecology of the group affected the way N. perceived people.

MA.

N. on Ma.

He gave her a +1 in the first round and +2 in the second. With these he consistently put her in the least liked females, but still above R., who was his least liked person in the group. On the other hand he never marked Ma. with an L or GL.

Based on the labels for him she was a typical "Hispanic", although for some reason the percentage decreased from 92% to 87% to the second session. "Food" was his first association of her after both sessions. The first set also included "nice and Spanish" too, while the second "San Francisco and family."

Me. on Ma.

Me. gave Ma. +2 in the first round and her universal +4 in the second. Her first session choice made Ma. member of her least liked cluster of people that included three individuals. But in neither session did she mark Ma. with an L.

First Me. thought of Ma. as a typical "baseball player" with connection to "food, golfing, and shells." The second session resulted in a typical "book" label, along with being associated with the words "blue, Texas, and volunteer."

Group on Ma.

Ma. was the second best liked female in her group both by males and females in the first session, with 2.3 and 3.0 means respectively. She kept her second best liked female position amongst male group members for the second session despite her mean to drop to 2.0. Amongst the females however she gained .7 point making her the best liked person, even higher than N., who was the absolute favorite of the first session.

Male observers on Ma.

Liking based: Based on the first session she was in the middle range of male observers' liking with her +1 mean score. Five male observers gave her positive scores, usually around +2 or +3, while the three who gave her negative ones only moderately so with -1. Her image on the other hand was not the best because she got one L and two GLs, albeit not from the person who gave her the L.

After the second session three persons lowered his liking score of her and this couldn't counteract that two increased it: her mean dropped with .1. Furthermore by now three person marked her as least liked, although only one as GL. She didn't gather any Bs or GBs in either session.

Label based: She dropped the most in Adam's eyes (two) whose opinion of her changed from typical activist to typical saint. Also instead of being strong and serious she became "activist" and "Chicana." Others identified her as mother, strong, Latina, catholic, cook.

Female observers on Ma.

Liking based: She was the most liked female by the female observers with a mean of +3.3 just slightly behind the most liked male (C. with +3.4). Only two persons gave her +2, everybody else +3 or +4. Nevertheless this high liking didn't translate into Bs: she only got one and no GBs at all. On the other hand she received no Ls or GLs.

After the second session her scores dropped the most (1.5) ever in any of the groups. This is due to the fact that besides the four people who didn't change her liking score, the other four dropped it, one of them (J. H.) by five points, the deepest drop of anybody in the three the groups.

Label based: J. Herold's five point drop of Ma. is explained in the labels. First she thought of her as listener, understanding and interested, but the same kind withdrawal generated different reactions in her at the second time: boring, quiet, religious.

Summary table on how the class liked Ma.:

	N.	Me.	Group	Male observer	Female observer
1 st session	+1 (Hispanic)	+2 (Baseball player)	2.6	+1	+3.3
2 nd session	+2 (Hispanic)	+4 (Book)	2.7	+.9	+1.8
Difference	+1	+2	+.1	-.1	-1.5

Analysis of people's perception of Ma.

Ma. talked relatively little in both sessions. Her balanced and limited self-representation earned her a middle position first in the eyes of group members of both genders, with only .7 difference between the scores given to her by the two genders. Her behavior in the second session however had a strong effect, because that difference grew to 1.7. Her fellow female group members raised her to be the most liked female in the group.

The male observers didn't like her, kept her the second least liked female in both rounds, giving her 1-3 Ls and GLs. For them her self-disclosure was not sufficient to create a positive image.

She had just the opposite effect on the female observers than on the female group members: from the best liked female with a high score of she dropped a sharp 1.5 points.

Analysis based on readings:

When we talk about Ma.'s self-disclosure, we must think about what stands out from her. What did she present to the group that makes her unique? Besides the point that she was one of two people in the group that was visually unique in terms of ethnicity, her clothing and communication leaves much to the imagination. Of all eight-group members, she was the 2nd

least talkative person ahead of J.. If we look at Ma. in terms of how much she was liked from session 1 to session 2, it is interesting to note how her scores dropped in every group (except the female main group) from session 1 and 2 (this also happened with J. which we believe is correlated). In session 1, people were getting to know one another, and it was known that there was some resistance and nervousness to this project. It was then acceptable to think that it was okay to be somewhat quiet in the first session because there needed to be that time to settle in. Ma. did come off as very nice to the women with labels from the women observation group such as “friendly”, “caring”, and “compassionate”. The men observation group saw her in a different way with labels such as “not forthcoming”, “serious”, and “uninterested”. Her quiet self-disclosure worked much differently for the women than it did for the men. In the second session, she continued to be someone with a quiet self-disclosure, and in relation to that it affected her scores in a negative way. The women’s observation group, the men’s observation group, and the men in the main group all had lower scores for Ma. the second time around. Now that the uneasiness of being in the main group should have been gone, it was not acceptable to participate less than other people (to compare this can also be seen with J., another very quiet person). Labels from the women observation group now were “serious”, “tyrant”, and “dry”, which are much more negative than before.

I believe Gerard Egan in “Interpersonal Living can explain the negative feelings toward Ma. in the second session. On page 235 it discusses The Observer as “a person who does not reach out actively to make contact with other group members and who, when contacted, responds inadequately.” Because of this, the person, in this case Ma. becomes a liability to the group. Since she is now seen as a liability to the group, people did not feel much connection to her anymore, which reflects on the labels and in the ratings.

Egan also explains on page 38 the phenomenon of “under disclosure.” This is the “unwillingness to let others know anything about them except what can be picked up from observation.” In relation to the group sessions it can be said that Ma. did not sufficiently give that much information about her life, things that she has been through, things that are fun to her, and so forth. Because of this, people had to use their imagination to come up with an idea of what Ma. is all about. Women can relate to Ma. more because she is a woman herself, and this leads to the higher ratings she got from women. Men on the other hand can not relate to Ma. has much, and therefore did not score her as high. Her under disclosure lead her to be a observer in the group, which both lead to negative feelings toward her in the group setting.

ME.

N. on Me.

N. gave Me. +3 in both sessions. The first time this made her one of his best liked females, while the second time the best liked female. Although on neither occasion did he pick Me. as B or GB, because those honors went to C..

His labels say that for him she was a typical "condescending" person first and a "working class" person second. "Work" and "smoke" were his first and third associations of her both times, while being "unhappy" and wearing "black" rounded up the pictures in the respective sessions

Ma. on Me.

Ma. gave Me. +3 on both occasions. In the first session this made Me. one of the five people at this level (as opposed to the other two who got +4s.) But for the second session this same number means that Me. got into the more liked group of 4 people with the same score (as opposed to the other three with +2s.) Ma. never marked Me. as B, GB, L, or GL.

Me. represented a typical "suitcase" first and a "banker" the second time for Ma.. First she was a person who "likes to out and shop, and is nice." By the second occasion Me. became a "hard-working, outgoing, sorority girl" for Ma..

Group on Me.

The male group members liked Me. the most amongst the females in both session (+2.8, +3 respectively.) This makes her the second best liked person for male group members (after C.) in the first session. For the second session she is as liked as N. and Pat. (with a +3 mean) by the male group members. The female group members placed her as the second least liked person in both rounds. In the first round she was alone in this category (with 2.7 mean), while in the second (with a +3 mean) she shared the position with two males (Pat. and R..) Most of this doesn't translate into Bs or Ls because she got only one B in the second session and none in the first. She got no Ls at all but besides she guessing about herself being GL one more person (J.) assumed in the first round Me. would be the least liked.

Male observers on Me.

Liking based: In the first session she was the second best liked female amongst male observers with a mean of +1.3. The positive scores ranged from +1 to +4, while her negatives ones never went below -1. At this point she didn't generate strong enough opinions to make her marked with any B, L, GB or GL.

She dropped .3 after the second session, because 4 people lowered their liking score, two with two points and two with one point. One person (Devin) marked her as best liked and one person (Gabor) as GL, although he didn't mark her as L.

Label based: Adam and Gabor dropped 2 points their likings of her from the first to the second session. Adam no longer thought of her as typical (50%) coffee-drinker, but as a (50%) manager. At the same time his first association of her became "guarded" instead of "business"-

person. In Gabor's view she remained typical manager, but her "driven" characteristic moved from third to second position, while the first label shifted from "aloof" to "confident". Daniel was the person who raised her liking score the most (with 2 points). For him, she no longer was typical (90%) business woman, but a (85%) rebel girl. The other male observers' labels focused on her business orientation, humor and maturity.

Female observers on Me.

Liking based: With her +2.4 mean score in the first session, Me. was in the medium range. Nobody gave her negative points and four out of nine females marked her with a relatively high +3. One even liked her the best, while nobody marked her with a GB, L, or GL.

For the second session her liking went up, because only one female observer lowered her score (and even she with only one point), while four raised with 1-2 points. This made her the most liked female in this round; she even collected a GB guess. But she lost her "B" from the one person who marked her as such in the first session.

Label based: Jennifer and Nicole's opinion of Me. both went up with 2 points. For Jennifer she turned from a typical pessimist to a typical guy's girls, while changing from "bitter, sarcastic, and dark" to "nice, real, and funny." Similarly Nicole switched her typology from "career woman" to "student", along with "hard worker, cynical, laid back" to the more positive "friendly, laid back, outgoing" adjectives. Chandra was the only person who lowered her scores, and changed from a typical "aware" person to a "critic."

Summary table on how the class liked Me.:

	N.	Ma.	Group	Male observer	Female observer
1 st session	+3 (Condescending)	+3 (Suitcase)	+2.7	+1.3	+2.4
2 nd session	+3 (Working Class)	+3 (Banker)	+3.0	+1.0	+3
Difference	0	0	+3	-.3	+6

Analysis of people's perception of Me.

She, similarly to Ma., was also in the middle range for both male and female group members in both rounds. But she was more liked after the second round. Her more extensive and personal self-disclosure bore the fruit of increasing likeness.

In the eyes of the male observer she remained in the middle range although dropped from 1.3 to 1.0. Her sharpness and businesslike atmosphere didn't help her to gain more positive ranking amongst them.

On the other hand amongst female observers this sarcastic manner seemed attractive, because by the second session she became the most liked female, displacing Ma..

Analysis Based on Readings:

First let us take a look at Me. self-disclosure. It was noticeable on the first session that her clothing gave off the impression that she was very business-like and looked more mature than many of the other group members. We get a first glimpse of this when Pat. mentions her attire fairly quickly in the first session. With it being mentioned and noticeable, this left a last impression on many of the observers minds. This can be seen in labels such as “mature”, “hard working”, and “independent”. Along with these labels there was some negative labels from the women observers as well like “sarcastic”, “dark”, and “skeptical”. Compare these labels to what the men observers had: “mature”, “business”, and “responsible”. The women seemed to pick up on something in the first session that the men were not able to pick up on. In the second session her scores actually went up in all groups with the exception of the male observation group. An interesting note is that her scores with the male observation group were considerably lower compared to what all the other groups rated Me., but why?

For many of the labels, one of the dominant labels that were used with Me. was the concept of maturity and being business-like. One label even described her as being a “manager”.

We also know that we live in a male dominated society where it is awkward for a male to work under a woman. It seems to us that this is one of the main reasons that the male observers rated her low (keep in mind that most of the women were rated lower to men, but there must be a reason for each one). With the main idea of Me. being a mature woman that is independent and a hard worker, it is intimidating for a man to accept this. This did differ though when it was males in the group with her. The interaction of actually being able to talk to her made a difference on the way the males perceived Me., and that can be seen in the relatively high scores that she was given compared to the male observers. Different genders in the different groups had many different ways of viewing and accepting Me..

One thing that has become very visible with Me. throughout the course of this class is her fear of intimacy, which is described by Egan on page 44 of "Interpersonal Living". This concept with her has changed dramatically over the last 10 weeks, and we believe was very visible comparing her in the first session with her in the hypnosis session we had in our last class meeting. When watching the tapes of Me. in the first session, you can see a lot of comprehension when talking about her past, as she almost wants to avoid the entire conversation of where she is from. She says with apprehension that she is from Ojai, and says it with negative feelings behind it. You can also see in the some of the labels of her after the first session by people. Some were "bitter", "skeptical", and "a little more quiet than I thought". In the book by Egan it describes fear of intimacy as "difficult to reveal oneself on a deep level to another without creating, by the very act of self-revelation, some degree of intimacy." It has been seen though that throughout the course of this class, her intimacy level has increased with certain people in the group, especially Pat.. Because of this intimacy, she has opened up on more topics that are much more personal. Some of these include the fact that she was living in cars as a teenager, drug abuse, and family problems. All of these were revealed in our last class meeting, when she felt more comfortable

about revealing this information to people. As we can see here, there are a lot of things inside a person that must be worked out before she feels at ease with releasing information to a bunch of strangers. It would be awkward for her to come out and reveal this information to us on the first meeting. The concept of fear of intimacy is something that must be worked out over time, but because of this time, it affected the way she self-disclosed herself to the rest of the class.