

# The Ingredients of Self-Disclosure: Similarity, Depth, Reciprocity, and Liking

Yixian Li, MSc & Erin Heerey, PhD | The Department of Psychology, Western University, Canada

## Research question:

What kind of self-disclosures leads to greater liking of the discloser?

- Perceived similarity is linked to liking<sup>1</sup>
- Receiving self-disclosure is linked to liking; disclosure depth matters more than breadth<sup>2</sup>
- Reciprocated self-disclosures is linked to liking<sup>3</sup>

## Hypotheses:

Increased liking of the discloser as a result of:

- Higher self-disclosed similarity (Study 1-3)
- Higher self-disclosure depth (Study 1-3)
- Greater reciprocity of self-disclosure depth (Study 4)

## Study 1-3:

Same procedure; slight modifications

- **Study 1:** "You will view randomly selected information about previous participants"
- **Study 2:** "You will view randomly selected information about other participants, some of whom you will meet later"
- **Study 3:** "You will view information intentionally disclosed to you by other participants, some of whom you will meet later"

## Procedure:

1. Participant answered 40 multiple-choice questions about themselves varying on disclosure depth

### 20 Low depth:

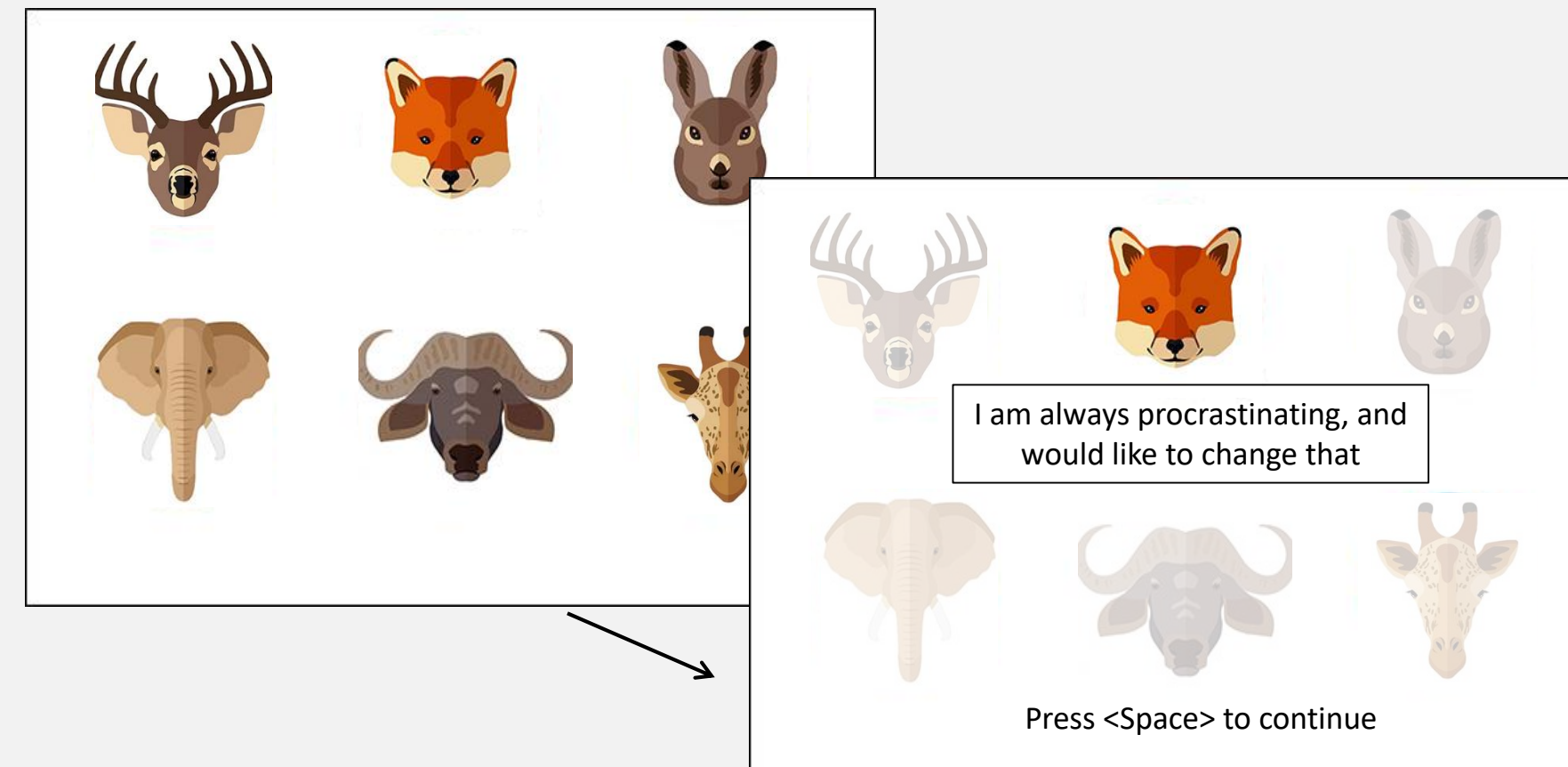
- e.g., -- I like to imagine the happy endings in romance movies  
 -- Comedy movies make light of things and always make me laugh  
 -- I like how excited action movies make me feel  
 -- I like how dark and twisted horror movies can be

### 20 High depth:

- e.g., -- I wish I was a little better at talking to people  
 -- I wish my body was a bit more athletic looking  
 -- I wish I had better self-confidence  
 -- If I had better self-control I would be really happy with things

2. Avatars' information was generated based on the participant's answers

3. Participants explored avatars' information for five minutes by clicking on different avatars



4. Dependent measure:



*Across all the 3 studies:*

- Manipulation checks: "the degree that they are SIMILAR to you" "how much you've GOTTEN TO KNOW them"
- Social preferences: "how much you'd actually like to MEET them" "how comfortable you'd feel ASKING THEM FOR ADVICE" "how much you would like to admit them to your CIRCLE OF FRIENDS"
- Personality traits: "how TRUSTWORTHY you think they are" "how FRIENDLY you think they are"

*Study 3 Only:*

- Perceived partner's interest in friendship: "how much do you think they'd like to BE YOUR FRIEND?"

## Results:

### In Sum

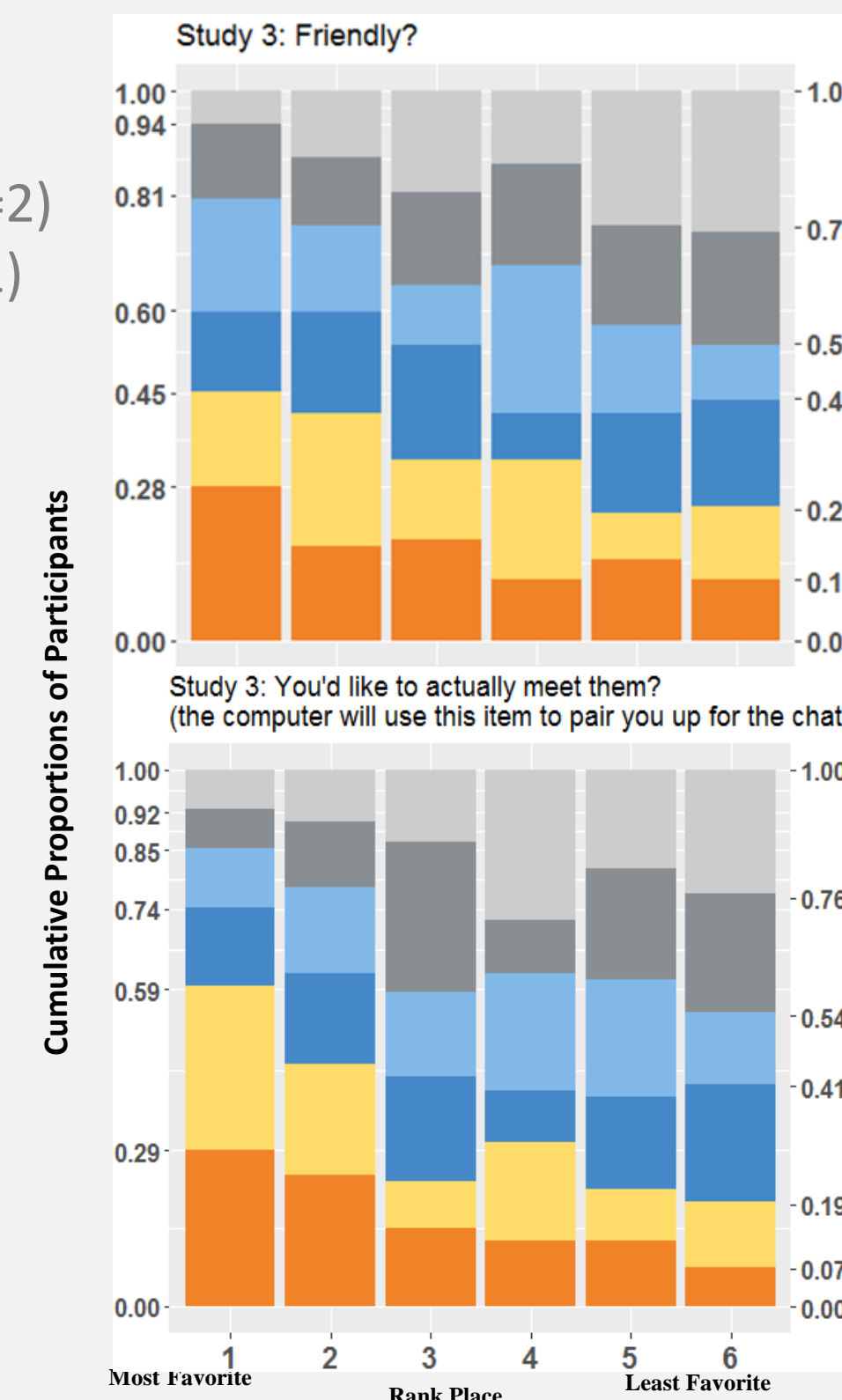
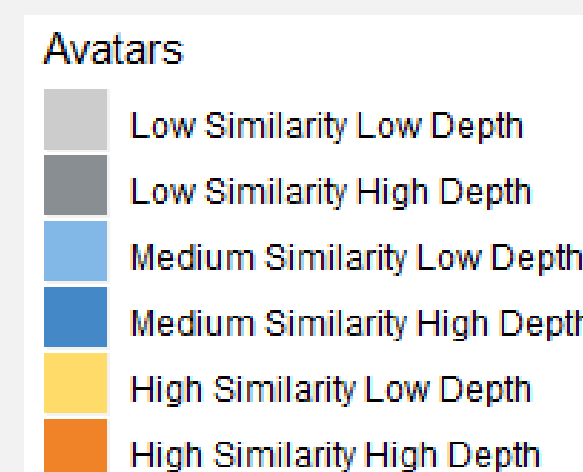
- An effect of similarity on all items;
- No effect of disclosure depth or interaction on any items

Participants (after exclusion): university students

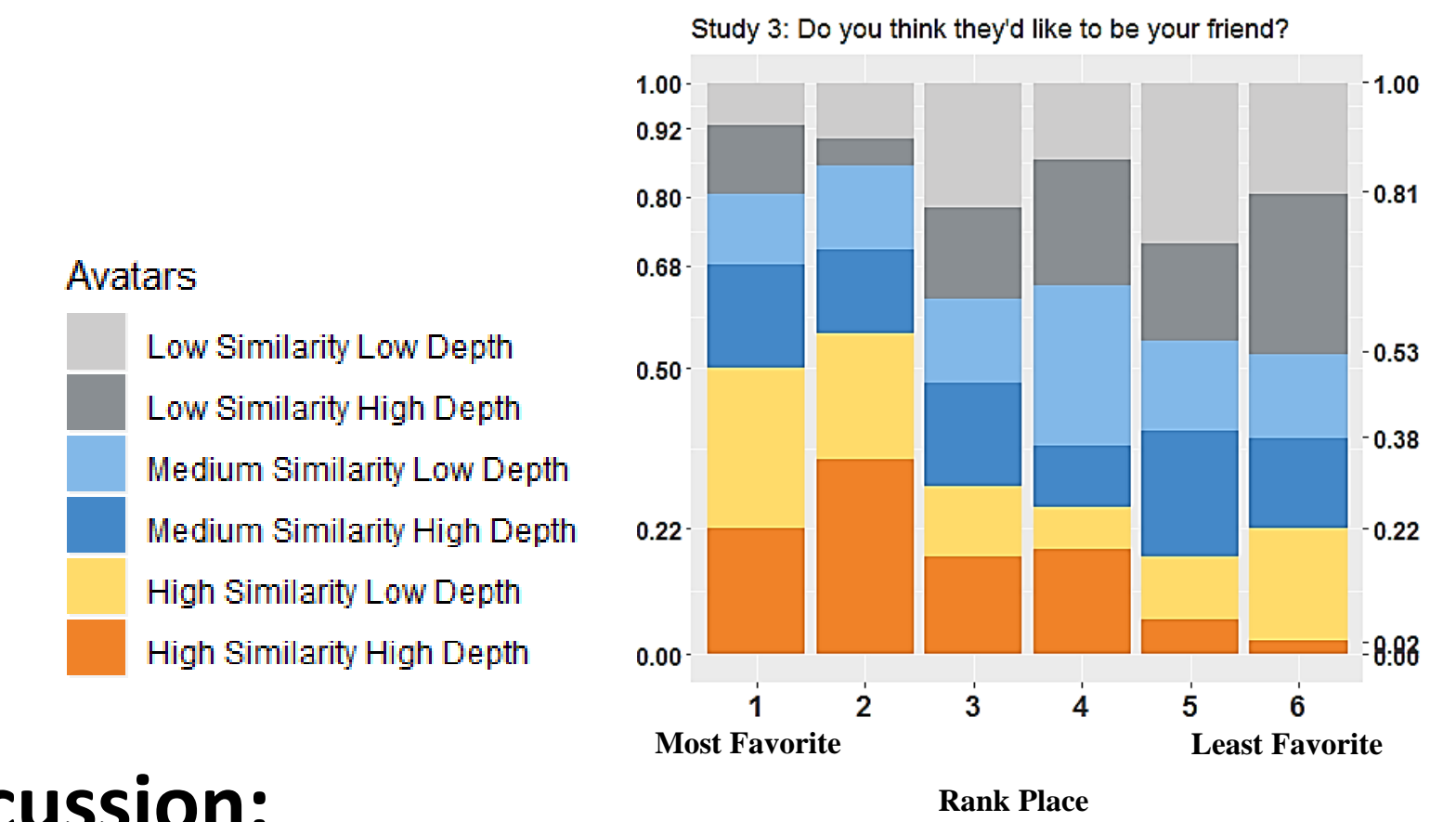
Study 1: N=168 (F=85; M=81; N/A=2)  
 Study 2: N=94 (F=58; M=35; N/A=1)  
 Study 3: N=86 (F=46, M=40)

Across all 3 studies, avatars with **higher similarity** were ranked as:

- Having more desirable personality traits
- More preferred potential social partners



In Study 3, avatars with **higher similarity** were perceived as *more interested in becoming friends with the participant*



## Discussion:

- Similarity led to greater liking & greater perceived social partner's interest in becoming one's friend.
- Neither disclosure depth nor its interaction with similarity altered results.
  - Manipulation not working? Or
  - Disclosure depth not important?

## Study 4 (in preparation):

### Procedure:

1. Participants answer 40 multiple-choice questions about themselves varying on disclosure depth
2. Participants engage in **back-and-forth exchanges** of self-disclosures with each avatar

### IV1: Similarity

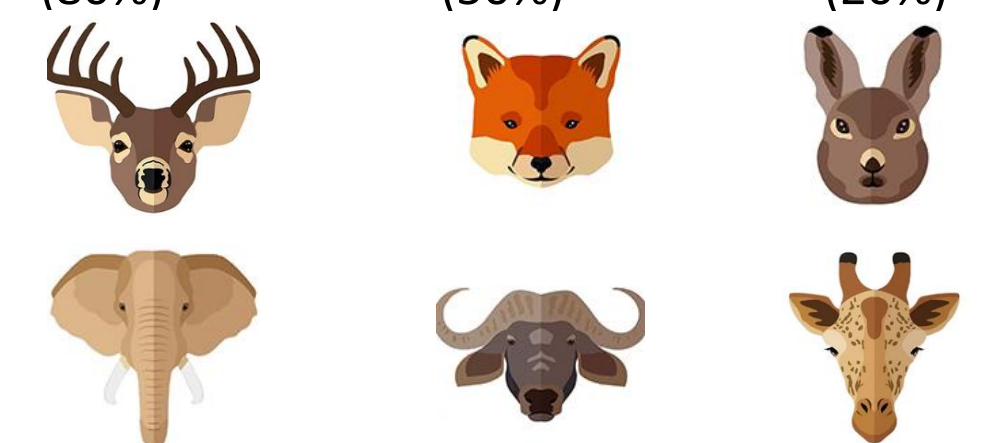
(Show same answers to the participants % of time)



### IV2:

**Reciprocity of Disclosure Depth**  
 (Show answers to same-depth questions % of time)

High (80%)  
 Low (20%)



## Anticipated Results:

1. Higher similarity → Greater liking
2. Higher reciprocity in disclosure depth → Greater liking

## Potential Implication:

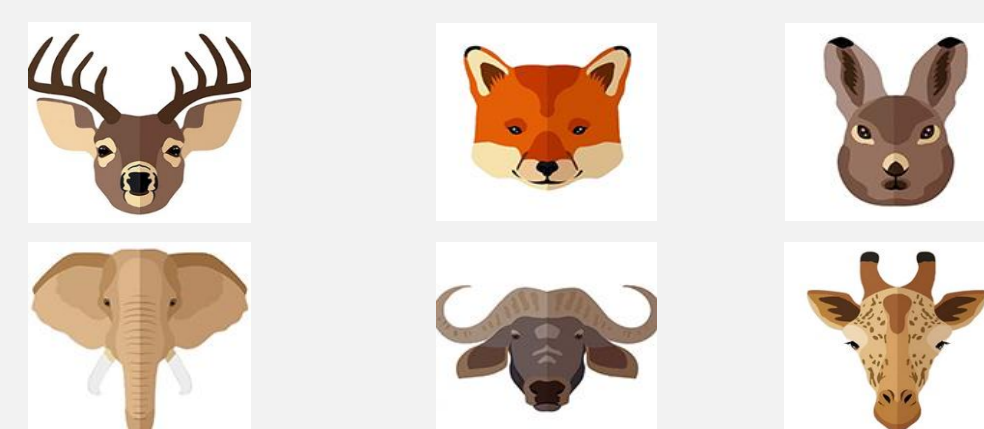
If higher reciprocity of disclosure depth leads to greater liking of the avatar, it might suggest that the *content* of self-disclosures matters less than *how* they are exchanged (e.g., whether they are reciprocated by the social partner).

## References:

1. Montoya, R. M., Horton, R. S., & Kirchner, J. (2008). Is actual similarity necessary for attraction? A meta-analysis of actual and perceived similarity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25(6), 889-922.
2. Collins, N. L., & Miller, L. C. (1994). Self-disclosure and liking: a meta-analytic review. *Psychological bulletin*, 116(3), 457.
3. Sprecher, S., Treger, S., Wondra, J. D., Hilaire, N., & Wallpe, K. (2013). Taking turns: Reciprocal self-disclosure promotes liking in initial interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(5), 860-866.

**IV2: Disclosure Depth**  
 (Show answers to high-depth questions % of time)

High (80%)  
 Low (20%)



### IV1: Similarity

(Show same answers to the participants % of time)

High (80%) Medium (50%) Low (20%)