

# The embarrassment gap – difference in perceptions when disclosing embarrassing information

**Meikel Soliman**

Leuphana University Lüneburg

**David Loschelder**

Leuphana University Lüneburg

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## **Abstract**

People are not accurate in their perceptions of themselves and of other people. After a conversation with unknown parties, people think the other person likes them less than they like them, resulting in a liking gap. We assume that this effect should be especially pronounced when having to disclose embarrassing information in conversations. This is why, we pose the following research question – Do people overestimate how harshly they think they are being evaluated when disclosing embarrassing information? Indeed, people consistently overestimate how harshly they think they are being perceived compared to how they perceive themselves when disclosing embarrassing information. We call this pattern the embarrassment gap. As impression management is integral to social interaction, we are interested in whether humor is a valid impression management tool when disclosing embarrassing information and if it attenuates the embarrassment gap. We find that, generally, the embarrassment gap persists in various humorous disclosures.

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Behaviour, Decision-Making, Information Processing*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour