

Humorous Self Disclosures as Resistance to Socially Imposed Gender Roles

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This paper demonstrates the function of humorous Self Disclosures (SD) as a pragmatic means for women to grapple with their possible identities in modern society. We analyze instances of SD that are made freely in ordinary social conversation and which place the speaker in a vulnerable position, whether with strangers or friends. The data show how humorous self disclosures are co-constructed in talk-in-interaction where individuals build a shared history through talk and display this history to others in talk. Through this sort of conversational interaction, female interlocutors develop a mutual history within particular constellations of interaction. The humorous frame through which the SDs are realized allows for resistance to roles imposed by the larger societies, in particular gender roles.

Data for this study derive from two groups of women in distinct speech communities and languages during two different eras: 1) US English in Gainesville in 2007; and 2) Porteño Spanish in Buenos Aires more than a dozen years ago.