with people who see us as we see ourselves. Consequently, the theory predicts that high-self-esteem people like people who like them, but that low-self-esteem people like people who dislike them (McNulty & Swann, 1984). Bernichon (1999) conducted a study to test this hypothesis. In this study, college students with varying levels of self-esteem interacted with another student in the context of a get-acquainted discussion. Using random assignment to conditions, half of the participants later learned that the other person liked them and half learned that the other person did not like them. Afterward, the students indicated how interested they were in getting to know the other person better.

Figure 11.7 shows some of the results from this investigation. It is apparent that people preferred to interact with someone who liked them more than with someone who disliked them, and this was no less true among low-self-esteem participants. These data argue against the claim that people who feel bad about themselves seek others who dislike them. Instead, reciprocity is the rule: We like people who like us.

C. Personal Qualities of a Likable Person

You’d be hard-pressed to find someone more likable than Tiger Woods. Whether he is pitching products, making the rounds on the talk-show circuit, or playing an exciting round of golf, Tiger is one of the most appealing celebrities of our day. Tiger’s likability is no mystery: He is competent and attractive, and he has a warm, pleasing manner. In short, he has all the qualities of a likable person (N. H. Anderson, 1968; Folkes & Sears, 1977). In this section, you will learn how these variables affect liking (N. L. Collins & Miller, 1994).