Research Article

The Illusion of Saving Face: How People Symbolically Cope With Embarrassment

Ping Dong[1], Xun (Irene) Huang[2], and Robert S. Wyer, Jr.[3]

[1]Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto; [2]Lingnan College, Sun Yat-Sen University; and [3]CUHK Business School, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract
People who feel embarrassed are often motivated to avoid social contact—that is, to hide their face. At the same time, they may be motivated to restore the positive image that has been tarnished by the embarrassing event (or, in other words, to restore the face lost in the event). Individuals can symbolically employ these coping strategies by choosing commercial products that literally either hide their face (e.g., sunglasses) or repair it (e.g., restorative cosmetics). However, the two coping strategies have different consequences. Although symbolically repairing one's face eliminates aversive feelings of embarrassment and restores one's willingness to engage in social activities, symbolically hiding one's face has little impact.

Feelings of embarrassment result from a public action that observers would consider foolish or inappropriate (Dahl, Manchanda, & Argo, 2001). Embarrassing situations threaten the positive public image that people try to convey and can impair the effectiveness of their social interactions (Brown, 1970; Miller, 1987; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Physiological reactions (e.g., blushing, feeling hot in their face) can also arise (Leary, Britt, Cutlip, & Templeton, 1992). Because embarrassment is aversive, people are motivated to eliminate these feelings and to avoid situations that elicit them (Apsler, 1975). However, although the determinants of embarrassment are well documented, the strategies that people use to cope with the feeling have received much less attention. We investigated these strategies. In doing so, however, we focused on symbolic ways of coping with embarrassment rather than direct means. Furthermore, we examined the effectiveness of these symbolic coping strategies in eliminating the aversion to social contact that embarrassment typically produces.

Embarrassment is inherently a public emotion. This distinguishes it from other self-referent emotions (e.g., guilt or shame), which can be experienced even when one is alone (Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Tangney, Miller,

Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). The feeling of embarrassment can give rise to two different motives. First, it can motivate individuals to avoid the conditions that give rise to it (e.g., being observed by others). This motivation, which is described metaphorically as a desire to "hide one's face," can be manifested in individuals' avoidance of eye contact and in behaviors that increase their psychological distance from others (Keltner, 1995; Keltner & Buswell, 1997). Second, embarrassment can motivate individuals to restore the positive public image that the embarrassing event diminished (Feinberg, Willer, & Keltner, 2012; Miller, 1992; Modigliani, 1971) or, metaphorically, to regain their lost face (Goffman, 1967; White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004).

The concepts of psychological face and physical face are cognitively linked. Consequently, embarrassed individuals might respond to embarrassment not only directly (Brown, 1970; Feinberg et al., 2012) but also symbolically. That is, they may literally try to hide their face (e.g.,

Corresponding Author:
Ping Dong, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, 105 St. George St., Toronto, M5S 3E6 Canada
E-mail: ping.dong12@rotman.utoronto.ca

by wearing sunglasses) or to restore it (e.g., by wearing restorative cosmetics). The next section elaborates this possibility.

Metaphors and Comprehension

Our conceptualization of the phenomena we investigated is based on the role of metaphors in comprehension (for reviews, see Landau, Meier, & Keefer, 2010; Lee & Schwarz, in press). Many concepts have both physical and psychological referents (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). These referents can be traits (e.g., warm, heavy, clean), behaviors, or subjective experiences. "Smelling something fishy," for example, can refer both to a physical sensation and the perception that a situation is not what it appears to be. Similarly, "hiding one's face" refers to both a specific behavior and a more general avoidance of social contact, and "restoring one's face" can refer both to the use of facial cosmetics and to regaining one's esteem in the eyes of others.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) noted that these associations are formed as a result of comprehending an abstract and inherently vague concept in terms of a more concrete concept that is directly related to one's physical experience. Once these concepts become associated, activating one concept can increase the accessibility of the other (Förster & Liberman, 2007; Higgins, 1996; Wyer, 2008). Thus, the physical experience of warmth can activate concepts pertaining not only to this experience but also to social warmth (IJzerman & Semin, 2009; Williams & Bargh, 2008), and concepts activated by the experience of heaviness can lead social issues to be judged as more important (Zhang & Li, 2012). These effects can be bidirectional (Lee & Schwarz, 2012; see also Landau et al., 2010). For example, not only can concepts activated by fishy smells increase one's suspiciousness of others' motives, but concepts activated by suspiciousness can increase sensitivity to fishy smells.

These possibilities have implications for the strategies that individuals use to cope with unpleasant emotions. Individuals are typically motivated to eliminate the negative emotions they experience and the conditions that give rise to them. However, they might attain these objectives symbolically as well as directly (Lee & Schwarz, 2010; Li, Wei, & Soman, 2010; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). For example, Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) found that when individuals recalled an unethical deed and felt motivated to "wash away their sins," they attempted to reduce potential threats to their self-image by physically washing their hands. In a similar vein, individuals who had been induced to tell a lie via e-mail reported a preference for hand-washing liquid over other consumer products in a subsequent choice task, whereas those who had lied orally preferred mouthwash (Lee & Schwarz,

2010). Thus, individuals who had engaged in immoral behavior preferred products that would symbolically "wash away their sins." However, the product that accomplished this was specific to the thing that needed "washing."

These considerations have implications for the strategies that individuals use in coping with embarrassment. In this case, two different symbolic coping strategies might be employed. To reiterate, feelings of embarrassment may motivate individuals both to avoid social contact (to hide their face) and to reestablish their esteem in others' eyes (to restore the face lost in the embarrassing event). If these objectives cannot be attained directly, however, individuals may attempt to attain a goal that is symbolically related. (For a formal analysis of the effects of attaining one goal on the satisfaction of other goals to which it is related, see Kruglanski et al., 2002.) For example, embarrassed individuals might symbolically avoid being seen by others by literally hiding their face (e.g., wearing dark glasses). Alternatively, they might symbolically repair their loss of face by using restorative facial cream.

Consequences of Symbolic Coping

Although symbolic strategies for coping with negative emotions may be applied, their actual effectiveness is unclear. To our knowledge, only one study (Xu, Zwick, & Schwarz, 2012) has considered the consequences of symbolic coping, and this study, which concerned the effect of reactions to good or bad luck in a gambling situation, did not concern reactions to emotion per se.

We assumed that the effectiveness of symbolic coping strategies would be similar to that of the strategies they symbolize. If this is so, the two strategies for coping with embarrassment may not be equally effective. Avoiding social contact in one situation does not decrease feelings of embarrassment that individuals experienced previously and therefore may not affect their subsequent desire to avoid social contact. Correspondingly, symbolically avoiding social contact by hiding one's face should have little impact on people's feelings of embarrassment and their later behavior. In contrast, behaving in a way that restores the positive self-image individuals present to others should decrease their feelings of embarrassment and reestablish their willingness to have social contact. To this extent, symbolically restoring their face (e.g., by wearing restorative facial cream) should be effective.

We investigated these possibilities in three studies. Participants recalled an embarrassing past experience, thereby re-eliciting the feelings that had accompanied the experience originally. We tested whether induced embarrassment increased participants' preference for products that symbolically hid their face (e.g., large and dark

sunglasses) or symbolically repaired it (e.g., restorative cosmetics). We then assessed what effects these symbolic coping strategies had on participants' subsequent willingness to engage in social behavior.

Experiment 1

Embarrassed and nonembarrassed participants were given the opportunity to choose sunglasses that varied in both size and tint. We expected that embarrassed participants would have a greater preference for large, dark sunglasses than nonembarrassed participants would.

Method

Fifty-one undergraduate students from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (18 males, 33 females; mean age = 20.65 years) participated in return for 40 Hong Kong dollars (HK$40; about US$5). Participants were instructed to write about several different types of personal experiences. On this pretense, participants in the *embarrassment* condition spent 8 min describing a situation in which they had felt embarrassed, after being given some examples (e.g., walking into the opposite-sex restroom). Participants in the *no-embarrassment* condition wrote about a typical day at school. All participants then indicated how involved, interested, and engaged they were in the writing task, using scales from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very*). Responses to these items (α = .92) were averaged.

Participants then performed what they were told was an unrelated product-evaluation task being conducted by a different researcher. They were told that a sunglasses manufacturer was launching a new product line and, on this pretense, were shown eight pictures. Four pictures showed a male model wearing sunglasses that varied in lens size and tint. Four other pictures portrayed a female model wearing similar glasses. Participants reported their reactions to each pair of glasses, using scales from −5 (*dislike*) to 5 (*like*), and indicated how likely they were to purchase each pair, using scales from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very likely*). Finally, they reported how they had felt while they were writing about their experience along five dimensions: embarrassed, ashamed, afraid, angry, and upset; responses were made using scales from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very*).

Results

Participants reported feeling more embarrassed in the embarrassment condition ($M = 5.82$) than in the no-embarrassment condition ($M = 3.00$), $F(1, 49) = 14.58$, $p < .001$. However, embarrassed and nonembarrassed participants did not differ in the feelings they reported along other dimensions ($Fs < 1$) or in their engagement in the writing task (embarrassment condition: $M = 6.71$; no-embarrassment condition: $M = 6.35$), $F(1, 49) = 1.96$, $p = .17$.

Preliminary analyses revealed no systematic effects of either participant sex or the sex of the model ($ps > .10$). Therefore, participants' liking for each type of sunglasses was averaged over male and female models. The top half of Table 1 shows these evaluations as a function of embarrassment conditions and the size and tint of the sunglasses. Participants generally evaluated the sunglasses more favorably if they were embarrassed ($M = -0.26$) than if they were not ($M = -1.31$), $F(1, 49) = 21.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .30$. However, embarrassment interacted with both lens size, $F(1, 49) = 28.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .37$, and tint, $F(1, 49) = 8.64$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$. Specifically, the difference between judgments in the embarrassment and no-embarrassment conditions was greater when the lenses of the glasses were large (mean difference = 1.85) than when they were small (mean difference = 0.26), and was greater when the glasses were dark (mean difference = 1.48) than when they were light (mean difference = 0.62). The three-way interaction of embarrassment, lens size, and tint was not reliable ($p > .20$).

Analyses of participants' purchase intentions yielded similar conclusions, as shown in the bottom half of Table 1. These intentions were generally greater in the

Table 1. Mean Scores for Liking of and Willingness to Purchase Sunglasses as a Function of Embarrassment Condition and Sunglasses Attributes (Experiment 1)

Measure and attributes of sunglasses	Embarrassment condition	No-embarrassment condition
Liking		
Small, light sunglasses	−1.32 (1.18)	−0.89 (1.47)
Small, dark sunglasses	−0.65 (0.99)	−1.58 (0.77)
Large, light sunglasses	0.12 (1.78)	−1.56 (2.12)
Large, dark sunglasses	0.80 (2.01)	−1.22 (2.32)
Willingness to purchase		
Small, light sunglasses	4.61 (1.20)	4.97 (1.51)
Small, dark sunglasses	5.14 (0.96)	4.61 (1.38)
Large, light sunglasses	5.03 (0.82)	4.14 (1.43)
Large, dark sunglasses	5.53 (0.92)	4.47 (1.12)

Note: Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

embarrassment condition (M = 5.08) than in the no-embarrassment condition (M = 4.55), $F(1, 49)$ = 9.89, $p < .01$, η_p^2 = .17. However, the magnitude of this difference was greater when the glasses were large (mean difference = 0.97) than when they were small (mean difference = 0.08), $F(1, 49)$ = 12.78, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .21, and was greater when the glasses were dark (mean difference = 0.79) than when they were light (mean difference = 0.26), $F(1, 49)$ = 4.17, $p < .05$, η_p^2 = .08.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we sought to replicate the results of Experiment 1 and to demonstrate the influence of embarrassment on attempts to symbolically repair one's face.

Method

Sixty-seven undergraduates from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (23 males, 44 females; mean age = 20.52 years) participated in return for HK$40. We again manipulated participants' embarrassment by asking them to write about either an embarrassing experience or a typical school day. Their engagement in the writing task was also assessed as in Experiment 1. Then, in what they were told was an unrelated study, participants were asked to imagine that they were in a department store and were looking around to see if there was anything they needed to buy. On this pretense, they were presented with a list of eight products of four different types. Of these, one was a face-hiding product (sunglasses), three were body-hiding products (scarves, shoes, and socks), and two were face-restoring products (cosmetics and facial moisturizer). The remaining two products, watches and handbags, were fillers. For each product, participants indicated how willing they would be to visit the part of the store that sold it, using a scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very*). Finally, participants reported how they had felt when they were describing the experience, using a scale from 0 (*not embarrassed at all*) to 10 (*very embarrassed*).

Results

Participants reported feeling more embarrassed in the embarrassment condition (M = 5.71) than in the no-embarrassment condition (M = 3.00), $F(1, 65)$ = 20.79, $p < .001$. However, their engagement in the writing task did not differ (embarrassment condition: M = 4.88; no-embarrassment condition: M = 4.53; $F < 1$).

Ratings of shoes, socks, and scarves were averaged to provide a single index of participants' interest in body-hiding products. Ratings of cosmetics and facial moisturizer were averaged to provide a single index of participants' interest in face-restoring products. Data

were then analyzed as a function of embarrassment condition and product type (face hiding vs. body hiding vs. face restoring), with the latter treated as a within-subjects variable. This analysis yielded a significant interaction of these variables, $F(1, 65)$ = 3.00, p = .05, η_p^2 = .04. The results, shown in Table 2, indicated that although embarrassed participants reported greater interest than nonembarrassed participants in both face-hiding products (embarrassment condition: M = 6.29; no-embarrassment condition: M = 5.22), $F(1, 65)$ = 9.60, $p < .01$, η_p^2 = .13, and face-restoring products (embarrassment condition: M = 6.03; no-embarrassment condition: M = 5.33), $F(1, 65)$ = 6.96, $p < .01$, η_p^2 = .10, their preference for body-hiding products did not differ (embarrassment condition: M = 5.30; no-embarrassment condition: M = 5.37; $F < 1$). Judgments of the two filler items also did not differ (embarrassment condition: M = 6.60; no-embarrassment condition: M = 6.28; $F < 1$). In other words, the effects of embarrassment were restricted to products that pertained to the face rather than to products more generally.

Experiment 3

Experiments 1 and 2 confirmed our hypothesis that embarrassment increases preferences not only for products that hide one's face but also for products that symbolically restore the face lost in the embarrassing situation. As we have noted, however, these coping strategies may not be equally effective. To investigate this possibility, we had embarrassed and nonembarrassed participants report their relative preference for activities they could perform alone and activities they could perform with others. However, some participants wore sunglasses while they made these ratings, whereas others applied a restorative facial cream. We expected that when embarrassed participants did not use either of these coping strategies, they would prefer activities they could perform alone to those they could perform with others. We further expected that because wearing sunglasses would not eliminate the embarrassment participants were feeling, it would have little effect on their avoidance of social activities. In contrast, wearing restorative facial cream should decrease participants' embarrassment and reduce their motivation to avoid social contact. Consequently, their

Table 2. Mean Scores for Interest in Product Categories as a Function of Embarrassment Condition (Experiment 2)

Product category	Embarrassment condition	No-embarrassment condition
Face hiding	6.29 (1.74)	5.22 (1.05)
Body hiding	5.30 (1.78)	5.37 (1.95)
Face repairing	6.03 (1.39)	5.33 (0.72)

Note: Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

preference for social activities should be similar to that of nonembarrassed participants.

Method

Ninety-nine undergraduates from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (31 males, 68 females; mean age = 20.60 years) participated in return for HK$40. They were assigned randomly to conditions of a 2 (emotion: embarrassment vs. no embarrassment) × 3 (coping conditions: no coping vs. face hiding vs. face repairing) design.

Procedures for inducing embarrassment and assessing task involvement followed those used in the previous studies. Participants in the *face-hiding* condition were told that a local sunglasses company had asked us to obtain reactions to a new product they planned to market locally, that evaluations of sunglasses are more accurate after they have been worn for a while, and that we therefore wanted participants to wear them while performing an unrelated task. On this pretense, we asked them to wear a pair of large, dark sunglasses similar to those shown to participants in Experiment 2. The procedure in the *face-repairing* condition was analogous. Participants were told that we were helping a cosmetics company obtain reactions to a new restorative facial cream and that "the main selling point of this facial cream is its revitalizing effect . . . consumers feel they have a brighter face after applying it." On this pretense, participants applied a sample of the cream thoroughly to their face and kept it on while performing the next task. In the *no-coping* condition, these procedures were omitted.

Participants then proceeded to an ostensibly unrelated study. They were told that we were interested in the activities college students like to perform, that they would be given nine pairs of activities, and that their task was to indicate which activity they would prefer if they "had to make a choice at this moment." One activity in each pair was performed with other people (e.g., going to dinner with four friends, playing basketball or badminton), and the other was performed alone (having dinner by yourself, jogging on the treadmill). The number of choices that reflected a preference for a social rather than a nonsocial activity was computed.

Finally, participants reported both their feelings at the moment and their feelings at the time they had written about their experience along five dimensions: embarrassed, happy, calm, upset, and ashamed; responses were made using scales from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*very*).

Results

Embarrassment. Scores for participants' self-reported embarrassment at the end of the experiment and for the embarrassment they recalled having when writing about their experience are shown in Table 3 as a function of embarrassment condition and coping strategy. As expected, participants recalled being generally more embarrassed while writing about an embarrassing experience ($M = 4.86$) than while writing about a daily life event ($M = 3.30$), $F(1, 93) = 13.63$, $p < .001$.

Of greater interest, however, were participants' perceptions of the decrease in their feelings of embarrassment over the course of the experiment. These decreases, shown in the third column of the table, indicate that the decrease in embarrassment in the no-embarrassment condition was negligible in all three coping conditions (mean decrease = 0.41; $F < 1$). It was also negligible when participants were embarrassed but were not given an opportunity to cope (mean decrease = 0.31). Furthermore, although the decrease was somewhat greater when participants symbolically hid their face (mean decrease = 1.12), this decrease was also not significant ($p > .10$). In contrast, participants who were able to restore their face saw their feelings of embarrassment significantly decrease over the course of the experiment (mean decrease = 1.69), $F(1, 93) = 24.92$, $p < .01$. The

Table 3. Mean Scores for Self-Reported Embarrassment as a Function of Embarrassment and Coping Conditions (Experiment 3)

Embarrassment condition and coping condition	Initial judgment	Final judgment	Difference
Embarrassment condition			
No coping	5.23 (1.88)	4.92 (2.02)	0.31 (0.86)
Face hiding (sunglasses)	4.94 (2.49)	3.82 (1.98)	1.12 (1.87)
Face repairing (facial cream)	4.53 (2.12)	2.84 (2.73)	1.68 (1.49)*
No-embarrassment condition			
No coping	3.14 (1.75)	3.00 (1.62)	0.14 (1.10)
Face hiding (sunglasses)	2.79 (2.12)	2.21 (1.58)	0.57 (1.51)
Face repairing (facial cream)	3.73 (2.59)	3.23 (2.49)	0.50 (1.60)

Note: Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.
*$p < .05$.

three-way interaction of time of judgment, coping strategy, and embarrassment was not significant ($p > .10$). However, the interaction of time of judgment and coping strategy in the embarrassment condition alone was quite reliable, $F(1, 93) = 5.17$, $p < .05$, whereas the comparable interaction in the no-embarrassment condition was negligible ($F < 1$).

In contrast, analyses of emotions reported along other dimensions yielded no significant results ($ps > .17$). These results suggested that face-restoring strategy did not have any influence on other negative emotions and did not increase participants' positive feelings in general.

Preference for social activities. The mean number of social leisure activities participants chose is shown in Table 4. Analyses yielded significant effects of both embarrassment, $F(1, 93) = 5.20$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, and coping condition, $F(2, 93) = 5.69$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, and the interaction of those variables, $F(2, 93) = 6.36$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. Participants' choices in the no-embarrassment condition did not depend on whether participants had worn sunglasses, applied facial cream, or done neither of those things. When participants had written about an embarrassing experience, however, they were appreciably more likely to choose social activities after applying facial cream ($M = 7.21$) than after wearing sunglasses ($M = 5.35$), $F(1, 93) = 12.74$, $p < .01$, or neither applying facial cream nor wearing sunglasses ($M = 4.92$), $F(1, 93) = 16.62$, $p < .01$. Choices in the latter two conditions did not differ ($F < 1$). Put another way, embarrassment significantly decreased preferences for social activities in both the no-coping condition (embarrassment condition: $M = 4.92$; no-embarrassment condition: $M = 6.14$), $F(1, 93) = 4.13$, $p < .05$, and the face-hiding condition (embarrassment condition: $M = 5.35$; no-embarrassment condition: $M = 7.07$), $F(1, 93) = 9.38$, $p < .01$. However, the effect of embarrassment in the face-repairing condition was nonsignificantly in the opposite direction (embarrassment condition: $M = 7.21$; no-embarrassment condition: $M = 6.45$), $F(1, 93) = 2.40$, $p > .10$.

General Discussion

Individuals who recall an embarrassing event re-experience the negative feelings they had at the time. As a result, they become attracted to both products that symbolically hide their face and products that symbolically restore it. However, these symbolic coping strategies are not equally effective. That is, using face-restoring products reduces the embarrassment that people are experiencing and reinstates their willingness to interact with others. In contrast, symbolically hiding one's face (wearing sunglasses) does not have these rehabilitating effects. These findings are consistent with evidence that bodily sensations can have an impact on judgments and behavior that are only metaphorically related to these sensations (Landau et al., 2010; Zhang & Li, 2012). However, only a few studies have identified symbolic strategies of coping with emotions (Lee & Schwarz, 2010; Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006), and our research provides the first evidence of the consequences of using symbolic coping strategies.

Our conceptualization of these effects was guided by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) assumption that concepts of concrete behavior and subjective experiences become associated with concepts of more abstract and vaguely defined reactions. Consequently, one of these associated concepts can activate another under conditions in which it applies. An alternative conceptualization is based on research on embodied cognition (Barsalou, 2008; Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2005), which assumes that bodily sensations, subjective experiences, concepts associated with these experiences, and behavioral dispositions are contained in a single mental representation and that one component of the representation (e.g., a subjective experience) can have a direct effect on the others. Considered within this framework, our finding that the same subjective experience (feelings of embarrassment) can give rise to different metaphor-related behavioral dispositions suggests that more than one metaphorical concept can be activated by bodily feedback and that the one that predominates is determined by the particular stimuli that happen to be present in the situation at hand.

The coping strategies we identified in this research are obviously specific to embarrassment. However, research on mood-repair processes (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988; Lazarus & Folkman, 1991; Zillmann, 1988) has indicated that individuals are generally motivated to reduce or eliminate the negative feelings they experience and that

Table 4. Mean Number of Social Activities Chosen as a Function of Embarrassment and Coping Conditions (Experiment 3)

Coping condition	Embarrassment condition	No-embarrassment condition
No coping	4.92 (1.55)	6.14 (1.56)
Face hiding (sunglasses)	5.35 (1.50)	7.07 (1.49)
Face repairing (facial cream)	7.21 (1.72)	6.45 (1.50)

Note: Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

they use indirect means of doing so when the actual cause of their feelings cannot be immediately eliminated (Andrade, 2005; Shen & Wyer, 2008). This suggests that in the absence of means of embarrassment-specific coping, individuals might employ other means of eliminating their negative feelings that are not directly related to embarrassment.

Two possible qualifications of our findings should be noted. First, wearing restorative cosmetics might make individuals feel socially self-confident and increase their willingness to participate in social situations independently of the cosmetics' face-saving implications. (The description of the cream as making faces "brighter" could have contributed to this effect.) However, this effect would not necessarily imply a decrease in feelings of embarrassment (contrary to our findings in Experiment 3). Moreover, differences in self-confidence could not account for embarrassed participants' preference for the restorative facial cream in Experiment 2, in which the facial cream was not actually applied.

Second, the participants in our studies were Hong Kong Chinese. The motivation to react to embarrassment by avoiding social contact and to reestablish the positive image one wishes to present to others may be fairly universal. However, the effectiveness of symbolic means of attaining these objectives requires that the metaphorical meaning of these terms be well known to individuals themselves. Although the metaphorical concept of hiding one's face is fairly widespread, the concepts of losing face and saving face are more pervasive in Asian than in Western cultures. It is interesting to speculate that although the effects of symbolically hiding one's face are likely to generalize to Western cultures, the effect of symbolically restoring one's face might not.

Author Contributions

P. Dong and X. Huang developed the study concept. All authors contributed to the study design. Data collection was overseen by P. Dong and X. Huang. P. Dong and X. Huang analyzed and interpreted the data under the supervision of R. S. Wyer. All authors contributed equally to the preparation of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript for submission. First authorship is shared equally by P. Dong and X. Huang.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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