

**Beyond Truth and Lies:  
Non-truthful Information Managing and Its Consequences**

by

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To the Truth

To all the days I have struggled to find it,  
To all the days I have been and will be struggling to live according to it,  
And to those who have been affected by my non-truthful communications.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this dissertation, I investigate how social interactions stimulate non-truthful management of self-threatening information and the consequences thereof. The first chapter focuses on interpersonal consumer communication in situations that involve social disparity and how moral emotions such as embarrassment, guilt, or shame underlie the behavior. While deception has been examined extensively as a consumer response to requests for self-threatening information, we theorize and demonstrate that evasion is a distinct, often preferred behavioral response to the same goal. Through four studies, I show that although evasion and deception are both driven by anticipated embarrassment, the behaviors have different antecedents and emotional consequences. I find that consumers employ evasion (non-answer) more than deception (false answer) potentially to decrease the extent to which they experience guilt and shame for their dishonest behavior. While deception (but not evasion) avoidance is driven by the risk of being exposed by an informed other, evasion (but not deception) avoidance is driven by the risk of exposure to a persistent other. Overall, I find evidence that evasion is a distinct, and potentially more common response to self-threatening information exchanges than deception, suggesting that while consumers may not be biased by profit motives, the information they share about their consumption experiences can be contaminated by other distortions that limit its usefulness to consumers.

The second chapter of the dissertation delves into consequences of non-truthful communication tactics. I examine the social consequences of evasive and deceptive tactics in a

consumption setting for which communicational missteps may have economic consequences: a waitperson-customer interaction. Specifically, I investigate the extent to which the information-sharing tactics (i.e., evasion or deception) favored by the waitperson (i.e., communicator) may or may not be consistent with those most likely to be rewarded by the customer. I argue that although the communicator may be more motivated to favor evasion over deception as in Chapter 1, the audience might not respond as favorably to evasion, as it lacks informativeness and believability. The negative impact of paradoxical social consequence is mitigated when the further information search leads to the moral consideration of other-(vs. self-) benefitting motive of the non-truthful communication.

Overall, this dissertation builds upon the literature on consumer morality and interpersonal communication by pursuing a rigorous examination of a less than truthful information sharing tactics that have received limited attention in the literature.

## INTRODUCTION

People share their thoughts, feelings, values, experiences, and facts to other people. People seek information from others in hopes to navigate through their decision-making processes more smoothly in everyday life. More freely people share and receive information via internet-mediated platforms, and some watchfully call this age ‘the era of information overload.’ Not only has information grown in amount to an overwhelming extent, but also the accuracy of information has been threatened. Let alone the general anonymity of the web space fueling the decline of veracity from many information exchanges, a variety of factors may result in non-truthful information exchange. While consumers automatically discount the trustworthiness of firm sources of product information (Main, Dahl, & Darke, 2007) due to their profit motives, information coming from other consumers might also be distorted due to their self-presentational motives (Barasch and Berger 2013; Packard and Wooten 2013) or need for uniqueness (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010).

This dissertation recognizes the importance of information to consumers: how it shapes consumers’ knowledge structures, perspectives, perceptions, and ways in which consumers make purchase and resource allocation decisions. Moreover, how consumers evaluate and/or enjoy their consumption experiences may be malleable depending on what information they have. This dissertation also acknowledges that the information consumers acquire through various social interactions around their consumption experiences may not reflect the true reality. Therefore, this

dissertation devotes deliberate attention to instances of non-truthful information exchange that arise in consumption settings.

Particularly, this dissertation investigates a specific type of information sharing that often involves a form of self-presentation. That is, information can be shared to others arguably as a medium to present one's self in a favorable light. In other cases, however, sharing information as is might be undesirable to consumers when others having the information might reflect negatively on the self. This presents challenges to individuals who must effectively manage disclosure of information to achieve their self-presentational goals. In other words, when a piece of information does not align well with your self-presentational goal, it may not be obvious how to best handle it. Consequently, interpersonal communications often comprise false information, and other instances of communication involve withholding information to only partially reflect the reality. Antecedents and consequences, along with demonstrations of such non-truthful information sharing are discussed in this dissertation.

Extant research on non-truthful communication has focused primarily on deception, and has found that individuals are sometimes willing to lie to achieve gains or to avoid losses (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996). Consumer researchers have also shown that consumers lie to service providers to attain financial gains (Andrade & Ho, 2009; Anthony & Cowley, 2012). Moreover, Goffman (1955)'s suggestion that all participants in social interactions are engaged in certain practices to avoid being embarrassed has motivated consumer research to examine the theoretical explanations to describe the precursors to interpersonal deception in terms of impression management (Sengupta, Dahl, & Gorn, 2002) and social comparison (Argo, White, & Dahl, 2006). Yet, while deception is extensively documented as a strategic communication tactic often used to attain consumer goals in social interactions, less

effort has been devoted to understanding of the downstream consequences of managing information in such a way. Only recently has consumer literature started to recognize that there exists an “acceptable range of dishonesty” (Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008). Insofar as the notion alludes to the existence of unacceptable consequences of the dishonest information managing, an investigation of an alternative to deception in handling unfavorable information is justified.

Two chapters of this dissertation attempts to fill this gap to explain a commonly occurring yet overlooked phenomenon, i.e., evasive communication among individuals, on the basis of the self-presentation literature. Evasion, which refers to providing ambiguous, vague, and/or irrelevant information or being avoidant, has been suggested by communications researchers as a means to which deceptive communicators can resort in order to avoid getting caught in a deception (Burgoon, Buller, Ebesu, & Rockwell, 1994; Carlson, George, Burgoon, Adams, & White, 2004) and more recently, as an appealing strategy a salesperson can use by consumer researchers (*obfuscation*; Bickart, Morrin, & Ratneshwar, 2015). With a primary goal of empirically establishing evasion as an alternative to deception, I extend literature on deceptive self-presentation. Specifically, I examine self-presentational motives that underlie social interactions (e.g., to avoid being in the short end of social comparison, Chapter 1; to maximize economic compensation gained through self-presentation, Chapter 2) and how those motives can stimulate dishonest and fragmentary communication of information. I further consider downstream consequences of both of the non-truthful communication tactics, in hopes to achieve a more thorough and comprehensive analysis of information management tactics that individuals can employ to fare well in social situations that involve unfavorable information.

More specifically, I comparatively examine two different maneuvers of non-truthful information management, evasion and deception, to document when, why, and how individuals

engage in such information sharing that is less than truthful. In doing so, I show that evasion is a distinct and often-preferred alternative to deception. An examination of consequences follows, first by attempting to understand emotional outcomes of engaging in the non-truthful communications to further support discriminant validity between deception and evasion, and second in search of implications to social interactions that may involve economic effects. I focus the scope of social interaction to face-to-face interactions in this dissertation to uncover the utilizing of untruthful communications in a context that requires immediate self-presentational efforts. For greater generalizability, I test my theoretical arguments with regards to the aspects of non-truthful communications in two different consumption contexts: consumer-to-consumer communication and waitperson-customer interaction.

A list of specific questions I address in this dissertation is presented below:

1. What communication tactics do individuals employ in social interactions that potentially involve disclosure of information that might reflect unfavorably to the self?
  - 1.1. Is deception a common means?
  - 1.2. Is evasion a unique and viable alternative to deception?
  - 1.3. Which tactic is generally more preferred?
2. What (emotional) aspect(s) about the information drives individuals to engage in deception and/or evasion? Does the anticipation of 'feeling embarrassed' underlie the process?
3. What are emotional outcomes of deception and evasion? Do deception and evasion result in different levels of emotional consequences?
4. Can the tendency to use deception or evasion be moderated? What situational factors affect consumer's willingness to be deceptive vs. evasive?
5. What are some social consequences of engaging in deception vs. evasion?



- 5.1. Which of the tactics is more welcomed by the recipient?
  - 5.2. How do the differences in perceived believability and perceived informativeness affect the recipient's further information search behavior?
  - 5.3. Do the recipients view the two tactics equally negatively? Do the two tactics evoke differential responses from the recipients once they receive truthful information?
6. What communication tactics do individuals employ in social interactions that potentially involve disclosure of information that might reflect unfavorably to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party?
    - 6.1. Is evasion a common means of avoid disclosing a inconvenient truth that might reflect negatively on other person?
    - 6.2. How do the recipients respond to non-truthful communications with other-benefitting (vs. self-interested) motives?

The first chapter of this dissertation, in a series of laboratory experiments, seeks to answer questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 by investigating a series of face-to-face interactions between two individuals that involve social comparison in their performances as consumers. The second chapter is intended to revisit some of the questions examined in the first chapter and to extend the findings taken from consumer-to-consumer communication to another domain of interpersonal communication (i.e., service provider – customer interaction). Furthermore, the second chapter delves into the downstream socio-economic consequences of evasion and deception (Q5), mainly focusing on how the recipients of those communications would respond. Two dimensions of non-truthful communications, (i) ambiguity of the information (lack of informativeness) and (ii) untruthfulness of the information (lack of believability), were examined in terms of their influences on the recipient's subsequent decision-making. Finally, I test the

possibility of negativity of non-truthful nature of the communication being overridden if other-benefitting (vs. self-serving) motives underlie those communications (Q6).

In sum, the two chapters in this dissertation together seek to provide scientific understanding of evasion and deception within interpersonal communications. I demonstrate how individuals manage information flow within the meaningful intersection of self-presentation and morality. Furthermore, the two chapters explain what emotional aspects are accompanied with the non-truthful communications, and also present the downstream consequences of those communications. With this intellectual endeavor as a whole, I intend to contribute to continued effort in the Marketing field (1) to promote consumer welfare by providing insights that would improve the quality of communications outcomes within various social contexts that consumers engage in, and (2) to inform firms and service providers with a better understanding of the dynamics of communications with and among consumers to help them establish and maintain more solid relationships with consumers.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Beyond Truth and Lies: Evasion as an Alternative to Deception to Manage Unfavorable Consumption Information**

Consumers participate in a variety of conversations that not only influence prospective purchases, but also facilitate evaluations of past purchases. In the process of such evaluations of past or potential purchases, consumer-generated information is viewed as trustworthier and more likely to be driven by altruistic as opposed to self-interested motives (Bickart and Schindler 2001). Relatively speaking, the trustworthiness of commercial messages is often discounted as a consequence of persuasion knowledge (Friestad and Wright 1994).

While consumers often express skepticism about firm sources of product information (Main, Dahl and Darke 2007), they might also have cause to question the quality of information provided by fellow consumers. A growing body of evidence suggests consumers try to present themselves in a favorable light to others in consumer-to-consumer communication (cf. Berger 2014 review). Such efforts can potentially impact the information they share with others and the audience with whom they share these messages (Barasch and Berger 2013; Packard and Wooten 2013), especially when the interaction entails social comparison. For example, consumers are willing to deceive others to avoid sharing information that reflects unfavorably upon them (Anthony and Cowley 2012; Argo, Dahl and White 2011; Argo and Shiv 2012; Argo, White, and Dahl 2006; Mazar, On and Ariely 2008; Sengupta, Dahl, and Gorn 2002).

Although considerable attention has been paid to the use of deception in consumer-to-consumer communication contexts as one of the most common ways people manage the unflattering consumption information, some studies have reported levels of lying intentions that suggest consumers generally are reluctant to lie to each other. For example, across four studies presented by Argo, White, and Dahl (2006), the mean score on the lying index exceeded the scale midpoint in only two of 16 experimental conditions. That is, on average, participants reported being unlikely to deceive. If these participants were being honest about their lying intentions, then how else might they respond to requests for information that may not reflect favorably upon them?

“You don’t tell deliberate lies, but sometimes, you have to be evasive.”

- Margaret Thatcher, 1976 -

Prime Minister Thatcher’s comment about the need to be evasive suggests a plausible answer to this question. Evasiveness, defined as the avoidance of a clear and direct answer to a question (Merriam-Webster 2012), has been proposed as a non-obvious alternative to authenticity or deception (Leary 1995), a probable response to concerns about unfavorable self-presentations (Wooten and Reed 2000), and an effective approach to handling difficult questions, especially when audiences devote relatively more attention to the speaker than to the message (Rogers and Norton 2011). More recently, consumer researchers have extended their efforts in examining the outcomes of evasive communication to find an ‘obfuscating salesperson’ may effectively increase the prospects of a sale depending on factors that affect trust perceptions of the salesperson (Bickart, Morrin, and Ratneshwar 2015).

In the present chapter, we attempt to advance understanding of evasion as a tactic used to manage disclosures of consumption information when communicating truthfully could present threat to the self in an interaction. Although scholars have devoted considerable attention to deception as one means of avoiding the truth, evasion represents a largely unexamined means of achieving a similar end. In this research, we conduct four experiments to: (1) assess people's tendencies to evade rather than deceive as a means of avoiding the truth about their consumption outcomes, (2) examine differences between evasion and deception by exploring psychological consequences of evasion versus deception and factors that differentially affect consumers' intentions to evade versus deceive.

Before presenting our experiments, we provide a conceptual foundation to support: (1) the proposed distinction between evasion and deception, (2) shame and guilt as psychological consequences of deception more so than of evasion, (3) the threat of embarrassment as a driver of intentions to evade or deceive, and (4) discredibility and persistence as unique moderators of intentions to deceive and evade, respectively.

## **1.1 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **1.1.1 Evasion as an Alternative to Deception**

Despite considerable interest in consumer lying (Anthony and Cowley 2012; Argo, Dahl and White 2011; Argo and Shiv 2012; Argo et al. 2006; Mazar et al. 2008; Sengupta et al. 2002), our understanding of how consumers avoid truthful disclosures of consumption information remains limited. Scholars often define deception following DePaulo's seminal paper on lying (DePaulo et al. 1996, 980) as, "the deliberate fostering of a false impression rather than the judicious editing of a true one."

We offer that this definition of deception implies a third category: one in which people can avoid telling the truth without telling a lie. It further implies that the so-called “lie of omission” may be a misnomer, because the “judicious editing” of truthful information does not constitute deception at all. Instead, such responses appear to fit under a broader category of evasive behaviors that include providing a vague or ambiguous response, clamming up, dodging questions or changing the subject (Rogers and Norton 2011; Schlenker and Weigold 1989; Wooten and Reed 2000).

In contrast to DePaulo’s definition, some scholars have conceptualized half-truths as whole lies, particularly if the communicator intends to deceive (Ekman 1985) or has the potential to “profit from lies without, technically, telling lies” (Goffman 1959, 62). Kirmani and Campbell (2004) similarly lumped withholding or concealing consumer information together with deception as a consumer tactic in managing interactions with salespeople. With this more expansive view of deception, many responses for which any pertinent fact is omitted can potentially be viewed as “lies of omission,” particularly if the communicator intended to introduce false inferences by this omission or the audience was in fact actually misled.

Regardless of whether one favors the more restrictive definition or a more expansive one, there remains a category of responses that do not reveal the truth, yet also do not involve either deceptive intent by the communicator or deceptive inferences by the audience. The congressional testimony of General Motors CEO, Mary Barra, provides a recent case in point. In response to multiple questions about her company’s mishandling of the problems created by defective ignition switches in many GM vehicles, Ms. Barra indicated that the company was investigating the matter. That is, instead of providing a direct answer containing the most relevant facts or

(assuming an investigation is actually in process) providing false or misleading information, she gave “non-answers” to many questions.

The present research seeks to establish this type of evasive behavior as an alternative to deception when the truth is an unattractive option. Although the scope of evasion and its relationship to “lies of omission” have depended on whether one favors a restrictive or expansive definition of deception, we propose that evasion is a distinct response alternative that is likely to have different antecedents and consequences than deception.

In the present research, we seek to establish evasion as a distinct behavioral response to potential disclosures of self-threatening information, with different antecedents and consequences than deception. Surprisingly, empirical examination of when and why people are evasive in social interactions is scant. In two unpublished manuscripts, Leary and his students found that people avoid revealing information about themselves when their self-concepts are inconsistent with personal attributes valued by their conversation partners (Lamphere and Leary 1988; Spivey and Leary 1990). That is, study participants were less likely to voluntarily provide self-relevant information when their traits (e.g., introversion or light-heartedness) did not match their conversation partners’ preferences (e.g., extroversion or seriousness). While withholding information about undesired traits (a non-answer) is qualitatively different than falsely claiming exaggerated levels of desired traits (a deceptive answer), the two approaches reflect distinct means of achieving similar ends – avoiding the disclosure of truthful information.

Whereas Leary and colleagues explored the tendencies of people to give evasive responses, Rogers and Norton (2011) considered the perspectives of listeners who receive them. They found that people can fail to detect a political speaker’s efforts to dodge questions, especially when the speaker gives answers to closely related questions or when listeners focus



more on the speaker than the message. Moreover, ‘artful dodgers’ who answer tangentially-related questions in a fluent manner are rated more positively than those who answer the actual question, but do so less fluently. Similarly, Bickart et al. (2015) defined obfuscation as a response to a question that “(a) does not directly answer the question; (b) is intentionally vague and unclear; and (c) impedes the *target*’s ability to obtain desired information.” They examined obfuscation by salespeople, finding that under certain conditions, it represents a potentially advantageous selling approach. Taken together, this works suggest there may be some psychosocial advantages to evasion for the speaker.

In summary, people actively manage the information they reveal about themselves, especially information that presents them in an unfavorable light (Argo et al. 2006). Although deception is a well-documented means of managing the flow of self-threatening information, including information about consumer performance disparities (Argo et al. 2006, 2011; Sengupta et al. 2002), evasion is a less obvious means to a similar end (Leary 1995). However, neither consumer researchers nor social psychologists have devoted much attention to examining evasion as an alternative to deception or truthfulness, the potentially different psychological consequences of these behaviors, the psychological mechanisms linked to evasion and deception, and the moderators of intentions to evade rather than deceive. The present research seeks to fill these gaps by highlighting how evasion is distinct from deception as well as truthful communication.

### **1.1.2 Emotional Consequences of Evasion versus Deception**

We seek support for our proposed distinction between evasion and deception by exploring consumers’ emotional responses to employing each tactic. Recent efforts to understand

consequences of truth avoidance (e.g., Anthony and Cowley 2012; Argo and Shiv 2012) have focused primarily on its financial and behavioral consequences and exclusively on deception. In the present research, we seek initial support for our proposed distinction between evasion and deception by exploring consumers' emotional responses to employing each tactic. Specifically, we examine differences in negative self-conscious affect (i.e., guilt and shame) as a result of deceiving versus evading.

Because people typically value honesty, deception is a potential affront to one's perceptions of morality (Bok 2011) and self-concept maintenance (Mazar et al. 2008). As a result, people have reported feelings of tension, guilt or anxiety during the act of lying (Caso et al. 2005; Ekman and Frank 1993; Vrij et al. 1996). Such feelings are driven in part by the fear of deception detection—being caught in a lie (Zuckerman, DePaulo and Rosenthal 1981). The fear of deception detection has also been associated with feelings of shame (Keltner and Buswell 1996). However, the psychological consequences of deception likely extend beyond the fear of being caught in a lie. When deception is self-interested and therefore a moral transgression, (Mazar et al. 2008), guilt and shame can arise as a result of the blow to one's self-concept associated with being a liar (Ekman and Frank 1993).

Guilt and shame are described as “close cousins” in the family of negative self-conscious affect, with guilt and shame being the private and public manifestations of this affect, respectively (Ekman 1985; Tangney et al. 2006). Both emotions are significantly more aversive than the feelings associated with revealing an embarrassing truth (Tangney et al. 1996) in that they reflect a more serious personal flaw or moral transgression (Buss 1980; Lewis 1992). Accordingly, we expect feelings of shame and guilt to be prevalent among those who deceive. In

contrast, these feelings should be less prevalent among those who evade because evasion allows individuals to avoid the moral transgression associated with sharing false information.

### **1.1.3 Evasion and Deception as Protective Responses to Anticipated Embarrassment**

In his classic analysis of *face-work*, defined as the actions people take to navigate situations with self-threatening implications, Goffman (1959) posits that the norm of self-respect requires individuals to go to certain lengths to protect themselves from threats to their situated identities. Argo et al.'s (2006) finding that victims of unfavorable social comparisons are willing to lie about the prices they paid to protect themselves from the threat of being "taken" is consistent with Goffman's analysis. In Goffman's parlance, Argo and colleagues found that self-respecting consumers are willing to deceive others in order to save face. Although they did not conduct formal tests of mediation, Argo et al.'s discussion of unfavorable social comparisons as threats to public self-images suggests embarrassment as a possible mediator of the effect of consumer performance disparities on individuals' intentions to lie about their consumption outcomes.

Self-presentation theorists have described embarrassment as a reactive response to social predicaments (Leary and Kowalski 1995). That is, people feel embarrassed after presenting themselves unfavorably to others (Ekman 1985; Miller 1995). However, because it is an aversive state (Leary 1995; Miller 1992), embarrassment also serves an important regulatory function that is essential for orderly social interaction and social well-being (Goffman 1963). The fear of embarrassment motivates people to keep their behaviors within the limits of propriety and to withhold information that threatens their public self-images (Leary and Kowalski 1995). The notion that desires to avoid embarrassment can influence future behaviors suggests that

embarrassment can be anticipatory as well as reactive. If people can feel embarrassed for others (Miller 1987, 1992; Stocks et al. 2011), then they should be able to feel embarrassed for future selves (Tangney et al. 1996; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003), and respond accordingly.

We, therefore, propose embarrassment as a mediator of the effect of unfavorable performance disparities on consumers' intentions to provide both evasive and deceptive responses to requests for information about performance outcomes.

#### **1.1.4 Differential Drivers of Evasive versus Deceptive Communication**

While we predict that evasion and deception arise out of a similar need—the anticipated embarrassment of disclosing self-threatening consumption information—the strategies people use to present themselves to others are often influenced by characteristics of the situation and audience at hand. For instance, people present themselves differently to psychologically close than to psychologically distant audiences (Argo et al. 2006, study 3; Tesser and Campbell 1982). Moreover, actors' self-presentations are sometimes constrained by what their audiences know about them (Baumeister and Jones 1978).

To support our conceptualization of evasion and deception as distinct behaviors, we examine how factors pertaining to the information being exchanged would drive evasion independently of deception. Specifically, we discuss disinformation and non-information as two situated risks that should differentially drive intentions to evade and deceive, respectively.

In the present research, we consider how an audience member's possession of relevant information about the actor (discredibility) and how an audience member's motivation to obtain the information (persistence) differentially affect the use of evasion and deception in response to requests for information that could reveal the outcome of an unfavorable

performance disparity. Our primary purpose for examining these two moderators is to provide further evidence that evasion and deception are conceptually distinct behavioral strategies likely to be employed under different circumstances.

*Discredibility.* The more difficult it is for an audience to invalidate a self-presentation, the more likely it is for an actor to self-aggrandize (Schlenker 1980). On the other hand, when someone in the audience is known to possess relevant information about the actor, it should be easy for others to check the veracity of a self-presentation and, consequently, unlikely that the actor will succeed at deception.

Whereas knowledge of the actor is a characteristic of the audience, discredibility is a characteristic of an actor who is at risk of being “exposed” by a knowledgeable other. Goffman (1963) describes actors as *discreditable* when potentially stigmatizing information about them is generally unknown to others, but at risk of being discovered. This risk increases with the presence of someone who has access to relevant information that is not widely known. In the present context, consumers who deceive in the presence of someone who knows the truth are at risk of being discredited. In summary, the greater is the likelihood of consumers’ being discredited by others with relevant information about them, the higher is their cost of deceiving, the lower is their probability of pulling off deceptive performances and, therefore, the lower should be their intentions to deceive. In contrast, evasion involves wholly or partly avoiding the disclosure of relevant information, leaving the other with nothing to discredit. As a result, discredibility should have no impact on consumers’ intentions to evade.

*Persistence.* Persistence is defined as the quality or state of continuing firmly or obstinately with a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition (Oxford 2012). In this research, we consider persistence as a characteristic of an audience member who witnesses a

self-presentation. Research on criminal investigations links the persistence of interrogators to reductions in the amount of evasive or incomplete responses provided by suspects (Inbau, et al. 2011). Evasion is a risky strategy for an individual who faces another who is expected to continue probing for a more definitive answer (Buller, Strzyzewski, and Comstock 1991) because evasiveness can easily be detected in those occasions (Burgoon et al. 1994), especially when listeners focus more on the message than on the speaker (Rogers and Norton 2011). By contrast, continued probing does not necessarily improve an audience's ability to detect deception (Buller et al. 1989). Of course, persistence in understanding and meeting customers' needs has been described as an attribute of effective salespeople (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994), making persistence germane not only to criminal interrogations, but also to personal selling. In summary, the persistence of a key audience member should decrease the probability of pulling off an evasive performance and, therefore reduce actors' intentions to evade, but not deceive.

Overall, we expect the potential to be discredited by a knowledgeable other to affect consumers' intentions to deceive, but not evade; and the presence of a persistent other to affect consumers' intentions to evade, but not deceive. Together, we expect the two moderating variables to support the proposed distinction between evasive and deceptive responses by showing that each tactic has at least one distinct antecedent.

## **1.2 Research Overview**

To summarize, this chapter extends research on self-presentation and non-truthful responding by: (1) examining evasion as an important and distinct alternative to deception for those who wish to avoid truthful disclosures of consumption information, (2) exploring

differences in the psychological consequences of evading versus deceiving, (3) assessing anticipated embarrassment as a mediator of the effects of unfavorable performance information on efforts to avoid the truth, and (4) investigating moderators that differentially affect the two alternative means of managing the flow of unfavorable information.

The remainder of this manuscript presents four lab experiments that explore when and why evasion (rather than deception) may be used to manage disclosures of consumption information. The purpose of these experiments is to seek a better understanding of why consumers avoid revealing outcomes of unfavorable social comparisons, the conditions under which they favor one alternative over the other, and some psychological consequences of choosing one approach over the other.

We report the results of five laboratory experiments to accomplish these objectives. Study 1A provides an initial exploration of evasion as a viable and preferred alternative to deception by allowing participants to indicate the responses that they would most likely provide when asked a question that could reveal that they overpaid for a product. Study 1B replicates the self-reported response distribution found in Study 1A examining real behavioral responses to a query about the outcome of a bogus consumer credit assessment. This study also provides initial empirical evidence for our distinction between evasion and deception by testing predicted differences in the psychological consequences of these tactics. Study 2 examines the effect of comparing unfavorably to others on intentions to evade versus deceive in response to a request for price information, and provides an initial assessment of previously theorized, yet untested, driver of non-truthful communications. Studies 3 and 4 seek additional support for the distinction between evasion and deception by exploring moderators that should differentially affect the two approaches to avoiding the disclosure of truthful information. Study 3 examines whether the

potential to be discredited by another moderates intentions to deceive, but not evade. It also provides a more fulsome examination of psychological mediators by considering several alternatives to embarrassment. Study 4 examines whether the persistence of the questioner moderates intentions to evade, but not deceive in response to a request for credit information.

### **1.3 STUDY 1A**

Study 1A provides an initial examination of evasion as an alternative to deception for consumers who are reluctant to reveal self-threatening consumption information.

#### **1.3.1 Method**

Two hundred and seventy-eight (111 female) participants of an online panel completed the study for a small monetary payment. Participants saw one of two hypothetical scenarios presenting a dialog between two guests at a resort hotel. Participants read that they paid either more than or as much as a same sex guest who purchased a similar product (a 4-night stay in a hotel with a similar room and view), reflecting price disparity and conditions, respectively. Gender was collected beforehand to enable presentation of the scenarios as same-sex interactions to avoid confounding deception motives associated with social interactions between sexes (DePaulo et al., 1996). Full text of the scenario is provided in the appendix.

In the last line of the scenario dialogue, participants are told how much the other guest paid, and are asked to reveal the price they paid for their room. The dialog format was used to manipulate information about relative prices and to prompt naturalistic responses from participants. In the disparity condition, participants (\$1,000) paid more than the other guest (\$800). In the control condition, both parties paid the same price (\$1,000). This setup was based



on prior research on deception in consumer social comparisons (e.g. Argo et al. 2006). After reading the scenario and dialog, participants were asked to choose one of three options constructed to represent truthful (“I would say the price that I actually paid”), deceptive (“I would say I paid less than I actually paid”), or evasive (“I would give them a response that does not directly answer the question, or does not answer it at all”) responses. Option order was randomized.

We used three items (measured on a seven-point scale) to assess the price disparity manipulation (“I paid much less [more] than the other guest,” “I [The other guest] got a better deal than the other guest [me],” “I paid a much lower [higher] price relative to the other guest;”  $\alpha = .92$ ) and three items to assess participant comprehension that both parties in the scenario purchased similar products (“Not at all [Extremely] similar,” “Not at all [Very much] identical,” “Not at all [Very much] the same”;  $\alpha = .93$ ). Finally, participants completed a suspicion-probe question before being thanked and dismissed. Responses to the suspicion probe suggest that none of the participants identified the study’s purpose.

### **1.3.2 Results**

The manipulation check revealed a successful price disparity manipulation ( $M_{\text{disparity}} = 5.84$  vs.  $M_{\text{no disparity}} = 3.97$ ;  $F(1, 275) = 463.62, p < .0001$ ) and the comprehension check suggest that participants understood that they and the other guest had similar rooms ( $M = 6.37, SD = .94$  on a seven-point scale). Consistent with prior research (Argo et al. 2006, 2011; Sengupta et al. 2002), we found that consumers were less likely to give truthful responses when they paid more than another consumer (70.0%) than when they paid the same amount (87.0%;  $\chi^2(1) = 11.81, p < .01$ ). We also replicate previous findings that participants were more likely to deceive given a

negative price disparity relative to control (7.9% vs. 0.0%; Fisher’s exact  $p < .001$ ). More importantly, participants were more likely to evade given a negative price disparity than in the control condition (22.1% vs. 13.0%;  $\chi^2(1) = 3.96, p < .05$ ), with evasion a significantly more common response than deception among those who overpaid (22.1% vs. 7.9%;  $\chi^2(1) = 11.20, p < .001$ ). We also observed a non-zero rate of evasion in the control condition (18.0% vs. 0.0%; Fisher’s exact test  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that some consumers may generally be reluctant to share price information with others. Table 1.1 presents response option counts and proportions for all conditions.

TABLE 1.1: MOST LIKELY RESPONSE TO A PRICE INQUIRY (STUDY 1A)

	Condition	
	Disparity	No Disparity
Truthful	98 (70.0%)	120 (87.0%)
Deceptive	11 (7.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Evasive	31 (22.1%)	18 (13.0%)
Total	140 (100%)	138 (100%)

### 1.3.3 Discussion

Study 1A contributes initial evidence of evasion as an attractive, and possibly preferred, alternative to deception for consumers who want to manage information that reflects unfavorably upon them. While these results are promising, and most prior research examining consumer deception behavior uses self-reported scale measures (for exception see Argo and Shiv 2012), participants may have chosen evasion over deception to present themselves in a more socially desirable manner. Our next study seeks to replicate these results examining real word of mouth behavior to assess this possibility.

## 1.4 STUDY 1B

Study 1B has three goals. First, as mentioned above, we attempt to assess the potential shortcomings of self-reported behavioral intentions for socially undesirable behaviors as used in Study 1A and prior research examining consumer deception.

Second, we seek to replicate our initial test of evasion in the context of consumer-to-consumer information exchanges of credit scores rather than price information to help demonstrate robustness and generalizability.

Third, we test our predictions that the psychological consequences of self-interested deception, guilt and shame, may be linked to consumer tendencies to use evasive rather than deceptive responding in self-threatening social interactions.

### 1.4.1 Method

Undergraduate students (N = 212, 107 female) at a Canadian university participated in the study for partial course credit. Participants were run one at a time in a small lab room with another individual of the same sex who posed as another student participant (confederate). Same sex interaction partners were used as in the pilot study. The participant and the confederate were first invited to complete a national survey of credit-worthiness using a widely accepted credit-score test (FICO). Participants were told that they would learn their personal credit score as a bonus for taking the survey. Participants privately see an electronic copy of their own credit report indicating a FICO score of 610, indicating “low credit-worthiness” (disparity condition) or 775, indicating “excellent credit-worthiness” (no disparity condition). After completing the survey and receiving this (bogus) information about their credit scores, they were informed by a research assistant that a third participant who was scheduled for an unrelated group discussion

study had not arrived. The research assistant left the participant and confederate in the room unattended, ostensibly to find the third participant. While the participant and confederate were by themselves, the confederate revealed his/her credit score, which was either higher than (disparity condition) or the same as the participant's score (no disparity condition). The confederate then asked the participant about his/her credit score. The confederate was instructed to allow the participant to respond to the question before coughing as a signal for the research assistant to re-enter the room.

Upon returning, the research assistant advised the participant and confederate that they would skip the group discussion due to the “missing” third participant, and proceed to a final computer-based study. This part of the study served several purposes. First, it asked participants to indicate whether the confederate asked them anything after the research assistant left the room; and, if so, what (open-ended). This question was used to confirm that participants heard the question and recalled it accurately. Participants were next asked to report how they answered the question and to indicate the extent to which a series of words described how they felt after responding to the other student’s question. We asked how shameful (ashamed, humiliated, disgraced) and guilty (repentant, guilty, blameworthy) they felt about their response using items from Tangney et al. (2006) to test for our prediction that these negative self-conscious emotions were a stronger consequence for deceptive than evasive responses. We also captured three items measuring embarrassment (awkward, uncomfortable, embarrassed). As discussed in conceptual development, while we expect this negative self-conscious emotion underlies intentions to deceive or evade (mediation; tested in studies 2 and 3), we expect a null effect for this emotion as a consequence of deceptive and evasive responding. All items used seven-point scales (from 1 = Not at all to 7 = Very much).

We used three items (measured on a seven-point scale) to assess the credit score disparity manipulation (“I was less [more] credit-worthy than the other student,” “I [The other student] got a lower credit score than the other student [me],” “I had a worse [better] credit score than the other student;”  $\alpha = .96$ ). A funneled debriefing was performed, including checks for suspicion and hypothesis guessing. The confederates and one of two research assistants were blind to condition and hypotheses. The second research assistant was blind to condition but not to hypotheses. There was no difference in the pattern of results by research assistant.

Participants’ open-ended verbal responses to the confederate’s prompt as recorded by an audio device served as the dependent measure. Two independent research assistants who did not participate as confederates transcribed the audio recordings to text. Three more independent judges assessed the transcription of participants’ verbal responses. Judges were asked to code factually accurate responses as “truthful,” factually inaccurate responses as “deceptive,” and vague or indirect responses that were neither factually accurate nor inaccurate as “evasive.” Inter-judge agreement was 84%. Disagreements were resolved by majority rule.

#### **1.4.2 Results**

The confederate, research assistant and audio transcriptionist were provided a mechanism to indicate suspicious participants as they were processing participants. Participants for which there was majority agreement regarding suspicion were withheld from analysis. Twenty participants were withheld from analysis using this procedure. The high frequency of suspicion was due to participants showing up earlier than their scheduled time, in which case they saw the confederate in the lab room before the study began. Using unanimous rather than majority agreement on suspicion as the exclusion criteria produces the same statistical conclusions as

those reported below. No participants guessed that the study was concerned with evasive or deceptive responding. The audio recording of the response to the confederate’s question about the participant’s credit score was inaudible for one participant, leaving a total of 191 participants for analysis.

*Manipulation Checks.* All but two participants recalled that the confederate asked about their credit score. Consistent with condition assignment, analysis of variance on the mean of the three credit disparity check items revealed that participants in the disparity condition perceived themselves to be on the short end of the credit score comparison ( $M = 6.42$ ), compared to those in the no disparity condition ( $M = 3.45$ ;  $F(1, 189) = 481.17, p < .001$ ).

*Main Results.* An omnibus Fisher’s exact test revealed that the pattern of responses was significantly different across the disparity and no disparity conditions ( $p < .0001$ ). Replicating the pilot study, participants were less likely to be truthful when there was a consumer performance disparity (60.6%) than in the no disparity condition (88.7%;  $\chi^2(1) = 18.46, p < .0001$ ). Participants in the disparity condition were more evasive (25.5% vs. 11.3%;  $\chi^2(1) = 6.42, p = .01$ ) and more deceptive (13.8% vs. 0%; Fisher’s exact test  $p < .0001$ ) than were participants in the no disparity condition. Given a credit-score disparity, participants were significantly more likely to use evasion than deception (25.5% vs. 13.8%;  $\chi^2(1) = 4.07, p < .05$ ; cf. table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2: REAL BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES TO A CREDIT SCORE INQUIRY (STUDY 1B)

	<u>Condition</u>	
	Disparity	No Disparity
Truthful	57 (60.6%)	86 (88.7%)
Deceptive	13 (13.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Evasive	24 (25.5%)	11 (11.3%)
Total	94 (100.0%)	97 (100.0%)

*Emotional Consequences.* As predicted, when attempting to avoid unfavorable information disclosures, deception produced more guilt and shame than evasion. First, we replicated previous findings that participants who used deception felt more guilt and shame than those who told the truth (Guilt:  $\alpha = .87$ ; Deception = 3.56 vs. Truth = 1.83;  $t(68) = 3.58, p = .003$ ; Shame:  $\alpha = .91$ ; Deception = 3.82 vs. Truth = 2.08;  $t(68) = 3.18, p = .006$ ). Deceptive participants also felt more embarrassment than those who told the truth ( $\alpha = .91$ ; Deception = 4.26 vs. Truth = 2.78;  $t(68) = 3.15, p < .01$ ). The same tests contrasting evasive with truthful participants reveals that evasive participants felt no more guilty than truthful participants (Evasion = 2.33 vs. Truth = 1.83;  $t(79) = 1.44, p > .15$ ), and only marginally more shameful (Evasion = 2.64 vs. Truth = 2.08;  $t(79) = 1.75, p = .09$ ). However, like those who were deceptive, evasive participants felt significantly more embarrassment than those who told the unfavorable truth about their credit score (Evasion = 3.53 vs. Truth = 2.78;  $t(79) = 2.01, p < .05$ ).

Most centrally to the present research, participants who used deception reported feeling significantly more guilt and shame than did participants who used evasion (Guilt: Deception = 3.56 vs. Evasion = 2.33;  $t(35) = 2.16, p < .05$ ; Shame: Deception = 3.82 vs. Evasion = 2.64;  $t(35) = 2.15, p < .05$ ). As predicted, there was no difference in embarrassment as a consequence of either deceptive or evasive responding (Deception = 4.26 vs. Evasion = 3.53;  $t(35) = 1.13, p > .25$ ).

### **1.4.3 Discussion**

Study 1B uses real interactions in a controlled laboratory setting to find evidence of evasion as a possible alternative to deception when people are asked to share unfavorable consumer information. We replicate the results in Study 1A and prior research that has used

scale-based intention measures of deception in a real behavioral setting, suggesting that desirable responding is not a major concern.

Consistent with this prior research that commonly reports scale-based intentions below the scale midpoint, we find deception a minority behavior. Most centrally to the present research, we find evasion to be a significantly more common behavioral response than deception. Notably, we again observe that the distribution of actual responses is similar to that of the self-reported intentions captured in the pilot study. This result suggests that participants were somewhat accurate in estimating their behavioral intentions and truthful in terms of reporting them, even when these intentions involve socially undesirable behavior, and that the lower reported level for deception might require an alternative explanation than socially desirable responding.

This study also contributes evidence that evasion has distinct emotional consequences from deception. For those attempting to avoid the disclosure of unfavorable information, evasion produced less guilt and shame than deception. This suggests lower emotional costs for avoiding the truth (evasion) than producing a falsehood (deception). Relative to evasion, deception brings greater degree of guilt and shame, which are known to be more severe than embarrassment (Tangney et al. 1996; Buss 1980; Lewis 1992). Based on the empirical linkage between moral transgressions and deception (Bok 2011; Mazar et al. 2008), this result suggests that evasion may not pose the same self-concept threat as deception.

In our next study we build on these findings in two ways. First, we seek to assess whether the rate of self-reported intentions to either evade or deceive in the face of social inquiries about unfavorable consumer information are similar to those revealed in study 1. Second, we examine the three negative self-conscious emotions (guilt, shame, and embarrassment) as triggers—rather than consequences—of avoiding the disclosure of unfavorable information. While guilt and



shame are stronger consequences for deception than evasion, we expect embarrassment will be the primary trigger (mediator) for non-truthful responses to social requests for unfavorable word of mouth information.

## **1.5 STUDY 2**

In study 2, we examine the extent to which unfavorable performance disparities increase consumers' intentions to either evade or deceive in response to questions about their consumption outcomes. This study also seeks to test embarrassment as a mediator of the effects of unfavorable performance disparities on intentions to provide evasive or deceptive responses. Argo et al.'s (2006) characterization of being on the short-end of a performance disparity as a threat to one's public self-image is consistent with the idea that comparing unfavorably to others can be a source of anticipated embarrassment, which arises from threats to the presented self in the presence of real or imagined audiences (Schlenker 1980; Lau-Gesk and Drolet 2008). Although they did not conduct formal tests of mediation, Argo et al.'s discussion of unfavorable social comparisons as threats to public self-images suggests embarrassment as a possible mediator of the effect of consumer performance disparities on individuals' intentions to lie about their consumption outcomes.

The fear of embarrassment motivates people to keep their behaviors within the limits of propriety and to withhold information that threatens their public self-images (Leary and Kowalski 1995). The notion that desires to avoid embarrassment can influence future behaviors suggests that embarrassment can be anticipatory as well as reactive. If people can feel embarrassed for others (Miller 1987, 1992; Stocks et al. 2011), then they should be able to feel embarrassed for future selves (Tangney et al. 1996; Verbeke and Bagozzi 2003), and respond

accordingly. We, therefore, propose and test embarrassment as a mediator of the effect of unfavorable performance disparities on consumers' intentions to provide both evasive and deceptive responses to requests for information about performance outcomes.

### **1.5.1 Method**

Two hundred twenty-seven (138 female) members of an online panel successfully completed the study in return for a small cash payment. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of three versions of a hypothetical situation involving same sex interaction partners (see appendix for stimuli). Participants read scenarios that were similar to those used in the pilot study in which they paid either more than or as much as another for the same product. However, there were a few notable differences. In Study 1, the two parties were friends rather than strangers; the product was a television instead of a hotel room; and the price disparity manipulation included large disparity (\$300), small disparity (\$100) and control (no disparity) conditions. We varied the size of the disparity based on previous findings that larger disparities are associated with higher levels of depression (Strohnmer, Biggs and McIntyre 1984) and greater intentions to deceive (Argo et al. 2006).

Following the scenario, we collected six scaled measures of participant's intentions to evade or deceive in response to the friend's price inquiry. Participants indicated their likelihood of: (1) revealing the actual price (reverse scored), (2) concealing the actual price, and (3) being evasive about the price, (4) misrepresenting the actual price, (5) being deceptive about the price, and (6) misleading their friend about the price. The first three items were intended to capture evasion intentions, and the latter three deception intentions. All items were measured with seven point scales anchored by 1 = Very unlikely and 7 = Very likely. Item order was randomized.

Reliabilities for the three item evasion and deception indices were  $\alpha = .91$  and  $\alpha = .98$ , respectively.

Anticipated embarrassment was measured with three items assessing the extent to which participants would feel embarrassed, awkward, and uncomfortable (on seven point scales from “Not at all” to “Very”) in the situation described in the scenario. These three items were averaged to form an embarrassment index ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Finally, as in the pilot study, participants completed checks to assess the price disparity manipulation ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and comprehension that the scenario involved purchases of similar products ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

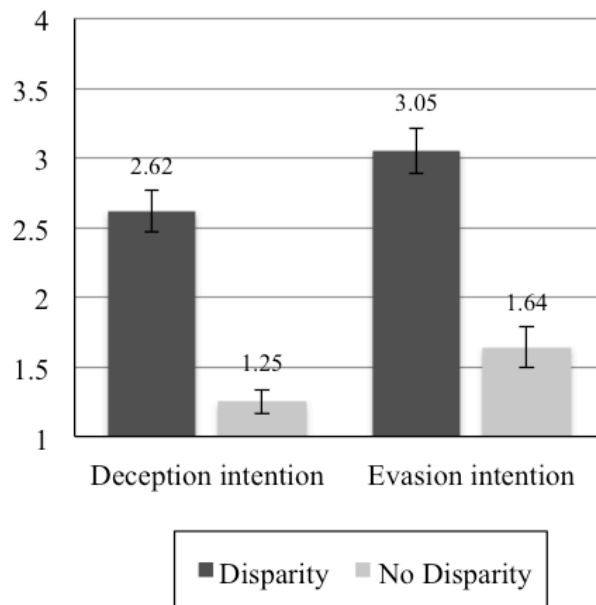
### 1.5.2 Results

*Manipulation Checks.* Consistent with condition assignments, participants in the disparity conditions perceived a significantly larger price gap than control participants ( $M_{\text{disparity}} = 5.97$ ,  $M_{\text{no disparity}} = 3.88$ ;  $F(1, 225) = 333.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, participants in the large disparity condition perceived a significantly larger price gap than those in the small disparity condition ( $M_{\text{large}} = 6.29$  vs.  $M_{\text{small}} = 5.63$ ;  $F(1, 150) = 22.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, participants understood that the television they purchased was extremely similar to the one purchased by their friend ( $M = 6.88$ ,  $SD = .40$  on a seven point scale).

*Main Results.* Analysis of variance revealed no differences in deception ( $F < 1$ ) or evasion intentions ( $F(1, 150) = 1.17$ ,  $p = .28$ ) due to price disparity level. In hindsight, this finding is consistent with Argo et al.’s (2006, study 1) finding that disparity size affects deception intentions only when the comparison target is socially distant (i.e., a stranger rather than a friend). As a result, we collapsed our data across disparity levels, resulting in two experimental conditions (disparity and control).

Participants in the disparity condition reported greater intentions to deceive ( $F(1, 225) = 37.91, p < .001$ ) and evade ( $F(1, 225) = 30.46, p < .001$ ) than did control participants. Moreover, participants reported higher intentions to evade than to deceive in both the disparity ( $t(152) = 4.49, p < .001$ ) and control conditions ( $t(75) = 3.29, p < .01$ ). In short, both responses were more likely among disparity than control participants, with evasion seeing stronger intentions than deception in both conditions. Condition means are summarized in figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1  
INTENTIONS TO DECEIVE AND EVADE  
BY PRICE DISPARITY CONDITION (STUDY 2)



*Mediation.* Bootstrapping tests of embarrassment as a mediator of the relationship between social comparison outcomes and either evasion or deception intentions (Preacher, Rucker and Hayes 2007) showed that embarrassment mediated the effects of unfavorable comparisons on both response options. The indirect effect was significant for both evasion (95% CI = [.28, .55] with 5,000 resamples) and deception (95% CI = [.24, .52]). All path coefficients for both models are positive and significant at  $p < .05$  (table 1.3).

TABLE 1.3: MEDIATION BY EMBARRASSMENT (STUDY 2)

Study	Model	Mediator	DV	95% CI for Indirect Path	Path coefficients				
					a	b	a x b	c	c'
2		Embarrassment	Deception	[.24, .52]	.69 *	.53 *	.37 *	.68 *	.32 *

*NB: Price disparity versus control is the independent variable for all rows.*

*\* Estimates using embarrassment items from Tangney et al. (2006) items shown. Embarrassment items used in study 1 replicate.*

*\* Significant at  $p < .05$  or better*

### 1.5.3 Discussion

In study 2, we used scaled intention measures to show that evasion is an attractive alternative to deception among consumers who are reluctant to respond truthfully to requests for unfavorable consumption information. The results of study 2 using scaled responses replicate our study findings using a forced-choice paradigm and real behavioral measures. We again found that participants reported stronger evasion than deception intentions when they sought to avoid revealing price information. Embarrassment mediated the effects of an unfavorable performance disparity on both means of avoiding the truth.

Thus far, our findings suggest that evasion may be an emotionally preferable alternative to deception as a means of avoiding the truth. In studies 3 and 4, we seek further evidence that the two response tactics are distinct by examining contextual variables that may moderate intentions to use one without affecting the other. In study 3, we consider how the presence of an informed other, which gives rise to the potential to be discredited, can impact deception but not evasion intentions. In study 4, we consider how questions from a persistent other impact evasion, but not deception intentions.

## **1.6 STUDY 3**

In this study, we test our prediction that discredibility, the presence of an informed other can affect the strategy that people use to hide the truth about unfavorable consumption outcomes. The presence of a third party who knows the truth about an unfavorable consumption outcome is expected to decrease one's intentions to deceive, but not evade in response to a request for information about the outcome in question. According to Goffman (1963), concerns about being discredited arise when potentially stigmatizing information is generally unknown to others, but at risk of being discovered. This risk increases with the presence of someone who has access to relevant information that is unknown to others. In the present context, consumers who deceive in the presence of one who knows the truth are at risk of being discredited as a liar, a stigmatizing condition that causes feelings of guilt and shame (Keltner and Buswell 1996). The easier it is for an audience to invalidate a self-presentation, the less likely people are to misrepresent themselves (Schlenker 1980). The use of evasion, on the other hand, should provide little or no relevant information to invalidate, making it largely unaffected by the threat of discredibility. Therefore, we expect the threat of being discredited to reduce intentions to deceive but not evade in response to a request for information about an unfavorable consumption outcome. In this study, we also conduct a more fulsome examination of our proposed mediator (embarrassment) to rule out alternative mediating variables such as shame, guilt, envy, resentment and generalized depressive affect.

### **1.6.1 Method**

One hundred and ninety-eight (89 female) undergraduate students at a Canadian university completed the study for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of

four conditions in a 2 (Disparity: Yes vs. No) x 2 (Discredibility: High vs. Low) between-subjects design. As in the pilot study, we used a single disparity condition (\$200) versus a no disparity (control) condition. Similar to the pilot study, each participant read a scenario about an unfavorable price disparity involving a television purchase. Discredibility was manipulated by varying the number of people present who knew the true price paid for the television (see appendix for stimuli). In the low discredibility condition, the participant was the only one who knew how much he/she paid for the television. In the high discredibility condition, a second person also knew the actual price paid for the television. Scenarios were constructed to involve same-sex interactions.

We next collected the same measures used in study 2 to capture participants' intentions to evade or deceive in response to the friend's price inquiry (order randomized). The three items for measuring embarrassment from study 2 were included used to assess the robustness of this mediating variable. We also collected previously validated items capturing other self-conscious emotions (shame and guilt) and other emotions that are potentially associated with upward social comparison context (anger, envy, and resentment) to rule out alternative mediators. For the sake of thoroughness, we included additional measures of embarrassment from Tangney et al. (1996). All emotion items are listed in the appendix.

Participants then completed a series of manipulation checks. First, they were asked to indicate how many of the friends in the scenario knew the actual price paid for the television. The following three items were used to assess the discredibility manipulation: (1) how hard it would be for the friends to find out the actual price (reverse scored), (2) how easily the friends could discover the real price paid, and (3) how accessible the true price was to the friends (1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much). Finally, checks regarding the size and direction of the price disparity

and the similarity of the televisions purchased were measured in the same manner as in prior studies.

### 1.6.2 Results

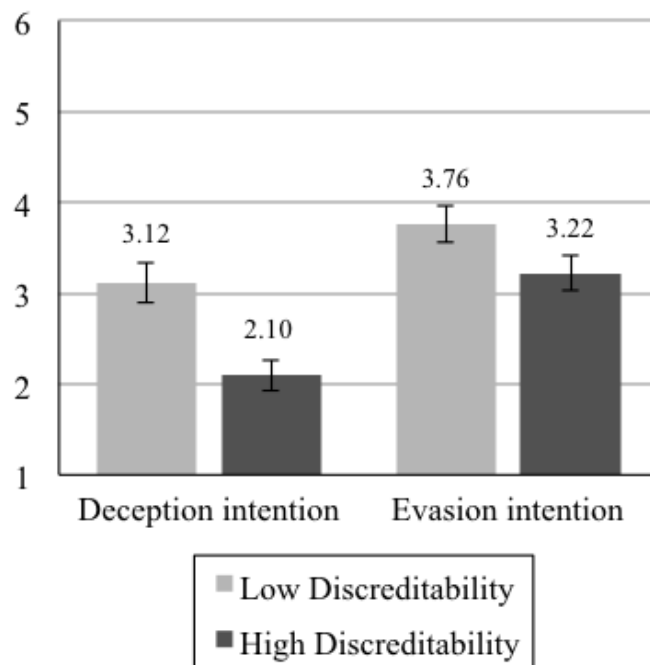
*Manipulation Checks.* All participants correctly identified how many of their friends knew the actual price paid for the television. Consistent with condition assignments, analysis of variance on the mean of the three discredibility check items ( $\alpha = .92$ ) revealed that participants in the high discredibility condition perceived a higher risk of discredibility ( $M = 5.69$ ) than those in the low discredibility condition ( $M = 4.10$ ;  $F(1, 196) = 44.14, p < .001$ ). Participants in the disparity condition perceived a greater price disparity ( $M = 6.10$ ) than did participants in the no disparity condition ( $M = 4.03, F(1, 196) = 547.19, p < .001$ ), and all participants recognized that both parties purchased similar televisions ( $M = 6.74, SD = 0.70$  on a seven-point scale). The evasion ( $\alpha = .84$ ) and deception ( $\alpha = .95$ ) intention items again fit a two-factor model better than a single factor model (CFA  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 93.94, p < .0001$ ).

*Main Results.* ANOVA on the composite measure of deception intentions revealed a significant main effect of a disparity ( $M_{\text{disparity}} = 2.59$  vs.  $M_{\text{no disparity}} = 1.68$ ;  $F(1, 194) = 17.15, p < .001$ ), no effect of discredibility ( $F < 1$ ), and a significant disparity by discredibility interaction ( $F(1, 194) = 9.48, p < .01$ ). While there was no difference in deception intentions between high and low discredibility participants in the no disparity condition ( $F(1, 100) = 2.42, p > .10$ ), high discredibility participants were significantly less likely to deceive than were their low discredibility counterparts when faced with a price disparity ( $F(1, 94) = 7.24, p < .01$ ). See figure 1.2 for means.



ANOVA for evasion intentions yielded a main effect of disparity ( $M_{\text{disparity}} = 3.47$  vs.  $M_{\text{no disparity}} = 2.31$ ;  $F(1,194) = 24.40, p < .001$ ), no effect of discredibility ( $F < 1$ ), and a significant disparity by discredibility interaction ( $F(1,194) = 4.32, p < .05$ ). Despite the unexpected cross-over interaction, evasion intentions did not differ with discredibility within either the disparity ( $F(1, 94) = 2.58, p > .10$ ) or no disparity condition ( $F(1, 100) = 2.60, p > .10$ ), unlike deception intentions which were significantly reduced when participants in the disparity condition were more discreditable.

FIGURE 1.2: SOURCE DISCREDITABILITY IMPACTS DECEPTION (NOT EVASION) INTENTIONS (STUDY 3)



*Mediation.* We used a simple mediation model to examine all emotion items as simultaneous parallel mediators of the relationship between a consumer performance disparity and either evasion or deception intentions (Preacher et al. 2007). The results show that paying more than another consumer significantly affects each measured emotion (a path), but only embarrassment mediates the effects of this unfavorable outcome on both response options (b paths; cf. table 1.4). This effect occurred regardless of whether embarrassment was captured by

the measures used in study 1 or measures used in prior research (Tangney et al. 1996). For brevity, we report the mediation analyses conducted on the latter. The conditional indirect effect of a price disparity through embarrassment was significant for both evasion (95% CI = [.23, .94] with 5,000 resamples) and deception (95% CI = [.22, .91]). All path coefficients for both embarrassment mediation models are positive and significant at  $p < .05$  (cf. table 1.4).

Depression measures negatively mediated the relationship between price disparity and deception intentions (but not evasion intentions) in the full model. However, when the model was reduced to include only the significant embarrassment and depression mediators, embarrassment remains significant (95% CI = [.30, .73]) while depression falls to non-significance (95% CI = [-.49, .11]), supporting embarrassment as the dominant mediator of the relationship between an unfavorable disparity and evasive or deceptive responding.

TABLE 1.4  
MEDIATION BY EMBARRASSMENT (STUDY 3)

Model	DV	Mediator	95% CI for Indirect Path	Path coefficients			
				a	b	a x b	c
A	Evasion	Embarrassment	.23, .94 *	.98 *	.54 *	.53 *	0.22
		Shame	-.18, .57	1.01 *	.18	.18	0.22
		Guilt	-.25, .15	.81 *	-.05	-.04	0.22
		Anger	-.67, .21	1.55 *	-.13	-.20	0.22
		Envy	-.47, .26	1.59 *	-.06	-.09	0.22
		Resentment	-.08, .71	.91 *	.31	.28	0.22
		Depression	-.87, .19	1.20 *	-.25	-.30	0.22
B	Deception	Embarrassment	.22, .91 *	.98 *	.55 *	.54 *	0.25
		Shame	-.35, .46	1.01 *	.05	.05	0.25
		Guilt	-.37, .12	.81 *	-.15	-.12	0.25
		Anger	-.66, .20	1.55 *	-.14	-.22	0.25
		Envy	-.25, .46	1.59 *	.08	.13	0.25
		Resentment	-.01, .83	.91 *	.45	.41	0.25
		Depression	-1.17, -.01	1.20 *	-.48 *	-.58 *	0.25
C	Deception	Embarrassment	.30, .73 *	.98 *	.51 *	.50 *	0.15
		Depression	-.49, .11	1.20 *	-.16	-.19	0.15

Price disparity versus no disparity control is the IV for all results.

\*Significant at  $p < .05$  or better.

### **1.6.3 Discussion**

Study 3 demonstrates that discredibility decreases consumers' intentions to deceive without affecting their evasion intentions, thereby supporting our distinction between evasion and deception by providing evidence of a unique moderator of deception. Moreover, study 3 replicates our findings of embarrassment as the mechanism underlying the relationship between unfavorable performance disparities and non-truthful response intentions. Specifically, the study rules out shame, guilt, envy, resentment, and depressive feelings as mediators of the effect. While study 3 shows that the risk of being discredited decreases deception (but not evasion) intentions, study 4 examines a variable that should moderate intentions to evade, but not deceive.

## **1.7 STUDY 4**

Our last study examines a variable that should moderate intentions to evade, but not deceive. As discussed in conceptual development, persistence is defined as the quality or state of continuing firmly or obstinately with a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition (Oxford 2012). The presence of a questioner who is expected to persevere until getting an answer should complicate efforts to evade, but not deceive, because evasiveness can be easy to detect (Burgoon et al. 1994). In contrast, continued probing does not necessarily improve the ability to detect deception (Buller et al. 1989).

### **1.7.1 Method**

Study 4 employed a 2 (Disparity: Yes vs. No) x 2 (Persistence: High vs. Low) between-subjects design. One hundred and eighty six (71 female) undergraduate students at a Canadian university participated for partial course credit. Participants were presented with a situation in

which they were meeting a group of same-sex friends at a mall food court. On the way to the food court, the participant and a friend (the interaction partner) stop at a kiosk where each receives a free credit report. Participants privately see an electronic copy of their own credit report indicating a FICO score of 610, indicating “low credit-worthiness” (disparity condition) or 775, indicating “excellent credit-worthiness” (no disparity condition). Later, while socializing with friends over lunch, the participant overhears the interaction partner being either very persistent or not very persistent when asking another friend about a recent exam. In the scenario, the participant thinks about how this display of high (or low) persistence is typical of the interaction partner. The interaction partner then announces to everyone present that both she/he and the participant just obtained their credit scores. The interaction partner mentions that she/he had a rating of “excellent credit-worthiness” with a FICO score of 775, and then asks the participant, “What about you?” (see appendix for full stimuli).

Immediately after participants read this scenario, we measured evasion ( $\alpha = .85$ ) and deception ( $\alpha = .95$ ) intentions. Confirmatory factor analysis again supports evasion and deception as independent factors ( $\chi^2(1) = 162.57, p < .0001$ ). We next used three seven-point bipolar items to assess the persistence manipulation (“relenting:unrelenting,” “surrendering:persistent,” “unyielding:yielding”;  $\alpha = .60$ ). Each participant also completed manipulation checks to assess understanding of who knew their credit score and how their score compared to that of their friend.

### **1.7.2 Results**

*Manipulation Checks.* Participants in the high persistence condition perceived the inquiring friend as more persistent ( $M = 4.91$ ) than did participants in the low persistence

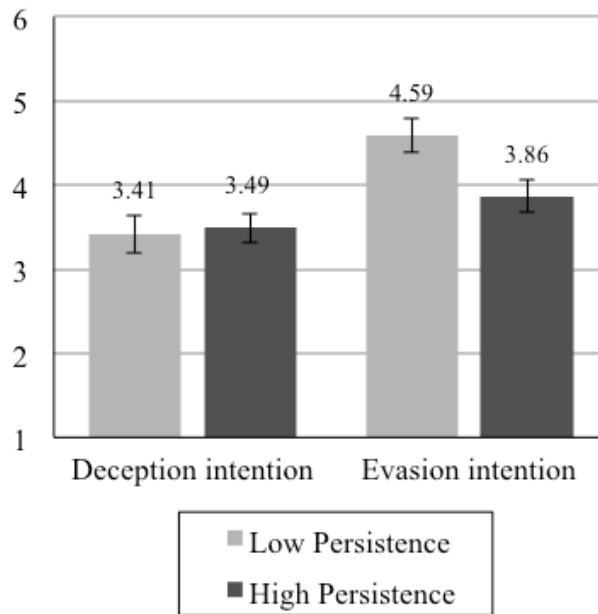
condition ( $M = 3.49$ ;  $F(1, 172) = 83.90, p < .001$ ). Responses to an adapted version of the same three-item price disparity check ( $\alpha = .94$ ) used in prior studies (i.e. the words “deal” or “price” were replaced with the words “credit score”) confirms that participants in the disparity condition perceived themselves as having paid more than their friend ( $M_{\text{disparity}} = 6.16$  vs.  $M_{\text{no disparity}} = 4.03$ ;  $F(1, 172) = 182.91, p < .001$ ). One hundred and thirty-seven (94%) participants correctly indicated that only they knew their own credit score. Excluding participants who failed this check did not change the main results.

*Main Results.* Omnibus analysis of variance of disparity and persistence on the two tactics to avoid disclosing self-threatening information revealed a main effect of the credit-score disparity for both evasion intentions ( $F(1, 169) = 7.82, p < .01$ ) and deception intentions ( $F(1, 170) = 6.43, p < .05$ ). Participants had greater evasion and deception intentions when they fared worse than others than when they performed on par with their peers.

Most importantly, there was a significant interaction of disparity and persistence for evasion intentions ( $F(1, 169) = 7.83, p < .01$ ). Participants in the disparity condition had lower evasion intentions when faced with a more ( $M = 3.86$ ) versus less ( $M = 4.59$ ) persistent inquirer ( $F(1, 85) = 4.61, p < .05$ ; see figure 1.3). Deception intentions, on the other hand, were unaffected by the interaction partner’s persistence, even when participants fared worse than their peers ( $M_{\text{high}} = 3.49$  vs.  $M_{\text{low}} = 3.41$ ;  $F < 1$ ).

Comparing the effect of a credit score disparity within persistence level, we see no change in evasion intentions given a more persistent interaction partner ( $F < 1$ ), but significantly higher evasion intentions given a credit score disparity and a less persistent interaction partner (4.59 vs. 3.23;  $F(1, 84) = 17.88, p < .001$ ). In contrast, these factors did not significantly affect deception intentions ( $F_s < 1$ ).

FIGURE 1.3: AUDIENCE PERSISTENCE IMPACTS EVASION (NOT DECEPTION) INTENTIONS GIVEN PERFORMANCE DISPARITY (STUDY 4)



### 1.7.3 Discussion

Study 4 demonstrates that the persistence of an inquirer impacts intentions to evade, but not deceive, in response to a request for unfavorable credit information. This provides additional support for our distinction between evasion and deception by contributing evidence that evasion has at least one unique moderator. Taken together, studies 3 and 4 demonstrate that despite representing alternative approaches to avoiding embarrassing truths, evasion and deception are likely to be used under different circumstances. Although tendencies to evade or deceive can be motivated by a similar emotional antecedent, each tactic is favored under different circumstances.

## 1.8 GENERAL DISCUSSION

Although a large body of research documents the use of outright deception to protect the liar or another from psychological discomfort, there has been scant empirical consideration of how people might employ a less costly means to a similar end.

The present research begins to address this gap by contributing evidence of evasion as an alternative to deception as a means of managing disclosures of unfavorable consumption information. The field has focused on lying, to the exclusion of this other category of responses that may be in fact more pervasive in the consumer-to-consumer communications. In contrast to recent efforts to investigate how people who dodge questions are perceived by their audiences (Rogers and Norton 2011; Bickart et al. 2015), the present research considers the perspective of the people who choose to be evasive within the context of consumer-to-consumer communication.

We found the two tactics to have similar antecedents (i.e., performance disparities and embarrassment), but more importantly, different psychological consequences and moderators. Specifically, people who engaged in evasion reported feeling less guilt and shame than did their counterparts who deceived. This result may explain why we consistently found consumers to prefer evasion over deception as a means of managing information about unfavorable social comparison outcomes. Moreover, deception (but not evasion) intentions declined with the risk of being discredited by an interaction partner, while evasion (but not deception) intentions decreased as a function of the persistence of an inquirer.

Recently, consumer researchers have documented evasion as an effective tactic to avoid conveying information that might pose threat to the self in various marketing settings, in which

the communicator is either a focus group participant who is motivated to make desired impression (Wooten and Reed 2000) or a salesperson who seeks greater potential sales (Bickart et al. 2015). Building on such endeavors, the current research serves as the first to study evasion as an alternative to deception when consumers share unfavorable consumption information with other consumers. Inasmuch as the most impactful word-of-mouth takes a form of consumers' face-to-face communication, this study sheds light on our understanding of potential threat to the quality of word-of-mouth communications. A global survey conducted by Nielsen (2013) reports that consumers rely on word-of-mouth communication more now than they did before, and more heavily than they do on commercial messages. Specifically, the percentages of consumers who reportedly trust information from people they know or from consumer opinions posted on line were higher in 2013 than they were in 2007. Moreover, higher percentages of consumers were reportedly willing to trust or act on information from these sources than on information from television commercials or branded websites. These findings support estimates from a major consulting that word-of-mouth influences 20 to 50 percent of all purchasing decisions and generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising in a variety of product categories (McKinsey 2010), and are in accordance with the empirical evidence that the word-of-mouth communications affect sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Godes and Mayzlin 2009) and influence product choices (Leskovec, Adamic, and Huberman 2007). Given the impact of word-of-mouth communication in the marketplace, we make a case that the pervasiveness of non-truthful communication of consumption information within consumer-to-consumer context should sound the alarm to consumers who tend to overestimate the validity of information coming from other consumers and take the information into full account, in the tradition of other



research that questions the assumptions about the quality of word-of-mouth communications (Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Packard and Wooten 2013).

Notably, however, our findings should mitigate concerns that deception is the dominant response to sensitive or self-threatening word of mouth exchanges (e.g. Anthony and Cowley 2012; Argo, Dahl and White 2011; Argo and Shiv 2012; Argo et al. 2006; Mazar et al. 2008; Sengupta et al. 2002). Our results suggests that the suppression of true information is a greater risk than the introduction false information in word of mouth exchanges. This finding holds positive implications for both consumers and firms. For example, consumers who lie to others about the price they paid for a product may create invalid price expectations for the recipients of this word of mouth information, leading to negative attitudes or service interactions when the recipient comes to find the true (higher) price.

Our research also suggests practical implications for the firms who monitor or promote consumer-to-consumer communications for marketing research, either through ethnographic approaches, focus group approaches, or on the internet. Marketers may wish to provide an environment (e.g. online forums, customer communities) or create marketing communications that downplay the potential self-threat of negative consumption experiences. For example, focus group moderators could diffuse self-threat by creating an open, non-threatening conversational environment and thereby encourage truthful information exchanges among consumer research participants. Encouraging moderators in the focus group research to exhibit some degree of persistence might also help as participants would reduce sharing their information in evasive manner (study 3), although not all research in focus groups would deem the role of moderators important (Fern 1982). Similarly, salespeople may be trained to look for evasive responding, which should be easier to detect than deception (Buller et al. 1991). For example, if a car buyer

avoids responding to a salesperson's inquiry about why they want a new car, the salesperson should take this as a cue that unflattering motives (e.g. prestige rather than functional need) may be driving their auto purchase. This insight could be taken to suggest the customer is less price sensitive, representing more useful information than the lie that could result if the salesperson persists in trying to understand why the customer wants a new car.

This research also contributes new insight on the psychological mechanisms underlying decisions to avoid telling the truth about outcomes of unfavorable social comparisons, whether through evasion or deception. We found that embarrassment mediated the relationship between unfavorable social comparisons and both evasion and lying intentions when the social comparison information might be threatening to the self. While Argo et al. (2009) identified empathy as a mediator of consumers' willingness to lie for friends who were victims of unfavorable social comparisons, it is possible that embarrassment mediates that effect as well. Observers may recognize and empathically share the discomfort felt by those who are embarrassed, even if the embarrassing actions do not reflect on the observers (Miller 1987, 1992; Stocks et al. 2011). Observers also may feel embarrassed if they can imagine themselves in the social predicament (Stocks et al. 2011), even when those who actually face the predicament display no visible signs of embarrassment (Miller 1987). Moreover, observers feel greater empathic embarrassment for those whom they like more (Stocks et al. 2011) or when they feel partly responsible for creating the embarrassment (Leary and Kowalski 1995). Future research is needed to assess embarrassment as a common mediator of the effects of both self- and other-threatening social comparisons on intentions to either evade or deceive.

While the present research provides a foundational exploration of the use of evasion as a response to social predicaments, much work remains to be done for a fulsome understanding of

when, why and how evasion occurs, both within and outside the domain of consumption. Wooten and Reed (2000) theorize that evasion may be especially likely to occur when individuals are highly motivated to make desired impressions, but uncertain of how to do so. By contrast, they argue that individuals may resort to deception when they are motivated to make certain impressions and they understand what is required for them to succeed. Their analysis suggests that evasion may be a useful tactic for individuals who wish to avoid looking bad whereas deception may be more useful for those who are more concerned about looking good. Our findings are consistent with their view of evasion as a protective, as opposed to an acquisitive response (Arkin 1981). However, deception appears to be useful for both protective and acquisitive styles of self-presentation.

Future research should investigate behavioral and social consequences of evasive versus deceptive responding, in addition to the distinct psychological consequences explored here. Specifically, behavioral consequences to the recipients of the non-truthful responding should be explored in consumer-to-consumer communication, where evasive responding could only provide information that is not necessarily informative. Due to this motivated communication, information is being lost and hidden. Examining ways to best regain access to the lost information in the information maintenance perspective is an important direction for further investigation. For instance, its implications on the recipients' subsequent information search behavior as opposed to when they are at the receiving end for false, misleading information call for a closer scrutiny.

As even white lies intended to smooth social interactions can have negative personal and social consequences (Argo and Shiv 2012), evasion may offer a more socially acceptable means of avoiding inconvenient truths. For example, a consumer who is evasive in response to a retail

employee's inquiry about her returning a dress may believe that she has subtly signaled that the dress was too small, without using an outright lie to avoid this embarrassing fact. Indeed, in some interaction settings, evasion may be perceived as a social signal that the conversation should move to less uncomfortable topics. Future investigations could examine the perceived morality of evasion versus deception, and the possibility that, in some cases, evasion facilitates teamwork among those who are motivated to manage impressions of self and other (Goffman 1959). Such teamwork may be particularly critical in consumer interactions with firm employees, where employees must obtain factual information from the customer while avoiding their potential embarrassment (e.g. loan interviews, restaurant and other service interactions). In a similar vein, prior research has found consumers' willingness to disclose their personal information to relationship-seeking marketers for customized benefits is greater when the information is privacy-related, but consumers are reluctant to disclose embarrassing information to firms whom they have built relationships with (White, 2004).

Our findings also suggest that ease of detection by observers may be another factor that differentially motivates evasion versus deception. While rates of deception detection among lay people are no better than chance (DePaulo, Stone, and Lassiter 1985; Vrij and Graham 1997), researchers have devised ways to improve evasion detection (Buller et al. 1991; Rogers and Norton 2011). We found that the persistence of an inquirer affects evasive, but not deceptive responding, possibly because probing facilitates detection of evasion (Buller et al. 1991; Burgoon et al. 1994) but not deception (Buller et al. 1989). On the other hand, our findings of discredibility as a moderator of deception (but not evasion), suggest that failure may be more costly for deceivers than evaders. People are ashamed of being caught telling lies (Keltner and Buswell 1996), and the facade of a false reality can be challenging to sustain over time (Buller et

al. 1991). Overall, it appears that deceptive responses are easier to construct, harder to maintain, harder to detect, and more damaging if discovered.

Depending on how narrowly one defines deception, the popular conception of the “lie of omission” is either a special case of evasion or a hybrid approach that blurs the boundary between deception and evasion (i.e., an evasive response that prompts deceptive inferences). Consistent with our focus on evasion as an alternative to, rather than a means of deception, we constructed scenarios to limit opportunities for “lies of omission” and leveraged measures to capture the evasive intentions of communicators, while ignoring the inferences made by message recipients. Nonetheless, our findings suggest that telling lies of omission can be a way of deceiving others without the psychological pain of presenting false information, especially if consumers have a restrictive view of deception. Further research is needed for a better understanding of this specific type of deception.

In conclusion, this research empirically introduces evasion as a significant and often preferred alternative to deception and contributes theory-driven insights on the behavioral and psychological differences between these two alternatives to the truth. We hope this work will stimulate further inquiries into the evasive maneuvers made by people on the everyday battleground of self-presentation.

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## **CHAPTER II**

### **Self-Presenter's Paradox?**

#### **Downstream Consequences of Non-truthful Communication**

In an information exchange context that involves self-presentation, the content of information ('what') often directly affects audience's social perception of presenter. As frequently, the manner in which the presenter communicates the information ('how') exerts influence on the perception by the audience. Accordingly, how the presenter is perceived often provoke different reactions from the audience as a result of the social interaction, depending on the accuracy or ambiguity of the information involved in the interaction. This difference in audience reaction deserves special attention, especially in interactions that involve economic consequences.

One such interaction is service provider–customer interaction. Service providers are compensated by an additional source of income other than wages: gratuity. Customers determine the amount of gratuity after their interactions with the service providers. Within those interactions, information the service providers convey to the customers shapes the perception of the service providers, and thereby impacts the economic return for the service providers. Accordingly, service providers often face a situation where they need to make strategic choices with regards to what information to share with the customers and how to share it. What happens,

specifically when the service providers need to deal with information regarding an inconvenience to the customer?

In this chapter, we delve into the consequences that different approaches of communicating information (i.e., evasion or deception in comparison to truth-telling) can bring, in addition to observing the presenter's tendency to engage in each of the tactics, particularly when the communication involves unfavorable information.

## **2.1 CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1.1 Non-truthful Interpersonal Communication and Its Consequences**

When it comes to social interactions, it is almost hard to argue that a single action from an actor can be considered free from the concerns of how the self would be viewed by the interaction partner. Goffman (1959) suggested that when an individual comes in contact with other people, the individual will attempt to control or guide the impression that others might make of him/her by changing or fixing his/her setting, appearance, and manner as actors are on stage in front of the audiences who try to form impressions and obtain information about that individual. Such endeavors of individuals communicating some information about themselves to others are called self-presentation (e.g., Baumeister, 1982).

Despite the ubiquity of self-presentational motives, how much individuals participate in conscious attempts at or putting efforts into self-presentations (impression motivation), how skillful they are at it (impression efficacy), and the means they use to engage in self-presentation vary to a great extent (Snyder, 1974; Wooten & Reed, 2000). Hence, researchers have devoted significant efforts to classify self-presentational behaviors and construct an integrative taxonomy of such behaviors (Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976; Tedeschi & Norman, 1985; Arkin, 1981). An

important dimension emerged from the classification of self-presentation, demonstrating a person's efforts to look good as opposed to efforts to “not look bad” (Arkin, 1981; Olson & Johnson, 1991; Roth, Snyder, & Pace, 1986). As much as individuals try to construct messages within communication to present the self in a favorable light (cf. Berger 2014), individuals are motivated to avoid looking bad in the eyes of others. This motive often underlies non-truthful self-presentation.

Prior literature has extensively examined deception as a common response to requests for self-threatening information within social interaction to avoid presenting the self unfavorably (Argo, Dahl & White 2011; Argo, White, & Dahl 2006; Sengupta, Dahl, & Gorn 2002). In attempts to recognize the antecedents of lying, DePaulo et al. (1996) examined diary entries of individuals and found out that some ‘liars’ engage in deceptive behavior to be protected from negative outcomes, such as embarrassment and disapproval. However, deception is often regarded to negatively affect one’s *own* perceptions of the moral self (Bok, 2011; Mazar, On, & Ariely 2008), and even “innocent” white lies have been studied to have undesirable personal and social consequences (Argo & Shiv, 2012).

We suggests an alternative measure, noting the fact that the structure of prior research might have forced participants to decide their responses in terms of lying or not. When individuals encounter a situation that might embarrass them or the other person, they need not form their responses in regards to either lying or not lying. Instead, they might intentionally withhold some information as a strategy to break away from such situations. Communications researchers, as well as consumer researchers suggested evasion as an appealing means to which communicators can resort when neither lying nor truth-telling is an attractive option to achieve one’s self-presentational goal (Burgoon, Buller, Gurrero, Afifi, & Feldman, 1996; Carlson,

George, Burgoon, Adams, & White, 2004). By minimally disclosing information about oneself (Snell, 1989) or by remaining silent in social interactions (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Meleshko & Alden, 1993; Pilkonis, 1977), one gives others little opportunity for criticizing oneself and therefore the risk of negative evaluation is reduced (Schlenker & Leary, 1985). In this vein, we have also argued that, consumers, rather than telling an outright lie, often share unflattering consumption information in an evasive manner in the first chapter of this dissertation. It argues that evasion is viewed as a tactic that offers a more acceptable means of avoiding unfavorable truths than deception, without involving too much severity of emotional consequences of feeling guilt and shame. Despite the potential benefits that evasive communication might entail, evasion may not necessarily lead to successful attainment of one's goal in social interaction.

The objective of this chapter is to acknowledge this possibility and to establish boundary conditions to the general conception of evasion being a 'preferable' alternative to deception in truth avoidance. We attempt to advance the understandings of evasion as a commonly used tactic to manage disclosures of information that might present one's self in an unfavorable light, by investigating downstream consequences in comparison with deception. We explore, in particular, socio-economic consequences of these non-truthful communications to the communicator and to the recipient. Recent efforts have started to shed light on the social consequences of evasion. Roger and Norton (2011) suggested that the manner in which a speaker delivers a piece of information impacts the social perception of the speaker. More recently, Bickart et al. (2015) examined the tendency to engage in non-truthful communication of salespersons and how it influenced not only the social perception (more specifically, trustworthiness and competence) of the speaker but also the outcome variable that is relevant to economic returns to the speaker (i.e., sales potential).

### 2.1.2 Engaging in Non-truthful Information Sharing for Others

To avoid feeling embarrassed or to protect your self-image from being hurt, individuals might misrepresent or conceal information about their performance when responding to the request of unfavorable information. On the other hand, would they as likely be willing to engage in non-truthful communication even when the inconvenient truth is about other person, out of concerns for the other person's feelings?

“Just as the member of any group is expected to have self-respect, so also he is expected to sustain a standard of considerateness; he is expected to go to certain lengths to save the feelings and the face of others present, and he is expected to do this willingly and spontaneously because of emotional identification with the others and with their feelings,” Goffman suggests in one of his essays (1967). In this vein, research has documented deceptive behaviors of individuals that are benefitting others, wherein people lie to be polite, to ensure that a social interaction runs smoothly, or to protect another person's feelings (Argo & Shiv, 2012; Argo, Dahl, & White, 2011; Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, previous research (Schlenker & Britt 1999) investigated individuals' efforts to assist others maintaining their self-image and coined the term ‘strategic identity support,’ and Argo et al., 2011 suggested that individuals would not only lie to the other person when you are motivated to avoid being embarrassed, but also are likely to be motivated to lie for the other person to manage other person's impression or public self-image (*deceptive* strategic identity support), particularly when they were motivated to protect (rather than to enhance) the other person's identity.

We attempt to extend this literature in search for a more fulsome understanding of how individuals would actually support other person's identity maintenance in a strategic manner. While other-oriented deception may be employed, individuals should not engage in deception to

the extent that will sacrifice one's self-interest. Therefore, evasive approach could deem appropriate and/or attractive to bypass the risk of jeopardizing self or the other when dealing with inconvenient truth.

### **2.1.3 Self-Presenter's Paradox**

While self-presenters are mainly concerned as to how their behaviors could influence how their public self-image or the social perception from the audience, they should also be cognizant about diverse types of downstream consequences. However, what they might expect as a consequence of engaging in such behaviors may not always be in line with what the reality brings them. We conjecture that this mismatch is prevalent in social interactions. While an evasive communicator might expect favorable response from the recipient as he/she dodges from potentially self-threatening information, the recipient may not welcome the seemingly fragmented information. This theorizing builds onto the notion of 'the presenter's paradox' (Weaver, Garcia, & Schwarz, 2012), which refers to a tendency to incorrectly estimate evaluator's perspective when selecting information to present. In Weaver et al.'s study, presenters employ additive strategy and thus try to include all favorable information whereas evaluators take a holistic approach and show a weighted averaging pattern. As a result, when a presenter includes a mildly favorable information is added, it dilutes the impact of highly favorable information, which leads to a less optimal outcome.

We test the extent to which the presenter's paradox extends to the protective self-presentation that deals with unfavorable, negative information. While the paradox has been discussed in terms of decision to include or exclude more or less favorable information in the self-presentation, we seek to demonstrate a relevance of this paradox that avoiding to present

unfavorable information altogether in hopes to maintain favorable response from the audience may, in some cases, backfire. However, we further attempt to find a potential remedy to this paradox.

## **2.2 THE CURRENT WORK**

The majority of this chapter is devoted to investigation of whether a specific self-presentation tactic (i.e., evasion, deception, or truth-telling) preferred by a waitperson (i.e., self-presenter) would lead to maximizing one's own (financial) gain. That is, is a particular self-presentation favored by the server necessarily well-received by customers?

Exploring customer responses to the different types of self-presentation of the servers also provide insights regarding the implications for the audience. We investigate how the two tactics differentially affect future decision-making on resource allocation (e.g., tipping behavior and further information search behavior). Not only the reactions from the audience are different but also what the audience takes away from the interaction could diverge as a function of different communication tactic that the presenter uses.

Lastly, the current work intends to explore the possibility and consequences of engaging in less-than-truthful communications in the interest of others. Although the traditional perspective of self-presentation views non-truthful self-presentation as a strategic tactic to protect one's own self, a few recent works consider Goffman (1967)'s discussion on norms of other-considerateness and self-respect to argue that individuals might also engage in non-truthful communications when they are motivated to prevent other people from being harmed by the exposure of unfavorable information. Evasion, just as certain types of deception, can be other-



benefitting. Instances and consequences of other-benefitting evasion are empirically examined and discussed in this chapter.

In short, the goal of this research is to extend the recent research efforts that have started to shed light on understanding the phenomenon and theoretical background for non-truthful information managing, and we accomplish this task by investigating the downstream consequences of those tactics in a waitperson-customer interaction, which is a consumption setting in which self-presentational missteps may have economic outcomes. We draw on the approach of examining ‘the presenter’s paradox’ to argue that the expectations of the information provider as a function of in what manner he/she communicates the information might not be in accordance with how favorably the audience responds to the information sharing. Finally, we explore the possibility that the paradoxical choice of the self-presenter might prove itself to be the rewarding and worthwhile when given consideration of the underlying motives.

In the sections to follow, we present a series of studies to demonstrate that evasive communication commonly takes place in the marketplace, particularly within waitperson-customer interaction context. In the tradition of other research on social interactions, we investigate the perspectives of both parties that are involved in non-truthful information sharing. To ensure that the both ends of the interaction have actually engaged in evasive communication, we report brief findings from pilot tests then move on to report and discuss findings from laboratory studies. Pilot A and study 1 examine the viewpoint of service providers (i.e., self-presenter) and shows potential evidence of their efforts to make ‘strategic’ choices of how to share information. Then, pilot B and study 2 investigate how the audience actually responds to the contents and the manner of information sharing, using tip amount as a proxy for the expressed favorability towards the information provider, and by asking them to indicate how

they are willing to engage in further information search. Furthermore, downstream consequences of additional information gathering about non-truthful communication and how the revelation of truth impacts consumer responses are tested and discussed.

## **2.3 SERVER'S PERSPECTIVE**

### **2.3.1 Pilot A**

When customers experience an inconvenience at a service establishment, they often demand an explanation, an apology, or other means to compensate for their experience. In those cases, a normatively appropriate behavior from the service provider is to correctly identify the cause of the inconvenience and share the information with the customer. However, to avoid looking bad in front of the eyes of the customer, the self-presenters (i.e., servers) might dodge away from the normatively appropriate communication (i.e., truth-telling). Admission of one's own mistake can result in negative perception about the server's competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Blaming the kitchen might withdraw the customers as witnessing the instance of other-blame often threatens assumptions about justice and personal invulnerability (Tenner & Affleck, 1990). In the first pilot, the extent of non-truthful information sharing in the existence of customer inconvenience was measured from the perspective of the waitpersons.

The pilot testing was conducted mainly to demonstrate the prevalence of evasion in the marketplace, to provide evidence that it is a commonly used tactic by service providers. To reach this objective, real-world experiences of restaurant servers were recalled in the pilot study.

### *Method*

A total of 165 participants (104 females) were recruited online through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (cf. Goodman, Cryder & Cheema, 2012). Notably, study participation was limited only to the participants who reported that they either had an experience of working as a server at a restaurant or are currently employed as one. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, where they were asked to think of a time when they had to deal with any customer inconvenience that was caused by own or other person's mistake while they were serving a customer. We asked the participants to explain what the customer inconvenience was about, but more importantly, to provide an open-ended response to the question that asks how they verbally communicated with the customer about the inconvenience, to the best of their memory.

Two independent coders who were blind to the hypotheses of this research were provided with a classification schemes for the responses. An inter-coder reliability check was completed for the 165 cases. The two raters agreed on 135 of 165 cases (81.8%), suggesting high levels of inter-coder reliability (Weber, 1990). Disagreement between the two raters occurred primarily because one tended to take the written responses more literally than the other rater; a third coder reconciled the disagreements.

### *Results*

Among participants who recalled how they dealt with customer inconvenience that was caused by themselves, being truthful about one's own fault seemed to be the most common response (49.4%). We also found out that being evasive about one's own mistake is as common as telling the truth (45.8% vs. 49.4%;  $\chi^2(1) = 0.22, p = .64$ ).

On the other hand, we found that service providers were less likely to be forthcoming when it comes to revealing the fact that other party caused the customer inconvenience (18.3%) than admitting their own mistakes (49.4%;  $\chi^2(1) = 17.80, p = .00003$ ). In fact, evasive responses were most widely used when servers provide explanation about customer inconveniences caused by other party (76.8% vs. 23.2%;  $\chi^2(1) = 47.22, p < .00001$ ). Table 2.1 presents response option counts and proportions for both conditions (Omnibus  $\chi^2(3) = 20.78, p = .00012$ ).

TABLE 2.1  
RESPONSE TYPE (PILOT A)

	<u>Condition</u>	
	Self	Other
Truth	41 (49.4%)	15 (18.3%)
Deception	4 (4.8%)	4 (4.9%)
Excuse	12 (14.5%)	11 (13.4%)
Non-answer	26 (31.3%)	52 (63.4%)
Total	83 (100%)	82 (100%)

With sizable proportion of former or current servers actually reporting that they have engaged in some form of non-truthful communication with the customers to avoid disclosing unfavorable information, we further conducted a couple of experiments to seek converging evidence in a more controlled lab setting.

### 2.3.2 STUDY 1A

Study 1A was designed to examine the perspectives of self-presenters, by observing the choices participants make regarding how to share unfavorable information when they engage in

communications with the audience. The choice that a self-presenter makes on how to share information brings a significant impact on how the self-presenter is perceived by the audience, and it shapes further interaction between the self-presenter and the audience, which might involve economic outcomes.

When a service failure takes place at a service establishment, how would a service provider communicate with the customer to make up for the failure? We surveyed the question from the service providers' perspective within a context of a restaurant where there was a mistake in food preparation for the customer and examine the servers' intentions to engage in non-truthful communication.

#### **2.3.2.1 Design and Procedure**

One hundred and fifty-three participants were recruited via paid community panel at the University of Michigan and received cash payment for their participation. Participants were presented with one of two versions of a hypothetical scenario, where they, as servers, were to handle information about a customer inconvenience (see appendix 2B for scenario). The customer inconvenience of having unwanted sauce on the food was either caused by the server (self-fault condition) or by the inattention of the kitchen (other-fault condition). At the end of the scenario, the customer noticed the mistake and demanded an explanation.

Once they have read the scenario, participants were asked to indicate which of the following statements best describes how they would respond to the customers at the table: (1) *I would apologize and blame myself for the mistake*, (2) *I would apologize and blame the kitchen for the mistake*, (3) *I would apologize but not be specific about who made the mistake*, or (4) *I would apologize but give an irrelevant excuse like "it's been a bad day"* (order counterbalanced).

Choosing responses (1) or (2) was an indication of willingness to provide either truthful or deceptive explanation, while responses (3) and (4) were included to represent the evasive explanation for both conditions.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3.2.2 Results and Discussion

Participant responses were recoded according to the assigned conditions (i.e., self- vs. other-fault conditions) for analyses. For instance, if a participant in the self-fault condition had chosen the response option of blaming the kitchen, the response was categorized as deception.

Depending on who caused the mistake, there was a significant difference in the distribution of the responses that the participants who took the perspective of the servers would provide to the customer (Omnibus  $\chi^2(2) = 15.96; p = 0.0003$ ). The detailed pattern of the distribution replicated what was observed in the pilot study. When the customer inconvenience happened as a result of one's own mistake, admitting one's own fault was as frequent an option as being inexplicit about the source of the mistake (44.6% vs. 53.0%;  $\chi^2(1) = 1.18; p = 0.277$ ). On the contrary, when participants were to deal with the mistake that was caused by other party (i.e., kitchen), their intentions to pinpoint the correct source was significantly reduced (18.6% vs. 44.6%;  $\chi^2(1) = 16.38; p = 0.001$ ), highlighting the evasive responses to appear as the most common approach above other types of information sharing ( $\chi^2(1) = 16.46; p = 0.00005$ ) to handle negative information regarding customer inconvenience. See table 2.2.

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<sup>1</sup> Although I expected to conduct further analyses for the different types of evasion based on pilot study results and prior literature that suggested that even irrelevant excuses can assist communicator to reach their communication goal (i.e., Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978), the tally of those 'irrelevant excuse' responses was too small to conduct a meaningful statistical analysis. Therefore, further analyses treat non-answer and excuse categories as a single response type.

TABLE 2.2  
RESPONSE TYPE (STUDY 1A)

	Self	Kitchen
Truth	37 (44.6%)	13 (18.6%)
Deception	2 (2.4%)	10 (14.3%) <sup>2</sup>
Non-answer	42 (50.6%)	46 (65.7%)
Excuse	2 (2.4%)	1 (1.4%)
Total	83 (100%)	70 (100%)

### 2.3.3 STUDY 1B

Study 1A sought to understand the perspectives of self-presenters by asking participants to indicate how they would communicate unfavorable information to the audience. While evasive communication was most commonly used, servers were more likely to truthfully communicate their mistakes than forthcoming about other people's mistake. Extending the findings of study 1A, study 1B considers if the self-presenters would modify their behaviors when it is more salient that their financial outcomes are at stake. How do service providers (i.e., self-presenters) recruit different types of non-truthful measures in communications to customers (i.e., audience of the self-presentation) in an unfavorable social situation with regards to maximizing their financial incentives?

<sup>2</sup> One of the counterintuitive results from this study was that while the proportion of participant reporting they would escape the inconvenience of admitting their own fault in front of customers by blaming the kitchen was negligible (2.4% vs. 0; Fisher's  $p = 0.49$ ), a significant number of participants who were to handle information about the kitchen's fault rather took the responsibility themselves (14.3% vs. 0;  $\chi^2(1) = 10.77$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Perhaps this can be partially attributed to each of (or the combination of) the following factors: (1) a lack of severity in the mistake or an ease of suggesting a remedy, or (2) the perception of a cooperative, team-work setting and the extent to which one feels responsible for the mistake in such a setting.

### 2.3.3.1 Design and Procedure

Four hundred forty-one (170 female) participants were recruited via online panel and provided data in return for a small cash payment. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four versions of a hypothetical scenario, while taking perspective of a waitperson (see appendix 2C for stimuli). The scenario this time involved a lengthy delay at a restaurant, for which the waitperson inevitably needed to apologize and provide explanation to customer(s). In the scenario, two factors were manipulated. First, to explore the interplay between the impacts of the content and the manner of the sharing of unfavorable information, I manipulated the delay to be coming either from server's own mistake or the kitchen's, as in the previous studies. An additional factor of financial incentive structure (i.e., whether the waitperson's compensation with tips from customers is fixed or not) was manipulated to examine the extent to which the self-presenter strategically alters the choice of information management tactics in consideration of downstream consequences (e.g., financial reasons in this context).

As in study 1A, upon reading the scenarios, participants were asked to indicate which of the following statements best describes what they would say to the customers: (1) *I would apologize and blame myself for the mistake*, (2) *I would apologize and blame the kitchen for the mistake*, or (3) *I would apologize but not blame anyone for the mistake* (note the irrelevant excuse option was dropped from study 1A; order counterbalanced).

### 2.3.3.2 Results

*Source effect.* Overall, there was a significant source effect on the distribution of the most likely response that participants would provide to the customer who asks about the reason for the delay (Omnibus  $\chi^2(2) = 39.86; p < 0.00001$ ). Participants were mostly truthful when they



communicated the information regarding the delay that was caused due to their own fault (within self-fault condition: truth 61% vs. non-truthful tactics 39%,  $\chi^2(1) = 21.14$ ;  $p < 0.00001$ ). On the contrary, when they needed to speak of the kitchen's fault, the pattern flipped. They indicated that they are much less likely to be straightforward when communicating information about other's fault (within kitchen condition: truth 31% vs. non-truthful tactics 69%,  $\chi^2(1) = 61.79$ ;  $p < 0.00001$ ). Among the non-truthful responses, evasive responses were used significantly more than deceptive responses regardless of the source of the delay, replicating the findings from Chapter 1 (Full sample  $\chi^2(1) = 194.82$ ;  $p < 0.00001$ ). This preference towards evasion, nonetheless, was more prevalent when participants were to deal with other party's mistake, to the degree in which it even outnumbered the tendency to favor communicating information in truthful manner (within kitchen condition: truth 31% vs. evasion 62%,  $\chi^2(1) = 41.66$ ;  $p < 0.00001$ ). See table 2.3a.

TABLE 2.3:  
MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION REGARDING DELAY (STUDY 1B)

2.3a Source Conditions	Self	Kitchen
Truthful	133 (61.0%)	70 (31.4%)
Deceptive	12 (5.5%)	15 (6.7%)
Evasive	73 (33.5%)	138 (61.8%)
Total	218 (100%)	223 (100%)

*Financial incentive structure effect.* The extent to which differences in financial incentive structure affects the truthfulness of the responses was not as strong compared to the source effect (Omnibus  $\chi^2(2) = 5.31$ ;  $p = 0.07$ ). Yet, the financial incentive structure had a significant impact

on the rate of truth-telling among participants, such that participants who were assigned to the condition in which the tip amount they receive depends solely on the customer's decision (i.e., high incentive condition: HIC) were less likely to provide truthful explanation for the delay than the participants who would receive fixed percentage of the food bill as tips (i.e., low incentive condition: LIC) (rate of truthful responses: HIC 40% vs. LIC 51%,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.73$ ;  $p = 0.03$ ; see table 2.3b). We decomposed the results to verify that the truth-tellers in the self-fault condition were indeed impacted by the differences in the financial incentive structure. Albeit the truthful response was the most prevalent response among participants responsible for the delay, they became much less willing to admit their responsibility when their partners were perceived to be in greater power to affect how much they receive as compensation (rate of truthful responses within self-fault condition: HIC 52% vs. LIC 68%,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.48$ ;  $p = 0.019$ ; see table 2.3c).

TABLE 2.3:  
STUDY 1B: MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION REGARDING DELAY  
(b: BY INCENTIVE STRUCTURE; c: SELF-FAULT CONDITION)

2.3b	<u>Incentive conditions</u>	High	Low	2.3c	<u>Incentive conditions</u>	High	Low
	Truthful	78 (40.2%)	125(50.6%)		Truthful	49 (52.1%)	84 (67.7%)
	Deceptive	15 (7.7%)	12 (4.9%)		Deceptive	8 (8.5%)	4 (3.2%)
	Evasive	101 (52.1%)	110 (44.5%)		Evasive	37 (39.4%)	36 (29.0%)
	Total	194 (100%)	247 (100%)		Total	94 (100%)	124 (100%)

### 2.3.3.3 Discussion

By asking how participants would choose to communicate unfavorable information with others and analyzing their responses, we again found empirical support to the theorizing that

evasion is a preferred alternative to deception among individuals who are reluctant to reveal the truthful yet inconvenient information. While participants were more honest about admitting their own responsibility in a social mishap, they seemed to be uneasy going public with the information about other people's mistake. However, we demonstrated that this greater tendency to disclose one's own mistake (vs. a third party's mistake) in an unfavorable situation is mitigated once the financial stakes are more closely involved within the social interaction. This provides suggestive evidence that the presenters of information are taking into account the downstream social consequences when they are making choice of how to best handle potentially self-threatening information. Pilot B and Study 2 examines the extent to which such considerations of downstream consequences are worthwhile and relevant, by directly testing customer responses to the self-presentational efforts.

## **2.4 CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE**

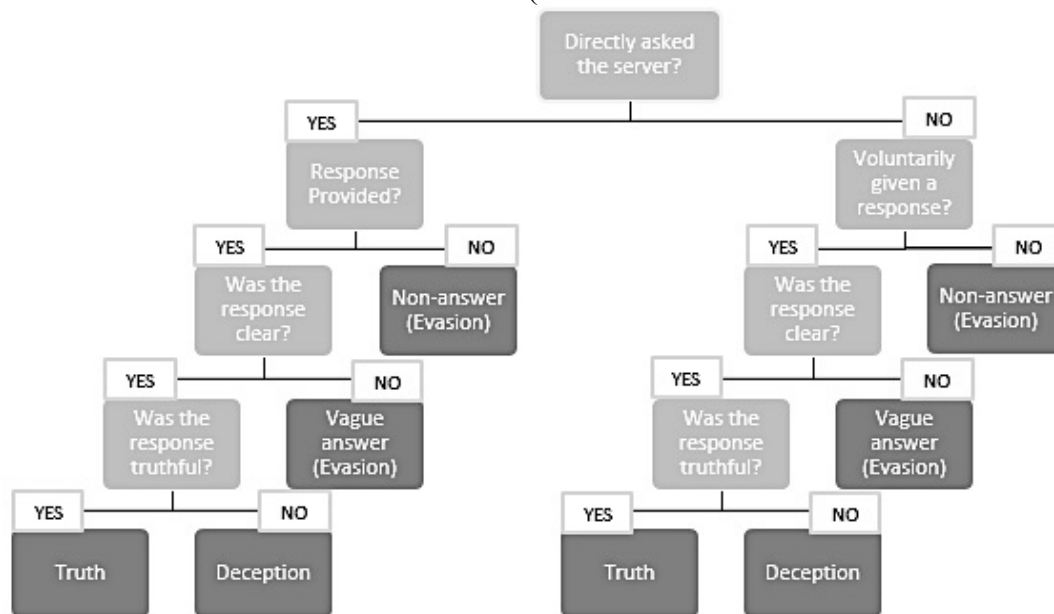
### **2.4.1 Pilot B**

The second part of the chapter was devoted to examine the customer responses to the communications of servers. First, a quick pilot study was conducted to assess the accessibility of customers to recall their experiences of non-truthful communications in their interaction with service providers. In doing so, a categorization of the communications with regards to two dimensions of non-truthfulness was attempted. The two dimensions of interest were: (i) if the communication lacks clarity (i.e., evasion vs. other answers) or (ii) if the communication lacks veracity (e.g., deception vs. truth). Finally, the second pilot served as a feasibility check for using tip amounts as the main dependent variable in study 2.

*Method*

Two hundred and twenty-seven participants were recruited via an online panel under a restriction that they must reside in North America (i.e., USA or Canada), where customers normally leave the gratuity to service providers at the end of the service encounter. Their ages ranged from 18 to 72 years (49.8% female). Participants were told in advance to consider participating in the study only if they have had experienced an unpleasant incident at a restaurant to help better reach the study objective. They were also informed that they will be asked a several questions regarding what they remembered about the experience. To ensure the maximum accessibility in memory to those events, participants were asked to think and write down about the last time they had an unsatisfactory experience at a service establishment (e.g., long delay for the order, overcooked food, etc.), particularly at a restaurant. They were to provide open-ended responses to briefly explain what happened (i.e., what the customer inconvenience they experienced was) and whom they thought was responsible for the inconvenience.

FIGURE 2.1  
RECALLING SERVER COMMUNICATION (CUSTOMER’S PERSPECTIVE: PILOT B)



Then, they were asked to answer a series of binary questions to identify the perceived type of the communication with the server (figure 2.1). The questions were used to capture how the customers had *perceived* the communication provided by the servers to be, rather than the actual nature of the communication.

Finally, they were asked to indicate if the communication with the server made them reconsider their willingness to leave the tip or the amount of it.

### *Results*

Overall, we observe that the distribution of actual responses recalled by customers is similar to that of the self-reported communication types captured in the first part of the pilot testing which examined the perspective of the servers. This suggests that the audience perceives the actor's non-truthful communication rather accurately as a deviance from a truthful information exchange. Not only do the servers admit that they would largely engage in evasion while communicating inconvenient situational information within their interactions with customers, but the customers can also readily recall their experiences in receiving an evasive communication from the servers. When participants were guided to identify the category of communication they received about an inconvenience they experienced at a restaurant, a majority (about 70%) of the participants (N = 140) reported that they were not provided with an explanation for the inconvenience. This result shows that servers incline to avoid providing explanation, and furthermore, the non-trivial counts of responses not given even at times when they were directly asked by customers (N = 31) imply that the customers are aware of the fact that the servers often engage in avoidant communication (i.e., a type of evasion) when dealing with information regarding customer inconvenience.

TABLE 2.4  
RESPONSE TYPE (PILOT B)

	Asked	Not asked
Truth	30 (40.0%)	15 (9.9%)
Deception	3 (4.0%)	2 (1.3%)
Vague answer	11 (14.7%)	6 (3.9%)
Non-answer	31 (41.3%)	129 (84.9%)
Total	75 (100%)	152 (100%)

A separate analysis on influence on tip amount was conducted to gauge whether using tip amounts as an indication of customers' favorability towards the receiving of different types of communications. Prior literature on tipping behavior suggests that many factors other than service quality, including individual differences such as conformity to norms, influence tip amounts (Conlin, Lynn, & O'Donoghue, 2003), and thus, this should in fact be a conservative approach. By simply comparing the extent to which the different types of communication influenced the willingness to leave tip or the amount of it, we found that the different types of non-truthful communications could result in meaningful differences in tipping behavior ( $\chi^2(3) = 10.72, p = .013$ ). Further, when we examined the effect of definite answer versus evasive answer, customers were more likely to reconsider their intentions to provide tip when they receive an indefinite responding than definite answers (68% vs. 52%,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.57, p = .032$ ). More specifically, among the conversations that actually took place, customers who thought they received an evasion communication from the servers reported that they had reconsidered the tip amount and their willingness to give, whereas customers who perceived their communication to be truthful reported that they did not reconsider their tip after the conversation. Based on these

observations, therefore, we gain support for using tip amounts as a proxy to measure customer attitude towards the communication in the main study.

TABLE 2.5  
COMMUNICATION INFLUENCING TIP (PILOT B)

	YES	NO	Total
Truth	21 (14%)	24 (30%)	45 (19.8%)
Deception	5 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (2.2%)
Vague answer	13 (9%)	4 (5%)	17 (7.5%)
Non-answer	108 (73%)	52 (65%)	160 (70.5%)
Total	147 (100%)	80 (100%)	227 (100%)

Finally, a laboratory study was conducted to explore how the customers respond to servers that use non-truthful maneuvers in communication to handle information about customer inconveniences.

#### 2.4.2 STUDY 2

Studies conducted to understand the server’s perspective, whether recalled or imagined, collectively showed that while servers tend to be more truthful about admitting their own fault, a sizable portion of the responses were provided in an evasive manner. Also, this evasive approach appeared to be the most frequently chosen option when the servers were to communicate the fault of other party. That is, servers were motivated to protect the kitchen from negative evaluations as well, rather than being blunt about the kitchen’s fault. However, whether these efforts would necessarily result in consequences that are beneficial to the waitperson is questionable and further leads to other relevant questions. Is taking an evasive approach more advantageous than a deceptive (or honest) approach in maximizing their financial incentives? Moreover, do the two non-truthful communication tactics, when detected, trigger similar

audience responses (i.e., which tactic is riskier when detected)? Then, how do self-serving motives that underlie the non-truthful information sharing impact audience responses? As such, consideration of social consequences (i.e., audience responses) is warranted for more fulsome understanding of non-truthful information sharing.

If we turn back to the pilot study B, not only did the results show that customers readily recall instances where their communications with restaurant servers were evasive in manner (i.e., avoidant or vague), but the results also suggest that those customers are generally not favorable towards the evasive communication, that they were more likely to report that the communication influenced the willingness to leave tip or the amount of it. Given this general reluctance to accept evasive communication from the audience, it is worthwhile to delve deeper into the seemingly paradoxical preference towards evasion in the current study.

The purpose of Study 2 is to examine various consequences of different tactics of information sharing by examining the responses of the audience. More specifically, the experiment is designed to serve a three-folds objective: (1) exploring initial responses of audience to different types of non-truthful information management tactics in determining tip amounts (which often constitutes a significant proportion of financial incentives that the service provider would receive), (2) investigating the role of perceived informativeness and believability of the tactics to observe the differences in willingness to search for additional (and potentially more truthful) information, and (3) testing the degree to which, if at all, the audience perceives and responds favorably to the non-truthfulness of evasion and deception in relation to their underlying motives to serve self vs. other.

#### **2.4.2.1 Design and Procedure**



In this experiment, we asked participants to take the perspectives of customers to capture how customers respond to the different self-presentations of service providers, using tipping behavior as proxy for customer responses. Two hundred and twenty-nine (107 female) participants successfully completed the study.

The study followed a two-part procedure. In the first part of the study, participants were exposed to a scenario similar to what was used in study 1B, but it was organized to represent a perspective of a customer who experienced a lengthy delay at a restaurant. In the last lines of the scenario, the participants received one of three responses to their direct inquiry regarding the source of delay: the server blames oneself, blames the kitchen, or does not provides any explanations for who caused the delay. Then, the participants were asked to complete the following sets of dependent measures: (1) A question provoking an open-ended response about the percentage of total food bill that they would like to leave as a tip after receiving the waitperson's explanation, (2) scale-based measures to evaluate the response provided in two dimensions of believability (2 items) and informativeness (3 items), and finally, they were asked to indicate (3) their willingness to seek for further information (2 items).

After the participants indicated their likelihood of engaging in further information search, they were instructed to complete the second part of the study. This portion of the experiment was designed to explore more consequential downstream effects of non-truthful information sharing in the context of when the truth is revealed. Participants were presented with another short scenario in which the restaurant manager comes out to apologize and communicate information about the (true) source of the delay that took place earlier. This information would either confirm or reject the original information provided by the waitperson, or update the customer(s) with the motives of the previous non-answer by the waitperson. Participants were finally asked to indicate

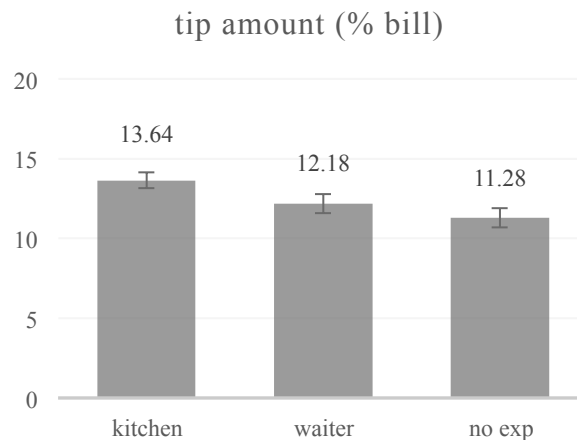
the tip amount that they would then like to leave, to examine the extent to which they would change the amount from what they had stated initially.

### 2.4.2.2 Results and Discussion

#### Phase 1

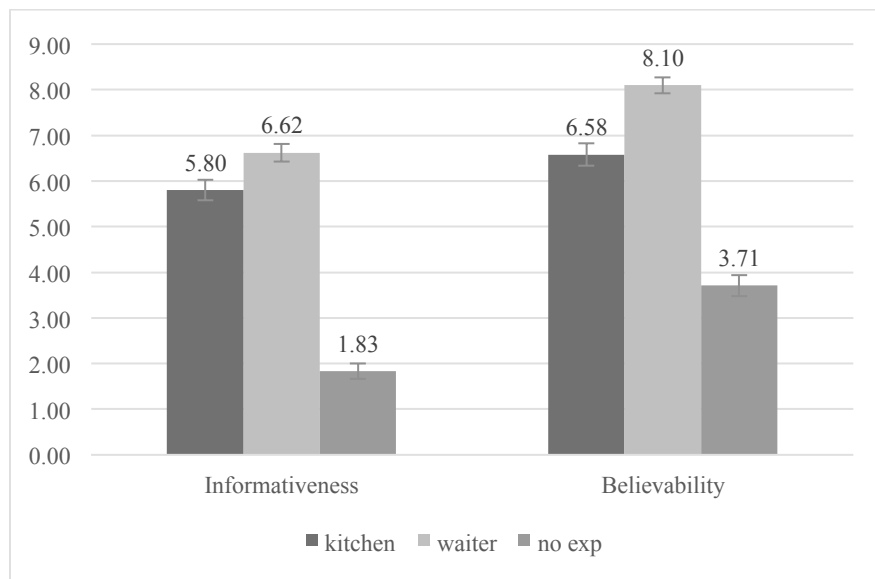
*Main results.* A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the data, with response type as the single factor, revealed a significant main effect on the tip amount dependent variable. The amount of tip left by the customers differed significantly depending on the response provided by the waitperson (Omnibus  $F(2, 226) = 4.51, p = 0.012$ ). More specifically, pairwise contrasts reveal that customers indicated willingness to leave higher tip when the response from the waitperson directed the source of the delay to be the kitchen ( $M_{\text{kitchen}} = 13.64$ ) than when they were told that it was the waitperson's fault ( $M_{\text{waitperson}} = 12.18; p = 0.066$ ), also than when the waitperson did not provide any explanations ( $M_{\text{no\_explanation}} = 11.28; p = 0.003$ ; see figure 2.2). Waitpersons taking up the responsibility for the delay did not result in tip amount any higher than when they were mute about the fact (12.18 vs. 11.28;  $p = 0.263$ ).

FIGURE 2.2  
INITIAL RESPONSES TO SERVER'S COMMUNICATIONS (STUDY 2)



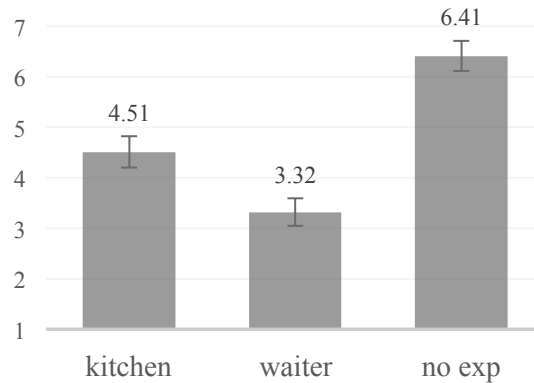
*Evaluation of responses.* Customers evaluated the response from the waitperson in terms of how informative it was (3 items;  $\alpha = .937$ ) and how believable it was (2 items;  $\alpha = .935$ ). Customers rated the responses that specifically told who the source of delay was to be much higher in both dimensions than the response that did not, although saying that it was the waitperson's fault was evaluated significantly more informative and believable than blaming the kitchen. ( $ps < 0.01$  for all Omnibus ANOVA and pairwise contrasts; see figure 2.3 for mean values).

FIGURE 2.3  
EVALUATION OF RESPONSES (STUDY 2)



*Likelihood of further information search.* Results show that customers who could not explicitly figure out where the delay was coming from by the waitperson's response were more likely to engage in further information seeking activities ( $M_{\text{no\_explanation}} = 6.41$ ) than those who received the information about the source ( $M_{\text{kitchen}} = 4.51$ ,  $M_{\text{waitperson}} = 3.32$ ;  $ps < 0.001$ ). Among those who were provided with a specific source of the delay, customers reported higher willingness to seek for more information when the blame was directed to the kitchen (4.51 vs. 3.32;  $p = .005$ ; see figure 2.4).

FIGURE 2.4  
WILLINGNESS TO SEEK FURTHER INFORMATION (STUDY 2)



In general, customers seemed to take the waitperson's communication as valid information when it contained definitive information about the source. This might suggest that evasive responses are more likely to be perceived as a violation of communication norms of informativeness and truthfulness (Grice, 1989). As a consequence, customers are (i) more likely to search for additional information about the source of their inconveniences, and also (ii) more likely to reduce tip amount as an expression of their unsatisfactory outcome of the 'conversation.'

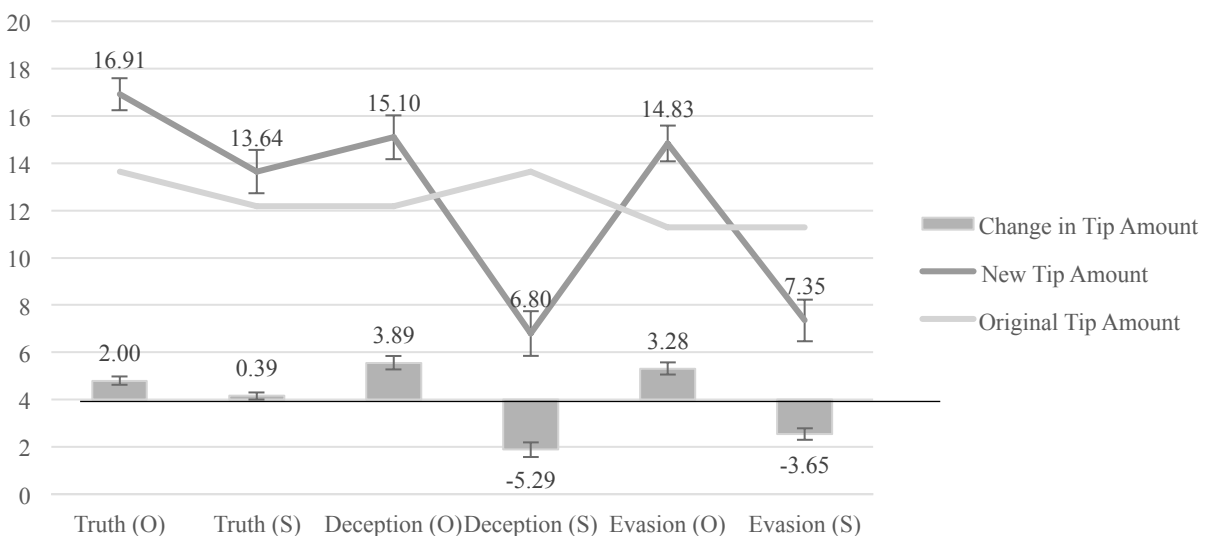
## Phase 2

*Changes in the tip amount.* The final dependent measure was intended to capture whether customers would modify their willingness to provide tip when they find out the manner in which the waitperson communicated with them was in fact not truthful. For each participant, I obtained a difference score for the tip amounts by subtracting the original tip amount from the final tip amount they indicated to leave. The three original responses by the waitperson were crossed with the two true sources of the delay (i.e., kitchen and waitperson), resulting in 6 experimental conditions for analysis.

In particular, customers significantly reduced the tip amount by 5.29% of the total food bill when they found out that the waiter had blamed the kitchen for his/her own fault (i.e., self-

interested lie). Similarly, when the underlying motive of the waitperson's non-answer was proven to be self-serving, participants reduced the tip amount by 3.65%. On the contrary, when it was known to the customers that the waitperson was either lying or being evasive so as to cover up for the kitchen's fault, they were willing to better compensate the waitperson by increasing the tip amount (by 3.89% or 3.28%, respectively). These results suggest that customers were willing to reward other-benefitting intentions of the servers albeit their non-truthfulness, but punish if those non-truthful maneuvers were in pursuit of self-interest (deception: 3.89 vs. -5.29,  $p < .001$ ; evasion: 3.28 vs. -3.65,  $p < .001$ ). The extent to which the customers change their tip amounts for the responses that were truthful in the first place fell in between how they reward the other-benefitting deception/evasion and how they punish the self-serving lies or evasive behaviors. They indicated to only moderately increase the tip (2%) when they were confirmed that it was not the waitperson's fault, but verification of the waitperson's truthful admission of one's own fault did not result in any increase in the compensation (0.39%; 2 vs .39,  $p = .06$ ; .39 vs. 0, ns).

FIGURE 2.5  
CHANGES IN TIP AMOUNT AFTER MANAGER'S CLARIFICATION (STUDY 2)



This latter part of study 2 provides insights on if and how information sharing falling short of authentic and truthful communication may be evaluated not only negatively but also positively by the audience, depending on the underlying motive. In particular, we showed that non-truthful communication may be penalized when it was intended to serve one's own interest, but the non-truthful communication can be redeemed and justified when it was done for other's benefits. In other words, the audience (i.e., customer) rewarded the information presenter, despite the information's non-truthfulness, only when the non-truthful information was provided in the interest of others. This might serve as suggestive evidence that there could be a hierarchy among different dimensions of morality (which rewards unselfishness over truthfulness), at least in this context.

In the section that follows, an integrative discussion of the results is attempted, while seeking to provide practical implications to interpersonal interactions in various consumption settings.

## **2.5 GENERAL DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, two pilot studies were conducted in attempts to demonstrate the pattern of real communications that take place at restaurants between servers and customers. Additionally, three laboratory studies were conducted to examine antecedents and consequences of non-truthful information managing in a more controlled setting, through which we found a consistent pattern of responses. When service providers (i.e., waitpersons in this context) were dealing with information about customer inconvenience, being evasive was the most preferred communication tactic used overall. While they tended to be evasive when the unfavorable situation was caused

by a third party (i.e., kitchen), they were as highly as or more likely to admit their own fault to customers.

However, the tendency to admit one's own fault diminished when the financial stakes were more directly involved with the interaction. This seems to signal that the servers were in part fighting with the drive to resort from normatively appropriate behavior to maximize one's financial incentive. Evasion might deem itself as a viable option that would not necessarily hurt one's moral self-view (Mazar et al. 2008) nor jeopardize their economic outcome from the interaction, to those who originally wanted to take responsibility in the mishap, and this might account for the prevalence of evasion in the self-fault condition in general. With such a conjecture that this reduction in the truth-telling tendency was based on the strategic motive to maximize the socio-economic outcomes, we, therefore, examined whether the choice of communication tactic driven by such motives would serve the communicators right.

Using tip amounts as representations of customer reactions in study 2, I showed that customers respond less favorably at the tactic(s) most frequently chosen by the service providers. While evasion tends to be often preferred maneuver of communicating unfavorable information, customers do not seem to be satisfied with the manner in which the information is presented. Consequently, customers who were involved in an evasive communications indicated that they would leave the least amount of tip on average. Also, those customers were more likely to search for additional information had they been involved in evasive communications.

Lastly, further downstream consequences in the event that the customers were provided with truthful information were inspected. Specifically, when additionally acquired information revealed the fact that the service providers had engaged in non-truthful tactics, customers

punished only the self-interested non-truthful behaviors but rewarded the those behaviors committed in the interest of other party (i.e., kitchen).

Taking these findings from all the studies together, there seems to exist a paradox. The most favored options of the presenters did not result in the audience reactions that would maximize their financial stakes. In particular, servers were more likely to (1) be evasive or truthful about their own fault or (2) become evasive when it comes to communications about the kitchen's fault. However, these popular responses did not always turn over to the most favorable economic outcomes. According to the customers, these behavioral tactics prompt significantly lesser tip than what the servers can receive otherwise, if they take an alternative approach of (1) blaming the kitchen instead of truthful admission of their own fault or (2) being truthful and explicit when it comes to communicating the kitchen's fault.

Nonetheless, a fairly high level of reported intentions of engaging in further information search reported by customers might suggest ways in which the paradox could be at least partially resolved. By investigating how participants react when another party verifies the non-truthful information, we can revisit the less beneficial consequences of the most favored response tactic(s). Given that there is a chance that the actual information comes available for the customers, to avoid telling the truth about the kitchen's fault is not a terribly mistaken approach, as customers tend to reimburse for the well-intentioned evasion. Similarly, although being truthful about one's own mistake does not necessarily get commended by higher incentives in the first place, it is better off than getting caught in deception or evasion about one's own fault, as those self-interested lying or evasion are penalized by customers (study 2; phase 2). Therefore, the presenter's paradox is not as severe as it seems, only with the potential of actual information being provided for the audience.



Overall, current findings suggest a boundary condition to generally preferable outcomes of employing evasion over deception, such that social consequences of evasion may be less favorable. This boundary condition was examined in a particular context where the evaluation of the information managing involved financial stakes. It would be worthwhile to examine if this condition applies to contexts that are associated with compensation mechanisms other than monetary incentives (e.g., moral judgments of others).

A noteworthy pattern that emerged throughout the studies was that the majority of servers were loyal to the kitchen staff. Even when kitchen was responsible for the mishap, the servers stayed silent about the fact that the kitchen staff had caused the inconvenience to the customer, even though it turned out to be at the expense of their opportunities to maximize one's financial return. Likewise, whereas some self-interested individuals might argue that there is a room to falsely blame the kitchen to present oneself in a favorable light when the mishap was caused by one's own mistake, the servers in the population were reluctant to take advantage of the kitchen. Potential theorizing attempts for such loyal behaviors toward kitchen are suggested here:

- This could be a hierarchy effect within the restaurant staff members in terms their relative standings. If the waitperson perceives kitchen to be higher in the hierarchy, the observed pattern of behavior might be explained by 'loyalty towards superordinate'; if the waitperson perceives kitchen to be lower in the hierarchy, the pattern of behavior might be thought of as 'taking care/responsibility of subordinate.'
- They might actually feel a shared responsibility for the mistake to solely blame the kitchen. When restaurant employees get trained to keep in mind that there is a common, singular goal to provide "best possible customer service," the mere fact that customer(s) were inconvenienced might make them feel at least partially responsible.

- They might care about the kitchen's reputation. They might think that ruining the reputation of the kitchen could be more damaging down the road, as the kitchen is the primary source from which the product is made.
- Similarly, they might be cognizant about the fact that there rarely is a room or direct opportunities for the kitchen to make up for the mistake or provide justification or excuse themselves.
- They might be simply afraid that customer might see them just to be 'blaming' the other party by default.

Most of these theorizing attempts are closely related to the recent literature on social preferences (see Rabin, 1993; Fehr & Schmidt, 1999; Bolton & Ockenfels, 2000) that proposes a variety of ways that people might care about social outcomes and not just private outcomes, but whether any (or the combination) of these would actually be at work is an empirical question.

Future studies should also investigate the impact of non-truthful communication on recipient responses, particularly when the response to the communication involves financial transaction. Assuming that the general unfavorability towards evasive communication holds, a consumer might be paying more for wrong information over uncertain information. While the recipient of evasive communication may be motivated to seek additional information until he/she finds a definitive answer, it is highly likely that the word-of-mouth information that this consumer generates would be in a form of "gossip." Negative consequences associated with gossiping behavior may be worthwhile to be discussed in the future research.

Moreover, the findings regarding less favorable reactions toward evasive responding can be compared with Langer and her colleagues (1978)' demonstration of the importance of providing a reason, even a 'placebic' one. In a field study of compliance, they found out the

requests that were accompanied by either a valid or a “placebic” reason were more successful than when no reason was provided. While individuals rejected statements that had the form of an unqualified request, they accepted almost any statement that had the general form of an explanation, showing that a statement with explanations are perceived better by the audience. In pilot study A, from the recall of actual server experiences, we observe that a number of servers went about the customer inconvenience by presenting ‘placebic’ information to the customer, consistent with Langer’s findings. However, when participants were asked to imagine themselves as servers, they seem to not understand the potential benefits of providing a seemingly irrelevant excuse to the customers (see Footnote 2, study 1A). Or, it may be a function of the rather subtle customer inconvenience that did not motivate restaurant servers in the study enough to engage in providing ‘placebic’ information to the customer.

Moving forward, although this chapter is primarily intended to examine social outcomes of non-truthful communication tactics, it is worthwhile to consider the emotional experiences of the self-presenter (i.e., waitperson) throughout the course of interaction with the customer. In Chapter 1, I have shown that anticipated embarrassment serves as a common driver for deceptive and evasive communications among consumers, but the two tactics result in experiencing different levels of negative moral emotions, namely guilt and shame. The waitperson – customer interaction might entail similar emotional experiences as the self-presenter, but a different psychological mechanism might be at work as the monetary stakes are involved in the interaction.

In conclusion, this chapter shows that while evasion is distinctively preferred way of managing an inconvenient truth in a social interaction, how it is regarded in the eye of the beholder may not be so preferable. Careful consideration of (unexpected or undesired)

downstream consequences would be helpful in making a wiser choice with regards to how to manage the flow of information within social interaction.

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## CONCLUSION

Although a large body of research documents the use of outright deception to avoid disclosures of unflattering personal information, there has been scant empirical consideration that people might employ a less costly means to a similar end. Evasive communications are prevalent in a wide range of social interactions, where individuals are faced with a demand of unwanted disclosure of information. For example, a consumer might not want to disclose information about their recent consumption in the word-of-mouth context. A salesperson, who has attempted to allure a customer to purchase a product, would not wish to let the customer know that he or she does not have an answer to the question that the customer had just asked. In the tradition of recent efforts to address the paucity in the literature, the two chapters in this dissertation investigate evasion as a viable, often preferred alternative to deception. These chapters have revealed that evasion and deception are distinct response tactics that uniquely operate to different situational factors with unique emotional and socio-economic consequences. The present research provides a foundational exploration of the use of evasion as a more preferred response to social predicaments over deception.

Chapter 1 revealed that evasion is a more likely response than deception, whether using self-reported intentions or observations of real behavior, and given consumer-to-consumer communications about price information or credit scores. We found empirical support for psychological distinction in these behaviors, that people who engaged in deception felt more guilt and shame than did their counterparts who were either evasive or told the truth. Further



evidence of discriminant validity for the two behaviors was provided by showing that evasion and deception are impacted by different contextual moderators. Deception (but not evasion) intentions declined with the risk of being discredited by an interaction partner, while evasion (but not deception) intentions decreased as a function of the persistence of a fellow consumer. Chapter 2 investigated the dynamic between communicator and recipient of the two non-truthful communication tactics. Specifically, two factors that are relevant to self-focus of self-presentation were considered: (i) how motives to protect self vs. other might influence the self-presentation and the veracity of it, and (ii) how the incentive structure can shape this self-presentation. While communicators seemed to be conflicted between the choices of admission and evasion when they were to communicate about one's own fault, they were reluctant to be in the position of blaming other party and evaded about the other party's fault. However, an exploration of the recipient's responses to the communication reveals that the most favored option by the communicator (i.e., evasion) is not necessarily favored by the recipient, thus often resulting in less satisfactory outcome. That is, while engaging in evasion has many benefits over deception, such as protecting oneself from getting exposed of potentially embarrassing information without feeling too much guilt and shame, it may or may not lead to achieving one's goal in a social interaction.

Taken together, the present dissertation sought to demonstrate the process of engaging in evasion within a social interaction that requires an effective self-presentation, by investigating psychosocial antecedents and consequences of evasion. Future research should continue to elucidate the conditions under which evasion might be an effective self-presentation tactic, yet recognize its caveats to further investigate ways to help restore more truthful and genuine communication within individuals.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1A CHAPTER 1 STUDY 1A SCENARIO

[Disparity = Yes / Disparity = No] Condition, Male Version

Imagine that you are sitting poolside at a resort hotel. While sipping an iced tea, you have a pleasant conversation with Victor, a guest you met earlier that afternoon. You talk about fabulous amenities and excellent service at the hotel and you think about how you paid \$1000 for 4 nights. The following conversation ensues:

Victor: "So {first name}, how long are you here?"

You: "Just for the weekend. I got here on Thursday and I'm leaving Monday morning."

Victor: "Me too. We have the exact same schedule! I'm on the 16th floor with a lakeside view. What floor are you on?"

You: "I'm on the 16th floor too, also with the lakeside view. Isn't it great?"

Victor: "Absolutely! I paid \$[800 / 1000] for 4 nights. What about you?"

How are you likely to respond to Victor's question?

**APPENDIX 1B**  
**CHAPTER 1 STUDY 2 SCENARIO**

Imagine that you have invited a handful of friends to your apartment to watch a movie on the new big-screen TV that you bought for \$1,000. Before the movie starts, one of your friends notices that your new television is exactly the same brand, model, and size as the one (s)he bought a week ago. Then you and (s)he have the following conversation about television sets:

Friend: "Nice TV. When did you get it?"

You: "I got it on sale about a week ago."

Friend: "Me too. I got the exact same set!"

You: "Really?"

Friend: "Yeah, I paid [Large Disparity = \$700; Small Disparity = \$900; No Disparity = \$1,000]. What about you?"

You: “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

**APPENDIX 1C**  
**CHAPTER 1 STUDY 3 SCENARIO**

[Low / High] Discredibility Condition, Female Version

Imagine that you have invited a handful of friends to your apartment to watch a movie on the new big-screen TV that you bought for \$1,000. One of your friends, Maria, arrives at your apartment a few minutes earlier than everyone else, so the two of you talk about the [features on / price you paid for] your new television while you wait for your other friends to arrive. Maria seems to be impressed when you tell her [about the 60-inch screen/ you paid \$1,000 for it].

Soon, everyone arrives at your apartment and gathers around the television before you start the movie. Everyone is talking, when Jane looks at your TV and notices that it is exactly the same brand, model, and size as the one she bought a week ago. She suddenly blurts out, "Hey, I got the exact same set on sale last week for \$800 at Best Buy, what about you?"

How are you likely to respond to Jane's question?

**APPENDIX 1D**  
**CHAPTER 1 STUDY 4 SCENARIO**

[Low / High] Persistence Condition, Male Version

Imagine that you and some friends are meeting for lunch at the food court in the local mall. You and one of your friends, John, arrive a bit early to walk around the mall. The two of you stop at a kiosk for a credit card company that offers a free credit report for completing a credit application. After completing the application, each of you go to separate booths to see electronic copies of your credit reports. You privately learn that your FICO score of 610 is in the “low credit-worthiness” range.

You and John then head to the food court to join your friends for lunch. While eating, you overhear a conversation between John and one of your mutual friends, Victor:

John: “That history midterm was brutal. How did you do?”

Victor: “I’ve been so busy this term, it’s been hard to study.”

John: “I know what you mean. [So what did you do on the weekend? / So how did you do on the midterm?]”

Victor: “I studied really hard for that exam.”

John: [“So what are you doing tonight? / So what was your mark?”]

Victor: [“Well, I’m going to a movie. / Well, I got a C.”]

John: “Me too. [Maybe we should go together! / Maybe we should study together!]”

After listening to this conversation, you think to yourself, “That’s just like John... he’s [not very / so] persistent when he wants to know something. He [totally / totally didn’t] let Victor avoid answering his question about his midterm mark.”

John then mentions to everyone that the two of you just received your credit scores. He says, “I got a score of 775, which means I have “excellent credit-worthiness.” Turning to you, he says, “What about you?”

You are the only one who knows about your low credit score, and would be a little embarrassed if your friends found out that you have “low credit-worthiness.” How are you likely to respond to John's question?

**APPENDIX 1E**  
**CHAPTER 1 EMOTION MEASURES**

1. Embarrassment
  - a. Embarrassed, awkward, uncomfortable (S1B, S2)
  - b. Embarrassed, self-conscious, blushing (Tangney et al. 2006; S1B, S3)
2. Resentment: Resentful, malicious, animosity (S3)
3. Depressive affect: Unhappy, distressed, dejected, awful (S3)
4. Anger: Angry, irritated, annoyed (S3)
5. Envy: Envious, jealous (S3)
6. Shame: Ashamed, humiliated, disgraced (S1B, S3)
7. Guilt: Repentant, guilty, blameworthy (S1B, S3)

**APPENDIX 2A**  
**Classification schemes for responses (Chapter 2 Pilot A)**

**Conditions**

Participants were asked to recall their experiences as a server during which a customer inconvenience happened.

There were **2 conditions**: in one condition, **participants themselves** (who were working as servers at a restaurant) caused the inconvenience; in the other condition, they were to recall an incident where they had to deal with a customer inconvenience **caused by other person/party**

**Situation**

They were to describe what happened: please check if the description of the situation matches (or correctly reflects) the assigned condition

**Communication**

**When condition = 1 (self)**

DV = 1 if participant apologizes and openly admits that it was "one's own fault" in the communication with the customer

DV = 2 if participant apologizes but blame OTHER party (or claim that it's because of other person/party's fault)

DV = 3 if participant apologizes without providing explanation about who caused the inconvenience, but with a less relevant excuse (e.g., busy day, 1st week at work)

DV = 4 if participant apologizes without providing any explanation, but just says sorry

**When condition = 2 (other)**

DV = 1 if participant apologizes but says that the inconvenience was caused by OTHER party (or claim that it's because of other person/party's fault)

DV = 2 if participant apologizes and says that it was one's own fault that caused the inconvenience

DV = 3 if participant apologizes without providing explanation about who caused the inconvenience, but with a less relevant excuse (e.g., busy day, 1st week at work)

DV = 4 if participant apologizes without providing any explanation, but just says sorry

**Other notes**

. If the steak was prepared not right, it could be the chef's fault that didn't prepare it the right way or the server's fault who did not clearly tell the chef.

. Please judge by the situation whether it was the chef's or the server's fault and determine the coding for the communication.

**APPENDIX 2B**  
**Scenario (Chapter 2 Study 1A)**

- 2-level ‘source of mistake’ factor: [**Self-fault / Other-fault**] conditions

Imagine that you work on the wait staff of a local restaurant. You are paid an hourly wage plus 100% of the tips at your tables.

On this particular day, there are a lot of guests in the restaurant, so you have been extremely busy. You discover that [**you had / the kitchen**] misplaced a food order for one of the customers from a party of 8 seated at one of your tables. The customer wanted sauce on the side for the meal, but [**you forgot to tell the kitchen about/the kitchen forgot about your note regarding**] the customer's request.

When you were about to place the food order to the table, both you and the customer notice that the food order has the sauce on the food itself. The customer asks you:

*"Didn't I ask for the sauce on the side?"*

**APPENDIX 2C**  
**Scenario (Chapter 2 Study 1B)**

2 x 2 between-subjects design

- 2-level ‘source-of mistake’ factor: [**Self-fault / Other-fault**] conditions
- 2-level ‘financial incentive structure’ factor: high vs. low (underlined phrase added for low condition)

Imagine that you work on the wait staff of a local restaurant. You are paid an hourly wage plus 100% of the tips at your tables with an 18% gratuity automatically included for parties of 6 or more.

On this particular day, there are a lot of guests in the restaurant, so you have been extremely busy. You discover that [**you / the kitchen**] misplaced a food order, causing a party of 8 seated at one of your tables to experience a 45-minute delay. Several customers seated at other tables around them already have received their meals, including some who arrived after the party of 8 placed their orders.



**APPENDIX 2D**  
**Scenario (Chapter 2 Study 2)**

Imagine that you are dining at a local restaurant with a group of friends. As you wait for a waiter or waitress to take your order, you notice that there are a lot of guests in the restaurant. After you and your friends place your orders, a lot of time passes before you receive your meal. Meanwhile, you notice that many tables around you have already gotten their meals, including some that placed their orders after you did. After a 45-minute delay, your waiter finally brings your food order.

You ask your waiter:

"What took so long?"

The waiter answers:

- **(self)** "I'm sorry for the delay. I accidentally mixed up your order. Thank you for your patience. Enjoy your meal."
- **(kitchen)** "I'm sorry for the delay. The kitchen staff accidentally mixed up your order. Thank you for your patience. Enjoy your meal."
- **(no explanation)** "I'm sorry for the delay. Thank you for your patience. Enjoy your meal."