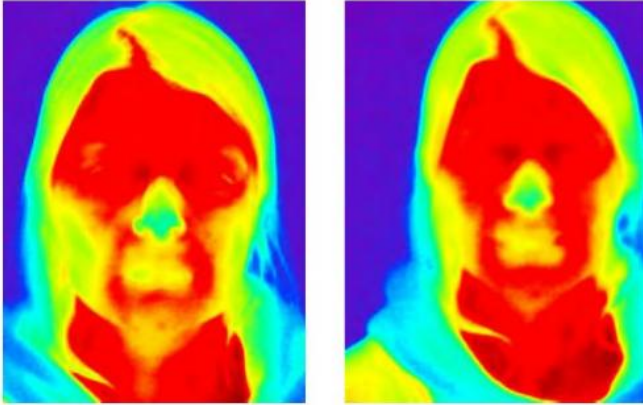


Research duo confirm that yes, people do blush in the dark

6 September 2013, by Bob Yirka



Credit: Denise Wächter and Wolter Seuntjens

(Phys.org) —Confirming a suspicion held by many dedicated scientists throughout the world, that no attribute of the world around us, or indeed *inside* of us should go unanalyzed, a pair of researchers has tested and proven that human beings truly are capable of blushing while sitting in a dark room. The pair, Denise Wachter of the University of Erfurt in Germany and Wolter Seuntjens of the Dutch Academy of 'Pataphysics (field of philosophy dedicated to studying what lies beyond the realm of metaphysics) found using a single volunteer and a thermographic camera, that given the right set of circumstances, a young woman can be made to blush in a completely dark room, and that when she does so it can be evidenced as blood rushing to her cheeks.

News of this important discovery comes courtesy of *Improbable Research*, which has very graciously agreed to print the [paper](#) written by the pair of researchers. IR, known for awarding Ig Nobel prizes for research efforts that have for one reason or another gone unappreciated by other more established journals has yet to decide apparently, if the paper "Blushing in the Dark: First

Experimental Proof" will be considered for such an esteemed reward.

The authors claim that mankind has been fascinated for centuries by the question of whether people can blush in the dark, because well, if it happens, it's too dark for anyone to see. The thinking is that blushing, the authors report, is a type of [social response](#), similar perhaps to coughing when uncomfortable or jiggling one's legs when nervous. Thus, it would make little sense for a person to blush in the dark if no one is able to witness the act. But that has not stopped people from wondering. Apparently such notables as Darwin pondered the question, only to conclude that he was willing to believe the claims of a certain nameless young woman with whom he as keeping company in a very dark room.

At any rate, Wachter and Seuntjens decided to settle the question once and for all. They enlisted the assistance of a willing 31 year old woman who claimed she had a tendency to blush easily. The researchers sat her in a dark room where they took an initial baseline thermographic image of her face. The volunteer was then asked to make herself blush—she did so by recounting an embarrassing tale from her past (no details of that past event were revealed, unfortunately). At the end of story, the woman vocally reported that she was feeling herself blush. The researchers jumped into action, taking new thermographic images of the woman's face, without haste. In comparing the two images, the researchers noted that more heat was present in the cheeks of the woman during the time she claimed to be blushing, proving once and for all, that yes, people really are able to blush in the dark.

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