CONSUMER RESPONSES TO FLATTERY DURING SALES TRANSACTIONS:
EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF THE SINISTER ATtribUTION ERROR

by

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Abstract

The aim of the current research was to examine consumer reactions to flattery using an attributional framework. The first study, using scenario methodology, illustrated that consumers made rational and irrational attributions for flattery. Consumers who were flattered prior to purchase accurately adjusted for the presence of ulterior motives and responded negatively to flattery whereas consumers who were flattered after purchase over accounted for the possibility of ulterior motives and responded more negatively than was warranted by the situation. The second study, a field experiment, demonstrated that consumers in a real shopping situation were even less likely to distinguish between when flattery occurred and responded simply to its presence or absence. This negativity in consumers flattered after purchase is evidence of the sinister attribution error; as consumers were overly suspicious of the motives and intentions of others. The third study, also a field experiment, demonstrated that even flattery preceded by a negative evaluation only resulted in a slightly more positive response from consumers. The contributions of the current research are discussed within their relevant literatures.
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CHAPTER I Overview

Imagine that you have gone shopping to buy a new pair of sunglasses. You have browsed around the store and have a sense of the selection that is available. You tried on a few different pairs and narrowed down your choice to two pairs of sunglasses, one pair has a black frame and the other is brown. After you try on each pair a second time, the salesclerk comes over and tells you that the black pair looks good on you. Now, as a consumer, how do you respond to the compliment? Do you smile and thank the clerk for their keen observation that you do look better in the black sunglasses? Or do you smile politely and think to yourself that the clerk is simply trying to convince you to purchase the black pair? It is this second potential response to the clerk’s compliment that raises an interesting question concerning consumer responses to flattery. What is it about the clerk or the sales situation that causes consumers to decide whether flattery is sincere or insincere?

Flattery has only been examined tangentially in consumer behavior whereas in psychology and organizational behavior, research has been extensive. Research has demonstrated positive (Gordon 1996; Vonk 2002) as well as negative effects of flattery (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Pandey and Bohra 1986; Vonk 1998; 1999) and a variety of theoretical frameworks have been used to explain the findings. The current research used an attributional framework to investigate questions relating to the effectiveness of flattery in consumer settings. Attribution theory’s discounting principle suggests that consumers are likely to accurately discount flattery for the presence of plausible ulterior motives in the situation (such as trying to make a sale). This discounting would result in a negative reaction from consumers, such as lower perceptions of the trustworthiness of the salesclerk, as they discount the flattery for the presence of plausible ulterior motives in a sales setting.
However, an emerging concept in the attribution literature suggests another potential consumer reaction to flattery. Kramer (1994) discussed a sinister attribution error where individuals are overly suspicious of the motives and intentions of others and assume a lack of trustworthiness (Kramer 1994). In a sales setting, consumers whose judgments are influenced by the sinister attribution error would react negatively to flattery based on the assumption of possible ulterior motives such as trying to influence the sale, regardless of the validity of the assumption or the plausibility of those motives. Evidence of the sinister attribution error would be best demonstrated through consumers’ perceptions of the trustworthiness of the salesclerk. If consumers perceive that the salesclerk is untrustworthy following the use of flattery, even in those cases where such judgments are not warranted given the situation, this would be evidence of the sinister attribution error.

Three experiments were conducted to examine how consumers would respond to flattery in a sales situation. The first two studies examined consumer reactions to flattery when there was an obvious ulterior motive present (i.e. the salesclerk trying to make a sale), one used a scenario methodology and the other a field experiment. The third study examined whether consumer reactions would be different if salesclerks prefaced flattery with a negative evaluation, providing a more balanced presentation. The results of this research make a number of contributions to the literature. First, it is one of only a few papers to investigate consumer behavior within an attributional framework, answering repeated calls for research in this area (see Folkes 1988; Weiner 2000). Second, this research is one of the first to demonstrate empirical evidence of the sinister attribution error, and the only to apply this concept to a consumer setting. Third, this research demonstrated that it is not just the presence of ulterior motives that influences interpretations of flattery, but rather it is the sales
situation itself, regardless of the implausibility of ulterior motives, that was partially responsible for consumer reactions to flattery.
CHAPTER II Literature Review

When we think about everyday occurrences for consumers in the marketplace, there are two general observations that can be made. First, consumers are bombarded with a multitude of information from a variety of sources (e.g. advertisers, competitors, other consumers, salesclerks, etc.) and while research has examined how consumers respond to information about products, less attention has been devoted to understanding how consumers respond to interpersonal information received in the marketplace (i.e. information about their decision making ability, how they look in an item, etc.). It is this second and more interpersonal form of information that is the most relevant and interesting for the current research. The second observation is that when consumers receive interpersonal information in the marketplace, they need to judge its accuracy or validity. These two observations led to the research question guiding this research: How do consumers respond to interpersonal information received in the marketplace and determine its accuracy?

When two people interact and one person tries to change the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors of the other person, it is referred to as interpersonal influence (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Blaauw and Vermunt 1999). While the marketing literature has attempted to develop a typology of interpersonal influence behaviors (Strutton, Pelton and Tanner 1996), research in psychology has tried to identify differences between the various influence tactics, as well as examining the influence of those tactics upon individuals. Interpersonal influence tactics have been classified into three general categories: hard, rational, and soft (Farmer, Maslyn, Fedor and Goodman 1997). Hard tactics are often used in situations where one person has control over meaningful reinforcements for another. In fact, the use of hard interpersonal influence tactics are often considered to be unfair based on this power
imbalance. These perceptions of unfairness have led to a decrease in the use of hard tactics in interpersonal settings (van Knippenberg et al., 1999). Given the perceptions of unfairness and potential negative consequences of these tactics, it is not surprising that they are infrequently used in a marketing context. In contrast to hard tactics, rational interpersonal influence tactics use rational arguments and reasoning as a way of influencing another person (Farmer et al., 1997). Rational tactics are often used in negotiation and bargaining situations, a common occurrence in consumer settings. Consider a situation in which consumers are negotiating the terms of their mortgage with the lender; it is likely that both sides of the negotiation are using arguments and logic to illustrate their position and it is fairly easy to identify the accuracy of information received.

In contrast to hard and rational tactics, soft tactics use more subtle methods in order to gain compliance (Thacker and Wayne 1995) or to change attitudes. These tactics rely on subtle forms of interpersonal influence such as self-enhancement, ingratiation, favor doing, and name-dropping (Bohra and Pandey 1984; Yukl and Tracey 1992). One common soft interpersonal influence tactic is ingratiation, and one form ingratiation can take is flattery. The main difference between these soft tactics is the goal being sought by its use. For ingratiation, the main goal is to influence another person’s attitudes (i.e. to be perceived as attractive and likable) whereas for flattery, the main goal is to secure a benefit from the other person (Jones 1964). When we think about the various types of influence tactics that are used in a retail setting, flattery readily comes to mind. Even the psychological literature has demonstrated that in terms of frequency, flattery has the second highest overall frequency of use in persuading others of all the influence tactics (Buss Gomes, Higgins and Lauterbach 1987). One of a few papers to examine flattery in a marketing context was also interested in
how often flattery was used and results demonstrated that both men and women were equally likely to use flattery (Strutton, Pelton and Lumpkin 1995). However, this research did not examine the effect of flattery upon consumers nor did it examine how consumers decided the accuracy of the flattery that was received. This is one of the questions driving the current research.

Marketing research on flattery is quite sparse, and in order to define flattery, we need to turn to the psychology literature. Across the literature examining flattery, there are two basic themes that can be identified in the definitions: 1) flattery involves the communication of positive information to another person; and 2) flattery is designed to achieve a specific goal. Definitions of flattery that focus on the communication of positive information suggest that flattery is often used to make the other person feel good (Harrison, Hochwarter, Perrewe and Ralston 1998; Kumar and Beyerlein 1991; Ralston 1985) or to increase their self-esteem (Eastman 1994). While all definitions agree that flattery involves imparting positive information to others, definitions that focus on the goal of flattery are more interested in the reason behind flattery. For example, flattery can be used to create a favorable impression (Liden and Mitchell 1998) or to influence behavior (Buss et al., 1987).

One unstated assumption in the literature is that flattery may or may not be truthful information. While flattery is often used to change another person's attitudes or behaviors without regard for the truth (Fogg and Nass 1997), it is also the case that flattery can be truthful information. It is up to the individual to determine whether flattery is accurate or inaccurate. The truthfulness of flattery highlights another important distinction, that flattery can be viewed from two different perspectives, that of the target (who receives flattery) and the actor (who gives flattery). The salesclerk initiates interpersonal influence by flattering
the target and that flattery may or may not be true. Regardless of its truthfulness according to the salesclerk, the target makes a separate judgment regarding the accuracy of flattery and the final decision may not necessarily be consistent with the actors’ intentions. When flattery is true, targets may decide it is untrue, when it is false they may decide it is true and vice versa. Overall, decisions regarding accuracy are quite complex, and before discussing flattery within a theoretical framework that explains how individuals may make judgments about the accuracy of flattering information, it is important to first review the existing literature on the effectiveness of flattery.

Research findings on the effectiveness of flattery are not consistent across the literature and this is partially a result of the varied situations in which flattery has been investigated. There is ample research in psychology that reliably demonstrates flattery has a positive effect, and these findings have been confirmed by experimental research (Fogg and Nass 1997) and meta-analysis (Gordon 1996). The positive effects of flattery are not surprising given people’s need to see themselves in a favorable light (Pandey and Singh 1987). The majority of research on the effectiveness of flattery has, quite predictably, always had flattery originate from another person. However, the robustness of this positive effect can be seen even when flattery is initiated by an inanimate object. More specifically, research has demonstrated that flattery from a computer shows similarly positive effects upon self-perceptions (Fogg and Nass 1997).

Previous work illustrating the positive effects of flattery has been demonstrated in the psychology literature, and similar results have been found in organizational behavior. Positive effects for flattery in employment settings have been illustrated upon attitudes and behavior. For attitudes, research has shown that employees using flattery are perceived more
positively by their employers (Judge and Bretz 1994; Wayne and Ferris 1990) and were thought to have the greatest potential to be promoted (Watt 1993) than employees who did not utilize such tactics. Beyond the influence of flattery upon perceptions, this positivity has also been extended to behavior, and in particular, monetary gains. Employees who used flattery had higher salaries when compared to employees who did not use it (Gould and Penley 1984). Overall, one can see that there is a vast literature supporting the positive effects, however there is an emerging literature which demonstrates that solely positive effects to flattery can not be assumed.

Despite evidence supporting a positive response to flattery, there is growing evidence that flattery can also have negative effects. One stream of research investigating the impact of flattery upon superiors and subordinates illustrated that flattery was perceived negatively when it was directed towards people who held rewards for the target. In particular, it was demonstrated that flattery directed towards superiors was perceived in a more negative light than flattery directed towards subordinates (Vonk 1988; 1999) leading to the term “slime effect” to refer to this phenomenon. While other researchers have not always used the term slime effect when referring to the negative perceptions associated with flattery, other researchers have demonstrated similarly negative effects upon perceptions of the flatterer (Pandey and Bohra 1986).

The negative response to flattery by those who hold rewards for the actor is consistent with ideas that the dependency of the actor upon the target contributes to a negative response to flattery. Specifically, it has been argued that there are two factors that contribute to a negative perception of flattery (or the flatterer). The first is the frequency of the behavior and the second is the degree to which the actor is dependent on the target for rewards (Jones
and Wortman 1973). What seems to happen is that the actor’s dependency upon the target for a reward such as a promotion or raise arouses the suspicion that flattery is being used to influence the target as a means to that reward (Pandey and Bohra 1986; Vonk 1998). The reward serves as an alternative explanation for individuals to use in judging the accuracy of flattery and can lead to the conclusion that flattery was only given in furtherance of the reward. Evidently, the dependence of the actor upon the target functions as a situational constraint that negates the previously demonstrated positive effects of flattery. This is also consistent with literature demonstrating that when an individual stands to be rewarded in the short-term for their behavior (i.e. the flattery), that behavior was seen as less trustworthy by the target (Hubbell, Mitchell and Gee 2001; Stiff and Kim 1992). The majority of evidence for the negative effects of flattery has thus far been demonstrated in organizational settings between employers and employees, but it is also likely that in a consumer setting flattery may have similarly negative effects given that the salesclerk is dependent upon the consumer for the sale.

However tempting it is to conclude that flattery in a consumer setting will have similar results to flattery in social or organizational contexts; this is not an appropriate conclusion to make. There are a number of important differences between the literature on flattery and the current consumer context that make it difficult to extrapolate from one literature to the other. First, the majority of research on flattery examined it within the context of a relationship that has already developed, which is often not the case in consumer settings. Second, when flattery is investigated in developing relationships, the goal is to get the other person to like you (which is actually a test of ingratiation and not flattery according to Jones (1964)). Third, in many cases, the actual goal being sought in an organizational
context (i.e. a raise or promotion) is usually far removed in time from the use of flattery, whereas in a consumer setting the reward is more proximate. If we consider a sales situation that does not take place within the confines of a relationship and has a specific goal (i.e. to make a sale), flattery may be more likely to evoke negative perceptions rather than the positive effects intended by the flatterer.

To date, there is only one empirical investigation of flattery in the marketing literature. The research did not set out to investigate consumer responses to flattery; instead researchers were interested in how consumers use their knowledge regarding the use of persuasion tactics in the marketplace to make decisions. It was argued that consumers use persuasion knowledge to make inferences about the underlying motivations for salesclerk’s behavior and the use of this knowledge is influenced by two factors: 1) the accessibility of ulterior motives; and 2) cognitive capacity (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). The operationalization of the accessibility of ulterior motives varied depending on when flattery was used in a sales context. Across a series of four experiments, researchers set out to examine how the use of persuasion knowledge affected judgments regarding the salesclerk’s sincerity.

In the first study, participants were asked to imagine that they (or an observer) were shopping and were flattered prior to or after purchase. It was argued that flattery before purchase should result in more accessible ulterior motives than flattery after purchase, based in part on the assumption that salesclerks in retail settings are motivated to sell products or to receive a commission. The second manipulation was the participant’s role as target or observer, which in the current research was considered a manipulation of cognitive capacity. It was suggested that observers were more likely to use their persuasion knowledge because
they were not as cognitively busy as targets who were actively involved in the situation. Results indicated that when flattery occurred after purchase (i.e. when ulterior motives were less accessible), observers rated the salesperson as less sincere than targets. When flattery occurred before purchase (i.e. when ulterior motives were more accessible) there was no difference between targets and observers in the perceived sincerity of the clerk. The results of the first study suggested that when the salesperson’s behavior did not highlight potential ulterior motives by flattering a consumer before purchase, target consumers were less likely to use their persuasion knowledge, demonstrating that cognitive capacity and the accessibility of ulterior motives both influenced consumer perceptions of the salesclerk.

In the second study, cognitive capacity was no longer investigated as only the observer condition was used. Accessibility of ulterior motives was again of interest as well as a manipulation of cognitive load. The cognitive load manipulation required participants to rehearse a series of numbers that appeared in the scenario they read. Results indicated that the salesperson was thought to be less sincere when the ulterior motive was more accessible (i.e. flattery before purchase) and when observers were busy rehearsing the sequence of numbers. This finding was taken to suggest that cognitive capacity accounts for the differential use of persuasion knowledge.

The third study changed focus in order to examine whether it was possible to prompt consumers to use their persuasion knowledge more effectively. Campbell and Kirmani (2000) argued that priming potential ulterior motives by having consumers read an article on the use of corporate donations for tax savings and improving consumer perceptions would assist consumers in better using their persuasion knowledge. In this study, the accessibility manipulation was changed from the first two studies in order to vary the source of the flattery
as either the store salesperson or a salesperson from a different store. Varying the source of the flattery was considered to be another manipulation of the accessibility of ulterior motives as it was assumed that a salesperson from another store was not likely to have ulterior motives, whereas the store salesperson did. Results demonstrated that when ulterior motives were present, consumers primed with thoughts of other ulterior motives perceived the salesperson as less sincere when compared to consumers who were not primed. In addition, it was shown that when there was no ulterior motive, priming had no effect. The authors argued that priming ulterior motives served to make persuasion knowledge more accessible and that information was used to judge the sincerity of the salesperson.

The fourth study further elaborated upon ideas from the third study and tried to identify situations in which consumers would be more likely to use their persuasion knowledge effectively. In this study, observers were assigned the same cognitive load manipulation as in the second study, rehearsing the numbers presented in the scenario. In addition, the priming manipulation entailed having participants list ways in which they would try and persuade another person to help them. It was argued that this manipulation would make persuasion knowledge more accessible. Participants in the knowledge suppression condition were simply asked to think about a task that was unrelated to persuasion. Results of this final study indicated that persuasion knowledge needed to be accessible in order for it to be used effectively in a consumer setting.

Taken together, the results of these four studies indicated that consumers use their persuasion knowledge differently depending on the situation to interpret the cues that suggest another person's behavior may be the result of ulterior motives. This research suggested that consumers are wise to flattery as an influence tactic and are relatively unresponsive to its
potentially positive effects when there is a plausible ulterior motive (i.e. making a sale). However, despite the evidence, this research cannot illustrate the exact positive or negative nature of consumer reactions. In all of the studies conducted by Campbell and Kirmani (2000), there was no condition without ulterior motives. While having flattery originate from a salesclerk who did not work at the store reduces the ulterior motives in the situation, it does not eliminate them completely. Stated differently, this research did not include a control group of consumers who were not flattered. The addition of this condition would allow us to better identify whether consumer reactions were positive or negative. When comparisons are made between flattery before purchase and flattery after purchase, the only possible conclusion is that one is more positive than the other, but the overall positivity of that reaction is not known.

The conclusion that flattery can have negative effects in a consumer setting is quite different from the majority of findings in psychology and organizational behavior. Perhaps consumers are particularly sensitive to ulterior motives attached to flattery in a sales context and this information is given greater weight in making decisions regarding accuracy. In order to make predictions concerning consumer reactions to flattery, it is important to take a step back and examine the literature that explores how consumers make decisions regarding the accuracy of information they receive, namely attribution theory.

Attribution Theory

Research on the process of how we make causal attributions began with the simple question of how people answer the question of “why” when interpreting the behavior of others (e.g. why did he say that, why did she do that, etc.). Researchers have long been interested in determining how individuals form their perceptions of others on the basis of
cues in the situation and information about the person. One of the foremost attribution theories was developed by Harold Kelley (1972; 1973) to explain the process of how consumers make judgments and decisions about behavior they encounter. Kelley's attribution theory is a normative theory, attempting to explain how individuals make rational judgments about behavior they encounter in their environment. In the opening of a chapter on attributions in social interactions, Kelley (1972) gives examples of situations in which he has been unsure of how to attribute another person's behavior that served to prompt this line of research. One of the examples given relates to the current research. Specifically, Kelley (1972) wonders how to interpret a compliment from a student that was received following a recent lecture. Was the compliment because it was a good lecture or was the student only trying to influence their grade? What Kelley (1972) described in this example is the search for alternative explanations for the student's behavior, and in particular, whether the compliment was the result of the situation (i.e. trying to increase a grade) or the student's disposition (i.e. really enjoyed the lecture). While this example is not followed up with an empirical investigation of the attributions made for flattery, it does underscore the variety of situations in which people are concerned about deciding why another person acted a certain way. Retail sales settings are just one of the numerous situations in which people may be concerned about coming to the correct conclusion for behavior they witness.

In the initial formulations of attribution theory, Kelley (1972; 1973) discussed the covariation principle and maintained that individuals attribute an effect to a cause that covaries with the effect over time and occurs closely after the cause. When individuals encounter a certain behavior, they use information in the situation to help them determine whether the behavior was the result of an external or internal factor, the situation and the
person respectively (Kelley 1972; 1973). When people come to the conclusion that the observed behavior was the result of the person, they make an internal attribution. In contrast, when people decide that the cause of the behavior was specific to the situation, they make an external attribution.

There are two principles within attribution theory that have been forwarded to explain more of the process of how attributions are made, as opposed to simply focusing on what attributions were made. These two principles further outline how individuals make causal attributions and are the discounting principle and the augmentation principle (which will be discussed later). The discounting principle maintains that people discount the role of a cause in producing an effect when plausible alternative causes exist (Kelley 1972; 1973). More specifically, individuals take note of factors present in the situation that may serve as additional explanations for the event. The presence of other explanations leads people to discount the observed behavior as an indication of the person’s disposition and conclude that the behavior was caused by situational pressures. Now, consider the discounting principle in the context of a retail sales setting wherein consumers are flattered while shopping. Consumers are aware that in that setting, the behavior of the salesclerk is subject to influence by a number of situational factors such as trying to make a sale or seeking a commission on the item sold. These situational factors are potential alternative explanations for the salesclerk’s behavior in addition to the possibility that the flattery is sincere. The presence of plausible alternative causes, or ulterior motives in the situation should lead consumers to evaluate which cause is most likely. The conclusions that consumers reach regarding which ulterior motives are driving the flattering behavior will directly influence consumer perceptions of the trustworthiness of the salesclerk.
When individuals are trying to determine which cause is responsible for a particular effect, one variable that may influence their decision is the salience of the cause. Kelley and Michela (1980) argue that an effect is most likely to be attributed to the cause that is the most salient in the situation at the time that perceivers observe the effect. In a marketing context, flattery may be a salient cue that suggests the presence of possible ulterior motives and consumers recognize these cues and use them in judging the cause of certain events. The question that remains is whether consumers will adequately utilize information concerning plausible ulterior motives in forming their attributions for flattery. Consumers who recognize plausible ulterior motives should adjust their responses accordingly, thereby attributing flattery to the situation and not the salesclerk. This situational or external attribution is likely to result in consumers responding negatively to the perceived insincerity of the flattery. Consumers who insufficiently account for the presence of plausible ulterior motives are likely to make an internal or dispositional attribution for flattery concluding that the flattery was sincere, and respond positively. There is evidence in the psychology and marketing literatures that lends support to both possibilities: that consumers may accurately discount for the presence of ulterior motives or they may inaccurately adjust for the presence of ulterior motives. The next section will highlight and discuss this research as well as the supporting evidence before forwarding the experimental hypotheses.

**Accurate Discounting**

Evidence from both psychology and marketing suggests that people are able to accurately adjust or discount for the presence of ulterior motives. The literature has suggested that searching for ulterior motives or alternative explanations for behavior can result in doubt and suspicion. When individuals experience doubt concerning the reason why
an event occurred, the doubt is accompanied by a heightened vigilance to detect the truth (Burgoon, Buller, Dillman and Walther 1995) as well as a motivation to avoid being tricked or fooled by others (Fein 1996). In addition to doubt, when individuals are not certain about the motivations behind an observed behavior, they experience suspicion (Fein, Hilton and Miller 1990), a dynamic state where individuals search for explanations for information that has been received (Fein 1996). Suspicion leads people to assume that others are trying to hide information that would discredit their behavior in the current situation and this suspicion results in a reluctance to take the information at face value (Fein 1996). Suspicion can be triggered when cues are recognized in the situation that suggest the possibility of other motives. This experience of doubt and suspicion in response to possible ulterior motives in the situation has consequences for judgments of trustworthiness and attributions made about the observed behavior.

One of the main goals of research on suspicion was to determine the implications suspicion has on attributional processes. In a series of experiments, Fein (1996) sought to identify the impact of suspicion upon attributional processing. The first two studies were interested in demonstrating how suspicion influenced attributional thinking in the absence of strong demand characteristics. Research on suspicion frequently asks participants to explicitly report on their attitudes towards the actor and participants' responses may be based on demand characteristics as opposed to their natural reaction. In an effort to address this methodological concern, the first two studies used an essay writing paradigm followed by an implicit measure of attributional thinking in which participants completed a thought listing after reading the other person's essay. This change in experimental procedures was successful in demonstrating the powerful effects of suspicion on attributional thinking in the
absence of demand characteristics. Results demonstrated that suspicion triggered a thoughtful and active form of attributional thinking as individuals considered other reasons for the observed behavior.

The following three studies in the paper attempted to replicate the results of the first two studies and to demonstrate whether suspicion had carryover effects onto other actors and situations. Using a different experimental paradigm to explore the carryover effects, students were presented with information about an actor, but not by means of an essay purported to be written by the actor as used in the previous study. This information was given to participants to use in making their judgments about the other person’s behavior. In both experiments, results demonstrated that information suggesting an actor’s behavior was influenced by ulterior motives led perceivers to make similarly suspicious judgments about other actors. It was argued that these results were further evidence that suspicion led to a more sophisticated form of attributional analysis.

Overall, results illustrated that suspicion of ulterior motives led individuals to engage in a relatively sophisticated form of attributional processing as they devoted greater attentional resources towards the task of correcting their initial inferences to adjust for the influence of the situation. Beyond demonstrating the effects that suspicion has upon the attributional process, researchers have also tried to establish whether perceivers continue to attend to additional information received after the initial experience of suspicion (Fein, Hilton and Miller 1990). The main question in this research concerned the processing of subsequent information, and specifically if that information is relevant to the actor’s motives, do perceivers continue to process and update their attributions based on the new information? Or do they fail to consider its relevance and refrain from processing the new information?
Results demonstrated that perceivers continued to attend to information in the situation that was relevant to the actor's behavior and further confirmed the complex attributional process that accompanies suspicion. Perceivers faced with the presence of multiple motives for a particular behavior continued to attend to the actor's behavior in order to actively process information that may aid in deciding the accuracy of the information.

One of the driving factors of suspicion is the individual's need to be accurate and their desire to avoid being tricked or fooled into making incorrect judgments of information that they encounter. This concern over making accurate decisions necessarily leads to judgments of the accuracy of the source of the information as well. If the information is deemed to have come from a trustworthy or accurate source, individuals can make more accurate attributions for the observed behavior. In line with this reasoning, research has revealed that individuals formed more negative attitudes when information came from a dishonest source as opposed to an honest source (Priester and Petty 1995). If you consider this research in the current context, it suggests that if consumers perceive the salesclerk as honest, their attitudes towards the salesclerk would be more favorable (i.e. the salesclerk is trustworthy) as compared to flattery originating from a dishonest source. A dishonest source would lead consumers to experience more negative perceptions of the salesclerk's trustworthiness.

The literature on suspicion has also illustrated that individuals who suspect that ulterior motives are influencing another person's behavior are likely to be highly attentive to information that confirms those suspicions (Vonk 1998). In the current context, any information regarding the clerk's behavior in trying to make a sale would be information that is highly consistent with consumers' suspicion that flattery is a result of ulterior motives.
This suspicion of ulterior motives is likely to lead consumers to decide that the flattery was untrustworthy and respond negatively as a result.

So far, the psychological literature has suggested that individuals are able to accurately account for the presence of plausible ulterior motives and correctly attribute the cause of flattery to the situation. One can see from this literature that there is evidence of appropriate or sufficient discounting of flattery for the presence of ulterior motives; individuals were able to accurately adjust for the presence of plausible ulterior motives. This recognition of ulterior motives led individuals to conclude that the actor’s behavior was the result of situational pressures, not their disposition.

Further to the psychological literature on suspicion, research in marketing has also aimed to understand how consumers understand and interpret information they encounter in the marketplace. The Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) was developed to examine how consumers respond to influence or persuasion attempts in consumer settings (Friestad and Wright 1994). This model drew upon a number of related conceptual ideas including the schemer schema (Wright 1986) and the anatomy of a persuasion schema (Rule, Bisanz and Kohn 1985) that had been previously illustrated in the literature. Despite previous work on consumer responses to persuasion, there was no comprehensive model of how consumers develop and use knowledge that is gathered from the marketplace in deciding how to respond to persuasion attempts until the development of PKM. According to the model, a persuasion attempt consists of the target’s perceptions of the actor’s behavior in attempting to influence the target (Friestad and Wright 1994). Flattery is one form that a persuasion attempt can take. For example, if a salesclerk flatters the target consumer in order to influence his/her purchase decision, this is a persuasion attempt. PKM holds that targets use their persuasion
knowledge and their beliefs about the salesclerk’s traits and goals to determine how to respond to the influence attempt. As consumers gain more experience, their ability to respond accurately to persuasion attempts increases. The development of persuasion knowledge can lead to an increase in consumers’ ability to make inferences about the motivations behind a persuasion attempt and an increase in the target’s ability to examine the characteristics of the situation that help them understand the marketer’s tactics or goals (Friestad and Wright 1994).

PKM argued that individuals develop an ability to identify persuasion tactics through the development of simple “tactic recognition” heuristics (Friestad and Wright 1994). These simple heuristics occur in response to the presence of one or two key features of a persuasion attempt. Consumers learn to use simple heuristics such as “the presence of a doctor in a white lab coat signals that the advertiser is trying to get me to trust what they are saying about the product” and over time, these heuristics become automatically activated in the consumer’s mind when they recognize a cue. Tactic recognition heuristics are an extension of previous work in social psychology on peripheral cues in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) and heuristics in the Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken et al., 1987). On a conceptual level, these tactic recognition heuristics are similar to the cues that Fein (1996) suggest function to help individuals decide if there are alternative explanations in the situation that may account for the witnessed behavior.

In addition to the recognition of flattery as part of a persuasion attempt, these heuristics can serve other purposes for consumers such as judging the accuracy of information they have been given and deciding why a particular tactic is being used (Friestad and Wright 1994). How consumers make judgments about the accuracy of persuasion
information is according to the process of attribution, and while PKM briefly addresses the
links between itself and attribution theory, the links are not explicit. Further, PKM does not
address the issue of the accuracy of consumer judgments. There is an implicit assumption
that if consumers use their persuasion knowledge appropriately, they will make accurate
judgments about the persuasion attempt. Taken together, the literature on suspicion and
persuasion knowledge suggests that consumers should be able to recognize the presence of
plausible ulterior motives in a sales situation, and adjust their responses accordingly. More
specifically, if consumers experience flattery in a retail setting and use their persuasion
knowledge of marketers' tactics effectively, they should be able to accurately conclude that
flattery was the result of the clerk attempting to influence the sale, thereby attributing the
flattery to the sales situation. This external attribution for flattery to the sales situation and
not to the salesclerk would result in a variety of negative consumer reactions including lower
trust in the salesclerk, more negative attributional thoughts and higher perceptions of
manipulative intent. Therefore, it is expected that:

**H1: Consumers who are flattered and accurately adjust their attributions for
plausible ulterior motives are more likely to make an external attribution for
flattery and respond less positively as compared to consumers who are not
flattered.**

Despite the evidence reviewed thus far suggesting that individuals are able to
rationally adjust for the presence of ulterior motives in certain situations, there is also
literature suggesting that the attributional process may not be so accurate.
Inaccurate Discounting

In contrast to accurate discounting, there are situations in which individuals are unable to accurately adjust for the presence of ulterior motives, and instead individuals make inaccurate attributions for behavior they encounter. One of the most common attributional errors made by individuals is insufficiently discounting for the influence of the situation upon behavior (Kelley 1972; 1973). This inadequate discounting has also been referred to as "behavior engulfing the field" which argues that behavior can be so vivid and salient to individuals that they are unable to devote sufficient attentional resources to the influence of the situation (Quattrone 1982).

This lack of attention to situational variables leads personal factors to receive more weight in the determination of the cause of the behavior. Consider the commonly used paradigm in attributional research in which participants read an essay written by another person arguing for a particular cause such as increasing tuition. Participants are told that the writer of the essay was assigned to argue on one particular side of the issue and was not given a choice. Faced with this information regarding situational constraints and with only the essay to use in making decisions about the other person, participants come to the conclusion that the writer actually agreed with the side of the argument they were forced to advocate. In these situations, individuals seem unable to fully integrate the impact of situational pressures into their judgments of the person's disposition. This stream of research illustrates one common principle in the psychology literature: individuals do not fully discount for external pressures that may influence another's behavior and as a result overestimate the influence of internal dispositions. This common attributional mistake has
been referred to as the fundamental attribution error (Kelley and Michela 1980) or correspondence bias (Jones and Davis 1965).

In contrast to previous evidence suggesting that individuals are relatively good at recognizing situational pressures that may influence the behavior of others, the literature on insufficient discounting suggests that people often make errors in the attributional judgments they make. It is interesting to note that these errors occur in situations where participants have full use of all their cognitive resources and abilities; there are no constraints upon their behavior that can account for this common pattern of errors. If we consider these errors within a sales context, it suggests an alternate possible consumer response to flattery than was predicted by the first hypothesis. If consumers do not fully account for the pressures of the sales situation and possible ulterior motives upon the salesclerk's behavior, they will inaccurately discount the clerk's behavior. Stated differently, when faced with flattery, consumers may under adjust for the presence of ulterior motives and conclude that flattery is the result of the salesclerk's disposition and not their attempt to make a sale. This inaccurate discounting would lead consumers to respond positively to flattery as it is perceived as positive information from the salesclerk and not as a manipulative persuasion attempt. However, while it is possible that under adjustment may be observed in a retail setting, the existing literature on suspicion suggests that people are reasonably accurate when it comes to discounting for attributions of ulterior motives, and therefore there is no hypothesis forwarded for this possible response.

Thus far, the attribution literature suggests that consumers are likely to have a negative response to flattery based on the attributions made regarding why flattery occurred and in consideration of the ulterior motives present in the situation. Consumers who
accurately adjust their perceptions of flattery for the presence of a plausible ulterior motive are likely to have a negative response as they attribute flattery to the pressures of the situation. However, another consumer reaction is possible based on emerging research on irrational distrust and paranoid cognitions that has been integrated into the literature on attribution.

Rather than focusing on paranoid cognitions from a psychopathological or clinical perspective, the emphasis in the organizational behavior literature has been on the social and situational factors that influence these paranoid thoughts and judgments. Kramer (1999a) argues that paranoid cognitions are a form of social misperception and misjudgment that can occur under conditions of evaluative scrutiny or heightened self-consciousness. These cognitions are characterized in part by their exaggerated perceptions of distrust and suspicion, and the distrust that is experienced is an irrational form of distrust. While rational trust is characterized by generalized expectations regarding the trustworthy nature of other individuals as well as beliefs that those individuals will perform actions that result in positive outcomes (Gounaris and Venetis 2002), irrational distrust refers to a heightened sense of distrust and suspicion of others (Kramer 1999b). This irrational distrust is exaggerated to the point that it can occur in situations that do not warrant it (Kramer 1994) or without sufficient evidence (Kramer 1998). These paranoid cognitions are byproducts of certain situations and social contexts and involve systematic patterns of misattribution concerning the intentions of others (Kramer 1999a). This pattern of misattribution characterized by irrational distrust has been referred to as the sinister attribution bias or error, wherein individuals misperceive the behaviors of others and are overly suspicious of their intentions and motives (Kramer 1994).
Thus far, the literature has suggested two important characteristics of the sinister attribution error that are relevant in a consumer context. First, one of the precursors to the sinister attribution error is heightened feelings of evaluative scrutiny or self-consciousness. Second, one of the consequences of the sinister attribution error is a mistaken attributional process in which individuals are overly suspicious of the intentions and motives of others. Both of these factors are likely to influence how consumers respond in retail settings. Both heightened self-consciousness and evaluative scrutiny are common occurrences in retail sales settings as consumers evaluate themselves and face scrutiny from others present in the situation (i.e. salesclerk, other consumers, etc.). Further, the heightened suspicion that results from the sinister attribution error is also likely to influence how consumers respond as they are highly aware that one of the main goals for salesclerks is to make the sale. This awareness of possible ulterior motives in the situation and suspicion regarding the salesclerk’s motives may lead consumers to be overly sensitive to possible ulterior motives, even to the point of exaggeration.

The sinister attribution error has only been briefly discussed in the organizational behavior literature, and has not been given any consideration within marketing. Further, to date there is little empirical support for the sinister attribution error. In one of the only investigations of this error to date, Kramer (1994) was interested in exploring the antecedents and consequences of the sinister attribution error. It was argued that one’s time in an organization would lead newcomers to make more sinister and dispositional attributions for another’s behavior than members who had been with the organization for a longer period of time. Participants in the first study were first and second year MBA students, with the first year students considered to be newcomers and the second year students serving as members
with a longer tenure with the organization. A vignette methodology was used asking students to imagine a number of different interactions with other MBA students. In one vignette, students were asked to imagine that they called another student (either a first or second year student) in the program with an urgent question concerning an exam the next day and asked to be called back regardless of the time. The other student did not return the phone call. Students were asked to indicate the reason the other student did not call back: 1) they never got the message or were unable to call; or 2) they got the message and decided not to call back. First-year MBA students with a shorter tenure with the organization were more likely to conclude that the student decided not to call them back on purpose, making a dispositional internal attribution for the other person's behavior whereas second-year students were more likely to make an external attribution for the same behavior. Those same first year MBA students were also more suspicious about the motives and intentions of the other person, partial evidence of the sinister attribution error. Kramer (1994) concluded that this was evidence that the first-year students, who were feeling more self-conscious about their place in the organization, were prone to assuming that other more senior members of the organization were less trustworthy and had more negative motives and intentions.

In an attempt to more clearly establish evidence of the sinister attributional error, the second study used a different experimental methodology. Here, participants worked on a group task and payment was contingent on the behavior of others in the situation. This methodology utilized a combination of the autokinetic effect and the prisoner’s dilemma, common experimental paradigms in the psychology literature. Participants were led to believe that the movement of a dot of light (that was in fact stationary) was being controlled by themselves or others in the group. If the dot moved from the center, it was explained that
this was the result of another person in the group moving the dot in order to gain greater monetary rewards for the task, when in fact the dot often appeared to move based simply on a trick of the eye. The structure of the task created a trust dilemma among participants in which they were required to choose between self-restraint (i.e. in trying not to move the dot in order to maximize joint payoffs) and self-interest (i.e. moving the dot in order to gain additional rewards at the expense of the others) (Kramer 1994). Within this experimental paradigm, two independent variables were manipulated. First, self-consciousness was manipulated through the presence or absence of a video camera set up to tape the group’s performance on the task. Second, the extent to which participants engaged in rumination about the intentions or motives of the others in the group was manipulated as the second independent variable. Previous research had demonstrated that rumination increased suspicions regarding others because thinking about negative events leads to negative thinking and a pessimistic attributional style (Kramer 1994). Results demonstrated that individuals who were self-conscious during the group task were more suspicious of the intentions and motives of the others in the group as compared to those who were not self-conscious. A similar effect was revealed for rumination as participants who gave more thought to the other person’s intentions became increasingly suspicious of their behavior. Overall, this research lead to the conclusion that both rumination and self-consciousness impaired trust in others and lead to increased feelings of suspicion and distrust.

Kramer (1994; 1999a) argued that these results provide evidence of the sinister attribution error, that tendency for people to be overly suspicious about the motives of others. However, the presence of plausible ulterior motives in the second study (i.e. that others were moving the dot in order to gain greater rewards) suggests that this is not the strongest
evidence of the sinister attributional error. While it is an optical illusion that leads participants to think the dot is moving, the dot does seem to move because of eye movements, and suspicions about the others are somewhat warranted. In essence, Kramer’s (1994) research was not the strongest test of being overly suspicious since participants could not have known that their suspicions were unwarranted. In contrast, the setting and paradigm used in the current research should be a stronger test of the sinister attribution error as it should be more obvious to consumers that in certain situations (i.e. when flattery occurs after purchase), the ulterior motive is implausible. Regardless of the fact that the evidence in an organizational context thus far is not conclusive, the sinister attribution error may play a significant role in impacting consumer responses to persuasion tactics, and flattery in particular. In fact, there is an emerging literature in marketing that could be taken as partial evidence of a sinister attribution error.

Researchers in marketing and advertising have become increasingly concerned that over time consumers are becoming more suspicious of advertisers or marketers. For instance, in response to non-deceptive advertising, some consumers become concerned that things are “too good to be true” and begin to lookout for the use of hidden or unfamiliar persuasion tactics (Koslow 2000). This is not a rational response to marketplace information; instead consumers are overly suspicious and are on the alert for instances of deception or trickery. Similarly, Obermiller and Spangenberg (2000) revealed that market-controlled sources of information (e.g. advertising and salespeople) were regarded with higher levels of skepticism than non-market controlled sources (e.g. friends, government agencies or Consumer Reports). Overall, it seems that consumers are becoming increasingly
aware of the potential presence of ulterior motives in the marketplace regardless of the implausibility of those motives.

More recent research has tried to identify how consumers respond to advertisers after they have been made explicitly aware of the actions of a deceptive advertiser. Darke and Ritchie (2003) examined the influence of false advertising upon consumer suspicion and demonstrated that consumers exposed to those false claims became suspicious of additional advertising claims from other advertisers. A carryover effect of suspicion was identified such that subsequent advertisers were treated with increased suspicion as a result of the actions of the first deceptive advertiser. One can argue that the carryover effect to subsequent innocent advertisers is evidence of a fairly sinister attribution process. Once again, consumers are overly suspicious of the actions of others (i.e. the second advertiser) despite the lack of direct evidence.

In summary, despite the literature suggesting that consumers may make rational adjustments for the presence of ulterior motives in the situation and as suggested by hypothesis 1, there is another emerging literature supporting potential inaccuracy. An alternate possibility is that consumers may actually over correct for possible ulterior motives, even when such motives are clearly absent, leading to overly sinister conclusions regarding the motives of the salesclerk as well as their perceived trustworthiness. These sinister conclusions are likely to lead to an overly negative response given the circumstances (i.e. that the ulterior motives are implausible) that would lead consumers to be less trusting of the clerk and to have more negative attributions for the flattery. Consistent with this, the second hypothesis suggests that:
H2: Consumers who are flattered and over correct their attributions for implausible ulterior motives are more likely to make an external attribution for flattery and respond negatively as compared to consumers who are not flattered.

Therefore, the current research makes two predictions concerning the manner in which consumers will react to flattery in a sales context. First, consumers who accurately adjust for the presence of ulterior motives should respond less positively than consumers who were not flattered in the same situation where a plausible ulterior motive is present, but should largely ignore implausible ulterior motives. However, it is also possible that some amount of error or bias will be observed in such judgments. One possibility is that consumers will fail to correct for plausible ulterior motives. The other potential source of error is that consumers will show signs of being overly suspicious in the sense that they will respond negatively to potential ulterior motives, even when they are objectively implausible. This second possibility would lead to an overly negative response to flattery given the circumstances, resulting in negative perceptions of the salesclerk’s trustworthiness. It is this overly negative response that would be evidence of the sinister attribution error. As Kramer (1999) pointed out, rational distrust would be evidenced when consumers are able to accurately adjust for the presence of ulterior motives in the situation when deciding on the trustworthiness of the clerk. Irrational distrust occurs in those situations where perceptions of distrust are exaggerated given the objective circumstances of the situation. It is this irrational distrust that serves as evidence of the sinister attribution error. It is these two hypotheses that were tested in the current research.
Target-Observer Effects

In addition to examining how consumers determine the cause of flattery received in a consumer context, research has also been interested in identifying how different people may make different attributions for the same observed behavior. Stated another way, does one's role in the situation influence the accuracy of attributions made for flattery? The attribution literature makes distinctions between the judgments that are likely to be made by targets and observers. Targets are those individuals to whom the observed behavior is directed, and in the case of flattery, it is the target who receives flattery. Observers, in contrast, are not directly involved in the situation, but merely witness the event. Research has been interested in why targets and observers come to different conclusions regarding the same event.

Attribution theory takes into consideration the fact that targets and observers who witness the same event may come to different conclusions regarding its cause, and one of factors that can lead to this discrepancy is the differing amounts of information that are available to targets and observers (Kelley 1973). The target, who is actively participating in the situation, has more information about his/her own behavior as compared to an observer. This difference in the amount of information available to use in making attributions for the observed behavior leads to different attributions.

Along a similar vein, the Persuasion Knowledge Model also suggests that targets and observers may have differing responses to the same behavior. The arguments made by PKM are the same as those made by attribution theory, that it is the differential use of and access to information that causes targets and observers to respond differently. In the case of attribution theory, it is information about the situation and the actor, whereas in PKM, it is persuasion knowledge. PKM argues that the targets' active involvement in a social interaction leads
them to use persuasion knowledge in different ways than an observer (Friestad and Wright 1994). Regardless of the theoretical paradigm, there is literature supporting the notion that one’s role in the situation, as either target or observer, may lead individuals to different conclusions for the same behavior.

Consistent with an informational explanation of target observer differences, the literature on influence tactics has also examined how differing levels of cognitive resources impact reactions to flattery. Vonk (2002) maintained that when targets are actively involved in an interaction with an agent, they are cognitively busy sending and receiving messages from the other person in the interaction, thereby limiting the target’s ability to objectively examine the agent’s motives. Observers, in contrast, do not experience a similar drain on their cognitive resources in interpreting information presented to the target. Despite the logic of the argument supporting cognitive resources as a potential explanation for target observer differences to flattery, Vonk (2000) ruled out this explanation.

In addition to research examining differences in the amount of and access to information that individuals have available to them, other variables have been identified that are more specifically related to flattery. Flattery involves the transmission of positive and enhancing information to the target and can lead to an increase in self-esteem and mood. There was an assumption that the target observer effect was the result of the target experiencing greater self-esteem upon accepting flattery and being less likely to critically examine the flattery or the person giving it (Vonk 2002). In contrast, observers who were not experiencing the same inflation of self-esteem were more likely to critically examine the observed behavior. The potential effect of mood follows a similar logic. Targets are assumed to be in a better mood following the acceptance of flattery and this good mood leads
them to be less likely to critically examine flattery. Through a series of experiments, Vonk (2002) eventually ruled out mood as an explanation for differing target observer reactions to flattery and concluded that the targets need for self-enhancement influenced their affective responses. In contrast, observers were not influenced by the same needs leading them to respond more accurately. Overall, the results of this research demonstrated that targets' responses to flattery, while not necessarily accurate, were positive.

While Vonk's (2002) research answered some important questions concerning target observer differences to flattery, there remain a number of unresolved issues. First, Vonk's (2002) research actually examined the influence of ingratiation not flattery given that the primary dependent variable was attraction or liking. For flattery, the goal is to secure a reward from the other person not to increase liking. Second and more importantly, this research had little or no clearly identifiable ulterior motive available to explain the flattery, participants were told that they would be working together on a task and were asked to form impressions of each other. However, in a marketing context, ulterior motives are more salient for participants given that one of the primary functions of the salesclerk is to make a sale. This becomes an important distinction in the current research, as it is the search for ulterior motives that leads consumers to experience a negative reaction to flattery as compared to the positive response demonstrated in the psychology literature and in the absence of ulterior motives.

Vonk's (2002) conclusions that targets responded more positively to flattery as compared to observers were consistent with those of Campbell and Kirmani (2000), however the research diverges in its explanations for the findings. Whereas Vonk (2002) concluded that self-enhancement drove individual responses to flattery and ruled out a cognitive
resource explanation, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) maintained that differences in cognitive capacity between targets and observers caused the discrepancy. Regardless of the reason why the differences occurred, both lines of research concluded that targets responded more positively than observers on measures of liking and sincerity.

However, the current proposal predicts a different pattern of results for target observer differences. For targets, flattery has the greatest potential to be perceived as potentially threatening evaluative information, especially if targets were fooled into accepting flattery that was only intended to deceive. In contrast, observers should be more objective given the lack of threats or benefits to self-esteem associated with flattery. In addition, given the literature on paranoid cognitions, it is possible that targets, who are personally involved in the situation, are more concerned about the motives and intentions of the salesclerk than detached observers, leading targets to be more likely to fall prey to the sinister attribution error and conclude that the clerk is less trusting and more manipulative than observers. Therefore, it is expected that:

\[ H3: \text{Targets who are flattered will be more likely to respond negatively than observers based on their greater personal involvement in the situation.} \]

The first three hypotheses were tested in two studies, the first used scenario methodology and the second used a field study to investigate consumer responses to flattery. Given the literature reviewed to date, most of the evidence suggests that when consumers are flattered in retail settings, they are likely to respond negatively based on the presence of ulterior motives. However, under certain circumstances, it may be possible to demonstrate a positive effect of flattery and this question was explored in the third and final study.
Positive Effects of Flattery

Thus far, a review of the literature has suggested that consumers are likely to experience a negative reaction to flattery based on the theory reviewed thus far. In a previous discussion, it was suggested that consumers who make an external attribution for flattery (i.e. the ulterior motive of making the sale) to the situation are more likely to have a negative response to flattery in terms of trust, satisfaction and other relevant variables. In comparison, consumers who make an internal attribution are more likely to have a positive reaction as they conclude that the flattery was a sincere statement from the person, and not the result of an ulterior motive. Therefore, placing consumers in a situation that is more likely to result in an internal attribution is more likely to result in a positive response. The augmentation principle in attribution theory suggests one specific situation in which individuals are more likely to make an internal attribution for an observed behavior. Specifically, the augmentation principle refers to a situation where the presence of costs or risks involved in taking an action results in others concluding that if that action is taken, the behavior is more likely to be due to the actor than if those costs or risks were absent (Kelley 1972; 1973). Essentially, when behavior occurs that is contradicted by the situation, it is taken as stronger evidence of the person’s disposition (Kelley and Michela 1980). In a marketing context, consider the following example to illustrate the augmentation principle. Based on their persuasion knowledge, consumers are aware that salesclerks frequently try to influence consumer decisions using a variety of influence tactics, including the provision of positive evaluations to consumers (i.e. flattery). Therefore, a potentially risky strategy would be to provide a negative evaluation to consumers. The statement of an honest salesperson who says something does not look good in a sales context where they should be motivated to
make a sale may help to establish initial perceptions of honesty through the augmentation principle. Negative feedback, even if followed by positive feedback like flattery, may lead consumers to make an internal attribution for the clerk's behavior resulting in the conclusion that the flattery was genuine (and not the result of retail sales pressures). This internal attribution would lead to a positive consumer response. In this case, the risky strategy of giving consumers a negative evaluation before flattery leads to the positive conclusion that the flattery was sincere. These predictions made by Kelley's augmentation principle (1972; 1973) are also consistent with research on the disconfirmation of expectations.

Research has demonstrated that when someone argues against the position that another person expects them to argue for, thereby disconfirming their expectations, the argument becomes more persuasive (Wood and Eagly 1981). Consider the example of a customer talking to an insurance agent. In most cases, individuals would assume that the goal of the insurance agent is to sell insurance. In the course of the conversation, the agent informs the customer that they do not need a particular type of insurance that is on the market. In this instance, the insurance agent has disconfirmed the customer's initial expectations by arguing against the purchase of a certain type of insurance. This disconfirmation results in the customer having to find a new explanation for the behavior. The most plausible rival hypothesis is that there was a compelling reason that caused the communicator to override personal or situational pressures (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). Therefore, when those initial expectations were disconfirmed and the communicator took a position that was unexpected, this led to the perception that the communicator was unbiased and enhanced the persuasiveness of the message. When one considers this literature in combination with the literature on flattery, it suggests that if a negative evaluation precedes
flattery, it may lead to a positive consumer response given that the flattery is prefaced by an unexpected behavior. The finding of more positive perceptions of messages that disconfirm expectations have been further demonstrated in research examining the effect of arguing against one’s interests.

Persuasion research has demonstrated that one of the best ways to increase message persuasiveness is to have the communicator argue against their own self-interests (Walster, Aronson and Abrahams 1966), and therein disconfirming expectations. Similarly, Drachman, DeCarufel and Insko (1978) have demonstrated evidence of an “extra credit effect” such that honesty in the face of a temptation to ingratiate (i.e. giving an honest opinion instead of flattery) resulted in increased liking, a positive response. Related research focused on the source of the message has illustrated similar findings in that perceptions of the honesty of the source also increases persuasiveness. Not surprisingly, individuals formed more positive attitudes regarding information presented to them by an honest source as compared to a dishonest source and these attitudes were less dependent on message scrutiny (Priester and Petty 1995; Ziegler, Diehl and Ruther 2002). What this suggests is that if flattery is presented to consumers in a manner that appears to argue against the salesclerk’s interests or speaks to the clerk’s honesty, flattery may result in a positive consumer response. Therefore, flattery preceded by a negative evaluation may result in a positive consumer response (i.e. greater trust in the salesclerk, more positive attributional thoughts) because the initial negative evaluation establishes the honesty of the salesperson. Therefore, it is expected that:

\[ H4: \text{Consumers who receive flattery preceded by a negative evaluation will respond more positively than consumers who receive flattery alone.} \]
This hypothesis was tested in the third and final experiment of the current research.

In summary, the first two studies examined how consumers account for the plausible vs. implausible ulterior motives in a sales situation in deciding how to determine the cause of flattery. The third and final study investigated a condition in which consumers would be expected to have a positive response to flattery. The first study is presented in the next chapter and used a scenario methodology to examine consumer responses to flattery in a retail sales context.
The aim of the first study was to explicitly examine consumer reactions to flattery in a sales context. One of the only studies in marketing to examine flattery investigated consumer reactions to flattery that occurred prior to or following purchase (Campbell and Kirmani 2000) and results indicted that consumers perceived the salesclerk as less sincere when flattery occurred prior to purchase as compared to consumers flattered after purchase. From this evidence, it seemed that consumers were able to accurately adjust their response to flattery based on the presence of ulterior motives in the situation. However, this research leaves one important question unanswered, and it concerns the response of consumers who were flattered after purchase. In all of the studies conducted by Campbell and Kirmani (2000), they did not include a condition with no ulterior motives to compare against flattery received prior to or following purchase. Stated differently, this research did not include a control group of consumers who were not flattered. The addition of this condition would allow us to better identify how accurate consumer reactions really are. When comparisons are only made between flattery before purchase and flattery after purchase, one is unable to identify whether consumers in both conditions are accurately adjusting for the presence of plausible ulterior motives, whether they are insufficiently accounting for plausible ulterior motives, or whether they are over accounting for potential ulterior motives.

Therefore, one focus of the current study was to examine the influence of flattery received prior to purchase as compared to after purchase and to compare these conditions against the response of consumers who did not receive flattery. When flattery is received before purchase, it is more likely that consumers will engage in a search for ulterior motives because flattery that occurs at this point in the interaction is likely intended to influence the
consumer’s purchase decision. In contrast, flattery received after the purchase decision is made should not arouse the suspicion that there is an ulterior motive driving flattery (rationally speaking). When consumers search for and find ulterior motives, they are likely to discount the flattery and conclude that it is the result of situational pressures in the sales situation, thereby responding negatively. This would be a rational response according to the normative prescriptions of attribution theory (Kelley 1972). In contrast, if consumers are more irrational in their response, they may respond negatively to flattery even in the absence of plausible ulterior motives. This would be revealed by a more negative consumer response to flattery relative to controls despite the fact that trying to make a sale is not a plausible ulterior motive in that case. Thus, an examination of the timing of flattery and its subsequent influence on the overall valence of consumer reactions was one of the goals of Study 1.

While previous research demonstrated that targets are less likely to critically evaluate flattery as compared to observers (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Vonk 2002), the current research makes the opposite prediction. For targets, flattery has more potential to be perceived as threatening information given that targets do not want to be tricked into accepting flattery that was simply a means to the sale. Targets should be more defensive or inaccurate in the processing of flattering information and the attributions that they make for flattery whereas observers should be more objective given that there are no threats or benefits associated with witnessing another person being flattered.

The current research examines consumer responses to flattery with two independent variables of interest, when the flattery occurred and the role of the person receiving the flattery. In terms of dependent variables, the attribution literature suggests that trust is an important variable to consider (see Hubbell, Mitchell and Gee 2001; Kelley and Michela
1980; Kramer 1994; Stiff and Kim 1992) in determining how consumers may respond to flattery. Given the focus on the influence of the attributional process upon consumer reactions to flattery, a measure of the attributional thoughts that participants experience regarding the flattery is of obvious importance. In addition, an examination of the attributional thoughts consumers have concerning the cause of flattery allow us to determine the valence of the attribution as positive (i.e. I was flattered because the clerk thinks I look good in this) or negative (i.e. I was flattered because the salesclerk was trying to get a commission). In addition to a self-reported measure of attributional thoughts, a measure of the total thoughts that participants experience was used as an additional measure of the cognitive processing occurring for participants after their purchase encounter. Finally, given the importance of perceptions of ulterior motives or manipulative intent that have been demonstrated in prior research (e.g. Campbell and Kirmani 2000); the current research also examined these measures.

The importance of self-reported attributional thoughts is not restricted to its role as a dependent variable as these thoughts are also likely to mediate individual reactions to events (Kelley and Michela 1980) and inform on the nature of the information processing involved in response to flattery. This analysis would indicate whether consumers are responding automatically to flattery in sales situations or whether they are responding in a more effortful and conscious manner. If attributional thoughts are found to mediate consumer responses to flattery, this is an indication that consumers are engaged in an effortful and conscious consideration of the situation and the ulterior motives present and that these thoughts are guiding their judgments. In contrast, if results of the mediation are not significant, this
suggests that consumers are responding in a more automatic manner to cues in the situation and are not giving careful consideration to what is happening in the sales situation.

3.1 Method

It was decided to use a scenario methodology similar to that used by Campbell and Kirmani (2000) in order to facilitate comparisons between their research and the current study with flattery before and after purchase conditions. In order to fully understand consumer responses to flattery, the current research added a control condition in which consumers were not flattered. This additional condition allowed us to interpret more clearly the differences between flattery occurring prior to purchase and after purchase in terms of the overall valence of the flattery effects. Therefore, the current research had three conditions of flattery: no flattery, flattery prior to purchase and flattery after purchase. The consumer’s role in the experiment was manipulated by having them imagine that they were shopping (target) or imagining that they observed another person shopping (observer). This manipulation was taken directly from Campbell and Kirmani (2000).

Participants and Design

Participants were 156 undergraduate students (67 male, 88 female with one additional person who failed to report their gender) who received course credit for their help. Each person read a brief scenario describing a shopping experience, which was varied according to a 2 x 3 between-subjects experimental design. The two experimental factors were participant’s role in the scenario (target vs. observer), and the timing of flattery (no flattery vs. flattery before purchase vs. flattery after purchase).
Procedure

Participants read a scenario in which they were told to imagine they had gone shopping for a new jacket (target condition). All participants randomly assigned to the role of target read the same introduction to the scenario, as follows:

Imagine that you've gone shopping to buy a jacket. You've looked at a few other stores, but haven't found what you really want.

Picture yourself walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that you begin to look around the store. The selection in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. You spend some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, you narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. You walk over to one of the two three-way mirrors and try both jackets on. Imagine looking at your reflection in the mirror.

It is at this point in the scenario that the flattery manipulation occurred. For participants in the control condition, the rest of the scenario read as “After thinking a little while longer, you decide to get the second jacket that is of higher quality. Imagine that you take the jacket to the cash register. The salesclerk rings up the sale. You pay for your purchase, pick up the package with your jacket in it and leave”. For participants in the flattery before purchase condition, the rest of scenario stated, “As you try on the second jacket, the salesclerk comes up to you and says, “That’s a great jacket. I think it looks better on you than the other one did. It really suits you.” After thinking a little while longer, you decide to get the second jacket that is of higher quality. Imagine that you take the jacket to the cash register. The salesclerk rings up the sale. You pay for your purchase, pick up the package with your jacket in it and leave”. Finally, for participants in the flattery after purchase condition the remainder of the scenario stated “After thinking a little while longer, you decide to get the
second jacket that is of higher quality. Imagine that you take the jacket to the cash register. As the salesclerk, rings up the sale, s/he says, “That’s a great jacket. I think it looks better on you than the other one did. It really suits you.” You pay for your purchase, pick up the package with your jacket in it and leave”. All scenarios can be found in Appendix A.

Those participants who were randomly assigned to the observer condition imagined that there was a consumer named Jamie who was shopping for a new jacket. All of the remaining information was identical between the target and observer conditions. The scenarios for the observer condition can be found in Appendix B.

After reading the scenario, a questionnaire containing the dependent measures was administered (see Appendix C for the target version and Appendix D for the observer version). First, participants were asked to list any thoughts or feelings they had experienced about the store, the salesclerk or themselves while imaging the scenario. The total number of thoughts was coded as well as the occurrence of attributional thoughts for the flattery (e.g. mentioning the possibility of ulterior motives or the sense that the clerk was sincere in their flattery). In addition to the above questions, participants were also asked to rate a list of traits that they believed the salesclerk possessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. These traits included pushy, manipulative, fake, phony, suspicious, trustworthy, genuine, sincere and honest. Reliabilities for all scales are reported in the results section.

Participants were also asked to rate the likelihood that the salesclerk’s behavior was the result of ulterior motives. Three scale items were developed to measure manipulative intent: “The sales clerk told me I looked nice in the jacket to influence my purchase”, “The sales clerk only complimented me in order to influence my purchase decision”, and “The
sales clerk would have complimented me on how good I looked whether or not it was true”.

These measures were rated on a 7 point scale ranging from not at all (1) to very much (7).

Finally, participants completed a number of demographic questions about their gender, age, and ethnic background. In addition, participants completed a manipulation check that entailed identifying if they (or Jamie) were flattered or complimented while shopping and whether that flattery occurred before or after purchase.

3.2 Results

Results were analyzed with a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) with role and the timing of flattery as the independent factors. The means for each dependent variable across flattery conditions are found in Table 1.

*Manipulation Check*

The manipulation check entailed asking participants to check one of three items that correctly described what happened in the scenario (no flattery, flattery before purchase and flattery after purchase) and these items were scored as correct or incorrect. Participants were able to correctly identify when the flattery occurred, $X^2 (2) = 6.255, p < .05$. In terms of the errors that participants made, 37 out of 52 in the control condition were able to correctly identify that they were not flattered, 47 out of 52 in the flattery before purchase condition and 39 out of 51 in the flattery after purchase condition were able to correctly identify when the flattery occurred during the sales interaction.

Additional analyses were conducted to determine if the findings would hold when those consumers who mistakenly identified when the flattery occurred were removed. Results across all dependent variables remained significant with the pattern of results reported.
Dependent Variables

Perceptions of the Salesclerk's Trustworthiness. For the traits used to describe the salesclerk, a principal axes factor analysis was conducted to determine which traits loaded together. All of the traits loaded together onto one factor that accounted for 67% of the variance. All factor loadings were greater than .40 and the reliability of the traits together was \( \alpha = .86 \). It was expected that consumers flattered before purchase would be more likely to suspect that flattery was driven by ulterior motives and thereby view the clerk as less trustworthy than consumers who were flattered after purchase or were not flattered at all. As expected, there was a significant influence of flattery upon perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness (\( F(2, 152) = 19.691, p < .001 \)). The means for the control, flattery after purchase and flattery before purchase conditions were 4.42, 3.99, and 3.35 respectively and can also be found in Table 1. Post-hoc LSD comparisons indicated that all conditions were significantly different from one another (\( p < .05 \)). Perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness were lowest in the flattery before purchase condition as expected based on the presence of plausible ulterior motives (i.e. making the sale). One interesting finding was that consumers who were flattered after purchase still perceived the clerk as significantly less trustworthy than consumers who were not flattered at all. An accurate consumer would not respond in this manner, as they should recognize that attempting to make a sale is an implausible ulterior motive when flattery that occurs after the purchase has been completed. This finding suggests that consumers were overly suspicious of flattery from the clerk and over corrected for the possibility of ulterior motives. There was no influence of role (\( F < 1 \)).

Total Thoughts. The total number of thoughts participants listed that were relevant to their interaction with the clerk was analyzed to determine if consumers in the flattery
conditions reported more thoughts as they searched for possible ulterior motives. Results were significant \( (F(2, 149) = 18.727, p < .001) \) and the means are presented in Table 1. Post-hoc LSD comparisons demonstrated that flattery before purchase (\( M = 1.538 \)) and after purchase (\( M = 1.274 \)) led to more thoughts than no flattery at all (\( M = 0.442, p < .001 \)), but the flattery conditions did not differ significantly from each other. This demonstrates that consumers responded to flattery (regardless of when the flattery occurred) by thinking more carefully about the situation as compared to controls. There was no influence of role upon total thoughts (\( F < 2 \)).

**Attributional Thoughts.** The thought listings participants completed after reading the scenario were coded for attributional thoughts relating to the clerk's motives as either genuine (i.e. the salesclerk was helpful in giving me advice) or insincere (i.e. she was working on commission). Genuine attributional thoughts were coded positively and negative or insincere attributional thoughts were coded negatively. These attributional thoughts were then summed together to form an overall valenced index of attributional thoughts. It was expected that consumers flattered before purchase would report the greatest number of negative attributional thoughts as compared to the other conditions. Results of the ANOVA for attributional thoughts revealed a significant influence of flattery (\( F(2, 150) = 18.798, p < .001 \)). Attributional thoughts were relatively neutral in the control condition (\( M = .079 \)), whereas attributions were more negative in the flattery before purchase and flattery after purchase conditions (\( M = -.962 \) and \( M = -.373 \) respectively). All conditions were significantly different from one another (\( p < .05 \)). These findings were consistent with expectations and suggested that consumers who were flattered prior to purchase experienced more negative attributional thoughts than consumers who were flattered after purchase.
Once again, results demonstrated that consumers flattered after purchase experienced more negative attributional thoughts than consumers who were not flattered. The results suggest that consumers experienced perceptions of ulterior motives and negative thoughts about the causes of flattery both when flattery occurred before purchase and even when flattery occurred afterwards.

Perceptions of Manipulative Intent. The three items measuring the manipulative influence factor accounted for 32% of the variance (α = .78). It was expected that perceptions of manipulative intent would be highest in the flattery before purchase condition, followed by the flattery after purchase and control conditions. Results again revealed a significant influence of flattery (F (2, 149) = 22.62, p < .001). Post-hoc LSD comparisons demonstrated that all conditions were significantly different from each other (control M = 3.8, flattery after M = 4.63, flattery before M = 5.7, p's < .05). Perceived manipulative intent was highest when flattery occurred before purchase. Further, perceptions of manipulative intent for flattery that occurred after purchase were still significantly higher than the control condition. The effect of role was also significant (F (1,149) = 3.82, p < .05). An examination of the means shows that targets (M = 4.95) perceived the clerk as having more manipulative intentions than observers (M = 4.49). This differs from expectations based on previous research by Campbell and Kirmani (2000).

Mediation. Mediation analysis was conducted according to Baron and Kenny (1986) on perceptions of trustworthiness with attributional thoughts as the mediator. There are three analyses that have to be conducted in order to test for mediation. First, results need to demonstrate a significant influence of the independent variable (flattery) upon the dependent variable (perceptions of trustworthiness). Results of this test were significant, F (2, 152) =
19.691, \( p < .001 \). The second analysis needs to demonstrate a significant influence of the independent variable (flattery) upon the mediator (attributional thoughts), and once again this test was significant, \( F(2, 151) = 18.798, p < .001 \). Finally, mediation is demonstrated if the presence of the mediator (attributional thoughts) as a covariate in the model decreases the significance of the independent variable (flattery) upon the dependent variable (perceptions of trustworthiness). Based on the significant decrease in the \( F \) value, this analysis reveals that attributional thoughts did mediate perceptions of trustworthiness, \( F(2, 150) = 8.572, p < .001 \), which is consistent with research suggesting that there is both conscious and unconscious processing at work in influencing consumer responses to flattery.

Mediation analysis was also conducted according on perceptions of manipulative intent with attributional thoughts as the mediator. Results demonstrated a significant influence of the independent variable (flattery) upon the dependent variable (perceptions of manipulative intent), \( F(2, 149) = 22.62, p < .001 \) as well as a significant influence of the independent variable (flattery) upon the mediator (attributional thoughts), \( F(2, 149) = 18.798, p < .001 \). Finally, when attributional thoughts are included in the ANCOVA, the significance of flattery upon perceptions of manipulative intent became less significant, \( F(2, 147) = 3.068, p < .05 \). Therefore, the current research has demonstrated that consumer's attributional thoughts about why the salesclerks used flattery partially mediated their perceptions of the manipulative intent of the clerk. When consumers have positive attributions about the reasons for the flattery (such as its' genuineness), the salesclerk is perceived as less manipulative as compared to when consumers experienced negative thoughts about why flattery was used.
3.3 Discussion

Overall, results of study 1 supported hypothesis 1 and 2. Hypothesis 1 predicted that consumers who were exposed to a plausible ulterior motive in a sales situation would experience the most negative reaction to flattery. Consumers who were flattered prior to purchase perceived the clerk as less trustworthy, reported more negative attributional thoughts and had higher perceptions of manipulative intent than consumers flattered after purchase. The results for this condition were consistent with previous research on flattery in a marketing context (e.g. Campbell and Kirmani 2000) and suggest that flattery is a cue that triggers suspicion and thoughts about why flattery occurred. Therefore, the findings of this research provide evidence that consumers recognize flattery as a cue that suggests the possibility of other motives. Further, flattery elevated the level of negative attributional thoughts regarding the cause of flattery that had negative consequences for the perceived manipulative intent of the clerk. This aspect of the results is consistent with the suggestion that ulterior motives increase the likelihood of attributional thinking about the cause of the flattery, and the response is consistent with the rational perspective of the discounting principle suggested by attribution theory.

The results for flattery before purchase suggest that consumers accurately detected the fact that the flattery might plausibly serve as an ulterior motive. And, consistent with prior research, this identification of an ulterior motive resulted in a state of distrust (Burgoon, Buller, Dillman and Walther 1995). What has not been previously demonstrated in the literature is the fact that even flattery occurring after purchase resulted in negative perceptions of the seller when compared to consumers who were not flattered at all. The findings for flattery after purchase were consistent with hypothesis 2 and suggest that
consumers were still suspicious of flattery despite the fact that no plausible ulterior motive existed. Consumers flattered after purchase experienced more negative reactions than were warranted by the situation. This finding serves as evidence of the sinister attribution error (Kramer 1998) as consumers were overly suspicious of flattery and failed to take into account when the flattery occurred in the situation. A consumer who was entirely accurate in attributing the cause of flattery should have recognized that there was no plausible ulterior motive for flattery after purchase and rated the clerk as similar to the control condition in terms of trustworthiness or perceptions of manipulative intent. In fact, this negative effect of flattery after purchase is evidence that there is something about flattery in a sales context that triggers suspicion that does not require the presence of plausible ulterior motives. This is also consistent with the contention that suspicion often occurs without sufficient evidence (Kramer 1998). Essentially, consumers over corrected for the situation when making an assessment of the seller’s motives and despite the fact that consumers in both flattery conditions were thinking more overall, consumers flattered after purchase did not accurately adjust their perceptions to be consistent with the fact that flattery occurred after the purchase, thereby rendering a sales motive for the flattery implausible.

Mediational analysis suggested that attributional thoughts mediated perceptions of the trustworthiness of the clerk. It appears that these judgments of trust have both an automatic and controlled component. In addition, results also demonstrated that consumer’s thoughts about the cause or reason for why flattery occurred did mediate perceptions of the clerk’s manipulative intent. These analyses suggest the perception of manipulative intent was mediated by more thoughtful and effortful attributional processing. Consumers who had more negative attributional thoughts (such as believing that the clerk was working on
commission or trying to make a sale) had higher perceptions of the clerk's manipulative intent. In contrast, if consumers made positive attributions for flattery (such as the clerk being helpful), perceptions of the clerk's manipulative intent were lower. Results demonstrated the salience of flattery in a sales context, and regardless of the presence of plausible ulterior motives, consumers suspect the worse, that they are the target of a persuasion attempt, not the receiver of a genuine compliment. Overall, this analysis demonstrated that consumers judgments of manipulative intent had both an automatic and controlled component given that attributional thoughts did mediate perceptions of manipulative intent (i.e. suggesting a conscious and effortful process) while the main effect of flattery upon these judgments is still significant (i.e. suggesting an automatic component as well).

It was expected that this research would also demonstrate evidence of target observer effects in consumer responses to flattery as suggested in hypothesis 3. In order to demonstrate evidence of this effect, it was expected that the role of the consumer in the situation (as target or observer) would interact with flattery. However, this was not the case. There were no interactions between flattery and role suggesting that the targets higher degree of personal involvement did not influence consumer reaction to flattery. However, one factor that is important to keep in mind is that in the current research both targets and observers imagined their shopping experience and this may not be the strongest test of target observer differences. The distinction between being a target of flattery and an observer of flattery may be too subtle of a manipulation to accurately detect using a scenario. It is possible that a more robust test of target observer differences would be in an actual shopping situation.
Thus, in order to more fully investigate target observer reactions to flattery, the second study utilized a field experiment.

One issue that remains unsolved in the literature is the impact of flattery on other marketing variables. Previous research on flattery has only measured its effect on perceptions of sincerity and ulterior motives (e.g. Campbell and Kirmani 2000), however it has not explored additional consequences. One of the goals of Study 2 was to examine the influence of flattery upon other variables such as consumer satisfaction and word-of-mouth intentions in addition to trustworthiness. The second study is presented in the next chapter.
Table 1 Study 1 - Means on all Dependent Variables for Flattery Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F value (df)</th>
<th>Flattery Before</th>
<th>Flattery After</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust of Clerk</td>
<td>19.691 (2, 148)</td>
<td>3.349&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.998&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.423&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Thoughts</td>
<td>18.727 (2, 149)</td>
<td>1.538&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.275&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.442&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributional Thoughts</td>
<td>18.798 (2, 149)</td>
<td>-.962&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.373&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.079&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative Intent</td>
<td>22.62 (2, 149)</td>
<td>5.74&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.6&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.81&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> - all means are significantly different from each other at p < .05.

<sup>b</sup> - flattery before and flattery after purchase are both significantly different from the control condition at p < .001, but not from each other.
CHAPTER IV Study 2

Results of the first study demonstrated that consumers are both accurate and inaccurate in their responses to flattery in a sales setting. Consumers who were flattered prior to purchase perceived the clerk as being less trustworthy and more manipulative when compared to consumers who were flattered after purchase or not at all. Additionally, consumers who were flattered before purchase reported more negative attributional thoughts about the reason they were flattered. These findings suggest that consumers are accurately adjusting for the presence of plausible ulterior motives in the situation. Interestingly, consumers who were flattered after purchase were also less trusting of the salesclerk and perceived manipulative intent compared to consumers who were not flattered. Further, these consumers also reported negative attributional thoughts about the cause of flattery. Results for consumers flattered after purchase serve as evidence of the sinister attribution error as consumers were overly suspicious of the salesclerk’s motives for using flattery.

In order to build upon the findings of the first study, the second study was designed to further examine consumer attributions for flattery in a field setting with additional independent and dependent variables. The first goal of Study 2 was to investigate flattery in a field setting with targets in a face-to-face interaction with the flatterer. Previous investigations of flattery have relied on imagined interactions between the target and flatterer, and this leads to two differing categories of observers, targets who imagine themselves in the situation and observers who imagine another person in the situation. Such manipulations may be too subtle to demonstrate reliable target observer effects.

A second goal of the current research was to determine whether the price of the flattered item would influence consumer responses to flattery. Instead of signaling product
quality (Dawar and Parker 1994), price in combination with flattery may be more likely to signal to consumers the presence of ulterior motives. In Study 1 and in previous research (Campbell and Kimmani 2000), consumers were always flattered on the higher priced item. It is likely that flattery on the higher priced item would heighten participants’ belief that flattery was the result of an ulterior motive and cause consumers to attribute the behavior to the sales situation. As in the first study, the presence of an ulterior motive is expected to result in a negative response. Consumers may be even more likely to respond negatively to flattery on a higher priced item when the flattery occurs prior to purchase. In contrast, flattery on a lower priced item is less likely to result in perceptions of ulterior motives and may be more likely to result in positive perceptions of flattery. Therefore, the current research also examined price as an independent variable of interest.

A third goal of Study 2 was to examine the effect of flattery upon other dependent variables such as satisfaction and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions. Research has revealed the influence of affect upon consumer satisfaction and WOM (Westbrook 1987) and it is likely that flattery would influence both these variables. Satisfaction has been linked to research on attributions, often in the context of service recovery (e.g. Maxhan and Netemeyer 2002) and product failure (e.g. Folkes 1984) and is likely to be an important consideration in the context of flattery and retail sales. While consumer researchers have faced difficulty in determining whether satisfaction is an entirely separate concept from other positive emotions such as happiness, enjoyment and delight (Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer 1999), satisfaction is still an important post-purchase variable. Prior research has identified a link between trust and satisfaction since trust is related to positive expectations about the intentions or behavior of an interaction partner (Singh and Sirdeshmukh 2000). When one’s expectations of an
interaction partner are met, trust is established which in turn positively impacts satisfaction (Singh and Sirdeshmukh 2000). Therefore, in the current research, satisfaction was added as a post-purchase variable of interest. It was expected that flattery prior to purchase would result in more thoughts about ulterior motives, less trust towards the salesclerk and less satisfaction than consumers who are flattered after purchase or not at all. Consumers who do not experience flattery while shopping are the least likely to think about possible ulterior motives and are the most likely to perceive the salesclerk as trustworthy and be satisfied with their purchase experience.

In addition to satisfaction, it is important to investigate the influence of flattery on word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions. Some researchers have suggested that WOM is often more effective than personal selling and television or newspaper advertisements in communicating information about a product (Brown and Reingen 1987). Previous research has also established a link between trust and positive WOM intentions (Gremler, Gwinner and Brown 2001). In the current context, WOM intentions are likely to be influenced by any distrust that accompanies flattery. Consistent with expectations for satisfaction, negative WOM intentions are likely to be highest for those consumers who are flattered prior to purchase as compared to those consumers who are flattered after purchase or not at all.

4.1 Method

Study 2 investigated the three independent variables of interest within a field setting using a different product than Study 1. Participant's role in the experiment, the price of the flattered item and the timing of flattery were the independent variables of interest.
Participants and Design

Participants were 196 university students who received course credit for their help. The three experimental factors were the participant's role (target vs. observer), the timing of flattery (no flattery vs. flattery before purchase vs. flattery after purchase) and the price of the item (high vs. low).

Procedure – Target Condition

When students arrived at the laboratory, those assigned to the role of target were told the cover story of the experiment. The entire experimenter script can be found in Appendix E. Students were informed that the experiment was interested in consumer experiences while shopping in different types of stores. Participants were told that they would be going shopping in one of the stores located on campus. Students were further informed that they would be given money to use in making their purchase, but due to budget constraints we were unable to let them keep the product they purchased. Students then chose a slip from an envelope that they believed contained the names of a number of different stores and products across campus. This lottery was used to minimize suspicions about the store at which participants shopped. In actuality, all slips informed them that they would be shopping for sunglasses at one of the retail outlets set up in the Student Union Building. The only difference between the slips was whether students were told to purchase the high priced sunglasses that were sold for $20, or the lower priced sunglasses that were sold for $10. This procedure was used to manipulate the price of the item subjects purchased.

The retail outlet was operated by the experimenter and was used to manipulate flattery. It was set up in the middle of the Student Union Building where vendors display their wares from week to week. On this particular week, other booths were selling a variety
of items including scarves, hats, jewelry and books. There were at least 40 pairs of sunglasses on the table at all times, with half selling for $20 and the other half for $10. There were signs on the table that clearly marked the price of the sunglasses as well as a cash box, a receipt book and a mirror that consumers could use to see how the sunglasses looked when they tried them on.

Students were told to take their time while shopping and to look at the different styles of sunglasses that were on the table. Participants were asked to try on at least one pair from each price category so they would be able to compare between them. Finally, they were told to choose the pair that they liked best in the price category that was identified. Participants were also told that while they were unable to keep the item they purchased, it was still important to choose the item they liked best. Following this, students were given money to use in making their purchase and after their shopping was completed, they returned to the laboratory.

The salesclerk at the retail outlet was a confederate of the experimenter and was blind to the experimental hypotheses. There were four female students who acted as the confederate at the table across the five days. The script for the salesclerks can be found in Appendix F. Prior to the arrival of the participant at the display table, the experimenter called the confederate and gave a brief description of the participant as well as informing the confederate of the condition the participant had been assigned to. All participants were addressed with the same opening line by the clerk of “Hi, can I help you?” Following this, participants were shown which side of the table the low and high priced sunglasses were on. Participants who had been assigned to the flattery before purchase condition were told, “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think they look good on you. They really suit you” after
they had tried on at least two pairs of sunglasses but before their purchase was made. For those participants assigned to the flattery after purchase condition, this same line was stated after participants had decided which pair of sunglasses to purchase. After their purchase, all participants were given a receipt and their sunglasses were placed in a bag. Participants then returned to the experimenter to complete the questionnaire (see Appendix G).

Procedure – Observer Condition

Those students assigned to the observer condition watched a videotape of the targets shopping and then completed the experimental questionnaire found in Appendix H. All of the target – salesclerk interactions were videotaped, and each of these interactions were yoked to a different participant who was assigned to the observer condition. This yoking allowed us to match the interactions that occurred across target-observer conditions. The video camera and microphone were hidden within the display of sunglasses and the VCR was concealed underneath the table. The video recording was in black and white, and was angled to show both the consumer and salesclerk from the side. In order to ensure that observers could understand the exchange between the consumer and salesclerk while watching the video, anything the salesclerk said during the sales encounter was transcribed and this script was provided to observers to refer to as needed while watching the video. The questionnaire observers completed contained the same dependent variables as the targets. Items in this questionnaire asked observers to rate how they thought the consumer would feel about their shopping experience (discussed below).

Measures

After participants served as target or observer, they completed a questionnaire containing the dependent measures. First, participants were asked to list any thoughts or
feelings they had while shopping or watching the video. Participants were encouraged to list any thoughts or feelings they experienced about the store, the salesclerk or themselves. These thoughts were later coded for the occurrence of attributional thoughts. Some examples of negative attributional thoughts included: "Although she complimented me on my choice, and said I looked good in the pair I was holding, I didn’t feel that she meant it. I did not trust her or her opinion at all.” (participant #10, flattery before purchase). Another consumer reported, “The sales clerk was really nice, almost too nice. I think that I must have noticed the excess of nice mostly because I was watching for it.”(participant #13, flattery before purchase) or that the “Salesclerk made it obvious all she wanted was to make a sale” (participant #4, flattery before purchase). Examples of positive attributional thoughts for the flattery included “She gave me some advice about which glasses suit me” (participant #16, flattery before purchase) and “The retailer aided me with my selection – it was nice to have a second opinion” (participant #13, flattery before purchase). This attributional evidence gives us a glimpse of the ulterior motives that consumers consider after being flattered.

Consumer satisfaction was measured towards the purchase by asking consumers how happy and unhappy (reverse-scored) they were with their purchase on a 7-point Likert scale rated from 1 to 7. Reliability of the scale items are reported in the results section. Word-of-mouth was measured by one item asking the extent to which consumers would say negative things about the store to others.

As in Study 1, participants rated the same list of traits for the measure of perceived trustworthiness. Participants were also asked to rate the likelihood that the salesclerk’s behavior was genuine or based on ulterior motives using the same items as in study 1. Finally, participants completed a number of demographic questions about their gender, age,
ethnic background and the manipulation check where consumers identified if they were flattered or complimented while they were shopping, whether that flattery occurred before or after purchase, and the price of the purchased item.

4.2 Results

Results were analyzed with a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), with role, timing of flattery and price as the independent factors. Out of the 196 students who participated in the experiment, 5 were removed from the analysis due to experimental errors (e.g. participants did not receive all of the flattery or were flattered in front of other participants) and a further 8 were removed for failing to follow the experimental instructions (e.g. went shopping in the wrong place). Following the removal of these participants, the analysis was conducted on 183 participants (72 male, 110 female). Price did not significantly influence any of the results and will not be discussed in the results section, it will be returned to in the discussion.

Manipulation Checks

Participants were able to correctly identify when they were flattered, $X^2(1) = 6.027, p < .05$, participants in the control condition were correct in 53 out of 58 cases, participants flattered before purchase were correct in 54 out of 62 cases and participants flattered after purchase were correct in 47 out of 62 cases\(^2\). Participants were also able to correctly identify the price of the sunglasses they purchased, $X^2(1) = 150.342, p < .001$, where 91 out of 95 cases correctly identified the lower priced pair and 82 out of 86 correctly identified the high priced pair.

\(^2\) Additional analyses were conducted to determine if the findings would hold when those consumers who mistakenly identified when the flattery occurred were removed. Results across all dependent variables remained significant with the same pattern of results as reported.
The suspicion probe at the end of the experimental questionnaire was examined in order to determine if subjects thought the retail outlet was part of the experiment. Out of the 99 targets that went shopping, only 6 participants wondered if the salesclerk was part of the experiment, and none guessed the experimental hypotheses.

**Dependent Variables**

*Salesclerk's Trustworthiness.* Factor analysis was conducted to determine if all the traits measuring trust in the salesclerk loaded together. The 9 traits together accounted for 29% of the variance. All factor loadings were greater than .40 and the reliability of the traits together was $\alpha = .78$. It was hypothesized that consumers in the flattery before purchase condition would be more likely to search for ulterior motives and report lower perceptions of the clerk's trustworthiness than consumers in the flattery after purchase condition or the control condition. There was a significant main effect of flattery ($F(2, 176) = 4.650, p < .01$). As can be seen in Table 2, the means for the control condition, flattery after and flattery before purchase are 4.81, 4.36 and 4.42 respectively. Post-hoc LSD comparisons indicated that the control and flattery before purchase conditions were significantly different ($p < .01$) as were the control and flattery after purchase conditions ($p < .01$). The flattery before and after purchase conditions did not differ from each other. These results were consistent with expectations that consumers who were flattered would report lower perceptions of trustworthiness than consumers who were not flattered. Also, the difference between those participants who were not flattered and those who were flattered after purchase is consistent with the prediction that consumers would continue to be suspicious even when the ulterior motive was implausible. This replicated the sinister attribution error observed in Study 1. However, contrary to expectations and Study 1, there was no difference between flattery
before purchase and flattery after purchase. This finding will be returned to in the discussion.

*Total Thoughts.* The total thoughts that participants listed that were relevant to their interaction with the clerk were analyzed to determine if consumers who were flattered reported more thoughts as they searched for plausible ulterior motives. There was a main effect of flattery ($F (2, 177) = 6.997, p < .001$), and a main effect of role ($F (2, 177) = 36.445, p < .001$) that were qualified by a significant interaction between flattery and role ($F (1, 177) = 4.842, p < .01$). As can be seen in Figure 1, targets had more thoughts overall as compared to observers, and observers had the most thoughts in the flattery after purchase condition ($M = .79$), perhaps suggesting that observers in this condition spent more time thinking about why the salesclerk would flatter consumers after the purchase was made. For targets, results for total thoughts were consistent with Study 1 and demonstrated that consumers who were flattered had the greatest number of total thoughts as compared to consumers who were not flattered. These findings again suggest that flattery induced greater information processing for targets. Post-hoc LSD comparisons indicated that targets had significantly more thoughts than observers across all conditions. ($p < .05$) Within targets, there were significantly more total thoughts in the flattery before purchase condition ($M = 1.85$) as compared to the control condition ($M = .76, p < .001$), flattery before purchase and flattery after purchase ($M = 1.3$) did not significantly differ from each other. For observers, there were significantly fewer thoughts when flattery occurred before purchase, suggesting that for observers the flattery occurring before purchase was obviously the result of ulterior motives and did not require much thought in order to come to that conclusion in comparison to observers who were trying to think about why a salesclerk would flatter a consumer after purchase.
Attributional Thoughts. Consumer’s thoughts relating to whether the cause of flattery was either genuine or a result of ulterior sales motives were coded in the same manner as in Study 1. It was expected that consumers who were flattered prior to purchase would be more likely to report negative attributional thoughts regarding flattery than consumers who were flattered after purchase or not at all. Results of the ANOVA revealed a significant influence of flattery ($F (2, 180) = 3.020, p < .05$). There were $M = .0508$ attributional thoughts in the control condition, in the flattery before purchase condition the average number of attributional thoughts was $M = -.097$ and in the flattery after purchase condition the average was $M = -.2419$. The control condition was significantly different from the flattery after purchase condition ($p < .01$), but was not significantly different from the flattery before purchase condition. The flattery conditions were also not significant from each other. Although it was expected that the flattery before purchase condition would be significantly more negative than the flattery after condition and the control condition, the results were consistent with those for trust in that the flattery conditions were not significantly different from each other.

Manipulative Intent. Perceived manipulative intent was measured with the same three items as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .78$). Results revealed a significant influence of flattery ($F (2, 171) = 29.858, p < .001$). As predicted, post-hoc LSD comparisons indicated that all conditions were significantly different from each other ($p < .05$). As can be seen in Table 1, results demonstrated that perceptions of manipulative intent were highest in the flattery before purchase condition ($M = 4.96$) and lowest in the control condition ($M = 2.81$). It was also demonstrated that consumers still perceived manipulative intent in the flattery after
purchase condition ($M = 4.17$), just not to the same extent as the flattery before purchase condition. The latter finding again replicates the sinister attribution error.

Results also indicated a significant effect of role upon manipulative intent ($F (1, 171) = 5.62, p < .05$). Contrary to Study 1, observers were more likely to report greater perceptions of manipulative intent ($M = 4.29$) than targets ($M = 3.81$). This finding will be returned to in the discussion.

Satisfaction. It was expected that consumers who were flattered prior to purchase would be more likely to perceive an ulterior motive and would be less satisfied with their purchase than consumers who were flattered after purchase or not at all. As previously mentioned, there were two items used for purchase satisfaction ($r = .65, p < .01$). Results of the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of role ($F (1,177) = 27.86, p < .001$), which was qualified by a marginally significant interaction between role and flattery, ($F (2,177) = 2.52, p < .08$). As shown in Figure 2, post-hoc LSD comparisons revealed that for targets, there was a significant difference between the two flattery conditions ($p < .05$) indicating that consumers who did not experience flattery while shopping were more satisfied with their purchase as compared to those who were flattered after purchase, which is further evidence of irrational suspicion or the sinister attribution error. The pattern of means suggested that flattery lowers the satisfaction of targets regardless of whether it occurred before or after the purchase. In contrast, flattery had little effect on observers.

WOM Intentions. It was expected that consumers would be more likely to report negative WOM intentions following flattery before purchase as opposed to consumers who were flattered after purchase or who were not flattered. Results indicated a significant influence of role upon consumer intentions to say negative things about the store to others ($F$
(1,177) = 25.55, \( p < .001 \), which was qualified by a significant interaction between flattery and role \( (F(2,177) = 2.952, p < .05) \). This interaction was conceptually similar to the interaction observed for satisfaction. As can be seen in Figure 3, post-hoc LSD comparisons indicated that targets were more likely to report intentions to say negative things about the store than observers when flattered before purchase \( (target \bar{M} = 5.06 \text{ vs. observer } \bar{M} = 3.17, p < .001) \) and after purchase \( (target \bar{M} = 4.82 \text{ vs. observer } \bar{M} = 3.62, p < .01) \). For targets, the control condition was the condition in which consumers were the least likely to report negative WOM intentions, and consumers who were flattered before purchase were significantly more likely to report negative WOM intentions \( (p < .05) \), consistent with expectations. Flattery after purchase was not significantly different from controls \( (p > .10) \).

Although the flattery after purchase condition was not significantly different from the control condition, the results were in the predicted direction and overall, results suggested that targets were more likely to react to flattery with negative WOM regardless of when the flattery occurred. As was the case for satisfaction, flattery has little effect upon the observers’ negative WOM intentions.

**Mediation.** Mediation analysis was conducted according to Baron and Kenny (1986) on perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness with attributional thoughts as the mediator. There are three analyses that have to be conducted in order to test for mediation. First, results need to demonstrate a significant influence of the independent variable (flattery) upon the dependent variable (perceptions of trustworthiness). Second, analysis should indicate a significant influence of the independent variable (flattery) upon the mediator (attributional thoughts). Finally, mediation is demonstrated if the presence of the mediator (attributional thoughts) as a covariate in the model decreases the significance of the independent variable.
(flattery) upon the dependent variable (perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness). First, there was a previously demonstrated effect of flattery upon trustworthiness, $F(2, 176) = 4.65, p < .01$. Attributional thoughts were also impacted by flattery, $F(2, 180) = 3.02, p < .05$. When attributional thoughts are included in the ANCOVA, results for trust are less significant, $F(2, 175) = 2.86, p > .05$ demonstrating that negative thoughts about why the salesclerk used flattery partially mediated perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness. When consumers have positive attributions about the reasons for the flattery (such as its genuineness), they perceive the sales clerk as more trustworthy as compared to when consumers experience negative attributional thoughts. The effects of flattery on trust seemed to be partially mediated by active attributional processing concerning the intentions of the salesperson.

Mediation analysis was also conducted on perceptions of manipulative intent with attributional thoughts as the mediator. Results demonstrated that flattery did significantly influence perceptions of manipulative intent, $F(2, 172) = 29.858, p < .001$ and attribution thinking, $F(2, 173) = 3.02, p < .05$. However, the last analysis required to demonstrated mediation was not significant, as the significance of flattery upon perceptions of manipulative intent does not change substantially, $F(2, 170) = 28.072, p < .001$.

4.3 Discussion

The results of study 2 demonstrated a number of interesting findings, and overall, results suggested that consumers make less of a distinction between flattery before purchase and flattery after purchase in a real shopping experience as compared to an imagined shopping experience. The distinction as to when flattery occurred was more subtle in a real purchase context and consumers responded more based on the presence or absence of flattery
as opposed to when it occurred. It was flattery that became a salient cue in the situation to consumers, and their reactions to flattery were primarily negative. Results demonstrated that consumers who were flattered were less trusting of the clerk, less satisfied with their purchase, and more likely to report negative WOM intentions than consumers who were not flattered.

In the current research, consumers responded to the presence or absence of flattery by experiencing greater suspicions of manipulative intent, less trust, less satisfaction and more negative WOM intentions. These results lend further support to the powerful effects of suspicion (e.g. Fein 1996; Kramer 1998) and the sinister attribution error (e.g. Kramer 1994). A negative response to flattery occurring before purchase is evidence that consumers are appropriately accounting for the presence of plausible ulterior motives, consistent with the discounting principle (Kelley 1972; 1973). In contrast, consumers flattered after the purchase should have recognized that there were significantly fewer ulterior motives in this situation, if any at all; suggesting that consumers made sinister attributions for flattery and were suspicious even in situations where it was not warranted. Interestingly, this error was not due to a lack of processing or thought about the meaning of the flattery. Total thoughts demonstrated that consumers in both flattery conditions were thinking more about their experience as compared to consumers who were not flattered. This is evidence that consumers were thinking about their experience and why the flattery occurred, but for those flattered after purchase, the conclusions they came to were negative and overly suspicious.

Whereas Study 1 clearly demonstrated that the timing of flattery influenced consumer perceptions, this was not the case in Study 2. This suggests that in the scenario method of Study 1, consumers searched for cues in the scenario to guide their responses and the timing
of the flattery was a salient cue. However, when flattery moved to a real shopping situation in Study 2, consumers were more sensitive to the presence of flattery as opposed to when it occurred, consistent with the notion that consumers are overly suspicious of persuasion or influence attempts in retail sales settings.

In addition to demonstrating the effects of flattery upon perceptions of trust and manipulative intent, the current research also demonstrated that flattery significantly lowered satisfaction and positive WOM intentions for targets. While satisfaction was lowest when consumers were flattered before purchase, it is also important to note that there was no significant difference between flattery before and after purchase. This is further evidence that consumers who were flattered after purchase were overly suspicious of the salesclerk’s behavior, especially given that there were fewer plausible ulterior motives. Results for WOM intentions were similar in that there was no significant difference between the flattery conditions, and WOM intentions were the most negative when consumers were flattered before purchase. These findings for satisfaction and WOM intentions are particularly important as they demonstrate that there are additional consequences to flattery beyond lower perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness.

Mediation analysis further revealed the influence of attributional thoughts on consumer reactions to flattery. It was demonstrated that consumer’s thoughts about the reason that they were flattered mediated perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness. When consumers made negative attributions for the clerk’s behavior (i.e. that they were trying to make a sale), they were less trusting of the clerk as compared to consumers who made more positive attributions for the clerk’s flattery (i.e. giving an honest opinion). These results further confirm the importance of the attributional process in examining consumer reactions.
to flattery. Study 2 further demonstrated that results appear consistent with the literature suggesting that there is an automatic and controlled component to consumer judgments of the trustworthiness of the clerk in response to flattery.

In terms of target observer differences, results for manipulative intent were contrary to expectations. In Study 2, targets were less likely to report perceptions of manipulative intent on the part of the clerk. Despite this surprising finding for manipulative intent, results for purchase satisfaction and WOM intentions were consistent with hypothesis 3 and demonstrated that target consumers were more likely to react negatively to flattery as compared to observers. In general, results suggest that targets and observers agreed on the implications flattery had for perceptions of trust but observers did not integrate these perceptions into judgments of satisfaction and WOM intentions. These findings were contrary to Campbell and Kirmani (2000) and could be a result of the change from a scenario to a field experiment. In a real situation, consumers are being bombarded with information and are less able to attend to cues in the situation.

When we examine the findings of the current research in comparison to those of Campbell and Kirmani (2000), there was a partial replication of their results. In particular, the negative reactions of consumers who were flattered before purchase were consistent between the current research and that of Campbell and Kirmani (2000), and serve as evidence that consumers were able to adequately use persuasion knowledge in determining potential explanations for flattery received in a consumer context. Consumers who were flattered before purchase were able to discount appropriately for the presence of ulterior motives in the sales situation. With the addition of a group of consumers who did not receive flattery, the results for flattery after purchase become clearer. Evidence from the second
study confirmed that consumers make fairly negative or sinister attributions for influence tactics used in sales settings. Instead of recognizing that there are no plausible ulterior motives for flattery after the purchase decision is completed, consumers responded just as negatively to this flattery as they did to flattery received before purchase. Consistent with other research (e.g. Darke and Ritchie 2003; Kramer 1994), consumers exhibited an irrational suspicion that they were the target of an influence attempt.

Contrary to expectations, price did not exhibit an influence upon consumer responses to flattery. Consumers did not experience more negative attributional thoughts when flattery occurred on the higher priced item as compared to a lower priced item. One possible explanation for this result may be that the $10 and $20 values were too close together and it was difficult for consumers to distinguish between them. The retail outlets set up near the experimental table were selling products that were reasonably priced for students, and it would be difficult to carry higher priced or high-end products in that setting. Future research should endeavor to increase the spread between the high priced item and the low priced item, or to change to a more formal retail setting in order to better examine the impact that price may have in combination with flattery upon consumer reactions. An additional explanation may be that price is not a salient feature in the sales situation when compared to the salience of flattery. The use of flattery in a sales situation led consumers to conclude they were being manipulated regardless of the ulterior motives in the situation and whether that flattery occurred on a high or low priced item became inconsequential.

In general, the results of the first two studies have demonstrated two main findings with respect to the negativity of consumer reactions: 1) consumers were able to appropriately discount for the presence of plausible ulterior motives; and 2) consumers also over corrected
for less plausible ulterior motives in the situation, reflecting the presence of the sinister attribution error in sales contexts. Given this evidence of fairly negative consumer reactions to flattery, this leaves the question of whether flattery might have more positive effects upon consumers. This question is the central focus of the third study and is discussed in the next chapter.
### Table 2: Study 2 - Means on all Dependent Variables for Flattery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F value (df)</th>
<th>Flattery Before</th>
<th>Flattery After</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust of Clerk</td>
<td>4.65 (2, 173)</td>
<td>4.42&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.36&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.81&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Thoughts</td>
<td>4.851 (2, 171)</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.39&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributional Thoughts</td>
<td>3.02 (2, 173)</td>
<td>-.097</td>
<td>-.24&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.05&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative Intent</td>
<td>29.86 (2, 171)</td>
<td>4.96&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.17&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.81&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Satisfaction</td>
<td>2.52 (2, 177)</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.40&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM Intentions</td>
<td>2.95 (2, 177)</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.01&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*<sup>* denotes a significant interaction between flattery and role  
<sup>a</sup> - the flattery before condition is significantly different from the control condition (p < .01) and the flattery after condition (p < .05)  
<sup>b</sup> - the flattery after purchase condition is significantly different from the control condition (p < .01)  
<sup>c</sup> - all conditions are significantly different from each other at p < .05

### Table 3: Study 2 - Means on all Dependent Variables for Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F value (df)</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Observer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust of Clerk</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Thoughts</td>
<td>36.45 (1, 171)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.33&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributional Thoughts</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative Intent</td>
<td>5.62 (1, 171)</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Satisfaction</td>
<td>27.86 (1, 177)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.7&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM Intentions</td>
<td>25.95 (1, 177)</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>3.5&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*<sup>* denotes a significant interaction between flattery and role
Figure 1 Study 2 - Interaction of Flattery and Role on Total Thoughts

Figure 2 Study 2 Marginal Interaction of Flattery and Role on Purchase Satisfaction

Figure 3 Study 2 Interaction of Flattery and Role on Negative WOM
CHAPTER V Study 3

The first two studies demonstrated only negative effects of flattery in terms of trust of the clerk, attributional thoughts, purchase satisfaction, and WOM intentions. In addition to evidence that consumers were accurately weighing ulterior motives in a consumer context (i.e. when flattery occurred before purchase), we saw evidence that consumers over attributed to ulterior motives on the part of the salesperson even when this was implausible (i.e. evidence of the sinister attribution error). Despite this preponderance of evidence for the negative effects of flattery in a sales context, there may also be certain situations wherein consumers have positive reactions to flattery. Therefore, one of the goals of the third study was to identify under what conditions consumers might respond positively to flattery.

In order to examine that question, it is important to review another important principle in attribution theory, the augmentation principle (Kelley 1972; 1973). This principle maintains that when there are costs or risks in a situation associated with taking a particular action, and an actor engages in that action, it is more likely that the behavior will be attributed to the actor than if those costs or risks were absent (Kelley and Michela 1980). The augmentation principle is consistent with persuasion research suggesting that one of the best ways to increase message persuasiveness is for the actor to argue against their self-interests (Walster, Aronson and Abrahams 1966). In a marketing context, having salesclerks argue against their own interests can be best exemplified by giving consumers a negative evaluation of an item that they have tried on. This negative evaluation is a risky strategy to use as it could cost the sales clerk the sale. In this situation, consumers may conclude that the negative evaluation from the clerk is a result of the clerk’s disposition (i.e. giving an honest opinion) and not to the situation (i.e. trying to make a sale). If that initial negative
evaluation was then followed by a positive evaluation of the consumer (i.e. flattery), the credibility imbued to the salesperson by their initial statement may result in a more positive response to subsequent flattery. By establishing the clerk’s credibility, consumers may be less likely to be overly suspicious of the salesclerk’s behavior.

5.1 Method

Participants and Design

Sixty-seven students participated in the experiment and received course credit for their help. The experiment was a one-way design with three conditions (balanced flattery, flattery only and control). All flattery occurred prior to purchase.

Procedure

The procedure for Study 3 was quite similar to that of Study 2. When students arrived at the laboratory, they were informed that they would be shopping at a retail outlet that has been set up just outside of the Commerce Student’s Association Snack Bar selling a variety of Commerce gear such as sweatshirts, t-shirts, and sunglasses (this script can be found in Appendix I). Students then drew a slip that identified which product they would be sent to purchase (sunglasses). This procedure ensured that participants believed they could be shopping for any item and helped to decrease any suspicion that the retail outlet was connected to the experiment. Students were told to take their time while shopping and to look at the different styles of sunglasses that were on the table. Participants were asked to try on at least three pairs so they would be able to compare between them.

The salesclerk at the retail outlet was a confederate of the experimenter. The experimental manipulation of flattery occurred at this point in the experiment. Participants assigned to the flattery only condition were told, “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think
they look good on you. They really suit you.” Those participants assigned to the balanced flattery condition were told, “I’m not sure this pair suits you. I thought the first pair you tried on was a great pair of sunglasses. I thought they looked good on you. They really suited you”. A script for the salesclerks can be found in Appendix J. After participants returned from shopping, they completed a questionnaire containing the same dependent measures as in Study 2 (the experimental questionnaire can be found in Appendix K).

Attributional thoughts were coded to determine whether the attributions were positive or negative regarding the cause of flattery. If thoughts were positive such as “She gave me her opinion on which pair to buy. I thought it was extremely helpful because it’s always nice to get a second opinion about a purchase.” (participant #35, balanced flattery) and “She offered her opinion on which product would look best. She told me which product I looked best in. Great because an opinion is always valued. And her opinion was not negative!” (participant #49, balanced flattery), these were coded as positive attributional thoughts. Attributional thoughts were coded as negative if consumers attributed the flattery to ulterior motives as can be seen when it was stated that “Although the salesperson appears to be friendly, she wanted to make a sale based on the customer’s first try, which might not be accurate” (participant # 60 flattery only). These positive and negative attributional thoughts were summed together to form a measure of attributional thoughts. The current study did not include measures of manipulative intent given that the measures of trustworthiness provided similar information.

5.2 Results

Results were analyzed with an oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) with three levels of flattery (flattery only, balanced flattery and no flattery) as the independent factor.
Out of the 67 students who participated in the experiment, 7 were removed from the analysis due to experimental errors (e.g. participants did not receive all of the flattery) and a further 12 were removed for failing to follow the experimental instructions (e.g. went shopping in the wrong place). Following the removal of these participants, the analysis was conducted on 48 participants (22 male and 26 female).

**Manipulation Checks**

Participants were able to correctly identify if they were flattered or not, $X^2(2) = 36.250, p < .001$. Participants in the control condition were correct in 15 out of 16 cases, participants in the flattery only condition were correct in 14 out of 16 cases and participants in the balanced flattery condition were correct in all 16 cases. In addition, when asked if the clerk provided any positive information during the purchase experience, participants in the flattery conditions were significantly more likely to report receiving positive information, $F(2, 44) = 5.808, p < .01$. The means for flattery only, balanced flattery and the control condition were 4.875, 5.0 and 3.05 respectively. This may not seem like clear evidence of a manipulation check for the balanced flattery condition given that it is not significantly different from the flattery only condition. However, we also coded whether participants reported that the sales clerk made a comparison between the different sunglasses that they tried on (i.e. that they received specific information that one pair looked better on them than another). As expected, there was a significant effect, $X^2(1) = 12.522, p < .001$. None of the control or flattery only consumers reported that the salesclerk made a comparison between how they looked in the sunglasses, but 9 out of 16 participants in the balanced flattery condition reported a comparison was made between items they tried on in their thought listings. This is clearer evidence for successfulness of the balanced flattery manipulation.
The suspicion probe at the end of the experimental questionnaire was examined in order to determine if participants were suspicious of a connection between the retail outlet or the salesclerk and the experiment. Out of the 48 targets that went shopping, only three mentioned suspicions, but none guessed the experimental hypotheses.

**Dependent Variables**

*Salesclerk's Trustworthiness.* Factor analysis was conducted to determine if all the relevant traits loaded together. The same 9 traits as used in the previous studies loaded together and accounted for 49% of the variance. All factor loadings were greater than .40. Based on the literature and on previous findings, it was expected that the balanced flattery condition would result in the highest perceptions of the clerk's trustworthiness and the flattery only condition would be the lowest on this measure. In contrast to the previous two studies, there was no significant effect of flattery upon perceptions of the clerk's trustworthiness ($F_{(2, 45)} = .145, p > .5$). The means for flattery only, balanced flattery and the control condition were 5.8, 6.0, and 5.9 respectively. In this study, there was no influence of flattery upon perceptions of the trustworthiness of the clerk. One possible explanation for this lack of a significant finding could be the setting the research was conducted in, and this issue will be returned to in the discussion.

*Attributional Thoughts.* Positive and negative attributional thoughts were coded and it was expected that consumers who were flattered would be likely to report negative attributional thoughts whereas consumers who received balanced flattery would report more positive attributional thoughts in comparison to consumers who were not flattered. Results demonstrated that there was a significant influence of flattery upon attributional thoughts ($F_{(2, 45)} = 3.814, p < .05$). Consumers who were flattered reported an average of .5625
attributional thoughts, and those receiving balanced flattery reported an average of 1.13 attributional thoughts (although this was not a significant difference). Consumers who were not flattered reported .125 attributional thoughts on average which was significantly different from the balanced flattery condition (p < .01). Overall, this is partial evidence that consumers had more positive attributional thoughts when they received a negative evaluation prior to flattery as compared to consumers who only received flattery.

**Satisfaction.** It was expected that consumers who received balanced flattery would be more satisfied with their purchase than consumers who received only flattery or no flattery at all. There were three measures of purchase satisfaction in this study which were based on those used by Oliver (1980): whether participants were happy/pleased/satisfied with their purchase (α = .87). Results demonstrated that there was a significant influence of flattery upon purchase satisfaction, F (2, 45) = 3.219, p < .05. As can be seen in Figure 4, consumers who received balanced flattery had significantly higher purchase satisfaction (M = 5.21) than those who only received flattery (M = 4.27, p < .05). Consumers who received only flattery experienced the lowest purchase satisfaction which was a marginally significant difference from those who did not receive any flattery (M = 4.9, p < .10). Consistent with previous research, consumers who were flattered experienced significantly lower purchase satisfaction as compared to those who received balanced flattery. While we expected that the control and balanced flattery conditions would be significantly different from each other, the results are in the predicted direction but are not strong enough for a significant effect.

**WOM Intentions.** It was expected that consumers would be more likely to report negative WOM intentions following flattery as opposed to consumers who received balanced flattery or were not flattered at all. However, results were not significant for consumer
intentions to say negative things about the store to others ($F (2, 45) = .636, p > .5$). This lack of a significant finding may be related to the similarly non-significant finding for the salesclerk’s trustworthiness and will be returned to in the discussion.

5.3 Discussion

Contrary to expectations, results of the third study are only partial evidence that it may be possible to reverse the otherwise negative effects of flattery experienced by consumers. As compared to flattery presented alone, balanced flattery (wherein it is preceded by a negative evaluation) did result in greater purchase satisfaction in partial support of hypothesis 4, however this was not a significant difference from the control condition. Given the lack of results on other variables, results of the final study are further evidence that flattery does not have a positive effect in retail settings.

Surprisingly, there was no influence of flattery upon perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness or WOM intentions. Given the results found in the previous studies, one would have expected to find a similar pattern of results. One possible explanation for this lack of a significant finding on some of the primary dependent measures may be the setting in which the research was conducted. More specifically, the retail location was set up within the business school, close to the snack bar where students go for snacks and coffee. The cover story was that the study was being used to gather marketing research data for the Commerce Student’s Union. It seems that this change in setting and instructions may have served to change consumer perceptions about the vendor. In the third study, students went shopping in the Commerce Building, not at the Student Union Building as in the second study. In this case, the retail outlet appeared to be operated, not by an independent vendor, but by the Commerce Student’s Association. Even with the removal of an independent
vendor from the sales situation, consumers still did not respond in an entirely positive manner to flattery. One would not expect that students would perceive a clerk working for the Commerce Student’s Association as being driven by ulterior motives, especially considering that it is a non-profit organization. While their attributions for flattery were more positive than in previous studies, the balanced flattery condition was only slightly different from the control condition on purchase satisfaction. Instead, the salience of the sales situation continued to exert an influence upon consumer perceptions. An additional possibility for the few significant results on dependent variables of interest in the third study may have been the small sample size.

The overall conclusions and discussion of the results across the three studies are presented in the following chapter.
Table 4 – Study 3 Means on All Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F (df)</th>
<th>Flattery Only</th>
<th>Balanced Flattery</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust of Clerk</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributional Thoughts</td>
<td>3.22 (2,45)</td>
<td>.56&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.13&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.13&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.81 (2,45)</td>
<td>4.27&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.9&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM Intentions</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> – the balanced flattery condition is marginally different from flattery only (p < .07) and significantly different from the control condition (p < .05).

<sup>b</sup> – the balanced flattery condition is significantly different from flattery only (p < .05) and the flattery only condition is marginally different from the control condition (p < .09).
Figure 4 Study 3 - Influence of Flattery on Purchase Satisfaction

![Graph showing the influence of flattery on purchase satisfaction. The x-axis represents Flattery Only, Balanced Flattery, and Control conditions. The y-axis represents Purchase Satisfaction, ranging from 3 to 5.5. The graph shows a trend where purchase satisfaction is highest in the balanced flattery condition and decreases towards the control condition.]
CHAPTER VI General Discussion

Campbell and Kirmani (2000) demonstrated that consumer responses to flattery were negative, but in the absence of a control group of consumers who were not flattered, the extent of that negative reaction was unclear. The current research sought to clarify this uncertainty in the research literature and demonstrated that consumer reactions to flattery in a sales context were indeed primarily negative, and that these reactions were even more negative than was warranted by the situation. Utilizing an attributional framework as opposed to a persuasion knowledge framework, the current research was interested in determining the accuracy of consumer reactions to flattery. There were two potential options that could have been evidenced in this research. First, consumers who were entirely accurate and rational in their judgments of the situation should recognize the presence of alternative explanations or ulterior motives for the salesclerk’s behavior. In recognition of these plausible ulterior motives, consumers would adjust their perceptions to take into account the sales context and decide that flattery was the result of an ulterior motive rather than genuine. This conclusion would result in a negative consumer response. A second possibility exists wherein consumers may react to the presence of ulterior motives in the situation and conclude that flattery was the result of ulterior motives even when those motives are implausible and respond negatively. These exaggerated negative responses would be evidence of the sinister attribution error as they demonstrate that consumers were unable to recognize the absence of plausible ulterior motives in that situation and adjust their judgments accordingly.

The operationalization of sales situations with and without plausible ulterior motives was borrowed from Campbell and Kirmani (2000) with flattery occurring before purchase as
a situation in which there were plausible ulterior motives for flattery, and flattery after purchase as a situation with significantly fewer ulterior motives (if any). Results across the current three studies supported the first and second hypotheses suggesting that consumers were both accurate and biased information processors in sales situations. In the first two studies, consumers who were flattered before purchase responded with less trust of the clerk, reported more negative attributional thoughts concerning why they were flattered and experienced greater perceptions of manipulative intent than consumers who were not flattered. These negative reactions were further extended to WOM intentions in the second study and purchase satisfaction in the second and third studies.

These negative reactions to flattery occurring before purchase were entirely reasonable responses as consumers accounted for the plausible ulterior motives in the situation and responded accordingly. It is the response from consumers flattered after purchase that illustrated an overly suspicious and irrational response to flattery. Consumers in this situation should have recognized that there were significantly fewer ulterior motives for flattery that occurred after purchase. While consumers who were flattered after purchase did respond less negatively than consumers flattered before purchase in Study 1, these responses were still overly negative when compared to consumers who were not flattered. Moreover, the second study demonstrated that consumers responded solely to the presence or absence of flattery. That is, responses were just as negative for flattery that occurred after purchase as for flattery occurring before purchase (relative to controls). In this case, the objective plausibility of the ulterior motives made little difference to consumers' attributions and these consumers also experienced lower purchase satisfaction and more negative WOM intentions. Taken together, consumer responses to flattery after purchase were consistent
with the second hypothesis that suggested consumers may be very suspicious of flattery in a
sales context and overly focused on the sales motive when making their judgments. These
findings provide important evidence for a sinister attribution error in consumer responses to
flattery in a sales context. It seems that retail sales are one situation in which there are
numerous suspicions about the intentions of the salesclerk and as a result, consumers make
overly suspicious judgments of the behavior they encounter.

One potential explanation for the results for flattery after purchase may be that these
consumers perceived a different set of ulterior motives that were less related to influencing
the current purchase decision and were more related to encouraging other positive consumer
behaviors. Flattery before purchase had the obvious ulterior motive of trying to make a sale.
Perhaps consumers were concerned about other ulterior motives for flattery that occurred
after purchase such as trying to get consumers to return to the store, or to tell other
consumers about the store. However, in the current research setting, two factors argue
against that possibility. First, the setting of the experiment makes it less likely that
consumers would believe the salesclerk was trying to induce them to return to the store,
especially in the long term. In the Student Union Building where the retail outlet was setup
in the second study, all vendors set up temporary booths selling their products, and the
duration of any particular booth in the marketplace tends to be short. This transient nature of
sellers in this setting makes it unlikely that consumers would perceive repeat sales as a
plausible ulterior motive. Second, consumers did not report any other ulterior motives that
they believed might be driving the salesclerk’s behavior in the thought listings other than
trying to influence the sale. The only ulterior motive ever mentioned was to make the
immediate sale.
In terms of the results for total thoughts and attributional thinking, results of the current research are consistent with evidence of both a controlled and an automatic thought process. The evidence for total thoughts demonstrated that consumers who were flattered reported more thoughts as compared to consumers who did not experience flattery. This suggested that consumers were engaged in a controlled and effortful thought based processing of the flattering information. Furthermore, results for attributional thoughts demonstrated that ulterior motives increased attributional thinking relevant to the context and to some extent perceptions of trust were derived by this conscious thought based process. These results are consistent with previous research which suggested that suspicion leads to a more sophisticated style of information processing (Fein 1996). Flattery served as a cue that induced greater attributional thinking. Additionally, the partial mediation for attributional thoughts implies that some of the effects of ulterior motives may be implicit or unconscious in addition to conscious thoughts about the reasons for the flattery. The results of the current research have further extended those findings and demonstrated that in consumer settings, evidence suggests that there may be both automatic and controlled information processing in response to flattery. In fact, it is also possible that the differing levels of conscious thought in response to flattery may also be evidence of both affective and cognitive processing. Although these measures were not included in the current research, it is possible that consumer’s affective judgments are occurring more automatically and that their cognitive responses are the result of more conscious thought. This would be consistent with Vonk’s (2002) findings that the need for self-enhancement influenced affective responses to flattery. Future research should be directed towards untangling both the
automaticity of consumer responses to flattery as well as the cognitive and affective components of such reactions.

As for predictions concerning target observer effects, results for this variable were disappointing and did not demonstrate a reliable pattern of effects. In the first study, consumers’ role did not interact with flattery to produce effects on the dependent variables of interest. The results of Campbell and Kirmani’s (2000) Study 1 which is the most comparable to the current research led us to expect role would influence perceptions of the clerk’s trustworthiness (the closest measure to Campbell and Kirmani’s (2002) perceived sincerity). Planned comparisons in their research demonstrated that targets and observers only differed in their perceptions of flattery that occurred after purchase, there was no difference for flattery before purchase. Study 1 of the current research did not show an effect of role on perceptions of the clerk after using flattery. In the second study, evidence for target observer effects were only present for measures of purchase satisfaction and WOM intentions and were in the expected direction with targets responding more negatively based on their greater personal involvement in the situation as compared to observers. However, there were subtle differences in both method and measurement that may partially account for the lack of similar findings, and therefore it is difficult to make definitive conclusions regarding these findings.

Findings in the third study demonstrated that while we did not have the same degree of negative effects of flattery as demonstrated in the first two studies, evidence for positive effects were minimal. Given the change in setting and the fact that there was an independent non-profit vendor selling the sunglasses, the effects should have been more positive. However, the balanced flattery condition, which was expected to produce a positive response
based on the augmentation principle and research on arguing against one's own interests, only resulted in a neutral response as compared to consumers who were not flattered at all. Overall, the dominant response to flattery was negative and in the most positive instance, the negative response became neutral.

Theoretical Contributions

The current research makes a number of contributions to the research literature and these contributions will be considered within attribution theory and the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). Following the discussion of the theoretical contributions of this research, future research directions are discussed.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory has a long and varied history within the psychology literature, however it has received less attention in marketing. Even though there was a call in the late 1980's for more research into attribution and consumer research (Folkes 1988), it was not heeded and the call went out again in the new millennium (Weiner 2000). One of the contributions of the current research was using an attributional framework to investigate consumer responses to flattery. This research confirmed the importance of an attributional framework as well as being one of only a few empirical investigations of the sinister attribution error. The findings for consumers in the flattery before conditions served as additional evidence for the discounting principle (Kelley 1972; 1973) and demonstrated that consumers can make rational and accurate decisions regarding the presence of ulterior motives in sales situations and adjust their perceptions accordingly. Further, mediational analysis suggested that evidence is consistent with automatic and controlled information processing occurring in response to flattery. Future research should endeavor to examine
under what circumstances the different types of information processing exhibit their strongest effects. Interestingly, there was little evidence for the augmentation principle in a consumer setting. However, in the current research the negative evaluation prefacing flattery only served to partially counteract the negative effects of flattery and consumers only responded slightly more positively than consumers who were not flattered at all.

The current research served as some of the best evidence of the sinister attribution error to date. Consumers, particularly those who were flattered after purchase, were overly suspicious of flattery from salesclerks and responded with more negative attributions, lower perceptions of trust and purchase satisfaction and more negative WOM intentions. Complete attributional accuracy would suggest at the very least there should have been some difference between flattery before and after purchase and presumably no difference between flattery after purchase and no flattery. Instead, as demonstrated in Study 2, consumers reacted to the flattery itself without taking into consideration when it occurred. Despite the increase in processing as evidenced by the increase in the number of total thoughts, consumers still responded to flattery that occurred after purchase in an overly negative manner, especially given the absence of plausible ulterior motives. Therefore, those consumers who were flattered after purchase are the best evidence of the sinister attribution error to date.

The current research is one of the first to identify the sinister attribution error in a marketing context, building upon previous research that has suggested consumers often make irrational judgments concerning the actions of advertisers and marketers. Almost 20 years ago, Pollay (1986) suggested that marketers’ dishonest actions lead consumers to the assumption that no one should be trusted. Since then, there has been growing evidence that consumers are not always rational when it comes to determining whether they should trust
marketers (e.g. Koslow 2000) or are highly skeptical of marketplace information (Obermiller and Spangenberg 2000). These examples in combination with the current research provide a picture of overly suspicious consumers who are not always making rational decisions.

**Persuasion Knowledge Model**

In addition to evidence for the sinister attribution error, this research has also confirmed predictions made by the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright 1994). PKM argues that consumers use persuasion knowledge to determine why something occurred in the marketplace. While it is only a small section of the paper, the authors do highlight the links between their theory and attribution theory suggesting that the general principles of attribution theory offer insight into how consumers interpret persuasion attempts (Friestad and Wright 1994). The current research has demonstrated that consumers have definite ideas and persuasion knowledge about the use of flattery in a sales context, which led to a highly negative response. Arguably, consumers' persuasion knowledge is partially responsible for their conclusions regarding the use of flattery as a method of encouraging sales in retail settings.

In the future, it would be interesting to more explicitly explore the influence of consumer's prior expectations for the use of various influence tactics in a sales context. More specifically, consider the case wherein a consumer expects that he/she will be the target of a persuasion attempt (i.e. flattery) because they are aware that other consumers in the same situation have had similar experiences (perhaps they overheard another consumer receive flattery). Now, what if that consumer was not flattered, or was not the target of a persuasion attempt? Research on the "extra-credit" effect (Drachman et al., 1978) and on having communicators advocate an unexpected position (see Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Wood and
Eagly 1981) would predict that consumers should respond positively given that the salesclerk resisted the temptation to use flattery. However, the literature on consumer satisfaction and disconfirmed expectations may predict the opposite given that consumer dissatisfaction results from initial expectations not being met (e.g. Teas and Palan 2003). Consumers, who expect that they will be flattered and prepare themselves to resist the persuasion attempt, may be dissatisfied when it fails to materialize. In fact, they might be insulted that others were flattered and not themselves. These competing predictions for consumer responses to flattery or other influence attempts when consumers have specific expectations regarding the occurrence of persuasion attempts is another interesting avenue for future research.

In general, the current research demonstrated that flattery is a salient cue for consumers in sales situations and functions as a broad recognition heuristic for persuasion attempts in a sales context. This cue is powerful enough to induce suspicion even when no plausible persuasion motive exists (i.e. even when the flattery occurs after the purchase has been made) (Friestad and Wright 1996). Furthermore, there seem to be distinct differences between flattery in social situations as compared to retail situations that leads consumers to interpret flattery as signaling vastly different motives. In social situations, flattery is frequently used as a way of getting another person to like you or to create a favorable impression (Liden and Mitchell 1998), and this is a subtle goal that individuals may be less likely to notice. In contrast, sales situations have completely different goals that are highly salient to consumers, like trying to make a sale. This fundamental and salient difference between social and sales situations may partially account for the vastly different responses that individuals have to flattery across these contexts.
Future Research

For those managers of retail stores, the results of this research suggest that the use of flattery as an influence or persuasion tactic in a retail setting can backfire. The evidence across the first two studies illustrated primarily negative effects of flattery, and the third study further demonstrated that even flattery preceded by a negative evaluation was only slightly more positive than no flattery at all. It is evident that there is something about the sales context that suppresses the potentially positive effects of flattery, all consumers see are ulterior motives, even when such motives are implausible objectively speaking. Flattery is a potentially costly strategy to use in a retail setting, as it results in lower purchase satisfaction and more negative WOM intentions, suggesting that you may not only lose the customer who was flattered, but others as well.

In terms of future research, there a number of interesting questions left unanswered. As mentioned previously, one possible difference between the literatures showing positive versus negative effects of flattery may be the relational context in which flattery occurs. The majority of organizational behavior research on flattery demonstrating positive effects of flattery has examined it within the context of a prior and ongoing relationship (Orpen 1996; Strutton, Pelton and Tanner 1996). Most research that has demonstrated relatively negative effects of flattery has examined flattery between strangers with no prior relationship (e.g. Campbell and Kirmani 2000). This suggests that flattery occurring in the context of a prior relationship may be less likely to result in negative attributions as compared to flattery occurring outside of a relationship. Perhaps, there needs to be an established amount of trust between two parties in order for flattery to have a positive effect. In a marketing context, if there is a prior sales relationship between the salesclerk and the consumer, flattery may be
less likely to result in perceptions of ulterior motives than when flattery does not occur within a prior sales relationship. It would be of interest to determine how the existence of prior relationships and the expectations created within those relationships influence consumer perceptions of flattery.

Turning back to an attributional framework, there is a great deal of work that could be used to extend the findings of the current research and answer additional questions about consumer attributions for flattery. Quattrone (1982) suggested that perceptions of proximity influence the attributions that consumers make for an observed behavior and the greater the proximity between an effect and a plausible cause, the greater the chance the effect will be associated with the cause (Quattrone 1982). When considering additional ways to decrease the negative attributions associated with flattery in a consumer context, if flattery and the purchase decision are less proximal in time, consumers may be less likely to conclude that flattery is related to the purchase decision, and may in fact respond positively. For example, suppose flattery occurred soon after consumers entered the store (perhaps with regards to what they were wearing at the time) and not after trying on an item. Perhaps when flattery is separated in time from the mechanics of the purchase decision (i.e. trying on items, making the purchase), it is less likely to result in consumers attributing the flattery to situational sales pressure and more likely to result in a genuine perception of the flattery.

It is also likely that the magnitude of flattery influences consumer responses. In the current research, flattery was always kept consistent at two lines of flattery in combination with one statement about the product (i.e. That’s a great pair of sunglasses. They look really good on you. They suit you) which was similar to that of Campbell and Kirmani (2000). Given that Jones and Wortman (1973) suggest that the frequency of flattery could result in
negative perceptions of the flatterer, one wonders if changing flattery from two lines to one would result in a more positive consumer response, whereas going to three lines would be even more negative. With less flattery, it may become less salient to consumers and they may be less likely to fall prey to the sinister attribution error. Other related questions concern whether the flattering statements should be given together (as they were in the current research) or separated in time. In the second case, consumers would hear that the sunglasses looked good on them and then a few minutes later the sales clerk could mention how the glasses suited them. Perhaps when the flattering statements are separated in time, they are less likely to result in consumers processing that information negatively or making negative attributions for the behavior.

An additional question concerning the proximity of statements to each other is with respect to prefacing flattery with a negative evaluation as was used in the third study. In this study, consumers heard the negative evaluation which was immediately followed by flattery. However, if you separated these statements in time, perhaps we would see the positive effects of flattery as predicted by research on the disconfirmation of expectations (Wood and Eagly 1981) and Kelley's (1972; 1973) augmentation principle. This would serve to make the negative evaluation much more salient to consumers, thereby highlighting the fact that the clerk was arguing against their interests. Perhaps in this situation, consumers would be less likely to make negative attributions for the flattery that follows, and conclude that it was a genuine compliment.

Another interesting question is how consumers respond to flattery after a certain period of time has elapsed. That is, do consumers have a more positive reaction to flattery when they reflect back on the experience at a later point in time? Research in social
psychology on persuasion and the sleeper effect lends support to this possibility. The sleeper effect refers to the phenomenon in which there is a delayed impact of a message when we remember the message (the flattery) but forget the reason for discounting it (it was part of a persuasion attempt) (Jacoby, Kelley, Brown and Jasechko 1989). In fact, research has demonstrated that the impact of a noncredible person, or a salesclerk actively trying to make a sale, may actually increase over time as people come to remember the message better than the reason for not believing it in the first place (Pratkanis, Greenwald, Leippe and Baumgardner 1988). This suggests that if consumers come to recall the compliment they received while shopping and not the reason that they initially disregarded it, with time they may have a more positive response to the flattery.

The findings of the current research are also consistent with research on the motives that influence how individuals process information according to the Heuristic Systematic Model of Persuasion (Chaiken et al, 1989). Within this framework, there are also additional avenues for future research. Chaiken et al. (1989) maintain that there are multiple motives that influence how we process and respond to information. Two of these motives are relevant to the current research: accuracy and defense motives (Chen and Chaiken 1999). Accuracy motivation refers to an objective examination of information used in making judgments (Chen and Chaiken 1999). Defense motivated processing is a fairly close-minded form of processing and refers to an individuals' desire to hold attitudes or beliefs that are congruent with a positive self-concept (Chen and Chaiken 1999). Chaiken et al. (1989) suggests that defense motivated individuals use the same persuasion heuristics that accuracy motivated individuals do, however they use them more selectively.
Consumers who are flattered have to make a trade-off between accuracy and defense goals. Serving accuracy goals means that consumers search for alternative explanations or ulterior motives for flattery and weigh any evidence concerning plausible ulterior motives against the possibility that the flattery is genuine. One can see that consumers who are accuracy motivated respond in a more objective and rational manner, adequately considering plausible alternative explanations for the behavior that occurred. This is akin to responses from consumers who were flattered prior to purchase in the current research. In contrast, serving defense goals would result in consumers accepting the flattery as genuine or not accepting the flattery in order to avoid being fooled. In the latter case, defense goals might lead consumers to suspect a salesperson of manipulation even when this is not a reasonable ulterior motive objectively speaking, similar to the evidence for consumers who were flattered after purchase.

The current research does not have evidence of accuracy and defense motives operating in the sales situation, we can only infer the possible reactions that consumers who are processing information according to these motives would have. However, this is an interesting avenue for future research. In order to be able to determine the exact influence that these two motives have on consumer reactions to flattery, a different experimental paradigm would be required. If accuracy or defense motives were primed prior to flattery, we may be able to determine how accuracy and defense motives each influence consumer reactions to flattery. If we were able to illustrate that defense motivated consumers are more likely to attribute flattery to an ulterior motive even when that motive is implausible, this would suggest that defense motivations may be one of the underlying processes that results in the sinister attribution error. Consumers may make sinister attributions for salesclerk
behavior in an effort to protect themselves from the negative consequences of accepting flattery that was insincere. Being able to establish links between persuasion and attribution theory would make significant theoretical contributions in both literatures and would stimulate research.

These are only some of the issues that remain to be addressed in the literature on flattery and consumer behavior. The current research has attempted to investigate consumer responses to flattery through an attributional framework and suggested that flattery results in both rational and irrational suspicion. Future research will help to identify the other boundary conditions of this framework and may be able to suggest what other factors influence consumer reactions to flattery.
References


Appendix A Target Scenarios Flattery After Purchase Condition

Please spend a few minutes visualizing the following scenario. Read carefully through each sentence, then close your eyes and imagine that you are in this situation. Take your time and imagine the following situation:

Imagine that you’ve gone shopping to buy a jacket. You’ve looked at a few others stores, but haven’t found what you really want.

Picture yourself walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that you begin to look around the store. The selection of jackets in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. You spend some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, you narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. You walk over to one of the two three-way mirrors and try both jackets on. Imagine looking at your reflection in the mirror. After thinking a little while longer, you decide to get the second jacket that is of higher quality.

Imagine that you take the jacket to the cash register. As the salesclerk, rings up the sale, s/he says, “That’s a great jacket. I think it looks better on you than the other one did. It really suits you.” You pay for your purchase, picks up the package with your jacket in it and leave.

STOP HERE! Please do not continue any further until you have been given further instructions from the experimenter. When you are done reading and visualizing the scenario, please for the experimenter to come over to give you the instructions for the next of the experiment.
Target Flattery Before Purchase Condition

Please spend a few minutes visualizing the following scenario. Read carefully through each sentence, then close your eyes and imagine that you are in this situation. Take your time and imagine the following situation:

Imagine that you’ve gone shopping to buy a jacket. You’ve looked at a few others stores, but haven’t found what you really want.

Picture yourself walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that you begin to look around the store. The selection in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. You spend some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, you narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. You walk over to one of the two three-way mirrors and try both jackets on. Imagine looking at your reflection in the mirror. As you try on the second jacket, the salesclerk comes up to you and says, “That’s a great jacket. I think it looks better on you than the other one did. It really suits you.” After thinking a little while longer, you decide to get the second jacket that is of higher quality.

Imagine that you take the jacket to the cash register. The salesclerk rings up the sale. You pay for your purchase, picks up the package with your jacket in it and leave.

STOP HERE! Please do not continue any further until you have been given further instructions from the experimenter. When you are done reading and visualizing the scenario, please for the experimenter to come over to give you the instructions for the next of the experiment.
Target Control Condition

Please spend a few minutes visualizing the following scenario. Read carefully through each sentence, then close your eyes and imagine that you are in this situation. Take your time and imagine the following situation:

Imagine that you’ve gone shopping to buy a jacket. You’ve looked at a few others stores, but haven’t found what you really want.

Picture yourself walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that you begin to look around the store. The selection in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. You spend some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, you narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. You walk over to one of the two three-way mirrors and try both jackets on. Imagine looking at your reflection in the mirror. After thinking a little while longer, you decide to get the second jacket that is of higher quality.

Imagine that you take the jacket to the cash register. The salesclerk rings up the sale. You pay for your purchase, picks up the package with your jacket in it and leave.

STOP HERE! Please do not continue any further until you have been given further instructions from the experimenter. When you are done reading and visualizing the scenario, please for the experimenter to come over to give you the instructions for the next of the experiment.
Appendix B Observer Scenarios Flattery After Purchase

Please spend a few minutes visualizing the following scenario. Read carefully through each sentence, then close your eyes and imagine Jamie in this situation. Take your time and imagine the following situation:

Imagine that Jamie has gone shopping to buy a jacket. Jamie has looked at a few others stores, but hasn’t found what s/he really wants.

Picture Jamie walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that Jamie begins to look around the store. The selection of jackets in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. Jamie spends some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, Jamie seems to narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. Jamie walks over to one of the two three-way mirrors and tries both jackets on. Imagine Jamie looking at his/her reflection in the mirror. After thinking a little while longer, Jamie decides to get the second jacket that is of higher quality.

Imagine that Jamie takes the jacket to the cash register. As the salesclerk rings up the sale, s/he says, “That’s a great jacket. I think it looks better on you than the other one did. It really suits you.” Jamie pays for the purchase, picks up the package with the jacket in it and leaves.

STOP HERE! Please do not continue any further until you have been given further instructions from the experimenter. When you are done reading and visualizing the scenario, please for the experimenter to come over to give you the instructions for the next of the experiment.
Observer Flattery Before Purchase

Please spend a few minutes visualizing the following scenario. Read carefully through each sentence, then close your eyes and imagine Jamie in this situation. Take your time and imagine the following situation:

Imagine that Jamie has gone shopping to buy a jacket. Jamie has looked at a few others stores, but hasn’t found what s/he really wants.

Picture Jamie walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that Jamie begins to look around the store. The selection in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. Jamie spends some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, Jamie seems to narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. Jamie walks over to one of the two three-way mirrors and tries both jackets on. Imagine Jamie looking at her/his reflection in the mirror. As Jamie tries on the second jacket, the salesclerk comes up to Jamie and says, “That’s a great jacket. I think it looks better on you than the other one did. It really suits you.” After thinking a little while longer, Jamie decides to get the second jacket that is of higher quality.

Imagine that Jamie takes the jacket to the cash register. The salesclerk rings up the sale. Jamie pays for his/her purchase, picks up the package with the jacket in it and leaves.

STOP HERE! Please do not continue any further until you have been given further instructions from the experimenter. When you are done reading and visualizing the scenario, please for the experimenter to come over to give you the instructions for the next of the experiment.
Observer Control Condition

Please spend a few minutes visualizing the following scenario. Read carefully through each sentence, then close your eyes and imagine Jamie in this situation. Take your time and imagine the following situation:

Imagine that Jamie has gone shopping to buy a jacket. Jamie has looked at a few others stores, but hasn’t found what s/he really wants.

Picture Jamie walking into the store and heading to the selection of jackets that features a large variety of choices. Imagine that Jamie begins to look around the store. The selection in this store has a number of different styles and a number of colors. Jamie spends some time looking at the different racks of jackets and comparing the various styles and colors.

Imagine that after looking at a few jackets, Jamie seems to narrow it down to two choices. The first is a nice, fairly standard jacket. The second is a higher quality jacket and costs quite a bit more than the first. Jamie walks over to one of the two three-way mirrors and tries both jackets on. Imagine Jamie looking at her/his reflection in the mirror. After thinking a little while longer, Jamie decides to get the second jacket that is of higher quality.

Imagine that Jamie takes the jacket to the cash register. The salesclerk rings up the sale. Jamie pays for her/his purchase, picks up the package with the jacket in it and leaves.

STOP HERE! Please do not continue any further until you have been given further instructions from the experimenter. When you are done reading and visualizing the scenario, please for the experimenter to come over to give you the instructions for the next of the experiment.
Appendix C Study 1 Target Questionnaire

Please list any thoughts and feelings that you experienced while imaging the scenario. For example, you can list thoughts or feelings that you experienced about the store, the salesclerk or yourself. (Please list your thoughts and feelings on the lines below – for each separate thought and feeling use a new line)
Please answer the following questions that also relate to your shopping experience in the store.

1. How satisfied were you with the service that you received at the store?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
   Satisfied

2. Do you think that the store could improve the level of service that it is providing?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

3. Were you pleased with the level of service that you received in the store?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
   Pleased

4. How satisfied were you with the purchase that you made at the store?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
   Satisfied

5. Do you think that the store could improve your purchase experience?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

6. Were you pleased with the purchase that you made at the store?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
   Pleased

7. How satisfied were you with the salesclerk that you interacted with at the store?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
   Satisfied

8. Do you think that the salesclerk could improve the level of service that they provided?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

9. Were you pleased with the level of service that you received from the salesclerk?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
   Pleased
Please answer the following questions that also relate to your shopping experience in the store.

1. Would you recommend this store to others?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

2. Would you recommend this jacket to others?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

3. Would you recommend this salesclerk to others?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

4. Would you tell another person about this store?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

5. Would you tell another person about this jacket?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

6. Would you tell another person about this salesclerk?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

7. How likely are you to visit this store again in the future?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

8. How likely are you to ask for this salesclerk again in the future?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
Please answer the following questions that also relate to the jacket that you were looking at in the store.

1. Did you like the jacket?
   Not at all likable  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likable

2. Would you rate the jacket positively?
   Not at all Positive  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Positive

3. Do you find the jacket favorable?
   Not at all Favorable  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Favorable

4. Was the jacket nice?
   Not at all Nice  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Nice

5. How likely are you to wear the jacket?
   Not at all Likely  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely

6. Do you think the jacket will look good on you?
   Not at all Good  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Good

7. How much would you be willing to pay for the jacket?  ____________
Based on the scenario that you have just read, think a moment about the sales person that you encountered. Now, please rate the sales person on the following scales.

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<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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Please circle your answer to following statements with respect to the salesclerk’s actions.

1. The sales clerk told me how I looked in the jacket to influence my purchase.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
2. The sales clerk only complimented me in order to influence my purchase decision.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
3. The sales clerk emphasized my positive qualities to influence my decision.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
4. The sales clerk looked for an opportunity to compliment me to influence my decision.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
5. The sales clerk complimented me on how good I looked whether or not it was true.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
6. The sales clerk was being manipulative by giving me a compliment.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

1. The sales clerk complimented me on how good I looked because it was true.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
2. The sales clerk looked for an opportunity to compliment me because I looked good.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
3. The sales clerk told me how I looked in the jacket because I looked good.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
4. The sales clerk was being flattering in giving me a compliment.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
5. The sales clerk only complimented me in order to tell me the truth.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
6. The sales clerk emphasized my positive qualities to give me truthful information.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
General Questions

Please answer the following statements.

The salesclerk flattered me before I made my purchase decision. Yes No
The salesclerk flattered me after I made my purchase decision. Yes No
The salesclerk did not flatter me.

What did you imagine was the gender of the sales person? Male Female

1) To what extent were you able to imagine the events described in the shopping scenario?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very

2) Were you able to visualize all of the events in the shopping scenario?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

Gender Male Female
Age ______
What country were you born in? __________________________
If you were born outside of Canada or the US, how old were you when you moved to Canada? __________________________
What country were your parents born in? __________________________
What language do you commonly speak at home with your family? __________________________
What do you think the researchers are interested in for this study?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your participation in this research! Please do not discuss this research with anyone else. Thank you.
Appendix D – Study 1 Observer Questionnaire

Please list any thoughts and feelings that Jamie may have experienced while you were imaging the scenario. For example, you can list thoughts or feelings that Jamie may have experienced about the store, the salesclerk or her/himself. (Please list the thoughts and feelings on the lines below – for each separate thought and feeling use a new line)

__________________________________________________________________________________

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__________________________________________________________________________________
Please answer the following questions that also relate to Jamie’s shopping experience in the store.

1. How satisfied was Jamie with the service that s/he received at the store?
   - Not at all
   - Satisfied
     
     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Very Satisfied |

4. Does Jamie think that the store could improve the level of service that it is providing?
   - Not at all
   - Very Much

5. Was Jamie pleased with the level of service that was received in the store?
   - Not at all
   - Very Pleased

4. How satisfied was Jamie with the purchase that was made at the store?
   - Not at all
   - Very Satisfied

5. Does Jamie think that the store could improve the purchase experience?
   - Not at all
   - Very Much

6. Was Jamie pleased with the purchase that was made at the store?
   - Not at all
   - Very Pleased

7. How satisfied was Jamie with the salesclerk that s/he interacted with at the store?
   - Not at all
   - Very Satisfied

8. Does Jamie think that the salesclerk could improve the level of service that was provided?
   - Not at all
   - Very Much

9. Was Jamie pleased with the level of service that was received from the salesclerk?
   - Not at all
   - Very Pleased
Please answer the following questions that also relate to Jamie’s shopping experience in the store.

1. Would Jamie recommend this store to others?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend
   
2. Would Jamie recommend this jacket to others?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend
   
3. Would Jamie recommend this salesclerk to others?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend
   
4. Would Jamie tell another person about this store?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
   
5. Would Jamie tell another person about this jacket?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
   
6. Would Jamie tell another person about this salesclerk?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
   
7. How likely is Jamie to visit this store again in the future?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
   
8. How likely is Jamie to ask for this salesclerk again in the future?
   
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
Please answer the following questions that also relate to the jacket that Jamie was looking at in the store.

1. Did Jamie like the jacket?
   Not at all likable  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likable

2. Would Jamie rate the jacket positively?
   Not at all Positive  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Positive

3. Did Jamie find the jacket favorable?
   Not at all Favorable  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Favorable

4. Did Jamie find the jacket nice?
   Not at all Nice  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Nice

5. How likely is Jamie to wear the jacket?
   Not at all Likely  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely

6. Does Jamie think the jacket will look good on her/him?
   Not at all Good  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Good

7. How much would Jamie be willing to pay for the jacket?
Based on the scenario that you have just read, think a moment about the sales person that Jamie encountered. Now, please rate the sales person on the following scales.

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<th>Quality</th>
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<td>Not Suspicious</td>
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<td>Not Manipulative</td>
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Competent
Pushy
Genuine
Warm
Likable
Fake
Phony
Sincere
Charming
Sociable
Trustworthy
Honest
Friendly
Appropriate
Outgoing
Suspicious
Manipulative
Please circle your answer to following statements with respect to the salesclerk's actions.

1. The sales clerk told Jamie how s/he looked in the jacket to influence the purchase.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

2. The sales clerk only complimented Jamie in order to influence the purchase decision.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

3. The sales clerk emphasized Jamie's positive qualities to influence the decision.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

4. The sales clerk looked for an opportunity to compliment Jamie to influence the decision.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

5. The sales clerk complimented Jamie on how good s/he looked whether or not it was true.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

6. The sales clerk was being manipulative by giving Jamie a compliment.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

1. The sales clerk complimented Jamie on how good s/he looked because it was true.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

2. The sales clerk looked for an opportunity to compliment Jamie because s/he looked good.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

3. The sales clerk told Jamie how s/he looked in the jacket because s/he looked good.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

4. The sales clerk was being flattering in giving Jamie a compliment.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

5. The sales clerk only complimented Jamie in order to tell the truth.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

6. The sales clerk emphasized Jamie's positive qualities to give truthful information.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
General Questions

Please answer the following statements.

The salesclerk flattered Jamie before he/she made the purchase decision. Yes No
The salesclerk flattered Jamie after he/she made the purchase decision. Yes No
The salesclerk did not flatter Jamie.

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

What did you imagine was the gender of the sales person? Male Female

1) To what extent were you able to imagine the events described in the shopping scenario?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very

3) Were you able to visualize all of the events in the shopping scenario?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

Gender Male Female

Age ______

What country were you born in? ____________________________

If you were born outside of Canada or the US, how old were you when you moved to Canada? ____________________________

What country were your parents born in? ____________________________

What language do you commonly speak at home with your family? ____________________________

What do you think the researchers are interested in for this study? ____________________________

Thank you for your participation in this research! Please do not discuss this research with anyone else. Thank you.
Appendix E Experimenter Script – Target Condition

1) Have student sign in for credit and the consent form.

2) Give instructions.

The experiment today is interested in consumer experiences while shopping in different types of stores on campus. As I am sure you know, there are a number of different stores on campus, fast food stores like Subway and Pizza Pizza, the Campus bookstore, The Outpost, as well as all those display tables and vendor booths that are set up at the SUB. We are interested in whether there are any differences in how people experience shopping in these different stores. Today we are going to have you go shopping in one of those stores on campus. We would like you to make a purchase in one of these stores to make it more like a real shopping experience.

We will have you pick a slip from this envelope and the slip will identify the store you are to go shopping at, as well as the product that we would like you to purchase. Some of the stores that you could be sent to are the Outpost or Benny's Bagels. Please do not tell the clerk that you are part of the study. We will give you money to use when making your purchase. After you have gone shopping, you will come back to this room and complete a questionnaire about your shopping experience. In total, the experiment should take about 45 minutes or so. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, we cannot let you keep the product that you are going to purchase. But we would still like to you to pick the product that you like the best within the product category that you have chosen.

3) Have student pick slip identifying store and product. Look at the slip.

Ok, you are to go shopping at a vendor booth in the SUB called “Shades” and buy a pair of sunglasses. I think that it's near the Outpost. Take your time while you are shopping, have a look at the different styles of sunglasses that are on the table. My understanding is that there are 2 different kinds of sunglasses at the booth, low priced sunglasses and higher priced sunglasses, or so I have been told. We would like you to try on at least one pair from each price category. Then choose the pair that you like the best for $10 or $20 (use the price that they have chosen), pay for the glasses and come back here to complete the questionnaire. Please don’t stop anywhere else on your way to and from the SUB. Also try not to talk to anyone besides the sales clerk at the booth. This helps us ensure that the store and product are the only differences in the shopping experience between students. Any questions?

4) Hand them the money, $10 for the low condition and $20 for the high condition. Tell them not to use their own money. Send them out.

5) Upon their return, ask to see the sunglasses that they purchased, leave them out on the table while completing the questionnaire. Then hand them the experimental questionnaire and ask them to complete it. When they are finished, take the consent form, questionnaire and glasses. Make sure the consent form and questionnaire stay together. They should wait and I will come as soon as I am finished with the other student.

6) Debriefing

Thanks a lot for your time today. I really appreciate it. I would like to ask that you do not discuss the study with anyone else, as that would change their behavior. Do you have any questions? Thanks again.
Appendix F Sales Confederate Script – Target Condition

It is important to stay as close to the script as possible while still keeping things realistic. Keep notes on anything that happens during the interaction with the participant that varies from the script. If there are other people at the table while the participant is there, make a note of that as well.

You will be called and the participant described so you know who they are. Participant approaches the table, Smile and say “Hi, Can I help you?”

Regardless of their answer, say “OK. Just to let you know, the glasses on this side of the table “(point to the $10 side) are all $10 a pair, and those on this side of the table are $20 a pair (point to the $10 side)”. Let them look at the sunglasses that are displayed and watch them unobtrusively, their behavior will cue some of your lines.

After participants have tried on at least one pair from each price category, the following will be said to the participant depending on the condition that they have been assigned to:

**Condition 1 BEFORE PURCHASE**– When you sense that the participant is getting ready to decide on the glasses to buy, after they have tried on one pair from the low price side and one from the high price side, point to the HIGH price sunglasses that they tried on and say “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think they look great on you. They really suit you.” **THIS HAS TO HAPPEN BEFORE THEY MAKE THEIR PURCHASE.**

**Condition 2 BEFORE PURCHASE**– When you sense that the participant is getting ready to decide on the glasses to buy, after they have tried on one pair from the low price side and one from the high price side, point to the LOW price sunglasses that they tried on and say “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think they look great on you. They really suit you.” **THIS HAS TO HAPPEN BEFORE THEY MAKE THEIR PURCHASE.**

**Condition 3 AFTER PURCHASE**– After they hand you their money to buy the pair of sunglasses that they have chosen, say “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think they look great on you. They really suit you.”

**Condition 4 AFTER PURCHASE**– After they hand you their money to buy the pair of sunglasses that they have chosen, say “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think they look great on you. They really suit you.”

**Condition 5** – After they hand you their money to buy a pair of sunglasses, say “Thanks”.

**Condition 6** – After they hand you their money to buy a pair of sunglasses, say “Thanks”.

After the sunglasses are paid for, put them in a bag and hand the bag to the participants and say “Thanks again”.

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Appendix G Study 2 Target Questionnaire

Please list any thoughts and feelings that you experienced while shopping. For example, you can list thoughts or feelings that you experienced about the retail location, the salesclerk or yourself. (Please list your thoughts and feelings on the lines below – for each separate thought and feeling use a new line)
1. How satisfied were you with the purchase that you made at the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
   Satisfied

2. Were you happy with the purchase that you made in the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Happy
   Happy

3. Were you pleased with the purchase that you made at the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
   Pleased

4. How satisfied were you with the salesclerk that you interacted with at the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
   Satisfied

5. Were you happy with the performance of the salesclerk in the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Happy
   Happy

6. Were you pleased with the service that you received from the salesclerk?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
   Pleased

7. How dissatisfied were you with the purchase that you made at the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dissatisfied
   Dissatisfied

8. Were you unhappy with the purchase that you made in the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Unhappy
   Unhappy

9. Were you displeased with the purchase that you made at the retail location?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Displeased
   Displeased

10. How dissatisfied were you with the salesclerk that you interacted with at the retail location?
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dissatisfied
    Dissatisfied

11. Were you unhappy with the performance of the salesclerk in the retail location?
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Unhappy
    Unhappy

12. Were you displeased with the service that you received from the salesclerk?
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Displeased
    Displeased
Please answer the following questions that relate to your shopping experience in the
retail location.

1. Would you recommend this retail location to others?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely to
   Likely to Recommend

2. Would you recommend the sunglasses you chose to others?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely to
   Likely to Recommend

3. Would you recommend this salesclerk to others?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely to
   Likely to Recommend

4. Indicate the extent to which you would say negative things about the retail location.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Negative

5. Indicate the extent to which you would say negative things about the sunglasses.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Negative

6. Indicate the extent to which you would say negative things about the sales clerk.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Negative

7. How likely are you to visit this retail location again in the future?

   Very  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely
   Unlikely

8. How likely are you to try to get this salesclerk again in the future?

   Very  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Likely
   Unlikely
Please answer the following questions that relate to the sunglasses that you purchased at the retail location.

1. Did you like the sunglasses on you?
   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7   Very Much

   Would you rate the sunglasses positively?
   Not at all Positive  1  2  3  4  5  6  7   Very Positive

2. Are the sunglasses nice on you?
   Not at all Nice  1  2  3  4  5  6  7   Very Nice

3. Do you think the sunglasses look good on you?
   Not at all Good  1  2  3  4  5  6  7   Very Good

4. How much would you be willing to pay for the sunglasses?

   136
Based on your shopping experience, think a moment about the salesclerk that you encountered. Now, please rate the salesclerk on the following scales.

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</table>
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as you feel at this moment by circling an appropriate number (1 – 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Right now, I am satisfied with myself</td>
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<td>2) At the moment I think that I am no good at all</td>
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<td>3) I certainly feel useless at the moment</td>
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<td>4) Right now, I feel that I have a number of good qualities</td>
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<td>5) At the moment, I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others</td>
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<td>6) Right now, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure</td>
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<td>7) I am able to do things as well as most people</td>
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<td>8) I feel I do not have much to be proud of</td>
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<td>9) I wish I could have more respect for myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>10) I take a positive attitude toward myself</td>
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This questionnaire is designed to measure what you are thinking at this moment. Answer these questions as they are true for you RIGHT NOW.

1. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.

   Not at all  a little bit  somewhat  very much  extremely

2. I am dissatisfied with my weight.

   Not at all  a little bit  somewhat  very much  extremely

3. I feel self-conscious.

   Not at all  a little bit  somewhat  very much  extremely

4. I am pleased with my appearance right now.

   Not at all  a little bit  somewhat  very much  extremely

5. I feel unattractive.

   Not at all  a little bit  somewhat  very much  extremely
1. If the retail outlet you visited decided to add a commission to the salary of the sales clerks you encountered, what percentage would you recommend?

2. To what extent did the sales clerk make you feel obligated to purchase something?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

3. To what extent did the sales clerk make you feel that you should purchase something?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

Please circle your answer to following statements with respect to the salesclerk’s actions.

1. Did you feel that the sales clerk tried to influence your purchase decision?  Yes  No
   If so, what did you think of that? Why?

2. Did you feel that the sales clerk complimented you?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

3. The sales clerk told me I looked nice in the sunglasses to influence my purchase.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

4. The sales clerk complimented me because I looked good in the sunglasses.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

5. The sales clerk only complimented me in order to influence my purchase decision.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

6. The sales clerk’s compliment was genuine.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

7. The sales clerk would have complimented me on how good I looked whether or not it was true.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

8. The sales clerk really thought I looked good in the sunglasses.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much
General Questions

Please answer the following statements. Circle the answer that is correct.

Did the sales clerk flatter you or give you a compliment while you were shopping?

Yes  No

If yes, when did the flattery occur? ________ Before you made your purchase

________ After you made your purchase

What was the price of the sunglasses that you purchased? $10  $20

How would you rate the sunglasses that you purchased?

Negatively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Positively

Gender  Male  Female

Age  ________

What country were you born in? __________________________

If you were born outside of Canada or the US, at what age did you move to Canada? ______

________

What country were your parents born in? __________________________

What language do you commonly speak at home with your family?______________________

What faculty are you in? __________________________

How seriously did you take this study?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

What have you heard about the study?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What do you think the researchers are interested in for this study?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Please do not discuss this research with anyone else. Thank you for your participation!
Appendix H- Study 2 Observer Questionnaire

Please list any thoughts and feelings that you may have experienced while you were watching the video. For example, you can list thoughts or feelings that you may have experienced about the retail location, the salesclerk or her/himself. (Please list the thoughts and feelings on the lines below – for each separate thought and feeling use a new line).
Please answer these questions that relate to the consumer’s shopping experience.

1. How **satisfied** was the consumer with the **purchase** that was made at the retail location?
   Not at all Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
2. Was the consumer **happy** with the **purchase** that s/he made at the retail location?
   Not at all Happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Happy
3. Was the consumer **pleased** with the **purchase** that was made at the retail location?
   Not at all Pleased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
4. How **satisfied** was the consumer with the **salesclerk** that s/he interacted with at the retail location?
   Not at all Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied
5. Was the consumer **happy** with the performance of the **salesclerk** that s/he had at the retail location?
   Not at all Happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Happy
6. Was the consumer **pleased** with the service that was received from the **salesclerk**?
   Not at all Pleased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Pleased
7. How **dissatisfied** was the consumer with the **purchase** that was made at the retail location?
   Not at all Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dissatisfied
8. Was the consumer **unhappy** with the **purchase** that was made at the retail location?
   Not at all Unhappy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Unhappy
9. Was the consumer **displeased** with the **purchase** that was made at the retail location?
   Not at all Displeased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Displeased
10. How **dissatisfied** was the consumer with the **salesclerk** that s/he interacted with at the retail location?
    Not at all Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Dissatisfied
11. Was the consumer **unhappy** with the performance of the **salesclerk** in the retail location?
    Not at all Happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Happy
12. Was the consumer **displeased** with the service that was received from the **salesclerk**?
    Not at all Displeased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Displeased
Please answer the following questions that relate to the consumer's shopping experience in the retail location.

1. Would the consumer recommend this retail location to others?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

2. Would the consumer recommend the sunglasses that the consumer chose to others?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

3. Would the consumer recommend this salesclerk to others?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

4. Indicate the extent to which the consumer would say negative things about the retail location.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Negative

5. Indicate the extent to which the consumer would say negative things about the sunglasses.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Negative

6. Indicate the extent to which the consumer would say negative things about the salesclerk.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Negative

7. How likely is the consumer to visit this retail location again in the future?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

8. How likely is the consumer to try to get this salesclerk again in the future?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely
Please answer the following questions that relate to the sunglasses that the consumer was looking at in the retail location.

1. Did the consumer like the sunglasses on them?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

2. Would the consumer rate the sunglasses positively?
   Not at all Positive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Positive

3. Did the consumer find the sunglasses nice on them?
   Not at all Nice 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Nice

4. Does the consumer think the sunglasses will look good on her/him?
   Not at all Good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Good

5. How much would the consumer be willing to pay for the sunglasses? 144
Based on the shopping experience that you have just watched, think a moment about the salesclerk that the consumer encountered. Now, please rate the salesclerk on the following scales.

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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Friendly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Outgoing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Suspicious</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suspicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Manipulative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Manipulative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as you feel at this moment by circling an appropriate number (1 – 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) Right now, I am satisfied with myself
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
12) At the moment I think that I am no good at all
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
13) I certainly feel useless at the moment
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
14) Right now, I feel that I have a number of good qualities
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
15) At the moment, I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
16) Right now, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
17) I am able to do things as well as most people
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
18) I feel I do not have much to be proud of
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
19) I wish I could have more respect for myself
   (1) (2) (3) (4)
20) I take a positive attitude toward myself
   (1) (2) (3) (4)

This questionnaire is designed to measure what you are thinking at this moment. Answer these questions as they are true for you RIGHT NOW.

1. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not at all a little bit somewhat very much extremely

2. I am dissatisfied with my weight.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not at all a little bit somewhat very much extremely

3. I feel self-conscious.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not at all a little bit somewhat very much extremely

4. I am pleased with my appearance right now.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not at all a little bit somewhat very much extremely

5. I feel unattractive.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not at all a little bit somewhat very much extremely

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1. If the retail outlet the consumer visited decided to add a commission to the salary of the sales clerks s/he encountered, what percentage would the consumer likely recommend?

2. To what extent did the salesclerk make the consumer feel obligated to purchase something?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

3. To what extent did the salesclerk make the consumer feel that he/she should purchase something?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

Please circle your answer to following statements with respect to the salesclerk’s actions.

1. Did you feel that the sales clerk tried to influence your purchase decision?  Yes  No
   If so, what did you think of that? Why?

2. Did you feel that the sales clerk complimented the consumer?

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

3. The sales clerk told the consumer s/he looked nice in the sunglasses to influence the purchase.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

4. The sales clerk complimented the consumer because s/he looked good in the sunglasses.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

5. The sales clerk only complimented the consumer in order to influence the purchase decision.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

6. The sales clerk’s compliment was genuine.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

7. The sales clerk would have complimented the consumer on how good s/he looked whether or not it was true.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

8. The sales clerk really thought the consumer looked good in the sunglasses.

   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much
General Questions

Please answer the following statements. Circle the answer that is correct.
Did the sales clerk flatter you or give the consumer a compliment while he/she was shopping?

Yes  No

If yes, when did the flattery occur?  ______ Before the purchase was made  ______ After the purchase was made

What was the price of the sunglasses that were purchased?  $10  $20

How would you rate the sunglasses that were purchased?

Negatively  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Positively

The following questions are about you.
Gender  Male  Female

Age  ______

What country were you born in?  ____________________________

If you were born outside of Canada or the US, at what age did you move to Canada?  ______

What country were your parents born in?  ____________________________

What language do you commonly speak at home with your family?  ____________________________

How seriously did you take this study?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Very Much

Did you know any of the actors in the video?  Yes  No

What have you heard about the study?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What do you think the researchers are interested in for this study?

__________________________________________________________________________

Please do not discuss this research with anyone else. Thank you for your participation!
Appendix I Study 3 - Experimenter Script

1) Have student sign in for credit and the consent form.

2) Give instructions.

The experiment today is interested in consumer experiences in different retail atmospheres. The president of CUS has asked for us to conduct some marketing research on consumer reactions to the commerce student’s lounge and possible additional retail services in the space. Since there was extra space in the research participation program, we agreed to do some research for them. In that space, there are the vending machines, different tables that can be set up to sell merchandise and the snack bar. We are going to have you go shopping in the lounge and make a purchase in order to make it more like a real shopping experience. We will give you money to use when making your purchase.

We will have you pick a slip from this envelope and the slip will identify the product that we would like you to purchase. Please do not tell the clerk that you are part of the study. It is important that they are not aware that you are part of a marketing research study as we do not want them to act any differently then they would normally. After you have gone shopping, you will come back to this room and complete a questionnaire about your shopping experience. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, we cannot let you keep the product that you are going to purchase. But we would still like you to pick the product that you like the best within the product category that you have chosen and we will take a picture of you with the product to have a record of all the purchases.

3) Have student pick slip identifying store and product. Look at the slip.

Ok, you are to go shopping at the table set up in the lounge selling Commerce Wear and other items. The table is located at the back of the student’s lounge near the pool table and arcade. You are to buy a pair of sunglasses. Take your time while you are shopping, have a look at the different styles of sunglasses that are on the table and try on the pair that you like best first. We would like to ask that you try three pairs of sunglasses on in total. The reason that we have you try on 3 pairs is to control the amount of time people spend shopping. We don’t want some consumers to be up there for 15 minutes trying on 20 pairs. Once you have tried on 3 pairs, choose the pair that you like the best, pay for the glasses and come back here to complete the questionnaire. Please don’t stop and talk to others while you are shopping, we would like to keep everyone’s experiences the same, so just go shopping and come back right away. This helps us ensure that the location and product are the only differences in the shopping experience between students. Any questions?

6) Hand them the money and send them out.
7) Upon their return, ask to see the sunglasses that they purchased, leave them out on the table while completing the questionnaire. After they have completed the questionnaire, say “We have had some students ask if they can keep the product that they went to purchase, and we have decided to give everyone the option of purchasing from us the product they chose while they were shopping. Were you interested in purchasing these sunglasses?”
8) Debriefing: Thanks a lot for your time today. I really appreciate it. I would like to ask that you do not discuss the study with anyone else, as that would change their behavior. Do you have any questions? Thanks again.
Appendix J Study 3 Sales Confederate Script

It is important to stay as close to the script as possible while still keeping things realistic. Keep notes on anything that happens during the interaction with the participant that varies from the script. If there are other people at the table while the participant is there, make a note of that as well. Use your best judgment in responding to the consumers.

You will be called and the participant described so you know who they are.

Participant approaches the table, Smile and say “Hi, Can I help you?”

Let them look at the sunglasses that are displayed and watch them as they try on the glasses so you seem interested.

**Condition 1 WHILE THEY ARE TRYING ON THE THIRD PAIR** say “That first pair you tried on was a great pair of sunglasses. I thought they looked good on you. They really suited you.”

**Condition 2 WHILE THEY ARE TRYING ON THE THIRD PAIR** – Say nicely “I’m not sure this pair suits you. I thought the first pair you tried on was a great pair of sunglasses. I thought they looked good on you. They really suited you.”

**Condition 3 – After they hand you their money to buy a pair of sunglasses, say “Thanks”.

For everyone, after the sunglasses are paid for, put them in a bag and hand the bag to the participants and say “Thanks again”.

Record what condition participants were in, if anything unusual happened and get ready for the next person.
Appendix K Study 3 Experimental Questionnaire

Please list any thoughts and feelings that you experienced while shopping. For example, you can list thoughts or feelings that you experienced about the retail location, the salesclerk or yourself. (Please list your thoughts and feelings on the lines below – for each separate thought and feeling use a new line)
Part A  These questions relate to your purchase experience.

1. How satisfied were you with your purchase experience at the retail location?
   Dissatisfied  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Satisfied

2. Were you happy with your purchase experience at the retail location?
   Unhappy  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Happy

3. Were you pleased with your purchase experience at the retail location?
   Displeased  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Pleased

4. Were you delighted with your purchase experience at the retail location?
   Disappointed  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Delighted

Part B  These questions relate to the salesclerk.

1. How satisfied were you with the salesclerk that you interacted with at the retail location?
   Dissatisfied  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Satisfied

2. Were you happy with the performance of the salesclerk in the retail location?
   Unhappy  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Happy

3. Were you pleased with the service that you received from the salesclerk?
   Displeased  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Pleased

4. Were you delighted with the salesclerk that you interacted with at the retail location?
   Disappointed  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Delighted

Part C  These questions relate to the product you purchased.

1. How satisfied were you with the product that you purchased at the retail location?
   Dissatisfied  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Satisfied

2. Were you happy with the product you purchased at the retail location?
   Unhappy  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Happy

3. Were you pleased with the product that you purchased at the retail location?
   Displeased  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Pleased

4. Were you delighted with the product that you purchased at the retail location?
   Disappointed  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Delighted
Please rate the product you purchased on the following scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Favorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part D Please answer the following questions:

1. Would you recommend this retail location to others?
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

2. Would you recommend the product you chose to others?
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

3. Would you recommend this salesclerk to others?
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely to Recommend

4. Indicate the extent to which you would say negative things about the retail location.
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Negative

5. Indicate the extent to which you would say negative things about the product.
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Negative

6. Indicate the extent to which you would say negative things about the salesclerk.
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Negative

7. How likely would you be to make another purchase at the retail store?
   - Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

8. How likely would you be to purchase this product yourself?
   - Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

9. How interested would you be in keeping this product now?
   - Not Interested 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Interested

10. How likely are you to visit this retail location again in the future?
    - Very Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Likely

11. If you had the chance, would you be interested in shopping at this location again?
    - Not Interested 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Interested
Based on your shopping experience, think a moment about the salesclerk that you encountered. Now, please rate the salesclerk on the following scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dishonest</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Trustworthy</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Genuine</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insincere</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Sincere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unkind</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncaring</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhelpful</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Giving</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Generous</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Generous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Thoughtful</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsiderate</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Likable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Likable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sociable</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Sociable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Charming</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Friendly</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Outgoing</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccurate</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Credible</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Credible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Rude</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Rude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Fake</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Fake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Phony</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Phony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Suspicious</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Suspicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Manipulative</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Pushy</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Pushy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. What did the salesclerk say to you, if anything, while you were shopping?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

2. Did you feel that the sales clerk tried to influence your purchase decision? Yes
   No

   How?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

   If so, what did you think of that? Why?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as you feel at this moment by circling an appropriate number (1 – 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21) Right now, I am satisfied with myself</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22) At the moment I think that I am no good at all</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23) I certainly feel useless at the moment</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24) Right now, I feel that I have a number of good qualities</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25) At the moment, I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26) Right now, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27) I am able to do things as well as most people</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28) I feel I do not have much to be proud of</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) I wish I could have more respect for myself</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30) I take a positive attitude toward myself</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These questions are about the salesclerk you encountered.

1. If the retail location you visited decided to add a commission to the salary of the sales clerks you encountered, what percentage would you recommend? ______________

2. To what extent did the sales clerk make you feel obligated to purchase something?
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

3. To what extent did the sales clerk make you feel that you should purchase something?
   - Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much

4. How do you think the salesperson viewed your purchase?
   - Negatively 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Positively

5. To what extent do you think it is the salesclerk’s job to:

   a) get you to buy something? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   b) please the customer? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   c) say good things? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   d) be polite? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   e) flatter the customer? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   f) provide good service? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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Please answer the following questions about the retail location you were shopping at.

1. What did you think of the prices for the merchandise?
   Low   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   High

2. What did you think of the selection of products that were available?
   Poor Selection   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Good Selection

3. What did you think of the cleanliness of the retail location?
   Not Clean   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Clean

4. What did you think of the hours of operation of the retail location?
   Not Open Enough   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Open Enough

5. How often do you shop in the CUS lounge?
   Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Often

6. How often do you spend time in the CUS lounge?
   Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Often

7. Do you consider yourself a loyal customer of the CUS Common Cents?
   Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Much

8. Do you think the CUS could improve their customer service?
   Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Much

9. Do you think the CUS should sell the Sauder clothing line in the lounge?
   Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Much

10. Do you think the Sauder clothing line should be expanded?
    Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Much

11. Do you think the CUS should have sales more often?
    Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Much
General Questions

Please answer the following statements. Circle the answer that is correct.

1. Did the sales clerk flatter you or give you a compliment while you were shopping?  
   Yes  No
If yes, please answer the following three questions. If no, go to question 2.
   a) How credible was the flattery you received?
      Not at all Credible 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Credible
   b) How genuine was the flattery you received?
      Not at all Genuine 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Genuine
   c) How sincere was the flattery you received?
      Not at all Sincere 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Sincere

2. Did the clerk give you any positive information during your purchase?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
   If yes, what was that information?

3. Did the clerk give you any negative information during your purchase?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
   If yes, what was that information?

Gender  Male  Female
Age
What country were you born in?
If you were born outside of Canada or the US, at what age did you move to Canada?
What language do you commonly speak at home with your family?
What faculty are you in?
How seriously did you take this study?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Much
What have you heard about the study?

What do you think the researchers are interested in for this study?

Thank you for your participation!