Forming an Impression of a Flatterer:

Targets and Observers Becoming Suspicious of Ulterior Motives

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Forming an impression of a flatterer:

Targets and observers becoming suspicious of ulterior motives

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Contents

Chapter 1

General Introduction

We form impressions of other people on a daily basis. For example, when we know that a man goes out on a date with a beautiful woman and gives her flowers, we think the man is considerate. When we hear that a person offers to carry some books down the hall, we think the person is helpful. When we see that a woman gives away vegetables from her own garden to her neighbor, we think she is generous. Perceivers readily attribute behavior to personality traits without much thought (Gilbert & Malone, 1995).

People are concerned with why a person behaves in a certain way. When forming an impression of other people, a fundamental distinction between dispositional and situational causes can be made (Heider, 1944, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & Harris, 1967; Kelley, 1967, 1973). This means that not only a dispositional, personal explanation can be inferred from behavior, but that also a situational explanation may be inferred: For example, the man gives flowers on a date, because the flowers are very cheap. The person who offers to carry books knows that the books are very light. And the woman gives away vegetables because it is too much to eat it all by herself.

Although both dispositional and situational inferences can be made effortlessly, in general, perceivers underestimate the situational influence on behavior. When we observe a behavior, we are generally inclined to ascribe it to someone's personality and not to the situation (Jones & Harris, 1967). This tendency for perceivers to conclude that a person has a disposition that corresponds to his or her behavior even when the behavior is attributable to the situation is called the correspondence bias (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones, 1990) and is a very robust and pervasive finding (see also the fundamental attribution error: Ross, 1977). As a result of the correspondence bias, perceivers thoughtlessly assume that actors' behaviors and statements mirror their dispositions. This is true, even when the observed behavior is highly constrained by situational factors (Gilbert & Jones, 1986; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). For instance, in the classic Fidel Castro experiment (cf., Jones & Harris, 1967), for some participants the position taken in an essay the author wrote was freely

chosen (to be in favor of, or against Fidel Castro's regime) whereas for other participants the experimenter assigned the position to the author. Perceivers, who read the essay advocating a position in favor of Fidel Castro's regime, inferred that the author of the essay endorses this position, regardless of whether the author freely chose to write the essay or had no choice. Both under conditions of free-choice and constraint, perceivers showed a tendency to infer a positive attitude towards Fidel Castro's regime, even when it is explained that the constrained author had no choice which essay to write because he or she was assigned the position. In fact, it is highly possible that the author in the assigned, constrained condition strongly opposes Fidel Castro, but thinks that a good writer is able to create a convincing essay, even if the position is not what he or she personally endorses. Not only in experiments, but also in real life the correspondence bias can be found: In a study from Schoeneman and Rubanowitz (1985) an analysis of "Dear Abby" letters appearing in newspaper advise columns revealed that people seeking advice explained the behavior of others in dispositional terms.

The general view in the trait inference field is that behavior tends to be taken at face value. However, there is some evidence that suggests that perceivers refrain from making dispositional attributions when they learn information that provides them with reason to suspect the motives of an actor (Jones, Davis & Gergen, 1961; Reeder & Brewer, 1979). The possibility of ulterior motives may work as an antidote to the correspondence bias (Fein, 1996; Fein, Hilton, & Miller, 1990; Hilton, Fein, & Miller, 1993) because perceivers are more inclined to apply a situational cause for the behavior (Gawronski, 2004). When someone is aware that there may be an ulterior motive or hidden agenda, the perceiver is ambiguous about the true motives and therefore withholds his or her trait attribution (Fein, 1996). In the examples mentioned earlier, ulterior motives can be present when the man goes out on a date with the boss' daughter and gives her flowers, when the person offers to carry books down the hall for the professor who grades the exam, and when the woman gives away vegetables and subsequently asks her neighbor to watch her kids after school.[1]

The Present Thesis

In society, there is a common assumption that people should be honest. Already as children we are taught about the importance of honesty: We tell the truth because it is the right thing to do. Being honest can thus be seen as the societal default

position: People assume that, when others tell them something, they tell the truth. Indeed, deception is highly disapproved of and flattery for ulterior motives (as a form of lying) is considered socially undesirable. However, being flattered can also be very rewarding, because it makes one feel good, even if the flattery is for ulterior motives. Thus there is a discrepancy between feeling good by accepting the flattery at face value, and wanting to avoid being fooled. This discrepancy is also important in information search. On the one hand, people who are flattered uncritically accept what others are saying, because it feels good and they do not want to know it if the flattery is not meant. So, they do not search for information indicating the flatterer is dishonest. On the other hand, people want to know whether the flattery is not sincere, because they want to avoid being duped.

In the current thesis we investigate the impression people form of someone with an ulterior motive. What sort of information do they request about the other person and how does this information subsequently alter their impression? As yet, it has never been investigated what kind of information perceivers request when they are aware of the possibility of ulterior motives. The question is whether ulterior motives are detected at all and whether targets (the person whom the flattery is aimed at) and observers (perceivers of flattery) differ in implementing the information regarding ulterior motives. First, we investigate what perceivers want to know about the other person (Chapters 1, 2, and 3), then, they receive the requested information and we look at impression formation (Chapters 2, 3, and 4). We conduct research among targets and observers to take into account the tension between being flattered and knowing the truth (Chapters 3, 4, and 5).

In general, forming an impression about other persons is seen in light of Kelley's covariance model (Kelley, 1967). However, we were more specifically interested in person perception when ulterior motives are involved. To examine what sort of information people request when ulterior motives are involved we conducted a pretest in which students at the Radboud University Nijmegen participated. We used a booklet with several different short descriptions (among others the three aforementioned). It was explicitly mentioned that there are two possible explanations for the behavior in the description and that they could ask questions to determine which one is true: "A student offers to carry some books down the hall for the professor. It is possible that the student is helpful. It is also possible that the student wants to butter up the professor. What do you want to know to determine this?" Two

coders independently of each other categorized the questions participants wrote down. If the two coders disagreed about a question they discussed the difference of opinion until they reached consensus (this happened in less than 1 % of the total number of cases). The coding data revealed that perceivers mainly asked questions about the actor (more than half of the questions were about the actor), some questions were about the actor-target relationship (e.g., dependence related questions, such as "Does the student take a class from the professor?"), some were about the target (e.g., "Is the professor a friendly man?"), and only a few were about other circumstances (e.g., whether the wife pampered her husband because it was their wedding anniversary). More specifically, most questions were about the actor's consistency (e.g., "Does she always behave this way towards her husband, preparing a nice dinner etc.?"); some about the behavior's distinctiveness (e.g., "Would he also help a man with car trouble?"); and there were also some consensus related questions (e.g., "Do other students help the professor?"); cf., Kelley's covariance model, 1967. Less than 18 % of the questions that were written down were negative in nature (e.g., "Will people be laid off/ fired soon?"), the rest of them were positive (e.g., "Is the wife always friendly towards her husband?") or neutral ("What does the student do for a study?"); suggesting that people may be reluctant to discover ulterior motives.

Since it is vital for survival to know whether one is duped or not, we investigate whether the information people requested in the pretest is sufficient to determine whether someone has ulterior motives when these motives are not explicitly mentioned. We begin by providing perceivers with only moderately informative cues, because this is even stronger evidence, if it suffices. In sum, we aim to investigate whether perceivers are able to detect ulterior motives at all; and, if they do, how this process evolves from beginning till end. At the same time, we investigate how the information changes their evaluation of the actor (Chapter 2).

However, we are not all uninvolved observers. Sometimes, we are the targets of someone with an ulterior motive. For instance, when someone pays you a compliment and then later asks if you can do him or her a favor. You are not just observing the flattery; you are the person whom the flattery is aimed at. For targets, other processes may be at hand when discovering ulterior motives than for observers. People who are being flattered generally like the flatterer and think he or she is more sincere than when they are only observing the flattering behavior (Gordon, 1996). This so-called target-observer difference is assumed to be caused by targets'

motivation to be flattered (Jones, 1990; Jones, Stires, Shaver, & Harris, 1968; Vonk, 2002). Surprisingly, this difference has never been the topic of interest in research on information search. We include targets in our studies to extend previous research on ulterior motives by examining what kind of personality information targets request when they have the opportunity (Chapter 3). Do targets and observers differ in their information search about a flattering actor? For targets it can be beneficial to uncritically accept the flattery, whereas observers are expected to be more suspicious. People look for information that confirms their initial impression which may result in different types of information search for targets and observers. Next, we investigate how the requested information subsequently changes the impression targets and observers have about the actor. For instance, do targets persevere in the more positive impression or are they quite sensitive to the personality information indicating ulterior motives?

To further take into account the tension between being flattered and knowing the truth, we compare targets and observers in their implementation of information (Chapter 4). We investigate whether targets persevere in the more positive impression when they receive information regarding the actor's distinctiveness (information they requested in our pilot study, see also Kelley, 1967). It can be beneficial for targets' wellbeing to hold a positive view of the flatterer. Or, are targets nevertheless willing to implement additional information about the actor's insincerity, because they do not want to be fooled? We use open responses to be able to compare targets and observers. Finally, we investigate whether targets like a flattering actor who has an ulterior motive, regardless of the content of the flattery. Can we say anything when we want to influence someone as long as it is positive or does it matter what is being said? Is it sufficient being positive or does flattery have to be accurate (Swann, 1997)? Is it important that the flattery is descriptively consistent with targets' self-view (Chapter 5)?

It is important to note that, in our studies, we are mainly interested in participants' impression regarding the traits "likeable," "sincere," and "slimy," because we expect these traits to be of interest when ulterior motives are involved. Already in 1968, Anderson conducted a study in which people rated the desirability of 555 traits; sincere received the highest value. This clearly indicates that people find sincerity one of the most valued traits we have. It is also one of the traits most valued in a desired mate (Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003). More recently, a survey in the

CentERpanel was conducted (a representative sample of the Dutch population) in which the respondents were asked what they thought is "the most positive personality trait" (Marchand, unpublished data, 2006). The results were clear: In their open responses more than 36% of the respondents used sincere (or a synonym such as honest) as the most positive personality trait. Friendly (likeable) came second (11%). Thus, knowing whether someone is sincere or is only behaving in a positive way because of an ulterior motive is important to people. People want to know what others are like. In addition to the traits likeable and sincere we are also interested in the trait "slimy". This trait is frequently used to describe flattery, overly friendly behavior, and brownnosing, and therefore relevant as a dependent variable in research about ulterior motives. Since likeability and sliminess need not correlate it is important to investigate both traits. Moreover, in research in which an experimenter gave participants a compliment about their appearance without having an ulterior motive (Marchand, unpublished data), targets rated the experimenter as more likeable than observers; however, we found no effect for ratings on insincere, and slimy. This suggests that flattery is only related to insincerity, sliminess, and less liking when ulterior motives are involved. Since in this thesis the focus is on ulterior motives and these hidden agendas are always present, we focus on ratings for liking, sincerity, and sliminess. Nevertheless, in some chapters, we also include measures such as participants' thoughts, mood, reading times, and behavior.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I will give an overview of the findings, discuss limitations of our research, and give suggestions for future research.

Below I give a summary of the method and hypotheses of each of the empirical chapters. These chapters are all based on papers accepted or submitted for publication and can therefore be read independently from the rest of the dissertation. At the same time, this implies that parts of the introductions may have some overlap.

Chapter 2: The Process of Becoming Suspicious of Ulterior Motives

In Chapter 2, we want to investigate how the process of becoming suspicious of ulterior motives evolves for perceivers. To record the entire process, we first provide participants with a positive behavior (e.g., taking a colleague with car trouble to the garage). Then, they receive little pieces of information (cues) that reveal the actor has an ulterior motive. All the cues are based on a pilot study and are moderately informative about the actor or about the target. Participants read each cue aloud and

after each cue they elaborate upon that information (cf., Cacioppo & Petty, 1981). We hypothesize that participants first draw a correspondent inference (e.g., helpful) after which the general impression gradually becomes less positive. Further, we hypothesize that suspicion of the ulterior motive first increases, and then decreases, until finally, they are certain that the actor is insincere. In short, we expect a linear effect for general impression and a quadratic effect for suspicion.

Chapter 3: Motivated by Vanity, not Insanity: Target-Observer Differences in Information Search and Impression Revision after Ingratiation

Chapter 3 is divided in two parts. In the first part (3A), we provide participants the opportunity to ask for personality information about a flattering actor. We use Skov & Sherman's method (1986) from the hypothesis testing literature to investigate whether targets and observers differ in the information they select. Participants can choose between different personality traits that vary in the degree to which they are typical of a "sincere" or "slimy" person. We hypothesize that targets and observers are differently motivated when they seek additional information, because targets' ego is at stake and they *want* the actor to be sincere (to determine this, we include a self-esteem measure), whereas observers' ego is not at stake. We expect that targets test the hypothesis the actor is sincere. In contrast, observers may be more cynical, and in comparison with targets they may be more likely to acquire information indicating that the actor is insincere and ingratiating. Observers, who are suspicious, are holding multiple, rival hypotheses about the actor's motives (Fein, 1996), so they may not have a preference for either type of information because both hypotheses are equally likely for the suspicious perceiver. In the second part (3B), participants actually receive the information they request (half of them receive positive information, half of them negative) and we examine how this changes their impression. Although it is possible that targets are motivated to ignore evidence that the flatterer is insincere, we hypothesize that both targets and observers are willing to implement the information.

Chapter 4: I Bet You Say That to All the Girls (Boys): When Flattery does not Work

In Chapter 4, targets and observers participate in an alleged dating situation and receive a flattering response to either their own or a third person's dating profile respectively (T1). Subsequently, they find out the actor says almost the same things to someone else (distinctiveness information). We expect to replicate the target-observer

difference at T1: Targets will judge the actor as more likeable, sincere, and less slimy than observers. At T2, we hypothesize this difference disappears. We also measure participants' mood, their reading times, and code their thoughts.

Chapter 5: When Flattery does not Work: the Importance of Descriptive Consistency

In this final empirical chapter, we want to investigate whether targets persevere in their positive impression, even when the flattery is descriptively not consistent with their self-view. Are targets charmed by the fact that someone views them as important or interesting enough to flatter, even when it is not in accordance with their self-view, or do they realize the flattery is not really meant by the actor and acknowledge the ulterior motive? Can targets' positive impression disappear immediately; i.e., without providing them with additional information revealing the insincerity of a flatterer? In a pretest, we select participants who view themselves as theoretical and later provide them with positive feedback about theoretical or practical qualities. This way, participants receive concrete feedback, which is consistent or inconsistent with the self, but that is still very positive in nature. We hypothesize that targets who receive self-consistent flattery judge the actor as more likeable, sincere, and less slimy, and feel better, than targets who receive self-inconsistent flattery.

Endnote

[1] Of course, several different ulterior motives are possible, such as that the professor is a very beautiful woman and the student wants to go out with her. We provide only one possible ulterior motive.

Chapter 2

The Process of Becoming Suspicious of Ulterior Motives[*]

There is ample evidence that most people can not distinguish honest from deceptive behavior of others (Anderson, DePaulo, Ansfield, Tickle, & Green, 1999; DePaulo & Friedman, 1998; Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991; Malone & DePaulo, 2001). One of the reasons why people are so poor at detecting deception is a pervasive truthfulness bias: People tend to accept everything they see at face value. Gilbert, Tafarodi, and Malone (1993) proposed that people cannot comprehend something without accepting it as true (cf., Gilbert, 1991). People do have the power to assent, reject, and to suspend their judgment, but only after they have initially believed the information to which they have been exposed. Gilbert, Tafarodi, and Malone (1993) provided evidence that "… belief is first, easy, and inexorable and that doubt is retroactive, difficult, and only occasionally successful" (p. 231). As a consequence, most people tend to judge others as truthful most of the time (O'Sullivan, Ekman, & Friesen, 1988; Zuckerman, Fischer, Osmun, & Winkler, 1987; Zuckerman, Koestner, Colella, & Alton, 1984).

Related research on attribution suggests that a disposition is often directly inferred from behavior, whereas the role of other variables (such as the situation) is underestimated or ignored by perceivers (known as the correspondence bias or fundamental attribution error; Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). This very robust phenomenon, again, reflects the tendency to take behavior at face value. More recent research by O'Sullivan (2003) suggests that the fundamental attribution error significantly undermines the ability to detect honesty and deception accurately. She found evidence that when observers thought positively about someone, they also tended to believe the other person was telling the truth even when the person was lying. Overcoming this robust effect appears to be difficult both in attribution research and deception detection: "The tendency to judge other people on the basis of enduring traits, rather than situational relevant states, is one of the reasons most lie

catchers are so inaccurate, and adjusting this cognitive heuristic is not easy"
(O'Sullivan, 2003; p. 1325).

There is one particular circumstance in which the truthfulness bias can be
overcome, namely, when a perceiver becomes suspicious about a person's motives
(Fein, 1996). For example, imagine that you are reading about John who takes a
colleague with car trouble to the garage. Probably you think of John as a nice, helpful
man. However, when you learn that the colleague is an attractive woman, that John is
not very helpful in other situations, and that he has no serious relationship at the
moment, you might start wondering whether John took her to the garage merely
because he was interested in her romantically. In this case, ambiguity emerges about
the actor's motives; the perceiver does not know whether the behavior should be
ascribed to a correspondent trait (helpful) or to an ulterior motive (romantically
interested).

Fein (1996) describes suspicion as a state in which perceivers hold multiple,
rival hypotheses about the motives or sincerity of the actor's behavior. According to
Hilton, Fein, and Miller (1993), perceivers in this state suspend their judgment about
the actor until they have more information about the actor's motives. If they have to
give a judgment, their evaluation will be neutral. This was also found in a study
conducted by Vonk (1999a), in which likeable behaviors enacted towards superiors
were judged more moderately than towards subordinates, indicating that subjects took
into account the possibility of ulterior motives (i.e., "brown-nosing"). Further, it
seems that suspicious perceivers think actively and systematically about why the
actor behaved as he or she did. This is what Fein calls the attributional mindset
(1996). Concomitant with this thoughtfulness and moderate judgments, the
correspondence bias is reduced, because looking beyond face value requires an
analytical state of mind.

In Fein and his colleagues' studies, suspicion of ulterior motives is
experimentally induced. Participants receive an incomplete description of a situation,
putting them in a state of suspicion. Subsequently, additional information is provided
that can change participants' judgments in one direction or the other. For example,
Fein, Hilton, and Miller (1990) had participants read a story about a man who courts
a wealthy widow. Participants were unwilling to conclude either that he was in love
with her or that he was after her money; they were not certain which inference to
make (i.e., they were suspicious). Then they read additional information about the

man's visit to a grocery store, where the clerk gave him too much change. In one condition, the man returned the extra money, while in the other condition he kept the extra change. Participants who read that the suitor returned the money concluded that he truly loved the woman, while the other participants concluded that he was motivated by greed. It is important to note that in our view, by this point participants cannot be regarded as suspicious anymore. This is because they no longer question whether the actor is insincere: They know.[1]

Although it is evident that suspicion about ulterior motives can overcome the correspondence bias, it is not clear how the process of suspicion evolves. In the studies by Fein and colleagues, participants are either in a state of suspicion (upon reading a story about an actor who behaves suspiciously) or out of that state (upon receiving subsequent information that corroborates one of the two possible inferences). Presumably, however, perceivers often do not instantly become suspicious, nor do they instantly abandon suspicion when they receive disambiguating information (unless it is extremely diagnostic). In the present study, we sought to extend the research by Fein et al. (1990) by examining the entire process, from the moment that perceivers have no suspicion at all, through a phase in which suspicion emerges, to the moment that they become certain that the actor indeed has an ulterior motive. We hypothesized that perceivers become suspicious gradually – (as they start questioning a person's motives) and that they abandon suspicion gradually, as more information becomes available that confirms their suspicion.

In order to record this dynamic process, we first presented participants with a description of a positive behavior, so they would have a positive evaluation of the actor (for example: taking a colleague with car trouble to the garage). Then participants received small pieces of additional information (cues) that imply that the actor might have an ulterior motive (e.g., the colleague is a woman; the colleague is attractive). We asked participants to think out loud after each cue (cf., Greenwald, 1968; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981), and we coded their thoughts on 2 dimensions, evaluation and suspicion.

Our hypotheses are that participants' general impression of the actor will become increasingly negative as more cues are encountered, whereas suspicion will first increase and then decrease, as participants become more certain of their

judgment and change their initial evaluation (from positive to negative). In short, we expect a linear trend for evaluation and a quadratic trend for suspicion.

Study 2.1

Method

Participants. Forty-nine students of the Radboud University Nijmegen participated for a fee of € 1.00 (at the time, about $ 1.10). Two participants were discarded, one due to stuttering and one because he did not think aloud the whole time.

Stimulus materials. In order to safeguard the generalizability of the results, we used three different scenarios (presented between participants), which were pretested among 59 participants. From the data of this pretest, we also selected ten cues per scenario, which were all judged to be moderately informative on a 7-point scale. More extreme informative cues were not selected, because one highly informative cue could be sufficient to create certainty about ulterior motives. The first scenario was: John asks Henrietta to marry him. Examples of cues for this scenario include: John likes luxurious products; Henrietta is not very interesting; Henrietta is a widow. The mean for the ten cues in this scenario was $M = 3.56$ (1 = not at all informative, 7 = very informative).

The second scenario was: John takes a colleague with car trouble to the garage. Examples of cues for this scenario include: the colleague is a woman; John does not have a steady relationship; John offers his colleague compliments about her work. The mean informativeness of the ten cues was $M = 3.99$.

In the third scenario, the main sentence was: John responds enthusiastically to another person's idea during the meeting. Examples of cues include: the other person is higher in rank; John does not have tenure; John will soon have an assessment. The mean informativeness for the ten cues used in this scenario was $M = 3.91$.

In addition to the specific actor cues, negative general actor cues of John were used, for example, John does not offer his seat to the pregnant woman in the bus. This type of behavior descriptions in other settings was also used in studies by Fein et al. (1990).

For each scenario, ten cues were presented. For order variation, these were divided into three blocks each containing three (or four) sentences. Each block contained one cue (or two) about the target (e.g., the other person is higher in rank), one was a negative general actor cue, and one a specific actor cue (e.g., John does not have a tenure). Both the order in which the blocks were presented, as well as the order of the sentences within each block, were randomized. This way, we ensured that no more than two "similar" sentences (e.g., two general actor cues) were presented sequentially. Also, in the car trouble scenario, the first cue was always that the colleague was a woman, because some other cues, (e.g., the colleague is attractive) were ambiguous without this information. In the meeting scenario, the first two cues were always that the person with whom John agrees is a man and that the man is higher in rank. This was done to prevent redundancy with a later cue, that this man is John's superior.[2]

Procedure.   Participants sat behind a computer in a cubicle. The experimenter sat near them. She told participants that they would participate in a study in which they had to think aloud, and that their thoughts would be recorded with a tape recorder. The participants then read an instruction on the computer screen, in which it was explained that they had to form an impression of John and that they had to express their thoughts aloud. They were asked to click "ok" in order to receive the scenario sentence (for example, John asks Henrietta to marry him), which had to be read aloud immediately, after which they started thinking aloud. In the same way participants clicked "ok" for every next cue, read it aloud, and expressed their thoughts.

Thoughts after each cue were rated for evaluation of the actor (ranging from -2 = negative to +2 = positive) and for how suspicious the participant was. Both scores were based upon all thoughts as a whole. A suspicion score of 3 was given for maximum suspicion, i.e., at least two possible motives for the behavior were considered and the participant could not decide between these two. A score of 2 was given when the participant did consider two explanations for the behavior, but leaned towards one of the two and thought the other less likely. A score of 1 was given when the participant was certain, either that the actor was nice/friendly or that he had an ulterior motive. Two judges coded the thinking aloud protocols independently of each other for half of the participants. The thoughts were coded in their original order, because in some cases participants said that a piece of extra information did not

change their views; in that case the thought was rated identical to the previous thought. The correlations between the scores of both judges were $r = .81$ for evaluation and $r = .79$ for suspicion.

The judges also coded at which particular cue a participant started doubting the actor's motives ($r = .87$) and at which cue the participant concluded for certain that the actor had an ulterior motive ($r = .84$).

Results and Discussion

A MANOVA with cue (0 through 10) as within-subjects factor and scenario as between-subjects factor showed that, with regard to evaluation, the expected linear trend emerged, $F(1, 44) = 147.31$, $p < .01$. Regardless of scenario (interaction $F(2, 44) = 1.35$, *ns*), the actor was judged less positively when more cues were presented. The means are shown in Figure 2.1. There was also a significant quadratic trend for this variable, $F(1, 44) = 91.21$, $p < .01$. This is due to the fact that the evaluation first declines rapidly, but later levels off which results in a deviation from the perfect linear pattern.
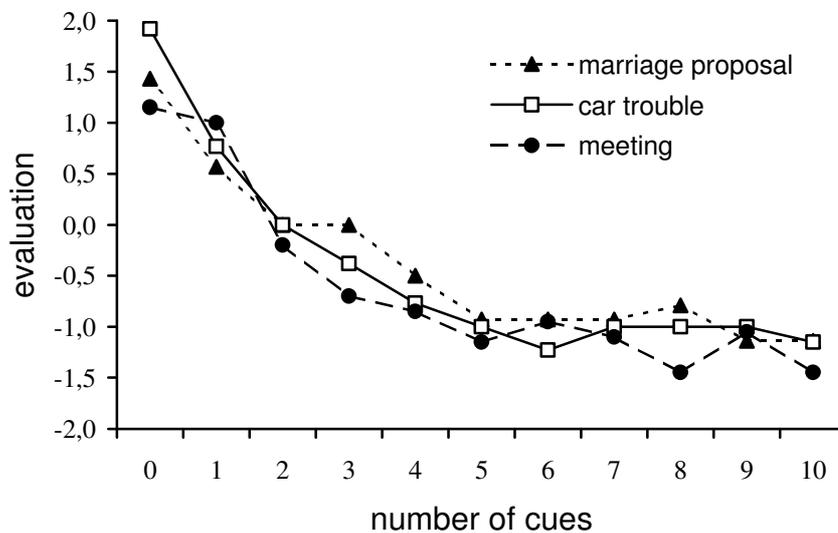

Figure 2.1.   Evaluation for each scenario at cue 0-10 (-2 = negative, +2 = positive) in Study 2.1.

With regard to suspicion we found the expected quadratic trend, $F(1, 44) = 14.14$, $p < .01$. The linear trend was not significant $F(1, 44) = 1.95$, *ns*. The means in Figure 2.2 indicate that initially, after reading the scenario sentence, the participants

were certain of their judgment of the actor, then quickly started doubting that judgment; gradually they tended to become less suspicious, until at the end they were certain about the motives again. As the figure also indicates, there is an interaction effect with scenario $F(2, 44) = 12.80$, $p < .01$. It appears that there was no suspicion in the marriage proposal scenario. More detailed examination of the thinking aloud protocols in this condition suggests that the process often developed so quickly that it could not be coded. For example, at the cue that Henrietta is a widow one participant immediately said: "Oh, widow, I think she is a rich woman, John himself has a low income evidently." The maximum suspicion score of 3 was never reached here, because the participant immediately changed from a positive to a negative image of the actor.
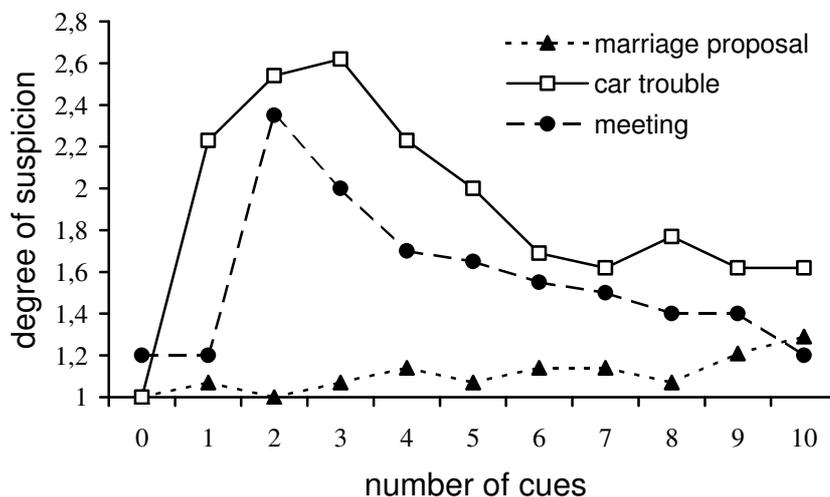
Figure 2.2.   Degree of suspicion for each scenario at cue 0-10 (1 = certainty, 3 = suspicion) in Study 2.1.

With regard to the question at which cue suspicion arises, no clear pattern was found for the marriage proposal scenario. Many participants (9 out of 12), however, became suspicious at the cues "Henrietta is not very interesting" (4 participants) or "Henrietta is not very attractive" (5 participants). This means that suspicion emerged at varying order positions, because the order of cues was varied. When participants first read that Henrietta is not very attractive they expect that John wants to marry her because of her inner qualities. When they learn subsequently that she is not very interesting, they are certain that there has to be an ulterior motive. Conversely, when she is dull participants assume she is attractive.

In the car trouble scenario most participants (12 out of 13) became suspicious at the first cue (the colleague is a woman). In the meeting scenario, 17 out of 21 participants became suspicious at the second cue (the person with whom John agrees is higher in rank). This implies that the rapid increase in suspicion in these scenarios might be caused by the fact that they always started with fixed cues that happened to evoke suspicion in most of the participants (see Figure 2.2). In order to examine this possibility we conducted the second study.

Study 2.2

Method

In this study we replicated the meeting scenario (John responds enthusiastically to another person's idea during the meeting), but presented all cues in random order. The cue "the person with whom John agrees is his superior" was removed and the cue "the other person is higher in rank" was not presented at a fixed location. In other respects, the method used was the same as in Study 2.1. Thirteen participants from the Radboud University Nijmegen participated for a fee of € 1.00.

Results and Discussion

The data were coded by the same independent judges.[3] The results again indicated a linear trend for evaluation, $F(1, 12) = 41.15$, $p < .01$. Also, a quadratic trend for suspicion emerged, $F(1, 12) = 5.97$, $p < .03$, whereas the linear trend was not significant, $F(1, 12) = 1.65$, *ns*. As can be seen in Figure 2.3, the increase of suspicion in this study is weaker and more gradual. Thus, the quick increase in the first study was probably caused by the fact that a relatively informative cue, that the other person is higher in rank ($M = 4.75$, in pretest, as compared to $M = 3.82$ for other cues), was the second cue for every participant. Presumably, the same applies to the car trouble scenario and the cue that the other person is a woman.
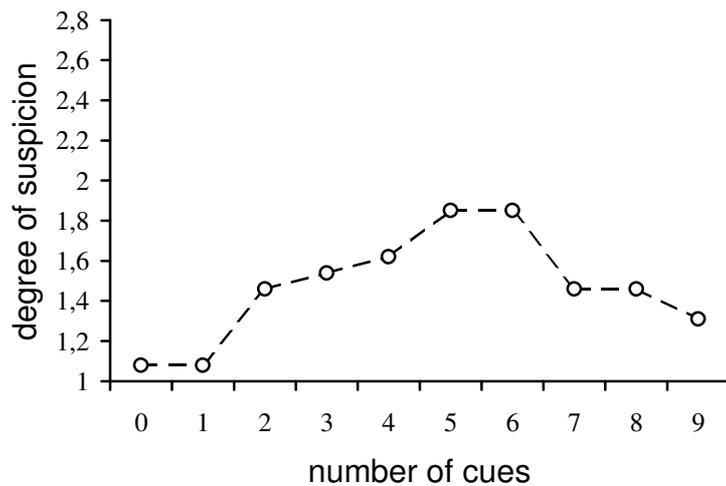
Figure 2.3.   Degree of suspicion for the random meeting scenario at cue 0-9 (1 = certainty, 3 = suspicion) in Study 2.2.

General Discussion

Extant research suggests that people are not good at detecting insincerity, due to the correspondence bias and a more general truthfulness bias (O'Sullivan, 2003). A suspicious mindset is a quite effective antidote to these biases (Fein, 1996). The present research uniquely showed how this mindset emerges and progresses as more information is received. In addition, each study showed that people can be quite ready to suspect ulterior motives. Participants read one of three different scenario descriptions of an actor who behaved in a positive way, to induce an initially favorable correspondent inference. Then they received additional, moderately informative cues that evoked suspicion by casting a negative light on the behavior. As predicted, thinking-aloud protocols showed the expected linear effect for evaluation of the actor. That is, participants evaluated the actor less positively as more information was presented. In addition, they also showed the expected quadratic effect for suspicion. Perceivers initially certain of their evaluation soon began to doubt the actor's motives (suspicion). As more information was presented, they became progressively more certain that the actor indeed had ulterior motives, until finally they were certain. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that suspicion is a dynamic process that unfolds over time as people grapple with the possibility that an actor has ulterior motives, and then become convinced. As more information is

processed, the negative opinion of the actor increases, while uncertainty rises and then falls.

Further, our findings suggest that participants can detect ulterior motives or insincerity quite quickly, even though they were presented with cues that were moderate in informativeness. The results also indicate that certain cues effectively trigger suspicion. Mainly, these cues involve characteristics of the person towards whom the behavior is enacted (i.e., target cues or actor-target relationship cues), such as "the other person is a woman," "the other person is higher in rank," and "the other person is not attractive." In line with Vonk's (1999a) studies, in which participants evaluated an actor's positive behavior differentially depending on the target's hierarchical position, the largest changes in suspicion and evaluation emerged on the basis of target information. By comparison, the general actor cues used by Fein et al. (1990) had a minor effect on suspicion in our studies. In only 4 out of 120 instances, general actor cues led to suspicion or to certainty that the actor had an ulterior motive. The difference between our actor cues and those used by Fein et al. is that ours were only informative on a general evaluative dimension and were unrelated to the behavior (e.g., in the wealthy widow scenario, offering a seat to a pregnant woman only means that the actor is friendly, but is not related to honesty or greed). It is possible that the actor cues in Fein's studies were more disambiguating because they were descriptively related to honesty or to the trait dimension under consideration (e.g., in the wealthy widow scenario, returning extra change to a clerk is related to honesty as well as greed, so this cue helped participants conclude that the actor was in love with the widow).

In general, cues that are specifically related to the characteristic under consideration probably evoke greater changes in suspicion. In our studies, these were often target cues (e.g., in the wealthy widow scenario: the woman is not very interesting). Note that the influential role of target information is at odds with the correspondence bias and the tendency to focus on the actor and ignore the behavioral field. It is, however, in accord with recent evidence (Ham & Vonk, in preparation) that characteristics of the targets of behavior are automatically included in spontaneous trait inferences (e.g., helping a colleague activates different traits than helping a superior).

In our studies, the informativeness of the cues presented was held constant. In real life, cues are probably more differentiated in their level of informativeness.

Moreover, the cues would not be observed in such a short amount of time. In every day life, people learn a few things when they meet a person and they learn something new on a different occasion. Although the basic mechanisms should be the same, the process of becoming suspicious and then certain may take more time outside of the lab. Also, in real life, people not only receive negative information about others, but also positive information, which might further slow down the process of suspicion or even reverse it.

In the present studies, the information was presented to participants. In real life, when people become suspicious about an actor's motives, they may themselves start to search for relevant information that could disambiguate the behavior, although we have evidence that the information they acquire is not the most diagnostic (see Chapter 3; Marchand & Vonk, under review b). Nonetheless, future research should examine a variety of protocols designed to mirror information gathering under more natural conditions.

In addition, individual differences may affect the speed of the suspicion process. For example, people who are high in need for closure (i.e., have a desire to reduce ambiguity, Kruglanski, 1989; and tend to be impulsive and form quick judgments of others, Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) may tend to think of others as primarily either good or bad. If so, participants with a higher need for closure may be quicker to jump through the process and conclude that an actor is insincere. Of course, they might also be slower to start doubting people if they prefer to retain their original, positive evaluation.

If people are certain about their judgment of an actor, they can no longer be described as suspicious, because they are not entertaining multiple, rival hypotheses anymore. At that point, by definition, suspicion is over. Interestingly, Fein (1996) has shown that when perceivers have been suspicious about an actor's motives, they are less likely to fall prey to the correspondence bias when making subsequent judgments about a novel actor. While this might suggest that suspicion continues onward, we think this result can be explained by a priming or accessibility effect. That is, once a suspicious mindset has been activated, it is more likely to be triggered again in new situations.

It is important to note that the process of suspicion may apply to any situation in which a person's behavior can be guided by multiple motives, thus causing perceivers to hold multiple hypotheses, or doubt whether their initial judgment was

correct. This may occur, for instance, in persuasion settings (e.g., a salesman claiming that this is the best buy ever, or any persuasive message from a biased source, cf., Campbell, 1995); deception detection situations (e.g., a woman who finds lipstick on her husband's collar); self-presentational situations (e.g., a person claiming high competence in a job interview; Leary, 1995; Vonk, 1999b); and even the detection of discrimination, in which case mixed motives are also involved (e.g., a person may be rejected for a job either because of sexism or because she is not adequate; Fiske et al. 1991; Berkvens & Vonk, 2002). Our studies are a first step in mapping the challenging and fascinating process of becoming suspicious, in person perception as well as other domains.

Endnotes

[1] According to the definition, suspicion has ended when a perceiver does not hold multiple hypotheses anymore, and is confident that the actor was driven by ulterior motives. At this point, the actor is no longer a "suspect", but is "guilty". This does not mean that having been suspicious may not produce subsequent residual effects. We will return to this issue in the General Discussion.

[2] The exact randomization scheme is available upon request.

[3] In addition, we asked two student coders, who were uninformed about our hypotheses, to rate both evaluation and level of suspicion for the thinking aloud data from Studies 2.1 and 2.2. The coders showed acceptable agreement (all rs > .60, ps < .01). For the first three scenarios from Study 2.1, the analyses of the data produced by these judges showed the same patterns; a linear trend for evaluation $F(1, 32) = 79.64$, $p < .01$ and a quadratic trend for suspicion $F(1, 32) = 5.51$, $p = .03$. For the random meeting scenario from Study 2.2, the results also replicate the patterns found earlier; a linear trend for evaluation $F(1, 12) = 21.63$, $p < .01$ and a quadratic trend for suspicion $F(1, 12) = 6.48$, $p < .03$.

Chapter 3

Motivated by Vanity, Not Insanity:

Target-Observer Differences in Information Search and Impression Revision after Ingratiation[*]

Imagine you are the supervisor in a corporation and you meet a new subordinate who expresses his enthusiasm about working with you in your company. You may assume the subordinate is so excited because he has heard only good things about you as a supervisor and wants to express his admiration. However, another subordinate, who walks by and observes the new colleague's enthusiasm, may conclude the colleague simply knows that it is very difficult to get promoted and has decided to start his career by flattering the boss.

In our daily lives, there are many examples of hidden agendas, or ulterior motives. Although we all know it is possible that somebody is not sincere when he or she is complimenting us, people generally like those who flatter them. Gordon (1996) found that people form more favorable impressions of an ingratiator when the ingratiation is directed toward them than when they are uninvolved observers. This target-observer difference (Vonk, 2002) is a very robust effect, caused by the target's motivation to be flattered. When people are the target of ingratiation, their self-esteem is served by accepting the flattery uncritically; on the other hand, when they are observers, their ego is not at stake and they may examine the actor's behavior with more scrutiny. In the example above, the supervisor probably forms a more favorable impression of the employee than the observer, who is more suspicious about the actor's motives.

In previous studies on ulterior motives, researchers investigated how disambiguating information about an actor influenced observers' impressions (Fein, 1996; Fein, Hilton, & Miller, 1990, 1993), but not how targets' impressions of the actor would be influenced by additional diagnostic information. Furthermore, such disambiguating information has always been presented to participants by the researcher, whereas in real life people may actively seek information themselves, and they may not

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[*] This chapter is based on Marchand, M. A. G., & Vonk, R. (under review b). It is also based on data collected by Vonk (2002): Only relevant, new analyses are reported in this chapter.

all acquire the same kind of information, depending on their own motives and goals. In the present studies, we want to extend previous research on ulterior motives by a) examining what kind of information participants themselves acquire when they have the opportunity, and b) examining differences between targets and observers in their information search as well as the effects of additional information about an ingratiating actor.

In research on hypothesis testing, it has been examined how observers test hypotheses about others' personality traits, such as the hypothesis that an actor is either introverted or extraverted (Snyder & Swann, 1978). Many studies based on this hypothesis-testing paradigm have shown that individuals prefer questions about behaviors that are consistent with the hypothesized trait as opposed to the alternative trait (see e.g., Devine, Hirt, & Gehrke, 1990; Evett, Devine, Hirt, & Price, 1994; Hodgins & Zuckerman, 1993; Skov & Sherman, 1986; Snyder & Swann, 1978; Swann & Giuliano, 1987; for a review of this 'confirmation bias,' see Trope & Liberman, 1996). Thus, people prefer to test their hypothesis by seeking evidence that is consistent rather than inconsistent with it (cf., positive test strategy described by Klayman & Ha, 1987; and Olson, Roese, & Zanna, 1996).

In line with this tendency, we expect that both targets and observers of ingratiation seek additional information that is consistent with their hypothesis. However, in the present setting, the ingratiating behavior is ambiguous, so due to motivational differences targets may test an entirely different hypothesis than observers, even though they receive the exact same information. Thus, we expect that targets will acquire information indicating that the actor is sincere, because this is consistent with their preferred hypothesis that the actor is a likeable, sincere person. In contrast, observers may be more cynical, and in comparison with targets they may be more likely to acquire information indicating that the actor is insincere and ingratiating. Observers, who are suspicious, are holding multiple, rival hypotheses about the actor's motives (Fein, 1996), so they may not have a preference for either type of information because both hypotheses are equally likely for the suspicious perceiver. Targets, on the other hand, are not truly suspicious because they have a preference for one of the hypotheses. As a consequence, they take the actor's behavior at face value and test the hypothesis that the actor is sincere.

In sum, we suggest that, in addition to cognitive, expectancy-based biases in information search, there are also motivational biases (cf., Dawson, Gilovich, & Regan,

2002; Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Kunda, 1990; Vonk, 1998a, 2002). More specifically, targets may be inclined to look for certain information, not because they *expect* it to confirm their hypothesis, but because they would *like* to see it confirmed. To investigate whether targets *want* the actor to be sincere or simply *expect* this, we included self-esteem in this study. If targets of ingratiation are motivated by vanity, both high and low self-esteem targets will search for information reflecting the actor's sincerity: Previous research shows that even people with low self-esteem are motivated to acquire favorable feedback because it makes them feel good (cf., self-enhancement; Swann, 1987, 1990). On the other hand, because high self-esteem targets are more likely than low self-esteem targets to see the ingratiating description as accurate and sincere, this implies that if targets are selecting information on a more cognitive, expectancy-based level, high self-esteem targets are more likely to select information reflecting sincerity because that confirms their hypothesis that the description is accurate, whereas low self-esteem targets are more likely to be distrustful and select information indicating that the actor is ingratiating. Because observers' ego is not at stake, their information search is independent of their level of self-esteem.

To distinguish between sincerity- versus ingratiation-consistent testing, we adapted Skov and Sherman's method (1986). In their study, they created entirely new planets to investigate what kind of information participants acquire to test a hypothesis about a person. They explained to participants that there were two types of creatures living on a faraway planet, and their task was to find out the identity of a creature they ostensibly met. For 12 different characteristics, participants received percentages on how the characteristics were distributed for each creature; e.g., on the planet Vuma, 10 % of the Kopis whistle while they work and 50 % of the Jabos whistle while they work. Then, participants received instructions to find out whether they had ostensibly met a Kopis (or, in another condition a Jabos, or in a third condition a Kopis or a Jabos) and were allowed to ask the creature two questions about its characteristics. Participants showed a tendency to ask hypothesis-confirming questions: They asked for traits that were frequent among Kopis when testing the hypothesis that the creature was a Kopis, whereas they asked for traits that were more frequent among Jabos (e.g., do you whistle when you work?) when testing the hypothesis that the creature was a Jabos.

In the present study, the question is whether the results of the planet Vuma can be generalized to the planet Earth, where people often have a motivational stake in the matter. We provided target and observer participants with the opportunity to acquire

additional information about an ingratiator's personality. Based on Skov and Sherman's method, the available information was varied with respect to a) the extent to which it was indicative of sincerity and b) the extent to which it was indicative of ingratiation. This way, sincerity-consistent testing can be examined independently of ingratiation-consistent testing. For instance, the trait "reliable" is indicative of sincerity, because sincere people are expected to possess the trait, whereas it is not indicative of ingratiation, because slimy people are not expected to possess it. However, the trait "ambitious" shows that a trait can also be indicative of both ingratiation and sincerity: A high percentage of ingratiating people are expected to possess this trait, but also many sincere people possess it. As another example, "hostile" is expected to occur infrequently among both sincere and ingratiating people.

Because participants in general are assumed to test the hypothesis that they prefer, we expect targets to predominantly request information about traits reflecting sincerity and not traits reflecting ingratiation, whereas this difference should not occur among observers. Furthermore, if targets are motivated by vanity, their preference for traits reflecting sincerity will emerge regardless of their level of self-esteem. On the other hand, if targets' hypothesis-testing strategy is cognitive and expectancy-based, the preference for sincerity-consistent traits should emerge only among high self-esteem targets. For observers, no effects of self-esteem are expected, so in this case an interaction of Condition (target, observer) X Self-Esteem should obtain.

Pretest

In a pretest, 150 participants rated 30 personality characteristics on how indicative of sincerity and ingratiation each characteristic was. Half of the participants received instructions to think of a prototypical sincere person and to indicate what percentage of sincere people possesses a certain characteristic; e.g., "What percentage of sincere people is reliable"? The other half received instructions to think of a typical slimy[1] person and indicated what percentage of slimy people possesses a certain characteristic; e.g., "What percentage of slimy people is reliable"?

Based on the mean percentages for each characteristic, we made a selection of 12 personality traits that fit into different categories for the two traits. These categories are shown in Table 3.1. When a trait is categorized as "Low," this means that, according to the participants, 0-39 % of the slimy or sincere people possess this trait. "Middle" means that 40-59 % of the slimy or sincere people are perceived to possess this trait,

and "High" means 60-100 %. The first category mentioned in the table refers to slimy people, the second category to sincere people; thus, a trait categorized as "Low-High" means that a small percentage of slimy people are expected to possess the trait and a large percentage of sincere people (e.g., reliable). The higher the frequency percentage for a trait, the higher is the extent to which the trait is seen as confirming the corresponding hypothesis (slimy or sincere). This way, the pretest provided us with frequency percentages for real traits, parallel to the "fake" frequencies for Skov and Sherman's imaginary planets.

Table 3.1

The mean percentages from the pretest for the 12 selected traits and the categories in which they are divided

		% Slimy	% Sincere
Trait Category	Trait[†]	*M*	*M*
Low-High	reliable	22 %	82 %
Low-High	direct	20 %	78 %
High-Low	artificial	84 %	13 %
High-Low	exaggerative	80 %	27 %
Low-Middle	authoritarian	30 %	40 %
Middle-Low	distrustful	55 %	27 %
High-Middle	complimentary	79 %	56 %
Middle-High	positive	38 %	64 %
Low-Low	inhibited	35 %	24 %
Low-Low	hostile	35 %	26 %
High-High	ambitious	81 %	73 %
High-High	looks out for self-interest	76 %	68 %

[†] Best possible translations from Dutch.

Overview

Target and observer participants received an ingratiating description about themselves or another participant, respectively (Condition), and formed an impression of the person who wrote the description (actor). Subsequently, they were given the opportunity to request more information about the actor. The information from which

they could choose varied in how indicative of ingratiation it was and how indicative of sincerity it was. Subsequently, the requested information (varying in valence) was actually presented to participants, and the actor was rated again.

For the sake of clarity, we will describe the first stage of the experiment as Study 3.1A, in which we examine what kind of information participants request, depending on Condition and Self-Esteem. Subsequently, the second stage will be described as Study 3.1B, in which we focus on the effects of the information received on subsequent impressions of the actor.

Study 3.1 A

Method

Design and participants.   The design was a 4 (Experiment number[2]) X 2 (Condition) factorial design. Participants were 483 undergraduates with different majors (314 women, 169 men). They were paid for participating in this study and an unrelated filler study.

Procedure and stimulus materials.   Participants were recruited to participate in a study on how people form impressions of others. Each participant read and signed a "confidentiality form" to make it credible that they would later receive information about other participants. The experimenter then seated the participants in individual cubicles behind a computer. Participants were first asked to type in their first name and their gender; it was explained that the names would be used during the experiment, but would not be saved. The first part of the study consisted of a Dutch translation of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (1965) and a series of alleged personality tests. Participants were told that everyone who participated was taking these tests. The primary goal of this part was to convey to participants that a) the flattering description they would later read was based on real personality information, and b) we had real test results for the traits they could later select from when acquiring information about the actor.

After completing the personality tests, participants learned that there would be two groups in the study. Participants in one group would see the test responses given by another participant (which would be transferred by the computer server to which they were connected) and would be asked to write a description of their impression of this person. Participants in the other group would get to read one of these descriptions. All participants were told that they had been randomly assigned to the latter group, and that

they would participate in a different and unrelated study, while the participants in the other group looked at the test results of others and wrote a description of their impressions. Subsequently, a filler study was conducted.

When the experiment resumed, participants were told that they would read one of the descriptions made by someone in the other group. They were informed of the name of the participant who had written the description (the actor), and the name of the participant whom the description was about (the target). The name of the actor was always Ronald or Laura, depending on the participant's gender: All participants read about an actor of their own sex. In the target condition, the name of the target was the participant's own name; in the observer condition it was Frances (Frank).

In all conditions, suspicion of ulterior motives on the part of the ingratiating actor was induced by explaining that we were interested in how people describe others on whom they depend. Participants were led to believe that the actor a) expected to be dependent on the target for participation fee and b) expected the target to read his or her impression description.[3] Participants were then informed of the instructions that had been given to the actor. For instance, in the target condition, it was explained that "Laura (Ronald) has been told that you will determine how much money she receives for this study. Second, we have explained to Laura the personality tests and have shown her your responses. Finally, she has been asked to type in her impression of you. We also told her that you were going to read this description." Subsequently, the computer ostensibly started searching for the impression description, and stopped the search as soon as the actor's data had been found. The ingratiating description contained several components of ingratiation, such as other-enhancement (e.g., "my impression is that she's a really nice person, easy to get along with, and someone who has many qualities") and expression of agreement and similarity (e.g., "we have the same ideas about many things," "we are very much alike," and "she's given many responses that appeal to me.")

After reading the flattering description, participants were asked to indicate their liking for the actor (1 = dislikeable, 7 = likeable) and to rate the actor on a series of 7-point trait scales, including "sincere" and "slimy." The instructions stressed that all questions were strictly anonymous and would not be shown to any other participant.

Subsequently, participants were offered the opportunity to receive personality test results about the actor. They were told that the personality tests used in this study were very reliable and that scores were adjusted for social desirability, so that the

personality scores presented a realistic picture of how a person really is. The explanation then read: "For each participant, we have a test score on 12 personality traits measured. You can choose <u>one</u> personality trait on which you would like to know Laura's (Ronald's) rating. Read all possibilities carefully, before you make your choice." The 12 personality traits were presented in alphabetic order on the same screen. Each trait was described by one (sometimes fabricated) psychological term, accompanied by a brief description of the trait; for example: Hyperbolism (the degree to which a person is inclined to exaggerate). Participants selected the trait for which they wanted to know the actor's test score.[4]

Results

There was a main effect of experiment number, $F(9, 471) = 1.89$, $p = .05$; participants in Experiment 1 found the ingratiating actor more sincere and less slimy than in the other three experiments[5]. No other effects of experiment were found, so it was dropped from the analyses reported below.

A 2 (Condition) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on ratings for likeable, sincere, and slimy produced a main effect of Condition, $F(3, 477) = 7.67$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .046$. As hypothesized, participants in the target condition judged the actor as more likeable ($M = 5.34$ vs. $M = 4.86$), $F(1, 479) = 19.36$, $p < .01$; more sincere ($M = 4.31$ vs. $M = 3.94$), $F(1, 479) = 6.58$, $p = .01$; and less slimy ($M = 4.76$ vs. $M = 5.30$), $F(1, 479) = 11.56$, $p < .01$ than observers.[6]

Table 3.2 presents the distribution of the observed frequencies and percentages of traits selected by targets and observers. Targets most often requested information on the trait reliable, whereas observers requested information on the trait "looks out for self-interest". Based on the mean percentages from the pretest, we computed two variables: the informativeness of the requested trait for sliminess and the informativeness of the requested trait for sincerity. For instance, a participant requesting the trait "positive" would obtain a score of 64 and 38, for sincere and slimy respectively (see Table 3.1). A 2 (Condition) MANOVA on these scores, with Hypothesis (sincere, slimy) as a within-subjects factor, produced an interaction effect of Condition X Hypothesis (WS Factor): $F(1, 481) = 18.45$, $p < .01$. As hypothesized, targets asked more traits indicative of sincerity ($M = 64.68$) than of ingratiation ($M = 47.85$), whereas for observers this difference did not occur ($M = 56.21$ vs. $M = 56.09$ respectively).

Table 3.2

Observed frequencies (and percentages) of selected traits for targets and observers

Trait Category	Trait[†]	Condition	
		Target	Observer
Low-High	reliable	56 (23.4 %)	37 (15.2 %)
Low-High	direct	42 (17.6 %)	29 (11.9 %)
High-Low	artificial	9 (3.8 %)	38 (15.6 %)
High-Low	exaggerative	10 (4.2 %)	14 (5.7 %)
Low-Middle	authoritarian	4 (1.7 %)	7 (2.9 %)
Middle-Low	distrustful	8 (3.3 %)	2 (.8 %)
High-Middle	complimentary	20 (8.4%)	18 (7.4 %)
Middle-High	positive	23 (9.6 %)	23 (9.4 %)
Low-Low	inhibited	6 (2.5 %)	6 (2.5 %)
Low-Low	hostile	3 (1.3 %)	6 (2.5 %)
High-High	ambitious	14 (5.9 %)	16 (6.6 %)
High-High	looks out for self-interest	44 (18.4 %)	48 (19.7 %)

[†] Best possible translations from Dutch.

Three participants did not fill out the self-esteem scale. A factor analysis on the ten self-esteem items for the remaining participants, revealed one factor with an Eigen Value of 5.35 and 53.48 % explained variance. After recoding three items, Cronbach's α was .89. When self-esteem was included as a covariate in the analysis, the interaction effect of Condition X Hypothesis (WS Factor) remained, $F(1, 477) = 17.81$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .036$, whereas there was no effect of self-esteem, $F(1, 477) = 1.24$, *ns*.

Because most students have a relatively high self-esteem, and we wanted to be sure to examine low self-esteem, we also divided our participants in a high and low self-esteem group, with low self-esteem participants having a self-esteem score of 3.90 and lower. This variable was included as an additional independent variable. In this analysis, too, the interaction effect of Condition X Hypothesis (WS Factor) remained, $F(1, 477) = 18.78$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .038$, whereas there was no effect of self-esteem group, $F < 1$. These results suggest that targets' preference for traits reflecting sincerity emerged regardless of their level of self-esteem, i.e., regardless whether the description was consistent with their self-view. Instead, targets –including low self-esteem targets– seem to be

motivated to acquire sincerity-correspondent traits about the actor, whereas observers do not have a preference for sincere versus slimy traits.

Discussion

As predicted, we obtained evidence that targets choose traits that confirm their preferred hypothesis. Although it is usually difficult to interpret null effects, in our opinion, the absence of any moderating role for self-esteem suggests that both high and low self-esteem targets are motivated to receive information indicating that the actor truly likes them. If the effect had a more cognitive basis, low self-esteem subjects would show hypothesis testing behavior similar to observers. Observers did not have a preference and equally requested traits indicative of sincerity and ingratiation. Although our conclusions may be preliminary we provide the first demonstration of the hypothesis-testing behavior of the "suspicious mind," holding multiple, rival hypotheses about the actor's motives (Fein, 1996).

Knowing what kind of information targets and observers wish to receive about the actor, we now move on to investigate what the effects are of actually receiving the requested information. Generally, we expect that a positive test score (information indicating that the ingratiator is sincere) will lead to a more positive impression, whereas a negative test score (information indicating that the ingratiator is slimy) will lead to a more negative impression.

However, efficient information gathering does not guarantee efficient or unbiased use of the information (Slowiaczek, Klayman, Sherman, & Skov, 1992). As noted before, targets are motivated to form a favorable impression of the actor, rather than dismiss the flattering episode as ingratiating. They request hypothesis-confirming information, implicitly hoping that their preferred hypothesis will be confirmed. If they receive information indicating that the actor is in fact low on the requested sincere trait, they might be unwilling to implement the information, because this would reflect negatively on the self. If, on the other hand, targets receive information indicating that the actor is high on sincerity, they are probably very willing to accept it without further consideration, because it confirms their preferred hypothesis. In contrast, an uninvolved observer is not motivated by vanity and might be more objective. Thus, an observer could be more willing to implement the information received, regardless of the implication. It is possible, then, that the effect of Test Score is qualified by Condition. On the other hand, it would be naïve of targets if they were totally blind to the received

information. Indeed, research suggests there are limits to the need for self-enhancement and targets do want to avoid being fooled (Marchand & Vonk, under review a). Targets may also be highly motivated to avoid looking silly and, hence, readily revise their relatively favorable impression when they learn that the actor is in fact low on sincerity.

In the second part of the experiment, we provided participants with information about the actor's test results on the trait participants requested in the first part. The information reflected either a high or a low score on the requested trait (Test Score). We hypothesize that positive information leads to a more positive impression of the actor and negative information leads to a more negative impression. We also expect that targets are motivated by vanity, but not insanity: Even though they have a preference for information indicative of sincerity, we hypothesize, that when they receive the information they are also motivated to avoid being duped (Fein, 1996; Marchand & Vonk, under review a). Therefore, they are expected to implement both the positive and negative Test Scores, just as observers.

Study 3.1 B

Method

    Procedure and stimulus materials.   After participants in part A had selected a trait they wanted to know more about, they were told that this information was in fact available, as all participants had filled out a personality test, including the actor. It was explained that they would receive the requested test score of the actor and that, thereafter, they would again answer some questions about their impression of the actor.

Participants learned that the test score of the actor had been calculated by comparing it with a large group of other students who had filled out the personality test in a previous experiment; this way, we were able to determine for each participant whether they had a higher or lower score than average on a particular trait. Subsequently, the computer ostensibly started searching for the actor's data on the trait requested and presented the test results.

An example of a test result read as follows: "The trait you want to know about Laura (Ronald) is: Authenticity, the degree to which somebody is straightforward. The test results show that Laura rates higher than average on this trait. Her score is in the 80th percentile. This means that 80 % of our participants has a lower score on this trait than Laura."   For half of the participants, the test score of the actor was high on the

requested trait, for the other half it was low. This was determined randomly. In the low test score condition, participants were told that the test score was lower than average, in the 20th percentile, meaning that 80 % of the participants has a higher score on this trait than the actor. Note that a high score on some traits (e.g., authenticity) reflects sincerity whereas a low score reflects sliminess; for other traits (e.g., artificial) this is reversed. In the analyses, Test Score for some traits was recoded such that all results reflecting sincerity were coded in the same direction.

After seeing the test result, participants read the ingratiating description for the second time, and again rated the actor on likeability and a series of traits including sincerity and sliminess. Finally, they were thanked, paid, and debriefed.

Results[7]

Some traits were selected very infrequently (e.g., in the Low-Low Trait Category) and therefore removed from the analyses; this left 441 participants (294 women and 147 men). To take into account the differential informativeness of the traits with regard to the two dimensions, five different trait categories were created: two high-low traits combined, two low-high traits combined, two high-high traits combined, one middle-high trait, and one high-middle trait (see Table 3.1).

A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Test Score) X 5 (Trait Category) MANOVA on the second series of ratings for likeable, sincere, and slimy produced a main effect of Condition, $F(3, 419) = 5.99$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. After receiving the requested information, targets again judged the actor as more likeable ($M = 5.34$ vs. $M = 4.83$), $F(1, 421) = 14.56$, $p < .01$; more sincere ($M = 4.38$ vs. $M = 3.99$), $F(1, 421) = 5.73$, $p < .02$; and less slimy ($M = 4.24$ vs. $M = 4.82$), $F(1, 421) = 8.85$, $p < .01$ than observers. In a subsequent analysis of covariance, we included the first ratings as covariates. In this analysis, the Condition effect disappeared, $F(3, 416) = 1.26$, ns., indicating that this effect can be explained entirely by differences at T1 that persisted at T2.

Just as the regular MANOVA, the analysis of covariance produced a main effect of Test Score, $F(3, 416) = 38.08$, $p < .01$. $\eta^2 = .22$. Compared with participants who received a negative test score, participants who received a positive test score judged the actor as more likeable ($M = 5.35$ vs. $M = 4.82$), $F(1, 418) = 32.04$, $p < .01$; more sincere ($M = 4.77$ vs. $M = 3.60$), $F(1, 418) = 89.04$, $p < .01$; and less slimy ($M = 3.94$ vs. $M = 5.12$), $F(1, 418) = 69.10$, $p < .01$. This effect was qualified by an interaction with Trait

Category; $F(12, 407) = 2.99$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. As can be seen in Table 3.3, the effect of Test Score was smaller for the High-Middle category. Considering the overall pattern, we are inclined to see this result as a chance finding, or due to idiosyncratic characteristics of this category. In the Middle-High category, which is about the same in diagnosticity as the High-Middle category, ratings are affected very strongly by the test results. Thus, corroborating our recent findings (see Chapter 2; Marchand & Vonk, 2005), moderately diagnostic information affects participants' impressions. Interestingly, although the High-High category is not diagnostic at all, the effect of Test Score is quite substantial here, indicating that participants drew rather firm conclusions on the basis of the information received, even when this does not make logical sense. We will address this issue in the General Discussion.

Table 3.3

Mean scores of ratings for likeable, sincere, and slimy for the Test-score X Trait Category interaction

			univariate F-tests
	Likeable		
Trait Category	positive test-score	negative test-score	$F(4, 418) = 4.54$**
Low-High	5.57a	4.68b	
High-Low	5.17a	4.58b	
High-Middle	5.11a	5.30a	
Middle-High	5.63a	5.25a	
High-High	5.10a	4.21b	
	Sincere		
	positive	negative	$F(4, 418) = 6.11$**
Low-High	5.25a	3.41b	
High-Low	4.77a	3.47b	
High-Middle	4.17a	3.70a	
Middle-High	5.30a	4.13b	
High-High	4.51a	3.19b	
	Slimy		
	positive	negative	$F(4, 418) = 1.70$
Low-High	3.59a	4.99b	
High-Low	4.34a	5.00b	
High-Middle	4.72b	5.40b	
Middle-High	3.17a	4.69b	
High-High	4.12a	5.60b	

Note. Within each row, means with noncommon subscripts are significantly different at $p < .01$.

** $p < .01$.

In general, then, Test Score affected the impression regardless of the diagnosticity of the trait requested[8]. Importantly, no interaction effects with Condition were found, $Fs < 1$, suggesting that targets implemented the received information just as much as observers, even when it did not converge with their preferred hypothesis.

General Discussion

There is ample evidence that most people can not distinguish honest from deceptive behavior of others (Anderson, DePaulo, Ansfield, Tickle, & Green, 1999; DePaulo & Friedman, 1998; Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991; Malone & DePaulo, 2001) and that people are not good at detecting insincerity (O'Sullivan, 2003). Although the detection of lies, or ulterior motives, seems to be difficult, recent research has shown that people can be quite sensitive to small cues indicating ulterior motives (see Chapter 2; Marchand & Vonk, 2005), thus evoking suspicion.

When people are suspicious, they postpone judgment and want to acquire further information that may help resolve the ambiguity about the actor's true motives (Fein, 1996). Because this is a quintessential feature of suspicion, it is remarkable that previous studies on suspicion have typically presented fixed information to participants. Our study is the first to inquire how suspicious perceivers select information when they have the opportunity to do so, thereby linking the suspicion phenomenon to the hypothesis-testing literature. As expected, because suspicious observers hold two multiple competing hypotheses, we found that they do not have a clear preference for information reflecting one or the other option.

A second new aspect of our study is that, by looking at differences between targets and observers in their information search, we were able to examine the motivational basis of hypothesis-testing behavior. Targets, who were motivated to hold a positive view of the actor, requested more traits indicative of sincerity than of ingratiation. Presumably, they implicitly hoped to receive information that would confirm their preferred hypothesis, that the actor was a sincere person. Subsequent analyses including participants' self-esteem suggest that this preference is motivational and not cognitive, expectancy-based: Both high and low self-esteem targets requested traits indicative of sincerity, indicating that they both acquired information they would *like* to see confirmed, not information they *expect* to see confirmed. On a cognitive basis, low self-esteem targets should regard the flattering description as inconsistent with their self-views and, hence, due to self-verification (cf., Swann, Griffin, Predmore,

& Gaines, 1987), expect the actor to be inaccurate and insincere. If this is the hypothesis they are testing, they should select traits reflecting ingratiation. However, on the basis of a motivational, self-enhancement process, they like the flattery and prefer to see the actor as a sincere and likeable person. The present pattern of results suggests that targets' evaluations of the actor as well as their hypothesis-testing behavior was guided primarily by this need for self-enhancement: Targets judged the actor as likeable and selected information indicating sincerity, regardless of their level of self-esteem. It needs to be said that conclusions are based on a null effect and remain preliminary. Observers, on the other hand, did not have a clear preference for information reflecting one or the other option, because they were testing two competing hypotheses.

A third way in which our study extends previous research is that we examined how the information that was gathered by participants themselves, subsequently affected their impressions. This allowed us to examine the persistence of targets' preference for a favorable impression of the ingratiator. Previous research shows that there are limits to the need for self-enhancement and that even targets of ingratiation are not completely unaware of possible ulterior motives and want to avoid being fooled (see Chapter 4; Marchand & Vonk, under review a). As hypothesized, both targets and observers were affected by the requested information when they actually received it. A positive test score resulted in a more positive impression, a negative test score in a more negative impression. In general, then, targets seem to be motivated by vanity, not insanity. Although the target–observer difference in evaluations obtained at T1 was maintained at T2, we have reason to assume that this is primarily an anchoring effect (see Chapter 4; Marchand & Vonk, under review a).

For both targets and observers, it is remarkable that they were affected by the test scores regardless of how informative the information was. Some of the traits requested by participants were indicative of sincerity as well as ingratiation, so they were not very diagnostic. Rationally, such test scores should not have influenced the impression very much (Bassok & Trope, 1984; Trope & Bassok, 1982, 1983; Trope, Bassok, & Alon, 1984); and yet they did just as much as the more diagnostic test scores. A possible explanation is that, in our study, the distribution of the traits was only implicitly available. Skov and Sherman (1986) explicitly presented percentages on how characteristics were distributed for each creature, and participants could easily see the difference in the distribution of the characteristics. The apparent prevalence for diagnostic information may be partially due to this presentation format, that is rarely

present outside the laboratory (Garcia-Marques, Sherman, & Palma-Oliveira, 2001). We used real traits and, as in real life, did not provide percentages, assuming that the distribution of the traits was implicitly available in participants' minds. In this situation, people may not notice as easily that some traits are not very informative. Hence, on the planet Earth, where frequency percentages of traits are not explicit, people's search strategies may often be based on erroneous conceptions of what an informative trait is.

Another explanation why participants were affected by even nondiagnostic information is that the context affects the meaning of the trait (cf., Asch, 1946; Hamilton & Zanna, 1974; Wyer & Watson, 1969; Wyer, 1974). For example, the ambiguous trait "looks out for self interest" can occur among both sincere and slimy people. Participants testing the sincere hypothesis may have given a more positive meaning to the trait "looks out for self interest" (e.g., not being a pushover), whereas participants testing the slimy hypothesis may have assigned a more negative connotation to it (e.g., being self-centered). This way, the test score does provide diagnostic information, because the hypothesis being tested changed the meaning of the trait (a sincere person is not as self-centered as a slimy person).

Apparently, participants were unaware that the information they requested was not always diagnostic. For example, when participants request the actor's test score on the trait "looks out for self interest", they presumably saw the test result as meaningful and assumed that a negative test score indicates high "sliminess," because people ingratiate themselves to get ahead in the world. In actuality, the trait is not diagnostic because both sincere and slimy people are perceived to possess this trait to some extent. However, if participants implicitly assume that looking out for self interest is indicative of sliminess, and thus conclude after a negative test score that the actor really is slimy as expected, they ignore the fact that sincere people often look out for their self interest as well (cf., the base-rate fallacy and the representativeness heuristic; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Tversky & Kahneman, in: Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982).

Our differential judgments and trait selections among targets and observers provide yet another illustration of the pervasive need for self-enhancement. For instance, people judge positive traits to be more characteristic of the self than negative ones (Alicke, 1985; Brown, 1986), they process and recall positive personality information more efficiently than negative personality information (Kuiper & Derry, 1982; Kuiper & MacDonald, 1982; Kuiper, Olinger, MacDonald, & Shaw, 1985), and are more likely to attribute positive than negative outcomes to the self (Bradley, 1978;

Miller & Ross, 1975; Ross & Fletcher, 1985; Zuckerman, 1979). Nevertheless, our findings also suggest that people are quite willing to revise their initial impression when they receive additional information revealing the flatterer's insincerity. For observers, this is not a surprising result, however, for targets the description was self-relevant so we might have expected them to accept the flattery without much thought (Gordon, 1996; Vonk, 2002) and maintain their favorable impression of the actor in the face of one slight piece of disconfirming evidence. The results suggest, however, that the possibility of ulterior motives makes targets less prone to persevere in their favorable impression of the actor, even though the actor boosted their self-esteem. The neutral judgments after additional information indicate that targets became suspicious after receiving additional negative information. Thus, suspicion of ulterior motives is a way to encourage healthy skepticism that can facilitate even the acceptance of evidence that is not preferred or not convenient.

Endnotes

[1] "In the Netherlands, where these studies were conducted, there is no general word for ingratiation… The verb 'to slime' [slijmen] refers to the behavior of ingratiating oneself for ulterior motives… As in English, a person who engages in this type of behavior is described by the adjective 'slimy' [slijmerig]. The word 'slime' and its conjugations have a negative connotation and are used frequently to describe flattery, overly friendly behavior, and brown-nosing. So, for all practical purposes, these words refer to the same class of behaviors as the term ingratiation, but they are much more informal" (quoted from Vonk, 1998b, pp. 849-850).

[2] The data analyzed in this study are a combination of data from four experiments conducted at Leiden University and Radboud University Nijmegen. For a more detailed description of the separate experiments, see Vonk, 2002. The four experiments are almost identical, but they each contained different independent variables which were dropped from the present analyses. The previously reported studies (Vonk, 2002) focus on the effects of Condition and other independent variables on the first impressions of the actor. The results described in the present paper, on subsequent information search and the effects of this additional information, have not been reported previously.

[3] In experiment one, expected interaction was manipulated, such that half of the participants were misled to believe they would work on a task with the actor; in

the other experiments there was no expected interaction, and participants were told that participants in the other group were receiving a smaller financial reward for the study, and that they could later decide to increase the reward of the actor.

[4] In one experiment, participants were subsequently allowed to obtain test results on a second and third trait; analyses on the combined 1st through 3rd choice produced the same pattern of results as on the 1st choice only, so this question was dropped in subsequent experiments.

[5] This effect can be accounted for by the expected interaction among half of the participants in this experiment (see footnote 3).

[6] Also, a main effect of gender was found: Women judged the actor as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy. This effect was qualified by an interaction with Condition, such that female targets rated the actor more favorably than male targets, whereas for male and female observers there was no difference. Because gender effects are difficult to interpret in this study (since gender of the participant and gender of the actor are confounded), it was dropped from subsequent analyses.

[7] Experiment number and gender did not show any systematic main or interaction effects; therefore, they were dropped from the analyses. Self-esteem did not mediate any of the effects found and is not described further.

[8] Regression analysis produced the same results.

Chapter 4

I Bet You Say That To All The Girls (Boys):

When Flattery Does Not Work[*]

Suppose someone approaches you after a presentation that you held and tells you it was the most interesting talk he or she ever heard. You feel flattered and start talking with the person. While you are pondering a little if your presentation was really that great, you think "That is a really nice person." A colleague, who is standing next to you, later says "Who was that sweet-talker, what did he want from you?"

Research demonstrates that people who are flattered judge the flatterer as more credible, and like the person more, than people who observe the ingratiating behavior as outsiders (Gordon, 1996). This target-observer difference is caused by the target's motivation to be flattered (Vonk, 2002). When people are the target of ingratiation, their self-esteem is served by accepting the flattery uncritically; they feel good about themselves when they are flattered and do not question the ingratiator's motives. On the other hand, when people are observing ingratiating behavior, their ego is not at stake and they may examine the behavior more thoroughly. In the example above, this would mean that you, as the receiver of a compliment, form a more favorable impression of the ingratiator -this way serving your self-esteem- than your colleague, who is an uninvolved observer of the interaction.

Researchers have unsuccessfully tried to identify variables that moderate or qualify the target-observer effect. Vonk (2002) found that the target-observer difference in judgments of an ingratiator is not affected by variables such as cognitive resources, the motive to like one's interaction partner, the motive to form an accurate impression, or mood. Nor is it qualified by personality variables such as self-esteem, dominance orientation, or narcissism. Thus, we can conclude that the target-observer effect is quite robust. This is underscored by the results from a study we conducted (see Chapter 3; Marchand & Vonk, under review b) in which the target-observer difference persisted even after participants received additional trait information discrediting the ingratiator. For example, after they received information that the ingratiator was not very reliable

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[*] This chapter is based on Marchand, M. A. G., & Vonk, R. (under review a).

compared to other people, targets still judged the ingratiator as more likeable and more sincere than observers did. Thus, it appears that targets maintain their relatively positive impression of the ingratiator, even when they obtain trait information that sheds a different light on the ingratiating behavior.

In this sense, the target-observer difference resembles a perseverance effect, in that the impression that targets form of the ingratiator is remarkably perseverant and unresponsive to new input, even in the face of discrediting evidence (cf., Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Ross, Lepper, & Hubbard, 1975). However, it is possible that the discrediting evidence used so far was not powerful enough. In our earlier study we used trait information to influence the target-observer effect, whereas in general trait descriptions are seen as relatively uninformative compared with behavior descriptions (Rodin, 1972). Behavior descriptions, even though they are more specific than traits, are seen as "hard evidence" of how a person really is. In addition, they are more concrete and vivid. It is conceivable that the target-observer difference persists unless targets are confronted with such hard evidence; i.e., when we rub their face in the ingratiator's insincerity by means of concrete, vivid, and salient behavioral information. Generally, information that is salient, available, or vivid tends to have more impact (e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Therefore, in the present study, instead of providing participants with trait information that the ingratiator is insincere, we made sure that participants found this out themselves, by observing that the ingratiator flattered another person in exactly the same way.

We examined the effects of this additional behavior information in an internet dating setting. Targets and observers received an extremely positive description (T1), after which it became clear that the ingratiator said the same ingratiating things to another person (T2). At T1, we predict a target-observer difference for judgments of the ingratiator, replicating earlier research. At T2, we hypothesize that this difference will disappear. We also measured cognitive variables (based on Swann, Griffin, Predmore, and Gaines, 1987) and affective variables (mood) at T1 and T2.

Study 4.1

Overview

In an experiment simulating a dating situation, participants received an ingratiating response to their own profile (targets) or to the profile of another participant

(observers), and formed an impression about the person who wrote the response (actor). Subsequently, participants read an almost identical ingratiating response from the same actor, this time about the profile of another (third) participant, thus revealing the insincerity of the actor, after which they rated the actor again.

Method

   Participants and design.   Participants were 81 undergraduates with different majors (45 women, 36 men) at the Radboud University Nijmegen. They were recruited from a subject pool that was set up at the beginning of the academic year. They were approached by telephone to participate in an experiment about internet dating. An appointment was made when participants agreed to take part in the experiment. The design was a Condition (target, observer) X Time (measure at T1 or T2) mixed subjects design, with Condition as a between- and Time as a within-subjects variable.

   Materials.   The materials used in this study are a profile, two flattering descriptions from an alleged other participant, and several dependent variables. The profile was a form on which participants filled out their personal characteristics. The profile screen looked different from other screens in the experiment: It had a different lay-out, font, font size, and color. Due to the use of radio buttons, it resembled an internet page, also because participants used mouse clicks to fill out the profile, whereas during the rest of the experiment they used the keyboard. Participants had to indicate their gender, age, and whether they were looking for a friendship, a relationship, sex, or e-mail contact. Furthermore, they were asked to select from 12 options what they felt was important in a friendship or relationship: for example, respect, intelligence, intimacy, honesty, good sex, equality (multiple responses were possible); from 15 options what their most important personality traits were: for example, humorous, extraverted, modest, impulsive, sportive, romantic; and from 12 options what their hobbies were: for example, reading, going to the cinema, listening to music, traveling, shopping, going out, playing sports. Finally, participants had to type an open-ended description of themselves in a box at the bottom of the screen.

   The profiles filled out by alleged other participants looked exactly the same, but were already filled out and could not be edited. These profiles were of Simon/Simone and Michiel/Michelle (depending on the participant's sex) and were filled out in a way a typical student would.

Two flattering responses to a profile were used, allegedly given by another participant. The first flattering response was from Martin/Martine, whose name was indicated at the bottom of the page by showing the sender's name. In the experimental condition, in which participants read a response to their own profile, it was made clear at the top of the page that it was a response to the profile of "…" (participant's own name), in the control condition it was a response to the profile of "Daan" or "Daantje" (depending on the participant's sex). The description itself was quite flattering and went as follows:

"Great that I received your profile. I was afraid I had to respond to somebody I wouldn't find interesting at all, but the opposite is true. You seem like an extremely nice person. You find exactly the same things important that I do. I also feel you have many different interests and that you are fun to be around, but you can also be serious when necessary and you think about what's important in life. I think it's super that I received your profile!!! and I wonder if it was a coincidence or that it was meant to be ;-) "

The second flattering description was also from Martin/Martine (depending on the participant's sex) and was similar to the first one. This time it was a response to "Leon" or "Leonie". There were some changes in the order of the text and some words were replaced by their synonyms, but in other respects the two responses were the same. Both responses contained a few typing errors in order to appear realistic.

We used three different kinds of dependent variables, all measured on 7-point scales: 1) Judgments about the actor on a series of 9 traits, including likeable, sincere, and slimy[1]. 2) Cognitive variables (12 in total), e.g., how accurate do you think the actor's impression is; how informative do you think the description is. 3) Affective variables (10 in total), in which we asked participants to indicate how they felt at that moment (e.g., happy, sad, angry).

Procedure.   Participants participated in groups of 6 to 8 in which half were men and half were women. Sometimes they saw each other before the experiment started, but they never knew any of the participants of the other sex. Upon arrival for their appointment, they were seated behind a computer in individual cubicles. They were told they would take part in a study about internet dating, in which we would be looking at first impressions in internet contacts. They were led to believe that the computers were connected to each other, so that information could be transmitted from one participant to the other. They were told that the internet site was a simulation

because we did not want participants to surf the web during the experiment, so they were not really on the internet but were connected only with the other participants taking part at that moment. They waited until everyone was present and then the experimenter started the program.

The instructions repeated that we would be simulating an internet situation in which participants would have to pretend visiting a dating website. In this type of relationship seeking, it was explained, the first impression is often the most important. People decide to contact a person or not on the basis of a very short description (profile) of that person. When they receive a response to their profile, they decide on the basis of that response whether they want to pursue contact with the responder. We were interested in what people say in their profiles and particularly in how people respond to others' profile, in order to achieve a positive result, and how these responses affect the first impression. Participants were told that we wanted to motivate them to write realistic, positive responses to the profiles of others, and therefore the person who received the most positive evaluation as a result of their response, would win € 10.00. This way, we gave the ingratiator an ulterior motive for writing a flattering response.

Participants were asked to type in their first name and their gender. It was explained that this was necessary for the computer program to be able to send profiles to persons of the opposite sex. Participants then filled out the profile, in which they could mark their interests, hobbies, and personality traits. After clicking "send", the computer ostensibly started to send the profile to two other participants of the opposite sex who would respond to it; in reality, nobody read the profile of the participant.

Next, participants were invited to give a response to two profiles of other participants of the opposite sex. This was done to make it credible that at the same time, the profile of the participant was also being viewed by two persons. The computer ostensibly started searching for a profile, and after a while came up with the profile of Simon or Simone (depending on the participant's sex). The participant read the profile and could respond to it by clicking "respond". The response indicated the name of the participant and the name of the person whose profile was being viewed (Simon/Simone). After the participant had written and sent the response, the computer immediately searched for the second profile of Michiel or Michelle. Again, the participant read the profile, typed a response, and sent it by clicking "send".

Subsequently, participants read that they would now read someone else's response to a profile and that they were asked to form an impression of the person who

wrote the response. They were asked to imagine, just as in an internet dating situation, that they had received a response to a profile on the internet and had to decide whether or not the other person was interesting enough to give a reply. Thus, they were asked to give an evaluation of the person who wrote the response. Half of the participants were told that the response was to their own profile, the other half read that they would receive a response to a profile of somebody else.[2]

Participants then read the flattering response to either their own profile or another profile and rated the ingratiator on a series of trait scales (including likeable, sincere, and slimy), on cognitive variables, followed by the affective variables (mood). The second flattering response came from the same ingratiator, but this time it was always a response to the profile of another (third) participant. At this point, then, the participants found out that the ingratiator made almost the same flattering comments towards another participant. Participants rated the same ingratiator on the same dependent variables. The instructions stressed that all responses were strictly anonymous and would not be shown to any other participant. Several additional questions were asked, such as whether the participant was heterosexual, had ever met someone on the internet, and if the participant was single or not.

Finally, to probe for suspicion, participants were asked to type in their ideas about the goal of the study. Then they returned to the experimenter, who paid, thanked and debriefed them.

Results and Discussion

Three participants were excluded from the analyses (1 target, 2 observers), one because she was in the wrong condition (see footnote 2), and two because their responses to the open-ended question reflected suspicion about the goal of the study. Participants' gender did not influence the results (all Fs < 1) and was removed from analyses. Sexual preference (heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual), relationship status (single or not), and whether or not participants had ever met someone on the internet did not moderate any of the results found (Fs ≤ 1.67, *ns.*) and are therefore not discussed.[3]

A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Time) multivariate analysis of variance, with T1 vs. T2 as within-subjects variable, on ratings for likeable, sincere, and slimy produced a main effect of Condition, $F(3, 74) = 3.61$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .13$. Participants in the target condition judged the actor as more likeable ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.16$) than observers ($M =$

3.97, $SD = 1.56$), $F(1, 76) = 9.57$, $p < .01$ and as more sincere ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.29$) than observers ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.15$), $F(1, 76) = 5.78$, $p < .05$; on ratings for slimy the means were as expected, but the difference failed to reach significance (targets: $M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.27$; observers: $M = 6.14$, $SD = 1.01$), $F(1, 76) = 2.05$, ns. These results replicate the target-observer effect. A main effect of Time, $F(3, 74) = 19.33$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .44$, indicated that, compared with T1, participants judged the actor at T2 as less likeable ($M1 = 5.24$, $SD1 = 1.87$ vs. $M2 = 3.73$, $SD2 = 1.74$), $F(1, 76) = 35.91$, $p < .01$ and less sincere ($M1 = 3.88$, $SD1 = 1.64$ vs. $M2 = 2.62$, $SD2 = 1.50$), $F(1, 76) = 35.64$, $p < .01$; on ratings for slimy there was no significant difference ($M1 = 5.92$, $SD1 = 1.34$ vs. $M2 = 5.95$, $SD2 = 1.35$), $F < 1$. The interaction effect was not significant, $F(3, 74) = 1.37$, ns.

Effects found on the cognitive variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$) paralleled those on the trait ratings and were completely mediated by these ratings. Therefore, these effects are not described further below.[4]

Regarding the affective variables, Cronbach's α for the items happy, positive, proud, angry, and disappointed (after recoding the latter two) was .75.[5] An ANOVA on this scale produced a main effect of Condition, $F(1, 76) = 6.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$, of Time, $F(1, 76) = 14.95$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .16$, and a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 76) = 7.67$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$. At T1 targets ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .78$) felt significantly better than observers ($M = 5.14$, $SD = .80$), $F(1, 76) = 12.05$, $p < .01$, whereas at T2 the difference between targets and observers disappeared (respectively, $M = 5.19$, $SD = .80$ and $M = 5.04$, $SD = .71$), $F < 1$.

In short, the hypothesis that the target-observer effect would disappear at T2 was only confirmed for the affective variables and not for the judgments. This may be due to the fact that targets are still motivated at T2 to judge the ingratiator as more likeable, sincere, and less slimy, even though their affective response has been affected. Alternatively, it is possible that an anchoring effect affected the ratings at T2 (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Since the dependent variables were assessed both at T1 and T2, the measure at T1 could have served as an anchor for the second measure, this way sustaining the target-observer difference. Both groups adjusted their impressions at T2, but if they retrieved their initial ratings at T1 as an anchor (which were more positive for targets) the difference persists. To examine this possibility, we conducted a second study with measurements at T2 only.

Study 4.2

Method

Forty-three students (13 men, 30 women) at the Radboud University Nijmegen participated in Study 4.2. The method was the same[6] as in Study 4.1, with the exception that all dependent variables were assessed only at T2; at T1 participants only wrote down their thoughts about the actor for three minutes.

Results

The results from Study 4.2 show that for all dependent variables, there was no effect for Condition at T2; all $Fs < 1.29$, $\eta^2 s \le .03$. Targets and observers rated the same on judgments and affect (for mean scores at T2, see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Means, SDs (enclosed in parentheses) and F-values for the univariate analyses of the results from Study 4.1 and 4.2 combined

Dependent Variables	Condition	Time T1	T2	Condition X Time
Likeable	Target	5.88 (1.37)	3.82 (1.65)	$F(1, 117) = 4.53^*$
	Observer	4.50 (2.12)	3.81 (1.50)	
Sincere	Target	4.26 (1.65)	2.45 (1.37)	$F(1, 117) = 2.34$
	Observer	3.44 (1.52)	2.52 (1.40)	
Slimy	Target	5.67 (1.48)	6.14 (1.08)	$F(1, 117) = 4.17^*$
	Observer	6.22 (1.10)	5.62 (1.83)	
Affect	Target	5.76 (.78)	5.09 (.75)	$F(1, 117) = 3.17^{\dagger}$
	Observer	5.14 (.80)	5.00 (.81)	

$^*p < .05$. $^{\dagger}p = .08$.

Thus, as hypothesized, the target-observer difference disappeared for ratings at T2, suggesting that the difference in Study 4.1 was caused by anchoring effects. Unfortunately, these are null effects. To examine the predicted Condition X Time interaction, we added the data from Study 4.2 to the data from Study 4.1 (i.e., we combined Study 4.1 and 4.2), such that ratings at T1 are from Study 4.1 and ratings at

T2 are from Study 4.2, allowing a between-subjects comparison. In this analysis, the hypothesized Condition X Time interaction for ratings on likeable, sincere, and slimy was marginally significant, $F(3, 115) = 2.52$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .06$; at T1 a target-observer effect occurred, whereas at T2 this effect disappeared (for the univariate analyses, see Table 4.1).

Discussion

Study 4.1 replicates the target-observer difference at T1: Targets judged the ingratiator as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy than observers. Study 4.2 shows that these differences disappear at T2, provided that no ratings have been given at T1. Thus, it appears that the target-observer difference that remained present at T2 in the first study can be ascribed to an anchoring effect, since the difference disappeared in the second study. For the affective variables, no anchoring effect was found in the first study, which may be explained by assuming that participants give their ratings for affect more intuitively and on a more implicit level. Therefore, they may not base their affective response on their earlier ratings for affect, but base it on how they experience their emotions. For the judgments, we assume that the first ratings were used as an anchor for the second ratings. Another possible explanation is that the anchoring effect was not found in affective ratings due to the instruction. We explicitly asked participants to indicate how they felt "at that moment" and participants therefore may not have used the earlier ratings.

In Study 4.3, we want to replicate these results in a single study. Based on the results from Study 4.1, we hypothesize a replication of the target-observer difference at T1. And based on Study 4.2, we hypothesize that this difference disappears at T2. In addition, we assessed reading times to see how long participants took to read the two flattering responses and think about them. Fein (1996) suggests that suspicion of ulterior motives triggers active, sophisticated attributional thinking. Presumably, observers are more suspicious about the motives of the ingratiator than targets, so we hypothesize that observers process the response at T1 in a more systematic way than targets, who simply accept the response as accurate. At T1, then, we predict longer reading times for observers than for targets, indicating that they are more uncertain about their judgment (Ybarra, Schaberg, & Keiper, 1999). At T2, in general, we expect reading times to be shorter than at T1, because participants read almost the same text for the second time.

We also predict that when observers receive specific and diagnostic evidence of the actor's insincerity, they are not suspicious anymore, but are certain and, as a result, they read the second response very fast. Targets, on the other hand, should become suspicious for the first time when they receive the additional information. Thus, they will be more uncertain about their judgment, and reading times will be relatively long.

In addition to the assessment of the reading times, participants in this study are asked to what extent they feel "fooled" and "hurt"; these are more specific feelings that we assume could be particularly relevant to the process among targets. For these two emotions, we hypothesize that the target-observer difference is only present at T2, because at that moment targets find out that the ingratiator is insincere, and they may feel fooled and possibly hurt because they "bought it" at T1. Observers, on the other hand, were already suspicious and therefore do not feel fooled. Thus, we predict an interaction effect of Condition X Time for these specific emotions.

Study 4.3

Method

Participants and design.   Participants were 88 undergraduates with different majors (67 women, 21 men) at the Radboud University Nijmegen. They were invited to participate in an experiment about internet dating during a psychology seminar for freshmen. An appointment was made when participants agreed to take part in the experiment. Other participants volunteered at the laboratory and made an appointment on the spot. The design was a Condition (target versus observer) X Time (measure at T1 or T2) between-subjects design. The materials used were identical to those in Study 4.1.

Procedure.   Comparable to Study 4.1 and 4.2, the study simulated a dating situation: Targets and observers received an ingratiating response to their own profile or to the profile of another participant (Condition), and formed an impression about the person who wrote the response (actor). Subsequently, participants received an almost identical ingratiating response from the same actor, this time about the profile of another (third) participant, thus revealing the insincerity of the actor. Reading times for both responses were assessed unobtrusively: The computer registered the time from the moment participants started reading the response until the moment they pressed the return key to continue. Participants wrote down their thoughts for three minutes immediately after they read the ingratiating response, both at T1 and T2. After these

three minutes, judgments about the actor (likeable, sincere, and slimy) and affective variables (mood), including "fooled" and "hurt" were measured, either at T1 or T2 (varied between subjects), so they were assessed only once.

Results

One participant erroneously assumed that the second response came from someone of the same sex, and was excluded from the analyses. There were no systematic gender effects, so gender was removed from the analyses.

A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Time) multivariate[7] analysis of variance on ratings for likeable, sincere, and slimy produced a main effect of Time, $F(3, 81) = 7.80$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .22$, as well as the predicted Condition X Time interaction, $F(3, 81) = 2.84$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .10$ (see Table 4.2). At T1, targets judged the actor as more likeable ($M = 5.77$, $SD = .75$) than observers ($M = 5.14$, $SD = .96$), whereas at T2 this difference was absent ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.05$ versus $M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.22$, respectively), $F(1, 83) = 3.91$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Furthermore, targets judged the actor at T1 as more sincere ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.36$) than observers ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.69$), whereas at T2 this difference disappeared ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.18$ versus $M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.66$, respectively), $F(1, 83) = 6.42$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Finally, targets judged the actor at T1 as less slimy ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.47$) than observers ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.34$), whereas at T2 this difference was absent ($M = 6.50$, $SD = .80$ versus $M = 6.09$, $SD = 1.06$, respectively), $F(1, 83) = 4.16$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. There was no main effect for Condition, $F < 1$.

Table 4.2

Means, SDs (enclosed in parentheses) and F-values for the univariate analyses of the results from Study 4.3

Dependent Variables	Condition	Time		Condition X Time
		T1	T2	
Likeable	Target	5.77 (.75)	4.41 (1.05)	$F(1, 83) = 3.91$*
	Observer	5.14 (.96)	4.64 (1.22)	
Sincere	Target	4.64 (1.36)	2.64 (1.18)	$F(1, 83) = 6.42$**
	Observer	3.48 (1.69)	3.09 (1.66)	
Slimy	Target	5.36 (1.47)	6.50 (.80)	$F(1, 83) = 4.16$*
	Observer	6.00 (1.34)	6.09 (1.06)	

*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

Regarding the affective variables, Cronbach's α for the items happy, positive, proud, angry, and disappointed (after recoding the latter two) was .72. An ANOVA on the mean of this scale produced a main effect of Condition, $F(1, 83) = 13.02$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .14$; a main effect of Time, $F(1, 83) = 4.58$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$; and a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 83) = 5.67$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (see Table 4.3). At T1, targets ($M = 5.91$, $SD = .45$) felt significantly better than observers ($M = 4.93$, $SD = .86$), whereas at T2 the difference between targets and observers disappeared (respectively, $M = 5.17$, $SD = .86$ versus $M = 4.97$, $SD = .80$).

Table 4.3

Means, SDs (enclosed in parentheses) and F-values for the univariate analyses of the affective results from Study 4.3

Affect	Target	5.91 (.45)	5.17 (.86)	$F(1, 83) = 5.67*$
	Observer	4.93 (.86)	4.97 (.80)	
Fooled	Target	1.14 (.35)	3.09 (1.77)	$F(1, 83) = 12.43**$
	Observer	1.62 (1.12)	1.73 (1.20)	
Hurt	Target	1.18 (.66)	2.14 (1.49)	$F(1, 83) = 6.86**$
	Observer	1.57 (1.25)	1.27 (.88)	

*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

A separate 2 (Condition) X 2 (Time) multivariate analysis of variance on ratings for the variables "feeling fooled" and "feeling hurt" produced a main effect of Time, $F(2, 82) = 8.77$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .18$; as well as the predicted two-way interaction, $F(2, 82) = 6.25$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .13$. Targets at T1 did not feel fooled ($M = 1.14$, $SD = .35$) or hurt ($M = 1.18$, $SD = .66$), just as observers did not feel fooled ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 1.12$) or hurt ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 1.25$), whereas at T2 targets felt more fooled ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.77$) and hurt ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 1.49$) than observers ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 1.20$ and $M = 1.27$, $SD = .88$) respectively (see Table 4.3). There was no main effect for Condition, $F(2, 82) = 1.40$, *ns*.

In the analyses of the reading times, two participants (1 target, 1 observer) were removed because they were outliers (i.e., more than three standard deviations from the mean). A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Time) ANOVA on the reading times, with Time as within-subjects variable, produced a main effect of Condition, $F(1, 83) = 3.85$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 =$

.04; a main effect of Time, $F(1, 83) = 35.05$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .30$; and a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 83) = 9.83$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$ (see Table 4.4). As hypothesized, observers read the ingratiating response longer at T1 ($M = 63.47s$, $SD = 26.99$) than targets ($M = 48.47s$, $SD = 17.24$), indicating that observers were more uncertain about their judgment. At T2, targets ($M = 41.60s$, $SD = 18.21$) and observers ($M = 41.14s$, $SD = 18.18$) did not differ in their reading times. As hypothesized, participants in general read the second response faster than the first. Surprisingly, targets did not read the second response longer than observers. This issue will be addressed in the general discussion.

Table 4.4

Means, SDs (enclosed in parentheses) and F-values for the analyses of the reading times from Study 4.3

Dependent Variables	Condition	Response		Condition X Time
		T1	T2	
Reading times	Target	48.47s (17.24)	41.60s (18.21)	$F(1, 83) = 9.83**$
	Observer	63.47s (26.99)	41.14s (18.18)	

** $p < .01$.

Although we did not formulate any hypotheses about participants' open-ended thought listings, these were also analyzed. We counted the number of times a word occurred in the following categories: 1) positive evaluative judgments of the ingratiator (i.e., trait terms such as likeable and spontaneous), 2) negative evaluative judgments (i.e., trait terms, such as slimy and insincere), 3) positive cognitive remarks (e.g., the description is accurate or is indeed about me), 4) negative cognitive remarks (e.g., the description is not accurate or not about me), 5) positive affective comments (e.g., I feel good, cheerful), 6) negative affective comments (e.g., I feel bad, disappointed), 7) positive behavioral intention (e.g., I would like to meet the ingratiator, go on a date with the ingratiator), 8) negative behavioral intention (e.g., do not want to go on a date), and 9) ulterior motives of the ingratiator (e.g., the ingratiator wants to win extra money, is desperately looking for a date). A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Time) MANOVA on the frequencies of these nine categories, with Time as within-subjects variable, produced a main effect of Condition, $F(13, 71) = 3.45$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .39$; a main effect of Time,

$F(13, 71) = 8.19$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .60$; and a significant two-way interaction, $F(13, 71) = 2.13$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .28$ (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Means, SDs (enclosed in parentheses) and F-values for the thought listings analyses from Study 4.3

Dependent Variables	Condition	Time		Condition X Time
		T1	T2	
positive evaluation	Target	2.90 (1.30)	1.14 (1.16)	$F(1, 83) = 6.19$**
	Observer	1.93 (1.56)	1.09 (1.31)	
negative evaluation	Target	.38 (.70)	.93 (1.05)	$F(1, 83) = 1.03$
	Observer	.63 (.98)	.93 (1.06)	
positive cognition	Target	.60 (.86)	.02 (.15)	$F(1, 83) = 7.24$**
	Observer	.26 (.44)	.12 (.32)	
negative cognition	Target	.52 (.67)	.43 (.63)	$F(1, 83) < 1$
	Observer	.67 (.89)	.53 (.63)	
positive behavior	Target	.62 (.54)	.29 (.55)	$F(1, 83) = 3.78$*
	Observer	.16 (.37)	.07 (.26)	
negative behavior	Target	.05 (.22)	.17 (.44)	$F(1, 83) = 4.14$*
	Observer	.12 (.32)	.05 (.21)	
positive affect	Target	.74 (.91)	.33 (.61)	$F(1, 83) = 8.00$**
	Observer	.07 (.34)	.07 (.34)	
negative affect	Target	.02 (.15)	.38 (.58)	$F(1, 83) = 4.53$*
	Observer	.19 (.50)	.23 (.53)	
ulterior motive	Target	.31 (.56)	.90 (1.01)	$F(1, 83) = 6.85$**
	Observer	.79 (.89)	.74 (.98)	

*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

In general, participants' written thoughts paralleled the other results. At T1, targets wrote more thoughts about positive evaluation ("I think he is very sympathetic"), positive cognition ("It is as if he really knows me"), positive behavior ("I would like to meet her in real life"), and positive affect ("I feel good") than observers, and wrote fewer thoughts about negative behavior ("I would never go on a date with such a

person"), negative affect ("I feel irritated"), and ulterior motives ("He is definitely after the money") than observers; whereas at T2 these differences disappeared or were reduced, resulting in a Condition X Time interaction. This interaction was significant in all univariate tests, except for negative cognition and negative evaluative judgment, but the means for negative evaluative judgment were in the same direction: Targets were less negative ("What a slime") about the ingratiator at T1, whereas at T2, they mentioned words concerning slimy and insincere as much as observers.

General Discussion

Previous research suggests that flattery is like a warm bath that puts targets asleep peacefully and prevents them from critical considerations of the ingratiator's motives. The present data indicate that concrete and salient evidence of an ingratiator's insincerity does have the effect of waking them up. In our studies, the target-observer difference was replicated: Participants who were ingratiated judged the flatterer as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy than participants who were observing the flatterer. In addition, they experienced more positive affect. When participants found out that the flatterer said almost the same things to someone else, the difference disappeared. The same pattern of results was found for participants' thoughts, which they wrote down before the other ratings were asked.

The reading times of the flattering responses suggest that participants who are ingratiated engage in simplified processing, taking the flattery at face value. In fact, their relatively short reading times is a surprising result, considering that they were reading about themselves, and other research suggests that people are more attentive to social feedback if it confirms their self-views (Swann, 1987; Swann & Read, 1981) which would lead to longer reading times. Note, however, that we compared participants who receive positive feedback about themselves with participants who receive positive feedback about someone else, and not with participants who receive negative feedback about themselves.

Observers of flattery processed the information longer, even though it was self-irrelevant, suggesting that they were scrutinizing the content and tried to decide if the actor had ulterior motives (cf., Fein, 1996). These results seem in line with an earlier study, in which observers requested both positive and negative trait information about a flattering actor, thus suggesting they tried to find out if the actor had ulterior motives. In contrast, targets requested more positive traits, suggesting they wanted to find out if the

actor was sincere (see Chapter 3; Marchand & Vonk, under review b). Presumably, targets have no question that the ingratiator is sincere and likeable; they do not need to read the description in our study very long, because the behavior is not ambiguous to them. Observers, on the other hand, try to determine the evaluative meaning of the ingratiator's behavior, which is reflected in a relatively long elaboration. Note that observers' judgments of the ingratiator were also more moderate, indicating that they were sitting on a fence, not knowing whether the ingratiator's behavior was authentic or not; i.e., whether the ingratiator really liked the person s/he responded to, or whether s/he was trying to earn extra money by writing a response that the other person would surely like. Upon receiving the second, similarly flattering description about someone else, observers' reading times were much faster, suggesting that the ambiguity was resolved. Similarly, an earlier scenario study (Vonk, 1998) showed that, once observers are suspicious about an actor's motives, they require very little cognitive effort to process information confirming that the actor has an ulterior motive and, subsequently, make more extreme negative judgments.

Interestingly, targets read the second response as fast as the observers did, suggesting that they were also relatively certain about their judgments. Possibly, the concrete behavioral information immediately made targets certain about the insincerity of the ingratiator. It is also possible that targets actually were still ambiguous and uncertain, but they just did not want to elaborate about the ingratiator's motives, because it would make them feel bad. More detailed examination of participants' open-ended responses suggests, however, that after the second response, targets were thinking the same things as observers: Targets mentioned possible ulterior motives of the ingratiator at least as often as observers; and occurrence of words reflecting sliminess and insincerity also did not differ between the two. The open responses thus suggest that targets were aware of the sliminess and ulterior motives of the ingratiator, and the fast reading times indicate that they did not elaborate long about this. Apparently, targets acknowledged it would be a rare coincidence if another participant had filled out the profile exactly the same as they did. As one target wrote: "… It is obvious that Martin's responses to me and Leonie are almost the same. I doubt that she had the same profile as I had; he must be insincere." Apparently, such inferences about low distinctiveness in an actor's behavior (cf., Kelly, 1967) can be made rather quickly and are reflected in a decline in positive responses mentioned in their thoughts listings.

In these studies, we also examined affective variables. Participants who were flattered felt better than participants who were observing the flattery; they felt more happy, positive, and proud, and less angry and disappointed. As soon as they found out that the ingratiator said the same things to another person, they felt the same as observers. This suggests that the good feeling participants get from being flattered disappears when they become aware that the ingratiator also flatters others. In addition, more specific affective ratings revealed that targets felt somewhat fooled and hurt when they found out the ingratiator was not sincere, as if they got a slap in the face, whereas observers felt the same as before. These affect patterns were also manifested in participants' thought listings, before they were presented with the rating scales: Targets at T1 wrote down more often that they felt good, or positive than observers, whereas at T2 negative affective terms increased (e.g., "it is a pity"). It is possible that this also affected the judgments to some extent: Participants who were ingratiated and found out the behavior was not sincere, judged the ingratiator somewhat more negatively than observers. This pattern of results suggests that it is less pleasant for participants to find out that the actor was not sincere when they did not expect it.

Although an internet dating situation may appear to represent a context in which people are more prone to be skeptic about flattery, our data suggest otherwise. After the first flattering response, targets accepted the flattery without much scrutinizing: They judged the actor positively (as indicated in their trait ratings and their own written thoughts) and they did not study the flattering response very long. Note that people generally give much attention to positive feedback about themselves (Baumeister & Cairns, 1992), which should produce long reading times in this situation, yet our targets went through the response quicker than observers. Thus, at first, targets are not really skeptic about the actor's flattery. As one participant wrote: "Wow, impressive, that someone can really get to know me so well just by reading my profile." It appears, then, that even in a situation in which flattery may be expected, targets were not skeptical. Nevertheless, they were willing to judge the actor much less positively after they found out s/he was also flattering someone else.

We may assume that in everyday life, when there is more at stake and people are more emotionally involved with others, these effects are more powerful. In our study, when targets found out the ingratiator was not sincere, they were still feeling rather positive (5 on a 7-point scale), and there was no difference with observers. In the thought listings they sometimes mentioned the word "funny" or wrote "hahaha" (which

was categorized as positive affect). Also, although they indicated that they felt more fooled and hurt than observers, these ratings were still on the lower end of the scale, and in the thought listings they used rather mild words indicating negative affect ("too bad," "it is a pity," "I feel fooled a little"). Similarly, they did not judge the ingratiator as very dislikeable. In real life situations, the effects observed here may be more pronounced. For example, in the laboratory, participants who were flattered often stayed very cheerful after thorough debriefing, whereas in real situations people value sincerity very highly and might even get angry when they find out they were played with. When someone or something is important to you, additional information revealing insincerity may have an enormous impact.

People generally prefer to have a positive self-view and are willing to accept flattering compliments about the self without much thought (Gordon, 1996; Vonk, 2002). Previous studies suggest that this motive is more powerful than the need to form accurate impressions of an ingratiator or to be cautious because the ingratiator could be after the participant's very own money (Vonk, 2002). Obviously, however, reality puts constraints on the self-enhancement principle, and the situation here is a case in point. Although people are motivated to like an ingratiator, and are put in a good mood by flattery, they are not completely oblivious. When they receive vivid and salient evidence that the ingratiating comments are not exclusive and are given to others as well, the generally robust and persistent target-observer effect disappears. This suggests that targets do want to avoid being fooled. And, for good reason: in real life, it can have far-reaching consequences if you don't.

Endnotes

[1] "In the Netherlands, where these studies were conducted, there is no general word for ingratiation… The verb 'to slime' [slijmen] refers to the behavior of ingratiating oneself for ulterior motives… As in English, a person who engages in this type of behavior is described by the adjective 'slimy' [slijmerig]. The word 'slime' and its conjugations have a negative connotation and are used frequently to describe flattery, overly friendly behavior, and brown-nosing. So, for all practical purposes, these words refer to the same class of behaviors as the term ingratiation, but they are much more informal" (quoted from Vonk, 1998, pp. 849-850).

[2] Participants were randomly assigned to the target or observer condition, with the exception of 3 participants named Daan or Daantje (the name of the person

described in the observer condition), who were always assigned to the target condition in order to avoid confusion.

[3] In Studies 4.2 and 4.3, sexual preference, relationship status, and whether or not participants had ever met someone on the internet also did not moderate any of the results found (Fs < 1), so these variables are not discussed further.

[4] As in Study 4.1, effects found on the cognitive variable in Studies 4.2 and 4.3 were also completely mediated by the trait ratings, therefore the cognitive variable was removed from subsequent analyses. We did not find evidence for the two separate routes as described by Swann et al. (1987).

[5] This subset of variables yielded the highest reliability for Study 4.1 and Study 4.2 combined.

[6] In this study, more women than men participated. Therefore, on some occasions the presence of participants of the other sex was faked by saying that the other, male, participants were already seated in the cubicles, and we had been waiting for them to start. Comments at debriefing indicated that participants had not questioned the presence of other people.

[7] We analyzed the ratings for liking, sincere, and slimy in a multivariate analysis (and not as one composed variable), because the traits do not necessarily correlate highly. For example, an actor behaving very positively to everybody all the time is rated high on likeable but also on slimy (Vonk, 1998). In an analysis where we did combine the three traits into one composed measure, the results were the same. The other traits used in our studies were included as fillers.

Chapter 5

When Flattery Does Not Work:

The Importance of Descriptive Consistency[*]

People like to be viewed favorably. According to the self-enhancement principle, people have the tendency to seek positive or self-enhancing feedback. A great deal of empirical evidence demonstrates this motive (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; Greenwald, 1980; Jones, 1964; Jones & Pittman, 1982). The self-enhancement principle also implies that people want others to treat them in a positive manner (Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987). For example, people are generally very willing to accept flattering compliments (Gordon, 1996). And this makes sense, since it is healthier to sustain a positive self-image than a negative one (Taylor & Brown, 1988).

People also like to be viewed accurately. According to the self-verification principle, people display a clear preference for self-consistent feedback; i.e., feedback that verifies and sustains the image they have of themselves (Swann & Read, 1981). A great deal of evidence supports this assumption (e.g., Baumgardner & Brownlee, 1987; Swann, 1987, 1997). The self-verification principle assumes that people want others to perceive them as they perceive themselves (Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987). And this makes sense, because it makes the world a predictable and controllable place.

Thus, people are simultaneously motivated to self-enhance and self-verify and they will try to satisfy both motives when possible (for a review, Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989). Since most people have high self-esteem (Ross & Wilson, 2002) people generally like positive feedback, because it is self-enhancing and self-verifying at the same time. It is evaluatively positive and thus self-enhancing and it is accurate because they have a positive self-view. In line with this reasoning, research on ulterior motives has shown that targets of ingratiation are more accepting of a flattering response (Jones, 1990) and less sensitive to the possibility of ulterior motives (Jones, Stires, Shaver, & Harris, 1968) than observers of ingratiation.

Presumably, targets accept the flattery without much thought, because it is self-enhancing and their ego is at stake, whereas observers' ego is not (Vonk, 2002).

The target-observer effect is a robust effect, so by now we have obtained quite a lot of evidence for this difference (Marchand & Vonk, under review a, b). For example, targets' ratings of an ingratiator are more positive than observers' ratings (see Chapters 3 and 4). However, there are also limits to the effect. Data from an alleged internet dating study show that the target-observer difference disappears when participants find out the ingratiator says the same flattering things to someone else, thus revealing his or her insincerity (see Chapter 4; Marchand & Vonk, under review a). Thus, although targets are motivated to self-enhance, they are not totally oblivious to ulterior motives and persuasion tactics. When they discover the flatterer's insincerity, they rate the ingratiator in the same way as observers, and the target-observer difference disappears. Also, when they become aware of the insincerity targets' mood becomes much less positive than before.

It appears that participants need to think the flattery is about them personally. Therefore, we decided to examine what happens when the ingratiator flatters participants (and not someone else), but the flattery is not self-consistent, e.g., they are complimented about a trait they do not possess. Thus, our study is a 2 (Target/Observer) X 2 (Consistent/Inconsistent with self) design.

We hypothesize that for observers, who are not being flattered themselves but are only observing the flattering behavior, there will be no difference for the two flattering responses. Observers in general give more moderate judgments, because they are more suspicious about the ingratiator's motives and are uncertain what to think of him or her (cf., Fein, Hilton, & Miller, 1990, 1993; Vonk, 1999). For targets, according to the self-enhancement principle, it is expected that targets judge the flatterer as more likeable, regardless of the consistency of the flattery, because the response is positive and therefore self-enhancing. Thus, according to the self-enhancement principle, we should obtain a main effect of Condition, regardless of Consistency: Targets judge the ingratiator as more likeable, sincere, and less slimy than observers, regardless of the response. According to the self-verification principle, targets only judge the flatterer as more likeable after a self-consistent flattering response, not after a self-inconsistent one. Thus, according to the self-verification principle, we should obtain an interaction effect of Condition X Consistency.

We hypothesize the same logic applies to the affective measure (mood), since in our internet dating study affect also resembled the trait ratings (see Chapter 4; Marchand & Vonk, under review, a). For the behavior measure, hypotheses are more speculative, but we suppose this measure also resembles the trait ratings: If you think someone is a likeable person, you are probably more willing to donate your money to him or her. We hypothesize the same logic also applies to the behavior measure. Thus, according to the self-enhancement principle, we should obtain a main effect of Condition: Targets feel better and are more generous (behavior measure) than observers, regardless of the flattering response. Whereas, according to the self-verification principle, we should obtain an interaction effect of Condition X Consistency: Targets feel worse and are less generous (behavior measure) after reading a self-inconsistent flattering response than after a self-consistent flattering response, whereas for observers no difference is expected.

To test these hypotheses, we conducted an experiment among students who consider themselves to be strong in theoretical matters (as opposed to practical) and used flattery about either theoretical or practical characteristics. We chose this personality trait, because both ends of the scale are evaluative neutral, i.e., both traits (theoretical and practical) can be viewed as positive, desirable traits.

Study 5.1

Method

Overview.   Based on a pretest, we selected "theoretical" participants to join an experiment. In the experiment, these participants filled out a personality test on the basis of which they received a flattering response (stressing theoretical or practical qualities). The actor's response was about their own personality profile (target condition) or about the profile of another, third participant (observer condition). Then, participants rated the actor on likeability, sincerity, and sliminess. In addition, we asked how participants felt, and whether they were willing to give up some of their money for the actor.

Design and participants.   The design was a 2 Condition (target vs. observer) X 2 Consistency (theoretical vs. practical) between subjects design. Participants were 62 undergraduates from the Radboud University Nijmegen with different majors (42 targets, 20 observers). We had selected them on the basis of a

pretest, in which they indicated that they were theoretical (see below). They were paid € 6.00 for participating in this study and an unrelated filler study.

Procedure and materials. In a different prior study, participants were asked to fill out a short questionnaire, in which they rated on a 5-point scale how much certain traits were indicative of them. We used three items to select participants who consider themselves to be theoretical: "thinker-doer," "practical-theoretical," and "gathering knowledge-carrying out work;" the other 29 items were from the Big Five (McCrae & Costa, 1987) and were used as fillers. Participants who indicated to be theoretical (i.e., at least twice rated a 4 or 5 on theoretical items, and not lower than a 3 on the 3rd item) were invited to join the experiment.

A week later participants returned for their appointment and were seated behind a computer in individual cubicles. They were led to believe that the computers were connected to each other, so that information could be transmitted from one participant to the other. Then, they were told that there were two different groups in the experiment and they were in the group that would start by filling out a personality test. The data of this personality test would allegedly be sent to a participant in the other group who would form an impression of them on the basis of this test. In reality, we did not use the personality test, but we wanted participants to think that the other person would be able to write a response on the basis of several, different aspects of their personality, including being theoretical or not. The personality test consisted of 36 items (among others: interpersonal orientation, Machiavellism, and personal values) measured on 7-point Likert scales (1 = disagree completely, 7 = agree completely). Examples of these items are: I enjoy making an effort to achieve good results; I am more a follower than a leader; when I am dancing, I can let myself go entirely. Then, participants were asked six times to choose between three virtues by indicating which one was most important to them (e.g., friendship, health, success, freedom).

In the second part of the experiment, participants received an unrelated filler task, during which the alleged other participant was reading their test results and writing his or her response. After the filler task, the experiment was resumed.

In the third part it was explained that the goal of the experiment was to investigate how people form an impression of someone on whom they are dependent. Participants read that the participants in the other group would not receive any money for their participation. However, although these participants had volunteered to

participate for free, they could receive some money if the person they were reading and writing about (i.e., the target participants or someone else) decided to give up € 3.00 of their money. Participants also read that the other person was informed about this possibility before he or she wrote the response. This way, we gave the actor an ulterior motive for writing a flattering response.

Subsequently, participants received a flattering response to a personality test. In one condition, the response was about theoretical qualities, in another one it was about practical characteristics. Both the name of the flatterer and the name of the person whom the description was about (the participant's own name in the target condition; or Frank/Franka in the observer condition) were mentioned in the first line of the text. The theoretical version for a male target participant went as follows:

> I am Ronald and I understand that (participant's name) is in another group and that they receive money for this experiment. I find this a bit strange, because we don't get anything for participating, but well, that's the way it is. I read the test results. I think that he's a very nice guy. Especially, because I get the impression that *he's good at thinking seriously about all kinds of things*. I also think that he can get along great with everyone, because *he is focused on theory and therefore is good at coming up with new things*. I think that I could certainly get along great with him myself, because he, just like me, is the type of person who *likes to use his head*. He will definitely make the right decision about the money. Also, he seems to be a very nice person to talk to, but unfortunately we will probably never meet. He gave a lot of answers that appeal to me. All in all, he seems to be an extremely nice person, and *gathers knowledge just as I do*.

In the practical version, italicized phrases were replaced by similar practical descriptions: "he is good at handling things", "he is focused on practice and therefore is good at doing assignments", "he is the type of person who likes to use his hands", and "likes doing something".

For female participants, the flattering response was given by Laura instead of Ronald, thus participants always received a response from someone of the same sex. In the observer condition the target's name was replaced by Frank or Franka (for male and female observer participants, respectively).

After reading the flattering response, dependent variables were measured. These variables consisted of items regarding judgments about the actor (including

likeable, sincere, and slimy) and affective variables (mood), in which we asked participants to indicate how they felt at that moment (e.g., happy, content, worried). These were all measured on 7-point scales (1 = applies not at all; 7 = applies very strongly). Further, we asked participants whether they were willing to give up some of their money for the actor (€ 3.00). This question was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = definitely no, 5 = definitely yes). Finally, they were paid, thanked, and debriefed.

Results

Two target participants' data were not included in the analyses because they indicated that they were practical in the personality test administered during the experiment, so their scores on this dimension had changed. Participants' gender did not affect any of the results and was therefore removed from analyses.

A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Consistency) multivariate analysis of variance on ratings for likeable, sincere, and slimy produced a main effect of Consistency, $F(3, 54) = 2.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .14$, which was qualified by an interaction effect of Condition X Consistency, $F(3, 54) = 3.94$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .18$. Targets judged the actor as more likeable ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.20$), sincere ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.21$), and less slimy ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.30$) when the response was theoretical (i.e., consistent with their self-image) than when it was practical ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.12$; $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.17$; $M = 6.05$, $SD = 1.05$, respectively), whereas there was no difference for observers (see Table 5.1). There was no main effect of Condition, $F < 1$.

Table 5.1

Means and SDs (enclosed in parentheses) for the Condition X Consistency interaction effect for the trait ratings likeable, sincere, and slimy

Dependent Variables	Consistency	Condition		Condition X Consistency
		Target	Observer	
Likeable	consistent	5.20 (1.20)	4.30 (1.64)	$F(1, 56) = 2.49$[†]
	inconsistent	3.75 (1.12)	4.00 (1.63)	
Sincere	consistent	3.90 (1.21)	3.90 (1.37)	$F < 1$
	inconsistent	3.10 (1.17)	3.20 (1.55)	
Slimy	consistent	5.00 (1.30)	6.00 (.82)	$F(1, 56) = 10.05$**
	inconsistent	6.05 (1.05)	4.90 (1.73)	

** $p < .01$. [†] $p = .12$.

Simple main effects showed that for targets, there was a significant effect of Consistency, $F(3, 36) = 6.78$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .36$. Targets rated the actor as more likeable, $F(1, 38) = 15.68$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .29$, more sincere, $F(1, 38) = 4.54$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .11$, and less slimy, $F(1, 38) = 7.91$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .17$ after reading a theoretical (i.e., consistent with their self-image) response than after reading a practical response. As expected, for observers there was no effect of Consistency, $F(3, 16) = 1.84$, ns; indicating that it did not matter for observers whether the flattering response was theoretical or practical.

Regarding the affective variables, Cronbach's α for the items happy, content, worried, annoyed, confused, sad, and tense (after recoding the latter five) was .82. An ANOVA on the mean of this scale produced an interaction effect of Condition X Consistency, $F(1, 56) = 12.88$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .19$. There were no main effects, $Fs < 1.67$, ns. For targets, a significant effect of Consistency indicated that targets felt better after receiving a theoretical (consistent) response ($M = 5.74$, $SD = .67$) than after a practical (inconsistent) one ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.01$), $F(1, 38) = 16.24$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .30$, whereas observers do not feel differently after receiving a theoretical ($M = 5.16$, $SD = .89$) or practical ($M = 5.67$, $SD = .51$) flattering response, $F(1, 18) = 2.51$, ns (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Means and SDs (enclosed in parentheses) for the Condition X Consistency interaction effect for the affective variable (mood)

	Consistency	Condition		Condition X Consistency
		Target	Observer	
Affect	consistent	5.74 (.67)	5.16 (.89)	$F(1, 56) = 12.88$**
	inconsistent	4.64 (1.01)	5.67 (.51)	

** $p < .01$.

Finally, we investigated participants' willingness to give money to the actor. A 2 (Condition) X 2 (Consistency) ANOVA on the question "Are you willing to give up half of your money earned in this experiment to Ronald (Laura)?" produced a main effect of Consistency, $F(1, 56) = 5.21$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$, which was qualified by a

marginally significant interaction effect of Condition X Consistency, $F(1, 56) = 3.78$, $p < .06$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (see Table 5.3). Targets were more willing to give up their money after the theoretical version ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.27$) than after the practical version ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .91$), $F(1, 38) = 12.81$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .25$, whereas observers did not differ in their willingness to donate money $F < 1$.

Table 5.3

Means and SDs (enclosed in parentheses) for the Condition X Consistency interaction effect for the behavioral intention to give up money

		Condition		
	Consistency	Target	Observer	Condition X Consistency
Willingness to	consistent	3.35 (1.27)	2.50 (.97)	$F(1, 56) = 3.78^{\dagger}$
give up € 3.00	inconsistent	2.10 (.91)	2.40 (1.07)	

$^{\dagger} p < .06$.

Discussion

According to the self-enhancement principle, people want to be treated in a positive way (Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987). Indeed, people seem to like those who say positive things about them; they like others who flatter them (Gordon, 1996; Vonk, 2002). This motive to self-enhance and to accept flattery without much thought appears to exist even in the face of an ulterior motive (Vonk, 2002). However, ingratiating tactics or other manipulation intents (such as flattery) need to be attuned to the target or else they can backfire (Jones, 1964; Schwarzwald, Raz, & Zvibel, 1979). This is also demonstrated in the present study. Targets of ingratiation rated an ingratiator much less positively when the flattery was about self-inconsistent characteristics than when it was about self-consistent ones. They also felt worse after the inconsistent response and were less willing to give up their money. It appears that people want others to perceive them as they perceive themselves. Even when the flattery is evaluatively positive, it is important that there is a descriptive fit. The content should be accurate and compatible with the self-concept, if not, even targets who receive a positive response view the flattery as negative and "slimy".

Although the target-observer difference was in the expected direction for all dependent measures, it was only significant for the affective measure. A possible explanation for this is that targets of the flattering response rated the ingratiator somewhat less positive, because the flattery was too specific. Research on personality has shown that people accept statements that are generalized and vague (ambiguous) as accurate self-descriptions (cf., the Barnum effect: Forer, 1949; for a review: Dickson & Kelly, 1985; Furnham & Schofield, 1986), because people can readily find confirming behavioral evidence for diverse and generalized aspects of the self (Davies, 1997), and apparently are gullible in accepting such personality feedback (Marks & Seeman, 1962; Meehl, 1956). In contrast, we used feedback that was concrete and unambiguous and therefore may have been rated less positively than in our previous studies (see Chapters 3 and 4; Marchand & Vonk, under review a, b). Moreover, during the experiment, targets filled out a personality test with 36 items and only received a response about being theoretical, whereas they may have expected other parts to be included in the response. Another explanation is that observers were basking in reflected glory (cf., Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976). Observers may have been associating with the person who was flattered, because they possessed the same personality characteristic (theoretical). This way, the observer could benefit from the flattering response that was about those characteristics and rate the ingratiator somewhat more positive than is found in other experiments.

One could argue that the effects we found can be attributed to differences in the two descriptions. Although the versions are almost identical, it still may have been that the theoretical version is more positive than the practical one. However, observers did not differ in their judgments of the ingratiator whether a theoretical or practical response is given, which rules out this explanation.

Since for observers in general it does not really matter which flattering response they receive (viz., there are no significant effects of Consistency), observers reading the theoretical and practical response can also be combined into one large control group. Interestingly, observers' ratings as one group, fall in between the two targets groups, such that a linear trend emerges for all three trait ratings; likeable: $F(1, 59) = 12.04$, $p < .01$; sincere: $F(1, 59) = 3.86$, $p = .05$; slimy: $F(1, 59) = 6.84$, $p = .01$. Targets who read the flattering response consistent with their self-image form the most positive impression of the ingratiator, followed by observers who give more

moderate judgments; finally, targets who read the inconsistent flattery are least positive.

The affective measure (mood) shows the same linear pattern; $F(1, 57) = 17.56$, $p < .01$. Targets feel better after a consistent flattering response than after an inconsistent one, with the observers falling in between. Although the targets who read a practical response, received positive flattery, they feel worse than observers, because the response is not in accordance with their self-view (cf., Swann, 1997). Finally, the behavior measure (or at least behavioral intent) reveals the same pattern of results; $F(1, 57) = 13.64$, $p < .01$. Targets are somewhat willing to give up half of their own money to the flatterer when he or she is flattering about self-consistent characteristics, but are unwilling to give it up when he or she is flattering about practical qualities; again, with the observers falling in between. In sum, in favor of the self-verification principle, not only the evaluative meaning, but also the content of a flattering response is important, even in case of these unfamiliar people who would never get to meet each other.

Although general positive flattery may be accepted without much thought, because it tickles one's vanity, there are limits to this need for self-enhancement. In recent studies (see Chapter 4; Marchand & Vonk, under review a) data suggest that, although people were motivated to like an ingratiator, they did not hesitate to rate the ingratiator negatively when they found out the flattery was not really about them. This is also what happened in the present study. Although receiving inconsistent, positive feedback can lead to the acceptance of the feedback, because it is evaluative positive and therefore self-enhancing, it appears that, in favor of the self-verification principle, the content of the feedback is just as much important.

Chapter 6

General Discussion

In the current thesis we investigated the impression people formed of someone with an ulterior motive. We compared what sort of information targets and observers requested about a flattering person and how this information subsequently altered their impression. This way, we came to a better understanding of targets' and observers' impressions of someone with an ulterior motive. Previous studies on suspicion of ulterior motives have typically presented fixed information to participants (Fein, 1996; Vonk, 2002) or were limited by investigating only observers' impression of an ingratiator (although in some studies participants imagined themselves to be the person in the interaction) (Campbell, 1995; DeCarlo, 2005). In the current empirical chapters, the focus was first on what kind of information participants requested, followed by an investigation of what happened when we provided perceivers with this information.

An overview of the results for each chapter will be given, I will discuss limitations of our research, and provide alternative explanations, after which suggestions for future research are made. I will end this discussion with some final, concluding remarks.

In Chapter 2, we used a thinking-aloud technique (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) and found people can discover ulterior motives or insincerity quite quickly, even though we provided them moderately informative cues. This is remarkable since detecting deception is rather rare (Anderson, DePaulo, Ansfield, Tickle, & Green, 1999; DePaulo & Friedman, 1998; Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991; Malone & DePaulo, 2001). Even information about the flattered person evoked changes in suspicion, which is interesting, since people normally have the tendency to focus on the actor and ignore other situational information. Moreover, the cues used in these studies were based on peoples' open responses (in a pretest) to the question "what do you want to know", instead of being created by the researchers. We used three different scenarios that together demonstrate how the process of becoming suspicious unfolds over time as people grapple with the possibility that someone has ulterior motives, and then become convinced. Thus, based on information people requested, our

findings show that the positive evaluation of the actor decreases as more information indicating ulterior motives is received. At the same time, our results for the first time show how the suspicious mindset emerges and progresses. Confirming our hypotheses, a linear effect for general impression and a quadratic effect for suspicion emerged.

In Chapter 3, we moved on to include targets of someone with an ulterior motive in our studies. As expected, Study 3.1A replicated the target-observer difference for ratings of a flattering actor: Targets judged the actor as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy than observers. In addition to these results, we used Skov and Sherman's method (1986) from the hypothesis testing literature and found that targets and observers differ in what sort of information they request about a flattering person. Targets preferred personality information indicating the flatterer is sincere, whereas observers requested both personality information reflecting sincerity and sliminess, suggesting they were more suspicious. For targets, the effect emerged regardless of their level of self-esteem, suggesting that they wanted the flatterer to be sincere, because their ego is at stake.

Next, in Study 3.1B the requested information was actually presented and results showed that targets did not persist in their positive impression when they received negative trait information about the actor. Although it would be beneficial for targets, whose self-esteem was boosted by the flatterer, to disregard the negative trait information from a self-enhancing point of view, both observers and targets implemented the requested information when they received it and changed their impression.

In Chapter 4, studies were conducted in an alleged dating situation, in which skepticism towards flattery may be anticipated. However, as in Chapter 3, targets still rated the flatterer as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy than observers, showing the robustness of the target-observer difference even in a skeptic situation. Moreover, targets' short reading times of the flattering response suggest they engaged in simplified processing and they thoughtlessly accepted the flattery. In contrast, observers appeared to be scrutinizing the flattering message to find out if the actor had ulterior motives. This is in support of the results found in Chapter 3, in which observers were considering ulterior motives and requested both sincere and slimy personality traits.

When receiving the second, similarly flattering response about someone else (i.e., the flatterer's behavior was low in distinctiveness) both targets and observers rated the actor much less positive. As in Chapter 3, both targets and observers implemented the information about the flatterer but target-observer differences remained. These differences, however, can be attributed to an anchoring effect (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), as suggested by Study 4.3, in which the target-observer difference disappeared entirely when ratings were only given once. Fast reading times of this second response further suggest targets did not elaborate long about the second description and were relatively certain about their judgment. Thus both targets and observers quickly made up their mind and gave negative ratings.

We also measured affective ratings: At first targets felt much better than observers, whereas after the second response targets felt the same as observers. More specific affective ratings revealed that targets felt somewhat fooled and hurt when they found out the flatterer was also flattering someone else. In addition, targets' thought listings (measured before the other ratings) resembled observers' open responses, suggesting they were having the same thoughts as observers. Summarizing the results of Chapter 4, we can state that both targets and observers can readily detect ulterior motives.

In Chapter 5, we found empirical evidence that, corroborating the results in Study 4.3, there are limits to targets' need for self-enhancement. More specifically, in the face of an ulterior motive, the content of a flattering response is important. As hypothesized, targets who received a self-consistent response judged the flatterer as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy than targets who received a self-inconsistent response. Also, they felt better and were more willing to give up half of their money after the self-consistent response. Interestingly, for all dependent variables, observers (taken together as one group) fell in between the two target groups such that a linear trend emerged with targets after a positive self-consistent response being most positive, observers being less positive, and targets after a positive self-inconsistent response being least positive. This shows flattery can also result in negative consequences. Flattery needs to be accurate and compatible with targets' self-concept or else it may backfire.

Strengths and Limitations

Our main focus has been on ratings of the traits likeable, sincere, and slimy, because we think that these traits are involved most in discovering ulterior motives. For instance, a person who is seen as sincere (a highly valued trait; cf., Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003) tends to be seen as likeable as well. As research has already shown, ratings on likeability and sliminess need not correlate, because someone can be seen as likeable and slimy at the same time (Vonk, 1998). We assessed these three traits in our studies to investigate the entire scope of the process. Nevertheless, other researchers may think that other traits are more important. Therefore we sometimes added other, somewhat related traits, such as general impression (positive, negative) or sly and manipulative. Results from these traits showed similar patterns as the other traits, but effects were weaker; thus, results were most consistent for the traits we focus on, corroborating our view, that these traits are most important. Moreover, filler traits (e.g., intelligent or spontaneous) did not reveal the same effects, again suggesting that only more specific traits are involved. This also rules out the possibility that target-observer differences can be explained by a general halo effect, the tendency to evaluate all components of a person in the same way once a general evaluation is formed (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; cf., e.g., Forgas & Bower, 1987).

Besides the general halo effect, another possible alternative explanation is that our results may be due to the reciprocity norm, which means that people return a positive response with a positive impression (Gouldner, 1960). This explanation is undermined by our data from the internet dating study. In this study the actor gave a positive response twice, but was negatively evaluated after the second response, even though it was evaluative positive. In addition, in the study described in Chapter 5, positive inconsistent feedback did not result in a positive impression of the actor. People obviously did not feel the need to be polite or the need to reciprocate the actor's positive response. Based on these studies in which only positive information was given, the reciprocity norm can be ruled out as an alternative explanation.

A limitation of our studies is that we only looked at one kind of ulterior motive, viz. personal gain (an instrumental ulterior motive), whereas people who deceive may do so for various reasons, such as avoiding personal loss (also an instrumental reason), creating or maintaining personal relationships (an interpersonal objective), or enhancing their public image (an identity objective) (Buller & Burgoon, 1994). Note however that in our internet dating study, participants wrote down

ulterior motives such as "desperately wanting a date," or "wanting sex," demonstrating we did not exclusively investigate instrumental reasons. This is remarkable, since these self-generated ulterior motives were not mentioned anywhere, whereas the motive of gaining extra money was highly accessible, because it was explicitly described in the instructions. This indicates varying reasons for flattery may produce the same effects, even when it involves self-generated ulterior motives. This supposition, however, is left for future research to examine.

Another limitation involved the comparability of information knowledge for targets and observers. For instance, targets received a flattering response that was evaluative consistent with their self-image; on the other hand, observers did not have an existing expectancy of the person being ingratiated, so the flattery did not match anything that was already known. Observers might have judged the flatterer more neutral simply because they lacked information (cf., Vonk, 2002). To meet these objections, we ran another study in which we gave observers information about the person who was flattered, so they had an informed impression of the actor. We used a so-called yoked design study: A target wrote a short text about him- or herself and then allegedly an ingratiator wrote a positive response based on this text. In reality, everyone received the same positive response written by the researcher. After reading this response, the target rated the actor. Hereafter, an unacquainted observer received the same positive response together with the target's short text, so that the observer knew on what information the response was based. Results again showed a target-observer difference, indicating that the difference is not due to differences in information knowledge and this explanation can be ruled out.

We used a broad variety of ways to conduct our research, which can be seen as the strength of our research. By using many different research methods and settings and still finding cohesive results, we are showing the generality of our results. We used several different dependent variables (e.g., trait ratings, thoughts, behavior intention, affect, and open responses), had different situational settings, and based our studies on different research areas: All resulting in a better understanding of what impression people form of someone with an ulterior motive.

Moreover, individual characteristics (e.g., the need for cognition, dispositional trust, narcissism) did not seem to be important in discovering ulterior motives. Although one could argue these traits may play a substantial part in influencing the results, in Vonk's studies (2002), dominance orientation, narcissism, self-esteem

etcetera, did not show any evidence for this. We ourselves also did not find any evidence. And it was not for a lack of trying: In several studies we measured need for cognition and dispositional trust (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Rotter, 1967; respectively) but these did not moderate any of the results. The only result we found was a gender difference: In Study 4.3, men wanted to go out with a flattering woman more than women wanted to go out with a flattering man. It appears that our results describe a general human propensity. Though we found the target-observer difference in impression formation can be robust, we also showed that people in general are readily willing to change this impression in the face of additional evidence of an ulterior motive. And this finding may not be so surprising since sincerity is highly valued in our Dutch society, as suggested by a questionnaire held amongst more than 2,000 respondents in the CentERpanel (a representative sample of the Dutch society). These respondents wrote down most often that "sincere" is the most positive personality trait. When people find out someone is not sincere this will influence their impression.

Future Research

　　Note however that we mainly focused on intentional inferences. People who are ingratiated explicitly rated the ingratiator as more likeable than someone observing the ingratiation. However, this does not mean that, spontaneously, the ulterior motive is not inferred. As suggested by Ham and Vonk (2003) spontaneous trait and spontaneous situational inferences can co-occur (cf., Reeder, Kumar, Hesson-McInnis, & Trafimow, 2002; Reeder, Vonk, Ronk, Ham, & Lawrence, 2004). Thus, both the ulterior motive (situational inference) and the dispositional inference likeable can spontaneously be activated, but targets are subsequently more motivated to ignore this situational inference. To investigate underlying processes in discovering ulterior motives by targets and observers, our line of research could be expanded by using more unobtrusive measures (reaction time studies or other). These factors were considered beyond the scope of this thesis, but can be useful for future research involving ulterior motives and impression formation.

　　Also, we conducted our research in the Netherlands, a Western individualistic oriented country. Note that there are cultures in which it is accepted or even normative that people are overly flattering, as well as there are situations in which self-presentation is appropriate. For example, during a job interview an applicant is expected to be self-presenting by being very enthusiastic about the new job. Some

personality tests even take into account such norms; such as the Achievement Motivation Test (Hermans, 1970) which has a different score coding table when it is used in selection situations. Research suggests cultures differ in the motives for deception. Members of collectivistic cultures use deception to meet a social obligation, whereas members of individualistic cultures use deception to secure their individual goals (Rodríguez, 1996). We think that although these reasons and schemas for deception or flattery can differ between cultures, underlying processes of detecting it may be the same. It is conceivable that what goes for deception also goes for flattery for ulterior motives. Since deception is often defined as "a message knowingly transmitted by a sender to foster a false belief or conclusion by the receiver" (Buller & Burgoon, 1996, p. 205), according to the definition, flattery for ulterior motives may also be considered a form of deception. Future research may further explore whether our results about targets' and observers' impression formation can be generalized to other cultures as well.

In our studies, we presented people with positive textual feedback, but there are also other (non textual) ways to ingratiate oneself or to persuade; for example, through speed of speech, head movements, smiling (Miller, Maruyama, Beaber & Valone, 1976), mimicry (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999) and so on. Although we did use smiley faces in the alleged internet dating study, we never had real interactions, which may even make the effects we have shown more powerful. Meta-analyses by Zuckerman and Driver (1985) and DePaulo et al. (2003) identified and categorized some nonverbal cues pointing to deception, which can help people discover ulterior motives (cf., Vrij, 2000). Instead making discovery of ulterior motives more difficult DeTurck and Miller (1985) found also truthful senders display nonverbal behavior associated with deception. Also, Dunbar, Raminez, and Burgoon (2003) stated that the more visual information available, the less accurate the detection of deceit is. Whether real interactions improve or deteriorate detecting deception by targets and observers remains to be examined.

It is hypothesized that the cognitive and behavioral energy devoted to upholding a conversation make conversational partners inferior lie detectors compared to passive interrogators, because they face a more demanding task than do people passively taking part of the same communication (Burgoon et al., 1996; Forrest and Feldman, 2000). For this reason, targets of ingratiation may be less apt at detecting ulterior motives than observers. This hypothesis is also partly based on the

notion of the honesty effect; that is, an assumption of truthfulness is a part of general conversation maxims; hence, deception ought to be a less frequent attribution by conversational partners (targets) than by passive interrogators (observers) (Vrij, 2000). Some researchers have already noted the low levels of natural suspicion between communicators that are extremely familiar with each other and particularly between people in intimate relationships (McCornack & Levine, 1990; Levine & McCornack, 1992) suggesting it may be more difficult for targets to discover ulterior motives in real interactions.

In general, we think it is important to recognize that two competing mechanisms are at hand for targets; the motivation to *detect* and the motivation to *neglect* ulterior motives. In real life, the motivation to neglect ulterior motives may become more pronounced than in our laboratory, because there is more at stake (e.g., a friendship, a happy marriage, etcetera). People may thus ignore signs indicating ulterior motives; i.e., they only see that the other person smiles at them and further ignore nonverbal cues revealing deception. This way, they feel liked and boost their self-esteem. On the other hand, targets may be more motivated to detect ulterior motives in real life, because an erroneous inference can engender costs in daily life and they want to avoid being duped or deceived. Since we have shown ulterior motives can be detected even in situations in the laboratory, which are personally less relevant, we hypothesize self-enhancement, by accepting flattery uncritically, only works up to a certain point, until costs (of being duped) become too high, then detection occurs. This suggests there is a trade-off between the motivation to detect and the motivation to neglect ulterior motives.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis we looked at differences in targets' and observers' impression formation and impression change when they become suspicious of ulterior motives. A unique asset of our studies is that we provided information people requested themselves. It appears that when flattery is more general and can be applied to everyone, more associative processes are involved (it just feels good) and the flattery is accepted without much thought. The flattery "makes sense," and is not critically processed. People who are being flattered form a more favorable impression of the flatterer and feel better than someone observing the flattery, even when the flatterer

has an ulterior motive for the behavior. Indeed, ingratiation or flattery is a form of deception that has proven to be rather effective.

However, this does not mean a positive behavior always works in favor of the flatterer. We found that when people become suspicious, this can also result in the opposite effect, and this suspicion can simply be awakened by moderately informative cues. Our recent studies have begun to show some of these downside effects of flattery for ulterior motives (Marchand & Vonk, under review a and c). When people find out someone is not sincere, they feel less positive, more fooled and hurt, and judge the flatterer more negatively. They are aware that the flatterer was just trying to influence them and make much less positive attributions. This shows there are limits to self-enhancement effects. People who were flattered and became suspicious of the other person's motives may even judge the flatterer more negatively than people observing the situation, because they feel personally duped, but this finding is still rather speculative.

We do think there are many different situations in which a general, overly flattering (though subtle) response may be beneficial, for instance for improving social interactions, such as when you flatter your partner after a nice meal, flatter a friend after a new haircut, or flatter your boss to get ahead. However, it is also good to bear in mind there are limitations; e.g., workplace problems with colleagues when you flatter the boss too much; cross-cultural misunderstandings; being seen as a hoaxer when trying too hard to sell something, or having a reputation as the desperate guy stalking every girl in the pub. Ulterior motives can be readily detected and flattery thus does not always work.

Imagine the following situation (based on personal experience). A group of teens are talking and hanging around. One of the boys lights up a cigarette when his girlfriend points out he has promised her to stop smoking. She is angry and starts to walk away, so he quickly says: "Please come back; if you want me to stop smoking, of course I will stop, but only for you." And with a lot of drama and big gestures he puts out his cigarette. "See, I immediately throw away my cigarette." The girl is not convinced. "Please, come back. You know I'd do anything for you, I think you are great. I love you and you know it. Here, I throw away all the other cigarettes too. The girl hesitates. "You know what, I will throw away the lighter, so you know I mean it this time." And he throws the lighter in the trashcan. She gives in and they make up with a kiss and hold hands; she has a smile on her face. After a while the boy goes

home and there he immediately goes to his room and opens his drawer; it is filled with packets of cigarettes and at least 15 lighters. He lights a cigarette and mumbles "that tastes good..."

The story described above can repeat itself several times and for a while everything goes well. The girl is happy, because her boyfriend gives up smoking for her and her ego is enhanced. However, when she finds out that he is not sincere (and probably never intended to stop smoking) she feels like a fool for trusting him. Her ego is damaged and he immediately falls from his pedestal. In general, people value sincerity and we all want truth in our lives. But we also want to have smooth, positive interactions and we like being popular and loved. Flattering another person helps us smoothen the interaction and some sliminess indeed has positive effects. Just like the girl really loves her boyfriend for giving up smoking for her. But how does she feel when discovering it was all for an ulterior motive…

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Summary

In society, there is a common assumption that people should be honest. Already as children we are taught about the importance of honesty: We tell the truth because it is the right thing to do. However, we also want to have smooth interactions with others and we know that telling a few white lies helps to achieve this goal. Also, we readily flatter other persons to improve our interactions. People who are being flattered generally form a positive impression of the flatterer. But what happens when the flatterer only flatters for an ulterior motive? What if he or she has a hidden agenda?

In the current thesis we investigate the impression people form of someone with an ulterior motive. What sort of information do they request about the other person and how does this information subsequently alter their impression? So far, it has never been investigated what kind of information perceivers their selves request when they are aware of the possibility of ulterior motives. Interesting is whether ulterior motives are detected at all and whether people being flattered (targets) and people seeing others being flattered (observers) differ in implementing information about a flatterer's ulterior motives.

In the first methodological chapter, we found that observers can readily detect ulterior motives, even if detection is based on moderate information. We used a thinking aloud method to demonstrate how the process of becoming suspicious unfolds over time as people grapple with the possibility that someone has ulterior motives, and then become convinced. The present research uniquely showed how this mindset emerges and progresses as more information casting a negative light on the behavior is received. Perceivers initially certain of their positive evaluation soon began to doubt the actor's motives (i.e., they became suspicious). As more information was presented, they became progressively more certain that the actor indeed had ulterior motives, until finally they were certain. Thus, our findings show that the positive evaluation of the actor decreases linearly as more information indicating ulterior motives is received, whereas a quadratic effect emerged for suspicion.

In Chapter 3, we moved on to include targets of someone with an ulterior motive (i.e., the flatterer is being overly positive to gain money) in our studies. As

hypothesized, we replicated the target-observer difference: Targets rated the flatterer as more likeable, more sincere, and less slimy than observers. Then, we used Skov and Sherman's method from hypothesis literature to inquire how (suspicious) perceivers select information about this flattering person. People could choose from several different traits reflecting sincerity or sliminess. As expected, observers do not have a clear preference for information reflecting sincerity or sliminess of the flatterer. In contrast, targets requested more traits indicative of sincerity. Extending previous research we examined how the requested information subsequently affected targets' and observers' impressions. In Study 3.1B, targets and observers implemented the information they received and both changed their impression, regardless whether the information was positive or negative. This is surprising, since it would be beneficial for targets' ego to disregard the negative trait information. Thus, suspicion of ulterior motives is a way to encourage healthy skepticism that can facilitate even the acceptance of evidence that is not preferred or not convenient.

In line with the first results from Chapter 3, we replicated the target-observer difference in Chapter 4 in an alleged dating situation. This is a situation, in which skepticism towards flattery may be anticipated and therefore shows the robustness of the effect. Also in support of the results of Chapter 3, targets' short reading times of the flattering response suggest they engaged in simplified processing and they thoughtlessly accepted the flattery, whereas observers appeared to be scrutinizing the flattering message to find out if the actor had ulterior motives.

Next, participants received a second similarly flattering response about someone else (imagine a slimy guy in a singles bar trying the same pick-up line on each woman sitting at the bar) and both targets and observers implemented this information about the flatterer and rated him or her much less positive. Fast reading times of this second response suggest observers' ambiguity was resolved. Interestingly, targets also did not elaborate long about the second description and were relatively certain about their judgment. Apparently, both targets and observers quickly made up their mind, were aware of the sliminess and ulterior motives of the flatterer, and gave negative ratings. More detailed examination of open-ended responses suggests, that after the second response, targets were thinking the same things as observers.

In addition, we measured affective ratings: At first targets felt much better than observers, whereas after the second response targets felt the same as observers.

More specific affective ratings revealed that targets felt somewhat fooled and hurt when they found out the flatterer was also flattering someone else. It appears that even in a situation in which flattery may be expected (such as a dating situation), targets were not skeptical at first. Nevertheless, they were willing to judge the flatterer much less positively after they found out he or she was also flattering someone else. Summarizing the results of Chapter 4, we can state that both targets and observers can readily detect ulterior motives.

In Chapter 5, we demonstrated that manipulation through flattery needs to be attuned to the target or else it can backfire. Corroborating results in Study 4.3, there are limits to targets' need for self-enhancement. Targets who receiving concrete flattery, rated the flatterer much less positively when the flattery was about self-inconsistent characteristics than when it was about self-consistent ones. They also felt worse after the inconsistent response and were less willing to give up their money. Interestingly, for all dependent variables, observers (taken together as one group) fell in between the two target groups such that a linear trend emerged with targets after a positive self-consistent response being most positive, observers being less positive, and targets after a positive self-inconsistent response being least positive. This shows flattery needs to be compatible with targets' self-concept or else it may result in negative consequences.

Samenvatting

In onze maatschappij is het algemene uitgangspunt dat mensen eerlijk moeten zijn. Als kinderen leren we al over het belang van eerlijkheid. We vertellen de waarheid omdat dat het juiste is om te doen. We willen echter ook graag soepele interacties met anderen hebben en we weten dat de omgang met anderen vaak beter verloopt als we kleine leugentjes vertellen. Ook vleien we anderen om meer positieve interacties te hebben. Mensen die gevleid worden, vormen namelijk een positieve indruk van de vleier. Maar wat gebeurt er als iemand alleen maar aardig is vanwege een verborgen motief of als iemand een bijbedoeling heeft met zijn gedrag?

In dit proefschrift onderzoeken we de indruk die mensen hebben van iemand die een bijbedoeling heeft. Welke informatie willen mensen graag hebben over de andere persoon en hoe verandert hun indruk als ze deze informatie vervolgens krijgen? Tot op heden is er nog nooit onderzoek gedaan naar wat voor soort informatie waarnemers willen ontvangen wanneer ze zich bewust zijn van een verborgen agenda. Interessant is om te weten of de bijbedoelingen überhaupt ontdekt worden (aangezien het juist goed voelt om alles klakkeloos aan te nemen als waar). Bovendien is het interessant of de mensen die gevleid worden (de targets) en de mensen die zien dat een ander gevleid wordt (de observers) van elkaar verschillen in het implementeren van de informatie over de bijbedoelingen van een vleier.

In het eerste methodologische hoofdstuk vonden we dat observers de bijbedoelingen ook kunnen ontdekken zélfs als ze slechts matig informatieve informatie ontvingen. We lieten respondenten hardop denken om te onderzoeken hoe het proces precies verloopt: als mensen achterdochtig worden, vervolgens de mogelijkheid overwegen dat er verborgen bedoelingen zijn en uiteindelijk zeker zijn van hun zaak. Het huidige onderzoek toont als enige hoe deze manier van denken ontstaat en zich verder ontwikkelt wanneer mensen extra informatie ontvangen die een negatief licht werpt op de situatie (op het vleiende gedrag). Mensen waren in het begin zeker van hun positieve evaluatie, maar begonnen de motieven van de ander al snel te wantrouwen (ze werden achterdochtig). Naarmate er meer informatie aangeboden werd, waren ze er steeds meer van overtuigd dat de ander verborgen bedoelingen had, totdat ze uiteindelijk weer zeker waren (nu van een negatievere evaluatie). Onze bevindingen tonen dus aan dat de indruk van de vleier lineair

afneemt (de positieve indruk wordt steeds negatiever), terwijl de achterdocht kwadratisch verloopt.

In Hoofdstuk 3 keken we in onze studies ook naar targets van een vleier met een verborgen bedoeling (de vleier wil graag geld verdienen door extra positief te doen). Zoals verwacht, repliceerden we het target-observer effect: targets beoordeelden een vleier als aardiger, oprechter en minder slijmerig dan observers. Vervolgens gebruikten we de methode van Skov en Sherman (1986) uit de literatuur over hypothesen toetsen om erachter te komen hoe waarnemers informatie kiezen over de vleier. Mensen konden uit verschillende persoonlijkheid eigenschappen kiezen die indicatief waren voor oprechtheid of slijmerigheid. Observers hadden geen voorkeur voor de eigenschappen die wezen op oprechtheid of slijmerigheid. Als uitbreiding op dit onderzoek bekeken we hoe de informatie over de gevraagde eigenschappen vervolgens de indruk van targets en observers beïnvloedde. Uit de resultaten van Studie 3.1B kwam naar voren dat zowel targets als observers hun indruk van de vleier lieten beïnvloeden door de informatie over de vleier. Informatie die erop wees dat de vleier oprecht was, leidde tot een positievere indruk; informatie die wees op een slijmerd, tot een negatievere indruk. Dit kan als verrassend beschouwd worden als men bedenkt dat het voor targets veel prettiger zou zijn om de negatieve informatie te negeren en te denken dat de vleier het oprecht meende, dit zou het welzijn van de target namelijk verhogen. Het lijkt er echter op dat achterdocht een gezonde manier is om informatie sceptisch te bekijken, zelfs als deze informatie eigenlijk niet gewenst is of niet goed uitpakt voor de persoon.

In overeenstemming met de resultaten uit Hoofdstuk 3 repliceerden we het target-observer effect in Hoofdstuk 4 met een dating studie. Targets beoordeelden de vleier positiever dan de waarnemers. Aangezien je in een situatie waarin je gaat daten enige scepsis ten aanzien van vleierij zou kunnen verwachten, toont deze studie de robuustheid van het effect aan. Bovendien suggereren de korte leestijden van de targets dat ze de vleiende beschrijving niet al te diepgaand verwerkten en dat ze de vleierij accepteerden zonder er veel over na te denken. De observers daarentegen leken de boodschap langer te bestuderen om erachter te komen of de vleier bijbedoelingen had.

Daarna kregen de deelnemers een tweede, soortgelijke vleiende reactie van dezelfde persoon, maar nu ging deze over iemand anders (zoals een jongen die in de kroeg bij iedere vrouw dezelfde slijmerige openingszin gebruikt). Zowel targets als

observers beoordeelden de vleier na deze extra informatie veel minder positief. De korte leestijd van de observers suggereert dat ze niet meer twijfelden. Vreemd genoeg dachten ook de targets niet lang over de beschrijving na. Het lijkt te zijn dat zowel de observers als de targets zich redelijk snel bewust waren van de bijbedoelingen van de vleier en beiden gaven negatieve oordelen. Uit de open antwoorden kunnen we afleiden dat de targets na de tweede reactie dezelfde gedachten hadden als de observers.

Om meer inzicht te krijgen in wat er zich afspeelt, hebben we ook gevraagd naar gevoelens (affectieve maten). Eerst voelden targets zich beter dan observers, maar na de tweede vleiende reactie was dit verschil verdwenen. Meer specifieke emoties toonden aan dat targets zich enigszins bedrogen en gekwetst voelden nadat ze erachter kwamen dat de vleier ook zo positief was tegen iemand anders. Hoewel targets dus in eerste instantie de vleierij zonder enige scepsis accepteerden (zelfs in een dating situatie waarin je vleierij mag verwachten), waren ze bereid de vleier veel minder positief te beoordelen na de tweede reactie. Kortom, de resultaten uit Hoofdstuk 4 laten zien dat zowel targets als observers verborgen bedoelingen zonder al te veel moeite kunnen ontdekken.

In Hoofdstuk 5 tonen we aan dat de vleierij betrekking moet hebben op de target, anders kan het een averechts effect hebben. In overeenstemming met Studie 4.3 vinden we ook in de studie in Hoofdstuk 5 dat er grenzen zijn aan de behoefte tot zelfverheffing. Targets die concrete vleierij ontvingen over eigenschappen die inconsistent waren met hun zelfbeeld beoordeelden de vleier veel minder positief dan targets die gevleid werden over concrete eigenschappen die wel overeen kwamen met het zelfbeeld. Tevens voelde deze eerste groep zich slechter en was minder bereid om geld af te staan aan de vleier. Als groep vallen waarnemers met hun oordelen wat betreft alle afhankelijke variabelen precies in tussen de twee target groepen. Er ontstaat zo een lineaire trend waarin targets het meest positief zijn na een positieve reactie die zelf-consistent is, observers die minder positief zijn en targets na een reactie die niet overeenkomt met hun zelfbeeld het minst positief zijn. Beide target groepen verschillen van de observer groep, wat aangeeft dat vleierij zowel positieve als negatieve gevolgen kan hebben, afhankelijk van hoe compatible het is met iemands zelfbeeld.

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Miquelle Marchand

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Curriculum Vitae

Miquelle Adriana Gertruda werd geboren op 8 december 1976 in Tilburg. Op haar derde begon ze bij juffrouw Marianne op de peuterspeelzaal. Daarna voldeed ze met veel plezier aan haar onderwijsplicht op kleuter- en basisschool 'De Schakel' te Tilburg. Vervolgens ging ze in dezelfde stad naar 'het Cobbenhagen College', waar ze in 1995 haar gymnasium diploma behaalde. Aangezien ze graag op kamers wilde, begon Miquelle in datzelfde jaar aan haar opleiding Psychologie aan de Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen. In 2000 studeerde ze cum laude af en begon aansluitend als onderzoeker in opleiding (OIO) bij de vakgroep Sociale Psychologie aan diezelfde universiteit. Tijdens deze periode gaf Miquelle praktica en werkgroepen aan eerstejaars studenten, had haar eigen drukbezochte cursus over intieme relaties (mede dankzij de titel) en schreef zij dit proefschrift. Sinds 2005 is Miquelle werkzaam als onderzoeker op de afdeling Survey Onderzoek bij CentERdata, aan de Universiteit van Tilburg.