

## A Rock or a Hard Place: The Foot-in-the-Face Technique for Inducing Compliance Without Pressure<sup>1</sup>

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Situations in which the formulation of a target request is preceded by another request are a frequent field of research for social psychologists. So far, however, increased compliance with the target request has been found in conditions in which the initial request was either easier than the target request and was fulfilled (i.e., foot-in-the-door technique) or more difficult and was rejected (i.e., door-in-the-face technique). In the series of 3 field studies presented in this article, it is shown that increased compliance with the final request can also be observed when the initial request has more or less the same degree of difficulty as the final request.

There are numerous situations in which people try to influence others. They may try to exert pressure directly or act without any evident pressure. Compliance without pressure is a phenomenon that has been quite intensively explored by social psychologists ever since the experiments by Freedman and Fraser (1966), who posed the hypothesis that if people agree to comply with a small request, they will be subsequently more willing to comply with a more difficult one. In one of their experiments, people who had complied with the experimenter's request to sign a petition calling for keeping California clean or increasing road traffic safety or who had agreed to place a small sign in the front window of their homes encouraging others to behave in accordance with these appeals were then more willing to have a large, ugly billboard reading "Drive Carefully" installed in their front yards for a period of 1 week.

Freedman and Fraser (1966) labeled the technique of getting a person to comply with an easy request before the target request is posed the *foot-in-the-door technique*. Although debate on the psychological mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of this technique has been going on for years,

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most empirical data seem to point to self-perception (Bem, 1972). After complying with the first request, the person cannot indicate apparent external reasons (e.g., in the form of a direct order or a financial reward) that could justify his or her behavior. Therefore, the person assumes that some internal cause must be responsible; that is, his or her attitudes, values, or beliefs. The subsequent second request is in harmony with the newly created self-image deduced by fulfillment of the first request and, for this reason, is fulfilled. A slightly different approach to the question of the possible mechanisms underlying this technique was demonstrated by Cialdini (2001; Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995), who suggested that people who comply with the first request are inclined to fulfill the target request because of their urge to remain consistent.

Several years after the experiments by Freedman and Fraser (1966) described previously, another social influence technique was presented by Cialdini et al. (1975), who coined the term the *door-in-the-face technique*. According to this technique, in order to make someone comply with a comparatively difficult request, it is advantageous to first pose a request with which it is very difficult to comply. This difficult request will most likely be rejected. However, the chances that the easier target request will be fulfilled will grow.

In one of the experiments to verify the effectiveness of the door-in-the-face (DITF) technique, confederates introduced themselves as representatives of an institution working with adolescent delinquents, and asked the participants in the experiment for cooperation. The control group was asked to join a 2-hr trip to the zoo with a group of young lawbreakers. In the experimental condition, a more difficult request was formulated first: The participants were asked to become counselors for these young people. The task would require an approximately 2-hr commitment every week on a permanent basis for 2 years. The great majority of the participants refused to comply with the request. However, when they were asked immediately afterward to perform a one-time activity (i.e., take a group of adolescent felons to the zoo), they complied with this request much more readily than did the control-group participants.

As is the case with the foot-in-the-door (FITD) technique, researchers are not unanimous as to which psychological mechanism underlies the effectiveness of the DITF technique. In light of empirical research (for a review, see Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), the most convincing explanation seems to be the reciprocity rule, which was already discussed by Cialdini et al. (1975). According to this rule, people have a natural need to repay any favors or acts of kindness they receive from others. Hence, we send Christmas cards to those who send them to us, and we try to remember the birthdays of those who wish us a happy birthday (Cialdini, 2001). In the case of the DITF

technique, after the first request has been rejected, the requester distinctly lowers the demands when formulating the second request. Thus, the second request is easier to fulfill than the first. The action taken by the requester can be then classified as a compromise. According to the reciprocity rule, for the person who rejected the first request, it is now time to compromise and consent to fulfilling the second, easier request. Here, the reciprocity rule takes the form of a reciprocal concession principle. An alternative interpretation of the effectiveness of the door-in-the face technique was presented by O'Keefe and Figge (1997). What they pointed out is that rejection of the first request can generate a sense of guilt. People are inclined to accept the subsequent, easier request because by complying with it, they rid themselves of that uncomfortable emotion.

It is noteworthy that both of the strategies deal with a sequence of requests. Hence, in the literature on the subject, the techniques are embraced by the common name of sequential (or multiple) compliance-gaining strategies. However, while in the case of the FITD technique the first request is easier than the target request, the initial request is markedly more difficult than the target request in the case of the DITF technique. This means that these techniques are symmetrical in the sense that in order to increase the chances for a person's compliance with the target request, we can first pose either another request that is relatively easy for the person to comply with, or a much harder request that will most likely be rebuffed.

Both techniques discussed here use sequences of requests that differ in the degree of difficulty of compliance. The question arises, however, whether a technique using a sequence of two correspondingly difficult requests would prove effective. Obviously, someone asked to fulfill the first request has two possible ways of action: either to comply with it or not comply with it. Let us analyze the theoretical consequences of both these courses. If the person fulfills the first request, then by the self-perception principle, he or she should conclude that he or she is "the sort of person that fulfills requests of this type" and subsequently be inclined to fulfill the ensuing request; it is similarly difficult to comply with that request. A similar conclusion is reached if we assume the consistency rule as the explanation for the technique's effectiveness: A person who has fulfilled the first request should also fulfill the second, equally difficult request as he or she is motivated by the need to perceive themselves as a coherent and consistent human being.

The difficulty of the first request constitutes one of the factors so frequently taken into account in studies on the determinants of FITD effectiveness. What is worth noting is that in the perspective of self-perception, it should be expected that the more difficult the first (preliminary) request, the more prominent the change in the subject's self-perception and hence the

greater the inclination to comply with the subsequent request. On the other hand, however, the harder the first request, the fewer the people who choose to comply with it.

Because the criterion of the technique's effectiveness is based on the proportion of people who comply with the second request out of the total number of people confronted with the first request, the high difficulty level of the first request affects the effectiveness of the discussed technique. The increased difficulty of the first request reduces the percentage of those who comply with it, but at the same time there are increased chances that if the first request is complied with, the subsequent request will also be fulfilled. In this context, the results of the meta-analyses (e.g., Beaman et al., 1983; Fern, Monroe, & Avila, 1986) showing that the difficulty factor of the first request has very little (if any at all) impact on the effectiveness of the FITD technique should not be surprising.<sup>3</sup> It is then possible that even when the two requests are similarly difficult to fulfill, which is the case of the foot-in-the-face technique, most of those who comply with the first request will also comply with the second one.

Then again, what if the first request is rejected? Above all, we must consider whether the appearance of the second request can be interpreted by the person who rejected the first request as a struggle for compromise on the part of the requester. I think that such an interpretation by the accosted person is possible only in a condition in which the second request appears to be distinctly different from the first. If the second request is only a slight modification of the first, the person will not treat it as a compromise, but as a repetition of the first request or as an attempt to press the person.

A good illustration of this rule is an experiment by Cialdini et al. (1975). In one of the experimental conditions, the participants were presented a sequence of two requests that were similarly difficult to follow. First, they were asked to go with a group of delinquent youngsters for a 2-hr trip to the city museum and then to go on a 2-hr trip to the zoo. The point of this study was to determine whether or not the DITF effect is merely the result of a repeated request (and, if so, of pressing the person or making it clear that the requests are very important to the requester). It turned out that a mere modification of the second request was not enough to increase the chances for the participants' acceptance of this final request.<sup>4</sup> Out the 16 people who rejected the initial request, only 1 complied with the second request.

<sup>3</sup>Burger (1999) even found a positive relationship between the degree of involvement with the initial request (a factor closely related to the difficulty level) and the foot-in-the-door effect.

<sup>4</sup>It should be also pointed out that out of 24 participants in this experimental condition, 8 consented to the trip to the museum, of whom 7 agreed to go the zoo. This result agrees with my earlier assumption that if the first request is complied with, the second request of a similar degree of difficulty will probably also be accepted.

It is a vital characteristic of the DITF technique that the second request is of a reduced degree of difficulty. It should be stressed, however, that in many social situations, it is not unanimously clear whether the second request is or is not easier than the first request. When someone rejects a request to complete a 500-item questionnaire and is then asked to complete a 50-item questionnaire, it is obvious that the second request is easier to fulfill, even if the person also rejects this request. Similarly, someone who rejects a request to lend \$500 and is then asked to lend \$50 will identify the second request as easier. What will happen, though, if the first request is about completing a long questionnaire, and the second request requires participating in a 1-hr, face-to-face debate on the utility of studying classical ancient literature? Will the second activity take up the same amount of time or less than completing a 500-item questionnaire? Which of the two will be more tiresome? Which will turn out to be intellectually more involving? These and similar questions that are difficult to answer with certainty are, in some cases, able to make the person treat the second request as a compromise on the part of the requester (who does not insist on complying with the first request).

There is an additional reason why the second request might be interpreted as a compromise in such a case. In actual social situations, people are confronted with the classical version of DITF from time to time. Practitioners of social influence (e.g., salespeople, brokers, negotiators) or even colleagues and family members at least sometimes start with a request that is difficult to obey. (It does not matter if they assume in advance that it will be rejected or not.) When people decline to comply with this request, they are posed another, noticeably easier request.

Coming back to our analysis, one may say that if a person rejected the first request and is now faced with another (objectively equally difficult), on the basis of prior experience he or she presupposes that the second request may be easier. In other words, in the condition in which easy assessment of the real difficulty of the request is not possible, the person uses heuristic thinking: "If now I am asked a quite different request, it most probably must be easier than the one I have just rejected."

The enhanced inclination of the accosted person to accept the second request after having rejected the earlier request (equally hard to fulfill) can also be expected when we assume that the very psychological mechanism that underlies the effectiveness of door-in-the face is the person's desire to reduce his or her sense of guilt. Along with the proposal by O'Keefe and Figge (1997), the sense of guilt appears when the person has rejected the first request and his or her acceptance of the subsequent request becomes an excellent occasion to flush out the unpleasant emotion. As it seems, acceptance of a request equally difficult as the one that has just been rejected can

also create such an opportunity (especially as this new request, as already pointed out, can appear subjectively easier than the first request).

Hence, a sequence of two requests of a similar degree of difficulty can make the person more willing to fulfill the second request, regardless of whether the first request has been accepted or rejected. Thus, if the first request is fulfilled, the person will follow the FITD scenario (“Having accepted the first request, I should take up the second one”), and if the first request is rebuffed, the person will follow the DITF scenario (“Having rejected the first request, I shouldn’t now refuse to accept the second”).

The technique based on a sequence of two requests of similar degree of difficulty consists of two routes. The person “chooses” the route at the very moment he or she makes the decision of accepting or rejecting the first request. When the person accepts the first request, he or she is on the *agreement route*; and when the person rejects the first request, he or she finds himself or herself on the *refusal route*. Because the technique that is the focus of this article is based on a sequence of two requests, similar in difficulty, and constitutes a specific combination of the two classical sequential strategies recalled previously, I suggest the name *foot-in-the-face* (FITF) for the technique.

The degree of difficulty of complying with a request is usually identified in psychological literature with the percentage of people who comply with the request in control conditions (i.e., the request posed directly). While in FITD studies the first request is usually easy to fulfill or, for that matter, is accepted by all or nearly all of the control group participants (e.g., Burger & Caldwell, 2003; Dillard, 1991; Pilner, Hart, Kohl, & Saari, 1974), in the case of DITF studies it is a difficult request, which means that hardly any of the control group participants comply with it (e.g., Abrahams & Bell, 1994; Cann, Sherman, & Elkes, 1975; Cialdini et al., 1975).

As stated earlier, in the case of the FITF technique, the two requests should be of comparative difficulty. However, the required degree of difficulty of the requests cannot be determined a priori. If we, therefore, assume that these should be requests that are fulfilled by, say, 65% of the control condition participants, then we can assume that having presented them sequentially, we can expect 65% of participants to take the agreement route and the remaining 35% to follow the refusal route. If, however, these requests are more difficult and are accepted only by, say, 35% of the control group participants, then the same percentage of experimental condition participants should enter the agreement route, and the rest (65%) should follow the refusal route.

In the FITF technique, a sequence of two equally easy requests makes the agreement route dominant, and a sequence of two equally difficult requests favors the refusal route. Only in the specific case of a sequence of two

moderately difficult requests (fulfilled by about half of the control group participants) will conditions be created such that we can expect more or less equal numbers of participants in each of the routes. It seems, then, that a study of the FITF effectiveness should start with the sequence of two requests that are moderately difficult to respect. If we also assume that the sequence is Request A—[its acceptance vs. rejection]—Request B, then the technique can be treated as effective if Request B is fulfilled more often in the experimental condition than in the control group, in which Request B is formulated instantly.

Obviously, because Request A is equally difficult (or equally easy) as Request B, it should be possible to test the effectiveness of the technique by using a reversed sequence; that is, Request B—[its acceptance vs. rejection]—Request A, and compare the percentage of people who comply with Request A with the percentage of those who comply with the same request when it is formulated directly. Because there are no indications that would allow us to assess either of the sequences A–B or B–A as methodologically better or worse, the most logical solution seems to be a study consisting of two experimental conditions, both with a sequence of two requests. Obviously, the experimental design should be supplemented with appropriate control conditions. The following is the experimental design that we require:

Group 1: Request A, then, regardless of participants' compliance with Request A, Request B

Group 2: Request B, then, regardless of participants' compliance with Request B, Request A

Group 3: Request B

Group 4: Request A

where compliance with Request B obtained in Experimental Group 1 would be compared with the compliance with the same request obtained in Control Group 3 and compliance with Request A in Experimental Group 2, with the results obtained in Control Group 4.

However, the experimental design can be simplified by omitting Control Groups 3 and 4. The frequency of compliance with the final Request B in Group 1 can be compared with the frequency of compliance with the same Request B received in Group 2, where it is formulated initially (which, in fact, matches the required control condition of Group 3) and the frequency of compliance with Request A received in Experimental Group 2 with the compliance with the same Request A obtained in Group 1, in which this request comes first (which matches the condition of Group 4).



The three experiments presented in this article are based on the same design. All of the studies were conducted to test the effectiveness of the FITF technique, as well as to assess the conditions under which the technique proves effective.

## Study 1

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

Participants ( $N = 200$ ; 128 female, 72 male) were visited in their own homes by one of two men, who introduced themselves as geography students and asked for help in collecting some data for their master's theses. In half of the conditions, the participants were asked to perform a daily reading of the ambient temperature, and in the other half of the cases, the air pressure. Regardless of whether or not the participant agreed to comply with the first request, the second request followed; that is, to read the air-pressure value in the first condition and the temperature in the second condition.

#### *Procedure*

Because it has been assumed that both requests used in the study of the FITF technique should be moderately difficult (i.e., complied with by nearly half the people in the control condition), we conducted a pilot study to establish the sort of requests that fulfill the requirement of *moderate difficulty* and at the same time require different kinds of activity for different periods of time. As a result of the pilot study, we chose the two requests to conduct measurements of meteorological parameters formulated by a supposed geography student and addressed to house residents. The experiment was carried out by two young men aged 22 and 23, both of whom were blind to the hypothesis. Each was to visit people (aged 17–70) in the residential districts of the city of Wroclaw (Poland) and introduce himself as a geography student, asking the people for help with the empirical research for his master's thesis:

Good morning. I am a geography student, and I am currently carrying out some research for my master's degree thesis. I would be most grateful if you could kindly help me with this study. All I am asking is not more than a minute of your time daily for the next five days [a few minutes of your time next



Monday or Tuesday]. I am interested in weather parameter differences in various districts of our city.

In the temperature condition, the confederate then took out of his bag a small black box measuring 3 in. (7.5 cm) × 2 in. (5 cm) with a display on one side of it and on the other an adhesive rubber element (to attach the box to a windowpane). On the top was a green button. The confederate demonstrated the box to the participant and continued:

I would like to ask you to affix this small device to the outside of a windowpane and to read and note down the temperature values from the display every day for the next five days. The precise temperature will be displayed by pressing the button. Simply press this button, look at the display, and write down on a piece of paper the indication read from the display together with the time of the measurement every morning for the next five days, any time between 5 a.m. and 11 a.m.

In the air-pressure condition, the confederate took out of his bag a small device similar to a round black alarm clock, about 6 in. (15 cm) in diameter. He demonstrated this device to the participant and continued:

I would like to ask you to put this device on a windowsill in your kitchen or room (inside) and to read and write down the air pressure values from the display next Monday or Tuesday afternoon and evening four times in consecutive one-hour intervals. For example, you can choose Monday and take measurements at 7 p.m., 8 p.m., 9 p.m., and 10 p.m. You simply look at the display and write down on a piece of paper the indication read from the display together with the time of the measurement.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the participant agreed to carry out the measurements, the confederate formulated the second request, saying "Thank you very much, but [or Oh, I see, but then] I have another request to ask: if you could [also] measure the air pressure [temperature] . . ." and formulated the second request. Even if the participant did not agree to carry out the reading of the second parameter, the confederate thanked the participant for his or her time and admitted that, in fact, the study dealt with the question of whether people were inclined to comply with requests of this sort. The confederate noted the participant's sex and which of the requests he or she agreed to obey. Each confederate alternately asked the participant first to

<sup>5</sup>In the pilot study, 47% of the participants agreed to measure air pressure, and 54% agreed to measure ambient temperature.

measure the air pressure and then to measure the temperature or reversed the order of parameters in the requests. Each confederate conducted 100 such interviews.

### *Results*

The preliminary analyses indicate that participants' compliance with the requests was not affected either by the confederates or by the sex of participants. Both in the experiment and in the pilot study, and alike for Requests A and B, the request that appeared first was complied with by a similar number of people. Regardless of which of the meteorological measurements the participants were asked to carry out, about half of them complied with this request (52 out of 100 in the temperature condition vs. 49 out of 100 in the air-pressure condition;  $\chi^2 < 1$ , *ns*). When analyzing the results, then, it is quite legitimate to collapse over the nature of the request (temperature vs. air pressure) variable. In this situation, the appropriate test of the effectiveness of the FITF seems to be the comparison of the proportion of those who complied with the first request in the sequence (101/200) with the proportion of those who complied with the request to carry out meteorological measurements formulated as the second request of the sequence (131/200).

The FITF technique proved effective. While in the control condition 50.5% of the people consented to measure the air pressure or the temperature, the percentage increased to 65.5% when such a request was preceded by the initial request,  $\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 9.24$ ,  $p < .003$  (effect size [ES] = 0.33).<sup>6</sup>

What is noteworthy is that the increase in compliance in the experimental condition was obtained mainly thanks to the fact that the participants who complied with the first request behaved consistently and in general also complied with the second request. Of the 101 people who initially agreed to measure one parameter, 91 agreed to measure the additional parameter. Of the 99 participants who did not agree to fulfill the first request, only 40 decided to help with the second request. Therefore, it can be stated that of the two routes of compliance possible in the case of the FITF technique, the agreement route proved to be the more effective by far,  $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 54.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = 1.44). The study results are presented in Table 1.

### *Discussion*

Study 1 confirmed the effectiveness of the FITF technique. It turns out that when a sequence of two similarly difficult requests was presented, the

<sup>6</sup>The effect size was calculated from the phi coefficient, as suggested by Lipsey (1990).

Table 1

*Decision Tree of People Who Agreed to Fulfill the Second Request in Each Experimental Condition: Study 1*

First request: Temperature or air pressure	Second request: Air pressure or temperature, respectively
Yes = 101	Yes = 91 No = 10
No = 99	Yes = 40 No = 59

second request was accepted more often than when it was presented directly. Nearly all of those who agreed to fulfill the first request that was posed by the “geography student” (i.e., perform a short daily activity for five consecutive mornings) also agreed to help him with the other request (i.e., the afternoon measurement). The fact that the second request was also complied with by some of those who had not complied with the first request is what marks the FITF as an effective technique.

On the other hand, it would be utterly illegitimate to claim that in the conditions of two requests similar in degree of difficulty, Study 1 demonstrated the effectiveness of the agreement route just as it showed the ineffectiveness of the refusal route. We must bear in mind that by its very nature, the FITF technique will be effective only and exclusively in conditions in which the second request is complied with by some of those who have complied with the first request, and by some of those who have rejected the first request. Additionally, the percentage of those who comply with the second request of the sequence must be higher than the percentage of those who comply with the same request in the control conditions (i.e., when this request comes first). Therefore, even if all those who had complied with the first request then complied with the second, the criteria of the technique’s effectiveness would not be met. To claim its effectiveness, we would need at least some of those who rejected the first request to comply with the second. In Study 1, the FITF technique proved effective mainly thanks to those who complied with both requests, but also thanks to those who complied with the second request, having rejected the first request.

However, it must be pointed out that those who agreed to fulfill the first request in Study 1 in fact did not have to actually perform what they had just accepted to do. Additionally, compliance with the second request can be

considered a fairly low cost for those who had already agreed to fulfill the first request by taking some measurements using a device given to them. Their agreement with the second request simply involved taking some more measurements using another device. One could claim here that even if the degree of difficulty of both requests seems comparable when the requests are considered separately, their difficulty no longer seems comparable when the requests are treated as a sequence: Our compliance with the first request can make us perceive our compliance with the second request in terms of a minor additional effort.

The question arises whether the results would be similar if the participants actually had to fulfill the first request and if compliance with the second request would involve the investment of approximately as much time and effort as compliance with the first request. For these reasons, Study 2 was based on a different paradigm than Study 1. An additional reason for carrying out Study 2 is the possibility to consider one more factor connected with the effectiveness of sequential techniques.

The FITF technique consists of two routes: the agreement route and the refusal route. Participants automatically find themselves on one of these routes by complying or not complying with the initial request. Relevant research has demonstrated that in certain conditions, the classical sequential techniques (i.e., FITD and DITF) not only appear to be ineffective, but under particular conditions, compliance with the second request is lower in the experimental group than in the control group. With regard to the foot-in-the door technique, this occurs particularly often when immediately after the person has completed the first, comparatively hard, request, the second request is put forward. On the other hand, the DITF technique usually loses its effectiveness when there is a time interval between the first and second requests.

The explanation for this pattern comes from the model assuming that the person exposed to sequential techniques takes into consideration two sources of information. The first source provides data on the person's own behavior in similar past situations, and the second source deals with the person's perception of the behavior of those who formulate the second request (Tybout, Sternthal, & Calder, 1983).<sup>7</sup> According to this model, people want to perceive themselves as coherent and consistent. Therefore, the participants' choice of having complied with the first request should incline them to comply with the second request as well, while rejection of the first request should promote rejection of the second.

As to the information about the influence agent's behavior, the authors of the model assume that if the participant notices that the influence agent's

<sup>7</sup>The authors of this model concentrated solely on the situation in which both requests are formulated by the same person, which is in line with the problem discussed here.

demand has escalated, the second request will be rejected. However, if the participant is given the opportunity to notice that the requester has reduced the demands, the second request is more likely to be respected. Thus, we are dealing here with a situation in which in the case of FITD, information about himself or herself makes the person inclined to fulfill the second request (“I’ve already fulfilled a request like that”), but the information about the influence agent’s behavior pushes him or her in the opposite direction (“These demands are escalating”). This works the other way around in the case of the DITF technique. Information about himself or herself (“I have previously refused to do that”) makes the person rebuff the request, but information about the requester’s reaction (“Now, this time he or she is asking for less”) urges the person to accept the second request. The assumption that the authors of the model make is, in fact, that the key effectiveness determinant for both techniques is either of these two sets of information; that is, the one on which the person is focusing.

The FITD technique is particularly efficient in conditions in which the person focuses on the first set of information (i.e., the person’s own previous behavior) and leaves out the information of the second set (i.e., the influence agent’s behavior), while the DITF technique would be effective in exactly opposite conditions. What factors could possibly strengthen the required effects? According to Tybout et al. (1983), in the case of the FITD technique, to weaken the person’s concentration on the second set of information, an advantageous condition is a certain time interval after the first request is fulfilled and before the second request is made. With the passage of time, the fact that the requests are escalating in demand becomes less evident. In the case of the DITF technique, compliance with the critical request should be enhanced when this request follows immediately after the first one, because then the requester’s reduction of demand becomes more evident. The results of meta-analyses generally support this assumption (FITD<sup>8</sup>: Burger, 1999; Dillard, Hunter & Burgoon, 1984; Fern et al., 1986; DITF: O’Keefe & Hale, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>In earlier meta-analyses examining the effects of the time between the requests (Beaman et al., 1983; Dillard et al., 1984; Fern et al., 1986), the reviewers did not find a relationship between the length of time between the requests and the strength of the FITD effect. Burger (1999) argued, however, that the number of requesters and the time that elapses between requests must be considered together in analyses, which was not done in the aforementioned studies. Burger found 34 studies that included an FITD condition in which the same individual gave both requests and presented the target request immediately after participants agreed to the initial request; and 7 studies in which in such conditions, the final request was formulated after a delay of at least 2 days. Burger showed in his own meta-analysis that in the one requester/no delay condition, the FITD technique loses its effectiveness. He suggested that “participants are likely to have a negative reaction when the same person asks one request after another, and that a type of reactance effect may contribute to this negative response” (p. 313).

In line with this reasoning, I decided to introduce into the experimental design the variable of the time elapsed between posing the two requests. In half of the conditions, the second request was formulated immediately after the participant had either rejected or fulfilled the first request and in the other half of the cases, the final request was presented after an interval of 2 or 3 days.

It can be predicted on the basis of Tybout et al.'s (1983) model that the FITF technique should be particularly (or perhaps exclusively) effective under the condition that the second request is made immediately after the first has been rejected, but after some time has passed if the first request was accepted. In light of the previous model, two of the three remaining situations can be defined as less favorable to the FITF effect, and one as completely unfavorable to this effect. Posing the second request directly after the first one, whether or not the latter has been fulfilled, favors the refusal route and discards the agreement route. This is reversed in the case of posing the second request after some time has passed since the moment the first request was posed, whether it was rejected or accepted. What we can expect in both of these cases, then, is either a lack of the FITF effect, or its minor effect compared with the conditions in which the second request is formulated directly after the first has been rejected or with a delay if the first has been fulfilled.

The last situation of our experimental design assumes posing the second request directly after the participant has fulfilled the first request and delaying if the participant has rejected the first request. Both conditions favor the participant's disagreement with the second request and, at the same time, suppress the effectiveness of the FITF technique.

## Study 2

### *Overview*

Study 2 was conducted in student dormitories. The confederate visited the participants in their rooms, asking for help for a blind fellow student. Half of the participants ( $N = 200$ ; 123 female, 77 male) were to complete a questionnaire, while the other half ( $N = 200$ ; 119 female, 81 male) were asked to tape-record an excerpt from a student textbook. In half of the cases, the second request was formulated immediately after the participant's completion or rejection of the first request; while in other half, the second request was formulated 2 or 3 days later.

*Method**Procedure*

In the course of the pilot study, it was found that about half of the students who were asked in their dormitory rooms to complete a questionnaire (which takes about 30 min to complete), presented by the confederate as the empirical basis for the master's thesis of a blind fellow student, accepted the request. A second request was to make a recording of a five-page fragment of a psychology handbook on a supplied tape recorder, supposedly belonging to the blind colleague, which was to take about 15 to 20 min.<sup>9</sup>

This experiment was carried out in Wrocław by six confederates (4 women aged 23–24; 2 men aged 23 and 27), all of whom were blind to the hypothesis. Each of the confederates visited the experimental participants in their rooms in a student dormitory.

The confederate visited the participant and said “Hi. I would like to ask you something. We have a fellow student in our group who is blind, and we are organizing some help for him.” In half of the cases, the confederate continued:

For his master's thesis, he has to conduct a questionnaire study, and I would like to ask you, in his name, to fill out this questionnaire, which takes about 30 minutes. Because of the study procedure, this questionnaire must be filled out within this hour, as the subject of the thesis is the impact of the biological clock on human functioning. If you agree to do this, I will leave this questionnaire for you to fill out and drop in to collect it in about an hour.

To the other half of the experimental participants, the confederate said:

We need help with recording on tape texts from the handbooks, which are the material for the classes and exams. It so happens there's quite a lot of them, which is why we are looking for people who would agree to record five-page fragments of this book [here the confederate showed the handbook]. Reading this aloud and recording takes up 15, well, maybe 20 minutes. If you

<sup>9</sup>In the pilot study, it was initially assumed that if half (52%, to be precise) of the students who were asked to help the blind student agreed to spare 30 min of their time to complete the questionnaire, then we could expect more or less the same compliance with the request to do a 30-min recording of a textbook fragment on tape. However, it turned out that only 32% of the pilot students agreed to record the text. We then had to shorten the recording time from 15 to 20 min, which resulted in the increase in compliance to 46%.



agree to do this, I will leave the book and this tape recorder with you and come back to pick them up in half an hour.

Participants who agreed to comply with the request received a 100-item questionnaire on the student's opinions about the conditions of studying at the University of Wrocław, as well as about the economic situation in Poland, the student's political attitudes, and the student's current frame of mind<sup>10</sup>, or a portable tape recorder and the book with the fragment to be recorded marked in it, accordingly. Participants who did not agree with the first request were politely thanked.

In the no-delay-between-requests condition, whenever the participant agreed to fulfill the first request, the second request was formulated at the next contact time, when the confederate came back to collect the completed questionnaire or recording. In this case, the confederate said "Many thanks, also in the name of my blind friend. But, I'd like to ask you one more thing" and formulated the second request. In the situation in which the participant refused to comply with the first request, the confederate immediately formulated the alternative request, introducing it by saying "In that case, I'd like to ask you for something quite different."

In the time-delay conditions, the participants were thanked after fulfilling the first request or thanked and bid goodbye when they rebuffed the first request. In spite of this, they were visited again after 2 days and the second request was formulated. In the situation in which the participant was not available on that day, the confederates tried to pay another visit on the following day. If this also failed (11 out of 200 cases), additional new participants replaced these cases in the experiment. Each of the confederates interviewed 62 to 76 people, with a proportional share of the number in each of the conditions. After the experiment, the recordings of the handbook text were actually presented to a blind student; and of the 100 questions that were answered in the questionnaire, 80 proved to be useful for his master's thesis.

### *Results*

Preliminary analyses indicate that the confederates' sex did not affect the frequency of compliance with the requests. Of the six confederates, one (a man) was found to be less effective than the other five and another one (a woman) was found to be more effective, but the effect was even in all conditions and for both requests in the sequence. Therefore, the factors of the confederates' sex and their personal-effectiveness differences were not taken

<sup>10</sup>In fact, in the pilot study, it did take the students about 30 min to complete the questionnaire.

into account in further analysis. Analogously to Study 1, both in the pilot studies and in the main experiment, the request that appeared first was fulfilled by a similar number of participants in either of its variants. Whether the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (99 out of 200) or to make the recording (96 out of 200), about half of them agreed to fulfill the request ( $\chi^2 < 1$ , *ns*). This allows us to ignore the nature of the request variable (i.e., questionnaire vs. tape recording) in further analysis.

In the control condition (i.e., when the request was formulated directly), 195 of 400 people (48.8%) agreed to help. In the experimental conditions (i.e., when the critical request was preceded by another one), the former was complied with by 232 out of 400 people (58.0%). This difference is significant,  $\chi^2(1, N = 800) = 6.88, p < .009$ . As the ES is rather low ( $ES = 0.19$ ), one may say that the critical level of significance is obtained mainly because of the considerable size of the interviewed sample. What is interesting, however, is the way the experimental conditions determined by participants' reactions to the first request (i.e., consent vs. lack of consent) as well as time of posing the second request (i.e., directly after the first request is rejected/fulfilled vs. after 2 or 3 days) modified the participants' reactions.

We predicted that the FITF technique would be effective under the condition that the second request is made immediately after the first one has been rejected, but after some time has passed if the first request is accepted. Out of 102 people who were asked to fulfill the second request immediately after they had rejected the first request, 59 agreed to do it; out of 97 people who fulfilled the first request and were asked to fulfill the second request 2 or 3 days later, 74 complied with the last request. In total, in the conditions thus defined, the final request was fulfilled by 66.8%, which is significantly more than in the control conditions,  $\chi^2(1, N = 599) = 17.54, p < .001$  ( $ES = 1.09$ ).

In the conditions in which the final request was always formulated immediately after the first request, whether it was rejected or complied with by the participant, the FITF technique was also effective. The second request was fulfilled by 59% of participants. The difference between this rate and the frequency of compliance obtained in the control conditions did reach the conventional level of statistical significance,  $\chi^2(1, N = 600) = 5.61, p < .018$  ( $ES = 0.19$ ). A similar result was obtained in the conditions in which the second request was always posed 2 or 3 days after the first request. The compliance rate (57%) was higher than in the control group,  $\chi^2(1, N = 600) = 3.63, p < .057$  ( $ES = 0.16$ ). The frequency of participants' compliance was almost identical in the conditions in which the final request was always formulated immediately after the first request, as well as in the conditions in which the final request was always formulated with a delay,  $\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 0.16, ns$ . In the conditions in which the second request appeared immediately after the participant's compliance with the first request, but 2 to

Table 2

*Decision Tree of People Who Agreed to Fulfill the Second Request in Each Experimental Condition: Study 2*

	First request: Record or questionnaire	Second request: Questionnaire or record, respectively
Without delay	Yes = 98	Yes = 59 No = 39
	No = 102	Yes = 59 No = 43
2–3 days' interval	Yes = 97	Yes = 74 No = 23
	No = 103	Yes = 40 No = 63

3 days after the participant's rejection of the first request, the compliance rate thus constructed reached 49.3% and was nearly identical to that achieved in the control conditions,  $\chi^2(1, N = 601) = 0.01, ns$ .

If we now compare participants' reactions in the different experimental conditions, the compliance rate in the groups in which the second request was made immediately after the first request had been rejected or delayed if the first request was accepted was higher than in the groups in which the second request appeared each time immediately after the first request or each time after 2 to 3 days' delay, regardless of participants' reactions to the first request,  $\chi^2(1, N = 599) = 4.36, p < .037$  (ES = 0.17). The compliance rate in all three situations was, however, higher than in the groups in which the second request appeared immediately after the participant's compliance with the first request or 2 to 3 days after the participant's rejection of the first request,  $\chi^2(1, N = 601) = 4.14, p < .042$  (ES = 0.17). The results of this experiment are presented in Table 2.

### *Discussion*

The pattern of results obtained in Experiment 2 is totally in line with the model assuming the key role of the two sets of information; that is, the

person's own past behavior and the influence of the agent's behavior (Tybout et al., 1983). The FITF technique proved to be highly effective in conditions in which the second request was formulated immediately after rejection of the first request, but if the participant fulfilled the first request, the second request had to be delayed. The technique was less effective in situations in which the second request appeared immediately after the first request or after a 2- to 3-day delay, irrespective of participants' reactions to the first request. When the second request appeared immediately after the participant's compliance with the first request or 2 to 3 days after the participant's rejection of it, the technique proved to be ineffective.

In actual social situations, someone who would like to apply the FITF technique to reach certain aims would have to act flexibly, depending on the person's reaction to the first request. If the person fulfills the first request, the second request must be postponed. If the person rejects the first request, however, the final request must be posed immediately. Study 3 was designed to test the consequences of such a flexible setup of the confederates' performance.

### Study 3

#### *Overview*

This study was based on an idea analogous to that of Study 2. This time, however, the confederates were to follow the instruction "If the participant agrees to fulfill the first request, wait and make the second request after 2 to 3 days. If the participant rejects the first request, formulate the second request immediately."

#### *Method*

##### *Procedure*

The study was conducted in the city of Wroclaw by two women aged 23, both of whom were blind to the hypothesis. In half of the cases, the request for the participant to complete the questionnaire was made first, and then the request to tape record a fragment of a textbook; in the other half of the cases, the order of the requests was reversed. The confederates followed the instruction that if the participant refused to fulfill the first request, they were to formulate the second request immediately; and if the first request was fulfilled, the second request was to be formulated after 2 days or, if the participants were unavailable, on the third day. If the participant could not be

Table 3

*Decision Tree of People Who Agreed to Fulfill the Second Request in Each Experimental Condition: Study 3*

First request: Record or questionnaire	Second request: Questionnaire or record, respectively
Yes = 95	Yes = 71 No = 24
No = 105	Yes = 55 No = 50

reached on the second or third day after fulfilling the first request (4 out of 100 cases), she or he was replaced by a new participant. In total, one of the confederates interviewed 116 people (71 female, 45 male) and the other interviewed 84 people (49 female, 35 male).

### *Results*

The preliminary analyses indicate that the participants' compliance with the requests was not affected by the participants' sex or by the confederates. Whether the participants were asked to make a recording (46 out of 100) or to complete a questionnaire (49 out of 100), about half of them agreed to fulfill the request ( $\chi^2 < 1$ , *ns*). Therefore, the nature of the initial request variable was eliminated from the analysis of the results.

While in the control conditions 47.5% (95 out of 200) of the people agreed to fulfill the first request, the rate increased to 64.0% (128 out of 200) when this request was preceded by the other one,  $\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 9.72$ ,  $p < .002$  (ES = 0.32). If we compare the impact of the two routes contributing to the FITF technique, the agreement route again turns out to prevail over the refusal route,  $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 10.69$ ,  $p < .002$  (ES = 0.48). The results of Study 3 are presented in Table 3.

### *Discussion*

The results of Study 3 constitute additional evidence for the effectiveness of the FITF technique. The study's participants were compliant with the

second request also when the confederates carried out the alternative experimental scenarios depending on participants' reactions to the first request. In addition, it turned out that compliance with the target request was more likely when the person complied with the first request than when the person rejected it.

### General Discussion

Situations in which the formulation of a target request is preceded by posing another request are a frequent field of research for social influence psychologists. So far, however, increased compliance with the target request was found in conditions in which the initial request was either easier than the target request and was fulfilled (i.e., the FITD paradigm) or more difficult and was rejected (i.e., the DITF paradigm).

In the series of studies presented in this article, it was demonstrated that increased compliance with the final request can also be observed when the initial request is of more or less the same degree of difficulty as the final request. In Study 1, this effect was reached in conditions in which participants merely declared their willingness to fulfill the first request. In Study 2, the participants who accepted the first request and actually fulfilled it were then asked to fulfill the subsequent request. Additionally, this experiment was to test the effectiveness of the FITF technique in conditions of a differentiated time interval between the formulation of the first request and the second request. It was found that the technique becomes ineffective only in very specific situations; that is, when the second request was formulated directly after the participants had fulfilled the first request or several days after the participants had rejected the first request. The technique was effective, however, in situations in which the second request appeared immediately after the first one or after 2 or 3 days' delay, regardless of the participant's reactions to the first request. The FITF technique turned out to be most effective when the second request was formulated several days after the participants' fulfillment of the first request or directly after the participants' rejection of the first request. The high effectiveness of the technique in such conditions was confirmed in Study 3.

We have thus described a new compliance-gaining strategy, which includes, in a sense, the two classical sequential techniques: the FITD and the DITF. For this reason, we called it the *foot-in-the-face technique*. Although a direct comparison of the effectiveness of the FITF technique with the results of studies concerning the classical sequential techniques cannot be made, given that different behaviors were investigated, one may note that in the studies described in this article, we obtained compliance rates between 63%

and 68%. In classical studies, the compliance rate was a bit lower. In Cialdini et al.'s (1975) study, 50% of the participants complied with a critical request when it was preceded by a large request. In Freedman and Fraser's (1966) study, 53% complied with a critical request when it was preceded by a trivial one. One may conclude, therefore, that the FITF technique seems to be at least as effective as the well known classical sequential techniques.

In all three studies described here, the agreement route brought about a stronger effect than did the refusal route. The robust agreement route effect might be interpreted as an additional example of the crucial role played by the need for consistency in a person's social behavior (Cialdini, 2001; Cialdini et al., 1995; Guadagno, Asher, Demaine, & Cialdini, 2001). Altogether, in the studies described in this article, 75.6% of participants remained consistent by answering "Yes" to both requests, and 51.7% of participants remained consistent by answering "No" to both requests.

A fact to remember, however, is that if a great majority of those who rejected the opportunity to comply with the first request also rejected the second request, the FITF technique would prove ineffective. Its effectiveness would then be a result of activation of both the agreement route and the refusal route (even if the latter seems less active in the FITF strategy).

Although the presented FITF technique is similar to the other sequential techniques, there is one distinctive thing about it. In the FITD technique, there is almost always a certain, usually small group of those who do not comply with the first, comparatively easy request. We can nearly take it for granted that the moment the person says "No" to the first request, it is useless to go on with the FITD in that case. In the DITF, we start the interaction by formulating a very difficult request, aware of the fact that it will most likely be rejected. It is not clear, however, whether someone who agrees to fulfill this hard request will then agree or not agree to fulfill the easier, final request. Thus, in the case of both of these classical sequential techniques, we can at least potentially encounter people who do not act like the majority when they hear the first request, and hence stand outside the range of the psychological mechanisms underlying these techniques of social influence. In the case of the FITF, there is a difference: Whether the first request is accepted or rejected, the person still undergoes the psychological mechanisms that should push him or her toward acceptance of the subsequent request.

There are some limitations to the FITF technique, however, which the two classical sequential techniques do not share. In the case of the FITD, we can start the social interaction by posing a very small request (fulfilled by 99% of people in the control conditions), or one that is somewhat more difficult (90% control condition compliance) to finish off with a bit more difficult request than the initial one, or one that is evidently more difficult, or even one that is very hard to follow. Similarly, in the case of the DITF, we can either



start with an extremely difficult request (one rejected by 99% of population) or one that is quite difficult (normally rejected by 90% of people) in order to pose an easier question finally. Then again, an “easier” request could be one that is accepted by half of those in the control conditions, just as well as one that is accepted by every fourth person.

The FITF does not allow much freedom in choosing the requests. It is necessary that the interaction start with a moderately difficult request and end with a request of a very similar degree of difficulty. Although it has not yet been tested whether the technique would prove effective with a sequence of requests fulfilled by a bit less or a bit more than 50% of people in the control conditions (i.e., 40% or 60% of the population), it can be stated that the difficulty margin of the requests that can be posed in the case of this technique is much narrower than in the alternative sequential techniques.

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