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Dialogue Involvement as a Social Influence Technique

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When a request is preceded by a casual dialogue, the approached person is more likely to comply than when the same request follows a monologue. This effect appeared to be strong and replicable in a series of field studies. Across experiments, the issues discussed in conversations between the confederates and the participants and the nature of the critical request varied, suggesting that the effect is generalized. In social situations, the two basic modes of communication (dialogue and monologue) are characteristic of different types of interactions. Dialogue is characteristic of encounters with one's friends and acquaintances, whereas monologue is more prevalent in contacts with strangers. As a result of social learning, a dialogue makes us prone to treat a stranger as someone we know and thus become more eager to comply with her or his requests. Although the results obtained in the studies are consistent with this model, alternative explanations and limitations of the research also are discussed.

The persuasion and compliance literature (e.g., Cialdini, 2001; Perloff, 1993) provides descriptions of many effective social influence mechanisms that increase the likelihood of compliance. Some of these techniques are based on the use of specific vocabulary. Cialdini and Schroeder (1976), for instance, demonstrated that when people are being asked for financial contributions, compliance is increased by assuring them that “even a penny helps.” This added phrase discourages the person from justifying his or her refusal by saying, “I cannot afford to contribute” or “I am a poor person myself.”

Sometimes it helps to word the request for financial contribution in a less typical way. In an experiment conducted by Santos, Leve, and Pratkanis (1994), contributions were solicited in the street. The request was either typical (people were asked for a quarter or spare change) or stated in a more unconventional way (asking for 17 or 37 cents). Those approached with a nontypical request

showed greater interest (revealed through their questions about the cause for which money was being collected) and were more likely to contribute. Santos et al. (1994) proposed that the typical wording engenders an automatic, habitual refusal and that the likelihood of compliance is increased by stating the request in a way to encourage a less automatic reaction.

Daniel Howard (1990) offered a different piece of advice for charity workers:

Before you ask anyone for a donation, you first ask them how they're feeling. After they tell you they're feeling good, and you tell them you're glad they're feeling good, they'll be more likely to contribute to helping someone who isn't. (p. 1185)

Howard has observed that this “foot-in-the-mouth” technique is being frequently used by social influence practitioners. He proposed that the underlying mechanism is related to one's sense of obligation and desire to appear consistent. In Howard's view, having publicly declared one's own sense of well-being, one feels obliged to show care for the well-being of others who are not so fortunate. Complying (giving money to charity) is a way of fulfilling this so-called obligation.

In Howard's (1990) first experiment, a person introducing himself or herself as working for a campaign against hunger phoned randomly selected citizens of

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Dallas. In the control group, participants learned about the cookie sale (25 cents each) to be organized in their district in the near future. The experimenter asked each interlocutor whether he or she would receive a cookie vendor. In the experimental condition, the experimenter first introduced herself or himself, asked the interlocutor how he or she was feeling that day, declared herself or himself to be pleased (or sorry) to hear the answer, and finally, explained the cookie sale. Participants in the experimental group were more likely to agree to the salesperson's visit than were participants in the control group.

However, the question arises whether the increased compliance in the experimental group may have resulted simply from the fact that the person who phoned the participants in this group was perceived by them as more polite than in the control group. Asking the interlocutor about his or her mood and expressing pleasure after receiving a positive answer (or sympathy otherwise) is generally perceived as an example of polite behavior. To exclude such explanation, Howard conducted another experiment, introducing an additional experimental group. In this second experimental group, the experimenter began each conversation by expressing hope that the interlocutor was feeling well. In this group, the level of compliance was the same as in the control group. The pattern of results led Howard to conclude that the "politeness" factor does not explain the differences in compliance between the groups.

The results of Howard's experiments show that by asking people how they are feeling and declaring pleasure after hearing a positive answer is conducive to increasing their subsequent compliance with the request to support a charity effort. However, it does not seem that the underlying mechanism is necessarily that of obligation and consistency.

First, it is not entirely clear why those who expressed feeling good should have felt obliged to make others, who are less fortunate, feel better too. There was no direct obligation stemming from some earlier declaration (which would have been the case if one stated, for example, "I think one should help those who are in a difficult situation"). At the very most, the participants could have experienced an inconsistency between their own positive statements and the implied information about those who had no reason to feel equally good. There are also some doubts about Howard's explanation of the second experiment's results. He assumed that the experimenter who simply expressed the hope that her or his interlocutor was feeling good was perceived as equally polite as the one who actually asked the opening question and reacted accordingly. This assumption has not been experimentally tested and verified. It might well have been that the addressed persons perceived the lat-

ter behavior (question answer reaction) as more polite than the former (merely expressing the hope that the interlocutor was feeling good and continuing without even waiting for his or her answer).

Taking all this into account, Aune and Basil (1994) proposed an alternative explanation of the foot-in-the-mouth phenomenon. They suggested that by asking people about their mood and then expressing delight after hearing that it is good, the respondents are induced to experience the relation of interpersonal closeness with the interlocutor.¹ In turn, this interpersonal closeness produces the respondent's relational obligation to comply. Thus, Aune and Basil concluded that compliance may be induced by other verbal statements that may produce the perception of interpersonal closeness. They presented the results of a study in which the experimenter asked randomly selected students at a university campus for charity contributions: She either began with the request, without any introductory exchange; first asked the participants how they were feeling that day and then made the request; or inquired whether they were students at the university and after hearing a confirmation introduced herself as a fellow student and then asked for money. The participants in the third group were most likely to comply, whereas those in the first group were least likely to do so. In their second experiment, the participants were presented with descriptions of the three scripts described above and were asked to evaluate the relation between the interacting persons (i.e., the experimenter and the respondent). Perceived closeness was greatest when the (verbal) exchange concerned studying at the same university and least when the experimenter asked for contributions without any initial exchange. In Aune and Basil's (1994) view, it is the perception of closeness in interpersonal relations that constitutes the mechanism underlying the participants' compliance in Howard's (1990) experiments as well as in their own study.

Neither Howard nor Aune and Basil considered another important factor distinguishing the control and experimental conditions in each of the aforementioned experiments—the mode of interpersonal communication. In all of the experimental groups in which increased compliance was observed, dialogue was involved. In all control groups, monologue dominated. We suggest that the distinction between monologue and dialogue is the crucial factor behind the observed differences in the participants' compliance.

Why should dialogue, in contrast to monologue, make respondents more compliant? Obviously, the nature of verbal contacts with persons one knows is different than it is in encounters with strangers: Frequently, the interacting partners who know each other need fewer words, because they can refer to some shared past

experiences or knowledge (e.g., Clark, 1985; Hopper, Knapp, & Scott, 1981). Also, people are more likely to reveal their intimate thoughts and emotions to persons they know than to strangers (e.g., Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullett, 1990; Knapp, 1984). However, apart from the different content, each of these two types of situations typically involves a different mode of communication. Dialogue is the dominant mode of communication in contacts with one's acquaintances and friends. People who know each other exchange information and comments as well as react to each other's statements. Monologue is the characteristic mode of communication with strangers; for example, a newsboy in the street addresses us with an offer to buy a newspaper with a TV guide for an entire week or a stranger's voice from a loudspeaker orders us to move to another platform at a railway station. When a stranger picks up the phone in a friend's office, we utter a formal greeting, introduce ourselves, and ask to speak to our friend. Obviously, dialogue also occurs between strangers, but usually it is briefer and more artificial.

Social psychology research provides ample evidence that in our interactions with other people, we automatically react to certain stimuli (Cialdini, 2001; Kitayama & Burnstein, 1988; Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978; Slugoski, 1995). We are suggesting that the mode of communication also can function as a priming stimulus in such situations. The monologue mode of communication triggers the "dealing with a stranger" script, whereas the dialogue mode triggers the "dealing with an acquaintance" script. A number of studies show that people are more likely to comply with requests made by friends and acquaintances than those made by strangers (e.g., Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Boster, Rodriguez, Cruz, & Marshal, 1995; Roloff, 1987; Roloff, Janiszewski, McGrath, Burns, & Manrai, 1988). Thus, it is possible that the interactions between the experimenter and participants that were based on dialogue (characteristic of encounters between friends or acquaintances) resulted in increased compliance because it primed the participant to act as though the experimenter were a friend.

Thus, there are three alternative explanations of the participants' increased compliance in the situations analyzed here: obligation and consequence mechanism, as suggested by Howard (1990); the perception of closeness, suggested by Aune and Basil (1994); and the involvement in dialogue, as we propose in this article. In a series of experiments, we aimed to show that dialogue by itself is sufficient to increase the interlocutor's compliance with the subsequent requests. In Experiment 1, we made use of the fact that in Poland, unlike in the United States, the cultural standards of demonstrating optimism and positive feelings are not obligatory. We demonstrated that even though Polish people give vari-

ous possible answers when asked how they are feeling, they are more likely to engage in charity than the control group of people not asked the same initial question. Experiment 2 demonstrated that asking how people are is an effective technique of increasing compliance in case of commercial requests. Experiments 3 and 4 showed that the involvement in dialogue increases compliance when the relation of closeness is not emphasized. In the third experiment, we manipulated three factors: asking or not asking how the participants are; emphasizing, or not, the relation of closeness; and using either dialogue or monologue as the mode of communication. However, because asking people how they are usually implies some degree of closeness, we created in Experiment 4 a situation where this sort of asking is purely technical and clearly not motivated by the confederate's care about the participants' well-being. The experiments, as a set, were designed to isolate engagement in dialogue as a key factor in increased compliance. Experiment 5 explored the underlying psychological mechanism.

EXPERIMENT 1

Overview

The first experiment explored the role of mood and of communication mode (dialogue vs. monologue) in inducing compliance. A negative mood is not conducive to altruistic actions (e.g., Forgas, 1998; Milberg & Clark, 1988). The results of Howard's (1990) third experiment seem consistent with this rule. Those who were asked about their mood and gave negative responses were as unlikely to help as were the participants in the control group. In American culture, it is normal to declare that one feels OK, and those who admitted that they felt bad were likely in a bad mood. If so, it is not surprising that those who declared they were not well rarely got involved in altruistic actions. However, would one observe a similar effect in a culture where there is not a norm to express unconditional well-being? If in such a culture persons declaring negative moods engaged in altruistic actions more frequently than those in a control group, the effect cannot be attributed to mood. In Poland, it is not nonnormative to express negative moods and states of well-being (Dolinski, 1996). In the first experiment, we did or did not ask participants how they were feeling before making a request. We also noted whether participants responded positively or negatively when asked about their feelings.

Participants and Procedure

Participants included 51 female and 29 male students who were living in student dormitories in Wrocław (Poland): 40 in the control group and 40 in the experi-

mental group. The experiment was conducted during the 2 weeks preceding the examination session at the university. The participants, randomly selected out of those encountered in the dormitory premises (in the hall, in participants' rooms, or in the corridors), were accosted individually by a female confederate, age 23.

Similar to the other studies presented in this article, the confederates in this experiment were aware of the conditions of the experimental groups and the control group; however, they were blind as to the experimental hypotheses. In addition, the confederates were instructed to stick rigidly to the script and to keep their responses and demeanor constant.

In the experimental group, the confederate approached the participants with the following question, "Hi! Is this session going to be hard for you? How many exams are you taking?" After this was answered, the confederate asked, "So how are you feeling before the session?" After receiving the answer to the second question, the confederate formulated the request to support an orphanage:

We are running an action to aid an orphanage. In a couple of days we're collecting money, books, and toys for the children. Would you like to help, too? If not, just say no. If you want to help, please leave me your phone number or a contact address so that we could reach you later.

In the control group, the same request was formulated immediately after the greeting ("Hi!").

It was recorded whether a participant agreed to take part in the charity action. In the case of the experimental group, the participants' answers to the question about their well-being also were noted. After a couple of days, those participants who had expressed their willingness to join the action were contacted and told that they had participated in a psychological research to determine the factors inclining people to altruism. They were thanked for their willingness to help the needy.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses showed that the participants' sex had no influence on their willingness to declare help, and this factor was not considered in further analyses. Participants in the experimental group were more likely to comply (0.625) than those in the control group (0.275), $\chi^2(1) = 9.90, p < .0017$. Only 15 out of 40 (0.375) participants in the experimental group declared being in a positive mood. Their compliance was no different from that observed among the remaining 25 persons (0.625) who declared a nonpositive (neutral or negative) mood, $\chi^2(1) < 1$. At the same time, both those who declared a positive mood and those who declared a nonpositive mood were more likely to declare their involvement in the charity effort than the participants in

the control group, $\chi^2(1) = 4.98, p < .026$, and $\chi^2(1) = 8.44, p < .0037$, respectively.

Thus, as in Howard's (1990) study, asking people how they were feeling increased the likelihood of their compliance with the request. However, unlike in Howard's study, those declaring negative or neutral mood were as likely to help as those who expressed feeling good. In Poland, declaring a negative or neutral mood is a conventional response in casual exchanges and does not necessarily mean that the person is really feeling bad (just as a positive declaration in the United States does not necessarily mean that the respondent actually is in a good mood). However, the fact that in Poland declaring a nonpositive mood increases the likelihood of compliance to the same degree as declaring a positive mood cannot be explained by the obligation effect proposed by Howard.

Another way of testing Howard's explanation may be to create a situation in which the request made on people is not charity related but unambiguously commercial. If those inquired about their mood are more likely to comply with a commercial request, the explanation based on the obligation and consistency mechanism is less plausible. Howard (1990) emphasized that the effects he observed are limited to "the non-profit nature of the critical request, i.e., where the respondents do not perceive that the requester has personal gain associated with their compliance" (p. 1195). Experiment 2 examined whether this limitation applies to the dialogue effect.

EXPERIMENT 2

Participants and Procedure

One hundred women, randomly selected out of women walking unaccompanied down the sidewalk in the center of Opole (Poland), participated in the experiment: 50 were randomly assigned to the control group and 50 to the experimental group. The confederate was a young woman, age 22.

In the experimental condition the standard solicitation approach was as follows: "Good afternoon! How are you feeling today?" When the respondent's answer was positive, the experimenter reacted with the comment, "I am glad to hear that you are feeling good." When the answer was other than positive, her comment was, "I am sorry to hear that you are not feeling particularly good." Immediately afterward, the experimenter said, "I am selling aromatic Indian pastilles. Would you like to buy a box from me?"

In the control group, the participants were just greeted ("Good afternoon!") and then asked to buy the pastilles.

Results and Discussion

In the experimental group, 11 out of 50 participants decided to buy the pastilles. In the control group, only 3 of 50 participants decided to do so, $\chi^2(1) = 5.32, p < .022$. In the experimental group, in which the participants were asked how they were feeling, 21 persons declared being in a good mood and the remaining 29 expressed either feeling badly or not particularly good. There was no relationship between the respondent's answer and her compliance: Among 11 persons who decided to buy the pastilles, 5 gave a positive answer to the introductory question and 6 declared a negative mood, $\chi^2(1) < 1$.

Thus, asking people how they were feeling increased the likelihood of their subsequent compliance when the critical request was not charity related but obviously commercial. Similar to Experiment 1, there was no relationship between the respondent's declared mood and her subsequent compliance.

The psychological mechanism of consistency undoubtedly underlies many situations in which people decide to comply (e.g., Cialdini, 2001; Howard, 1990). However, the two experiments described above suggest that engagement in dialogue, not consistency or obligation, affected compliance. However, the results obtained in the above experiments also can be explained by the idea of closeness, as emphasized by Aune and Basil (1994). Asking people how they are may evoke the feeling that the inquirer cares about them and feels close to them. However, as shown by Aune and Basil, the relation of closeness is stronger when evoked by stressing the similarity of social status and membership in the same group (e.g., being a student of the same university).

Another possible methodological problem with Experiments 1 and 2 is the difference in the interaction duration between the conditions of the experiment. If dialogues last longer than monologues, then perhaps it is not the form of communication but the duration of the interaction that is responsible for the increase of compliance. In the third experiment, we contrasted the effects of mood, the relationship closeness, and the form of communication (monologue vs. dialogue). We also measured the time of the interactions.

EXPERIMENT 3

Participants and Procedure

The experimental design was 2 (mode of communication: monologue vs. dialogue) \times 2 (mood mentioned vs. not) \times 2 (relationship closeness: directly induced or not). The participants were 400 female students walking unaccompanied in the campus of the University of Opole. They were randomly assigned to one of eight experimental conditions: There were 50 persons in each

of the eight groups. The study was conducted by five female confederates (age 20-21), who each worked in all experimental conditions. Confederates indiscernibly switched on a pocket stopwatch when starting the interaction with each participant and then stopped it right after they finished formulating the request.

In all groups, a donation was requested: "I am collecting money for special care children. Would you like to contribute, please?" In the monologue conditions, the confederate only greeted the participant before formulating the request, "Hi!" (no closeness/no mood), and depending on experimental condition, the confederate added one or both of the following statements (both in the closeness/mood condition): "I hope you are fine today" (no closeness/mood) or "I guess you are a student here. Me too—I major in social sciences" (closeness/no mood).

In the case of the dialogue mode in the no closeness/no mood condition, after greeting the participant and before asking for a donation, the confederate asked, "I guess you are a student here. May I ask what you major in?" After receiving the answer, she said, "Well, do you consider it worth studying?" and listened to the answer. In the no closeness/mood condition, the conversation was conducted according to the following pattern: "How are you today? How are you feeling?" Depending on the respondent's answer, she would comment, "That's great!" or "That's too bad!" In the closeness/no mood condition, the following conversation scenario was performed: "Are you a student here?" After receiving the positive answer, she would say, "Me too. I major in social sciences." In the closeness/mood condition, the confederate first asked how the participant was that day and then switched to the question of being fellow students.

The amount of contributions and the duration of interactions were recorded. Money collected was given to *Handicap*, a charity organization working with special care children.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses showed that willingness to donate money, $\chi^2(4) < 1$, and the amount of donation, $F(4, 395) = 1.13, p > .30$, were comparable among confederates.

The only significant effect in a log-linear analysis was the interaction between the mode of communication involved and participants' compliance, $\chi^2(1) = 24.06, p < .0001$. In the dialogue condition, the participants were more likely to comply with the request (31%) than in the monologue condition (11%). ANOVA showed also that the average amount donated was higher in the dialogue condition (Polish zlotys = 0.30) than in the monologue condition (Polish zlotys = 0.08), $F(1, 392) = 19.04, p < .00001$. ANOVA did not reveal any other statistically sig-

nificant main or interactive effects. However, when only those who donated money were included in the analysis, there was no effect of the experimental condition on the amount of money donated.

In all of the conditions of the experiment, the duration of the interaction was measured (in seconds). Dialogue mode significantly prolonged the interaction time (22.54) in comparison to the monologue condition (16.22), $F(1, 392) = 485.99$, $p < .000001$. ANOVA also showed the main effects of the two other factors. The main effect for relationship closeness, $F(1, 392) = 185.33$, $p < .000001$, resulted from the fact that in the closeness conditions, the interaction time was longer (21.33) than in the no-closeness conditions (17.43). The main effect for mood, $F(1, 392) = 183.29$, $p < .000001$, indicates that in the mood conditions, the interaction time was longer (22.13) than in the no-mood conditions (16.63). ANOVA also revealed the interaction between the communication mode and the mood issue, $F(1, 392) = 7.51$, $p < .0033$, as well as the interaction of all three independent variables, $F(1, 392) = 414.92$, $p < .000001$.

As we can see, the pattern of results for the measured interaction duration time is more complex than the pattern of results for compliance. Although dialogue generally is associated with a longer time of interaction than monologue, the differences in the interaction duration recorded for the experimental conditions do not correspond with those for the compliance measures recorded in respective conditions. Also, the series of comparisons by the LSD test indicates that in some cases the interaction durations in the monologue conditions were equal to or longer than in the dialogue conditions (see Table 1).

The ANCOVA analysis 2 (mode of communication) \times 2 (closeness) \times 2 (mood) for the amount of the donation treated as the dependent variable and the interaction time treated as the covariate also indicates a highly significant main effect of the communication mode, $F(1, 391) = 19.41$, $p < .000002$. If an analogous analysis is performed for compliance treated as the dichotomous variable (Lunney, 1970), the main effect of the communication mode remains significant, $F(1, 391) = 22.18$, $p < .000003$. Hence, interaction time does not seem to mediate the compliance effects. Moreover, mode of conversation, not mentioning mood or involving personal closeness, accounts for compliance in this study.

Our next experiment was a conceptual replication of Experiment 3. This time, however, we decided to manipulate the relation of closeness in a different way. Whereas in the previous experiment the closeness relation was understood as belonging to the same social group, in this study we decided to treat it in terms of similarity of attitudes and opinions. In light of previous research, one may expect that such similarity would increase both lik-

TABLE 1: Proportion of Persons Complying With the Experimenter's Requests, Average Amount of Donation (in parentheses), and Average Duration of the Interaction (in seconds) in Each Experimental Condition (Experiment 3)

	Closeness			
	No		Yes	
	Mood		Mood	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Monologue				
Compliance	08 (.044)	08 (.090)	16 (.108)	12 (.084)
Time ^a	10.22 _a	17.54 _{b, c}	16.36 _d	20.78 _e
Dialogue				
Compliance	32 (.262)	24 (.250)	36 (.398)	32 (.294)
Time ^a	23.52 _f	18.44 _b	16.42 _{c, d}	31.78 _g

NOTE: In all experimental conditions, $N=50$. Means that do not share a common subscript differ within one row at $p < .05$.

ing (e.g., Batson, 1991) and compliance (e.g., Cialdini, 2001). There was also an additional, methodological reason for conducting this study. In most of the real as well as experimental situations, it is very difficult to differentiate conceptually between the mood declaration effect (i.e., technique recommended by Howard, 1990) and the interpersonal closeness induction (i.e., technique suggested by Aune & Basil, 1994). If you ask someone how he or she is, at the same time you are expressing care about him or her. To avoid this confound, in our Experiment 4, we created a situation where the context for the question about mood was not emotional.

As in Experiment 3, we measured the duration of the interaction between the confederate and the participant.

EXPERIMENT 4

Participants and Procedure

Participants included 250 citizens of Wroclaw, both men (125) and women (125). The experiment was conducted on a beautiful, sunny day. Each participant (a person standing or walking unaccompanied) was randomly assigned to one of five experimental conditions and then approached by a couple (man and woman) and addressed by the confederate of the same sex. The experiment was conducted by five teams of two persons (age 25 to 28). Each team worked in all experimental conditions.

In all groups, the confederate began by saying, "Good morning. We are research workers at the Meteorology Department of the Wroclaw University."

In the four experimental groups the confederate continued, "We are running a short survey among the citi-

zens of Wrocław . . .” and asked the participant a question. In no closeness/no mood condition, the confederate asked, “What—in your view—is the average monthly temperature in Wrocław in February?” Having received the answer, the confederate said, “Thank you for your answer.” In no closeness/mood condition, the confederate asked, “How are you feeling today?” Then, depending on the answer, the reaction was either satisfaction (“I am glad to hear that”) or regret (“I am sorry to hear that”). In closeness/no mood condition, the confederate asked, “Do you think that weather affects people’s health?” After hearing the answer (whether it was positive or negative), the confederate expressed delight, “I have to tell you that my opinion on this subject is exactly the same.” In closeness/mood condition, the participants were asked, “How are you feeling today?” Once the respondent answered, the confederate would say, “I have to tell you that I am feeling exactly the same.” Right after that, the confederate formulated the request for a donation, “Our Department takes care of the orphanage in Sobotka. Would you like to make a donation for the children?” In the control group (monologue condition), the confederate asked for the donation right after introducing the team as the Meteorology Department employees.

The confederate who accompanied the one initiating the interaction indiscernibly switched on a stopwatch placed in the pocket and then stopped it immediately when the first confederate finished the request for the donation. Once the participant decided to make a contribution or refused to do so, he or she was informed about the actual purpose of the study and was apologized to for having been misled.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses showed that the dependent variable (willingness to donate money) was not affected by the team of experimenters, the person making the request, or the participant’s sex. Likewise, specific answers provided by the participants (as to their current mood, effect of weather on health, or average monthly temperature in February) had no effect on the participant’s willingness to comply ($\chi^2 < 1$ in each of the cases). Table 2 shows the percentage of participants who complied with the request in each experimental condition.

A log-linear analysis showed only the interaction effect between the mode of communication and the participants’ compliance, $\chi^2(1) = 6.981, p < .0083$. In the dialogue condition, the participants were more likely to comply with the request for a donation (40.5%) than in the monologue condition (16%). The fit-goodness coefficient based on the assumption that the mode of communication was the only factor affecting the dependent variable proved the best model to explain the differ-

TABLE 2: Proportion of Persons Complying With the Experimenter’s Requests and Average Duration of the Interaction (in seconds) in Each Experimental Condition (Experiment 4)

	Compliance	Duration of Interaction
Monologue	.16	25.76
Dialogue		
No closeness		
No mood	.36	52.96
Mood	.40	38.30
Closeness		
No mood	.44	54.12
Mood	.42	36.94

NOTE: In all experimental conditions, $N = 50$.

ences in the likelihood of compliance shown in Table 2 (maximum likelihood chi-square = .0852, $p = .99$). Out of 100 persons asked about their mood, 76 declared being in a positive mood; however, there was no significant relationship between the participants’ declared mood and their willingness to donate money (42.11% of those in a positive mood and 37.5% of those in a negative or neutral mood), $\chi^2(1) < 1$.

Thus, the results of Experiment 4 support the role of dialogue in inducing compliance. Neither asking about the respondents’ mood nor agreeing with their opinions (nor the interaction between those two factors) induced compliance. It was enough to get the participants in the experimental groups involved in a dialogue to make them more likely to comply with the critical request than those in the control group who were addressed in the form of monologue.

The ANOVA analysis for the average interaction times in each of the experimental conditions indicates that in the dialogue conditions, an average interaction was longer (45.58) than in the monologue conditions (25.76), $F(1, 248) = 233.69, p < .000001$. Moreover, in the dialogue conditions, it turned out to be important whether the mood question was raised, $F(1, 196) = 712.80, p < .000001$. The dialogue about the mood subject turned out to be shorter (37.62) than the conversations on other topics (53.34). Also, the interaction effect of both dialogue-related factors, that is, mood and closeness, turned out to be statistically significant, $F(1, 196) = 4.46, p < .036$. The average interaction times for each of the five experimental conditions are presented in Table 2.

Unlike in Experiment 3, the interaction time for each of the dialogue conditions was longer than the monologue interaction time. This pattern of results does not allow for an unquestionable conclusion that it is the mode of communication and not the interaction time that accounts for the compliance observed under each

of the conditions. However, ANCOVA for compliance as the dependent variable, and with the interaction time as the covariate, indicates that the main effect of the communication mode remained significant, $F(1, 247) = 5.62$, $p < .019$. Thus, the results for Experiments 3 and 4 imply that it is not the duration of the interaction but the mode of communication that affected the frequency by which the participants complied with the requests.

Because we assume that initiating the dialogue mode of communication automatically activates the conversation with a friend or acquaintance script, it follows that individual sequences of the script, including a positive reaction to the request, also may get activated in an automatic and mindless manner as long as the conversation revolves around some trivial issues the respondent does not regard as terribly important. If, however, the subject matter is important to the respondent, we may expect a more thorough analysis of discussed issues; that is, a greater involvement of reflection on the respondent's part. These expectations are based on extensive literature concerning mechanisms of persuasion. On one hand, a number of studies show that when an individual is interested in the received information, she or he processes it in a highly controlled manner. On the other hand, a low level of interest in the received information results in more superficial and automatic processing (e.g., Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Chaiken & Stangor, 1987; Johnson & Eagly, 1989; Maio & Olson, 1995; Petty & Cacioppo, 1990; Petty, Cacioppo, & Haugvedt, 1992). When this is the case, people tend to focus less on the content of information and more on such peripheral issues as whether the source of the message is a nice, good-looking, or attractive person or an authority.

We suggest that when conversation concerns issues important to the respondent, not only is the dialogue mode of communication important but also the content of the conversation. Thus, when an issue is important, one will pay attention to what one's interlocutor is saying and her or his attitude toward discussed issues. However, when conversation revolves around some unimportant issues, dialogue will be the key factor that induces compliance; that is, the dialogue mode of communication will play the same role as the source's authority or attractive appearance in persuasion studies. Employing dialogue will make one more positively disposed toward one's interlocutor in the absence of active and conscious processing of the incoming information.

Thus, from the perspective of increasing compliance, if a dialogue involves unimportant issues, it should not matter whether the interlocutor expresses a similar or a different opinion. In contrast, if the subject matter is important, the similarity or divergence of opinion will be

important and dialogue will induce compliance only if the requester agrees with the target.

EXPERIMENT 5

Participants and Procedure

Participants included 300 citizens of Wroclaw (150 men and 150 women). They were randomly assigned to five experimental conditions. The participant, walking or standing unaccompanied, was approached by a two-person team of experimenters (man and woman age 20 to 28) and addressed by the team member of the same sex. There were six teams; each worked in all experimental conditions. The experiment was conducted about 6 weeks after the great flood that embraced more than a half of the total city area. The efforts to repair flood damage were important to the Wroclaw citizens' interests at that time.

In all experimental conditions, the beginning and the ending of the interaction were analogous. All participants were addressed with the following introduction, "We are employees of the Social Opinion Research Institute. Currently, we are running a research on various aspects of everyday life in Wroclaw." In the monologue conditions, the request was formulated immediately after the introduction, "We have several local daily newspapers issued in Wroclaw. We would like to make a detailed interview on your opinions about these newspapers. It would take about 15 minutes. Would you agree to be interviewed?"

In the dialogue conditions, a question was asked between the introduction and the request formulation, "In your opinion, is the elimination of the flood damages progressing promptly and competently?" (in the high involvement conditions) or "Do you like the yellow color of the newly installed telephone booths?" (in the low involvement conditions).² Regardless of the participant's attitude, the confederate responded to half of the answers with, "I totally agree with you" and the remaining half with, "I hold a different opinion about this. I don't agree with you." Once the participant agreed or refused to comply with the request, the experimenter explained the purpose of the study and apologized for taking his or her time.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses showed that the dependent variable was not affected by the team of experimenters approaching the participant, or by the person who addressed the participant, or by the fact of whether the confederate or the participant was male or female. Also, it did not matter what the respondents actually thought about the color of the phone booths or the progress of the works in the flood-stricken areas, $\eta^2 < 1$ (in each of

TABLE 3: Percentage of Persons Complying With the Experimenter's Request to Devote 15 Minutes of Their Time to Answer Questions About the Local Press (Experiment 5)

	<i>Compliance (%)</i>
Monologue	20.0
Dialogue	
Low involvement	
Disagreement	36.6
Agreement	35.0
High involvement	
Disagreement	23.3
Agreement	43.3

NOTE: In all experimental conditions, $N = 60$.

the cases). Therefore, in the analyses presented below, we considered only the mode of communication employed (monologue vs. dialogue), the importance of the discussed issue, and the similarity or divergence of opinion on the discussed issue. Table 3 shows the percentage of participants who complied with the request to devote 15 minutes of their time to answering questions about the local press in each of the experimental conditions.

The percentage of compliance in the groups in which dialogue was employed (34.6%) was higher than in the control group (20%), in which monologue was used, $\chi^2(1) = 4.72, p < .030$. However, a series of paired comparisons between the control group and the four experimental groups revealed an interactional pattern of results.

When the dialogue between the experimenter and participant concerned the high-involvement issue (elimination of the flood damage), the opinion expressed by the experimenter (similar to vs. different from that of the respondent's) had a significant effect on the likelihood of compliance, $\chi^2(1) = 5.40, p < .021$. In addition, when the experimenter expressed the same opinion as the respondents, compliance was different than in the control group, $\chi^2(1) = 7.55, p < .006$, but when he or she disagreed with the participants, compliance was similar to that in the control group, $\chi^2(1) < 1$. When the dialogue concerned the low-involvement issue (the color of the phone booths), similarity or difference of opinion had no effect, $\chi^2(1) < 1$. The likelihood of compliance in the low-involvement groups was higher than in the control group, $\chi^2(1) = 4.73, p < .030$.

The results of Experiment 5 confirm our expectations. When the exchange concerned the low-involvement issue, the very fact of employing dialogue as the mode of communication proved sufficient to induce compliance. When the discussion focused on the high-involvement issue, the likelihood of compliance increased only

among those convinced that the experimenter shared their views.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The series of experiments presented above shows that involving a stranger in a dialogue increases his or her willingness to comply with a subsequent request. At the same time, we have shown that dialogue effect is not adequately explained by obligation, consistency, or relational obligations. Having controlled statistically the time of confederate-participant interaction in Experiments 3 and 4, we also reject the hypothesis that interaction time can account for the dialogue effect. Moreover, we varied among our studies the issues discussed in conversations between the confederate and participants and the nature of the critical requests. Thus, our findings suggest that the dialogue generalized across a variety of interactions. At the same time, the results of Experiment 5 show the limitations of the effect. Compliance did not increase when conversations concerned issues important to the respondents and the opinions of interacting persons differed.

Undoubtedly, asking people about their well-being and then declaring to be pleased with the answer is an effective way of inducing compliance, as shown by Howard (1990). Similarly, claiming similarity of opinion or membership to the same social group may make people more willing to comply, as demonstrated by Aune and Basil (1994). Also, psychological mechanisms suggested by the authors (obligation and the relationship of closeness, respectively) account adequately for their findings. The point is, however, that these processes are not sufficient to explain our results. The dialogue also was effective when people declared bad mood and when the question about the participant's health and mood was purely technical in character (because it originated from the scientific interest of a meteorologist) and when the nature of the dialogue indicated no resemblance or closeness between the interlocutors (e.g., the conversation about the color of the telephone booths) or even stressed the differences in their attitudes (as in the low-involvement conditions of Experiment 5). Therefore, dialogue involvement by itself seems to be an effective social influence technique, even when it does not communicate obligation or relationship closeness. It explains both our results and those obtained by Howard (1990) and Aune and Basil (1994).

In some cases, dialogue involvement seems similar to the classical foot-in-the-door technique (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). In the foot-in-the-door technique, getting the person to comply with a small request increases the chances that the participant will comply with the subsequent, more serious request. In some of our experiments, the participant first had to comply with some ini-

tial small request (e.g., had to answer a question about his or her esthetical opinion of the telephone booth color) and then fulfilled a bigger request (agreed to a 15-minute interview). However, in our other experiments, the subject of the dialogue was not related to the fulfillment of the ultimate requests. For example, the dialogue dealt with such conventional matters as how people felt or the influence of weather on our health. Hence, we believe that dialogue involvement and foot-in-the-door techniques are independent techniques of social influence.

According to our proposal, the involvement in a dialogue about unimportant or conventional matters predisposes people to switch mindlessly to the script of the interaction with an acquaintance, repeatedly rehearsed throughout their past life experience. The request that occurs during the conversation constitutes one of the typical, although not indispensable, components of this script. Moreover, when a request is made by an acquaintance, one normally complies with the request. If this script interpretation is valid, one can imagine factors other than high involvement of the participant that would hinder or prevent the mindless adoption of the script. All the cues that are in opposition to this kind of script could perform this function; for example, behavior that is inappropriate or unusual in acquaintance conversation might disrupt the script: avoiding eye contact during a conversation or continuous staring right into the interlocutor's eyes. As shown by *Zimbardo (1977)*, someone who avoids eye contact can be perceived as not liking of the interlocutor or not feeling comfortable in the interlocutor's company. *Ellsworth and Carlsmith (1973)* demonstrated that someone who stares into the interlocutor's eyes can be perceived as either angry or hostile toward the interlocutor. Such reactions could delay the induction and mindless adoption of the acquaintance interaction script because the term "acquaintance" usually denotes someone who feels comfortable in our company and is not hostile toward us.

It is possible, however, that a dialogue does not lead us to mindless acceptance of the script of interaction with an acquaintance but rather leads us to feel like we are, in fact, an acquaintance. Self-perception mechanisms could play a role. If we interact like acquaintances, then we are acquaintances (*Bem, 1972; Olson & Zanna, 1990*).

Another interpretation refers to the effect of surprise. It has been confirmed in the research on attitude changes, for instance, that people warned they are going to listen to a persuasive communiqué that is in contradiction to their own attitudes cognitively prepare themselves to be able to reject the expected argumentation. Consequently, their attitudes change to a smaller degree than the attitudes of people taken by surprise with the

same persuasive announcement (*Hass & Grady, 1975*). It should be noted that the refusal to answer the apparently innocent first questions asked by the dialogue initiator would be repugnant to the socially accepted norms of the *savoir vivre*. At the beginning of the dialogue, there are no clear signals that the dialogue initiator aims at formulating a request. When the request is formulated, the participant is astonished, because right in this moment the participant cannot find a ready and cognitively available script of a request refusal; the chances that he or she will fulfill the request are growing.

We have to admit that although our experiments showed the high effectiveness of dialogue involvement as a social influence technique, they did not univocally identify the very mechanism that underlies this effectiveness. At the moment, all three interpretations presented above seem equally probable. They have to be verified empirically in future research.

In addition, relations of dialogue involvement to other social influence techniques demand verification by research. It is possible to claim, for instance, that dialogue involvement underlies the door-in-the-face technique (*Cialdini et al., 1975*). This technique is based on the assumption that to make someone fulfill a fairly difficult request the person must be first addressed with a still more difficult request. After the person refuses to fulfill the first, very difficult request, he or she will be more inclined to fulfill the critical request. According to *Cialdini and his coworkers*, the underlying mechanism of the technique is the reciprocity rule. If someone makes a concession for the participant's sake by switching to the easier request instead of sticking to the first difficult one, then it is the participant's turn to make the concession by fulfilling the easier request. However, *O'Keefe and Figge (1997)* questioned this interpretation, pointing to the fact that the effectiveness of this technique is not influenced by whether there is a large (as opposed to small) difference between the sizes of the two requests. Besides, the technique ceases to be effective when the second request is not made immediately after the first one was refused, whereas according to the reciprocity rule, the concession should correspond in size with the sense of obligation to return the favor, and the passing time (especially not a very long time) should not release the person from such obligation. Hence, *O'Keefe and Figge (1997)* suggest an alternative interpretation referring to the sense of guilt and shame. The refusal in the case of the first request induces such negative feelings in the subject, whereas the fulfillment of the second request becomes the occasion to suppress them. The span of the requests' difficulty would indeed be of no relevance, and the decrease in the effectiveness of the technique with the time flow would result only from the decreasing strength of the negative emotions. *O'Keefe*

and Figge do not ponder on the result that seems crucial in their interpretation. The door-in-the-face technique loses its effectiveness when the second request is formulated by another person, not the one who asked the first request (see Dillard, 1991; Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984). Why in these circumstances does the fulfillment of the easier request not help the participant release the negative tension, especially when both requests deal with similar or the same problems? If the interpretation of the door-in-the-face technique is based on the dialogue involvement, these doubts are dispelled. It is no longer surprising that both requests have to be formulated by the same person or that the size of the concession made is not essential or even the fact that the effectiveness of the technique decreases when the second request is not formulated directly after the first one. (In the latter case, the technique is simply no longer based on dialogue.)

In conclusion, we regard the present research as advancing the study of social influence in three important ways. First, the presented results support our predictions that dialogue involvement is an effective strategy of inducing compliance. Second, the findings are consistent with our hypothesis that people involved in dialogue with a stranger automatically treat him or her as a friend and, consequently, comply with his or her request. We have to admit, however, that not all possible alternative interpretations of the dialogue effect were ruled out in our research. Third, it seems reasonable that dialogue involvement may play a pivotal role in some well-recognized social influence techniques. Future empirical investigations should be devoted to this problem. Most scientific articles on social influence have not only theoretical but also clearly practical implications. We believe that this also applies to this article. The practical importance of our findings may be substantial for those interested in enhancing the likelihood of socially beneficial behavior through information campaigns (such as promoting health or environmental activity). Our data suggest that the induction of dialogue between the speaker and message recipients may well be effective in creating the desirable conduct.

NOTES

1. The term *closeness* used by the authors seems almost identical in meaning with that of social categorization, the sense of common social identity, or the perception of resemblance between the interlocutors. In this article, the term *closeness* is used because our experiments are contrasted with those of Aune and Basil (1994).

2. In a separate study, we asked a group of local citizens to judge (on an 11-point scale from 0 to 10) the importance of various municipal issues. The color of new phone booths was judged as relatively unimportant ($M=2.25$), whereas damage elimination works and restoration of municipal functions following a disastrous flood, which happened several months earlier, were judged very important ($M=8.50$). The difference between the scores was highly significant ($t=11.93, p<.00001$).

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