

ALICE M. TYBOUT, BRIAN STERNTHAL, and BOBBY J. CALDER\*

Foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face are multiple request techniques frequently used to increase behavioral compliance. However, results from experimental research indicate that these techniques may enhance, undermine, or have no effect on compliance. In the authors' research, the notion of information availability is introduced to help specify when multiple request techniques are likely to be effective. Four experiments are reported that test and support the information availability predictions.

## Information Availability as a Determinant of Multiple Request Effectiveness

Marketing strategists often use two multiple request techniques to influence buyers' behavior. One technique, termed "foot-in-the-door," involves asking people to comply with a critical large request after they have complied with a small request.<sup>1</sup> The other technique, "door-in-the-face," involves asking people to comply with a critical small request after they have rejected a large request. The use of these techniques is based on the belief that compliance is greater in response to multiple requests than it is in response to a critical request alone. Although some support for this belief is found in the literature (e.g., Allen, Schewe, and Wijk 1980; Scott 1976), it is also apparent that multiple requests can un-

dermine compliance (e.g., Snyder and Cunningham 1975) or have no systematic effect (e.g., Cialdini et al. 1978). Thus a theoretical basis is needed for predicting *when* multiple request techniques will be effective.

Some evidence for when these techniques are effective can be gained from the literature. Accordingly, we first present a brief critical review illustrating the various multiple request compliance effects, and highlighting some of the procedures adopted in our studies.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of this review, we assess self-perception theory and the bargaining-concession view, the two explanations offered in the literature to account for multiple request outcomes. Because neither explanation is adequate, we introduce the *availability hypothesis* and report four relevant experiments.

### MULTIPLE REQUEST EFFECTS ON COMPLIANCE

Considerable evidence indicates that the foot-in-the-door technique is an effective means of gaining compliance. In his review of the literature, DeJong (1979) cited 18 studies in which compliance with a critical large request was greater when it was preceded by a small request than when the critical large request was presented alone. A study conducted by Cann, Sherman, and Elkes (1975) is illustrative. People were asked to respond to a few short survey questions. All subjects complied with this small request. From this point the procedure depended on the treatment to which subjects were randomly assigned. In the contiguous request condition, re-

<sup>1</sup>Our distinction between small and large initial requests follows the convention developed in the multiple request literature. An initial request is defined as small when all subjects comply with it and as large when no one does. The term "critical" is used to distinguish the second request from the initial request. The second request is critical in that response to it is of focal interest in both theoretical and strategic terms.

\*Alice M. Tybout is Associate Professor of Marketing and of Transportation, Brian Sternthal is Professor of Marketing, and Bobby J. Calder is Professor of Behavioral Science in Management and Professor of Psychology, J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University.

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<sup>2</sup>For more extensive reviews of the multiple request inquiry, see DeJong (1979) and Cialdini et al. (1978).

spondents were asked to perform a critical large request, which involved passing out 15 pamphlets, immediately after being administered the small request. In a delayed request condition, the critical request was made several days after the initial request. Subjects in a control group were contacted only once and asked to comply with the critical large request. The results indicated that people who had been administered a small request previously were more compliant with the large request than those in the control group, regardless of whether or not the multiple requests were contiguous (i.e., made in a single interaction).

The observation that the foot-in-the-door technique increases compliance requires some qualification. Several investigations suggest that this technique reliably enhances compliance only when the initial small request is of significant magnitude (DeJong 1979). When more modest initial requests are employed, the foot-in-the-door technique is often no more effective than the critical request alone. Seligman, Bush, and Kirsch (1976) manipulated the size of the small request by varying the number of questions to which subjects were asked to respond. Two days later subjects were recontacted by a different experimenter and asked to respond to a large number of questions (i.e., the critical large request). The multiple request procedure was found to enhance compliance in relation to a critical large request control only when the initial request was sizable. A similar pattern of effects has been reported in studies in which a contiguous request foot-in-the-door procedure was used. Multiple requests enhanced critical request compliance when the initial request required people to answer several questions (Cann, Sherman, and Elkes 1975), but failed to have an effect when the procedure involved more modest initial requests, such as accepting a poster (Cialdini and Ascani 1976; Cialdini et al. 1978).

The effectiveness of the door-in-the-face technique also appears to be limited to certain situations. It enhances compliance when the same requestor makes contiguous requests. For example, Cialdini et al. (1975) requested that subjects volunteer to work in a juvenile detention center for an extended time period. When subjects refused this request, the same interviewer immediately asked subjects to volunteer for a one-time activity. Only the latter critical small request was made of subjects in the control group. The results indicated greater critical request compliance among experimental subjects than among the control subjects, a finding replicated in other investigations (e.g., Cann, Sherman, and Elkes 1975; Mowen and Cialdini 1980). To obtain this outcome, however, it is necessary to have one individual solicit the multiple requests, and to employ a contiguous multiple request procedure. Cialdini et al. (1975) reported that multiple requests induced the same level of compliance as a critical request control when different people made the two requests. Cann and his colleagues (1975) found that multiple request compliance was greater than that observed in a critical request control when requests

were contiguous, but was less than in a control when several days intervened between requests.

#### EXPLAINING MULTIPLE REQUEST EFFECTS

The studies reviewed underscore the need for caution in the use of multiple request techniques. They are effective only under certain conditions. Specifically, a foot-in-the-door technique is likely to enhance critical request compliance when the initial request is of significant magnitude. Otherwise, multiple requests do not affect compliance. A door-in-the-face procedure stimulates critical request compliance, but only when the same requestor makes contiguous demands. The use of different requests eliminates the effectiveness of the door-in-the-face technique, and the use of noncontiguous requests undermines its effectiveness. Thus if the strategist is to anticipate these conditions, an understanding of the process by which people respond to multiple requests is necessary. Two views, self-perception and bargaining-concession, have commonly been advanced to explain foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face outcomes.

#### *Traditional Views*

According to self-perception theory (Bem 1972), people use their behavior as a basis for inferring how they feel about an issue. This inferred attitude then guides subsequent action. In a multiple request situation it is predicted that people interpret their compliance with an initial request as evidence that they are favorable toward the issue. This attitude, in turn, stimulates compliance with the subsequent request. In contrast, people who reject an initial request are presumed to infer an unfavorable attitude toward the requested behavior and this undermines compliance with the subsequent request. These predictions are consistent with the finding that foot-in-the-door can enhance compliance, as it does when the initial request is substantial, and that door-in-the-face can undermine compliance, as it does when requests are noncontiguous. However, self-perception theory cannot explain why the foot-in-the-door technique is sometimes ineffective or why a contiguous door-in-the-face technique enhances compliance.

The other explanation for multiple request effects, a bargaining-concession view (Cialdini et al. 1975), postulates that people will be concessionary and thus more compliant when others first demonstrate a willingness to be concessionary. Compliance with a critical request is predicted to be greater when the critical request is preceded by a larger request, and thus represents a concession on the part of the requestor, than when the critical request is presented alone. In contrast, when a critical request is preceded by a smaller one, the nonconcessionary nature of these requests is expected to limit compliance. These predictions are consistent with the findings that multiple requests can enhance compliance, as they do when a contiguous door-in-the-face technique is used, and that multiple requests sometimes fail to produce a systematic effect when a foot-in-the-door tech-

nique is employed. However, the bargaining-concession view does not explain why a noncontiguous door-in-the-face technique undermines compliance or why a foot-in-the-door technique often enhances compliance.

Thus self-perception theory and the bargaining-concession view can each account for selected multiple request outcomes. Neither, however, provides an adequate explanation for multiple request effects because the circumstances in which each applies are not specified. It is perhaps possible to identify some variables that are *sufficient* to demonstrate a particular effect (e.g., size of the request, whether or not the requests are contiguous), but unless these variables are theoretically motivated they do little to impart a general understanding of the conditions *necessary* for multiple requests to be effective. We offer an extension of Tversky and Kahneman's (1973) availability hypothesis for this purpose.

#### *The Availability Explanation*

Our version of the availability notion states that individuals' decisions depend on the favorableness of the issue-relevant information available in memory. In a multiple request situation, two types of information are potentially available. One type pertains to the request behavior. The other is respondents' own behavior toward an initial request. Each of these types of information may be favorable or unfavorable in terms of complying with a critical request. The availability prediction is that multiple requests:

- enhance compliance when either favorable request-behavior or favorable own-behavior information is available,
- undermine compliance when unfavorable request-behavior or unfavorable own-behavior information is available, and
- have no systematic effect when favorable information of one type is offset by unfavorable information of the other type.

It follows that two issues must be addressed if the availability hypothesis is to be useful in predicting multiple request outcomes: (1) whether own-behavior information or request-behavior information is more likely to be available when individuals respond to the critical request and (2) whether the available information is favorable or unfavorable to critical request compliance. As discussed hereafter, current theorizing pertaining to information availability, along with data on the effects of multiple request strategies, is relevant to these issues.

Several factors are thought to affect information availability (Wyer and Carlston 1979). One is the recency of information processing. Memory appears to operate on a last-in-first-out basis, such that more recently processed information is more readily available (Higgins, Rholes, and Jones 1977). The other determinant of information availability is the structure of information in memory. Information availability increases as the net-

work of associations or linkages to a concept becomes more elaborate (Bower 1972). Elaboration can occur when new information is related to a concept for which people have many associations already stored in memory. This phenomenon accounts for the observation that information related to one's self is readily available (e.g., Rogers, Kuiper, and Kirker 1977). Elaboration can also occur when new information is substantial enough to activate multiple associations represented in memory. This effect is consistent with the observation that compliance with sizable initial requests (e.g., performing a behavior, answering a number of questions) enhances subsequent compliance, whereas compliance with minimal initial requests (e.g., agreeing to perform a behavior) often does not. The more substantial the behavior, the more likely it is to generate multiple associations and be available.

The favorableness of available information can be anticipated on the basis of previous research findings (e.g., Cann, Sherman, and Elkes 1975; Cialdini et al. 1978). These findings suggest that own-behavior information is likely to be favorable when individuals comply with an initial request and unfavorable when they reject an initial request. Request-behavior information is likely to be favorable when it is concessionary and unfavorable when it involves an escalation in demands.

Our availability hypothesis can be used to predict the various outcomes reported in the foot-in-the-door studies. The foot-in-the-door is expected to enhance compliance only when own-behavior information, which is favorable because it involves acceptance of the initial request, is more readily available than request behavior, which is unfavorable because it entails an escalation in requests. Consistent with this prediction, studies demonstrating the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door technique have employed procedures that make own-behavior information readily available, reduce the availability of the request behavior, or employ both of these procedures. Operationally, own-behavior information has been made available by requiring respondents to accept a rather substantial initial request (e.g., Cann, Sherman, and Elkes 1975; Seligman, Bush, and Kirsch 1976) and the availability of request-behavior information has been reduced by using noncontiguous requests (Freedman and Fraser 1966; Seligman, Bush, and Kirsch 1976). The latter procedure capitalizes on the fact that information related to oneself is generally more memorable than situational details such as request behaviors, particularly with the passage of time (Moore et al. 1979). In contrast, demonstrations that the foot-in-the-door technique is ineffective have involved situations in which favorable information about own behavior is likely to be no more available than unfavorable information about request behavior. In such studies the availability of information about own behavior has been limited by use of a contiguous multiple request procedure in which the initial request is modest (Cialdini et al. 1975, 1978). Contiguous requests restrict the time respondents have to access the extensive

information they have about themselves, and a modest initial request reduces the extent to which own-behavior information is elaborated. These limitations of own-behavior information render it no more available than request-behavior information.

The availability hypothesis also can explain the outcomes found in using the door-in-the-face technique. Here, the multiple request strategy is expected to enhance compliance only when request-behavior information, which is favorable because the requests are concessionary, is more available than own-behavior information, which is unfavorable because it involves rejection of the initial request. Demonstrations that the door-in-the-face technique is effective have involved contiguous requests and a single requestor (e.g., Cialdini et al. 1975). These procedures are likely to make request-behavior information more available than own-behavior information; the use of a single requestor enhances the number of associations to the request behavior, and the use of contiguous requests reduces the time available to evoke own-behavior information. In contrast, studies showing that the door-in-the-face technique undermines compliance have used noncontiguous requests and different experimenters (e.g., Cann, Sherman, and Elkes 1975), both of which are likely to make unfavorable own-behavior information relatively more available.

The view emerging is that the availability hypothesis is superior to other explanations offered to account for multiple request effects. However, this superiority is not strong evidence for the theoretical process posited. The *post hoc* nature of our analysis allows for the possibility that between-study differences other than the availability of favorable and unfavorable information account for the variation in outcomes. Moreover, even when the available information is varied within a single study, one cannot conclude that the *favorableness* of this information determines outcomes because the field procedures used in previous research confound the favorableness and the type of information (i.e., own behavior and request behavior).

These observations imply a need for two kinds of research on the availability hypothesis. First, theory-testing research is required to examine rigorously the process hypothesized to underlie multiple request compliance. We conducted two experiments for this purpose. In these studies, to isolate the impact of favorableness of available information on compliance, we used a controlled setting and manipulated favorableness while holding constant or independently varying the type of information. Second, theory-application research is needed to demonstrate that our hypothesis affords accurate predictions in settings of practical interest to marketers. We developed two experiments to address this issue. In these investigations, we used the availability hypothesis to design multiple request strategies expected either to enhance compliance or undermine it. These strategies were tested in a natural setting to determine whether the pre-

dicted effects would obtain despite the presence of variables exogenous to the theory.<sup>3</sup>

### EXPERIMENT I

This experiment examined the contention that critical request compliance in a multiple request situation depends on the favorableness of available information. We independently varied the type and favorableness of information available in a door-in-the-face context. Our reasoning was that, if information about the request were available, the favorableness of this information should determine compliance. Greater compliance was expected when the request information was favorable than when it was unfavorable. In contrast, if information about the request were not available, the favorableness of such information should not affect compliance.

To test these predictions, a  $2 \times 2$  factorial design was employed. The favorableness of the information about the request was manipulated by having either an authoritative figure (request information favorable condition) or the subject's peer (request information unfavorable condition) make the requests. This operationalization was suggested in a study reported by Thibaut and Riecken (1955). They found that a high status person was better liked than a low status person after both had performed conciliatory behaviors. Thus we anticipated that our subjects would view a concession more favorably when it was made by someone who need not make concessions than when it was made by a person who was perceived to have little choice but to be concessionary. Furthermore, using requestor status to manipulate favorableness was attractive in that it represented a factor that might be varied in everyday multiple request situations.

The second independent variable was the type of information available to subjects. In the request information available condition, subjects were asked to watch the experimenter in person and on TV monitors while the requests were being administered. Subjects in the own-behavior information available condition were asked to watch themselves on the monitors. This manipulation is a variant of the one used successfully to vary availability in self-awareness research (see, e.g., Carver and Scheier 1978). If the availability hypothesis is correct, a favorableness  $\times$  availability interaction should be observed such that favorable request information enhances compliance in relation to the unfavorable request information only when information about the request is available.

### Method

Twenty students (11 men and 9 women) participated individually in a taste test of several new beverages. For each subject, one dollar was paid to a student club to

<sup>3</sup>See Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981) for a detailed discussion of why both theory-testing and theory-application research are necessary to assess the value of a theoretical hypothesis.

which all research participants belonged.

The experiment was conducted in a laboratory setting where three television monitors and two television cameras were carefully arranged. When subjects arrived, they were greeted by the experimenter, who was either a faculty member or the participant's peer. Subjects were seated so that they faced the experimenter and two of the television monitors. The third monitor faced the experimenter. Each monitor was hooked up to one of the cameras. One camera focused on the subject and the other on the experimenter. Depending on the treatment to which they were assigned, subjects saw the experimenter or themselves on their monitors. Subjects were told that the session was being videotaped for the benefit of the beverage manufacturer. It was explained that there had been some trouble with the equipment and the monitors were being used so that equipment failure could be detected. Subjects were asked to inform the experimenter if the picture or the monitors in front of them malfunctioned. Ostensibly the experimenter also was watching a monitor that was hooked up to the other camera. These procedures ensured attention to the availability manipulation and provided a plausible explanation for the presence of the video equipment.

Subjects initially completed some questions about their beverage consumption habits. Next, they tasted and evaluated small quantities of three beverages. One beverage tasted relatively good, a second tasted moderately bad, and a third beverage tasted noxious. Different coloring was used for each beverage so that subjects could easily discriminate among them.

After the taste test, subjects were told the study was over. They were thanked for their time and asked to sign their name on a form so that their club would be paid for their participation. As subjects were leaving, the experimenter noted that there was some free time in the schedule and asked subjects if they would be willing to participate in another study. The study was described as an "extended taste test" that required spending one half hour a day for a week consuming and evaluating the worst tasting of the three beverages. This constituted the large initial request in the door-in-the-face technique. When

subjects refused this request (and all did), the experimenter immediately made a concession and asked subjects if they would be willing to participate in an in-depth evaluation of the moderately bad tasting beverage.<sup>4</sup> This served as the critical request. All subjects agreed and were given a glass containing 250 milliliters (ml) of the moderately bad tasting beverage. The amount they consumed served as the compliance dependent measure.

The use of amount consumed as the critical request compliance measure was attractive for two reasons. First, we anticipated that in a laboratory setting subjects would be highly sensitive to the apparent demands of the experimental tasks and thus would feel obligated to agree to drink the moderately bad tasting beverage. Subjects would be less likely, however, to anticipate that the amount they consumed was of interest. Further, the amount of consumption has practical relevance because marketers are likely to be concerned not only with whether or not people comply but also with the quality of their compliant behavior (e.g., Hansen and Robinson 1980).

### Results and Discussion

The data from Experiment I are summarized in Table 1. Subjects' evaluations of the three beverages in the initial task were examined to check intertreatment equivalence at the time of the door-in-the-face requests. Analysis of variance on these data revealed no significant treatment differences ( $F_s < 1$ ).

An analysis of variance pertaining to the treatment effects on compliance with the critical request indicates that neither availability ( $F < 1$ ) nor favorableness [ $F(1,15) = 2.78, p > .10$ ] had a significant main effect. However, the interaction between these variables is significant [ $F(1,15) = 8.96, p < .01$ ]. This finding is consistent with the availability hypothesis (see Figure 1).

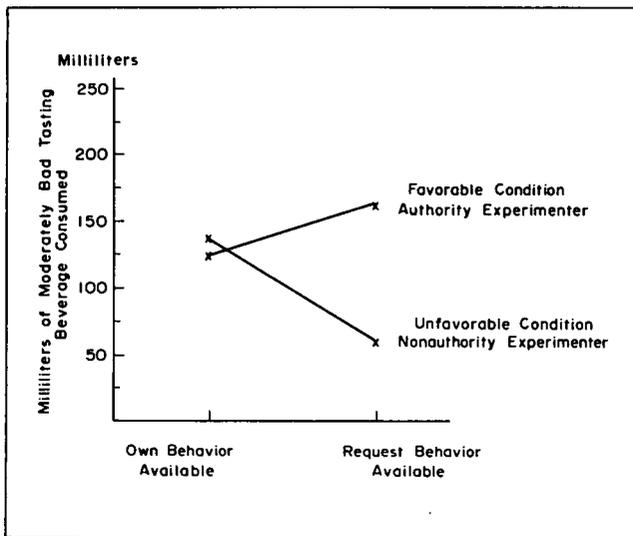
<sup>4</sup>Contiguous request procedures were used in this and all subsequent studies because noncontiguous requests increase the threat to construct validity. It is difficult to label the effect caused by the passage of time. Subjects may forget certain pieces of information. Moreover, noncontiguous requests enhance the likelihood of selection artifacts.

Table 1  
EXPERIMENT I: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY TREATMENT

Variable <sup>a</sup>	Treatment							
	Own behavior available favorable		Own behavior available unfavorable		Request behavior available favorable		Request behavior available unfavorable	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Evaluation beverage 1	5.00	1.47	5.18	.99	4.00	1.17	4.50	1.96
Evaluation beverage 2	6.87	.25	5.88	1.09	6.30	1.04	5.88	1.93
Evaluation beverage 3	4.87	1.88	4.43	1.66	3.20	1.44	4.62	1.89
Milliliters of beverage consumed	127.50	67.39	138.00	24.13	163.00	64.87	57.50	47.17
	$n = 4$		$n = 5$		$n = 5$		$n = 4$	

<sup>a</sup>Higher numbers indicate greater consumption or more favorable evaluation.

Figure 1  
EXPERIMENT I: BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION BY  
TREATMENT



When information about the request was available, subjects in the request information favorable condition consumed more beverage than did those in the request information unfavorable condition [ $t(7) = 4.26, p < .01$ ]. In contrast, when information about one's own behavior was available, there was no effect of favorableness ( $t < 1$ ). The latter finding reduces the plausibility of a demand character explanation for the data. If demand character were operative and subjects felt more obligated to comply when the requestor was authoritative than when the requestor was a peer, one would expect to find differences attributable to the requestor regardless of whether information about one's own behavior or the request was available.

Although the data in Experiment I are consistent with the availability hypothesis, this evidence would be more convincing if there were direct empirical confirmation for the assertion that the status manipulation caused variation in the favorableness of the information about the request. This confirmation would have entailed measuring subjects' liking for the authoritative and peer requestors. Such a measure was thought to be inappropriate in our study because subjects were unlikely to represent their true feelings about a faculty member with whom they might have later interaction. In addition, confidence in labeling the status difference as the source of the effect observed would be enhanced if all other differences between requestors were controlled. This control would have required employing a single requestor and describing that person in either high or low status terms. Such an operationalization would have greatly reduced power and might have allowed subjects to uncover the manipulation. These points imply that an even more

rigorous test of the availability hypothesis requires the operationalization of variables without regard to their relevance to any practical situation of interest. This was the objective of the next experiment. We returned to theory application in the final two experiments.

## EXPERIMENT II

This experiment was designed to provide a more controlled and readily documented favorableness manipulation. A thought-listing task was used because it has been shown to satisfy these requirements (see Higgins, Rholes, and Jones 1977). This task was introduced in the context of the foot-in-the-door technique.<sup>5</sup> After subjects had complied with an initial small request, they were required to list either favorable or unfavorable thoughts about the object of their initial request compliance. The critical large request was then administered. A control group was asked only to comply with the latter request. The availability prediction was that listing favorable thoughts would enhance multiple request compliance, whereas listing unfavorable thoughts would undermine such compliance.

### Method

Thirty-three subjects (10 women and 23 men) were recruited to participate in a taste test for new beverages. As in the previous experiment, they completed a questionnaire pertaining to their beverage consumption habits, and then tasted and evaluated small quantities of three beverages that differed in flavor.

After completing the taste test, subjects were told the study was over. Then their voluntary participation in subsequent tasks was solicited. At this point the procedure depended on the treatment to which subjects were randomly assigned. Subjects in the experimental treatments first were asked to participate in an additional study that entailed evaluating the physical characteristics (e.g., color, smell, etc.) of the moderately bad tasting beverage. All agreed to this small request. As part of this study, subjects were given a thought-listing task that contained the favorableness manipulation. The 11 participants in the favorable condition were instructed to generate seven adjectives that could be used to describe the product in advertising. Given the persuasive intent of advertising, these subjects were expected to generate adjectives favorable to the product. The 11 subjects in the unfavorable condition were asked to generate seven adjectives to describe the product to a friend. Given the moderately bad taste of the product, these subjects were expected to generate unfavorable adjectives. The 11 subjects in the control condition did not participate in the thought-listing task. Next, all subjects were administered the same critical request employed in Experiment I. They were

<sup>5</sup>A foot-in-the-door technique was used rather than a door-in-the-face technique because the thought-listing task required the availability of compliant behavior.

asked to participate in a further, separate study that involved drinking more of the moderately bad tasting beverage and completing a detailed evaluation of it. All subjects agreed to participate and the amount they consumed served as the dependent measure.

### Results and Discussion

The data from Experiment II are summarized in Table 2. Methodological issues were examined first. To test for treatment equivalence at the time of the foot-in-the-door request, subjects' evaluations on the three beverages used in the taste test were examined. No treatment differences were observed. Next, adjectives listed by subjects were coded and analyzed to check the effectiveness of the favorableness manipulation ( $F_s < 1$ ). Two independent judges scored the adjectives as positive, negative, or neutral. In 94.5% of the cases the judges agreed. Adjectives on which there was disagreement were deleted. As expected, significantly more favorable thoughts were expressed toward the moderately bad tasting beverage in the favorable condition than in the unfavorable condition [ $t(30) = 3.09, p < .01$ ] and more unfavorable thoughts were expressed in the unfavorable condition than in the favorable condition [ $t(30) = 3.21, p < .01$ ]. Thus, the manipulation operated as anticipated.

An analysis of variance indicates significant treatment differences in compliance with the critical request [ $F(2,30) = 5.71, p < .01$ ]. Contrasts reveal that subjects in the favorable condition consumed more of the beverage than did subjects in the unfavorable condition [ $t(30) = 3.25, p < .01$ ] or subjects in the control condition [ $t(30) = 2.42, p < .02$ ]. There was no difference in consumption between the unfavorable condition and the control ( $t < 1$ ).

These data offer further support for the availability hypothesis. As expected, when favorable information was available, individuals exhibited greater compliance with the critical request than when unfavorable information was available. The failure to find a difference between the unfavorable condition and the control condition may be due to the fact that the moderately bad taste of the

beverage induced the spontaneous generation of unfavorable thoughts. Alternatively, the null effect may be due to the relatively small sample size, which limited the power of the test ( $Z_m = -.45, p = .67$ )

### EXPERIMENT III

The preceding experiments provide support for the theoretical notion that the favorableness of available information determines critical request compliance. However, obtaining this support required the use of an artificial setting and procedures different from those used in field applications of multiple request techniques. Further research is needed to demonstrate the applicability of the availability hypothesis to multiple request strategies in natural settings. In Experiment III we examined this issue using a foot-in-the-door technique. The information about one's own behavior is likely to be favorable in this context, because individuals comply with an initial request. Information about the request behavior is likely to be unfavorable because the requests involve an escalation in demands. Thus, the availability prediction is that when own-behavior information is more available than request-behavior information, multiple requests will enhance compliance. In contrast, when favorable information about one's own behavior and unfavorable information about the request behavior are both available, no systematic effect on compliance is expected.<sup>6</sup>

### Method

**Procedure.** Fifty-six people (22 men and 34 women), sampled at random from the telephone directory, participated in this study. These individuals were contacted by

<sup>6</sup>The availability hypothesis suggests two predictions, depending on the calibration of the experimental manipulations. If request-behavior information is made more available than own-behavior information, the multiple request procedure will yield less compliance than is observed in a control group. If, however, the availability of request-behavior information merely offsets the availability of own-behavior information, no treatment effect is anticipated. Because the latter outcome has been observed in previous research, we predict no effect in our research.

Table 2  
EXPERIMENT II: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY TREATMENT

Variable*	Treatment					
	Favorable adjectives (advertiser)		Unfavorable adjectives (friend)		Control	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Evaluation beverage 1	4.23	1.42	3.81	.98	3.68	1.43
Evaluation beverage 2	5.81	1.37	5.36	1.40	5.95	1.46
Evaluation beverage 3	3.90	1.22	3.72	1.68	3.81	1.08
No. favorable adjectives	3.27	2.41	.82	2.14	—	—
No. unfavorable adjectives	.45	.68	2.72	2.80	—	—
Milliliters of beverage consumed	197.27	54.38	91.81	93.04	118.63	75.83
	$n = 11$		$n = 11$		$n = 11$	

\*Higher numbers indicate more favorable evaluation, more favorable or unfavorable adjectives, and more consumption.

telephone and asked to participate in a brief survey. After subjects had agreed to this small request, the experimental treatment was introduced. Subjects randomly assigned to the request-own behavior available condition did not perform the small request. Rather they were told that the interviewer was in the process of lining up people for a future survey and that they would be recontacted if they were needed. Because these subjects did not perform the small request and because the request was recent, we anticipated that both request- and own-behavior information would be available. In contrast, participants randomly assigned to the own behavior available condition performed the small request. We reasoned that performance of the small request would make this behavior substantial and would enhance its availability in relation to information about the request. Immediately after the small request, participants in both conditions were asked to comply with a critical large request. A control group was asked to comply only with the large request. All subjects who complied with the large request were administered this task.<sup>7</sup>

*Small initial request.* The following initial request was made of research participants assigned to the request-own behavior available and own behavior available conditions:

The Bureau of Health Care is conducting a survey to find out people's views of the medical care they receive. The information collected from people like yourself will be used to develop better health care services in your community. Would you be willing to answer five questions over the phone concerning your views of health care? It will take no more than five minutes of your time to answer them.

*Critical large request.* The following critical request was administered to all research participants:

The Bureau of Health Care is doing a variety of surveys. One is concerned with how people view medical services. This survey will be used to improve the quality of hospital care in your community. Would you be willing now to answer 20 questions over the phone concerning your views on this issue? It will take no more than 15 minutes of your time to answer them.

### Results and Discussion

Compliance with the initial small request did not differ among subjects randomly assigned to the multiple request treatments ( $Z = 1.38, p = .15$ ).<sup>8</sup> Seventeen of the 22 people randomly assigned to the request-own behav-

ior available treatment and 15 of the 16 people in the own behavior available treatment complied with this request. Regardless of whether subjects agreed to the initial request, they were included in subsequent analyses to avoid a selection bias.<sup>9</sup>

To determine the effect of the foot-in-the-door technique, we computed a chi square statistic for responses to the critical request. This analysis reveals a marginally significant treatment effect ( $\chi^2(2) = 5.04, p < .08$ ). To test for the hypothesized differences, the proportion of subjects who complied with the large request after being asked a small request was compared with the proportion of subjects in the control group who complied with the large request. Ten of the 22 people (45.5%) in the request-own behavior available treatment complied with the large request, whereas 10 of the 18 (55%) in the large-request-only control group complied. This difference is not significant ( $Z < 1$ ). In contrast, 13 of the 16 people (81.3%) in the own behavior available treatment complied, a proportion significantly greater than the proportion complying in the control group ( $Z = 1.61, p = .05$ ). Moreover, the proportion of those in the own behavior available group who complied with the large request is greater than the proportion in the request-own behavior available group who complied ( $Z = 2.25, p < .01$ ).

The results demonstrate the applicability of the availability hypothesis to multiple requests in practical circumstances. The two foot-in-the-door strategies are shown to operate in the manner predicted by the hypothesis. When individuals performed the initial request, favorable information about their own behavior was available and compliance with the subsequent critical request was enhanced. In contrast, when individuals merely agreed to the initial request, favorable information about their own behavior was no more available than unfavorable information about the request behavior, and compliance with the critical request was no greater than in the control group.

### EXPERIMENT IV

The goal of this experiment was to provide an additional field test of the availability explanation using the door-in-the-face technique. According to the availability hypothesis, door-in-the-face multiple requests will enhance critical request compliance if favorable concessionary request-behavior information is more available than unfavorable own-behavior information. However, reduced compliance is expected if the technique makes unfavorable own-behavior information more available than favorable request-behavior information.

### Method

One hundred and five people (61 women and 44 men) whose names were drawn randomly from the telephone

<sup>7</sup>Questions answered by respondents in the small and large request treatments were part of a survey being conducted for a community hospital. Participants' response served as a pretest for that study.

<sup>8</sup>A two-tailed test is used to determine intertreatment differences in compliance with the initial request because there was no basis for a *priori* prediction of directional differences. A one-tailed test is used to determine treatment effects on compliance with the critical request because there was theoretically based expectancy about the direction of treatment differences.

<sup>9</sup>The analysis was repeated after elimination of persons who did not comply with the first request; the inferences remained unchanged.

directory participated in the study. These individuals were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in a survey that involved answering a large number of questions (100 questions). Immediately after subjects had rejected this request, those assigned to the request behavior available treatment were asked to comply with a critical smaller request (20 questions). On the basis of previous research, this procedure was expected to make favorable request-behavior information readily available (e.g., Cialdini et al. 1975). For persons assigned to the own behavior available treatment, the requestor made the following comment after people rejected the large request: "Gee, you are only the second person in about 50 I've contacted in the last few days who has refused." This induction was intended to make the subject's rejection of the initial request readily available by drawing attention to its uniqueness. It was selected because of the effectiveness of similar labels in other studies (e.g., Swinyard and Ray 1977; Tybout and Yalch 1980). The requestor then administered the critical small request. Persons assigned to the control group were asked only to comply with the critical small request.

### *Results and Discussion*

Compliance with the initial large request did not differ among subjects randomly assigned to the experimental treatments. Four people in the request behavior available treatment complied versus two in the own behavior available treatment. To minimize threats to internal validity the responses of all subjects were included in subsequent analyses.<sup>10</sup>

To determine the effect of the door-in-the-face technique, we computed a chi square statistic for responses to the critical request. This analysis indicates the presence of a significant treatment effect ( $\chi^2(2) = 13.12, p < .01$ ). To test for the hypothesized differences, the proportion of subjects complying with the critical small request after rejecting the large request was compared with the proportion complying in the critical small-request-only control group. Twenty-six of the 34 (76.5%) people assigned to the request behavior available treatment complied with the critical small request, whereas only 19 of the 35 (54.3%) people assigned to the control condition complied. This difference is significant ( $Z = 1.93, p < .01$ ). In contrast, only 12 of the 36 (33.3%) people assigned to the own behavior available treatment complied with the critical small request. This proportion is significantly smaller than that observed in the control group ( $Z = 1.78, p < .05$ ).

These results provide further evidence for the applicability of the availability hypothesis. In this study, the hypothesis is shown to predict the effects of two door-in-the-face strategies used in a field setting. When a standard door-in-the-face procedure was employed and

the favorable concessionary behavior of the requestor was available, compliance with the critical request was enhanced. In contrast, when a labeling procedure made unfavorable information about individuals' own behavior available (i.e., noncompliance with the initial request), compliance with the critical request was undermined.

Although the availability hypothesis accounts for the findings in Experiment IV, the adequacy of this explanation may be questioned because the undermining effect of door-in-the-face when own behavior is available is open to an alternative interpretation. Although stressing the uniqueness of an individual's noncompliance with the initial request may enhance the availability of information about one's own behavior, it also may alter the nature of the request information that is available. Saying a person is one of a few people who rejected a request may have been interpreted as a hostile remark and as such may have supplanted the favorable concessionary request information. Thus, the undermining effect may have occurred because the hostile remark inhibited critical request compliance.

The alternative explanation for the undermining effect is consistent with the availability predictions. The availability hypothesis states that compliance depends on the favorableness of available information. When multiple requests make unfavorable information available, the availability prediction is that compliance will be undermined. The prediction holds regardless of whether the source of the unfavorable information is own behavior or request behavior. Indeed, in an application it is helpful to have multiple factors that could produce some desired effect. These factors increase the probability that the effect will occur despite the presence of exogenous variables.

### *GENERAL DISCUSSION*

Our four studies demonstrate that compliance in response to multiple requests can vary substantially from one situation to another. This variation is observed whether multiple request techniques are administered in a controlled environment (Experiments I and II) or in a natural setting (Experiments III and IV). It is found whether experimental manipulations involve altering the favorableness of a particular type of information (Experiments I and II) or the type of information available (Experiments III and IV). Moreover, the variability in multiple request compliance is not unique to the procedures used in our research. The foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face literature documents such variation in a variety of contexts.

In theoretical terms, the finding of variability in multiple request compliance is important because it casts doubt on the adequacy of the theories typically invoked to explain multiple request effects. As Table 3 shows, self-perception theory and the bargaining-concession view each account for some of the multiple request compliance effects caused by manipulating the favorableness of a particular type of information (Experiments I and II) and by

<sup>10</sup>The analysis was repeated after elimination of persons who complied with the first request; the inferences remained unchanged.

Table 3  
COMPARISON OF THEORETICALLY PREDICTED AND ACTUAL EFFECTS ON CRITICAL REQUEST COMPLIANCE

Experiment	Treatment effects predicted by the availability hypotheses and actually obtained		Self-perception theory	Bargaining-concession view
I	Information about the request available and authoritative requestor	> Information about the request available and peer requestor	Authoritative requestor < Peer requestor	No effect of requestor
	Information about one's own behavior and authoritative requestor	= Information about one's own behavior available and peer requestor	Authoritative requestor < Peer requestor	Same as actual effect
II	Favorable thoughts available	> Control	Same as actual effect	Favorable thoughts = Control available
	Unfavorable thoughts available	< Control	Unfavorable thoughts available > Control	Same as actual effect
III	Information about one's own behavior and the request behavior available	= Control	Information about one's own behavior and the request available > Control	Same as actual effect
	Information about one's own behavior available	> Control	Same as actual effect	Information about one's own behavior available = Control
IV	Information about the request available	> Control	Information about the request available < Control	Same as actual effect
	Information about one's own behavior available	< Control	Same as actual effect	Information about one's own behavior available = Control

varying the type of information available (Experiments III and IV). But neither explanation by itself can account for all of the data. One could employ both self-perception theory and the bargaining-concession view to predict the results we report in Experiments II, III, and IV. However, because there is no *a priori* basis for deciding when to invoke each theory, one would have to fit the theories to compatible data.

In contrast, the availability hypothesis provides a basis for explaining the multiple request compliance found in our experiments as well as in the literature. According to this hypothesis, critical request compliance is a judgment that depends on the favorableness of available information. Consistent with this expectation is the finding that compliance was greater when favorable information was available, regardless of whether that information pertained to one's own behavior or to the request behavior (Experiments I and II). Further, as the results of Experiments III and IV show, the availability hypothesis affords accurate predictions of multiple request outcomes obtained in field settings.

In terms of application, our findings suggest caution in using multiple request techniques. These procedures will not necessarily enhance compliance, even if the prescriptions identified in the literature are followed. Gaining compliance with a substantial initial request, a procedure prescribed to enhance the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door technique, was not sufficient to produce greater multiple request compliance than was observed in the

single-solicitation control condition (Experiment II, unfavorable condition). Employing the same individual to make contiguous requests, a procedure prescribed to enhance the effectiveness of the door-in-the-face technique, was not sufficient to produce greater multiple request compliance than was found in a control condition (Experiment IV).

The availability hypothesis implies two strategies for increasing compliance with requests. One strategy is to use procedures that will ensure the availability of favorable information as a basis for judgment. This can be achieved by increasing the number of associations with such information and the recency of its encoding. The other strategy is to enhance the favorableness of the information that happens to be available in a particular instance. This can be achieved by relating incoming information to favorable information that an individual has previously processed.

If the effectiveness of multiple request techniques is predicated on the availability of favorable information, as our findings suggest, the applicability of the foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face techniques may be more limited than is generally thought. Multiple request techniques are likely to be effective in contexts where the requests pertain to issues toward which people typically are favorably disposed. Indeed, the vast majority of studies in which multiple request techniques are shown to be effective have involved donating blood, giving to charity, traffic safety, and other social issues about which subjects are likely to have positive thoughts (see DeJong

1979). Multiple request techniques hold less promise as instruments of influence in contexts where people are likely to have a considerable amount of unfavorable information available. Consistent with this view are the failures to observe a systematic multiple request compliance effect when the solicitation pertains to donating money for the personal benefit of the experimenter (Harris and Samerotte 1976), the purchase of economic goods and services such as buying a weekly newspaper (Scott 1976), participating in marketing research (Reingen and Kernan 1979), or participating in a government health plan (Tybout 1978). In these more commercial contexts, either multiple request procedures were ineffective or strategies beyond the straightforward multiple request procedures were required to enhance compliance.

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