

“Seesaw of Emotions” and Compliance: Beyond the Fear-Then-Relief Rule

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ABSTRACT. Previous researchers have found that people who experience anxiety whose source is abruptly eliminated usually respond positively to various requests addressed to them. The authors of the present study used 3 experiments to demonstrate that a sudden withdrawal of positive emotions leads to a similar effect (i.e., increased compliance to requests and commands). The mechanism underlying this effect is probably related to how each emotion generates its own specific behavior program. When this program suddenly proves to be inadequate to new, modified external circumstances, the person begins to function mindlessly. The authors propose the term *seesaw of emotions* for situations in which a sudden retraction of the external sources of affect (regardless of its type) leads to an individual's increased compliance.

Keywords: compliance, emotions, seesaw of emotions, social influence

RESEARCH ON SOCIAL-INFLUENCE PROCESSES has shown the effectiveness of many compliance techniques that salespersons, charity workers, marketers, advertisers, and recruiters have long practiced (Cialdini, 2001). Psychologists have been particularly interested in social-influence techniques that can increase compliance without making the recipients of a request aware that they have been subject to the procedure. Since the original research on compliance without pressure concerning the *foot-in-the-door* tactic¹ (Freedman & Fraser, 1966), researchers have proposed several additional compliance techniques. The most popular

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include the *door-in-the-face*² (Cialdini et al., 1975), *low-ball*³ (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Basset, & Miller, 1978), and *that's-not-all*⁴ (Burger, 1986) techniques.

We recently proposed a new compliance procedure called *fear-then-relief* (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998). This procedure is based on the “good cop–bad cop” interrogation scenario that is common in crime literature and films: First, one policeman brutally mistreats a subject, humiliating him or her and threatening him or her with death. Then, everything changes when the “bad cop” leaves the room and another policeman, calm and pleasant, comes in. The “good cop” suggests having coffee and a cigarette and leads a relatively normal conversation. Most often the subject, so far obstinately refusing any form of cooperation, starts to reveal everything. We assumed that the good cop–bad cop scenario is only one example of a general rule that is not limited to police interrogations. In four field studies and one laboratory experiment (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998), we previously demonstrated that people who first encountered fear and then experienced relief were more willing to fulfill various requests, suggestions, and commands (e.g., requests to fill out a questionnaire or to make a charity donation) than were people to whom a straightforward request was made. We also ruled out that only the fear or only the better and improved mood was causing the increase of compliance. Apparently, the effectiveness of this technique of social influence seems to lie in the change it causes to people’s emotional states.

Our explanation for the participants’ increased willingness to agree focused on the course of the cognitive process of a person experiencing relief (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998). Charles Darwin (1872/1965) first identified an increase in mobilization and concentration of attention toward the source of danger as an important outcome of fear that enables an organism to deal effectively with danger. Many researchers have confirmed this assumption by showing that a moderate level of fear in dangerous situations increases attention, thus enlarging the opportunity to avoid potential damage (Denny, 1991; Izard, 1978; Plutchik, 1984; Tomkins, 1991; Tuma & Maser, 1985). Other researchers have described how moderate fear influences the cognitive processes underlying information processing; fear may cause individuals to engage in extensive monitoring of the environment and to make decisions under time pressure, which is a source of cognitive stress that can lead to cognitive exhaustion (Beck & Rush, 1986; Froeulich, 1978; Lazarus, 1966).

We proposed that compliance occurs in the fear-then-relief scenario because the program launched by fear—which suppresses all current actions, increases cautiousness about the external environment, and makes people freeze or flee—is not compatible with the demands of the suddenly changed situation (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998). When the stimulus that provokes and justifies the experience of fear is suddenly removed, people may experience a short-lasting state of disorientation. The action produced by fear is no longer functional in the changed circumstances, and a new, more effective program has yet to be activated. We assume that during this moment of disorientation, people function automatically and mindlessly, engaging in automatic, preprogrammed actions. This schematic

behavior in social situations is reminiscent of that observed by Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz (1978). In their study, a person about to use a photocopier was interrupted by an experimenter who asked one of the following: (a) "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?"; (b) "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I'm in a rush?"; or (c) "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I have to make some copies?" People allowed the requester to use the copier more often in scenarios (b) and (c)—when an explanation of why the requester needed the machine was added to the request—than they did in scenario (a). However, the compliance rates in the latter two scenarios were almost identical, even though in scenario (c), the explanation did not provide any real reason why the experimenter needed to use the machine immediately.

Langer (1989; see also Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000) assumed that people act mindlessly because of a lack of motivation to actively (or thoughtfully) construct categories and distinctions based on relevant features. They start to function mindfully, however, when their remaining in the state of mindlessness would be too costly for them. According to this assumption, participants in the Langer et al. (1978) study behaved mindlessly when the cost of staying mindless was low (waiting for 5 pages to copy) but shifted their functioning into the thoughtful mode when mindlessness became too costly. For instance, Langer et al. found that when the experimenter stated that he had 20 pages to copy, the explanation added to the request made participants more willing to comply only when they were told a real reason.

However, people face real consequences both in the scenarios in our previous study (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998) and in the real-life police interrogation situation in which the good cop–bad cop paradigm functions. Consequently, persons in these predicaments should be highly motivated to avoid mindlessness and shift their functioning to the thoughtful level. Apparently, however, they do not do this. We hypothesized that people in such scenarios continue to act mindlessly because although mindlessness occurring in routine and recurrent situations can result mostly from a lack of motivation to function mindfully, in situations in which there is a sudden withdrawal of the sources of a person's emotion, the mindlessness is caused by a temporary deficit of cognitive resources. When the person is in that specific state, the cognitive system is busy recovering its own balance. The cognitive resources are directed elsewhere, such as at (a) turning off the fear-activated action program that is no longer adequate or (b) handling the physiological consequences of the sudden drop of excitement.

Recent empirical findings support this view. Dolinski, Ciszek, Godlewski, and Zawadzki (2002) suggested that the cognitive functioning of individuals who experience relief from fear is impaired. Participants in Dolinski et al.'s study who were subjected to a fear-then-relief scenario took longer to find a particular face in the crowd and solved fewer arithmetical equations than did

participants in either the fear-only group or the emotionally neutral group. Although fear may be treated as an exceptional affective state, it is clear that every emotion prompts a specific action program uniquely designed for that emotion (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Oatley & Jenkins, 1996). Feelings of happiness, for instance, appear as a result of the person's achieving a certain subgoal within a broader action, which initiates a program of following that plan of action and, if necessary, modifying it. Sorrow appears when an important intention has not been realized or when the current target is lost, and the consequent action plan initiated may be one of acting passively, generating a new plan, or asking for help. Anger results from frustration at being unable to achieve the goal, and the consequence may be either the intensification of attempts to reach the goal or aggressiveness.

Emotions are thus an important element of organizing actions. They activate behavioral patterns in conjunction with the cognitive-behavioral apparatus (Schaub, 1995). This raises the question of whether it is necessary to use the fear-then-relief sequence to make people comply or whether similar effects can be obtained by evoking a sequence of any emotions of different valences within a short period of time—what we call a *seesaw of emotions*. It is probable that the sudden withdrawal of either negative or positive emotions leads to similar consequences: the participants' increased compliance to request and commands. If one accepts that every emotion initiates a specific action program, then one should also agree that in a specific situation in which the sources of a particular emotion suddenly retreat or disappear, the action program launched by this unique affective state ceases to be adequate for the changed circumstances. Consequently, regardless of the type of emotion, a specific state of a *break between programs* should occur: Fulfillment of one program has just been suspended because the stimulus justifying the particular emotion has disappeared, and a new program suitable to the new situation has not yet been initiated. Being in a break-between-programs state complicates the rational processing of information. However, because people cannot stay completely passive and nonactive, they react automatically and use readily available behavioral models (*scripts*) assimilated in the past.

On the basis of the aforementioned theories, one may conclude that a sudden withdrawal of any emotion could achieve compliance effects. However, to date, researchers have concentrated solely on the consequences of the fear-then-relief sequence. Therefore, the main purpose of the present set of studies was to test whether people who experience first positive emotions and then negative emotions would also show a greater willingness to comply. We also wanted to compare the compliance rates of people in situations of sudden withdrawal of negative emotions with those of people in situations of sudden withdrawal of positive emotions. Therefore, in our first study, we intended to induce in some of our participants a positive emotional state that would subsequently be suddenly changed into disappointment. We expected that individuals in this state would

be more willing to comply with a request directly addressed to them than would individuals in a control group.

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Participants

Participants were pedestrians in a small street in the center of Wrocław, Poland. Every fifth unaccompanied person became a participant in the experiment. We randomly assigned the participants to one of two groups—an experimental group and a control group—by means of a preset schedule. A total of 80 individuals (43 women, 37 men) participated, 40 in each group.

Procedure

The participants of the experimental group found a slightly crumpled piece of paper that looked like a 50 zloty banknote (worth approximately \$12 US). After picking it up, they could see that it was, in fact, an advertisement for a new car wash. A participant's typical reaction was to throw the false banknote into a garbage can. We excluded from the study potential participants who overlooked the false note and did not pick it up.

We did not mislead participants in the control group into thinking they had found money. However, we subjected participants in both the experimental and control groups to the following scenario: A female confederate with a big traveling bag waited around the corner from where the participants were standing. She asked the participants to watch her bag for a short time. She said, "Excuse me, may I ask you for your help, please? I urgently have to see my friend who lives on the fifth floor of this house, and my bag is too heavy, I can't carry it with me upstairs. It won't take more than five minutes; would you mind taking care of my bag for a moment, please?" The confederate did not know whether she was speaking to passersby who found a banknote or to control-group participants.

Results

A log-linear analysis of our data revealed an effect of the experimental conditions on the subjects' willingness to cooperate, $\chi^2(1, N = 80) = 5.013, p < .026, V^2 = .06$. More participants in the experimental group (52.5%) than in the control group (27.5%) were willing to watch the traveling bag. The effect of participants' sex on their compliance approached the .05 level of statistical significance. More men (51%) than women (30%) were willing to take care of the traveling bag, $\chi^2(1, N = 80) = 3.558, p < .060, V^2 = .04$.

Discussion

Previous research has indicated that social-influence techniques, in which evoked emotions change within a short time period, can effectively produce compliance when positive emotions replace negative ones (Burger, 1986; Cialdini, 2001; Cialdini et al., 1978; Cialdini et al., 1975; Freedman & Fraser, 1966). As we expected, our results showed that these techniques can also be effective if a negative emotion (disappointment) replaces a positive one (happiness). Almost twice as many participants in the experimental group (who picked up the banknote-like promotional leaflet) as in the control group agreed to take care of the bag. However, it is not entirely clear that the situation in our study—in which a participant found a slightly crumpled piece of paper that looked at first glance like a banknote but that turned out to be an advertisement—necessarily produces negative emotions. Such an experience may cause not only disappointment or other negative emotional states such as frustration or grief but also positive emotions. Someone may treat their finding a banknote-like leaflet as a ridiculous and laughable occurrence. As numerous studies have indicated, a good mood increases people's willingness to help others (Batson, 1991; Isen, 1970, 1987; Schaller & Cialdini, 1990). Therefore, the lack of a clear signal that participants' positive emotions were cancelled by negative emotions could be considered a serious flaw of Experiment 1 because we cannot exclude an interpretation of the data based on a good mood–compliance principle. To rule out this possibility, we conducted another study, which we designed to create more clearly defined conditions of withdrawal of emotion. Additionally, in Experiment 2, we intended to compare the compliance rates in situations of sudden withdrawal of negative or positive emotions with each other and with situations in which the source of emotion was still present.

EXPERIMENT 2

Method

Participants

We conducted this investigation at two geriatric nursing schools in Germany. Participants were 75 students (71 women and 4 men) averaging 36 years of age ($SD = 2.20$ years). The experimenters were two teachers (one man and one woman).

We divided participants evenly into five groups. One group was a control group and four were experimental groups whose members were exposed to conditions intended to produce one of the following: (a) positive emotions only, (b) negative emotions only, (c) negative-then-positive seesaw of emotions, or (d) positive-then-negative seesaw of emotions.

Procedure

The teachers pretended to retrieve their students' test grades from a notebook. However, after informing the students about their (false) grades, the teachers told the students that the grades of different classes had been mixed up and that the grades the students had just been given were incorrect. These supposed errors were corrected within approximately 2 min.

The teacher started by saying, "Oh, I'm sorry! Something went wrong! I'm afraid I made a mistake and I told you the grades of another class instead of yours. But this can be easily corrected. I just have to retrieve another data file." After a while, the teacher added, "OK, now I'm ready. Well, the correct grades are . . ." For the positive-then-negative seesaw group, the experimenters first told participants that they received grades of 1 (the equivalent of an American A grade) or 2 (American B grade) but then said the correct grades were actually 3 (American C grade) or 4 (American D grade), respectively. For the negative-then-positive seesaw group, the experimenters first told participants that they received grades of 4 or 3 but then said the correct grades were 2 or 1, respectively. The experimenters told participants in the positive-emotions-only and negative-emotions-only groups that they received grades of 2 and 4, respectively, and confirmed these grades after pretending to check.

After a 2-min break, the teacher went on to the next teaching unit, telling the students that the school would be participating in a summer street party 3 months later, for which the school would prepare an information booth and a buffet with cakes and coffee. The teacher said that the school administration had asked for the students' voluntary help and support. To make planning easier, the teacher requested that students put their names on a list stating how many hours (between 1 and 8) they could work at the information booth on the Sunday of the party. In the control group, the teacher asked participants about their willingness to help in the summer street party without their having experienced beforehand the aforementioned confusion with grades. The experiment ended with an explanation of a purpose of the study and a debriefing that included an apology.

Results and Discussion

A preliminary analysis of the data showed that the place of investigation (two different geriatric nursing colleges) did not affect compliance, $F(1, 73) = .923$, $p = .340$, so we did not consider this factor in subsequent analysis. A 2 (evoked emotion: positive vs. negative) \times 2 (manner of activating emotions: stable grades vs. changing grades) analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a main effect on the dependent variable (number of stated working hours at the street party) only for manner of activating the emotions, $F(1, 56) = 4.561$, $p < .0371$, $\omega^2 = .056$. The average number of volunteered hours was higher for the changing-grades condition (2.56) than for the stable-grade condition (1.36; see Table 1), indicating the effect of a sudden change of emotions.

TABLE 1. Number of Volunteered Working Hours as a Function of the Stability and Positivity of Participants' Evoked Emotional States (Experiment 2; *N* = 75)

Intended stability	Intended final emotional state					
	Positive		Negative		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Seesaw of emotions	3.06	2.91	2.06	2.22	2.56	2.56
Stable emotions	1.13	1.41	1.60	1.88	1.36	1.64
Control	—	—	—	—	1.20	1.47

Note. Prior to being exposed to stimuli intended to evoke the final emotional state, participants in the seesaw groups were first exposed to stimuli intended to evoke the opposite emotional state (either positive or negative). Participants in the stable-emotions groups were exposed to stimuli intended to evoke only one emotional state (either positive or negative). Participants in control group were not exposed to any emotion-changing stimuli. *n* = 15 for each of the 4 experimental groups and the control group.

We also found that participants' willingness to help (compliance rate) did not differ between the control group and the nonseesaw experimental groups, $F(1, 88) = .676, p = .763$. Similarly, the compliance rates did not differ between the two seesaw experimental groups. This outcome allowed us to look at the control group and the two nonseesaw groups together as control conditions and to compare participants' willingness to help under these three conditions with participants' willingness to help under the two seesaw conditions. This difference was significant, $F(1, 73) = 6.791, p < .011$.

These results suggest that participants who experienced different emotions within a short period of time exhibited significantly higher compliance rates (measured in declared working hours) than did participants in whom one stable emotional state (either positive or negative) or no substantial emotional response was evoked. In other words, the withdrawal of emotions was an effective instrument of social influence, regardless of whether participants experienced (a) first disappointment and dissatisfaction and then relief and a sense of well-being or (b) a sense of well-being followed by disappointment and dissatisfaction. This indicates that a rapid change in the valence of the just-experienced emotions, rather than the valence itself, is what led to an increase in participants' willingness to help. Thus, the term *seesaw of emotions* is apt for all different types of this phenomenon because it underscores that the main feature of such situations is the specific emotional dynamic resulting from the withdrawal of the stimulus that justified the experience of the original emotion.

Another result of Experiment 2 casts light on a possible psychological mechanism underlying the seesaw-of-emotions phenomenon. The day after the experiment, 3 of the 19 subjects in the seesaw-of-emotions conditions who had agreed to help at the street party cancelled their participation; another 11 participants decreased their time commitment by an average of 45 min, bringing the mean number of pledged hours in the seesaw-of-emotions groups to that of the other three groups. These participants gave several reasons, such as family affairs or forgotten appointments, to explain their decisions to decrease their initial allotments of volunteered time. Their behavior, coming 1 day after the experiment, resembled participants' reactions in another study we conducted (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998, Experiment 4), in which a sudden withdrawal of emotions also caused the participants to substantially lower the amount of pledged time. It appears that participants who experience the seesaw of emotions do not make their decisions rationally but react spontaneously and mindlessly to a request. Only when the confusion was over could they analyze, think, and make their decisions rationally.

More direct evidence supporting the assumption that a sudden withdrawal of emotions causes a mindless state comes from another study we previously conducted (Dolinski & Nawrat, 1998, Experiment 5). Participants in that study were jaywalkers. In some of the cases, when the participant was in the middle of the street, a police whistle was blown. The participants turned their heads toward the

sound, but it turned out there were no policeman on the sidewalk behind them. Other participants were allowed to cross the street undisturbed. All participants were then approached by an experimenter who presented a money box and asked them for a donation. As in Langer et al.'s (1978) experiment on which we based our procedure, the experimenter in our previous study (a) formulated the request without explanation ("Madam/Sir, would you please give us some money?"), (b) provided a reasonable justification for the request ("Madam/Sir, we are members of the Students for Handicapped Citizens organization. Would you please join our charity because we have to collect as much money as possible to cover the cost of a holiday camp for mentally handicapped children?"), or (c) made the same request with a *placebic* explanation that did not actually provide any additional information beyond the original request ("Madam/Sir, would you please give us some money because we have to collect as much money as possible?"). We found that participants in the emotionally neutral conditions (i.e., not disturbed by the whistle while jaywalking) behaved in a rational manner: They rarely dropped money into the box when the request was not accompanied by any justification or when the justification was placebic. However, the participants in the fear-then-relief condition reacted differently: The placebic explanation was sufficient to increase their compliance. Additionally, participants under the fear-then-relief condition who were given the placebic justification rarely asked questions about the purpose and organization behind the action. However, neutral-emotional-state participants frequently asked such questions.

As Dolinski et al. (2002, Experiments 1–2) demonstrated, forcing people in a fear-then-relief state back to mindfulness reduces their compliance. In that study, a state of fear-then-relief was created by suddenly grabbing by the shoulder people coming out of a covered marketplace. When the people turned around in astonishment, they noticed a blind man (with a white stick and dark glasses). In some of the conditions, the blind man said only, "Oh, excuse me." In other conditions, he added, "How much time is left till [. . .] o'clock?," specifying a time about 3.5 hours later (Experiment 1), or he asked, "Is that you?" (Experiment 2). Dolinski et al. assumed that answering both questions demanded certain cognitive activity (calculating the time and explaining the misapprehension). As a result of this activity, the participant's cognitive functioning should have shifted from the mindless level to the mindful level. After leaving the seemingly blind man, the participants were allowed to walk a few meters and were then confronted by another experimenter who asked them to spare a few minutes to fill out a questionnaire. The results indicated that compliance of those participants who were led to function on the thoughtful level under a fear-then-relief condition decreased to the level observed in the control group.

There is lack of a direct evidence, however, that mindlessness plays a similar role in situations in which a source of positive emotions is suddenly retracted. To examine the effect of mindlessness in the seesaw-of-emotions state, we conducted another experiment in which participants were confronted with a completely

senseless request. We put some participants in a positive-then-negative-emotions condition and others in the reverse condition.

EXPERIMENT 3

Method

Participants were 150 residents of the city of Wroclaw, Poland. We chose 150 different telephone numbers out of the telephone directory for Wroclaw and randomly divided them into the same 5 groups (30 participants each) as in Experiment 2.⁵ All participants were phoned by one of the female experimenters, who introduced herself as an employee of the Polish Telecom company. The experimenter told participants in the positive-emotions-only and positive-then-negative seesaw groups, "Our computer indicates a surplus payment of 116 zloty⁶ on your account. I would like to let you know that this amount will be credited and be cleared against your next bill." She told participants in the negative-emotions-only and negative-then-positive seesaw groups, "Our computer indicates a deficit of 116 zloty on your account. I would like to let you know that this amount will be drawn against your account." She then said only to the members of the seesaw groups, "Oh, one moment, I've just seen that there is an error message. . . What's your address, please? [pause for participant's response] I'm sorry, I'm afraid it's concerning a different telephone number!" To members of all experimental groups she then said, "On this occasion I kindly ask you for a favor. The Polish Telecom is testing the sound quality of the telephone transmission with the new system TELPOCOL. Would you put the receiver to your other ear, please? [pause for three seconds] Have you already done it?" The control group was only asked to respond to the alleged sound-quality test. We considered a confirmation from the participant as a mark of unreflective compliance with a senseless request. We considered all signs of astonishment or surprise or questions about the test's purpose as marks of nonapproval. The experiment ended with an explanation of the purpose of the study and a debriefing that included an apology (although no participants expressed resentment at being fooled).

Results

A preliminary analysis revealed that participant's sex had no influence on their reaction, $\chi^2(1, N = 150) = 0.01, p = .912$. A log-linear analysis of the data revealed an effect of the seesaw of emotions on participants' compliance, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 7.194, p < .008, V^2 = .06$. Participants in the experimental conditions in which the source of the evoked emotions was withdrawn (seesaw groups) placed the receiver onto the other ear more often (43% compliance) than did participants in the conditions in which the emotion-activating information about the surplus or deficit payment was not corrected (22% compliance). The difference between

(a) the positive-emotions-only and negative-emotions-only groups and (b) the control group was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 90) = 1.86$, whereas the difference between the seesaw-of-emotions groups and the control group was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 90) = 20.02, p < .0001, V^2 = .22$. The goodness-of-fit coefficient, which we calculated on the basis of the assumption that the seesaw of emotions was the only factor influencing the participants' compliance, maximum likelihood $\chi^2(0, N = 120) = .901, p = .925$, proved the best model to explain the differences in the likelihood of compliance that are shown in Table 2.

Discussion

One may consider the participants' switching the receiver to their other ear as mindless compliance to an absurd request. Although such a reaction sporadically occurred in the control group and in the positive-emotions-only and negative-emotions-only groups, it was considerably more common in the seesaw conditions in which information justifying the original positive or negative emotions was suddenly withdrawn. This pattern of results provides further support for our hypothesis that compliance can be increased by a sudden withdrawal of the source of not only negative but also positive emotions. Similarly to but more directly than the results of Experiment 2, these results establish that through the experience of changing emotional states within a short period of time, individuals can be transformed into a state in which their compliance increases even if confronted with a request that is senseless or stupid. One may conclude, therefore, that not only fear-then-relief but also a positive-then-negative-emotions form of a seesaw may induce a state of mindlessness.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of all three experiments presented in this article show that the seesaw of emotions is an effective social-influence technique. In addition, the results of Experiments 2 and 3 indicate that it is the fast change of emotions and not the valence of the final emotion that is responsible for compliance. Most important, we empirically showed that the sudden withdrawal of negative and positive emotions led to a similar effect: increased compliance to requests and commands.

The results of Experiment 3 also show that compliance in a seesaw-of-emotions condition is connected with a mindless style of functioning. In many social situations, people tend to react automatically. Both the range of information that people are normally able to process and the depth of data analysis are limited (Bargh, 1997; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). We suggest that the seesaw of emotions is one of such situation: The increased compliance of participants in a seesaw condition results from a change in the process of processing information at the cognitive level. The fast change of situational context and the emotions attached to it transfers participants into a state in which the behavioral program caused by

TABLE 2. Number of Participants Who Complied With the Telephone Request as a Function of the Stability and Positivity of Their Evoked Emotional States (Experiment 3; N = 150).

Intended stability	Intended final emotional state					
	Positive		Negative		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Seesaw of emotions	12	40 ^a	14	47 ^a	26	43 ^b
Stable emotions	8	27 ^a	5	17 ^a	13	22 ^b
Control	—	—	—	—	3	10 ^a

Note. Prior to being exposed to stimuli intended to evoke the final emotional state, participants in the seesaw groups were first exposed to stimuli intended to evoke the opposite emotional state (either positive or negative). Participants in the stable-emotions groups were exposed to stimuli intended to evoke only one emotional state (either positive or negative). Participants in control group were not exposed to any emotion-changing stimuli.
^aOut of *n* = 30 participants in subgroup. ^bOut of *n* = 60 participants.

the first emotion is obsolete and a new one that is relevant for the next emotion has not yet been activated. To quickly close the gap between the two behavioral programs, cognitive resources are required. Participants facing an additional request during this phase of emotional turbulence cannot instantaneously analyze it, so, at that moment, they seize the simplest responsive measure by showing an often-successful schematic behavior: agreement. A neurobiological research approach may offer additional support for this model.

Our results implicate a distributional problem in the mind's use of attention-related resources. In accordance with Birnbaumer and Schmidt's (1999) theoretical model for situation processing through a limited-processing system, a *limited-capacity control system* (LCCS) could offer an explanation for the seesaw of emotions. An LCCS takes over and defines the distribution of limited resources of attention, thus determining which information input receives conscious attention and which does not. This happens through comparison of the input with stored patterns of long-term memory. If the information received from the environment does not conform to the expected pattern (i.e., the situation is new or unexpected), the information will have to be examined thoroughly, at the cognitive level; an automatic reaction will not suffice to cope with the situation. For the brain to process such a situation at the conscious level, it will need to mobilize additional input from the endogenous centers that are responsible for attention, such as the locus coeruleus (Black, 1991). Physiological factors (e.g., glucose level, transmitter concentration) will limit the extent of processing. In the event that an organism is in a situation in which several components demand its attention, a distribution of attention-related resources will occur through the LCCS. The component that wins this competition for processing resources will be aroused, while the losing component will be inhibited.

The seesaw of emotions apparently presents a situation that must be processed through the expenditure of resources. These resources are then not available to enable participants to adequately process the subsequent requests. Although there are some data on how the seesaw state influences the basic cognitive process—for example, perception, logical thinking (Dolinski et al., 2002), attention, the processing of information in the short-term memory, and the schematizing of social perception (Nawrat, 2006)—more extensive research is needed in this area. Future research could contribute to a better understanding of the cognitive and behavioral consequences of the seesaw-of-emotions phenomenon.

NOTES

1. With the foot-in-the-door technique, a requester will start by asking for something small and then make progressively larger requests until the target has agreed to do or give more than he or she initially would have been willing.

2. The door-in-the-face technique involves a requester first asking for a large favor—one the target is almost certain to refuse. After being refused, the requester shifts to a smaller request—the favor he or she really wanted. Because the second request seems

reasonable compared to the first, the target is more likely to agree to it than he or she would have been had the second request been presented by itself.

3. With the low-ball technique, a requester asks a target to perform a certain course of action. After the target agrees, the requester substitutes a more costly or difficult course of action for the agreed-on one. The target will generally be more willing to perform the costlier action than he or she would have been had the requester not started with the easier request.

4. The that's-not-all technique consists of offering a product at a high price, not allowing the customer to respond for a few seconds, and then offering a better deal by lowering the price or adding another product.

5. Only adults (judged by their voices) were asked to participate. When a child answered the phone, the experimenter requested an adult.

6. Equivalent to approximately \$27 US.

AUTHOR NOTES

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