The Effectiveness of Compliance Techniques: Foot in the Door Versus Door in the Face

ANGELOS RODAFINOS
ARSO VUCEVIC
Department of Psychology
City Liberal Studies
Thessaloniki, Greece

GEORGIOS D. SIDERIDIS
Department of Psychology
University of Crete
Rethymno, Greece

EFFECTIVE PERSUASION OR COMPLIANCE—social psychologists (e.g., Dillard, 1991) have studied how multiple requests can achieve it. Two techniques are the foot-in-the-door (FITD) technique and the door-in-the-face (DITF) technique. The FITD technique can be defined as a gradual-persuasion technique in which an initial, modest request precedes a larger request. In contrast, the DITF technique involves (a) making a costly, large first request that the recipient will

We thank Margarita Diakou, Tamara Dimitrijevic, and Irene Nikiforou for their assistance in data collection.

Address correspondence to Angelos Rodafinos, Department of Psychology, City Liberal Studies, 24 Pr. Koromila Street, 54 622 Thessaloniki, Greece; rodafinos@city.academic.gr (e-mail).
probably refuse and then (b) making a second, less costly, and more realistic request.

Several researchers have attempted to examine the effectiveness of the two sequential compliance techniques (FITD and DITF) and the factors that may affect their effectiveness (see Burger, 1999). According to Dillard (1991), when they are compared separately with a control group, both techniques increase the rate of compliance from 15% up to 25%. However, when he compared the two techniques to each other directly, the results were equivocal. To add to the extant literature, in the present study we compared the effectiveness of the FITD and DITF techniques in a telephone solicitation for the participant to attend an educational seminar.

We randomly assigned undergraduate and postgraduate students \((N = 99)\) to one of three experimental conditions. Students were asked (a) a small initial request (two short questions regarding racism) and then a moderate target request (FITD), (b) a large initial request (to attend ten 1-hr seminars about racism) and then a moderate target request (DITF), or (c) a moderate target request only (control group). The dependent variable was compliance with the moderate target request (to attend a 1-hr seminar on racism).

Chi-square analyses indicated statistically significant differences between the three conditions, \(\chi^2(2, N = 99) = 7.48, p < .05\). Pair-wise chi-square analyses indicated that the DITF technique produced significantly more compliance (75.8%) than did either the FITD technique (48.5%), \(\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 5.21, p < .05\), or the control group request (45.5%), \(\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 6.35, p < .01\). No differences emerged between the FITD condition and the control condition.

Although in the DITF condition three fourths (75%) of the participants accepted the target request to attend a 1-hr seminar about racism, the FITD technique was not more effective than the control request. Because of the contradictory nature of past findings in the literature, the present findings agree with some studies (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1975; Harari, Mohr, & Hosey, 1980) and contradict others (Schwarzwald, Bizman, & Raz, 1983; Snyder & Cunningham, 1975).

It is difficult to explain, even post hoc, why in the present study the DITF was effective, and the FITD was not. Apparently, compliance with an initial small request is not always adequate for producing further compliance with subsequent requests. Factors that may influence the effectiveness of the two-step techniques include the type and size of the initial request (Even-Chen, Yinon, & Bizman, 1979; Seligman, Bush, & Kirsch, 1976), the length of delay between the first request and the second request (Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz, & Steblay, 1983), and the source variable and the target variable (Fern, Monroe, & Avila, 1986; Patch, 1988). Thus, the size of the request might be one reason for the present findings. Another reason might be that answering two questions on racism does not necessarily link (self-consistency–wise) to attending a seminar on discrimination. Future researchers should examine also the attitude–behavior consistency in relation to the two-step compliance techniques.
REFERENCES


Received January 21, 2004
Accepted December 6, 2004