

## The Effects of Initial Request Size on Compliance: More About the That's-Not-All Technique

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Research on the *that's-not-all* compliance procedure finds that making a request more attractive before the recipient has an opportunity to respond increases compliance beyond that of recipients who receive only the final version of the request. However, participants in Studies 1 and 2 presented with an improved offer before responding to a request were significantly less likely to agree to the final request than those not exposed to the technique. Studies 3 and 4 demonstrated that this reversal is a function of the size of the initial request. Compared to a control group receiving only the final request, participants presented with an initial request that was substantially larger than the final request were less likely to comply, whereas participants presented with an initial request that was only slightly larger than the final request were more likely to comply. The findings suggest an important limit to the application of the *that's-not-all* technique.

Among the social influence techniques studied by psychologists are a series of procedures designed to increase compliance without making the recipient of the request aware that he or she has been subjected to the procedure. These *compliance-without-pressure* techniques include the *foot-in-the-door* procedure (Freedman & Fraser, 1966), the *door-in-the-face* technique (Cialdini et al., 1975), and the *low ball* procedure (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett, & Miller, 1978). In addition to increasing our understanding of the rules and processes governing social exchanges, research on these techniques has obvious implications for those interested in selling, recruiting, converting, and the like.

Another of the compliance procedures has been identified as the *that's-not-all technique* (Burger, 1986). When applying this procedure, the requester presents the recipient with an initial request at a certain price but does not allow the person an immediate opportunity to accept or decline. As the individual considers the price, the requester suddenly improves the deal either by lowering the price or by including an extra product or bonus. For example, imagine a salesperson at a tropic resort who says you can experience the thrill of a parasailing lesson for only \$50.00. If you have no preconceived idea about what such a lesson would cost, and if the

price does not seem so outrageous that you immediately reject it, you probably will spend a few seconds weighing what you believe will be the excitement of parasailing against the cost of the lesson. Then imagine that before you decide one way or the other, the salesperson says you can in fact enjoy the parasailing experience for only \$30.00. If the technique is effective, you will be more likely to buy the \$30.00 parasailing lesson than if the same person had offered you the same lesson for \$30.00 from the start.

In an empirical demonstration of the *that's-not-all* effect, people approaching a bake sale table were told the price of a cupcake was \$0.75 (Burger, 1986). At that point, the salesperson was interrupted immediately by a second salesperson. The first salesperson held up his or her hand and asked the customer to "wait a second," presumably leaving the customer to ponder the decision of whether to buy a cupcake at that price. After a few seconds, the experimenter returned to the customer and explained that the price also included a small bag of cookies, which he or she brought out from behind a box. Participants presented with this *that's-not-all* manipulation were significantly more likely to make the purchase than participants in a control group presented only with the complete cupcake-and-cookie package at the same price. In another demonstration of the effect, some bake sale customers were presented with a \$1.00 price for a cupcake, given a few seconds to ponder the decision, and then presented with a \$0.75 price for the same cupcake. Again, these participants purchased the cupcake at a higher rate than par-

ticipants presented with only the \$0.75 price. In all, Burger found evidence for a that's-not-all effect in six separate studies using a variety of requests and control conditions.

Burger (1986) advanced two explanations for the that's-not-all effect. First, people in the that's-not-all condition may be responding to a perceived concession on the part of the salesperson. That is, the participants in these studies may have felt that by including the additional product or lowering the price the salesperson was "giving in" a little and doing somewhat of a favor for the customer. According to the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), people in our culture operate under a social rule that requires us to return favors. In experimental demonstrations of this rule, participants given an unexpected gift are more likely to respond to a request from the giver than participants merely asked the request (Regan, 1971). As applied to the that's-not-all situation, people may perceive that the salesperson has done them a favor, and therefore may feel an increased obligation to do something for that person; that is, buy the product. In support of this interpretation, when experimenters made the lower price in a that's-not-all manipulation seem like a personal concession they sold more candles than when the lower price was attributed to a misstatement.

A second explanation for the that's-not-all effect is taken from social judgment theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1967) and more generally from adaptation-level theory (Helson, 1964). According to these theories, judgments often are made in reference to an existing anchor point. For example, \$10.00 will be judged as a high price for a bottle of wine by a person who has never spent more than \$5.00 on wine but might seem a bargain to someone who routinely spends \$20.00 for a bottle. Subsequent research has demonstrated that the anchor point against which judgments are made often is subject to manipulation. For example, college students in one study rated models less attractive after first looking at photographs of very attractive women (Kenrick, Gutierrez, & Goldberg, 1989). Another example of changing anchor points was found in a group of lottery winners who reported that everyday experiences such as talking with friends and hearing a funny joke were less enjoyable than did people who had not been so fortunate (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978). Compared with the new anchor point for excitement and pleasure (winning the lottery), talking with friends fell short as a source of happiness.

As applied to the that's-not-all procedure, the initial price presented to the prospective customer is said to alter the anchor point that person uses when deciding whether or not to agree to the request. After introducing a \$1.00 anchor point in the cupcake example, \$0.75 seems like a more reasonable price for the product than if a \$0.75 anchor point were introduced at the onset of the process. Consistent with this analysis, participants in one study were told cupcakes had been selling for either \$1.00 or \$0.75. Those told about the \$1.00 price gave a higher estimate of what they thought was an honest price for

the cupcake and what they would pay for it than did participants who were told about the lower price (Burger, 1986).

The present set of studies began with a simple effort to test the generalizability of the that's-not-all technique. That is, all previous demonstrations of the effect were limited to sales situations. We reasoned that the that's-not-all procedure also should be effective for other kinds of requests. However, the results of our initial experiment raised some questions about the robustness of the effect.

## STUDY 1

The first study was designed to test the generalizability of the that's-not-all technique to requests other than sales. Specifically, we wanted to demonstrate that the that's-not-all procedure also could be an effective means to increase compliance to requests for altruistic tasks, such as volunteering time or making a charitable contribution. Based on the previous findings with the technique, we expected that people presented with a request to volunteer for 2 days' work that was subsequently changed to a request for 1 day's work would agree to the final request more than people asked only to work 1 day.

### Method

*Participants.* Sixty undergraduate students (30 men, 30 women) living in on-campus residence halls served as participants.

*Procedure.* Two college-aged students approached residents in randomly selected dormitory rooms. All students who answered the door alone were used as participants and were assigned to either a that's-not-all condition or a control condition, according to a prearranged random order. The first experimenter introduced both experimenters and explained that they were representatives from an on-campus organization, and that they were looking for volunteers to help at an elementary school carnival. The school is located near the university and is devoted to hearing-impaired students. The first experimenter asked students in the that's-not-all condition if they would be willing to help out at the carnival from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday of the upcoming weekend. As soon as the first experimenter finished the request, the second experimenter interrupted before the participant could respond. He or she said, "Wait a minute. All our volunteer spots are filled on Sunday. Are you interested in volunteering for Saturday only?" Participants in the control condition were not asked by the first experimenter to volunteer for 2 days. Instead, the second experimenter simply asked if they would volunteer to work between 11:00 a.m. and

2:00 p.m. on Saturday. If participants agreed to the request, their name and phone number were recorded. Participants agreeing to the request were later contacted by another student, who arranged for them to work at the carnival.

## Results

The number of people agreeing to the request in each condition was compared. Twenty-seven percent (8 out of 30) of the participants in the control condition agreed to work at the carnival on Saturday. However, only 3% (1 out of 30) agreed to the request in the that's-not-all condition. The difference between the two compliance rates was significant,  $\chi^2(1, N=60) = 6.41, p < .01$ . Thus, not only did we fail to replicate the that's-not-all effect, the procedure actually led to a decrease in compliance in this study.

## STUDY 2

Clearly, the results of the first study were unexpected. As a starting point to explain the finding, we compared the procedures used in Study 1 with those used in the six studies reported by Burger (1986). Two possible differences surfaced from this comparison. The first of these concerns the type of request. In each of the six examples of the that's-not-all procedure presented by Burger, participants were asked to buy a product, whereas in Study 1 reported here, the request was to engage in an altruistic task. Thus, it is possible that the type of request might account for the different outcomes. However, there were two reasons why we did not expect this distinction to account for the different findings. First, in each of the six successful demonstrations of the that's-not-all effect, the money collected was said to go to a charitable organization. Thus, many of the requests in the earlier research might also be described as altruistic. Second, there is no theoretical reason why an altruistic task should lead to a different effect than a request for a purchase. In both cases, the mechanisms described by Burger as underlying the effect should be operating.

The second potential difference we identified in the two sets of procedures concerned the size of the initial request. Compared with the relatively small size of the requests used in the earlier successful demonstrations of the that's-not-all procedure, we presented participants with an initial request that was relatively large. To the college students in our sample, volunteering for both days of an upcoming weekend probably seemed like a significant sacrifice. But why might the size of the initial request be important? The successful application of the that's-not-all technique is said to momentarily leave participants in a state of indecision in which they try to decide if, for example, the cupcake is worth \$1.00. But what if the original

asking price is too high? If the initial price is outrageously high, several reactions are possible. First, participants might decide instantly that they are not interested in pursuing the matter, even if they have not expressed their decision outwardly. In other words, the crucial point of indecision required for the that's-not-all process would be missing. It is during this time of indecision that the asking price is said to be considered, resulting in a modification of the person's anchor point. Second, because participants may have already decided to decline the offer, the rest of the requester's presentation—including the final price—might not be considered. Third, it is possible an extreme request will be met with distrust and suspicion. People might not want to engage in any transaction with a stranger who presents such an obviously unacceptable request. For these reasons, we proposed that the size of the initial request may play an important role in the effectiveness of the that's-not-all procedure.

However, before examining the effects of initial request size directly, we conducted a second study to eliminate two other possible explanations for our failure to find the expected results in the first study. First, we wanted to see if the decline in compliance produced in our initial investigation was replicable. That is, we sought assurance that the effect could not be attributed to some unknown and unique aspect of that study, or simply to chance. Second, we wanted to demonstrate that the reversal effect was not a function of the altruistic target request; that is, we wanted to see if we could produce a decline in compliance with a monetary request similar to those used in the original demonstrations of the that's-not-all technique.

## Method

*Participants.* Sixty undergraduate students (30 men, 30 women) living in different on-campus residence halls than those used in the first experiment served as participants.

*Procedure.* Students were randomly selected from a list of dormitory residents. The experimenter telephoned students and those who answered the phone were assigned to either the that's-not-all condition or the control condition, according to a prearranged order. The experimenter explained that he or she was collecting donations for the student's class fund, to be used for social activities and a class gift to the university. Students in the that's-not-all condition were asked if they would donate \$5.00 to the fund. Pilot testing suggested that most students would not be interested in making such a donation, thus making the request appropriately high for our purposes. Before participants could respond to the request, the experimenter pretended to be interrupted by another person. He or she said, "Wait, hold on a second. OK. I just found

out we still have Santa Clara coffee mugs left to give away. If you donate \$5.00 you will get a mug, too." Participants assigned to the control condition simply were asked if they would donate \$5.00 to receive a mug. If participants agreed to the request, the experimenter said that someone would be contacting them soon about how to donate. Participants were contacted about a week later, thanked for their offer, but told that the fund-raiser had been canceled for now.

## Results

The number of participants who agreed to the final version of the request in each condition was compared. Sixty-three percent of the students in the control condition (19 out of 30) agreed to donate \$5.00 in exchange for a mug. However, only 23% of the students in the that's-not-all condition (7 out of 30) agreed to the same request. Again, the difference between the conditions was significant,  $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 9.77, p < .01$ .

Thus, once again we found that the that's-not-all procedure not only failed to increase compliance, but actually led to a decrease in the number of people agreeing to the final request. Because students were presented with a monetary request going to a charitable cause, similar to the requests used in the Burger (1986) studies, it does not seem likely that the kind of request is the key to explaining the reversal of the effect.

## STUDY 3

The results of the first two studies, combined with previous research on the that's-not-all effect, indicate that the procedure sometimes increases compliance to requests and sometimes decreases it. Obviously, what is needed is a study that demonstrates both of these effects within the same investigation. Study 3 was designed to provide this demonstration. Because we anticipated that the size of the initial request was the key variable that would account for the different effects, we created two that's-not-all conditions. Participants in one of these conditions received a large initial request. Participants in the other that's-not-all condition received an initial request that was only slightly larger than the target request, and not so large that most participants would reject it from the outset. We expected that this latter procedure would be

more effective in generating compliance to the final request than would the procedure using the large initial request.

## Method

**Participants.** Two hundred and twenty undergraduates (105 men and 115 women) living in on-campus residence halls served as participants.

**Procedure.** The procedures were identical to those used in the first study, with the exception that two that's-not-all conditions were created instead of one. In one of these, the large initial request condition, participants were presented with the same initial request as in Study 1. That is, they were asked to work from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on both days of the upcoming weekend at an elementary school carnival. Participants in the moderate initial request condition were asked if they would volunteer to work from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday only. Control condition participants received no initial request. As in the first study, the final request in all three conditions was to work from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday.

## Results and Discussion

The percentage of students agreeing to the final version of the request in each condition is shown in Table 1. Although the overall effect for experimental condition fell short of statistical significance,  $\chi^2(2, N = 220) = 4.67, p < .10$ , specific comparisons suggest that the size of the initial request indeed had a significant impact on compliance rates. Students in the moderate initial request condition agreed to the request significantly more often than students in the large initial request condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 147) = 4.05, p < .05$ . However, although the moderate initial request participants were more likely to comply than the control group, the difference between these two conditions fell short of statistical significance,  $p < .14$ , as did the difference between the large initial request condition and the control group.

Thus, the results provide some support for the notion that the size of the initial request plays a critical role in the effectiveness of the that's-not-all procedure. An initial request only slightly larger than the final request was signifi-

TABLE 1  
Compliance Rates to Final Version of the Request

	Study 3		Study 4	
	Percent	Ratio	Percent	Ratio
Large initial request condition	10.8	8/74	24.3	17/70
Control condition	13.7	10/73	41.4	29/70
Moderate initial request condition	23.3	17/73	58.6	41/70

cantly more effective than an initial request much larger than the final request. However, the results fell short of a perfect demonstration of the predicted effects. That is, the strongest demonstration would come from a study that finds a statistically significant increase in compliance relative to the control group in the moderate initial request condition (the traditional that's-not-all effect) and a significant decrease in compliance relative to the control group in the large initial request condition. A glance at Table 1 suggests that our failure to produce statistically significant differences relative to the control group in Study 3 was most likely due to a floor effect. For unknown reasons (perhaps time of year, events on campus, other opportunities to do volunteer work, etc.), the base rate for compliance to the request was notably lower in Study 3 than in Study 1. This low compliance rate made it difficult to find significant differences between the conditions. Study 4 was conducted to take care of this problem.

#### STUDY 4

We utilized pilot testing to determine how our participants might react to requests of various sizes. We selected a control condition request that approximately 50% of our pilot participants said they probably would agree to. This percentage would allow room to demonstrate both an increase and a decrease in compliance relative to the control group with our two that's-not-all conditions.

#### Method

*Participants.* Two hundred and ten undergraduates (112 women, 98 men) living in on-campus residence halls participated in the study.

*Procedure.* A male experimenter telephoned students randomly selected from a list of dormitory residents. The students were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. The experimenter introduced himself to all students answering the phone and explained that he was raising money for a new scholarship fund. Students in the large initial request condition were told they could receive a coffee mug with the name of the school on it for a \$10.00 donation to the fund. As in the second study, at this point the experimenter pretended he was interrupted by another person. The experimenter said, "Wait, hold on a second. OK. My supervisor just told me we have lowered the minimum donation for receiving the mug to \$3.00. Would you be willing to donate \$3.00 to the fund for the coffee mug?" Participants in the moderate initial request condition received an identical request, except that they were told ini-

tially that they could receive the coffee mug for a \$5.00 donation that was then lowered to \$3.00. Participants in the control condition were presented only with the final \$3.00 request. As in Study 2, participants agreeing to the request were contacted by phone about a week later, thanked for their offer, but were told that the scholarship fund drive had been canceled.

#### Results and Discussion

The number of participants agreeing to the final version of the request for each condition is presented in Table 1. As in the previous study, participants in the two that's-not-all conditions had a very different reaction to the manipulation. Students who first received the request for \$10.00 were significantly less likely to agree to the \$3.00 request than were students who first received the \$5.00 request,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = 16.95, p < .001$ . More importantly, when compared with the control group, participants in the large initial request condition were significantly less likely to agree to the request,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = 4.66, p < .03$ . On the other hand, participants in the moderate initial request condition were significantly more likely to agree to the request than participants in the control condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = 4.11, p < .05$ .

The results thus replicate within the same experiment both an increase and a decrease in compliance with the that's-not-all procedure. When the initial request was substantially larger than the final version of the request, the that's-not-all manipulation led to a significant decrease in compliance. This decrease replicates the findings from Studies 1 and 2. When the initial request was only slightly larger than the final version of the request, the that's-not-all manipulation resulted in a significant increase in compliance. This latter finding replicates the results of earlier that's-not-all research (Burger, 1986).

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

The findings from the four studies identify an important limitation to the that's-not-all technique. Specifically, the size of the initial request plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of the procedure. The that's-not-all technique appears to increase compliance only when the initial request is within reason. A large initial request not only is ineffective, it can lead to a decrease in compliance. The findings suggest the that's-not-all procedure should be used with caution. Given the potential backfire, salespeople and others seeking compliance with the technique should have a good idea ahead of time whether their initial request will appear reasonable to the recipient.

An obvious next step in research on the that's-not-all procedure is to pin down the psychological processes un-

derlying the effects demonstrated here. Although at this point we are limited to speculation, at least two possibilities suggest themselves. First, investigators might examine the decrease in compliance demonstrated here within the anchor-point explanation for the that's-not-all effect advanced by Burger (1986). That is, one reason the that's-not-all technique works is that the initial request is said to alter the anchor points people use when deciding whether to comply with the revised version of the request. As explained by social judgment theory (Sherif & Sherif, 1967), by moving the person's anchor point, the experimenter increases the likelihood that the revised offer will fall into the individual's range of acceptance. However, social judgment theory also predicts that message recipients will move in the direction of a persuasive message only if the advocate's position is not very different from the recipient's initial position on the issue; that is, within that person's "latitude of acceptance." If the advocated position is outside the range of what the recipient considers acceptable, or within the "latitude of rejection," then a contrast or boomerang effect is possible. In this case, the recipient may see the message as more extreme and more antagonistic than it really is, and the advocated position will be rejected immediately. As applied to the that's-not-all procedure, if the initial request is outside the participant's range of acceptance, it may be rejected even before the requester can improve the deal. Although we did not examine this interpretation directly, our findings are consistent with this explanation.

A second direction for future studies might look at reactions to the requester. That is, an individual who makes an exceptionally high initial request might evoke a number of negative reactions in the recipient. These reactions might include suspicion, anger, annoyance, and dislike. Such feelings could account for the decrease in compliance found in our studies. Schwarzwald, Raz, and Zvibel (1979) advanced a similar argument to explain their findings when examining the effect of initial request size within the door-in-the-face technique. People using the door-in-the-face procedure present individuals with a large request they typically refuse, followed by a smaller request. Studies find that this sequence increases compliance to the smaller request beyond that obtained when only the small request is presented (Cialdini et al., 1975). Schwarzwald et al. (1979) found that when the initial request was outrageously high, participants agreed to the smaller request at a rate below that of the single-request control group. The researchers identified this latter finding as a *boomerang effect* and argued that the high request decreased compliance because participants disliked and were suspicious of someone who would ask such an obviously outrageous request. Although the two compliance procedures are different in some important ways, it is possible that participants in our that's-not-all studies responded to the person presenting the very high initial request similar to the way participants reacted to the requester in the Schwarzwald et al. experiment.

These two suggested mechanisms for the reversal effect might be tested in a number of ways. For example, if the effectiveness of the that's-not-all procedure depends on manipulating participants' anchor points, then we would expect the procedure to be more effective for some requests than for others. That is, some anchor points should be less susceptible to manipulation. People who purchase a certain product on a regular basis probably have an established anchor point against which to judge prices. It is unlikely the that's-not-all procedure would alter the product's anchor point for these people. However, the anchor explanation also suggests that the that's-not-all procedure should be most effective when the potential customer is unfamiliar with the product and therefore has yet to establish a solid anchor point. Researchers also might measure directly participants' perceptions of the requester. Such a procedure would test whether an outrageous initial request generates negative feelings about the requester that may then cause the decrease in compliance.

One concern in any social influence experiment that needs to be addressed here is the issue of experimenter bias. That is, if the experimenter knows the hypothesis ahead of time, it is possible that he or she could unwittingly treat participants differently in different conditions and thereby create the anticipated effects. Admittedly, the experimenters for Study 3 were aware of the hypothesis prior to data collection. However, the experimenter in Study 4 was blind to the hypothesis. More important, the experimenters in Studies 1 and 2 actually anticipated results opposite to the ones they found. Thus, an experimenter bias interpretation cannot account for the pattern of findings throughout the four studies.

Finally, researchers may want to explore the question of gender differences. That is, it is possible that the gender of the requester, the gender of the recipient or an interaction of these two can effect the success of the that's-not-all procedure. Unfortunately, the size of our samples and the composition of our experimenters did not allow us to examine these questions. Nonetheless, because of the important applied aspects of the research, it might be useful to examine in future studies the role that gender plays in the effects demonstrated here.

In sum, the results from the four studies demonstrate again that the that's-not-all procedure can be a powerful tool for salespeople, recruiters, and others interested in securing compliance to requests. However, the findings also call out for requesters to learn about their customers and clients ahead of time. Although the technique can be an effective means for increasing compliance, the present set of studies tell us that the that's-not-all procedure also is a two-edged sword.

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