

The Lure: A New Compliance Procedure

ROBERT V. JOULE
FABIENNE GOUILLOUX
FLORENT WEBER

*Laboratoire de Psychologie Sociale
Université de Provence, France*

ABSTRACT. A new compliance procedure called the lure is presented. This tactic consists of first leading a person to make a decision to execute a highly advantageous type of behavior, informing him afterwards that because the circumstances have changed, he can no longer perform the planned act, and then suggesting that he execute a less advantageous behavior. In two experiments, the subjects were led to believe that they would participate in a rather interesting and well-paid experiment. Once they had decided to participate, they were asked to come to the laboratory, where they were told that the planned experiment would not take place after all. It was then suggested that they participate instead in another rather tedious, unpaid experiment. The results attest to the effectiveness of this procedure.

SINCE THE RESEARCH conducted by Freedman and Fraser (1966) on compliance without pressure, it has become conventional in the study of social psychology to examine the effects of a variety of factors on the likelihood that one person will comply with a request from another (cf. Cialdini & Schroeder, 1976). Various compliance procedures have been proposed (in particular, door-in-the-face, Cialdini et al., 1975; low-ball, Cialdini, Cacioppo, Basset, & Miller, 1978; foot-in-the-door, Freedman & Fraser, 1966), and recently, researchers have attempted to combine them (for a foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face combination, see Goldman, 1986; for a foot-in-the-door and low-ball combination, see Joule, 1986, 1987b).

We can question not only whether the procedures studied in a laboratory remain effective outside in natural situations (cf. Helmreich, 1975; Smith,

Requests for reprints should be sent to Robert V. Joule, Département de Psychologie, Université de Provence, 29 Avenue Robert Schuman, 13621 Aix-en-Provence Cedex 1, France.

1972), but also whether the procedures commonly used in everyday compliance settings (e.g., sales) are actually effective. Accordingly, Cialdini et al. (1978) demonstrated the effectiveness of the low-ball procedure used by automobile salesmen (Carlson, 1973).

The purpose of the present research was to determine as Cialdini et al. (1978) did for the low-ball technique whether one of the tactics commonly used by sales personnel in clothing and shoe stores is effective. This tactic, which we have called the lure (Joule & Beauvois, 1987), is frequently used when goods are put on sale. For example, a beautiful pair of shoes marked 40% off is displayed quite conspicuously in a store window. The enticed consumer enters the store with the intention of taking advantage of this exceptional offer, but the salesperson informs him that they are out of the shoe in his size. Just when the disappointed customer is ready to leave the store, he is shown a new pair that resembles the shoes on sale but that is being sold at the regular price. The question was to find out whether use of such a strategy affects the likelihood that once in the store, the person will buy a full-price pair of shoes that he had not intended to buy.

In short, the lure tactic consists first of leading an individual to make a decision to behave in a certain manner in order to take advantage of a certain situation (e.g., buy a pair of shoes marked down 40%). Once this decision is made, he is informed that because the circumstances have changed, he can no longer act in the planned manner. Then he is given the opportunity to execute a substitute behavior that does not involve the same advantages (e.g., buy another pair of shoes that is not on sale). The individual then has a new decision to make, to execute the substitute behavior or not.

The lure technique is similar to the low-ball technique in that it also involves making two decisions, one made before knowing the real cost of the target behavior and the other made after. In the case of the lure, however, the decisions to be made pertain to different acts (the first pertains to the lure behavior, the second, to the target behavior); in the low-ball situation, both decisions concern the same behavior (the target behavior, whose cost is simply raised at the last minute).

The lure tactic also resembles the foot-in-the-door technique because both involve two acts, the first of which is less costly than the second. They differ in one essential way—in the lure situation, the individual, who has already decided to execute the first behavior, can no longer do so. It is because the first behavior is impossible that he is offered the opportunity to perform the target behavior.

Two experiments were conducted. In the first, the requests (one pertaining to the lure behavior and one to the target behavior) were made publicly to a group of subjects, whereas in the second the requests were made privately to individual subjects.

In both experiments, the subjects were led to believe that they would participate in a rather interesting and well-paid experiment. Once they had decided to participate, they were asked to come to the laboratory, where they were told that the planned experiment would not take place after all. It was then suggested that they participate instead in another rather tedious, unpaid experiment.

Experiment 1: Group Request

Method

Subjects and procedure. The subjects were 45 male and female students majoring in history at the University of Provence. Students from two comparable history classes were used as subjects. At the end of each class, the teacher asked the students not to leave right away because a researcher had something to tell them. The experimenter then went into the classroom, introduced himself, and said to the first group (control condition, $n = 26$):

I am conducting an experiment on memory and need volunteers. Let me tell you briefly what the experiment involves. I will show slides of numbers while playing back a recording of someone saying numbers. Then I will ask you to try to remember as many of the numbers as you can that were on both the screen and the recording. The experiment lasts about half an hour. If you're interested, please come and tell me, and we'll make an appointment for you to come to the laboratory tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

The experimenter then gave each volunteer a piece of paper indicating the appointment date, time, and place. To the second group (lure condition, $n = 19$), he said:

I am conducting an experiment on emotions and need volunteers. Let me tell you briefly what the experiment involves. I will show a 25-minute movie, and then will ask you questions for 5 minutes to find out which scenes struck you the most. The experiment thus lasts about half an hour. Participants will be paid 30 francs [about \$6]. If you're interested, please come and tell me, and we'll make an appointment for you to come to the laboratory tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

When the subjects arrived at the laboratory, they found a different experimenter who introduced himself and said:

I assume you have come to participate in the experiment on the emotions of movie watchers. But there's a problem. I wasn't able to contact Mr. X who made this appointment with you to tell him that the experiment on emotions ended yesterday. I therefore don't need any more subjects. But if you're interested, I need volunteers for another experiment. It is on memory. It consists of

the following. I will show slides of numbers . . . [The experimenter then went on to present the experiment exactly as in the control condition.] This experiment lasts about half an hour, like the other one, but you will not be paid. It's up to you to decide whether you wish to participate or not.

Experiment 1 was run by two experimenters. The request concerning the target behavior was made by the same experimenter in the lure condition as in the control condition. The request concerning the lure behavior was made by the other experimenter. After the experiment, the subjects were debriefed and thanked.

Results

Two measures were taken in the control condition: the percentage of subjects who made an appointment to execute the target behavior (15.4%; 4/26) and the percentage of subjects who went to the laboratory to do so (also 15.4%, because everyone showed up). In the lure condition, three measures were taken: the percentage of subjects who made an appointment to execute the lure behavior (47.4%; 9/19), the percentage of subjects who actually went to the laboratory to do so (also 47.4%), and the percentage of subjects who finally agreed to execute the target behavior (again 47.4%). In other words, all of the subjects who made an appointment to execute the lure behavior went to the laboratory and then agreed to execute the target behavior.

Of interest is the comparison between the percentage of subjects who agreed to execute the target behavior in the control group and the percentage who agreed in the lure group, i.e., 15.4% and 47.4%, respectively, $\chi^2(1) = 4.02$, $p < .05$. The lure procedure thus may be considered relatively effective.

Experiment 2: Individual Request

Method

There were three conditions in this experiment. An additional condition was added to test the hypothesis that the effectiveness of the lure procedure would increase if it were combined with the foot-in-the-door procedure, i.e., right after agreeing to execute the lure behavior, the subject is asked to perform an easy act likely to prepare him for the target behavior (in this case to undergo a very short experiment). The results obtained by Goldman (1986) and Joule (1986, 1987b) showed that compliance is significantly greater when two tactics are combined than when used separately.

Subjects and procedure. The subjects were 95 students at the University of Provence who were not studying psychology whom the experimenter approached one by one somewhere on campus.

Control condition. The experimenter said exactly the same thing to the subjects that he said in the control condition of Experiment 1.

Lure condition. The experimenter said, "I am conducting an experiment on concentration, and I need volunteers. The experiment takes half an hour, and subjects will be paid 30 francs. It involves doing puzzles. Are you interested?" The experimenter then made an appointment with the interested individuals for the next day or two days later in the laboratory. As in the control condition, he gave each volunteer a piece of paper with the appointment date, time, and place. In the laboratory, the experiment was conducted exactly as was Experiment 1.

Lure/foot-in-the-door condition. This condition was identical to the lure condition except that the experimenter also asked the subjects who complied with his request to take immediately a short concentration test lasting only 3 min (a Zazzo matching test, 1960).

As was Experiment 1, Experiment 2 was conducted by two experimenters. The subjects were also debriefed and thanked when the experiment was over.

Results

In the control condition, two measures were taken: the percentage of subjects who made an appointment to execute the target behavior (51.4%; 18/35) and the percentage of subjects who went to the laboratory to execute that behavior (34.3%; 12/35).

In the experimental conditions, three measures were taken: the percentage of subjects who made an appointment to execute the lure behavior (76.6% [23/30] for the lure condition and 80% [24/30] for the lure/foot-in-the-door condition), the percentage of subjects who went to the laboratory to execute that behavior (53.3% [16/30] and 73.3% [22/30], respectively), and the percentage of subjects who agreed to execute the target behavior (50% [15/30] and 70% [21/30], respectively).

Although conventional statistical calculations showed no significant difference between the control condition and the lure condition, 34.3% versus 50%, $\chi^2(1) = 1.64$, $p > .20$, the control and lure/foot-in-the-door conditions differed significantly, 34.3% versus 70%, $\chi^2(1) = 8.24$, $p < .005$. This finding can be explained by the fact that in the lure condition, only 16 of the 23 subjects who made an appointment to execute the lure behavior actually went to the laboratory. This difference, 76.7% versus 53.3%, is significant, $\chi^2(1) = 3.59$, $p < .06$, unlike in the lure/foot-in-the-door condition, in which al-

most all of the subjects who made an appointment actually went to the laboratory (only 2 out of 24 subjects did not show up).

As expected, the combination lure/foot-in-the-door tactic turned out to be more effective than the lure tactic alone, although conventional statistical calculations indicate only a tendency towards significance, 50% versus 70%, $\chi^2(1) = 2.58, p = .11$.

Discussion

It should be noted first of all that in both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2 there were no significant differences with respect to sex of subjects. Considered together, the results of these experiments indicate that the lure procedure was particularly effective. Indeed, in Experiment 1 every subject who went to the laboratory to execute the lure behavior agreed in the end to execute the target behavior, even though this new behavior did not have the same advantages as the one they had come to the laboratory to carry out, being a rather tedious task without pay. In Experiment 2, the same phenomenon occurred, because only one of the subjects in the lure condition and one of the subjects in the lure/foot-in-the-door condition who went to the laboratory refused to execute the target behavior. The problem is to get as many subjects as possible to go to the laboratory. The lure behavior has to be sufficiently attractive to persuade a large enough number of subjects to make an appointment to perform it and also to keep that appointment after they have made it. We might also note that all the subjects in the lure condition of Experiment 1 went to their appointments, although this was not true in the lure condition in Experiment 2. This difference may be explained by the fact that unlike those in Experiment 2, the subjects in Experiment 1 made their appointments publicly and the appointments involved two, three, and sometimes four individuals. As Lewin (1947) suggested, decisions made in a group situation can have a strong freezing effect. It seems that in the lure/foot-in-the-door condition in Experiment 2, the subjects' participation in a very short experiment right after their decision to execute the lure behavior also resulted in a freezing effect. Under these conditions, almost all subjects acted in compliance with their decision to go to the laboratory.

How can the lure phenomenon be interpreted? A first interpretation is based on Kiesler's (1971) commitment formulation theory. According to Kiesler, who continued Lewin's line of thinking, a major function of commitment is to impart resistance to change. Moreover, Cialdini et al. (1978) interpreted the low-ball phenomenon in terms of commitment. In the low-ball procedure, a subject makes a decision, and the fact that he has committed himself to that decision makes the decision less changeable, even after the circumstances that brought about the decision have themselves changed to make

it less appropriate for the subject. In the lure procedure, subjects make a decision, but in this case, the circumstances change and they no longer are able to execute the decision. They are then encouraged to execute another behavior likely to be a good substitute for the behavior they were unable to execute. From the commitment formulation perspective, we can expect subjects who are committed to a decision to act in a certain way to tend to act in that way, even if a new proposed behavior is less advantageous to them than the behavior they expected to execute.

Obviously, other interpretations are possible. According to Bem's (1972) self-perception theory, people observe their behavior and the context in which it occurs and from that makes inferences about their own dispositions. From this perspective, the fact that a subject has freely agreed to carry out the lure behavior enables him to infer that he is a person who voluntarily executes this type of behavior; this changed self-perception leads him to agree to the target behavior. Certain authors interpret the foot-in-the-door effect with this same type of reasoning (cf. Dejong, 1979), even though the self-perception explanation of this phenomenon is currently subject to a great deal of controversy (cf. Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz, and Steblay, 1983; Beaman, Steblay, Preston, & Klentz, 1988; Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984; Joule, 1987a).

An impression management explanation might also be valid. By agreeing to execute the target behavior after having been informed that the lure behavior is no longer possible, the individual is able to sustain a consistent public image whenever the lure behavior and the target behavior are being requested by the same person (salesperson or experimenter). If, as in both of our experiments, these two types of behavior are requested by different experimenters, another version of this explanation can be given (cf. Brock, 1969): Compliance with the target behavior can be explained by the individual's desire to be psychologically consistent for the sake of self-image, not by the need to sustain a consistent public image.

Thus, several possible interpretations of the lure phenomenon are possible; those discussed above are the three interpretations that come most readily to mind. We feel that the commitment formulation interpretation is the most appropriate because it best enables us to understand why, when asked in public to commit themselves, subjects adhere absolutely to their decision to come to the laboratory, whereas they do not do so in the individual situation. For Kiesler (1971, p. 33), the explicitness of the act, e.g., how public the act is, increases the degree of commitment. It also explains why, when asked individually to commit themselves, the subjects in the lure/foot-in-the-door condition, who had to perform a short, intermediate act, adhered more to their decision to go to the laboratory than the subjects in the lure condition, who did not perform this intermediate act. According to Kiesler (1971, p. 33 and

Chapter 4), the degree of commitment may be increased by increasing the number of acts performed by the subjects.

REFERENCES

- Beaman, A. L., Cole, C. M., Preston, M., Klentz, B., & Steblay, N. M. (1983). Fifteen years of foot-in-the-door research: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *9*, 181-196.
- Beaman, A. L., Steblay, N. M., Preston, M., & Klentz, B. (1988). Compliance as a function of elapsed time between first and second requests. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *128*, 233-243.
- Bem, D. J. (1972). Self-perception theory. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 6, pp. 1-62). New York: Academic Press.
- Brock, T. C. (1969). On interpreting effects of transgression upon compliance. *Psychological Bulletin*, *72*, 138-145.
- Carlson, M. D. (1973). *How to get your car repaired without getting gypped*. New York: Harrow Books.
- Cialdini, R. B., Cacioppo, J. T., Basset, R., & Miller, J. A. (1978). The low-ball procedure for producing compliance: Commitment then cost. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *36*, 463-476.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Schroeder, D. A. (1976). Increasing compliance by legitimizing paltry contributions: When even a penny helps. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *34*, 599-604.
- Cialdini, R. B., Vincent, J. F., Lewis, S. K., Catalan, J., Wheeler, D., & Darby, B. L. (1975). A reciprocal concessions procedure for inducing compliance: The door-in-the-face technique. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *31*, 206-215.
- Dejong, W. (1979). An examination of the self-perception mediation of the foot-in-the-door effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*, 2221-2239.
- Dillard, J. P., Hunter, J. E., & Burgoon, M. (1984). Sequential-request persuasive strategies. Meta-analysis of foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face. *Human Communication Research*, *10*, 461-488.
- Freedman, J. L., & Fraser, S. C. (1966). Compliance without pressure: The foot-in-the-door technique. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *4*, 195-202.
- Goldman, M. (1986). Compliance employing a combined foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face procedure. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *126*, 111-116.
- Helmreich, R. (1975). Applied social psychology: The unfulfilled promise. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *1*, 548-560.
- Joule, R. V. (1986). *Rationalisation et engagement dans la soumission librement consentie* [Rationalization and commitment in voluntary submission]. Doctoral dissertation, University of Social Sciences, Grenoble, France.
- Joule, R. V. (1987a). *Le-pied-dans-la-porte: Un paradigme à la recherche d'une théorie* [Foot-in-the-door: A paradigm in search of a theory]. *Psychologie Française*, *32*, 301-306.
- Joule, R. V. (1987b). Tobacco deprivation: The foot-in-the-door technique versus the low-ball technique. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *17*, 361-365.
- Joule, R. V., and Beauvois, J. L. (1987). *Petit traité de manipulation à l'usage des honnêtes gens* [Handbook on manipulation for use by honest people]. Grenoble, France: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.
- Kiesler, C. A. (1971). *The psychology of commitment. Experiments linking behavior to belief*. New York: Academic Press.

- Lewin, K. (1947). Group decision and social change. In M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley (Eds.), *Readings in social psychology* (pp. 197-211). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Smith, M. B. (1972). Is experimental social psychology advancing? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 8, 86-96.
- Zazzo, R. (1960). *Le test des deux barrages. Manuel pour l'examen psychologique de l'enfant* [The crossing-out-twice test. Manual for the psychological examination of children]. Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé.

Received January 13, 1989

Copyright of Journal of Social Psychology is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.