
When Saying Yes Leads to Saying No: Preference for Consistency and the Reverse Foot-in-the-Door Effect

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A requester using the foot-in-the-door (FITD) tactic begins by gaining compliance with a small request and then advances to a related, larger request. Previous work has demonstrated that a strong preference for consistency among targets of the tactic can enhance the FITD effect. Other work has indicated that an inadequate delay between the requests can produce resistance and can significantly reduce the effect. Study 1 found that high levels of preference for consistency (PFC) were sufficient to override this resistance, provided that participants' prior helpfulness in complying with the initial request was made salient. Study 2 replicated this finding among high-PFC participants and showed that low-PFC participants demonstrated a reverse FITD effect when their prior helpfulness was made salient. The authors conclude that high- and low-PFC individuals are likely to become more or less consistent with an action (respectively) when focused on the personal implications of that action.

Although there is a long-standing assumption in social psychology that people generally prefer to be consistent with their previous behaviors and attitudes (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1946, 1958; Newcomb, 1953), this may not always be the case. Indeed, Cialdini, Trost, and Newsom (1995) developed and validated a scale designed to assess individual differences in preference for consistency. The Preference for Consistency (PFC) Scale measures variation in the desire to be and to be seen as consistent. Individuals who score low on the PFC Scale appear to prefer spontaneity, change, and unpredictability in their responding rather than congruency with their prior responses. For those who score high on the scale,

however, personal consistency is valued, and these individuals take pains to align their responses in most situations with their previous actions, attitudes, and commitments, especially when the concept of consistency has been made salient. Accordingly, Cialdini et al. (1995) were able to replicate three traditional, consistency-based phenomena—balance, dissonance, and foot-in-the-door (FITD) effects—only among high-PFC scorers. Subsequent research (Bator & Cialdini, 2000) found that participants' responding was especially likely to be predicted by their PFC score when the concept of consistency was salient. Thus, the impact of one's PFC level is likely to be greatest when consistency issues are relatively prominent in consciousness.

In the studies reported in Cialdini et al. (1995), high-PFC participants were susceptible to cognitive dissonance, balance, and the FITD effect, whereas low-PFC participants were not. Specifically, in the dissonance experiment, participants who were high in preference

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for consistency reported significantly more favorable attitudes toward a tuition increase if they were in the choice condition as opposed to the no-choice condition. In the balance experiment, high-PFC participants rated an individual more favorable if they expected to interact with her than if they did not. Finally, in the FITD experiment, high-PFC participants were more likely to agree to fill out a long questionnaire (target request) if they had first complied with a smaller, initial request than if they had not. In each of the three studies, low-PFC participants showed no difference in behavior regardless of their assignment to the experimental or control conditions. That is, these low-PFC participants showed no balance, cognitive dissonance, or FITD effects. Other studies have also demonstrated that the preference for consistency moderates behavior. For instance, Council, Grant, Smith, and Matz (1997) reported that high-PFC participants were more likely to show up for experiments as promised than were lows. In addition, Bator, Guadagno, and Cialdini (1996) reported that high-PFC participants were more likely to return experimental materials after agreeing to complete them at home than were lows. Finally, a series of studies conducted by Council and his colleagues (Council, 2000; Smith, 1998) indicates that individuals who are high in PFC generate significantly higher test-retest reliabilities and internal reliability scores on a variety of personality scales than do low-PFC participants. Taken together, this evidence supports the assertion made by Cialdini et al. (1995) that the preference for consistency moderates consistency-based behavior.

In terms of its relationship to other scales, Cialdini et al. (1995) reported that the PFC Scale is moderately correlated with two of the Big Five factors—Conscientiousness (.20) and Openness (–.38)—but is not significantly correlated with the remaining three factors of the Big Five. In addition, the PFC Scale is significantly positively correlated with measures of rigidity (.48) and personal need for structure (.47), as would be expected, because the latter two scales also measure types of need for order. Cialdini et al. (1995) also reported that the PFC Scale is not significantly correlated with the following measures: self-monitoring, locus of control, social desirability, and intelligence. In addition, the validation study conducted by Cialdini and his colleagues indicated that the preference for consistency scale is reliable, $\alpha = .89$ with a mean of 5.43 and a standard deviation of 1.19. Additional research indicates that the test-retest reliability of the preference for consistency scale is $r(260) = .62$ (Guadagno & Cialdini, 1996).

The Foot-in-the-Door Effect

Of particular relevance to the present investigation is the FITD effect. Many FITD studies have shown that after

agreeing to an initial, small request, participants are more likely than controls to agree to perform a larger, related favor (e.g., Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz, & Steblay, 1983; DeJong, 1979; Dillard, 1991). In the Cialdini et al. (1995) study, participants in the FITD condition were called on the phone and asked to answer three short questions about their television viewing habits as the first request; almost all agreed. Then, within the same call, participants received the target request: to fill out a 50-item questionnaire, also on their television viewing habits, and to return it within 2 weeks. Thus, the larger request was an extension or continuation of the smaller one. In a recent meta-analysis, Burger (1999) found the FITD tactic to be highly effective when it incorporated such continuation requests. The results of the Cialdini et al. (1995) experiment indicated that only high-PFC participants exhibited the FITD effect; that is, agreeing to a small request made them more likely than controls to agree to a second, larger request. Conversely, low-PFC participants were highly likely to agree to the second request regardless of whether they had agreed to the small request first. Thus, under optimal conditions (i.e., continuation requests rather than separate or non-continuous requests—when the second request is a continuation of the first), a strong PFC facilitates the FITD effect.

But what if the conditions are less than optimal? In his meta-analysis, Burger (1999) identified a variety of situational factors and psychological processes that may either increase or decrease the likelihood of a FITD effect. One set of circumstances that reduces the FITD effect occurs when the procedure incorporates two non-continuous requests that are made with little delay between them. Under these conditions, targets may feel that they have already done their part for the relevant cause in complying with the first request and thus may resist the request to contribute to the same cause yet again. Study 1 of the present investigation sought to determine whether such resistance would be counteracted by a strong PFC. We hypothesized that high-PFC individuals would overcome such resistance, provided that their attention was focused on the personal helpfulness implications of their compliance with the initial favor. That is, the tendency to resist compliance with a temporally proximate, separate second request might be eliminated by drawing targets' attention to the extent to which compliance with the first request reflected their helpful nature. Under those circumstances, high-PFC participants would be likely to show a strong FITD effect to be consistent with their highlighted character trait of helpfulness.

To test these predictions, we performed a FITD procedure using only high-PFC participants. Low-PFC participants were excluded because previous research indi-

cated that they were not susceptible to the effect. Therefore, it made no sense to include participants who would not show the effect. We exposed high-PFC scorers to a small verbal request to help the homeless by signing a petition recommending greater government aid for them. After signing the petition, participants were thanked for their helpfulness. Approximately 10 minutes later in a separate context, participants received a second request to aid the homeless—this time by volunteering to help at a canned food drive—that was printed on a handbill. For half of the participants, this second request was preceded by the printed question, “Are you a helpful person?” which was designed to focus them on the personal helpfulness implications of their recent compliance with the initial request. For the rest of the FITD-condition participants, no such question preceded the second request.

Our expectation was that among these later FITD participants, presenting two separate (i.e., noncontinuous) requests for the same cause in close proximity would produce resistance to the second request, as Burger’s (1999) meta-analysis suggested, even among our high-PFC sample. We based this prediction on evidence indicating that even strongly held tendencies and motives are unlikely to influence behavior powerfully unless they are made focal (salient) prior to the behavioral opportunity (Bargh, 1997; Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Deaux & Major, 1987). In contrast, we anticipated that resistance to the second request would not occur among our participants who had been focused on the personal helpfulness implications of their initial compliance and whose strong inclination toward consistency would thus drive them to be helpful again by complying with the second request.

Our statistical prediction, then, was for an interaction, such that those participants focused on the helpfulness trait implications of their prior compliance would show a strong FITD effect, whereas those not focused on these trait implications would show a severely reduced or even reversed FITD effect. The FITD-condition participants’ compliance with the second request was compared with that of control condition participants who received the second request only.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 102 (53 female, 49 male) introductory psychology students at Arizona State University who scored in the upper 33% in the distribution of the PFC scores assessed in mass pretesting at the beginning of the semester.¹ These participants were drawn from a larger pool of 400 participants who filled out the PFC Scale. The scores for the overall sample of participants were

very similar to the original Cialdini et al. (1995) sample, $\alpha = .93$, $M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.47$.

Procedure

Participants were initially contacted by phone. During that phone conversation, the experimenter gave each participant directions to an experimental room. When the participant arrived, an experimenter explained that the experimental location had been shifted to a new room in the building next door. After a few minutes, the experimenter gave the participant an envelope containing his or her experimental materials and instructed him or her to take a certain route to the new building. On the way to the new building, a female confederate posing as a member of a fictitious student organization (Students Helping the Homeless) intercepted participants in the FITD conditions and asked them to sign a petition to aid the homeless. Almost all (96%) participants petitioned agreed to sign the petition. The petition was addressed to Arizona’s congressional representatives and asked them to give greater consideration to the plight of the homeless. After a participant signed the petition, the confederate said “Thank you for your helpfulness.” The confederate did not intercept control participants, but she did walk past them carrying the petition.

Upon arrival at the new location, a second experimenter greeted the participant and escorted him or her to an experimental room. All participants filled out two short questionnaires as a filler task and received one of two possible versions of the target request. The target request was a bogus memo from the Psychology Club asking participants to volunteer to work on a canned food drive to help the homeless on an upcoming weekend. The only difference between the two request conditions was that one version of the memo started out by asking, “Are you a helpful person?” prior to explaining the request (prior helpfulness focus condition), whereas the other version did not ask this question (no prior helpfulness focus condition). Participants were then instructed to indicate their willingness to volunteer for the canned food drive directly on the memo and to place it in a box labeled “Psychology Club Volunteer Forms.” Once they filled out the questionnaires and memo, participants were probed for suspicion, debriefed, given credit, and dismissed. All participants left with the understanding that the canned food drive was part of the experiment and not actually going to take place.

Independent Variables

The design included two independent variables: request tactic (the FITD condition, in which participants received two requests to aid the homeless, and the control condition, in which participants received only the

second request) and salience of prior helpfulness (the prior helpfulness focus condition and the no prior helpfulness focus condition).

Dependent Variables

A memo asking participants to volunteer hours for a canned food drive to help the homeless carried the target request. Participants were asked whether they would be willing to volunteer time for the canned food drive. They checked yes or no in response to this question. In addition, participants were asked to indicate the number of hours they were willing to volunteer for on a scale ranging from 0 to 3 hours. Participants who responded no were automatically coded as volunteering 0 hours.

RESULTS

The percentage of participants in each condition who agreed to the target request is displayed in Figure 1. Because there were no significant effects for gender of the participant or gender of the experimenter, all analyses reported are collapsed across gender. A logistic regression revealed the predicted significant two-way Request Tactic \times Salience of Prior Helpfulness interaction, $b = -.57$, $SE_b = .22$, $Wald(1\ df) = 7.09$, $p = .008$. To examine the nature of this interaction, specific contrasts were conducted, one comparing the FITD and control groups in the prior helpfulness focus condition and a second making the same comparison in the no prior helpfulness focus condition. These analyses revealed that in the prior helpfulness focus condition, the difference in compliance between the FITD and control conditions was significant (73% vs. 33%), $b = -1.67$, $SE_b = .63$, $Wald(1\ df) = 7.08$, $p = .008$. This difference was not significant in the no prior helpfulness focus condition (27% vs. 41%), $b = .63$, $SE_b = .59$, $Wald(1\ df) = 1.16$, n.s. Thus, an FITD effect appeared only when prior helpfulness was made salient to participants. In addition, as would be expected, the difference between the two FITD conditions was also significant (27% vs. 73%), $b = 1.98$, $SE_b = .65$, $Wald(1\ df) = 9.22$, $p = .002$.

In addition, we measured the number of hours volunteered for the canned food drive. The pattern of data was identical to that for the categorical data. A 2 (request tactic) \times 2 (salience of prior helpfulness) ANOVA on the hours data revealed the same two-way interaction, $F(1,91) = 7.98$, $p = .006$, and an identical response pattern. The prior helpfulness focus means were $M_{FITD} = 1.55$ versus $M_{control} = .60$; and the no prior helpfulness focus means were $M_{FITD} = .42$ versus $M_{control} = .76$.

DISCUSSION

As anticipated, exposing participants to an FITD procedure in which two separate requests to aid the same

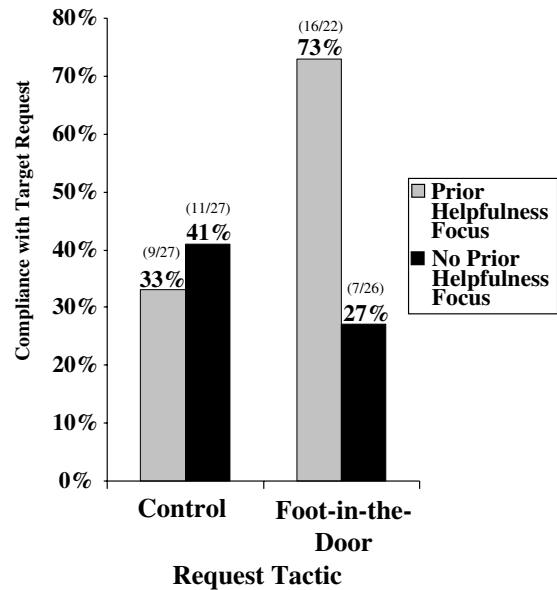


Figure 1 Percentage of high-preference for consistency participants in Study 1 who agreed to the target request.

cause were made within a few minutes of one another did not result in a significant FITD effect. Indeed, this version of the FITD tactic produced compliance to the second request that was lower than the controls. It is noteworthy that the resistance occurred among participants who possessed a strong desire for consistency within their actions. Thus, the simple act of compliance with a small request to support the homeless did not spur these high-PFC individuals to comply with a larger such request—unless their attention had been drawn to their prior helpfulness in complying initially. When these latter conditions were met, however, the FITD effect that appeared was among the largest in the history of investigation of the tactic—a 220% increase in compliance over the control levels (cf. Burger, 1999).

These findings are directly relevant to an ongoing controversy in the FITD literature. Although Freedman and Fraser (1966), the earliest researchers of the technique, explained its effectiveness in terms of self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), this account has received decidedly mixed support in the subsequent years. Whereas some experimental researchers (e.g., Cann, Sherman, & Elkes, 1975; Dolinski, in press; Snyder & Cunningham, 1975) and reviewers of the literature (e.g., Burger, 1999) have drawn conclusions congruent with self-perception theory, other experimental researchers (e.g., DeJong, 1981; Gorassini & Olson, 1995) and reviewers (DeJong, 1979; Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984) have done the opposite. When applied to the FITD technique, self-perception theory suggests that compliance with an initial request provides the target person with information

about his or her character—that he or she is “the kind of person who does this sort of thing . . . who cooperates with good causes” (Freedman & Fraser, 1966, p. 201). When confronted with the second request, the target is presumed to comply to be consistent with this helpful self-concept.

The results of Study 1 offer a way to reconcile the previous conflicting conclusions on the extent to which self-perception processes undergird the FITD phenomenon. Our findings suggest that individuals do take into account the self-relevant implications of their initial compliant actions when deciding whether to comply again but that they do so only to the degree that circumstances focus them on those self-relevant implications. If circumstances (e.g., two different requests to aid the same cause with little delay between them) focus individuals away from perceptions such as “I guess I am a helpful person” and toward perceptions such as “I’ve already done my part for this cause,” an FITD effect is unlikely. In sum, many of the conflicting findings regarding the self-perception-based mediation of the FITD phenomena may be due to the presence or absence of factors that orient targets to the self-diagnostic implications of their initial compliant act.

However, just because a target is focused on these self-diagnostic implications does not assure that he or she will act on them (Gorassini & Olson, 1995). Recall that according to the self-perception theory account, someone who views himself or herself as helpful by virtue of compliance with an initial request is likely to comply with a second request to be consistent with this self-view. The implicit assumption in this sequence is that the motive for consistency will push all initially compliant FITD targets to bring their actions into line with their self-concepts. As we have already discussed, this belief in a universal strain toward consistency is a long-standing one in the history of social psychology (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1946, 1958; McGuire, 1990; Newcomb, 1953). But as we have also already discussed, Cialdini et al. (1995) presented data indicating that this motive is not universal and that certain individuals (low-PFC scorers) are not inclined toward consistency.

STUDY 2

The upshot of the foregoing analysis is that when focused on the (helpfulness) trait implications of initial compliance, one group of individuals (high-PFC scorers) should show an FITD effect, whereas another group of individuals (low-PFC scorers) should not. In fact, there is reason to believe that under such circumstances, low-PFC individuals may well demonstrate a reverse FITD effect. Cialdini and his associates (Bator & Cialdini, 2000; Cialdini et al., 1995) have argued that low-PFC scorers do not simply possess a reduced prefer-

ence for consistency but, rather, possess a strong preference against it. That is, they may be regarded as anticonsistent, preferring to act at variance with their previously established commitments, habits, and attitudes. Some unpublished, suggestive evidence exists to support this conception of low-PFC individuals. For instance, as mentioned previously, they are less likely to appear as scheduled for their appointments (Council et al., 1997). In addition, Bator and Cialdini (2000) found that after the concept of consistency was made salient, low-PFC participants showed less attitude-behavior consistency, whereas high-PFC participants showed more such consistency. Specifically, in a dissonance experiment, low-PFC participants did not show a dissonance effect when exposed to the choice/no-choice manipulation. However, when primed for consistency, low-PFC participants in the choice condition showed significantly less attitude change than corresponding low-PFC participants in the no-choice condition. Finally, Council (2000) reported that when a unifying label (“mood inventories”) was applied to a pair of personality scales, high-PFC participants were significantly more consistent in their responses as measured by correlations between the scales than when no unifying label was applied. For low-PFC participants, the opposite was true: Labeling both scales as mood inventories led to significantly lower correlations between the scales. Thus, it appears that under certain situations, low-PFC participants behave in an actively anticonsistent manner.

The major goals of Study 2 were to determine whether this anticonsistency tendency on the part of low-PFC scorers could be, first, clearly demonstrated and, second, extended into the realm of personality traits. That is, we wished to inquire into the possibility that upon recognizing the trait implications of a particular action, low-PFC individuals would undertake subsequent action that was incongruent with that trait. We placed our investigation once again in the context of the FITD paradigm, where it would be possible to examine the subsequent behavioral choices of participants who had complied with an initial request whose trait implications had or had not been made salient. If, as we expected, the outcomes of Study 2 demonstrated a reverse FITD effect only among low-PFC participants who had been focused on the (helpfulness) trait implications of their initial compliance, we would have evidence that both supported and importantly qualified the self-perception account of the FITD phenomenon. Such a pattern of findings would indicate that the salient trait implications of initial compliance do affect the likelihood of an FITD effect but that targets’ PFC levels dramatically influence the size and direction of the effect.

To properly test our hypotheses, we recognized the need to shift the form of the FITD procedure we had

used in Study 1. In that experiment, we used a version of the tactic (two separate requests to support the same cause made with a short delay between them) that had historically reduced its success (Burger, 1999). We did so because we wished to show that we could reverse the ineffectiveness of this procedure by focusing our high-PFC participants on the personally relevant implications of their initial compliance. In Study 2, our purpose was quite different. It was to demonstrate that we could reverse the effectiveness of a successful FITD procedure by focusing our low-PFC participants on the personally relevant implications of their initial compliance. Therefore, in Study 2, we employed a version of the tactic that, according to Burger's (1999) meta-analysis, has historically been the most successful: presenting targets with two successive requests, the second of which could be seen as an extension or continuation of the first.

Specifically, we incorporated the FITD procedure of Cialdini et al. (1995), who asked participants to answer a brief (1-minute) phone survey regarding their TV viewing habits and who followed the resultant compliance with a request to respond to a fuller, mail survey of these same habits. After complying with the first request, one group of FITD-procedure participants (FITD/prior helpfulness focus) had their attention drawn to the personal helpfulness implications of their compliance by the experimenter, who said, "Thanks. Do you usually help people you don't know?" They were then asked if they would be willing to complete the more detailed survey by mail. A second group of FITD procedure participants (FITD/no prior helpfulness focus) did not receive this comment regarding the helpfulness of their initial compliance but were simply thanked for that compliance and asked if they would be willing to continue by completing the larger mail survey. Finally, a control group received only the request to complete the larger survey. All three conditions were composed of participants who scored either high or low on PFC.

We had three main predictions. First, we anticipated that in the control condition, more low- than high-PFC participants would comply with the solo, larger request. This expectation was based on such a finding by Cialdini et al. (1995), who attributed low-PFC individuals' greater willingness to participate in the survey to their greater openness to experience, especially novel experience, as indicated by their relatively high scores on the Openness factor of the Big Five Personality Inventory (John, 1990). Our second prediction was that among high-PFC participants, both FITD procedures would prove effective. When Cialdini et al. (1995) used a continuous response FITD procedure, they found a reliable FITD effect among high-PFC individuals, even without a helpfulness focus manipulation. Thus, we expected that a focus manipulation would not be necessary to attain a success-

ful FITD effect among such participants in Study 2's continuous response paradigm. Finally, we hypothesized that among low-PFC participants, (a) no FITD effect would appear and (b) those in the FITD/prior helpfulness focus condition would show a reversal of the typical effect pattern. The first component of this prediction was based on evidence from Cialdini et al.'s (1995) study showing that, even when exposed to a continuous response procedure, low-FITD participants were not susceptible to the technique. The second component was based on the contentions of Cialdini and his associates (Bator & Cialdini, 2000; Cialdini et al., 1995) that low-PFC individuals prefer to be unpredictable and to seize opportunities that allow them to challenge established patterns.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 178 (89 female, 89 male) undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology classes at Arizona State University. They were selected for participation based on their scores on the PFC Scale, which was administered during mass pretesting at the beginning of the semester. Participants scoring in the upper or lower 33% of the sample distribution were categorized as high- or low-PFC scorers, respectively. These participants were drawn from a larger pool of 1,300 participants who filled out the PFC Scale. The scores for the overall sample of participants were very similar to previous samples, $\alpha = .90$, $M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.24$.

Procedure

An experimenter who was blind to participants' PFC scores phoned participants and represented himself or herself as a member of Arizona State University's Student Survey Research Association.

FITD-condition participants were initially asked to answer three brief questions about their television viewing habits; 89% complied.² In the FITD/prior helpfulness focus condition, after the initial compliance, the experimenter responded, "Thanks. Do you usually help people you don't know?" Then, without giving participants a chance to respond, the experimenter pretended to need to get another pen and asked the participant to hold on ("Oops, I need to get another pen. I'll be right back"). This delay was provided to give participants a chance to reflect on the implications of their initial compliance. Ten seconds later, the experimenter returned to the phone and made the second, larger request ("Would you be willing to give us some additional help by completing a more detailed survey by mail?"). That larger request included completing a 50-item TV-viewing habits questionnaire and returning it within 2 weeks. In the

FITD/no prior helpfulness condition, no prior helpfulness comment was made after participants' initial compliance. Instead, after thanking participants for their initial compliance and pausing 10 seconds to get another pen, the experimenter asked if they would answer some additional questions about their viewing habits by agreeing to complete and return the 50-item questionnaire within 2 weeks. Participants in the control condition were only asked to perform the larger request; however, for reasons of procedural comparability, before making this request, the experimenter paused for 10 seconds while pretending to get another pen.

After responding yes or no to the second request, participants were debriefed and thanked for their assistance with the study.

Independent Variables

The design included two independent variables: preference for consistency (high vs. low PFC) and request tactic (FITD/prior helpfulness focus, FITD/no prior helpfulness focus, and no FITD control).

Dependent Variables

As the target request, participants were asked whether they would be willing to fill out a 50-item mail questionnaire on their TV-viewing habits and to return it in a preaddressed, stamped envelope within 2 weeks. They answered yes or no in response to this question.

RESULTS

FITD participants who did not comply with the first request and refused to answer the three questions about their TV-viewing habits were coded as saying no to the target request. The percentage of participants in each condition who agreed to the target request is displayed in Figure 2. The data were analyzed using logistic regression. Because there were no significant effects for gender of the participant or gender of the experimenter, all analyses are reported collapsed across gender.

We tested our three main predictions through three sets of contrasts. The first prediction—that low-PFC/control condition participants would comply more than high-PFC/control condition participants—was supported (83% vs. 63%), $b = -1.08$, $SE_b = .50$, $Wald(1\ df) = 4.73$, $p = .03$. This difference replicates an earlier finding of Cialdini et al. (1995) and offers additional support for the greater tendency of low-PFC individuals to make themselves available to novel opportunities.

Our second prediction was that among high-PFC participants, both FITD procedures would be effective. To examine this hypothesis, we performed a pair of orthogonal contrasts. First, we compared the percentage of compliance among the high-PFC participants in the prior helpfulness focus condition versus the no prior

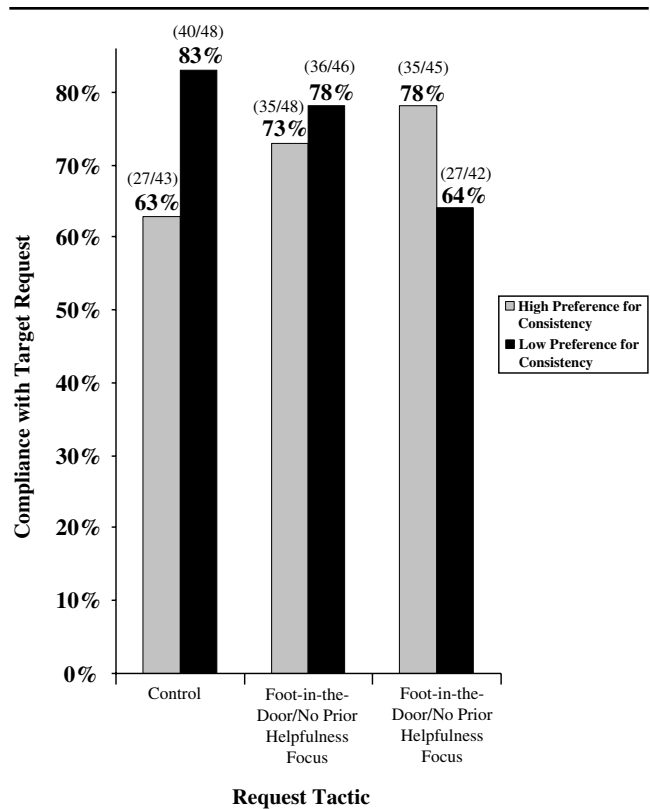


Figure 2 Percentage of participants in Study 2 who agreed to the target request.

helpfulness focus condition. That difference (78% vs. 73%) was not significant, $b = .13$, $SE_b = .24$, $Wald(1\ df) = .29$, n.s. Next, we compared the combination of the two high-PFC/FITD conditions against the high-PFC/control condition. That difference (75% vs. 63%) proved marginally significant in the direction of prediction, $b = .20$, $SE_b = .13$, $Wald(1\ df) = 2.27$, $p = .13$. We attributed the marginal nature of the effect to the relatively high levels of compliance in the control condition of this study (63% vs. 33% in the comparable condition of Study 1).

Our third prediction occurred in two parts. We anticipated that (a) among low-PFC condition participants, no FITD effect would appear and that (b) those in the FITD/prior helpfulness focus condition would demonstrate a reverse FITD effect. These expectations were tested by a pair of contrasts that compared each of the low-PFC/FITD conditions against the low-PFC/control condition. The first of these comparisons contrasted the no prior helpfulness focus condition against the control condition and, as predicted, produced no significant effect (78% vs. 83%), $b = -.16$, $SE_b = .26$, $Wald(1\ df) = .39$, n.s. The second and more theoretically interesting of these comparisons contrasted the prior helpfulness focus condition against the control condition and pro-

duced the hypothesized reverse FITD effect (64% versus 83%), $b = -.51$, $SE_b = .25$, $Wald(1\ df) = 4.11$, $p = .04$.

DISCUSSION

The outcomes of Study 2 appear to offer simultaneous support for and qualification of the self-perception theory account of the FITD phenomenon. That account holds that as a consequence of complying with an initial request, targets of the technique come to see themselves as relatively cooperative or helpful persons. Then, to be consistent with this self-image, they become more compliant with subsequent, similar requests.

Support for the self-perception theory explanation comes from that portion of our design that incorporated high-PFC participants, who are inclined to align their actions with what they perceive as their existing preferences and patterns. In Study 2, high-PFC individuals showed evidence of a FITD effect whether or not their attention had been drawn to the helpfulness trait implications of their initial compliance. Note that (a) this finding fits with the results of the Cialdini et al. (1995) study, which also used the continuous response FITD procedure, but (b) the finding is at odds with the results of our Study 1, which used a different FITD procedure. It seems that within the FITD sequence, when the second request appears to be a continuation of the first request, high-PFC individuals—for whom consistency issues are likely to be naturally salient—do not require a special focus manipulation to act in accord with the personal implications of their initial compliance. However, when the nature and timing of the second request orients them away from their normal focus on consistency with established patterns, as in the FITD procedure of Study 1, then a refocusing mechanism is necessary to produce a FITD effect in them.

But, by far, the most noteworthy outcome of Study 2 occurred among our low-PFC participants and importantly qualifies the self-perception theory account of the FITD phenomenon. Two outcomes of Study 2 are instructive in this regard. First, low-PFC participants in the experiment demonstrated no hint of a typical FITD effect. This finding highlights the previously underrecognized importance of consistency motives in the FITD phenomenon and in the self-perception theory explanation of it. If there is no predilection for consistency within oneself, there is unlikely to be any tendency for consistency with the self-relevant implications of earlier compliance.

Even more telling, in our view, is the evidence of a reverse FITD effect among low-PFC participants whose attention was drawn to the trait implications of their initial act of compliance. These individuals, who actively resist self-conceptions of regularity and constancy, chose

to act at odds with the salient trait implications of a prior compliant act. We find it remarkable that this was the case even though the trait at issue was the highly socially desirable one of helpfulness. Apparently, it was more important for these individuals to avoid the perception of personal consistency than to accord themselves the perception of helpfulness, suggesting that the power of this anticonsistency motive may be formidable in many people (Nail, MacDonald, & Levy, in press). In sum, the findings of Study 2 indicate that self-perception mechanisms do influence the occurrence of the FITD effect but that the size and direction of the effect is crucially affected by a dispositional feature of the technique's target—his or her PFC.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present research contributes to our knowledge of the FITD phenomenon in several ways. First, it reinforces the conclusion of Burger's (1999) meta-analysis that different procedures for operationalizing the technique can produce decidedly different success. A form of the tactic that provides an inadequate delay between two separate requests for the same cause is likely to be ineffective. Study 1 demonstrated, in addition, that the ineffectiveness of this procedure can be overcome by focusing high-PFC individuals on the (helpfulness) trait implications of their initial compliance. Second, this finding offers support for the often-challenged self-perception theory explanation of the phenomenon, which states that targets comply more with the second request because their compliance with the first request strengthens their self-images as cooperative, helpful persons. In keeping with this account, making salient the self-image implications of participants' initial compliance did lead to FITD effects among targets who were motivated to be consistent with their self-conceptions (i.e., high-PFC scorers).

A third contribution of the present research is to confirm the contentions of other workers in the field that likely shifts in self-image resulting from initial compliance are not sufficient to ensure the tactic's success (Dillard et al., 1984; Gorassini & Olson, 1995). To this observation, Study 2 added what may be a necessary condition: Such self-image shifts are likely to lead to a FITD effect only when the target is motivated toward internal consistency. Without a motivation for consistency, an altered self-concept will not result in corresponding behavior. Indeed, a motivation away from internal consistency (as embodied in low-PFC Scale scorers) led to a reverse FITD effect when self-image issues were made salient. In all, our results indicate, in keeping with the self-perception theory explanation of the FITD effect, that a focus on the trait implications of initial compliance does powerfully influence the effect. However, the

direction of the effect resulting from this focus is powerfully influenced, in turn, by differences in preference for consistency.

Finally, a general caveat seems in order for experimental researchers examining phenomena outside of the FITD tradition. We were able to uncover a remarkable reversal of a widely replicated psychological phenomenon in a group of participants who made up one third of the sample from which our experimental participants were derived (i.e., low-PFC scorers). The likelihood is considerable that a similar proportion of such individuals have been past participants (and will be future participants) in most social psychological experiments. It is intriguing to wonder what vexing impact these persons—who, in several studies now, seem disinclined to respond in accordance with their existing expectations, choices, and behaviors—may have had (and may continue to have) on many experimental investigations, even outside of the examination of consistency effects. After all, such responding is likely to confound the predictions of many theories.

Researchers might wish to respond in one of two ways to this possibility. First, they may want to measure and then remove the influence of low-PFC scorers from their data. Alternatively, rather than seeking to reduce the impact of such individuals, researchers may wish to focus attention on them to learn more about who they are and why they respond as they do. We would favor this latter approach, because a low preference for consistency strikes us as being much more interesting than a source of error variance to be dispatched. Instead, it looks to be a fascinating and understudied construct deserving deeper study.

NOTES

1. Three additional individuals participated in this experiment, but they are not included in the analyses because they expressed suspicion during postexperimental debriefing.

2. Ten participants (5 high preference for consistency and 5 low preference for consistency) out of the 87 contacted refused to answer the initial three questions.

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