Test of a List Procedure for Inducing Compliance With a Request to Donate Money

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A compliance tactic whereby a target is first shown a list of other compliers and is then asked to comply with a request was examined in a set of five field experiments. Experiment 1 showed that this tactic significantly increased the number of student donors when they were asked for a money donation. Experiments 2 and 3 replicated the basic finding for a household population and for a request for a blood donation, respectively. Experiment 4 varied the number of other donors and the size of their donations and found that students' compliance with a request to donate money was affected by these factors. These findings were interpreted as consistent with the expectations derived from the informational social influence hypothesis. Experiment 5 replicated part of Experiment 4 with a household population and suggested that a list effect does not materialize when the norms governing compliance are too strongly violated. The limitations of the research are discussed.

A growing number of investigations have recently focused on variables and compliance tactics that affect a target person's willingness to yield to a request. Studies have been conducted to examine the effects on compliance of such factors as prior compliance with a small request (Cann, Sherman, & Elkes, 1975; Freedman & Fraser, 1966; Reingen, 1978; Scott, 1976), prior noncompliance with an extreme request (Cialdini & Ascani, 1976; Cialdini et al., 1975; Reingen, 1978), cost (Wagner & Wheeler, 1969), need (Wagner & Wheeler, 1969), incentives (Scott, 1976), legitimization of paltry contributions (Cialdini & Schroeder, 1976), observation of a complier (Bryan & Test, 1967; Wagner & Wheeler, 1969), and commitment (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Basset, & Miller, 1978).

The purpose of the present study was to

examine another compliance procedure used in an everyday compliance setting for its efficacy and possible underlying conceptual mediator. Concepts from the social influence literature were applied to the interpretation of a tactic whose essential component is that a requester informs a target person of other compliers. Examples for this tactic abound, such as when an insurance salesperson provides prospects with a list of other policy subscribers, when a textbook publisher furnishes professors with a list of adopters of a new book, when names of contributors to a charity drive are announced during a telethon, and when people are asked to add their names to a petition, to mention just a few.

A series of five field experiments was performed to investigate the following questions: Does a technique whereby a target is merely informed of other compliers by a requester really work, or have practitioners— in the absence of hard evidence—deluded themselves as to the compliance-producing power of the technique (Experiment 1)? If it does work, is the effect reliable across target subjects (Experiment 2) and across target behaviors (Experiment 3)? If so, what is the underlying mediator of the effect (Experiment 4)? Finally, are there limits of generality to the effect (Experiment 5)?

Experiment 1

In order to demonstrate the efficacy of the technique, an initial, exploratory study was conducted in a naturalistic setting. Targets (college students) were asked to donate money to the Heart Association in one of two ways. In the first, a direct request for a donation was made. In the second, subjects were first shown a list of other contributors and were then asked for a donation. It was predicted that subjects who were exposed to the second strategy would show greater compliance with the donation request than would the subjects in the first condition.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 120 (60 male and 60 female) students at the University of South Carolina. Only those students qualified who were walking or sitting alone along university walkways during the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., and no subjects known to an experimenter were selected.

Procedure. The experimenters, one male and one female college student, approached only same-sex subjects. The experimenters had been thoroughly instructed, and they were equipped with the identification badges, information brochures, and donation envelopes commonly employed in fund-raising efforts by the Heart Association. Each experimenter was provided with the same list of the names of eight fictitious donors of both sexes and their donations. The donations had a range of $.10–$.50 (M = $.30), which, based on a previous study (Reingen, 1978), was expected to reflect the typical range of student donations. An interaction was initiated by an experimenter's introduction of himself or herself as representing the Heart Association. After the common introductory remarks, subjects were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, 60 subjects each, according to a prespecified treatment schedule that varied across experimenters. The schedule was constructed so that an experimenter completed exactly 30 replications per condition. After an interaction had been completed, an experimenter contacted the next subject who qualified.

In the first condition, the donation request-only control, the experimenter stated, "As part of our annual campus fund-raising drive, I'm collecting money for the Heart Association. Would you be willing to help by giving a single donation?" In the second condition, the list-then-donation request condition, the experimenter said, "As part of our annual campus fund-raising drive, I'm collecting money for the Heart Association. (While the experimenter stated the following, he/she showed the subject the list of donors with their donations.) As you can see, other students have given a donation already. (The experimenter then silently counted to two and continued.) Would you be willing to help also by giving a single donation?" Two dependent measures were taken: (a) whether a subject gave a donation and (b) size of donation.

Results

No significant differences ($ps > .10$) in compliance frequencies and donation amounts were found due to the sex of the target subject. Thus, the following analyses were performed on collapsed data. Of the 60 subjects in the list-then-donation request condition, 26 (43%) complied, whereas only 15 (25%) of the 60 subjects in the donation request-only control complied, $\chi^2(1) = 4.48$, $p < .05$. The average donation in the two conditions (M = $.25 and M = $.48, respectively) did not differ significantly, $t(39) = 1.52$, ns.

Discussion

These results indicate that the sequence of first showing the target a list of other compliers and then asking the target to yield may be an effective technique to produce a greater number of compliers. It is obvious, however, that further demonstration of the power of the technique is necessary before one's confidence in it is increased. Although Experiment 1 was a field investigation and the experimenter was naive, it employed students as subjects and was conducted in a university setting. Thus, it was decided to perform a second study to test for generality across types of target subjects and settings.

Experiment 2

Method

The subjects were 60 adult residents (30 per condition) from randomly selected homes of a middle-class suburban housing area of Columbia, South Carolina. The procedure was similar to the one in Experiment 1 with the following exceptions. In the experimental scripts, reference was now made to the residential area (rather than "campus"); the word "residents" was used (instead of "students"); one male college student served as the experimenter; and subjects were solicited door-to-door. The list of donors was the same as in Experiment 1, except that the donations now had a median, mode, and mean of $1.00, which, based on secondary data, was judged to be the typical donation size in door-to-door charity drives.

Results

Since no significant sex effects on compliance rates were observed ($p > .10$), the compliance data were analyzed with the sex factor collapsed. As in Experiment 1, the list-then-donation request condition produced a significantly greater proportion of compliers (73%, 22 compliers) than did the control (47%, 14 compliers), $\chi^2(1) = 4.44$, $p < .05$, and no significant difference in mean donations between the two conditions ($M = \$1.48$ and $M = \$1.36$, respectively) was found, $t(34) = .44$, ns.

Discussion

The findings of Experiment 2 suggest that the technique is robust across target subjects. However, is the technique also reliable across target behaviors? To obtain further evidence for the technique's generality, a third small-scale field experiment was performed that employed blood donations as the target behavior.

Experiment 3

Method

The subjects were 60 male students at the University of South Carolina. One male college student served as the experimenter. The experimenter introduced himself as representing a local blood organization. For subjects in the blood donation request-only control condition, the experimenter stated, "As part of our annual campus blood drive, we are asking students to donate blood. Would you be willing to volunteer blood to our drive?" In the second condition, the list-then-blood-donation request condition, the experimenter said, "As part of our annual campus blood drive, we are asking students to donate blood. [While the experimenter said the following, he showed the subject a list of eight potential donors whose names were those employed in the previous experiments.] As you can see, other students have agreed to donate blood already. [The experimenter then silently counted to two and continued.] Would you also be willing to volunteer blood to our drive?" The dependent measure was whether a subject indicated that he would call the blood bank for a donation appointment. In all other aspects, the procedure for Experiment 3 was similar to that of Experiment 1.

Results

Only one subject (3%) of the blood donation request-only control indicated that he would contact the blood organization for a donation, whereas nine subjects (30%) in the list-then-blood-donation request condition complied, $\chi^2(1) = 7.68$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The dependent measure in Experiment 3 was only a behavioral intention. Nonetheless, the data suggest that the technique may also possess cross-situational reliability.

Now that it has been shown via Experiments 1, 2, and 3 that a sequence whereby a requester first shows to a target a list of other compliers and then asks the target to yield not only works but also produces robust effects across target subjects and probably across some target behaviors as well, it seems pertinent to pay closer attention to a possible causal mediator of the compliance effect.

Experiment 4

Consequently, a fourth experiment was considered necessary to broaden the scope of investigation. One conceptual interpretation of the results of the previous experiments centers on the argument that a subject used the behaviors of others (as manifested in the lists) in determining his or her own action. That is, the compliance effect may have been due to informational social influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; King, 1975). Informational social influence is pervasive because of people's strong striving to be right and socially correct in their behavior (Aronson, 1972, p. 94). A readily available definition of correctness is the behavior of relevant others (Kiesler & Kiesler, 1969, p. 44). Generally speaking, informational social influence is from a source who is not intentionally seeking to influence another person (King, 1975, p. 21). This is consistent with the view taken here that the fictitious donors were the primary source of influence in the previous experiments; the requester (i.e., experimenter) merely activated the influence process.

One reasonable approach to the testing of the suggested conceptual variable of informational social influence entails the development of hypotheses pertaining to it from related theory/findings and the manipulation of the compliance tactic based on these hypotheses. To this end, Experiment 4 was

conducted with students as subjects and it manipulated the size of donations from others and the number of donors.

Predictions of the Informational Social Influence Hypothesis

The greater the uncertainty experienced by an individual in a social situation, the stronger the inclination to seek clarifying information from others (King, 1975). Since students are not the typical target of fundraising efforts, their experienced uncertainty with regard to how much to give should be substantial enough to have them pay especially close attention to the behavior of relevant others (i.e., others' donations). Thus, Experiment 4 varied the size of others' donations (low/high). Based on Experiment 1, the high donations were at a level above what was expected for student subjects but not so high as to render a student population invalid as a reference group (i.e., all donations were less than $1.00). The informational social influence hypothesis predicted that subjects who were exposed to others' high donations would give a higher amount on the average than would subjects who were informed of others' low donations.

Another variable that has been argued to affect an individual's susceptibility to influence is the sheer number of other compliers. Generally speaking, as more people agree on a given behavior, the probability of informational social influence is greater (King, 1975). The informational social influence hypothesis would therefore predict that subjects who were exposed to a long list of donors (12 donors) would be significantly more likely to contribute than would subjects who were exposed to a short list (4 donors) and request-only control subjects. Although small group research would suggest that a target's likelihood of compliance increases with the number of sources of information up to the point of only four sources (Asch, 1951), that research is of little relevance here because of its face-to-face interaction basis.

Normative Influence

The second purpose of Experiment 4 was to assess the efficacy of a compliance tactic based on normative social influence so that the differential effects of both major types of social influence could be investigated in the same design.

In contrast to informational social influence, normative social influence exists when a person accepts influence in order to gain some desired goal beyond merely being correct in his or her behavior. King (1975) differentiated between two types of normative influence, one based on outcome control and the other on cue control. In the former case, the influencer controls rewards and punishments that are distributed according to the appropriateness of the target person's behavior. A technique based on this type of normative influence was judged to be not feasible in the present request context. However, normative social influence based on cue control can be operationalized quite readily. As discussed more fully in King (1975), people can influence others to do things in normative social influence situations without mediating specific rewards (or punishments). Rather, normative social influence based on cue control relies on the arousal of preestablished dispositions (such as internalized cultural norms), which result in behaviors the target finds intrinsically self-rewarding. Thus, in contrast to informational social influence, this type of social influence is manipulative in that it involves one person's intentional attempts to influence another. Normative social influence based on cue control was operationalized in Experiment 4 by providing subjects with a cue intended to activate the norm of personal responsibility (Schwartz, 1970). Targets were told that their help was needed to prevent heart attacks for people they might even know. It was predicted that subjects who were exposed to this cue would be more likely to contribute than would control subjects.

Hybrid Strategies

Last, Experiment 4 investigated the compliance effects of four hybrid strategies. Subjects first were subjected to the normative influence tactic, then were shown a list of fictitious donors, with the number of donors and size of donations varied as previously

described, and finally were asked for a donation. Since the hybrid strategies would seem to reap the benefits of both normative and informational social influence attempts, they were expected to produce greater compliance with the donation request than were their component compliance techniques. This assumes, however, that the effects for both techniques are independent and additive.

Method

Subjects. 300 male students who were randomly assigned to 10 conditions of 30 subjects each, were approached by one of three male experimenters. In the first condition, the request-only control, subjects were asked by the experimenter to comply only with the request to donate money. In the next four conditions, a subject was first shown a list of fictitious donors and their "donations" and then was asked for a donation. The length of the list (short—four donors/long—12 donors) and the size of donations (low/high) were varied. The low donations had a mean of $.25 (range $.15-$.35) for both short and long lists, whereas the high donations averaged $.85 (range $.75-$.95). The names of donors were of course the same across the donation size factor. Thus, three identical sets, one for each experimenter, with four lists each were utilized.

In the sixth condition, the normative influence-then-request condition, the experimenter stated after the common introductory remarks, "As part of our annual campus fund-raising drive, I'm collecting money for the Heart Association. We need your financial support so that you can help us in preventing heart attacks for people you might even know. Would you be willing to help by giving a single donation?"

The final four conditions were the same as the second through the fifth conditions, except that subjects were shown a list of donors after they had been told that their financial support was needed.

As in Experiment 1, experimenters followed a prespecified treatment schedule. A schedule listed the 10 conditions in random order, and it varied across experimenters. Conditions were identified by numbers. In administering the treatments, an experimenter followed a schedule for a total of 10 times. Thus, an experimenter completed exactly 10 replications per condition. The method was in all other major regards similar to the one in Experiment 1.

Results

Table 1 presents the results for proportion of donors, average amount donated, and total amount donated.

Proportion of donors. An initial chi-square analysis on proportion of donors within each condition showed no significant differences between experimenters, with levels of significance ranging from .38 to .87.

Hence, the data were free of significant experimenter effects, and the subsequent analyses were therefore performed on collapsed data.

A series of four planned orthogonal contrasts was performed to test the hypothesis regarding the proportion of donors. The informational social influence hypothesis predicted that subjects who were exposed to a long list of compliers would be more likely to contribute than would subjects who were exposed to a short list and to no list. The first comparison between the combination of the long list conditions (Conditions 3, 5, 8, and 10) and the combination of the short list conditions (Conditions 2, 4, 7, and 9) and the control (Condition 1) confirmed this expectation, $\chi^2(1) = 5.02$, $p < .05$ (65% vs. 50.6%, respectively).

The second orthogonal comparison between the control (40%) and the combination of the four short list conditions (53.3%) was insignificant, $\chi^2(1) = 1.22$, *ns.* Thus, the compliance effect was obtained only when the number of other compliers was sufficiently large. When coupled with the results of the first comparison, the findings suggest a length-of-list effect.

The third orthogonal contrast between the combination of the low-donation conditions (Conditions 2, 3, 7, and 8; 58.3%) and the combination of the high-donation conditions (Conditions 4, 5, 9, and 10; 60%) was insignificant, $\chi^2(1) = .02$, *ns*, suggesting no size-of-donations effect on the proportion of donors.

It was expected that the hybrid strategies (Conditions 7 through 10; 64.2%) would induce greater compliance than would the list-only conditions (Conditions 2 through 5; 54.2%). The fourth orthogonal comparison involving these conditions failed to support the prediction, $\chi^2(1) = 2.09$, *ns.*

The hypothesis that the normative influence condition (Condition 5; 53.3%) would produce greater compliance than would the control (Condition 1; 40%) could not be directly assessed by the series of orthogonal contrasts employed. Thus, this comparison was performed separately, with the unexpected result that no significant difference was found, $\chi^2(1) = .60$, *ns.*

Average donation. Since unequal cell

frequencies of donors (i.e., nonorthogonality) and two no-list conditions were present (Conditions 1 and 6), the hypothesis with regard to average donation amounts could not be tested by standard approaches for the factorial analysis of variance. Instead, general linear hypothesis procedures (Perreault & Darden, 1975) were applied to a linear model that was appropriate for a 2 (Others' Donations: low/high) × 2 (Length: short/long) × 2 (Normative Influence: absent/present) design that included a variable for the two no-list conditions (coded 1 if the response came from the control and −1 otherwise). The importance of each factor was assessed by comparing simple models that did not include a particular factor with complete models that did include the factor. The results showed that only the size-of-donations factor was significant. Thus, the other factors could be ignored, and the analysis of the remaining one-factor model found a highly significant effect of size-of-donation of the fictitious compliers on the dependent measure, $F(1, 168) = 17.61$, $p < .01$. The overall means ($M_{low} = \$.37$ vs. $M_{high} = \$.57$) indicate that the results were in the predicted direction.

Total donation amounts. Given this pattern of findings, it is not surprising that along the practical dimension of total funds obtained, the conditions with long/high lists (Conditions 4 and 10) produced greater donation totals ($10.04 and $14.22, respectively) than did their short/low list counterparts ($5.75 for Condition 2 and $6.07 for Condition 7). When compared with the control outcome, the long/high list-then-request condition produced a total that was three times as high as that of the control, and the normative influence, long/high list-then-request condition produced 4.2 times that of the control.

Discussion

These findings lend credibility to the suggestion that the compliance effects observed in Experiments 1, 2, and 3 were mediated by informational social influence. The subjects in Experiment 4 were more likely to yield to the donation request as the number of other compliers increased, and the subjects in Experiment 4 offered a consistently higher amount of donation, on the average, the higher the donation level of other compliers. The data also suggest that in order to achieve a greater number of compliers, a minimum number of other compliers is necessary for informational social influence to be activated in indirect observation contexts. When the number of other compliers was small (four), the compliance increases tended to be insignificant.

Table 1
Donation Results For Experiment 4

Condition	Proportion of donors	Donation Average	Donation Total
1. Request-only control	.40	$.28	$ 3.35
2. Short/low list-then-request	.47	.41	5.75
3. Long/low list-then-request	.63	.37	6.99
4. Short/high list-then-request	.47	.46	6.48
5. Long/high list-then-request	.60	.55	10.04
6. Normative influence-then-request	.53	.44	6.99
7. Normative influence, short/low list-then-request	.57	.35	6.07
8. Normative influence, long/low list-then-request	.67	.33	6.63
9. Normative influence, short/high list-then-request	.63	.57	10.84
10. Normative influence, long/high list-then-request	.70	.68	14.22

Note. Base is 30 in each condition.

Although these data are consistent with the expectations derived from the informational social influence hypothesis, they do not ultimately confirm it. Alternative explanations to part of the findings exist. Methodologically, the experimental conditions differed from the request-only control not only in the lists that were employed but also in the experimenter's verbal reference to the fact that others had already complied. A normative social influence component therefore may have been introduced and may have affected subjects' behavior, indicating the general difficulty of obtaining a clean separation between informational and normative social influence through experimental manipulations (King, 1975, p. 22). Another conceptual alternative is that the primary effect of the list was to increase solicitor credibility, which in turn enhanced the persuasiveness of his communication (Zimbardo & Ebbesen, 1970) and thus the number of compliers (e.g., "Others have given, so he must be genuine"). Although either alternative interpretation could account for some aspects of the data of Experiment 4, it is doubtful that they provide complete explanations. For example, neither interpretation can readily account for the observed size-of-donation effect on subjects' donations.

A compliance technique based on normative social influence was not supported by the data. However, only one of many possible operationalizations of normative influence was utilized, and its cues may have been too weak to produce the desired effects. It is possible that with a different operationalization, one that would have made the norm of personal responsibility more salient, the results would have been more impressive.

There is, of course, a practical utility to the findings. The findings suggest an effective approach to increasing the number of donors and how much they give. Thus, the donation totals were much greater compared with the control outcome, a result that fund raisers in particular should consider of value. The technique can also be easily implemented. However, the effects have been demonstrated only in the contexts of prosocial requests.

Yet, an important question pertaining to the generality of data remains. For conceptual reasons, Experiment 4 employed student subjects who typically are not the target of fund-raising efforts. It was suggested that this would increase their uncertainty with regard to how much to give, making them especially susceptible to social influence. Would the technique also be effective in inducing greater donations for a subject population with well-defined norms of helping? In Experiment 2, which involved subjects from a household population, the request-only control group median was $1.00, the mode $1.00, and the mean $1.36, suggesting a well-defined norm of giving in household solicitations. A final field experiment was conducted with a household population similar to that of Experiment 2, which replicated from an applied viewpoint the more important conditions (1, 5, and 10) of Experiment 4.

Experiment 5

Method

The subjects were 90 adult residents (30 per condition) of a middle-class suburban housing area of Columbia, South Carolina. The area was demographically similar to the one in Experiment 2. The procedure was similar to that of Experiment 2, except that the list of fictitious donors now comprised the 12 names of Experiment 4; the donations had a median, mode, and mean of $2.00; and three conditions were involved.

Results

Table 2 presents the results for proportion of donors, average amount donated, and total amount donated. Since for each condition no significant sex effects on the number of compliers and donation amounts were found ($ps > .10$), the subsequent analysis was performed on collapsed data.

With regard to number of compliers, the orthogonal comparison between the request-only control and the combination of the two experimental conditions was insignificant, $\chi^2(1) = .45$, ns. The second comparison between the two experimental conditions was also insignificant, $\chi^2(1) = .27$, ns. Concerning donation amounts, a log $(X + 1)$ transformation was first performed on the data because they were not normally distributed (Neter & Wasserman, 1974). A one-way

Table 2
Donation Results For Experiment 5

| | Proportion of donors | Donation | |
Condition		Average	Total
1. Request-only control	.60	$1.35	$24.25
2. Long/high list-then-request	.53	1.72	27.50
3. Normative influence, long/high list-then-request	.47	2.23	31.25

Note. Base is 30 in each condition.

analysis of variance on the transformed data showed no significant difference in average donations between conditions, $F(2, 45) = 1.91$, *ns*.

Discussion

Because of the similarity in subject population, these findings are probably best interpreted in the light of the data obtained in Experiment 2. There, the fictitious donations were consistent with the norm of giving, and a significant positive effect on the number of compliers was observed. In Experiment 5, the norm of giving was again approximately $1.00, as attested to by the control group donations, which had a median of $1.00, a mode of $1.00, and an average of $1.35. In contrast to Experiment 2, however, the fictitious donations in their central tendencies were at a level about twice as high as the norm, and a decrease (insignificant) in the number of compliers resulted. Thus, consistent with the literature on the effects of group norms on the acceptance of social change (Berkowitz, 1975, p. 352), some targets appear to be unwilling to accept an influence attempt if it is drastically different from established norms.

The somewhat higher donation average in Condition 2 could lead one to believe that the subjects who did comply were affected by the high donations of fictitious others. In fact, however, the median and mode were still $1.00 in Condition 2. In Condition 3, the mode was again $1.00, but the median ($1.62) and especially the mean ($2.24) were more favorable, suggesting that a few subjects were strongly affected by the normative social influence component. Indeed,

four of the 14 subjects that complied in this condition accounted for 58% of the total donation obtained.

General Discussion

Together, the main results of the five experiments indicate that a technique whereby a target is first shown a list of other compliers and is then asked to comply (a) works (Experiment 1), (b) is robust across target subjects (Experiment 2) and probably across some request contexts as well (Experiment 3), (c) appears to be mediated by informational social influence (Experiment 4), (d) tends to be effective only if the number of compliers is sufficiently large (Experiment 4), and (e) can be employed to increase not only the number of compliers but also the amount of their donations (Experiment 4), probably subject to the restriction that existing norms that govern compliance are not too strongly violated (Experiment 5).

These findings suffer from the previously noted limitations of the existence of alternative explanations to the informational social influence hypothesis and the difficulty of obtaining a clean separation between informational and normative social influence processes. In addition, the results of these experiments were partly dependent on the values chosen for the independent variables (e.g., size of others' donations and number of other donors). Findings could be different depending on what values are sampled and the characteristics of the subject population. Furthermore, although the informational social influence hypothesis was found to account for the list effect, this explanation is probably too global to provide specific in-

sights to the process at work. King (1975, p. 31) observed that the informational social influence phenomenon has been divided into a great number of relatively isolated research concerns, among them modeling (e.g., Bryan & Test, 1967; Wagner & Wheeler, 1969) and conformity (e.g., Asch, 1951; Gerard, Wilhelmy, & Connolley, 1968). What distinguishes the modeling research from the present studies is a target person's direct observation of a present other's compliance. In the present studies, the requester merely provided "evidence" to the target person that others had complied. Conformity studies have examined judgmental agreement in direct interaction settings, whereas the present studies investigated behavioral compliance. Whether or not these differences imply differential influence processes should be assessed in future research.

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