

Door-in-the-Face and But-You-Are-Free: Testing the Effect of Combining Two No-Pressure Compliance Paradigms

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Abstract

According to Howard's proposal of chaining compliance techniques and based on the proximity of interpretation of their effects, this study aimed to test a combination of two paradigms: a door-in-the-face request that makes a high-cost request before the target request and the but-you-are-free request that adds an evocation of freedom to the request. Two experiments were conducted ($N = 120$ and $1,292$) to promote donations to non-profit organizations. There were four conditions. Participants were approached according to the door-in-the-face procedure, to the but-you-are-free procedure, to a combination of both of them, or directly in a control condition. There was an increase of compliance rates in experimental conditions compared to the control condition and an increase in the average amount donated in the combination condition compared to the control condition in the second study. Results are discussed in terms of responsibility and guilt mechanisms, and future developments are proposed.

Keywords

door-in-the-face, but-you-are-free, compliance without pressure, chaining

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Introduction

Since Freedman and Frazer (1966) introduced the concept of compliance without pressure with their foot-in-the-door (FITD) techniques, many procedures have been developed and demonstrated the possibility to produce influence without recourse to persuasion or authority (Joule & Beauvois, 1998). Without being exhaustive, these procedures are known as the Lowball technique (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett, & Miller, 1978), the Foot-in-the-mouth technique (Howard, 1990), the That's not all technique (Burger, 1986), the Pique technique (Santos, Leve, & Pratkanis, 1994), or more recently the Service request technique (Meineri, Dupré, Vallée, & Guéguen, 2015). In line with the proposition of Howard (1995) that "if one technique is effective, then perhaps the use of two or three of them together might be even more effective" (cited in Howard, Shu, & Kerin, 2007, p. 18), some authors were also interested in combining techniques together (Guéguen, Meineri, Martin, & Grandjean, 2010; Guéguen, Meineri, Pascual, & Girandola, 2015). In this study, we focused on two techniques, the DITF (Cialdini et al., 1975) and the But-you-are-free (BYAF) techniques (Pascual & Guéguen, 2002), and tried to chain them, based on the apparent compatibility of some interpretations of their effects.

Cialdini et al. (1975) proposed the DITF technique, which makes an exorbitant cost request before presenting a smaller one. There is almost systematic refusal of the first request and a higher than chance acceptance of the second, so that the first refusal tends to promote the second acceptance. In Cialdini's initial study, the aim was to recruit volunteers to escort young offenders from a juvenile delinquent center during a zoo visit. Participants in the control condition were directly approached with this smaller target request, while those in the DITF condition were initially approached with the exorbitant request: to become a volunteer counselor of a youth for two years, after that they were asked the smaller request for escorting a young offender for a single zoo visit. Fifty percent of participants in the DITF condition agreed to the request while only 16.7% did so in the "control condition."

Nearly 40 years of research and 6 meta-analytic studies later (Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984; Feeley, Anker, & Aloe, 2012; Fern, Monroe, & Avila, 1986; O'Keefe & Hale, 1998; O'Keefe & Hale, 2001; Pascual & Guéguen, 2005), the effectiveness of the paradigm was established, showing effect sizes ranging from $r = .13$ to $r = .08$ (according to the analysis). In many studies, only the declarative intention or verbal compliance was considered; Feeley et al. (2012) showed that by considering only studies with behavioral compliance as a dependent variable, the effect size was reduced to $r = .05$. Variables moderating DITF effect are consistent across meta-analyses. The procedure is effective in different contexts (face to face, phone contact, and email), for pro-social requests, when handled by a single experimenter, and without delay between solicitations.

Several interpretations have been evoked to account for the DITF effect, but only three have been supported by meta-analyses. The first explanation is based

on the logic of reciprocal concessions (Cialdini et al., 1975). After the rejection of the first request, the solicitor makes a concession on his initial demand by reducing its cost, which encourages the solicited person to compromise also, by accepting the newly proposed request under the social norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). The second explanation (Millar, 2002; O’Keefe & Figge, 1997) proposes that the effect arises from feelings of guilt produced by the refusal of the preparatory request, so accepting the second request reduces the guilt. A third and complimentary interpretation, advanced by Tusing and Dillard (2000) and Turner, Tamborini, Limon, and Zuckerman-Hyman (2007), postulates that negative emotions, including guilt, occur because refusal of the first request violates the norm of social responsibility to help dependent people (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964). According to this, people who refuse the preparatory request would seek to “redeem” themselves by accepting the less costly second request.

The second paradigm considered in this paper is BYAF (Pascual & Guéguen, 2002). Introduced by Pascual and Guéguen (2002), it simply adds the statement saying the participant is free to accept or refuse the request. In the Pascual and Guéguen’s initial study, the solicitor asks passers-by for money to take the bus. In the control condition, only the target request was made, while in the experimental condition, the experimenter added, “but you are free to accept or reject” (p. 266). Results showed increased donation rates from 10% in the control condition to 47.5% in the BYAF condition. A meta-analysis recently conducted by Carpenter (2013) based on 42 experiments found an effect size of $r = .13$. In connection with the DITF techniques, most studies using the BYAF considered behavioral compliance as the dependent variable. Results show that the procedure creates a significant effect using different types of requests, such as in face to face conditions, but also in an asynchronous communication situation, such as response to an email (Guéguen, Pascual, Jacob, & Morineau, 2002) and whatever statement is used, since it allows people the freedom to say “no” (Guéguen et al., 2013).

Four theoretical interpretations, some of which would compliment those mentioned for the DITF, were proposed by Pascual and Guéguen (2002). Referencing the salience of social norms (Harris, 1972), the evocation of freedom could create expectations based on the social responsibility norm (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964) and thus promote compliance with the request. A second interpretation is that compliance occurs because it allows people to avoid feeling guilty (O’Keefe & Figge, 1997). When people are declared “free,” it creates awareness of the social responsibility norm and thus people comply to avoid the uncomfortable feeling of guilt from not adhering to the norm. Complementary to this, a third interpretation refers to commitment theory (Joule & Beauvois, 1998; Kiesler, 1971) postulating that factors such as a feeling of freedom would lead people to be responsible for their behavior. They feel responsible whether they accept or refuse the request. As the request is primarily a helping one, it evokes the social responsibility norm whose violation leads to

negative emotional consequences. When they receive the statement that they are “free,” they tend to accept the request.

Finally, a fourth theoretical proposal is based on psychological reactance, a state of negative motivation following the threat of the restriction of freedom, which results in resisting the influence (Brehm, 1966). Accordingly, when people feel free to act or choose and somebody gives them a specific order, they try to regain freedom by engaging in the behavioral alternative that was removed. Considering this phenomenon in reverse, people who are “declared free” should feel less psychological reactance than those in a control condition, and thus would be more willing to accept the proposed request.

The BYAF technique has been combined with other techniques such as the Foot-in-the-door or the Lowball (Dufourcq-Brana, Pascual, & Guéguen, 2006; Dufourcq-Brana, 2007; Guéguen et al., 2010) and has shown an increase of their effects. To our knowledge, only one study Pascual, Dagot, and Vallée (2009) has considered the DITF and the BYAF techniques together, but the theoretical aim of that study was not to combine them but to compare their effects. The study was to solicit money donation in favor of an organization giving assistance to the victims of the 2004 tsunami. Results reveal that the two techniques were effective compared to the control condition the few days after the event, although the effectiveness of the BYAF decreased across time while effectiveness of the DITF was stable.

In order to support this previous study, the present research aim combined the effect of these two techniques based on the following: if the DITF effect arises from an emotional tension, mostly characterized by guilt, resulting from the violation of the social responsibility norm. If a declaration of freedom leads to awareness of the existence of the social responsibility norm, anticipation of the guilt by refusing the request, and induces a feeling of responsibility for the decision he makes. Thus, a declaration of freedom after the DITF target request should increase the intensity of motivational tension felt and promoted its acceptance. Specifically, we hypothesized an increase in the donation rate in the DITF condition and in the BYAF condition compared to the control condition. Also, we considered an increase in the combined DITF and BYAF condition in respect to the classic DITF, the classic BYAF, and the control conditions. We had no hypothesis about the average donation amount.

Study I

Method

Participants. The participants were 60 men and 60 women (estimated age 18–70 years, M age = 39.1, SD = 17.0) passers-by walking alone in the downtown area of a medium-sized city in south Brittany (50,000 inhabitants).

Procedure. Three female students and one male student from the University of South Brittany (M age = 20.5 year, $SD = 0.9$) posed as experimenters asking participants to make a donation to the CHIARA association: a French non-profit organization raising funds to take care of a little girl dealing with West syndrome. The design of the study had four conditions depending on the type of solicitation. Experimenters were instructed to approach the first met passer-by with the control script, the next with the BYAF script, the third with the DITF script, the fourth with the combined DITF and BYAF script, and so on. In the control condition, the experimenter approached passers-by and said:

Hello, I am part of the CHIARA association. This is the name of a little girl who is suffering from West syndrome and needs to be transferred to Toronto so she can receive special care. We are seeking donations to help fund her trip. Would you like to donate?

In the Classic BYAF condition, the experimenter proceeded in exactly the same way, but at the end of the request added: "Of course, you are free to accept or reject." In the classic DITF condition, the passers-by were initially asked to join the volunteer team to solicit donations from passers-by in the street every Saturday morning for two months and then received the target request after their initial refusal. The experimenter then said, "Well, in that case, would you agree to make a simple donation?" Finally, in the combined DITF and BYAF condition, the experimenter made the same approach and request but added the evocation of freedom at the end of the solicitation.

There were two dependent variables. The first one was the acceptance rate of the target request and the second was the average donation. Only people who effectively gave money were coded as donator. People who intend to make a donation but did not have money were coded as non-donators. After the solicitation, participants were thanked and the money raised was given to the organization.

Results

All participants approached within the DITF paradigm (single or combined condition) refused the preparatory request and were included in the analyses.

Considering the acceptance of the target request, a 2 (participant gender) \times 2 (solicitation type) log linear analysis indicated only a main effect of solicitation type, $\chi^2(3, 120) = 7.94$, $p = .047$, $\varphi = 0.26$; and non-significant effects of participant gender, $\chi^2(1, 120) = 0.00$, and interaction of participant gender \times solicitation type, $\chi^2(3, 120) = 1.90$. The 2 \times 2 comparisons indicated that the DITF condition (43%) presented a difference with small effect size compared to the control condition (20%), $\chi^2(1, 60) = 3.77$, $p = .052$, $\varphi = 0.25$, and a statistical difference ($p = .047$) using Fischer's Exact Test due to the small expected frequency in one

Table 1. Compliance rates and average amount of donation by condition.

Solicitation type	Control	Classic BYAF	Classic DITF	Combined DITF and BYAF
Compliance rates	20% (6/30)	43% (13/30)	43% (13/30)	53% (16/30)
Donation amount	2.66 Euros (<i>SD</i> = 1.36)	3.08 Euros (<i>SD</i> = 2.68)	1.50 Euros (<i>SD</i> = 1.49)	2.40 Euros (<i>SD</i> = 1.59)

Note. BYAF: but-you-are-free; DITF: door-in-the-face.

cell. The BYAF condition (43%) also had a difference from the control condition with small effect size, $\chi^2(1, 60) = 3.77, p = .052, \varphi = 0.25$ (Fischer's Exact Test, $p = .047$). Finally, the Combined DITF and BYAF condition (53%) significantly differed from the control condition, $\chi^2(1, 60) = 7.18, p = .007, \varphi = 0.34$, with a small effect size. Other comparisons were not significant: combined DITF and BYAF condition versus DITF condition: $\chi^2(1, 60) = 0.60, p = .43$; and combined DITF and BYAF condition versus BYAF condition, $\chi^2(1, 60) = 0.60, p = .43$.

Concerning the average donation amount, only participants who made an effective donation ($n = 48$) were included in the analysis. The average donation was 2.38 Euros ($SD = 1.94$). A 2 (participant gender) \times 4 (solicitation type) ANOVA was conducted. Results indicated no effect of solicitation type, $F(3, 48) = 1.41, p = .25$, of participant gender, $F(1, 48) = .51, p = .48$, or interaction of participant gender and solicitation type, $F(3, 48) = 0.62, p = .61$. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Discussion

The study tested the combined effect of two paradigms of compliance without pressure, the DITF and BYAF. Based on the theoretical interpretations of these procedures, we hypothesized that the statement of free choice associated with the DITF target request would promote acceptance of the request. The design sought to replicate the standard effects of these paradigms independently of each other and, second, to test for an increased effect when they were combined.

Concerning the acceptance rate, the results were in the expected direction but did not completely support the hypotheses. The DITF and the BYAF effects, when taken independently, indicated statistical tendencies or differences with small effect sizes, according to the analysis. Also, the combination of the two procedures differed significantly from the control condition. But compliance in the combined DITF and BYAF condition did not differ statistically from that in the single DITF and the single BYAF conditions. Unlike the majority of published research on DITF, only the effectiveness of the donation was considered here, not the behavioral intention or the commitment to do so. In addition, the size of the sample (30 participants per condition) is among the lowest in the literature. The combination of these two factors could explain the observed results.

Study 2

In order to correct the limits of the first study, we conducted a second study with a large sample of participants. Design and hypothesis of the research were the same, and only the non-profit organization changes.

Method

Participants. There were 1,292 participants (547 men and 745 women; aged 18 to 70 years, $M = 37.3$, $SD = 13.51$) who were encountered while walking alone in the downtown area of a medium-sized city in south Brittany (50,000 inhabitants).

Procedure. Twenty-three female research assistants, students from the University of South Brittany (M age = 20.0 years, $SD = 1.1$), asked participants to make a donation to the “Resto’ du Coeur” association: a French non-profit organization that delivers food to people in need. In the control condition, the experimenter approached passers-by who were walking alone and said:

Hello, I am UBS student in a Social Action and Health course, and I am participating in a student project to help the association « Les resto du cœur ». As you know, each year the number of people in need increases. So, we are organizing a fundraising drive to finance food baskets. Would you donate?

In the Classic BYAF condition, the experimenter proceeded in exactly the same way but just before asking for the donation he added, “Of course, you are free to accept or reject.” In the classic DITF condition, the assistants initially made an exorbitant request of the passers-by: To join the volunteer team and meet people in need four evenings per week in the winter season to deliver food baskets. After their refusal, the experimenter then said, “Well, we also organize fund raising to finance food baskets, would you donate?” Finally, in the combined DITF and BYAF condition, the experimenter made the same approach and request but added the evocation of freedom at the end of the solicitation, just before asking for the donation. After the solicitation, participants were thanked and debriefed about the experiment. Money was given back to the donators and the experimenter invited them to make direct contact with the organization if they wished to donate. Contact information was also provided.

Results

Eight participants approached within the DITF paradigm (classic or combined condition) accepted the initial request and were excluded from analyses.

Considering the acceptance of the target request, a 2 (participant gender) \times 4 (solicitation type) log linear analysis was conducted. Results indicated only a

main effect of solicitation type, $\chi^2(3, 1292) = 19.99, p = .0001, \varphi = 0.12$, but the effect was very small. The main effect for participant gender and the interaction was not significant: $\chi^2(1, 1292) = 0.26, p = .60$; participant gender \times solicitation type, $\chi^2(3, 1292) = 5.34, p = .15$. The 2×2 comparisons showed significant differences between the control condition (44/322) and the BYAF condition (73/327), $\chi^2(1, 649) = 8.23, p = .004, \varphi = 0.11$; the DITF condition (87/323), $\chi^2(1, 645) = 17.55, p = .00003, \varphi = 0.16$; and the Combined DITF and BYAF condition (78/320), $\chi^2(1, 642) = 11.96, p = .0005, \varphi = 0.14$. No other significant differences were found between conditions: BYAF versus DITF, $\chi^2(1, 650) = 1.86, p = .17$; BYAF versus Combined DITF and BYAF, $\chi^2(1, 650) = 0.38, p = .53$; DITF versus Combined DITF and BYAF, $\chi^2(1, 643) = 0.55, p = .45$.

Concerning the average donation amount, only participants who made an actual donation ($n = 286$) were included in the analysis. The average donation was 5.06 Euros ($SD = 5.79$). A 2 (participant gender) $\times 4$ (solicitation type) ANOVA was conducted. Results indicated only a significant main effect of solicitation type, $F(3, 28) = 4.07, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$; participant gender, $F(1, 278) = 0.00$; and participant gender \times solicitation type, $F(3, 278) = 5.34, p = .15$. The 2×2 post-hoc least significant difference (LSD) analysis indicated a difference between the Combined DITF and BYAF condition ($M = 6.81, SD = 9.00$) and the control condition ($M = 3.34, SD = 2.55; p = .001$); the BYAF condition ($M = 4.82, SD = 3.89; p = .034$); and the DITF condition ($M = 4.61, SD = 4.17; p = .014$). No other differences were found between the conditions: BYAF versus control, $p = .17$; BYAF versus DITF, $p = .82$; DITF versus control, $p = .22$. A complementary 2×2 Scheffé post-hoc analysis was conducted and indicated only a difference between the Combined DITF and BYAF condition and the control condition, $p = .02$; BYAF versus control, $p = .60$; BYAF versus DITF, $p = .99$; DITF versus control, $p = .68$; Combined DITF and BYAF versus BYAF, $p = .11$; Combined DITF and BYAF versus DITF, $p = .21$. Table 2 summarizes these results.

Discussion

The second study replicates the design of the first study, with an enlarged sample of participants. Concerning the acceptance rate, results support the first hypothesis and partially the second. DITF techniques as BYAF techniques produced significantly higher donation rates than did the control condition, 36.9% and 28.7% versus 13.7%, respectively. However, the combination of the two former techniques (32.2%), although producing more compliance than the control condition, did not differ from the two single techniques. To interpret the positive but limited effect of this last condition compared to the two single techniques, consider that these may already produce a maximal compliance rate, so the combined technique can not exceed that level. The binary measure of the behavioral compliance could promote a ceiling effect. Concerning the donation

Table 2. Compliance rates and average amount of donation by condition.

Solicitation type	Control	Single BYAF	Single DITF	Combined DITF and BYAF
Compliance rates	13.7% (44/322)	28.7% (73/254)	36.9% (87/236)	32.2% (78/242)
Donation amount	3.33 Euros (SD = 2.55)	4.82 Euros (SD = 3.89)	4.61 Euros (SD = 4.17)	6.81 Euros (SD = 9.00)

Note. BYAF: but-you-are-free; DITF: door-in-the-face.

amount, results showed an increase of donations in the Combined DITF and BYAF condition (6.81 Euros) compared to the control condition (3.33 Euros), but also compared to the single BYAF condition (4.81 Euros) and the single DITF condition (4.62 Euros). Despite higher average amount, single DITF and BYAF techniques did not differ from the control condition. More conservative Scheffé post-hoc test indicated that the Combined DITF and BYAF condition was the only condition that differed in donation rate from the control condition. Even given no specific hypothesis on this measure, the result is in line with the expected effect of the combination of techniques.

General discussion

Based on the theoretical interpretations of the DITF and BYAF techniques, we hypothesized that the statement of free choice associated with the DITF target request would promote acceptance of the request. Two studies were conducted. Results only partially supported the hypothesis. In the first study, observed donation rates were in the expected pattern and experimental conditions statistically differed from the control, but the difference between the combined condition and single conditions did not meet the statistical criterion.

In the second study, acceptance rates in the three experimental conditions were statistically different from that in the control condition, but the Combined condition did not differ from the single conditions. However, the average donation amount in the Combined condition differed from the control, from the DITF, and from the BYAF conditions taken independently according to the LSD post-hoc analysis. According to the Scheffé post-hoc analysis, this condition was the only one to differ from the control condition. Contrary to behavioral or verbal compliance, the literature regarding donation amount as a dependent variable is somewhat unclear for the two single techniques. Relative to the BYAF technique, some experiments reported an increase in donation amount (Pascual & Guéguen, 2002; Experiments 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) and some experiments did not (Pascual & Guéguen, 2002; Experiments 5 and 7, Pascual et al., 2009). Relative to the DITF technique, the same has been observed by

Wang, Brownstein, and Katzev (1989), Williams and Williams (1989), and Pascual et al. (2009), indicating an increase in donation amount. Reingen (1977) and Brownstein and Katzev (1985) did not observe this, despite an increased compliance rate. The small number of studies considering donation amounts, differences in the context and the purpose of studies, and finally the small sample of participants (only effective donators can be included) made it difficult to predict specific effects. Attention is needed in future studies to better understand effect of compliance without pressure paradigms on donation amount. This could help make specific inferences.

Taken together, these results suggest a weak potentialization rather than diminishment of the effects of independently applied techniques. From a theoretical point of view, results do not directly resolve the question of how to interpret the manipulated procedures. However, they support interpretations of the DITF that consider guilty feelings and more generally negative emotions or psychological discomfort as underlying the effect. As Terrier and Joule (2008) or Millar (2002) did, it would be appropriate to measure and compare the magnitude of motivational tension or guilt generated in the different conditions. Another way to interpret effect of the combined technique is also to consider a simply cumulative effect of the underlying mechanisms of each technique. By considering only the interpretation of the BYAF technique relative to psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966; Pascual & Guéguen, 2002), one can conceive that the feeling of freedom associated with the DITF only reduces psychological reactance of participants as compared to the single BYAF condition.

From a practical point of view, meta-analytic studies may suggest to practitioners that compliance without pressure paradigms, specifically the DITF here, is not an effective way to improve behavioral compliance (Feeley et al., 2012). The present studies demonstrate the opposite, having potentially doubled the compliance rate in an ecological context. Concerning the combination of techniques tested, Howard et al. (2007) observed that the tendency of academic researchers is to focus on examining singles techniques, while among practitioners, “the simultaneous use of several techniques is often the rule rather than the exception” (p. 18). The present research provides scientific support for practitioners wishing to combine DITF and BYAF, indicating that these two techniques are at least compatible. Due to the low cost of adding a freedom declaration to a DITF technique and potential benefits, the results should encourage practitioners to use this combination.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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