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Self-Concept Clarity and the Foot-in-the-Door Procedure

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Three studies examined the role self-concept clarity plays in compliance within the foot-in-the-door procedure. Undergraduate participants in Study 1 were either asked to sign a letter to the president encouraging aid for the homeless or did not receive this request. A few days later participants were contacted by phone and asked to take part in a food drive for the homeless. Participants high in self-concept clarity were more likely to agree to the larger request when they first had agreed to the small request, that is, the typical foot-in-the-door effect. However, low self-concept clarity participants were less likely to agree with the larger request after they had agreed to the small request. This pattern was replicated in Study 2 using a different set of requests and a different charitable cause. Study 3 found changes in self-rated helplessness following a foot-in-the-door manipulation that matched the pattern of compliance in the first two studies. The findings provide additional support for the self-perception interpretation of the foot-in-the-door effect and point to 1 explanation for the inconsistent results in research on sequential-request compliance procedures.

The deceptively simple foot-in-the-door technique is the oldest and most widely researched of the sequential-request compliance procedures investigated by social psychologists. Since its introduction by Freedman and Fraser (1966), the procedure has been examined in more than a hundred published studies and has been the topic of several reviews and meta-analyses (Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz, & Steblay, 1983; Burger, 1999; DeJong, 1979; Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984; Fern, Monroe, & Avila, 1986; Weyant, 1996). Briefly, the foot-in-the-door procedure consists of presenting individuals with a small request that virtually all people will agree to. Although researchers have used a number of variations of the basic procedure, typically a different requester contacts the individual at some later time and asks a related, but much larger, request. If successful, the procedure elicits a higher rate of compliance to the larger (target) request than is found in a control condition in which only the target request is presented. For example, when researchers asked participants to put a small sign in a window promoting driver safety, the participants were significantly more likely to agree to a larger request (placing a very large sign promoting driver safety in their front lawn) 2 weeks later than were participants asked only about the large sign (Freedman & Fraser, 1966).

Despite the large number of investigations, more than 3 decades of research on the foot-in-the-door procedure has resulted in mixed evidence for the effectiveness of the technique. Although many investigators have demonstrated an increase in compliance with the procedure, many others have failed to find this effect, and a few have found a decrease in compliance when employing the technique. Consistent with this observation, meta-analyses of foot-in-the-door studies find that the effect appears more often than would be expected by chance, but that the combined results of foot-in-the-door studies indicates the size of the effect is small. The inconsistent findings thus suggest the foot-in-the-door procedure may be effective only under certain circumstances. In a recent review, Burger (1999) identified several procedural differences in foot-in-the-door studies that help to explain when the procedure will be effective and when it is likely to be ineffective.

Another explanation for the inconsistent findings is that the foot-in-the-door procedure may not work with all people. Recently, researchers have begun to examine the role personality variables play in the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door procedure. For example, Cialdini, Trost, and Newsom (1995) examined individual differences in preference for consistency. They found a significant foot-in-the-door effect

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for participants who held a high preference to be consistent. However, no such effect was found for participants who scored low on this personality dimension. A similar pattern was found in a pair of follow-up investigations (Guadagno, Asher, Demaine, & Cialdini, 2001). Each of these studies found a significant foot-in-the-door effect for participants high in preference for consistency. However, participants who were low on this personality dimension and made aware of their previous helpful behavior (e.g., the experimenter asked if they "usually help people you don't know") actually showed the opposite pattern. That is, they were less likely than an appropriate control group to agree with the target request after agreeing to the initial request.

The practical and theoretical implications of such findings for understanding sequential-request compliance procedures are intriguing. Cialdini et al. (1995) pointed out that if the procedure tends to work only for a segment of the larger population, then we should not be surprised that the foot-in-the-door effect is found intermittently or—consistent with the meta-analyses findings—that the overall size of the effect is small.

This set of studies was designed to examine the role of another personality variable that also may influence the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door procedure. Specifically, we were interested in individual differences in self-concept clarity. A growing body of research indicates that people differ in the degree to which they have a clear idea of their self-concept (Baumgardner, 1990; Campbell, 1990; Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Campbell et al., 1996; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001; Setterlund & Niedenthal, 1993). That is, people differ not only in what they think of themselves but also in how that information is structured and stored in memory. Investigators use the term *self-concept clarity* to refer to individual differences in the extent to which one's self-concept is "clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 141).

Researchers have produced evidence for the stability and validity of scales designed to assess individual differences in self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996). Correlational analyses find that individuals scoring high in self-concept clarity also tend to score high on measures of self-esteem and extraversion and low on measures of neuroticism, anxiety, and depression (Campbell et al., 1996; Smith, Wethington, & Zhan, 1996). People with a clear self-concept also have been found to more often rely on active coping strategies, whereas those low in self-concept clarity are more likely to use passive strategies (Smith et al., 1996).

We anticipated that high self-concept clarity individuals would be more responsive to foot-in-the-door manipulations than lows. To understand this prediction, we need to look at one of the processes proposed to underlie the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door procedure. The most common explanation offered for why the small-to-large request sequence increases compliance is based on self-perception theory (Bem, 1972). According to the self-perception interpretation, compliance with the first request alters the individual's self-image. After agreeing to the small request, even though virtually everyone would do so, people move closer to seeing themselves as the type of person who complies with these kinds of requests. When later deciding whether to respond to the second request, these individuals are said to consider if they are the kind of person who agrees with such requests. Because their altered self-concept suggests the answer is yes, the likelihood of agreeing with the request is increased. In a recent review, Burger (1999) found considerable evidence that a self-perception process similar to that outlined above was operating in successful applications of the foot-in-the-door procedure. However, we hasten to point out that the self-perception explanation is not without its critics (Gorassini & Olson, 1995). Nonetheless, as described later, by examining individual differences in self-concept clarity within a foot-in-the-door experiment, we may be able to shed some light on the process underlying the effect.

If we accept the notion that complying with the initial request alters the person's self-concept, then individual differences in self-concept clarity should influence the effectiveness of the foot-in-the-door procedure. We have found in earlier investigations that people high in self-concept clarity are more susceptible to efforts to manipulate their self-concept than are lows (Guadagno & Burger, 2000). For example, high self-concept clarity participants in one study were given test feedback indicating they were helpful individuals. These participants were significantly more likely to stop and help a passerby who had dropped some pamphlets than high self-concept clarity participants not receiving the test feedback. Participants low in self-concept clarity did not differ in their amount of helpful behavior as a function of the test feedback.

Based on these earlier findings, we expected that people high in self-concept clarity would be more responsive to the typical foot-in-the-door manipulation than lows. After agreeing with the initial request, high self-concept clarity individuals should be especially likely to see themselves as the kind of person who helps with this kind of cause. If the self-perception explanation for the foot-in-the-door effect is correct, this change in self-concept should result in an increased likelihood of agreeing with the target request.

Although not the focus of our research, the studies also have the potential to provide additional insight about individual differences in self-concept clarity. Specifically, Campbell (1990) suggested low self-concept clarity individuals are more responsive to the social environment, whereas high self-concept clarity people rely on information about themselves to guide their behavior. One hypothesis derived from this description is that the way high self-concept clarity individuals think of themselves is not likely to change as a result of a foot-in-the-door manipulation. Thus, one could predict that highs will be less responsive to the manipulation than lows. However, based on our earlier studies that found

highs were more likely to alter their self-concept than lows, we hypothesize the opposite effect. We expect that high self-concept clarity individuals will be more responsive than lows to the foot-in-the-door manipulation. As Campbell (1990) argued, high self-concept clarity people are more attentive to self-information and are more likely than lows to use this information to guide their behavior. Thus, we expected high self-concept clarity participants would be more likely than lows to exhibit the traditional foot-in-the-door effect.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants. One hundred thirty-one (49 men and 82 women) undergraduates were selected from a larger group based on their personality test scores. The undergraduates participated in the study in exchange for class credit. Nine men and 11 women participants were dropped from the study because they could not be reached for the second part of the experiment. Four additional participants, all men, were dropped because they did not agree with the initial request, leaving 107 participants in the final sample.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to either the foot-in-the-door or the control condition. All participants completed a set of personality inventories, presented in random order. This set of inventories included a modified version of the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire (Baumgardner, 1990). The original version of the questionnaire consists of 20 self-descriptive terms (for example, *intelligent, persistent, unpopular*). Test takers are instructed to rate themselves on each item in two ways. First, test takers indicate on a 100-point continuum the extent to which the term typically describes them. Second, they indicate with two arrows on the same continuum the range within which they sometimes fall on that dimension. For example, the instructions tell the test taker that for the *athletic* item, "if you are sure you are more athletic than at least 15% of the population, then place an arrow halfway between the 10 and 20…and if you are sure you are not more athletic than 90% of the population, then put the second arrow there." Baumgardner (1990) used the sum of the ranges for each of the 20 items as a measure of self-concept clarity. We added 7 items, dispersed throughout the questionnaire, to assess self-concept clarity for a specific characteristic theoretically related to the foot-in-the-door effect, i.e., helpfulness. The items were *charitable, unselfish, helpful, insensitive, unsympathetic, self-centered*, and *compassionate*. Pilot work ($N = 109$) found that range scores for each of the 7 items were highly correlated (rs ranged between .42 and .74), with an α of .90. These also were the items used to assess self-concept clarity in some of the studies described earlier (Guadagno & Burger, 2000).

After participants completed the tests, they were given credit and dismissed. When leaving the lab room, participants in the foot-in-the-door condition passed a table containing information about homelessness and a series of pictures of homeless individuals. A second experimenter sat next to the table and asked participants if they would be willing to sign a letter to President Clinton advocating an increase in federal aid to the homeless. If participants agreed to the request, they were thanked by the experimenter and given a sticker that said "There are millions of homeless in America—Think about it." In all but a few cases the participants carried backpacks and the experimenter placed the sticker on the backpack. At the end of the study, the letter was indeed sent to the president. No table was set up when control condition participants left the classroom, and hence they received no initial request.

One to 5 days later, participants were called by an experimenter, blind to condition, and asked if they would be willing to help an organization called Students Helping Homeless with a food drive. Participants were asked to donate 3 hr of their time during the upcoming Saturday to help with the food drive for the homeless. Those who agreed to the request were told that the experimenter currently was making a list of interested students and would call the participant if he or she was needed.

Results and Discussion

We used the sum of the range scores for the seven helpfulness items on the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire as our measure of self-concept clarity ($M = 165.23$, $SD = 58.91$). Participants scoring in the upper and lower 40% of the distribution were retained for the analysis.[1] An initial examination of gender differences revealed no effects or interactions for this variable, and it was thus dropped in the subsequent analyses. The number of participants in each condition who agreed to the second request was examined in a 2 (Condition) × 2 (High vs. Low Self-Concept Clarity) log-linear analysis. A significant condition by self-concept clarity interaction was found in this analysis, $z = 2.36$, $p < .02$. As show in Table 1, and confirmed by planned cell comparisons, the number of high self-concept clarity participants who volunteered to help with the food drive was higher in the foot-in-the-door condition than in the control condition, $\chi^2(1, N = 66) = 4.25$, $p < .04$.

[1]We decided to examine extreme scorers rather than the entire distribution for several reasons. An examination of scores revealed a large number of participants bunched together in the middle of the distribution. As has been demonstrated elsewhere, including middle scorers in the analysis can disguise or distort differences between genuine high and low scorers (Sorrentino & Short, 1977). Moreover, given that we were using a nominal dependent variable, we were concerned about having enough power to find a significant effect and used the extreme groups to maximize our chances. This strategy is not uncommon among researchers looking at similar kinds of data (see, e.g., Cialdini et al., 1995).

TABLE 1
Percentage Agreeing to Target Request (Study 1)

	Self-Concept Clarity	
	High	*Low*
Control	15.6	31.8
Foot-in-the-door	38.2	0

The finding is consistent with our prediction and the self-perception analysis. According to that analysis, by signing the letter to the president, high self-concept clarity participants altered the extent to which they thought of themselves as the kind of person who supports such causes. These participants then relied on this information when later asked if they would volunteer time to help the homeless.

However, there was another unexpected and quite interesting finding in the data. As shown in Table 1, and confirmed by the specific cell comparison, low self-concept clarity participants were less likely to agree to the food drive request after agreeing to sign the letter to the president, $\chi^2(1, N = 39) = 6.59$, $p < .02$.

How can we account for this interesting effect? We suggest that low self-concept clarity individuals may be less likely than highs to make decisions about their behavior based on self-information. That is, when deciding whether to go along with a request, people high in self-concept clarity might ask themselves if they are the kind of person who agrees with such requests. However, people low in self-concept clarity are less likely to possess organized and easily accessible information about the kind of person they are. Consequently, these individuals are more likely to rely on information other than cognitive representations of their selves to guide behavior. It is possible that the low self-concept clarity participants who agreed with the initial request in Study 1 may have instead focused on the circumstances surrounding their behavior. Rather than looking inward and deciding that they must be the kind of person who helps with such causes, these participants used other information that led them to decline the target request. But why would these low self-concept clarity participants be less likely to agree to the target request after agreeing with the initial request? One possibility is that these participants reasoned something like this: "I have already helped out with this cause recently, therefore I don't need to do more right now." Of course, at this point we can only speculate about this interesting finding. Moreover, this unexpected pattern among low self-concept clarity participants should not detract from the fact that our primary prediction—that high self-concept clarity people would be more responsive to a foot-in-the-door manipulation than lows—was supported. Finally, it is possible that the drop in compliance found among the low self-concept clarity participants is not replicable. Thus, before speculating further, we wanted to see if we could reproduce the effect in Study 2. We also wanted to replicate the predicted foot-in-the-door effect with the high self-concept clarity participants using a different request and a different charitable cause.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants. One hundred thirty-three undergraduates (32 men and 101 women) were selected from a larger group based on their personality test scores. The undergraduates participated in the study in exchange for class credit. Eight women participants who could not be reached for the follow-up request were dropped from the study, leaving 125 participants.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to either the foot-in-the-door or the control condition. Those in the foot-in-the-door condition were greeted individually by a woman experimenter when they arrived at the experimental room. The experimenter wore a bright yellow button advocating cancer awareness, although neither the experimenter nor any of the participants made any reference to the button at this time. The button stated "17 or 70—Cancer Happens." Participants were given a package of personality tests to complete that included the modified version of the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire used in the previous study. After completing the tests, participants were told the experiment was over and were given participation credit. The experimenter escorted each participant away from the research rooms and toward an outside door. When participants were several feet away from the lab room the experimenter pointed to the button she was wearing and explained that she was promoting National Cancer Awareness Month. The experimenter turned to some material she had left on a nearby desk and asked the participant if, to help promote cancer awareness, he or she would like to wear a button and take a pamphlet provided by the American Cancer Society. The button offered by the experimenter was identical to the one she wore, and the pamphlet explained ways to identify and reduce cancer risks. If the participant agreed to the request (all did), the experimenter handed the participant the pamphlet and pinned the button on his or her backpack. Participants in the control condition completed the same set of personality tests. However, the experimenter did not wear the cancer awareness button and simply gave participants credit and dismissed them after they completed the tests.

One to 5 days after participating in the first phase of the experiment, participants received a phone call from a second experimenter who identified herself as a member of a fictitious student organization called the Cancer Information Coalition. The second experimenter, blind to experimental condition, explained that this was National Cancer Awareness Month and that the student organization was looking for students interested in promoting cancer awareness and

prevention. Participants were asked if they would be willing to donate 3 hr of their time, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. the next Saturday, to put together and deliver information to the local community. If participants said no, they were thanked for their time. If they agreed to the request, the experimenter thanked them and said she currently was collecting names of interested individuals and would call them back if they were needed.

Results and Discussion

As in Study 1, we used responses to select items on the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire to create a self-concept clarity score ($M = 148.87$, $SD = 56.06$). Participants again were retained if their score on the helpfulness items of the questionnaire fell in the upper or lower 40% of the distribution. As in the previous study, an initial examination of gender differences revealed no effects or interactions for this variable, and it was dropped in the subsequent analyses. We then examined the number of participants who agreed to volunteer their time in a 2 (Condition) × 2 (High vs. Low Self-Concept Clarity) log-linear analysis. A significant interaction was found in this analysis, $z = 1.99$, $p < .05$. As shown in Table 2, the pattern of results is similar to that found in Study 1. High self-concept clarity participants who had earlier agreed to wear a button also were more likely to volunteer their time than those who had not been asked the initial request, and low self-concept clarity participants who had agreed to wear the button were less likely to volunteer their time than those not presented with this request. Specific comparisons between the two conditions fell short of statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 1.25$ for the highs and 2.73 for the lows). Nonetheless, the same pattern found in Study 1 was replicated.

STUDY 3

The purpose of Study 3 was twofold. First, we wanted to provide additional evidence for our interpretation of the results from the first two studies. Specifically, we argue that the foot-in-the-door manipulation leads to changes in self-perceived helpfulness. However, we did not include a measure of self-perceived helpfulness in either Study 1 or Study 2. One reason for this omission is that completing a self-report measure between the foot-in-the-door manipulation and the presentation of the second request could affect whether participants complied with the second request, thus complicating the interpretation of the results. To correct for this problem, we designed Study 3 as a partial replication of the first two studies. High and low self-concept clarity participants either were or were not presented with a foot-in-the-door manipulation. Following this, we measured the extent to which participants thought of themselves as helpful people. If our interpretation of the first two studies is correct, we expected the relation between self-concept clarity and self-perceived helpfulness to be different for the foot-in-the-door and control conditions. Specifically, we predicted that following the foot-in-the-door manipulation, high self-concept clarity participants would be more aware of this aspect of their self-concept and therefore would report that they are more helpful than would low self-concept clarity participants. We did not expect this difference in the control condition.

TABLE 2
Percentage Agreeing to Target Request (Study 2)

	Self-Concept Clarity	
	High	*Low*
Control	31.0	41.2
Foot-in-the-door	45.0	17.9

The second goal of Study 3 was to examine the role self-esteem plays in the effect uncovered in the first two studies. Researchers often find a positive relation between measures of self-concept clarity and self-esteem (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1996; Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). Thus, it is reasonable to ask whether the differences we found between high and low self-concept clarity participants could be attributed to differences in self-esteem. To test this possibility, we measured self-esteem in Study 3 with the purpose of partialing out the effects of this variable in our statistical analyses.

Method

Participants. Fifty-eight undergraduates (11 men and 47 women) served as participants in exchange for class credit.

Procedure. About 30 sec after the participant arrived at the experimental room, a confederate posing as another participant arrived. The experimenter explained that the study was concerned with measuring various personality traits. Participants were given a battery of personality measures to complete in a random order. The experimenter picked up the inventories as they were completed and gave the participant the next personality measure. Included within the tests were two relevant for this investigation. One of these was the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire used in previous studies to measure self-concept clarity. The other was the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The Rosenberg scale is a self-report measure that asks test takers to indicate on 4-point scales (from 1 [*strongly disagree*] to 4 [*strongly agree*]) the extent to which each of 10 items describes them (for example, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself").

When the experimenter searched for the final personality measure, he or she acted surprised and announced that he or she would have to make more copies. The experimenter then left the room. Participants had been randomly preassigned to one of two conditions. In the foot-in-the-door condition, the confederate waited approximately 30 sec after the experimenter's departure before presenting the initial request. The confederate, blind to the hypothesis, retrieved a petition from his or her backpack and showed it to the participant. The petition was addressed to Senator Diane Feinstein and stated that students at the university were concerned about homelessness and encouraged the senator to support legislation that would help homeless individuals. The confederate asked the participant to sign the petition (all did). The experimenter listened to the exchange from a hidden position outside the room. Approximately 30 sec after the participant signed the petition, the experimenter returned. In the control condition, the confederate sat quietly while the experimenter was gone from the room. The experimenter returned approximately 2 min later.

The experimenter then administered the final questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate on a series of 11-point scales (from 1 [*not at all*] to 11 [*very much*]) the extent to which each of seven words described them. The seven words were those used earlier to assess clarity (that is, range of possible scores) of self-perceived helpfulness. In order, the words were *charitable, unselfish, helpful, insensitive, unsympathetic, self-centered*, and *compassionate*. Upon completing the questionnaire, the confederate was excused. The experimenter then debriefed the participant and gave credit.

Results and Discussion

The seven items on the final questionnaire were combined to form an overall index of self-perceived helpfulness. An initial examination of the relations between the items indicated that one item (unselfish) did not correlate well with the others and that dropping the item raised the internal consistency coefficient for the scale from .55 to .76. Thus, the combined score for the six remaining items was used as our measure of self-perceived helpfulness.

Following the procedures used in the previous two studies, we generated a self-concept clarity score from responses to the Latitude of Self-Description Questionnaire ($M = 131.02$, $SD = 55.36$). We also created high and low self-concept clarity conditions by selecting participants who fell into the upper and lower 40% of the distribution on the self-concept clarity measure. Once again, an initial examination of gender differences revealed no significant effects and we did not include the variable in subsequent analyses. We then examined the effect of self-concept (high-low) and condition (foot in the door-control) within an analysis of covariance, with scores on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale and the self-esteem by self-concept clarity and self-esteem by condition interactions used as covariates. The means for the four conditions are found in Table 3. Neither the main effect for self-concept clarity nor condition was statistically significant, $F(1, 39) = 1.01$, $\eta^2 = .02$, and $F(1, 39) = 0.02$, $\eta^2 = .00$, respectively. However, we did find the predicted interaction, $F(1, 39) = 4.24$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .10$. As seen in the table, the self-perceived helpfulness scores follow a pattern similar to the one we found for compliance behavior in the first two studies. Whereas high and low self-concept clarity participants did not differ significantly in the control condition, $t(22) = 0.76$, high self-concept clarity participants saw themselves as significantly more helpful following the foot-in-the-door manipulation than the low self-concept clarity participants, $t(22) = 2.09$, $p < .05$. None of the effects for the covariates reached significance, $F(1, 39) = 0.06$, $\eta^2 = .00$, for self-esteem; $F(1, 39) = 0.20$, $\eta^2 = .01$, for the self-esteem by self-concept clarity interaction; and $F(1, 39) = .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, for the self-esteem by condition interaction. The data from the third study thus help us argue that a change in self-perceived helpfulness, or at least participants' awareness of this aspect of their self-concept, is responsible for the difference in compliance observed in the earlier studies.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The findings from the three studies highlight the importance of considering personality variables when using sequential-request compliance procedures. Specifically, not all people respond alike to a foot-in-the-door manipulation. Although high self-concept clarity participants demonstrated the classic foot-in-the-door effect in Studies 1 and 2, low self-concept clarity participants did not. As Cialdini et al. (1995) noted, this kind of finding can help explain the inconsistent and often weak results uncovered in foot-in-the-door studies. Our findings suggest that a foot-in-the-door manipulation may be successful with only a portion of the population. By failing to examine personality variables, foot-in-the-door researchers may have a difficult time demonstrating the phenomenon.

The findings also provide additional support for the self-perception explanation for the foot-in-the-door effect. Previous research suggests that high self-concept clarity people are more likely than lows to alter their self-concepts as a result of recent information. According to the self-perception

TABLE 3
Mean Self-Perceived Helpfulness Scores (Study 3)

	Self-Concept Clarity			
	High		*Low*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Control	48.75	5.57	50.00	4.21
Foot-in-the-door	51.14	6.22	45.78	5.45

explanation for the foot-in-the-door effect, agreeing to the small request alters how participants view themselves when responding to similar requests. Thus, the self-perception explanation predicts that high self-concept clarity people would be more responsive to the foot-in-the-door manipulation than lows. This is exactly what we found in our studies.

The data also provide additional information about individual differences in self-concept clarity. In some ways, our findings are inconsistent with some descriptions of high and low self-concept clarity individuals. For example, Campbell (1990) suggested that low self-concept clarity people are more likely than highs to react to social situations. This suggestion is based on the notion that high self-concept clarity people have a clear and accessible sense of self they rely on to guide their behavior. In the absence of clear self information, low self-concept clarity people should be more responsive to situational influences than highs. However, we predicted and found the opposite pattern. Our high self-concept clarity participants were more responsive to the foot-in-the-door manipulation than the lows. Although our findings appear to contradict Campbell's description, this need not be the case. It is possible the foot-in-the-door manipulation did not alter the participants' self-concept in the sense that unhelpful people became helpful. Rather, we might think of the self-concept change in terms of making certain aspects of the self-concept more accessible. That is, each of us has a wealth of information to call upon when trying to decide how helpful a person we are. Signing the petition on homelessness may have primed self-concept information related to helpfulness for our participants. Participants high in self-concept clarity, who attend to and rely on self-information, may have become acutely aware of their helpfulness after the manipulation. When asked if they are helpful, these participants should report that they are indeed helpful. When given the opportunity to act in a helpful manner, such as volunteering for the canned food drive, these same high self-concept clarity people should be more likely to agree to the request. Because low self-concept clarity individuals are less likely to rely on this self-information to guide their behavior, we would expect a different reaction to the foot-in-the-door manipulation.

As always, there remain a few questions and limitations that we must acknowledge when interpreting our results. First, we assessed self-concept clarity within a narrower range than is typically used by researchers studying this individual difference. That is, we measured the clarity of participants' self-concept only as it relates to helpfulness. A great deal of research with other personality traits demonstrates that specific measures typically are stronger predictors of specific behaviors than are general measures (Ashton, Jackson, Paunonen, Helmes, & Rothstein, 1995; Mershon & Gorsuch, 1988; Paunonen, 1998; Wolfe & Kasmer, 1988). Although the relation between specific and general measures of self-concept clarity remains an open question, our intent here was to examine the relation between self-concept clarity as it relates to the foot-in-the-door effect. Thus, the statistically more powerful measure seemed appropriate for our purposes.[2]

Second, the interesting reaction of the low self-concept clarity participants to our foot-in-the-door manipulation was unexpected. In Studies 1 and 2 these participants reduced their helping behavior as a result of agreeing to the initial task. A similar "boomerang" effect has been found in other foot-in-the-door research (Burger, 1999; Chartrand, Pinckert, & Burger, 1999) and has been found among people with certain personality trait scores in other foot-in-the-door studies (Guadagno et al., 2001). We speculate that our low self-concept clarity participants were relatively inattentive to self-concept information and may instead have decided that they already had done their part for the charity. Although we have no direct evidence that our low self-concept clarity participants used this type or reasoning, data from Study 3 are consistent with this interpretation. That is, low self-concept clarity participants in the study were not more likely to think of themselves as helpful after signing the petition. Thus, these participants apparently did not use their behavior to determine that they were the kind of person who helps. The fact that the petition-signing experience actually made them feel less helpful suggests these participants may have attended to the situational reasons for their actions. However, we hasten to add that our explanation for the low self-concept clarity participants' behavior is necessarily *post hoc* and must therefore be interpreted with caution.

Finally, as with all research with personality variables, there remains the possibility that other individual differences vary along with the trait of interest. That is, self-concept clarity undoubtedly is correlated with other personality traits.[3] We controlled for the most obvious of these traits in our third study by measuring and partialing out the effect of self-esteem. However, we would not be surprised if researchers also uncover significant correlations between measures of self-concept clarity and measures of self-monitoring, self-esteem stability, attributional style, and so on. Consequently, we cannot rule out that one or more of these other personality variables influenced our findings. Nonetheless, a reasonable case can be made at a conceptual level that self-concept clarity plays an important role in how people respond to temporary manipulations of their self-concept.

In sum, successful implementation of sequential-request tactics like the foot-in-the-door procedure is not easy. What works for one person may have the opposite effect on another. As a result, salespeople and others who use such techniques run the risk of doing their cause more harm than good.

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[2]Consistent with this reasoning, when we reexamined the Study 1 data using the general measure of self-concept clarity that Baumgardner (1990) used, we found the same general pattern reported in Table 1, but with nonsignificant differences among conditions.

[3]However, our own unpublished data suggest that our measure of self-concept clarity is not significantly correlated with Cialdini et al.'s (1995) measure of preference for consistency, $r = .19$.

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